The Power of Deception Unveiled, and the Man of Sin Revealed

by John Jones

Jones works through the Revelation part by part, from the seven churches of Asia to the restoration of the true church, reading the prophecy as a history of the Christian church and identifying the man of sin within it. Prefixed is his Essay on the System of Man, on human nature before and after the fall. Philadelphia, 1829.

19 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 01. Biographical Preface
2. 02. Introductory Address
3. 03. SECTION I. Of man, as a being composed of natural and spiritual parts, - - - - ib...
4. 04. SECTION V. Of true religion
5. 05. SECTION VII. Of Conscience
6. 06. PART I. The state of religion in the seven churches of Asia
7. 07. PART II. The overruling providence of the Almighty, shown to be the power which w...
8. 08. PART III. Through the opening of the seals is discovered the propagation of the C...
9. 09. PART IV. Calamitous and warlike events to occur through the same period of time w...
10. 10. PART V. Representation of the state of pure religion, exhibited under the charact...
11. 11. PART VI. The primitive Christian church under the character of a woman
12. 12. PART VII. Explanation of the beast that arose out of the sea\u2014of the second b...
13. 13. PART VIII. Calamitous events under the remainder of the sixth and under the seven...
14. 14. PART IX. Discovery of the great whore who made all nations drunk
15. 15. PART X. Propagation of the pure doctrines of Christ, under the character of a Whi...
16. 16. PART XI. Awful representation of the day of judgment
17. 17. PART IX. Continued. Summary view of the state of religion, succeeding the revolut...
18. 18. PART XII. Restoration of the true church discovered, and its glory described
19. 19. Conclusion

Chapter 1

01. Biographical Preface

PREFACE,

BIOGRAPHICAL OF THE AUTHOR, &c.

JOHN JONES was a native of Chester county, in Pennsylvania. In early life he was subjected to much bodily affliction, as well as various severe trials, partly arising from the course of military operations at that time progressing. These, however, operating on a remarkably susceptible and intelligent mind, were embraced as profitable incitements to seek for a more intimate internal acquaintance with God, the great source of true consolation. Hereby his views of the divine sufficiency became enlarged, to the production of an operative faith—his tribulations, agreeably with the apostolic testimony, working “Patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.”

Thus learning in the school of Christ, and his mind becoming more and more enlightened, he was drawn to a careful examination of the various modes of religious profession amongst his family connexions, and in his neighbourhood. Having become dissatisfied and wearied with the forms, and particularly with the ministry amongst those with whom he was educated, as believing them lifeless and unprofitable, and finding in his own experience no foundation whereon to rest with peaceful confidence of certainty, but the immediate operation in his mind of the principle of divine internal light and iv love, he joined in connexion with the religious Society of Friends, whose professed fundamental principle he found to be the same that his best feelings approved.

Continuing his religious progress, he in time became an approved minister of the gospel in that society: and as his experience in the spirituality of the Christian dispensation advanced, he was sometimes drawn in the power of divine love to unfold to large congregations, to whom he ministered, in a very remarkable and impressive manner, deep and solemn mysteries of the gospel of Christ, in opposition to the vulgar trinitarian doctrines.

His natural disposition was remarkably cheerful, his manners engaging, and his social conversation pleasingly instructive; his rational faculties being strong and lively, and his judgment in natural things prompt and discriminative: but his bodily powers being unequal to much laborious exertion for the support of a family, and his pecuniary circumstances justifying in his rational apprehension, several successive changes of situation for the advancement of his earthly comforts, he at length suffered himself to engage in plans of worldly enterprise, which, though honourable and useful in their nature, eventually proved to his disadvantage. For his own account whereof the reader is referred to the concluding part of the following introduction.

His constitution having been impaired in his youth, by the loss of much blood on the occasion of a severe wound, was never afterwards robust; and in the latter years of his life, increasing weakness of the chest and lungs ensued, until—having travelled through heights and depths in his religious experience—his disease at length prevailing over his constitution, he resigned his v life into the hands of his merciful Creator, in the happy experience of the evangelical feeling of, "Glory to God in the highest—on earth peace—good will to men."

He departed this life at his house, in the county of Lancaster, in his native state, on the second day of the Second-month, 1800, in the forty-fourth year of his age.

The time in which he was most particularly engaged in his Analysis of the Book of Revelations, was at a late period of his life, when his health was fast declining; and his progress therein was often interrupted by the necessary calls on his attention to the arrangement of his temporal concerns. By reason of these circumstances the completion of the work was not effected until, by the progress of his disease, his bodily powers were so far weakened as to render it necessary to call in the aid of a friend, with whom he had been intimately conversant through several preceding years.

His first object, in thus requesting aid, was to review his work, in order to effect such corrections as might appear necessary, or likely to contribute to a more clear understanding. His mental faculties were strong as ever, and his mind deeply impressed with an apprehension of duty in devoting his attention to this concern, until, through divine favour, the work should be brought to such a state as that his survivors might comprehend his general views: fully believing that the light and understanding given him, with relation to this subject, were intended by "the Father of Lights," for the benefit of mankind. And for the sake of some particular classes of men in the world, an early publication thereof he believed it to be his religious duty to promote. Hence it became the duty of the friend he had called, so to enter into the views of the author as to vi contribute all in his power to his relief. Some days were therefore spent in a joint review of the Analysis, and in effecting such corrections, more clearly to convey the author's sense and meaning, as time and circumstances would admit.

Having proceeded thus far, and the author having completed some parts before unfinished, his mind appeared to be comfortably at rest with respect to the Analysis.

Another subject, however, now opened to his view, and engaged his attention. The parts and principles of the human system, with the various states of the mind, and relations of its intellectual powers, had previously obtained his mature consideration. His contemplations and results in this relation had been the forerunners of his peculiar notice of the revelations: but as his attention to this book became more and more engaged, and his openings extended, the former remained without special attention, only that the principles, by having become fixed and settled on his understanding, were, in a manner, ever present. Having committed some of his views on those subjects to writing, as well for his own satisfaction as for such future use as might appear to him right, and those papers remaining by him in their original state, the prospect which now presented was to review them in company with his friend, and to form an essay to precede the Analysis, expressive of his settled belief of the real state, nature and relations of the human compound being, as it originally came from the hand of the all-wise Creator, as well as under its various circumstances arising from obedience to, or rejection of, the divine law internally revealed; apprehending that an explanation of those vii principles would assist the unprejudiced mind in comprehending the doctrines contained in the work he had been engaged in, as well as furnish the reader with subjects of reflection relative to his own individual state.

Under this united engagement, the Essay received its form and arrangement.

The first section is wholly John Jones's production, taken by himself from his original papers.

Of the second section, the two latter paragraphs only were original with him. The fore part being offered by his friend, was approved and adopted.

The third section partakes but little of matter not originally his own.

The fourth section comprises doctrines which were in his view of much importance. On it he, therefore, bestowed peculiar attention. The last paragraph only was offered to his adoption, and gratefully accepted.

For a fifth section he proposed a definition of true religion, so far as remained necessary to illustrate the foregoing principles. But under this head he had by him only a few observations, which, being sketched at a period when his views were not extended to the present particular object, did not appear to be well adapted to the purpose. It being now very desirable to him to have his mind released from every species of fatigue, he felt satisfied in committing this subject entirely to his friend, to act in as he might afterward find a qualification. This section was, however, at a later period read to him, and thankfully approved by him.

As the subject of the sixth section had then received but little public discussion, and as his views thereof were supposed to be likely to excite some alarm, as being opposed to general and long established prejuviii dices, the omission of the publication of a section on this subject at that time was proposed to the author's consideration. To this proposition he decidedly objected, as believing it expedient that the public attention should be drawn to a doctrine, which, he apprehended, had been a prolific cause of the prevalence of darkness and confusion amongst the professors of religion; and standing opposed in the gross and superstitious manner in which they had in ages of apostasy accepted some metaphorical expressions in scripture, to the attainment of the true knowledge of correct religious principles.

In the course of communication with his friend, the author had requested him to make any corrections or further explanation of the work, that should afterward appear to be expedient, to render any subject more clearly explicit, preserving the general principles unchanged. The section on conscience, then inserted from his former notes, being but one short paragraph, not satisfactorily explicit, and he feeling his mind released from further attention thereto, its place has since, conformably with the aforesaid request, been supplied by the section now inserted; which will be perceived to correspond with his general views.

The Essay being thus disposed of, a subject still remained. After commencing the review of the Analysis, the author apprehended an advantage might result from offering some observations as an introduction; but it appeared to him that it would be too great a task, under his present bodily weakness, to devote any attention thereto. He had, therefore, early committed the consideration of this subject to his friend, to be taken up as he might find a qualification, after their joint ix labours should be completed. It now became necessary for his friend to personate the author in a more intimate manner than heretofore, in an attempt to collect and embody such reflections and observations as had occurred to himself in the course of the review, or as might occur during this engagement, as proper for the author to offer. The introductory address was the result of this attempt. The latter paragraphs, however, relating to the author's own moral conduct, were—after the foregoing had been submitted to him, and fully approved—drawn up by his instructions, carefully reviewed by him, signed with his own hand, and subjoined at his request; as a public acknowledgment to his friends in religious communion, and to the world, for those errors of his life which he deeply regretted, though now favoured with abundant mental evidence of the mercy and forgiveness of his gracious Redeemer.

The conclusion was afterward prepared at the author's request, upon a plan suggested by himself, and approved in the last interview between him and his friend.

The following reasons have operated on the mind of the editor, in presenting to the reader a sketch of the progress and completion of the work before him.

First,—It appeared to be the desire of John Jones, not to be considered as the author of productions not his own; and, in conformity with this desire, he had, shortly before his decease, requested, and received an assurance, that a memorandum of the aid received would be inserted in the volume.

Secondly,—That if any of those parts pointed out as being only adopted by the author, should appear objectionable to any judicious reader, the censure or dis-

X approbation, thence arising, may not be allowed to operate to the prejudice of the author's own immediate productions.

And, thirdly,—A sufficient apology may, perhaps, be thence inferred for whatever may be found in the volume, in the form of notes, or otherwise, under an editorial denotation.

It may, perhaps, be not improper here to observe, first, that the great end in view with John Jones, was an illustration of the spirituality of the Christian dispensation, in opposition to superstition, formality, and vague, incongruous or inexplicable opinions of every kind with which the world abounds. Particularly apprehending that the gross superstitions and monstrous absurdities which had, in the long established creeds and practices of some societies of religious professors, been blended with the profession of the Christian faith, but between which there was no more kindred alliance than between the olive tree and the bramble, or between light and darkness, had been a cause extensively operating to bring the Christian religion into disgrace, in the view of many in a nation at that time acting a conspicuous part on the continent of Europe, and raising in the room thereof, principles of infidelity, and a contempt of the benign doctrines of the gospel. For the sake of that nation he was particularly interested; as a door was then opened for free investigation, which has since, by the overturning of "principalities and powers," and the re-establishment of a species of censorship over the minds and consciences of men, been in a great measure closed.

Secondly, that if, from that deficiency in a faithful, undeviating attention and obedience to the principle xi of divine internal light, which he looked back upon with regret, and from the interruptions occasioned by those worldly embarrassments which he considered the effect thereof, he should, in the apprehension of some readers, not have arrived at a perfect clearness of evidence upon every particular part of the explanations he has offered of the Book of Revelations, perhaps such occasional obscurity as any unprejudiced reader may suppose he has discovered, may not defeat the effect intended by the author, or render abortive the general design of the work.

The eye of an attentive observer may embrace a widely extended field of varied objects in the visible creation, with a clearness and precision of view sufficient to prove to the beholder the reality of their existence, and their general bearing and relation to each other, at the same time that a partial cloud may possibly prevent the light from falling with equal radiance on some particular member of the landscape.

Thirdly,—That if it should be apprehended that some of the historical quotations advanced as proofs or illustrations might have been arranged, or referred to, in any different manner, so as to have contributed to a more prompt comprehension of the author's views, the apology for any occasional want of perspicuity of method which may be supposed to appear, will, perhaps, be found by adverting to the declining state of the author's health, as precluding any further review by him in order for improvement in this respect.

And, fourthly,—That, although the author apprehended the Book of Revelations contained a regular historical view of the Christian church, unfolded in prophetical anticipation to the beloved disciple John, xii in the manner and succession in which the divine prescience knew would in the course of time be fulfilled, yet it being thus descriptive of a chain of events outwardly fulfilled and fulfilling with relation to the general visible church, did, in his view, by no means invalidate the application of parts thereof to the progressive spiritual states of individuals, as often exhibited by other writers: inasmuch as the divinely inspired writings, being derived from the source of perfect wisdom and unbounded knowledge, are often wisely and fitly adapted to both general and special application.

Although the publication of the work was intended and directed by the author, to be accomplished very early after his decease, yet, owing to causes which, perhaps, it would not be useful here to detail, it has been delayed to the present time.

The doctrines inculcated, and the views exhibited, standing opposed to the preconceived opinions and prejudices of many under the various modes of Christian profession, animadversion and opposition may, perhaps, be reasonably anticipated. To the literary critic, should he deem the book worthy of his passing notice, it may be observed, that the exhibition of a critical correctness of style, has been no part of the inducement to the publication; neither is it necessary to the comprehension of plain practical truths, or the edification of the sincere religious inquirer. To those classes of society who may perceive their opinions to be controverted by the principles espoused, or that their worldly interest would be endangered by the prevalence of the doctrines advanced, a remark may be addressed similar to that which was introduced by the wise Gamaliel in a council of the Jews: "If this work xiii and this counsel be (merely) of men," and wholly erroneous, "it will come to nought," without your efforts to suppress it: "But, if it be" from a higher illumination, and grounded on the principles of everlasting truth, "ye cannot overthrow it." The editor, acting as the representative of the deceased author, in the fulfilment, though at this late period, of his dying request, does not hold himself necessarily bound to appear in future in defence of the work. It is, therefore, offered to the world, to receive its share of approbation or condemnation, according to the effect it may produce on the minds of its readers individually.

JOSEPH CHURCHMAN.

Frankford, Pa. 3d Mo. 1829.

Chapter 2

02. Introductory Address

My mind having been, at times, for several years, impressed with a serious consideration of the various circumstances of the nations of men now existing, attentive inquiries have thereby been raised, relative to the causes whereby the sufferings of many have been produced, and the oppressive power and undue dominion exercised by others have arisen. On pursuing these inquiries many reflections have occurred, in the course whereof, information has been opened to my understanding, relating to the nature of man, and the doctrines which concern his happiness. Yet I believe that the definitions and conclusions, relative to the system of man, and the manner of his salvation, which I am about to offer to the public in the following work, have not been the result of a labour merely in the powers of the rational understanding; but as I have sought instruction for my own benefit, and the regulation of my conduct, I trust a measure of divine light has been afforded, in which I have been induced to believe that my duty to my brethren in the great family of mankind, required my offering the principles therein contained to their view, as worthy of their serious attention.

From my experience of the loving kindness and mercies of God from my youth, as well as at times the adxvi ministration of his judgments, I have been long established in a full and feeling belief of the reality of his existence; and have been sensible of a compassionate tenderness and regard to mankind, generally, who are his workmanship, and by creation the children of his family. I have beheld many objects of pursuit amongst them, which do not appear to be productive of happiness; and many individual and national transactions which are evidently the means of multiplying miseries upon them. I believed that the great Father, in whom is fulness of wisdom and love, did not design that his creatures should be miserable, but that he had afforded a mean whereby they might enjoy his favour, and live in harmony one with another. My attention being thus occupied, I have clearly perceived that the source of all the confusions which prevent the happiness of the children of men exists within man himself.

On recurring to the scriptural account of creation, and duly considering the nature and constituent parts of my own being, I have discerned, with thankfulness to the Father of lights, that the order in which the faculties of man were originally placed, afforded him a capacity of doing the will of his all-wise Creator, wherein alone his happiness consisted; and that the perversion of this order is the mean whereby all the miseries which mankind suffer are incurred.

This order having been thus perverted, of which the transactions of men, through many ages, furnish decided proof, man appears to stand in a situation wherein the application of a power, superior to the strength of his own mind, is necessary for restoring him to the order and dignity in which he was originally placed. My views of this order, the manner of its perversion, and xvii the clearly evident necessity of such a superior power to effect its restoration, the reader will find briefly stated and explained, according to the light and understanding afforded me, in the forepart of the work I herewith present to his view; for which, as they are offered in simplicity, without any design to impose upon the understanding of others, I shall make no further apology.

That the power necessary to restore man to his original dignity, is granted, in the abundant mercy of God, is nominally acknowledged by many nations of the earth. The scriptural account of redemption by Christ, being familiar to those nations who profess a faith in his name, though the manner of it is, by the different

leaders of religious professors, variously defined, I do not propose to say much here respecting either the mean, or the manner of its operation; but refer the reader to the following pages, wherein he will find this doctrine most intimately interwoven with the historical and prophetical descriptions.

Numerous objections to the reality of redemption by the name and power of Christ, made by men whose minds were inflated with self-sufficiency, have fallen under my notice. But, though a large discussion of their principles might be entered into, and many proofs advanced on the side of reason and self-evident truth, sufficient, in the view of impartial readers, to overthrow their slender, futile, and fallacious systems, I forbear to dwell upon them. Because, to those who are believing, such proofs are not necessary; and to the unbelieving, arguments, grounded merely upon the principles of the natural understanding, would be ineffectual. It being only the evidence of the spirit of truth xviii to the soul, that can produce effectual conviction, as all things of a divine nature must necessarily have a divine evidence to demonstrate the reality of their existence. And as this divine evidence doth not, if resisted, operate to effect its purpose, so when not resisted, it begets a willingness to give it an impartial hearing: and if such a willingness be admitted, the strength of the principle of self-sufficiency which is seated in the powers of the natural mind, being thereby reduced, the divine evidence can operate to conviction without the necessity of many natural arguments.

In the course of my meditations on the nature, composition and circumstances of man, many expressions and declarations, recorded in the writings of the prophets and other books of scripture, have presented in memory and occurred to observation, which appear to me to unite in testimony to the truth of the system I have attempted to demonstrate.

On my attention being particularly turned to the Book of Revelations, my understanding became opened to discover that the prophecies therein contained, were not of such "private interpretation," as had been generally supposed. My mind was enlightened to perceive, on the one hand, that the Almighty did not confine his notice in these communications to any particular nation, or to any particular circumstances of individual earthly governments, which may have appeared to men important; but that they respected the general society of mankind, as extensively as the doctrines of Christ were, or should be, professionally adopted. And, on the other hand, to perceive, that the nations who denied, or did not profess his name, were not included in the description of events which were xix to succeed in the fulfilment of those prophecies, except only as they were, or should become, directly in contact with the body of Christian professors. Thus I found it was a history of religion, rather than of nations, or of men.

The book appearing to apply directly to the system of man's constitution, and to the mode and means of his redemption, and the fulfilment of his religious duties, and containing such a regular description of a chain of events, the accomplishment whereof exactly as foretold, affording such ample proof of the reality of divine revelation to man, and such clear demonstration of the truth of the system, I have believed it to be my duty to enter into a minute explanation of the manner in which this prophetical information has appeared to me to apply to those events: apprehending that to any person who divests himself of partiality, the evidences produced will be sufficient to satisfy him of the general propriety of the applications. If such conviction should prevail in the mind of the reader, he will then have it in his power to view with satisfaction the accordance of the terms of expression, throughout the writings of the prophets in general, and to discover that many of the same circumstances, transactions and dispositions, are described, in a more or less extensive manner, by many of them.

I know there have many attempts to explain the Book of Revelations, been made by men of eminence and learning; but without offering any remarks on their performances, I freely submit the present work to be judged of, according to the evidences which may accompany it, to the minds of my readers respectively.

In the course of his attention to this work, it will be

XX necessary for the reader to consider principles rather than men or distinct societies of men. As the religious Society of Friends are, in treating of those principles by which they are known from others, held up to view in a distinguished manner, let it be always remembered that I have no view of exalting men merely as men, of any name, but contend for the honour, power, and efficacy of the divine indwelling principle, for its own sake, and for the sake of the inhabitants of the world generally, to whom it is given to profit by. As to this society, my education was not amongst them. I therefore cannot be charged with partiality arising from the prejudice of education. But their principles I have adopted, because, from an unbiassed view of the general field of religious profession, and from internal conviction in my own mind, my understanding became convinced that they were consonant with truth. While engaged in this work, I have considered myself as a fellow member of the great fraternity of mankind; and have felt the extendings of love and compassion to the souls of all universally. The Society of Friends are then considered, not as personal or partial favourites of our heavenly Father, but only his favourites so far as they may have adopted those principles which the uniform testimony of the prophecies I have attempted to explain, bears evidence to be conformable to his will in the original institution of the order of creation, and may have demonstrated their faith by correspondent works. The internal redemption, life and communion which they profess to believe in, having been freely offered to the reception of all, from age to age; and the uniform ground of acceptance of all those who have feared God and wrought righteousness: although the clear display xxi of the simple doctrines thereof, have in many ages been obstructed by those shackles imposed upon the soul, which have been formed in the darkness of the natural understanding.

Continuing the caution, it will be necessary for the reader to divest himself, on the one hand, of all prejudices which may have been excited by the delineations of this people, exhibited in the writings of those who opposed and persecuted them, on their becoming embodied in religious society, and sometimes since that period, copied by writers who have not chosen to enter into a candid examination of the language they quote. Because, multiplied testimonies could, if necessary, be adduced, not only from the authors and historians amongst themselves, but from the writings of many men of liberality and eminence in the world, to prove that those representations originated in uncandid designs to vilify the society, and bring their principles into contempt, as being opposed to the craft whereby such a numerous class of men obtained the means of temporal support. The cause which produced this opposition of their enemies, will, on a just comparison, appear to be similar to that for which the Romans were incensed against the primitive Christians, which I here quote in the words of the historian Mosheim. "The simplicity of their worship resembled in nothing the sacred rites of any other people. The Christians had neither sacrifices, nor temples, nor images, nor oracles, nor sacerdotal orders; and this was sufficient to bring upon them the reproaches of an ignorant multitude, who imagined there could be no religion without these. But this was not all. The sordid interests of a multitude of lazy and selfish priests, were immediately connected xxii with the ruin of the Christian cause. The public worship was a source of subsistence, and even of riches, to the whole rabble of priests and augurs, and also to a multitude of merchants and artists; and as the progress of the gospel threatened the ruin of this religious traffic, and the profits it produced, this raised up new enemies to the Christians, and armed the rage of mercenary superstition against their lives and their cause."

On the other hand, it will be necessary not to be biassed in judgment, by examples which the reader may have observed in nominal members of the society at the present day. The mode by which many become attached thereto, in outward profession, is birthright—the full privileges of religious society not being denied to the families of their members, unless their obvious departure from, or neglect of, their principles require it: because opportunities are thereby often afforded them, through the instrumental aid of the influence of mind on mind, and the sympathies communicated in social religious intercourse, to begin, and increase, an acquaintance with that divine intelligence on which the spiritual union and communion of the society depends. But men of all religious denominations having similar natural dispositions, a mere name has no efficacy in preserving them from habits of inattention and disobedience to the impressions of divine love inwardly revealed. They therefore continue, each in the propensities which prevail in him respectively, till, by accepting the divine assistance freely offered them, they practise obedience unto life. Any expression then, in the course of the work, which may seem to include a favourable reference to the society at the present period, can only apply to those who believe in xxiii the spirituality of pure religion, and according to their respective measures fulfil the duties thereof; thereby holding up as a standard the principle of universal love, which first embodied them, and the testimonies required of them to bear: These only being the true representatives of those who in the seventeenth century faithfully endured persecution and affliction for the cause of their God, with that patience which designates the followers of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Though there may now appear much declension amongst this people—though the love of money, the deceitfulness of riches, or a compact with the spirit of the world, in whatever form it appear, may have dimmed the brightness of many, or "choked the good seed" in them, yet my faith at this solemn period remains unshaken, that if even thousands should "go back" from the Spirit of Christ, "and walk no more with him," because of the "foolishness of his cross," and ten thousands should continue "to eat of their own bread and wear of their own apparel," thus rejecting the offers of his bread of life and the clothing of his blessed spirit, while they fondly desire to "be called by his name," yet he will raise up, by the right hand of his power, an innumerable multitude, who, espousing the principle of divine, internal light, here alluded to, shall stand in his counsel, and be his faithful witnesses to the spirituality of his kingdom; which shall increase and spread from "sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth," until "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."

It is worthy of the reader's observation, that the messengers and ministers of the Almighty, through whom xxiv his will has been revealed to the people, have, in most ages, been persecuted or despised, by those who were wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own conceit. That power and policy by which men exercise unjust dominion over one another, operating in the exertions of the same spirit of self-sufficiency to which the doctrines of Christ stand eternally opposed, is competent to the accumulation of worldly wealth, and generally grasping at those places of temporal honour, dignity and promotion, to which wealth is commonly an appendage. The attention of these being thus engrossed by the merchandise of this world, and the deceitfulness of the cares, pleasures and policy thereof, their life and delight was therefore in them; and as the false prophets maintained their influence by flattering men in power, and uniting with them in their oppressions, so when the doctrines and reproofs delivered by the Lord's true messengers from age to age, were published, because the design thereof was to bring the people into a knowledge of the nature of their own being, and into obedience to the spirit of life, which would lead them to withhold an active compliance with those measures whereby their unrighteous dominion was supported, and their sensual appetites gratified; and because they hated the light which was unfolded to them through such ministry, whereby their wretchedness was made manifest, persecution or contempt was the consequence. That such a disposition prevailed, is manifest by many examples recorded in the Old Testament, is largely apparent from the conduct of the self-righteous Jews in the days of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and is

abundantly evident in the course of the transactions recited in the following work.

XXV

I would further observe, that if expressions should be found which may appear severe, in describing the conduct of those who have assumed the name of ministers of Christ, and endeavoured for the sake of unrighteous gain, or any other motive, to establish or support systems opposite to the simplicity of his cross, and oppressive to those who in humble sincerity have endeavoured to act in obedience to his Spirit, in this respect, also, we are to consider principles rather than men. At the same time that the subject seemed to require the use of plain and pointed language, I trust that this class, considering them as members of the one universal family, have been included within the bounds of that fervent love which I have witnessed to flow towards the souls of all men. Notwithstanding many of this description have, in ages which are past, exerted their strength with such violence in opposing the pure spirit of the gospel, and although many in the present day, continue to crucify that Spirit, in upholding the ministry of the letter, and to be oppressors of the creation in the support of the unrighteous systems of tithes and usurped dominion, yet to all those who have not resisted the Holy Spirit, till they have become finally swallowed up in spiritual death, the heavenly Father is continuing his gracious invitations "to receive him in the way of his coming"—"to forsake the evil of their ways—to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free." These terms fulfilled, he will receive them into his favour, and they shall truly become the children of his gospel light.

As the reader will find certain applications affixed to the metaphorical terms and figures used in the Book of Revelations, some of which applications may appear xxvi new to him, he may possibly at first view suppose that they are not all according to the original meaning. But upon a careful examination, he may not only find that they are uniformly placed to represent the same ideas throughout these prophecies, but the same terms generally express the same ideas in the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament and other books of scripture. The applications I have believed to belong to each respectively are described in a table preceding the Analysis.

The manner of dividing the Analysis into parts, without regard to chapters, the reader will see, naturally arose from tracing the subjects pointed out by the different characters.

Having now given the reader such information as appeared necessary respecting the plan of the work before him, and my motives for offering it to public view, I feel disposed to conclude this address with some reflections on my own conduct in the course of my life; designing them as a stimulus to excite others to faithfulness to the discoveries of the true spiritual light in the soul, and as a warning to avoid the dangers into which I, by repeated acts of disobedience, have fallen.

I have at many times, from my youth to middle age, been made clearly sensible that my safety consisted in dwelling in humility with the pure Spirit of "Christ within the hope of glory," and waiting diligently upon him, to be daily informed of my duty; that my whole man should be kept in subjection to his inward law, and that my pursuits of the things of this world should be bounded by true moderation. While I continued in obedience to these discoveries, I lived in the enjoyment of his favour and love, and was often sensible of xxvii his providential direction in conducting my outward concerns. But, suffering my mind to relax from a state of steadfast watchfulness, I fell into error in submitting myself too much to the government of my natural faculties, which were quick and vigorous; by the bustling activity whereof, more than from a desire to accumulate wealth, I have been hurried into an immoderate pursuit of outward objects, and a neglect of

attention to the testimony of my brethren, so often revived in our meetings for discipline, against such excess in the cares of this world. And although through the gently restraining kindness and mercy of my heavenly Father, I have often been made sensible of my error, and by his grace brought back—being clearly convinced that but a few outward cares were fittest for a Christian, and resolving to live in an humble, watchful frame, yet in the same manner I have fallen and transgressed again and again. Having thus departed from the place of my safety, the Christian life in me became weakened, and I failed of supporting several of the religious testimonies of my friends, which yet at times felt precious to me.

Thus following lying vanities, I have painfully found, that in proportion to the degree of my departure from the holy principle, I have forsaken my own mercies, and pierced myself through with many sorrows.

Yet, in all these transactions, I know not that I have, in any instance, more than is here alluded to, transgressed the bounds of moral rectitude; or that my exertions have exceeded that degree which would stand approved by those who judge only by the sight of the eye or the hearing of the ear. Nay, I even apprehended that my mind was often as much preserved xxviii from being unprofitably engaged when in large business as when in less; and I was frequently favoured to have it withdrawn therefrom when the transactions of the day were over. Nevertheless, he who seeth not as man seeth, in his wisdom frustrated the ends I aimed at, and suffered in mercy my possessions to be diminished by numerous losses, which all the powers of the understanding I acted by, could neither foresee nor prevent.

I have now to acknowledge with reverent thanksgiving, on the banks of deliverance, that the Lord Jesus Christ by his Spirit effectually awakened in my soul a sense of its wretched condition; through the revelation of that terror and wrath in which it was involved by separating itself from the principle of spiritual life, and submitting to the government of the natural understanding. After abiding under his righteous judgments, he mercifully vouchsafed to draw me out of that condition, and inclined me to submit to the operation of the flaming sword, which divideth asunder, between the soul and the natural spirit, as between joints and marrow, freely offering himself a propitiation for all my sin. The gulf of separation being then removed, the heavenly consolation which I found to flow as a river was indeed unutterable. And in the calmness and abstractedness from outward objects which I then witnessed, my understanding was opened renewedly to discover the substance and plan of the following work, and my duty pointed out in preparing it for the view of mankind. Although, by the attention which has since been necessary to the cares I had imprudently involved myself in, my mind has sometimes been embarrassed with weakness and perplexity, xxix yet as I have renewedly retired, I have still found the same advocate with the Father continue. Thus having tasted of the terrors of the Lord for disobedience, which is sin, I now persuade men. I believe that if I had dwelt in the pure fear of the Lord, and in a daily application to know his will concerning me, I should have been led into greater usefulness in his militant church than I ever have been.

By the gradual progress of sickness and decay, I perceive that the final dissolution of my body is now near at hand. My days are spent in weakness and pain—yet by the feeling enjoyment of the unutterable love of my heavenly Father, my soul is supported from day to day; without which most precious sensation I believe I should sink under the remembrance of my failings and the weight of my numerous afflictions. I am indeed as a monument of his mercy; and in the gracious assurance of its continuation, believe he will give me eternal life in his heavenly kingdom—yet prostrating all the faculties of my being at his footstool under a sense of my unworthiness. To his grace, which is able to bring salvation, if received and obeyed, I commend all—craving in the aboundings of the love which I feel, that they may be favoured to adhere to the reproofs of instruction, and live.

JOHN JONES.

12th Mo. 1799.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

03. SECTION I. Of man, as a being composed of natural and spiritual parts, - - - - ib. SECTION II. Of man in a perfect state

SECTION 1.

Of man, as a being composed of natural and spiritual parts; or body, spirit, and soul.

THE body is the earthen tabernacle, fitted up and prepared, as a receptacle for the soul, during its residence in it. It is formed of matter, into the mass of which, as into its first principle, it must return. It is propagated like other animal beings, by generation, and like them, has a spirit, or natural life, by which it is actuated, and which expires with it, as the life of other animals.

In the natural part of man, we find the properties of matter, the vegetation of plants, the life of animals, and their sensitive and instinctive properties, together with the additional powers of reason. This last appears to be the only material difference between the natural spirit of man, and the spirit of other animals.

As in the general order of universal existence, man is the medium, or centre, in which corporal and spiritual beings unite, so, in his particular composition, the spirit of man being naturally situated, between the material, earthly body, and the immaterial, spiritual soul, is by the powers of reason fitted to be the agent, or operative principle between them.

The soul is an indivisible, spiritual substance, that cannot be generated. It is the immediate production of the Almighty, created by him; and being immortal, it cannot cease to exist. It is, therefore, the most noble part; and being situated spiritually between the natural animal spirit and the supernatural divine spirit, it has a capacity of being united to either of them. By adhering to the former, the soul loses the exercise of its peculiar spiritual senses and heavenly powers, receives a birth and life from the powers of the natural part, and thus becomes carnally minded, which is its death. Being quickened by the latter, and adhering to it, it is made a living soul; the divine word, or spirit of truth, being the true light and life of it, even as the animal spirit is the light and life of the body.

SECT. II.

Of man in a perfect state.

The soul being made for the enjoyment of eternal happiness, has a capacity of acting in a manner suited to its nature and being. The natural spirit of man has also powers of action suited to its being in time, and to the government and support of the body in which it resides: in the exercise whereof, on its acquiring knowledge by experience, it is capable of exerting itself independently of the direction of the soul. But the natural spirit of man, not being capable of approaching to a divine communion, can only act with certainty in things which come directly within its observation.

As God is a being of all comprehensive knowledge, and of unlimited wisdom and goodness, and as all his works are works of perfect love, it is clearly evident that man was in the beginning placed in such circumstances as were exactly adapted to the station he was designed to fill in the creation; and as He who is infinite love knew would be most conducive to his happiness.

In the perfect state and proper order of the nature and economy of man, as God at first made him, or to which he is restored by Christ—the divine light—the wisdom and power of God—the soul, as the most noble part, is predominant, acting in subserviency only to the divine principle, which is its life, and thereby ruling and directing the rational powers, to the well ordering also and absolute governing of the natural appetites, passions and propensities: and thus body, soul, and spirit, are preserved blameless.

The soul being thus a partaker of the divine nature, and nourished by, and growing up in union with it, is transformed into the image of God, from glory to glory, by the operation of his spirit, “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Thus to man it is possible to arrive at such attainment in grace, as that it may become as natural to him to do the will of God as it is for the natural man to sin.

SECT. III.

Of man in a fallen state.

As to be spiritually minded is the true life, peace, and happiness of the soul, so to be carnally minded is its death, by which it loses the exercise of its peculiar living powers. And as by keeping under the divine influence, the soul has the pre-eminence in man, according to the true nature of his being, so by separating therefrom, it falls beneath the natural senses and faculties, and receives a birth and life from them, and thus he becomes another kind of being, called in scripture the *natural man*. Who, although he may have the use of his outward senses and natural understanding, as truly and exactly as the *spiritual man*, and even as our Saviour expresses it, may be "wiser in his generation than the children of light," yet *his judgment*, respecting divine and spiritual things, must be very uncertain, and *his faith* merely human. Because, the distinguishing faculty of his soul is as much asleep, as the visive faculty of a blind man. And though an idea of the existence of a God, may have become fixed in the understanding of the natural man, by impressions made at times on his soul by the divine spirit, or by being communicated to him from others, yet the happiness that any enjoy by contemplating this natural idea of God, is as different from the real heavenly enjoyment as the notion or description of natural light to a blind man is from the real vision. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And although he may suppose he has rationally decided, according to the evidences presented, and the manner in which he has viewed them, yet his conclusions must be doubtful, even as those of a deaf man respecting sounds or voices. And the judgment being founded on opinions and conjectures, or mere human testimony, different opinions and conjectures may again unsettle it.

The manner of education often fixes an improper bias, by calling the attention wholly to the exercise of the natural powers. The spiritual or supernatural sense hereby becomes neglected, and the corresponding ideas lost or prevented. To this the examples of vice and immorality, profaneness and impiety, which abound, much contribute. In these there is often an early acquiescence, and by habit a partaking in sensual indulgences; when, as Elihu expresses it, "their soul dieth in youth, and their life is among the unclean."*

Thus the immaterial soul—the most noble part in man, instead of ruling and directing the operations of the rational faculties to the glory of God, is fallen beneath, and subjected to, them; and even in many instances, to the earthly and beastly appetites and passions, being dead as to any power of overcoming them, through its separation from the principle of spiritual life. "Thus in Adam"—that is, in the earthly, animal, or natural state, "all die," or are dead; and man in a fallen state, whether professor or profane, Jew

or Christian, deist or doctor in divinity, is but as a beast of the field, or at best but a man by the halves, in comparison with the regenerate man. In the high-

* Job, chap. 36, v. 14.

est state of his natural knowledge and abilities, falling as much short of the spiritual man, as the beast of the field falleth short of him that is merely natural, being all included in one common description, as "having separated themselves"—"sensual, not having the spirit."

SECT. IV.

Of the full of Adam.

As man was created in the image of God, his nature must have been clear of all impurity. The powers of his capacity, when he entered into action, were unprejudiced; his mind having received no *information* but from the impressions made on his soul by the Spirit of the Almighty—that living word that became the life, food, and nourishment of it. The soul then acting under immediate divine influence, the whole system was in perfect order and harmony. The heart of man was then that pleasant garden, which the Lord planted; or in which he caused to spring up and grow every amiable virtue and pious disposition worthy of a human being, which are represented by the trees of the garden, that were pleasant to the sight and good for food.

As man was thus divinely instructed in the way of his duty to God, and the preservation of his person, and made observations on the various occurrences that took place, there naturally arose a knowledge out of experience, whereby he found and knew that those things which his benevolent instructor had pointed out to him, as fitting for his use and attention, were really good; and that what he had warned him to avoid as unsuitable was really evil. This is represented by the "tree of knowledge of good and evil."

Thus, it appears, that whilst our first parents lived and walked under the immediate influence and direction of divine grace, they remained in a state of innocence, enjoyed a spiritual communion with God, and were partakers of the divine nature; with which they might, by continued obedience, have arrived at such a state of nearness and conjunction, as to have been inseparable from it. It also appears, that the Almighty not only furnished them with ability to continue therein, but timely cautioned them to avoid the means which would lead out of it—"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat." Those good and pious dispositions which are of my own right hand planting, thou mayest freely live in the practice of. The exercise of them will be food and nourishment to their life. "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Thy soul must be supported, daily, by the bread of life. Thou must not depend, or think to live, upon that knowledge of good and evil which thou hast gained by my former instructions, or thy own experience. It is not food fit for the spiritual, immortal soul, but will bring it under subjection to the natural powers of the animal spirit, to depend on their ingenuity and invention, their conjectures and determinations, their will, judgment and memory, and will bring forth, feed, and nourish a wrong birth, by which it will become carnally minded, which is death. Now this does not appear to have been an arbitrary injunction of the Almighty, imposed upon Adam to tempt or try him; but a benevolent, timely warning, that as he stood in a state of perfect freedom of will, he might be admonished of that state of spiritual darkness and death, into which the soul would sink, by separating itself from that living word, which was the true light and life of it. As the Almighty did not fix him in a state of immutable happiness, but of probationary trial, so neither did he compel him to accept and follow the grace freely offered to lead him into immutable happiness. Such compulsion would

have rendered him a mere passive engine, impelled to act as a senseless machine.

Thus, while Adam and Eve lived in union with the divine principle, under which the soul was the predominant part of their being, there would, in their various cares and pursuits, be a constant attention in the natural spirit to the voice of the soul, expressed in the intimations of conscience, and thereby unfolded in the natural understanding. They would also be led, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, to pray daily for their souls' spiritual nourishment, as well as temporal blessings; and devoutly to acknowledge their gratitude for favours received, which, for the edification of one another, they might at times express in words, or perhaps in broken expressions, or "groanings which could not be uttered." After a time of living and acting in this manner, it appears to me, that "the woman," from the knowledge gained by observation and experience, apprehended they might be able to form plans of living and acting without waiting for further divine communications, and even to compose prayers, suitably to comprehend their several wants. The serpent was a figurative representation of a self-sufficient principle, and his speaking was expressive of the conflict occasioned in the mind by the natural understanding opposing the impressions of divine grace, which the principle of self-sufficiency reasoned away—presuming that by turning their attention to the unlimited exercise of their natural faculties, from the knowledge they had already acquired, they might, by investigating the works of creation, become competent judges for themselves of what was good and what was evil; and might also be prepared at all times with suitable forms of prayer, to address the Almighty; and thus their souls began to feed upon this tree of knowledge, which grew up in the midst of the garden.

Now, here was the self-sufficiency by which sin was introduced—which, I believe, was neither created by the Almighty, nor infused into man by any evil being, independent of his own mind; nor could he have sinned at all, if he had kept united to the divine principle. But the soul, being placed spiritually between the natural animal spirit of man, and the supernatural divine spirit, was in a state of perfect liberty, either to wait for the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit to discover its duty to God, and enable it to act accordingly, or to recur to the knowledge gained by experience, and treasured up in the faculties of the animal spirit. The soul, by attending to the suggestions of the natural understanding, and turning from that divine spirit wherein its life and strength lay, submitted the determination of its duty to the decisions of the natural mind, which could not know or discern the things of God, and thus subjecting itself to the powers thereof, received a birth and life from thence, and became carnally minded, which is death.

This has appeared to me to be the nature of the fall of man: in which the spiritual, immortal soul, which should be the governing principle, acting only in subserviency to the divine word or spirit of truth, is fallen beneath the powers of the natural part, and incapable of restraining its propensities—a state, in which it is not only capable of sinning, but “being at enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

And, notwithstanding Adam and Eve were soon sensible of their souls’ nakedness, which would be manifested on their offering up prayers in the strength of the natural understanding, which the Lord would neither accept nor own, yet, it seems, they continued in the practice, thus covering themselves with the fig-leaf covering of their self-righteousness. And, even in the cool of the day, when a retirement from their bustling exercises, thus entered into, gave them opportunity of reflecting coolly on what they had done, and the voice of the Lord began to be heard in their souls—such was their infatuation, that they thought to stifle conviction, by hiding themselves “amongst the trees of the garden”—those pious dispositions, the works of which they could now perform in the mere will of the natural part—until the soul-searching word awakened in them a sense of their wretchedness.

Now, this voice which spake to them—“Adam, where art thou?”—was the voice of the Spirit of Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—that peaceful, gentle, innocent life, which they crucified, when the foundation of the government of the earthly nature was laid in their souls. This is the spiritual rock which followed Israel in the wilderness, “which rock was Christ.” This is the “word of the Lord, which came” to the prophets of old, opening their understandings, qualifying them to declare his will to the people, and enabling them to fulfil his requirings, unmoved by all the malice of the wicked. This is that same divine word, which was manifested in the flesh, showing, in the person of Jesus Christ, a pattern of that perfection of manhood, whereunto we should strive to attain, and unto which he has called us: and representing by the sufferings endured in that outward body, the contempt, reproach, and oppression which his pure, innocent life suffers spiritually by being rejected of men. This is the same Holy Spirit, which is continually striving to redeem man, and restore him to his original dignity, and which, if not resisted, but co-operated with, will effect its purpose, by separating the soul from the government of the natural spirit, and causing it to live in him, after coming under the operation of the "flaming sword," which was "placed to guard the way of the tree of life." Herein is evident the wonderful kindness and mercy of God, who, notwithstanding man has thus transgressed his law of everlasting love, has continued to him a capacity of returning, and becoming again united to him, when that holy principle of life, which, under imprisonment and oppression by the carnal dispositions which prevail in the natural man, is compared to a small seed, is suffered to arise and bruise the head of the serpent, self-sufficiency.

SECT. V.

04. SECTION V. Of true religion

Of true religion.

The soul of man, only, being immortal, and, consequently, the only part of man that can approach to a divine communion, and true religion, comprehending a system or mode of faith and practice, relating to, and dependant on a spiritual union and communion between the soul and the divine spirit, the soul is, therefore, the part in man, which must be the active principle or agent under the divine spirit, in directing in the performance of all the duties which appertain to religion.

The natural understanding, when the soul is kept in subjection to the divine will, may be active in the general regulation of its own conduct, in common affairs, which relate to the accommodation of the body, and in the government of the animal dispositions in man, wherein, if it err, the soul being under right government, will, through the medium of conscience, convey impressions, whereby the natural judgment may be rectified, and the conduct regulated accordingly. But in religion, as it ultimately respects the well-being of the soul, all the proper efforts of the natural faculties must be only secondary in the performance of those outward acts, which are correspondent to the inward disposition of the soul.

All the outward acts which it is necessary for the animal powers, under the guidance of the rational faculties, thus instructed, to perform, as included in the class of religious duties, are only such as may simply manifest a subjection of our whole man to the divine principle, such as may tend to the information, edification or instrumental help one of another, or such as respect the exercise of that brotherly-kindness and love which our relative alliance one to another, as children of the heavenly Father's family, or dependence one on another, as fellow-creatures in the great scale of brotherhood, render expedient or necessary.

As God is a Spirit, and the soul of man is also spiritual, and as nothing which is composed of matter, or which is capable of being dissolved, can approach to a divine communion, so none of our outward religious acts can possibly operate between the soul and God, and, therefore, only appertain to our being in time. Hence, from the list of outward religious duties, are evidently excluded all that catalogue of complicated, ceremonious performances, which have been long supposed, by many, to operate directly between the souls of those who act therein, and the divine being.

In the divine superintendence over all created systems, love reigns predominant; and is the eternal source from whence proceeds all the benefits conferred on intelligent beings. It is, therefore, impossible for men so to co-operate with the divine mind, as to be acceptably instrumental in religiously conferring benefits one on another, or to perform outward religious acts to their own profit, without being made sensible partakers of that love which flows from the divine source, and the soul being influenced thereby in these religious performances. This truth is evidenced by Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter xiii. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." That, by the charity here spoken of, the apostle meant a lively and sensible participation of, and co-operation with, divine love, is too clear to admit of contradiction.

Now, in the performance of many outward acts, which have been long supposed by many to be inseparably attached to the religion of Jesus Christ, it is demonstrably certain, that the natural understanding can, and does, act as principal director, and, indeed, in general, no higher immediate power is expected or sought for. Divine love, therefore, not being the operative principle immediately influencing in these performances, they are for ever excluded from all possible union with pure and undefiled religion. And though many who have observed different forms, and adhered to different ceremonious systems of human invention, may have wrought righteousness, and been accepted of God, yet, the only ground of their acceptance has been, the obedience of the soul to his inward law, independent of outward forms.

In the performance of those religious acts which are designed for the instruction, edification, or instrumental help one of another, those powers and faculties which rule and operate in the actors, can only severally reach and affect the corresponding powers and faculties, in those who hear, see and feel. Thus, in the exercise of the ministry, if the soul be subject to divine counsel, and information be thereby opened in it for the benefit of the people, the soul keeping under the divine influence, the rational faculties in subserviency, become occupied; and by their powers over the animal frame, their ideas are conveyed by the organs of speech in the speaker, through the organs of hearing in the hearer. By these means, ideas similar to those in the speaker are formed, or renewed, in the natural understanding of the hearer, whereby impressions are conveyed to his soul, which, if he be waiting with desire to be benefitted, the divine evidence accompanying, bears witness to be according to truth; and the impressions are thus strengthened to his instruction, edification or conviction. But when men undertake to act in the ministry merely by the powers of the rational faculties, supposing that immediate divine revelation is ceased, or that it is not always necessary for the edification of the church, these can only convey ideas and impressions to their hearers, similar to those from which themselves act. Their origin being in the natural understanding, they can only operate on the natural understanding, passions or affections of their hearers. And, notwithstanding such ministers may "kindle a fire" in the natural passions and affections, "and compass themselves about with sparks," yet these efforts of the spirit of self-sufficiency which acts in them, and thus "transforms itself into" the appearance of "an angel of light," operating to beget, foster, and strengthen its own likeness in others, and the divine spirit being thereby rejected and crucified, their ministry only tends to lead the soul down deeper and deeper into the labyrinths of the chambers of death.

Thus the ancient or modern idolatrous priest or magician, the learned Jewish rabbin, the humanly-qualified Christian bishop or doctor in divinity, and all others who wait not for the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit in the works of their ministry, while they are each actuated and directed merely by the faculties of the rational understanding, in their several religious performances, are all included in one class, similar to those of whom the prophet declared formerly, "they have run unsent, and therefore they shall not profit the people."

Although by storing up and comparing the experiences of antecedent ages, human reason and self-sufficiency may have advanced from one degree of speculative refinement to another, yet, whenever their votaries undertake to act in matters of religion, though they may have formed copious systems, and adorned them with a pomp and glitter which tend to captivate the natural senses, the principle by which they act, manifests itself to be the old serpent still, feeding upon the dust. And, with all the advantages of former revelations and prophetical warnings, and the numerous examples left us upon record of the experience of others, this self-sufficient disposition can attain to nothing higher in the learned religious philosopher or divine of the present day, than it did formerly in the minds of Adam and Eve. And, as they,

by acting in the strength thereof, fell from their original dignity, and became subject to the animal nature, so these, while they continue to uphold the government of the same nature, and act by its powers, though they may have supposed themselves to have been eating and drinking in the presence of the Lord, are only feeding upon the same original tree of natural knowledge, and doing the works of that serpent, which is "cursed above every beast of the field."*

* Men, by assuming the direction of the religious movements of themselves and others, by the exercise of their rational faculties alone, without waiting for, and receiving divine guidance, inasmuch as they act, in their self-sufficiency, of which the serpent is a figure, more offensively in the divine sight, by assuming the divine prerogative, than those do,

The life of true religion, then, will stand for ever separated from all those external, servile systems, which have been formed in the darkness of the natural understanding, and a conformity thereto enforced, or advised, in the blind and creaturely zeal of their different advocates; the ceremonious services whereof have been supposed to operate in some mysterious and insensible manner, to the benefit of those who perform them, while themselves continue the servants of sin, and plead for the daily commission thereof. But true religion is pure and simple, and never confined by forms. In the exercises thereof, the soul is free, being exalted to its original station in the composition of man. In the progress thereof, the mind, like "the just man's path," is enlightened from one degree of spiritual perception to another, till the clearness of the gospel-day appear, and the shadows flee away. In the power thereof, all the propensities of the animal, and faculties of the rational nature, are held in subjection, and the body of sin and death, buried. In the enjoyments thereof, the internal communion of the Spirit of Christ, transcends and supersedes every inferior and external object. In the works thereof, the divine harmony is livingly witnessed, the spring of every action being love.

SECT. VI.

Of the serpent, called the devil, satan, &c.

There has seldom been an opinion propagated by superstition, or maintained by prejudice, more perniwho, overcome by temptations, gratify their sensual appetites and propensities in the lusts of the flesh, represented by the beasts of the field.

cious to man, than the notion of a self-existing being, denominated the devil, satan, &c. A belief in such a being, and in the powers generally attributed to him, has, in a great measure, frustrated the end intended by the divine cautions and threatenings recorded in holy writ against the tempers and dispositions pointed out by these appellations. For many, while supposing themselves to be watching against the wiles and stratagems of an imaginary evil being without them, to whom such vast powers have been attributed, have suffered the spiritual, immortal soul to be led and directed by the powers of the natural understanding. And being confident that the suggestions of the supposed self-existing devil have not governed their determinations, they have fixed themselves in the very state and condition they were warned to avoid.

It would appear, indeed, to be a monstrous absurdity, to suppose that the Almighty would create a being of such description, and furnish him with such vastly extensive powers and capacity as have long been ascribed to him—combining in his imaginary character, if not powers nearly allied to omnipotence, at least to omniscience and omnipresence. And those powers, too, as the doctrine would seem to intimate, conferred on him for the express purposes of continually opposing the will of the great Creator, and fulfilling the offices of tempter and tormentor to his rational creation.

An absurdity equally great would be the supposition, that a spirit, created good—as all the productions of the divine power unquestionably were—should, in consequence of a rebellious departure from a blissful state of obedience, be endowed with a capacity to assume, and exercise, of its own mere volition, the vastly extended attributes and powers in question; as it were in reward for the consummate wickedness of its conduct. A doctrine fit only to be entertained in some heathenish mythological tale, or in the pernicious fables of "Milton's Paradise Lost."

Some persons appear to entertain the opinion, that there can be no torment to the wicked without the intervention of an external tormentor. But what torment can be conceived to be more poignant in any state of existence, than an internal sense of wrath, horror, darkness and despair, arising from a separation, through wilful disobedience, from the blissful harmony of divine love? Some, again, will suppose there can be no temptations to evil without the agency of a personal tempter, of distinct and separate existence—forgetting the clear, emphatical declaration of the apostle James, that "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust."

Many will, no doubt, in consequence of their long-established traditional prejudices, apprehend that the pages of scripture furnish evidence conclusively confirming the doctrine of the existence of such a distinct evil agent; and will, therefore, condemn every effort to controvert the opinion, as an unhallowed attempt to invalidate the evidence of scriptural testimony in the case. But, on examining those passages of scripture where the terms alluded to are used, it appears clearly evident, that they are, in general, only meant metaphorically to express certain dispositions in the minds of men, unconnected with any evil being without them.

The manner in which the Egyptians recorded events in hieroglyphical representations, before the use of letters was introduced, would necessarily lead Moses to a figurative manner of expression, as the only mode whereby the people, in the state they then were in, could be instructed with the best effect. And, from the general history of the Israelitish nation, it is manifest that their understandings were not generally capable of receiving the discoveries of divine truth, without the intervention of metaphors and outward representations addressed to the perception of their outward senses—as in the days of the blessed Messiah the multitude to whom he spake, were incapable of receiving and comprehending his divine instructions, without the use of similes and parables. For it is said on a certain occasion, “without a parable he spake not unto them.”

From whatever cause it originated, the serpent appears to have been considered amongst the Egyptians as a figure, representing a self-sufficient principle, real or imaginary, without regard to its disposition. Thus the Almighty, to encourage Moses, and inspire him with confidence in the sufficiency of that divine power which was promised him to accomplish the object of his mission, turned his rod into a serpent—the well-known symbol of a principle having power in itself. This he was commanded to exhibit before the people, in order to remove their doubtings; and also to repeat the same before Pharaoh, to impress him, by a lively representation which he would understand, with a conviction of the sufficiency of that power in whose name he addressed him.

The same figure is applied to express the imaginary self-sufficiency assumed by the magicians in opposition to the divine commands.

Again, when the children of Israel were punished for their transgressions in the wilderness, in order to call their attention to the divine power, against which they had offended, and which was sufficient also to save

and deliver them, Moses was commanded to make a serpent, and set it up for them to look upon and be healed.

It appears then that Moses, when writing the Book of Genesis, could not have made use of a more forcible metaphor, or any other that would have been as well understood by the people to express the circumstance of our first parents omitting to wait for renewed manifestations of the divine will, from a self-sufficient apprehension, that from the knowledge they had already obtained, through former immediate communications, and the experience they had acquired, their judgment was now sufficiently matured to enable them by their own powers to discriminate between good and evil, and to discover and perform their duty.

After they had been convicted of their transgression by the solemn inquisition of the Almighty, the state and disposition into which they had fallen, and under which they had acted, was described to them in the awful terms, "Thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field." Their transgression in assuming the divine prerogative, by attempting to conduct their religious concerns by the power of their own unsubjected will, was more offensive in his sight, than if they had erred only by yielding to the propensities of their animal nature, as exhibited in the dispositions of the domesticated "cattle," or the less restrained "beasts of the field"—"Upon thy belly shalt thou go." The soul cannot, in this state, retain the dignified, upright position in which it was placed, and which it was designed to maintain, reigning over, and governing the natural powers and propensities, but is fallen into a state of complete prostration below them. "And dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." The metaphor of dust appears to be derived from a comparison between the natural traveller in the highway, and the spiritual traveller in his journey through life. As the former, by his walking, leaves the impressions of his footsteps in the dust, so the impressions made by the manner of walking of the spiritual travellers—their keeping in the right way—turning aside from it—or their different footsteps are figuratively called dust—or the dust of their feet.* Thus the food of the soul in this degraded state is derived from the operations of the natural mind, reflecting on past experience, referring to acquired knowledge, or the examples of others, and exercising a judgment by its own self-sufficient powers, with relation to the duties of religion. And thus the self-sufficient teacher, whose dwelling is in the dust, can judge of his duty, or regulate his conduct according to former experience, the formal rules and ceremonies of his order, or the practice of others. If he even incline to gratify himself in any thing beyond his prescribed limits, he finds it is no more than good men and approved saints have done

* When the disciples were commissioned to go on their gospel message, they were commanded to shake off the dust of their feet, as a testimony against those who would not receive them. A figure, importing that the innocence and purity of their lives—their blameless conversation and upright walking, in correspondence with the doctrines they preached, would be a standing testimony against the sensuality, hypocrisy, libertinism and unbelief of those who should thus reject their testimony.

before him. They had their failings, as well as he. The deep exercises of their wounded souls—the guilt and horror in which they involved themselves by transgression, and the purifying judgments they passed through, before they could witness a restoration to divine favour, he is insensible of, and overlooks. And, thus, that which was their death, this serpent can feed upon, and it is his life. And this kind of food he must “eat all the days of his life”—all the time of the soul’s receiving its life from the enjoyments and activity of this fallen state.

By the appellation of satan, or adversary, is generally meant a state of opposition or unbelief: either to disbelieve and oppose the immediate inspiration of divine life to the soul, and to deny the necessity thereof, or to doubt, or question, the truths of divine revelations, which cannot be ascertained on common natural principles. This, I think, appears clearly from the representations of this character in the Book of Job, and other passages of scripture wherein the term is used.

The epithet devil is not used in the Old Testament, except in a few instances, in the plural number, where it appears only to mean the heathen idols; which were totally void of spiritual power. In the New Testament its use is more diversified. The plural application of the term by the Evangelists, in the case of Mary Magdalen, is full evidence that their allusion was to the depraved tempers, dispositions and propensities of her unsubjected mind, and not to a separate, self-existing, individual power of evil. In some places it is used to express the same states of mind as implied by the terms serpent and satan. When the divine word is heard in the soul, and "the grace of God, that bring-eth salvation," hath taught the necessity of being led by it, to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to live "soberly, righteously and godly in this present world," it often happens, that the natural understanding, vainly conceiving it has ability for the work, undertakes to reform the man, and direct him in the performance of his religious duties. This is, then, "the devil" that "cometh" "and taketh away" the seed of the kingdom, or word of God, that hath been sown in his heart, through the activity of the creaturely will assuming to itself that power which cometh from God only. Whilst the man has imagined within himself, and been confirmed by his teachers in the supposition, that, by his religious endeavours, he was firmly securing himself against his soul's adversary, which he considered as a malignant spirit, distinct from his own mind: not considering that the imaginations and best religious purposes of his own carnal heart are "only evil continually:" and that it is "from thence every evil that defileth the man, proceedeth."

In other places the term devil is used as synonymous with a destroyer. In this sense it appears to be applied to those bodily or mental infirmities which deranged or destroyed the natural powers of man. But Christ rebuking the devil, in those cases of bodily or mental disease, argues no more in favour of the agency of evil spirits, than his rebuking the fever supposes it to have been an evil spirit. But, in general, the term devil is used to express an overbearing, domineering, brutal temper—a state, wherein man is subjected to his own lusts and passions, or, under their influence, arbitrarily tyrannises over the liberties and consciences of others.

And, when this was carried on with compulsive force, and bloody persecution, as amongst the Jews and pagan infidels, these evil dispositions were personified by the "great dragon."

To sum up the whole, self-sufficiency in man is represented by "the serpent." The state of a disbeliever in, or opposer of, divine grace, is expressed by "satan." The state of the mind which is sunk into a domineering, brutal, or destroying temper, or is carried away by its own lusts and passions, is denominated a "devil." And when inhumanly tyrannising over the lives, liberties and consciences of others, as in the infidel state of Rome, "the great red dragon," and after this power was transferred to the church, "the beast."

These dispositions, states and conditions are all the devils a man has to guard against and overcome. The greatest enemies he has to contend with, are those of his own house: and they are formidable, indeed. The strong natural man, armed with reason, philosophy, religion, determined will and ungovernable passions. He "keeps the house, and his goods are in peace." And nothing short of a supernatural, divine power can dispossess him, spoil his goods, and restore the soul to spiritual life.

In the second century—after the declension of the church had commenced—some, imagining they had discovered in the passages of scripture wherein these metaphorical terms are used, the true foundation, whereon the popular pagan doctrine of evil demons, and their malignant influences on mankind, was founded, or, at least, supposing there was plausible ground to impose such a theory on the ignorant and credulous, zealously propagated the doctrine. Thus, in the apostatizing state of the church, a theory of evil agents, with its terrifying appendages, came to be adopted, which opened the way for the introduction of many superstitious rites and ceremonies, which were represented by the priests, and supposed by the deluded people, to counteract the baleful influences of those malignant demons.

SECT. VII.

Chapter 5

05. SECTION VII. Of Conscience

Of conscience.

Conscience is the faculty of the soul, by which it is sensible of the impressions of divine love; and by which it communicates with, and—when maintaining its proper station—commands the obedience of the natural spirit.*

As the soul is situated spiritually, between the natural animal spirit, and the supernatural divine spirit, and has a capacity of being united to, or coming under the government of, either of them, so conscience is operated upon variously, according to the state the soul may be in.

* It may, perhaps, be considered as occupying a station in the soul, comparable to that of nervous sensibility in the animal system. As the latter is often subjected to a morbid state by disease in the system to which it belongs, produced by unhealthy food, or improper indulgence of the animal appetites, so the sensibilities of the former are blunted, and its intimations rendered less distinct and impressive by disease of the soul, produced by habitual disobedience, and partaking in the improper indulgence of the propensities of the natural spirit.

When the youthful mind is emerging from a state of ignorance, the soul being yet in a state of innocence, its attention is necessarily excited, as well to the influences of the natural spirit, as to the impressions of divine grace; because, being a free agent, it is necessary for it to perceive and know the tendency of each, in order for its subjecting the one, and uniting with, and obeying, the other. Hence, it is very common for it to alternate between them. And hence the great importance of the duty devolving on parents, as the constituted guardians of youth, under the divine economy, to direct the minds of their offspring to a retired attention to the "still small voice" of truth, impressing its admonitions on the conscience, and instrumentally to assist their opening understandings to comprehend its nature and its design. When the soul unites with, and obeys the impressions of divine love, peace and joy are its reward. If it continue steadfast in a course of obedience, subduing the irregular passions and desires of the natural mind, it may advance to that perfect state, wherein all the faculties of being are brought under the divine government, and the impressions of divine love on the conscience are always peaceful and joyous. The soul cleaving thereto, maintains its place and dignity in the compound being—the natural will is reduced to subjection—its life in the fallen propensities slain on the cross, and body, soul, and spirit harmonize together; each in its place, appointed under the economy of divine wisdom.* The rational faculties become enlight* The peculiar secret mode, whereby, under the laws appointed by divine wisdom, the soul and natural spirit of man ened, and expanded, to the full measure of comprehension necessary for each individual in his appointed allotment in religious and civil society, and of the duties required of him to fulfil. And the true enjoyment of the good things of this life is experienced.

The soul continuing thus steadfast during its earthly pilgrimage, having partaken of "the first resurrection," on it "the second death hath no power;" but on putting off the circumstances of time, it is involved in the boundless ocean of everlasting love; where all is light, all life, and all joy in the divine presence.

If it submit to the solicitations of the strong will of mutually communicate with each other—being of distinct and separate existence, though intimately connected for the purposes of the present probationary

state—may possibly be never fully unfolded in the human understanding. Because the mode of salvation and means of happiness being very simple, and wholly comprehended under the terms of obedience to sensible impressions intelligibly communicated—"obey, and thy soul shall live"—a minute comprehension of the subject may never be necessary. It perhaps may, therefore, be one of those "secret things," which "belong unto God." It is, however, an evident truth, that the natural spirit of man, has, by means of its faculties of understanding, memory, reflection and judgment, operating upon the mass of ideas it may be at any time furnished with, a capacity to form conclusions according to its views of the evidences presented, and to convey impressions and present its persuasions to the immortal soul. It is also equally certain, that the soul, being informed and instructed, by the operation of the divine power upon it, has a capacity to excite in the natural spirit, such ideas as are adapted to whatever end may be intended, and to bind all the faculties of the rational understanding in its service, and under its rightful authority; and that they are thus mutually associated for the accomplishment of the divine purposes, in this state of the soul's probation. the natural spirit, to seek, and adhere to, the natural pleasures and allurements of this world, the soul is thereby disqualified for union with the principle of divine love, which is ever present; and its sense of alienation in the conscience, when renewed conviction is at any time mercifully impressed, is anguish and pain. If the soul more and more remit in its faithfulness, and gradually become more and more subject to the desires of the natural spirit, it gradually, in proportion, dies to the divine life: conscience becomes less and less susceptible of the joy which arises from a union therewith, and finally may arrive at such a state of alienation, as to lose all sense and relish thereof, and become the passive or willing accomplice in all the irregularities and vices of depraved nature, according to the various inclinations of the natural dispositions of men. The conscience of the self-sufficient contemner of the restraints of true religion, consenting to the plan of placing natural reason as the supreme and only guide to the whole course of human action. The conscience of the covetous, conniving at the acquirement of worldly wealth by every means not absolutely punishable by human laws. The conscience of the ambitious warrior, submitting to the plausible arguments of self-will, for the destruction of his reputed enemies, or the conquest of neighbouring territories. The conscience of the voluptuary, acquiescing in the indulgence of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." And so of the votaries of every other depraved propensity of the natural mind. Hence, all the variety of "impure conscience," "defiled conscience," "conscience seared with a hot iron," &c. Through the unbounded mercy and goodness of divine love, the soul, in its progressive state of depravity, is often awakened to a sense of its wretchedness. Sometimes, by renewed immediate impressions of the divine power, or voice of the divine word, "in the cool of the day," conviction is produced in the conscience, of the state of the soul's degradation. Sometimes by means of instrumental gospel ministry, accompanied by divine power, the attention is gained, and conscience awakened to a sense of whatever degree of depravity it may have submitted to. Sometimes by the loss of near connexions—the deprivation of worldly property or enjoyments—the occurrence of sickness, or whatever other affliction the divine goodness may, in mercy, permit to overtake us, the vanity, or uncertainty of earthly enjoyments becomes opened to view; and the gratifications of the natural senses being in a degree suspended, the soul, through conscience, becomes renewedly awakened to a sense of its misery, as separated from the all-sustaining enjoyment of divine love. These convictions, if properly attended to, and judgment for transgression willingly admitted to have its due operation, would produce repentance, and sincere repentance reconciliation. Thus the harmony broken by disobedience would be restored, and the soul placed in a capacity to resist all future allurements from duty, till an establishment in a state of perfect obedience—which is a state of perfection—might be attained; and perfect peace would be the result.

But if it suffer itself again to fall under the dominion of the natural passions and propensities, by every such fall the danger to the individual is greatly increased, that—by habitually "perverting his own mind, and turning away his eyes, that he may not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgment"—he become landed in a state of obdurate insensibility to the impressions of divine love, till the natural life is ended. When all possible gratification or enjoyment from thence, being ended with it, the soul is left destitute, and conscience awakened to an inexpressible sense of the misery and horror, consequent on the abuse of its free agency—the rejection of continually offered mercy in the day of its visitation—and rebellious separation from the divine harmony. And having then passed from its probationary to its ever fixed state, all hope of redemption is extinguished. Amongst the various nations, now, and heretofore, inhabiting this earth, circumstances have contributed to render different nations and grades of men distinguishable from each other, in moral habitudes, and in their apprehensions of the duties of religion. But, as the goodness of the Almighty Father is unbounded, and never was limited by any local circumstance under which he is pleased to bestow existence on his rational creation, it may be inferred as an undubitable truth, that a soul was never placed in this probationary state, in any nation under heaven, to whom was not offered sufficient grace, or, in other words, a sufficiency of the energy of divine love, impressed on the conscience, to enable it, by adherence thereto, to work out its salvation. As it is undeniably evident, that man was designed, in divine wisdom, for a social being, his duties and allotments in this life cannot be fulfilled, to the glory of God, and the good of his fellow-beings, without the exercise of his various social qualities. Hence, great effects are often produced on the minds of each other, by the mutual fulfilment of social duty and the operations of social intercourse.

If, in the course of social communication, the precepts and examples of those who may be preserved in obedience to the dictates of a pure conscience are permitted to have their due effect, much good may be thus instrumentally promoted in the community. If, on the other hand, the examples of libertinism and depravity, and the diffusion of immoral sentiment, flowing from the slaves of a perverted or hardened conscience, be suffered to have an extensive morbid influence, moral rectitude proportionably declines, and moral depravity becomes extended.

In the exercise of its faculties, the mind may be employed amongst natural and moral things, and form conclusions according to its apprehension of the evidences they present; and in different nations and different ages of the world the results thus attained may have been widely different from each other, and yet may have been equally innocent; and the different practices consequent on those diversified results equally virtuous and upright—the divine goodness not seeing meet, under present and surrounding circumstances, to impress the conscience with any evidence of disapprobation, it has remained innocently or virtuously accessory to the conclusions of the judgment upon the evidences it had embraced. Yet the divine witness in the conscience, being purity in itself, never did consent to a course of conduct in men, whereby moral evils have been multiplied upon the aggregate human family, and the soul habitually estranged from its holy preserver. But the natural spirit of man, being strongly inclined to its own gratification, has, in many cases, prevailed to establish habits of conduct adverse to the admonitions of the witness for God in the conscience, and suited to the proud, selfish, corrupt desires of the natural mind, directed by depraved influential leaders.

Hence, in many nations, darkness, superstition, and gross moral depravity have overspread the mass of human mind, and introduced, in place of that purity of mind and conduct, which is the natural result of constant obedience to the impressions of divine love on the conscience, a course of procedure and thinking so adverse thereto, that in some cases an ambitious and depraved impostor has been considered

as the representative of the divine power on earth, and its agent in heaven; and in others, "the glory of the uncorruptible God" has been "changed" "into an image made like unto corruptible man; and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." And, hence, succeeding ages have been involved in gross superstition, through the traditions and examples of their forefathers. In these cases, however, there has been preserved among men, some idea, more or less definite, of an all-pervading divinity. And in ages thus involved in moral darkness, divine love has never failed to impress itself on the conscience, and offer salvation to the soul.

Now as the people in those idolatrous nations have been educated in the notion, that the divinity was only worshipped with acceptance under outward figures, presented to their senses, where individuals thus circumstanced have given sincere attention to the impressions of love, secretly operating on the conscience, and sought to adhere thereto as their chief good, they may have thus "feared God, and wrought righteousness," and have been "accepted of him," at the same time that their visible worship may have been presented before those sensible objects, which the traditions of their fathers have taught them to suppose were his visible representatives. And the neglect of their outward forms of worship may have produced compunction; because in their apprehension a dereliction of duty—conscience, in their dark estate, remaining acquiescent in the judgment founded on the examples and traditions of their fathers.

So the hardy red man of the American wilderness, not yet contaminated with the vices of his fellow creatures, calling themselves civilized, but conscientiously obeying what he sincerely believes to be the will of "the Great Spirit," though maintaining his national religious customs and ceremonies widely different from ours, may be in a more acceptable state than the less obedient, or self-righteous, professor of gospel light and knowledge—the ways of divine justice being always equal and without partiality, and his goodness never requiring more of his rational creatures to prepare them for acceptance with him, than obedience to such manifestations of light in the soul and understanding as he is pleased, under their widely varying states and circumstances, to discover to them: whether it be as the full splendour of meridian day, or as the glimmering rays of the morning dawn. When the Son of God—the blessed Messiah—was manifested among men, in him was offered to the nation in which he appeared, an example altogether perfect: showing forth in sublime purity, the effects of the operation of divine love on the conscience, in sanetifying every desire of the heart, and every motion of the will; and preserving the soul in a perfect conformity and union with the Almighty source of divine purity.

Standing thus in a state of complete perfection, all his doctrines, and all his precepts, delivered before the people, were calculated to direct the minds of men home, to their supreme good—to a steadfast obedience to the power and principle of divine life and love, operating on their consciences.

His immediate disciples, who had walked with him in his earthly sojourn, after he had retired from them, and after they had waited in secret retirement of soul, the time appointed of “his Father and their Father,” received qualification and power, to go forth and preach to the nations, the same everlasting gospel—“the power of God unto salvation”—which he had preached before them. Thus the attention of thousands was engaged, and the power and the joys of divine love in the conscience were largely experienced by many.

Soon, however, the natural will of man—ever prone to place itself in the seat of the divine government in the soul—began to insinuate its vain imaginations into the concerns of religion; and to mingle its inventions, founded in pride and selfish ambition, with the visible forms which had obtained under the apostolical administration. Thus extending its influence from less to more, great darkness and depravity at length overspread even the professing Christian church; through the means of those who affected to be

the successors of the apostolic band, and the leaders of the people in the concerns of religion. These continuing their arbitrary efforts, to establish their own dominion in the place of the divine guide in the conscience, a monstrous fabric of superstition and wickedness came to be erected, little less deleterious to the interests of true religion than was the worship of Moloch!!

In those ages of gross moral darkness and depravity, some, from time to time, who gave heed to the impressions of love on the conscience, and whose understandings became thereby enlightened with the light of divine truth, were, for bearing their testimony against the prevalent wickedness under the name of religion, subjected to persecution, suffering, and martyrdom. Others, equally sincere, may not have been required to appear in open opposition to the customs of the ages in which they lived; but their adherence to the impressions of love on their consciences, wrought their individual acceptance and salvation, though submitting outwardly to many, or even in that dark day approving some, of the vain superstitious rites and customs which had become established. But the abandoned host, exercising arbitrary power, from the hardened, haughty, spiritual despot, to the grovelling, ignorant, debauched monk, and their numerous, willing, tools and vassals, combined together for the suppression of every ray of divine light in the soul, and inflicting cruelty upon the sincere followers of the Lamb of God, who at any time conscientiously stood in opposition to them, the light of truth in the consciences of these was suppressed and rejected; and the turbulent, ambitious will of the natural man placed in its rightful seat. Conscience, therefore, in these, by submitting to the decisions of a depraved, perverted judgment, had become polluted—defiled—hardened—seared—and prepared to be the passive or active accomplice in whatever acts of wickedness and cruelty its haughty tyrants chose to command its compliance with. Now, to suppose that any of these, thus willingly uniting in works of wickedness, by acting in accordance with conscience in this its depraved state, had therefore acted with acceptance in the divine sight, would be as unreasonable as to say that a man was acting under the laws of divine providence, and according to correct principles, who wilfully closing his eyes against the light of the sun, and taking whatever direction his own blind imagination, or the imagination of others similarly blinded, should direct him, should plunge headlong, into whatever filth and pollution might happen to be in his way.

In ages which succeeded the grossest general darkness, those who in some degree emerged from under it, while professing the scriptures as their rule, adopted systems, and settled in them, which have still been in a great degree subversive of the rights of conscience— some of them being in reality but little removed from the mass of superstition which they professed to have left. And the general mind of the different communities, looking to human leaders as their guides, and thus remaining under a cloud, conscience in these has submitted to be governed by the will of their different leaders. And some of those leaders in different countries combining with the earthly governments, have continued to maintain the same beclouded systems, and to exercise lordship over the consciences of the people to the present time.

Others, under governments which, from the expansion of intellect, and a full conviction of the total injustice of all legal establishments, have left religion free, are seeking to subvert the wise provisions of governments, and to acquire worldly power, honour, precedence and wealth by indirect and insidious means.

Thus conscience, in the willing abettors of those religionists holding worldly power by the agency of human laws, and of those who are exerting their crafty endeavours to acquire it, remains in a state of slavish or blind captivity. Some of them from prospects of worldly advantage—some from a selfish or superstitious veneration to the images of worldly exaltation in sable attire, or from the love of human honour—some from a careless indifference to the interests of the soul, or awed by the idle denunciations of

priestcraft—and some from a choice to let the government of their consciences remain in the hands of those who wish to retain it, rather than forego their dear earthly delights, and submit to the crucifying operation of the power of Christ, (which, if admitted, would disturb their carnal security and rest, and awaken in the conscience a sense of the soul's depravity,) connive at the imposition, and pass on through life, under a profession of spurious doctrines, rites and ceremonies, and maintaining a false, deceptive ministry, as if pertaining to the glorious gospel of our divine master, and the religion of his church. Those religious leaders who are in possession of worldly power and influence by means of their several establishments, and those who appear to be indirectly and insidiously aiming at the acquirement thereof, profess at the same time to ground their several claims and systems upon the doctrines and precepts of the New Testament. And although by all the acts of theological eloquence, and all the sophistry of the schools, their dissonance can never be reconciled, but will remain to be as clearly evident to the candid inquirer as any other obvious moral disparity, they still continue so to profess—so to preach—and so to endeavour to make the people believe. Because on the maintainance of their systems, depends the standing of their idols, worldly influence, honour, maintainance and wealth. Take these away, and the religious fervour of many of them would languish, and their zeal become paralyzed, seeing that they have the daring effrontery to declare to the world, that on the abundance of MONEY to qualify and support their ministry depends the eternal salvation of millions !! Of the state of conscience in these, it will not be the design of the present essay to attempt a description. It is left to their own reflection. But if the light of divine truth be not admitted to purify and redeem the conscience, happy indeed will it be in a day of solemn reckoning for some of them, from the mitred prelate, rioting in all the profusion of luxury upon the honest labours of his moral slaves, down to the petty aspirant after the mere shreds of priestly power and consequence, if the answer be not meted to them, which our blessed Lord declared would be the portion of “many,” while pleading in their self-righteous confidence,” “Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” “I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” The light of divine truth and love, then, is the immediate and only enlightener of the human soul, and the only source of its salvation. It is the “voice which, when inclining to error, is heard “behind thee,” saying, “this is the way: walk in it.” It is the “little leaven," which, when "hid in three measures of meal," brings "the whole lump,"—body, soul and spirit—into a conformity to itself. It is the "grain of mustard seed," which, when duly cherished and cultivated, becomes a great tree. It is "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation," and "hath appeared unto ALL MEN." Conscience is the seat of its operations. Conscience, by adhering to this light, as its sovereign Lord, receives power to purify the judgment—subject, and conform to itself the natural will—chasten the desires—and command the obedience of all the powers of the rational faculties.

And though in their weak, but progressing state, while the prejudices of education and tradition are yet but partially removed, men may entertain diversity of opinions on things, not essential to salvation, yet conscience being preserved chaste to its heavenly Lord, will never permit them to revile, defame, or persecute each other. But, leaving judgment to him to whom it belongs, they will be brought experimentally to know that they "have but one master, even Christ," and that they "are all brethren." And the "love of God shed abroad in their hearts" will preserve them in peace and love one with another. But if by an habitual course of disobedience—rejecting the divine light—the judgment of a man becomes perverted and depraved, and conscience submitting thereto becomes levelled into a state of carnal security, and passive acquiescence in a course of conduct opposed to divine purity, in this case man is accountable even for the state of his conscience, and cannot in the end avail himself of its sanction, to justify or palliate his transgressions, any more than a man can justify himself in the eye of reason, who, having surrounded himself with artificial darkness at mid-day, shall pursue his way through brakes and briers by the deceitful

glimmerings of a meteor, surrounded with fogs, and changing its course with every varying breath his own depraved passions may blow upon it.

Explanation of the metaphorical figures used in the Book of Revelations.

ANGELS. Manifestations of light in the understanding.

BEAST. Arbitrary, tyrannical power.

BLACK. Spiritual darkness.

BRIMSTONE. Revenge.

CANDLESTICKS. Gathered churches. Testimony bearers.

CANDLES. Light conveyed through instruments.

CLOUDS. Prejudices which darken the understanding.

DEATH, is either the separation of the soul from the principle of spiritual life, whereby it dies to God; or by its submitting to the operation of the Holy Spirit and uniting therewith, it dies to that life it had in the natural part of man.

SECOND DEATH, is the dissolution of the body, by which the soul is entirely separated from the natural part, and immovably fixed in its eternal condition.

A DAY, in computation of time, is put for a year.

A DAY. Frequently used for the whole continuance or existence of persons or things; without any relation to the length of time.

DRAGON. A tyrannical spirit of infidelity.

DEVIL. Arbitrary tyranny.

EARTH. Earthly powers and governments.

NEW EARTH. A new state of government, conducted in the fear of God, and to his glory.

EARTHQUAKES. Removing or rending of earthy powers. Revolutions in governments.

EXPLANATION OF THE METAPHORICAL FIGURES

FOUNTAINS. Heads and leaders of religious sects.

FIRE. Zeal. Party rage.

HEAVEN. As heaven is that state of happiness which is the habitation of the blessed spirits, and as a life of religion and virtue is the only preparation for an admittance into this blessed abode, therefore religion is figuratively called heaven.

NEW HEAVEN. A new state of religion.

HORSES. The propagators of religion.

HAIL. Pestilential disorders.

ISLANDS. Small governments that are dependent on others, as colonies.

LIGHTNING. Contending of passions.

MOUNTAINS. Large established governments.

THE MOON. Emblems, types and figures.

PROPHETS. Those who speak in the name of the Lord, under the influence of his Holy Spirit; either to foretell things to come, or to the edification of those to whom they speak.

FALSE PROPHETS. Those who set up for ministers of Christ without the gifts or calling of the Holy Spirit; or undertake to foretell future events without a commission from God.

RIVERS. Large collections of different religious sects. See Waters.

RAIN. Refreshments of religion. Spiritual and heavenly consolations.

RED. Bloody. The spirit of war.

THE SUN. The prophecies and precepts contained in the scriptures of truth.*

* Through the instrumentality whereof, the light of truth has been reflected to the religious world, as the sun enlightens the natural world.

USED IN THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS.

STARS. Apostles; gospel lights; ministers and enlightened members of the church of Christ. Also, men in high ecclesiastical dignity in the apostate church.

SEA. State of unsettled religious opinions.

SATAN. Unbelief. Opposition.

SERPENT. Self-sufficiency.

SMOKE. Carnal ordinances, which were thought to contain spiritual virtues. But as the light arises, they vanish away as smoke.

THRONE. Seat of judgment. Dominion.

TREES. Firm and strong men.

TREE OF LIFE. The heavenly food. The spiritual flesh and blood of Christ; of which the soul partakes after passing the flaming sword, which slays the corrupt nature.

THUNDER. Events claiming solemn attention. Divine judgments.

WATERS. Religious sects founded on opinions; therefore unstable as waters.

WATER OF LIFE. The effusions of the Holy Spirit.

WHITE. Purity.

WHORE. Religious institutions, set up in the will of man; and acts of worship performed without the influence of the Holy Spirit.

ANALYSIS

OF THE

06. PART I. The state of religion in the seven churches of Asia

PART I.

The state of religion in the seven churches of Asia.

CHAPTER I.

1. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John;

2. Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things which he saw.

3. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand.

THE apostle, in his preface, shows this revelation of things to come, which he had from the Father, was through the word; agreeably to the tenor of his own and the other apostles' epistles and writings; wherein they testify that the knowledge of the Father and spiritual things, was only revealed through Christ. And, as the soul of man is capable of spiritual manifestations that are inconceivable by the natural understanding of it-

SO self, as Daniel confessed he saw, but understood not, the apostle shows it was not his own conjectures respecting the vision he had seen, but that he was favoured with divine light and knowledge, to comprehend those things he was about to write; which is represented by Christ sending and signifying it by his angel to his servant John.

"Who bare record of the word of God," had in himself that record of eternal life which he knew the Father gave of his Son, "and of the testimony of Jesus," which is the spirit of prophecy, "and of all things which he saw;" thereby assuring the reader of the certainty he had of the truth of what he communicated; in confidence whereof he pronounceth, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy;" that is, those whose spiritual eyes are opened to see, and their ears to hear, and who also "keep those things that are written therein, for the time is at hand."

That it was the spiritual seeing and hearing the apostle meant, will appear, compared with the declaration of Christ to his disciples; "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." There were many who had seen his miracles, and heard his sayings, but who had closed their spiritual senses, and shut out the light, lest they should understand, and be converted.

4. John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne;

5. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

The apostle then addresses himself to the seven churches which are in Asia; wishing them "grace," as it is only by grace that any one can choose the way of life, and thereby witness "peace," from him "who is" the true life of the soul; "and was" before self-sufficiency and sin entered, and brought it into a state of death; "and which is to come" to those that wait for him in the manifestation of eternal life; or, as the apostle Paul expresses it, "The second time, without sin, unto salvation:" "and from the seven spirits," those heavenly graces, through which, as agents or instruments, the Holy Spirit, at times, manifests itself; "and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness" of God in the souls of believers, "the first-begotten of the dead" therein; the resurrection and the life, and the "prince of the kings of the earth;" the Almighty power, before which both great and small must bow, either in mercy, or in judgment. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," which is the laver of regeneration to the soul.

This is a mystery, and a hard saying to the natural understanding: yet, as sure as in our natural body there must be a spirit begotten, to raise it into animal life, otherwise it is no more than a mere lump of vegetable substance, so it is also as certain, that unless Christ is first begotten in the soul, and becomes to it the resurrection and the life, it remains in a state of spiritual death, incapable of acting as a living soul.

It is thus he maketh us "kings," supreme rulers over the transgressing nature; a conquest infinitely greater than those of the mighty conquerors of the world; because not in the power of human nature to accomplish. "And priests," to draw nigh unto God; to enter into the holy place; to worship him in spirit in his temple with acceptance. "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever," in time and in eternity. No part of this glory is to be ascribed to the natural powers of man.

"Behold, he cometh with clouds," that is, veiled from the carnal understanding of men, who are looking for him in ways of their own conceivings, and not in that principle of light, in which he manifests himself in the soul. "And every eye shall be opened to see him, and they also that pierced him," quenching and grieving his spirit; "And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because" they have rejected him, the fountain of light and peace, and have involved themselves in darkness and tribulation, by trusting in their own understandings and judgment, and following their own wills. "Even so, Amen." "I" that reveal these things, "am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning" of life, the quickening spirit; "the ending" and overcoming of sin and corruption; the author and finisher of faith, "saith the Lord, which is, which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

9. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11. Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia, unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

12. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me; and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

15. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last:

18. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

19. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

20. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks; the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven churches.

The apostle having thus assured them of the certainty of his commission being from God, the greatness of whose power and authority he has set forth, then proceeds to inform them of the manner it was revealed to him. "I John, who am your brother," born of the same incorruptible seed, "and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," in which the soul is in dominion, and rules and governs the natural part, by which all impatience, even under great trials and afflictions, is kept down—"was in the isle that is called Patmos," where he was an exile for bearing witness to, and preaching "the word of God," manifested in the souls of men; "and for the testimony of Jesus Christ," which is the spirit of prophecy.

"I was in the spirit on the Lord's day." This does not appear to have been any particular day of the week, (neither is it probable that the apostle, or any other man, could comprehend in the natural understanding, which views things in succession, such a number of subjects and events in one natural day; which appears further by the revelations made to divers of the ancient prophets: they could not comprehend them, and were astonished many days, until their understandings were enlightened, which is represented by an angel's explaining the subject to them; as John also mentions that this divine revelation was "signified to him by an angel.") But it was a time wherein the outward light of the world, and the inward light of the natural understanding, were to him as absorbed into the vision of eternal light, which is day. His mind being raised above all other objects, into the love and power of God, it was thus to him, "the Lord's day," or the day of the Lord's power, wherein the voice of Christ is heard distinctly. And on this solemn occasion the impression was so powerful, John compares it to the voice of a great trumpet, proclaiming, "I

am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last;" and commanding him to

"write what he saw in a book, and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia."

"And being turned" to, or having fixed his attention to this divine manifestation, he saw in spirit these seven gathered churches, as represented by "seven golden candlesticks," to contain or hold up to the world the pure light of the gospel. "And in the midst of them, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to his feet," representing complete righteousness and salvation, as the want of them is represented by nakedness; and "girt about" with the girdle of truth. "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," as the Ancient of days is represented in Daniel's vision. "And his eyes were as a flame of fire," which signifies his capacity of seeing the state of religion amongst its professors, and his zeal for its purity. "And his feet were like to fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace," firm and strong to tread down his enemies, and preparing with consuming zeal, as it was said in Micah, "I will make thy hoofs brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people." "And his voice"—to the natural understanding—"as the sound of many waters;" but which the attentive mind, through divine aid, is enabled to distinguish from all creaturely imaginations and opinions.

"And he had in his right hand, seven stars"—or lights—"and out of his mouth goeth a two-edged sword." This is the flaming sword which turneth every way against the transgressing nature, to keep the way of the tree of life; the food and nourishment of the spiritual, immortal soul. "And his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength." That is, in him were united, as their centre, the promises recorded in the scriptures of truth respecting the Messiah;

"this is he of whom Moses and the prophets did write."

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

At the revelation of divine majesty, all self-sufficiency vanishes, and natural or acquired abilities shrink into nothingness. "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last;"

I give life, and am the fulness and reward of it; "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell, and of death."

—I can unlock the secret chambers of wrath and horror, and release the repenting soul, and quicken them that are dead in trespasses and sins, and raise them up to sit in heavenly places.—"Write the things which thou hast seen"—which thou hast been a living witness of—"and the things which are"—the state of the churches at this time—"and the things which shall be hercafter," that are now about to be manifested to thee.

"The mystery which thou sawest, the seven stars, are the angels," or the portion of divinely enlightened understanding in the seven churches: "and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches," which, as candlesticks, were designed to hold up to the world, the pure, spiritual light of the gospel.*

* Some commentators have supposed, that the following epistles were prophetical of so many successive periods of the church, which, upon consideration, does not appear even probable: although it is evident the promises and threatenings equally included all. The disagreement with other parts of these Revelations, sufficiently refutes such an opinion. They point out the last state of the church as the most glorious of all; whereas the last state mentioned in these epistles, being that of the Laodiceans, is represented as the most wretched

CHAPTER II.

1. Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

and miserable. Moreover, it plainly appears from the acts of the apostles, and divers of their epistles, that there were many gathered societies of Christians in Asia; and particularly in some of those very places to which these epistles are directed; so that there appears no room to doubt of their being written immediately to the churches of the seven cities, the names of which are mentioned in succession to each other; not in order of time, but as they lay in a kind of circuitous situation. Others, again, suppose it hardly possible that these churches could degenerate in so short a space of time from their first establishment, so much as to merit the severe reproofs contained in these epistles. With such as can flatter themselves to believe, "that being once in grace establishes a certainty of always continuing therein," this objection will have some weight: but, to those who consider the nature and constitution of man—who consult the state of their own minds, observing diligently what is passing therein, and believe in the testimony of the scriptures, independent of those private interpretations imposed by systems—it cannot have any. Such must view the situation in which our first parents were placed by their Creator, as a state of grace from which they fell. Paul was of this opinion, and also sensible of the danger of the Corinthians falling from that state, in which he declares he had espoused them to one husband, when he expresses his jealousy lest the subtilty of their own understanding should corrupt their minds from the simplicity that is in Christ, even as the serpent beguiled Eve. He also marvels that the Galatians were so "soon removed from him that called them into the grace of Christ:" "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" "But, now, after ye have known God, or rather, are known of God,

2. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3. And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

6. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

7. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

The apostle is commanded to write to the divinely enlightened members of the church of Ephesus: "These how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?" To such things as the natural spirit of man, of its own ability, can perform. "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." Again, "holding faith, and a good conscience, which some have put away, concerning faith, have made shipwreck; of whom is Hymenias and Alexander, whom I have delivered to satan;" separated from the church, that they might be left to their own unbelief and self-sufficiency, to "learn not to blaspheme;" by calling themselves believers in Christ, when they had lost the true faith which they once had: for no man could truly attain to a good conscience without the operation of God's saving grace; much less could it subsist with a false or hypocritical faith.

The scriptures contain a number of such testimonies, cautions and warnings to mankind of their danger, as well as examples of individual societies and nations quickly falling away from life and power, to death and formality; and from religion and virtue to idolatry and vice.

things saith he that upholdeth" and preserveth the spiritually-minded "in his right hand," and knoweth the degree of light and knowledge with which they have been favoured, "who walketh in the midst of the seven" churches, which as golden candlesticks are to uphold the light of the gospel to a dark world, encouragingly assuring them that he "knew their works"—their endeavours to comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, and to instruct the ignorant—approved of their labour and patience for the recovery of the unfaithful, of their not bearing with those that were evil, and continued irreclaimable; and of their trying and detecting such as assumed the office of apostles or ministers of the gospel, without a divine and spiritual call and qualification, finding "them to be liars."

He also approved their example, setting forth the authority of a Christian church over its members, and the manner that the faithful are to labour with them that are overtaken in faults, for their recovery, in "forbearance and patience for his name's sake"—that is, for the sake of his power, which only hath preserved themselves—as the apostle Paul also advises,: "You which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Nevertheless, he reminds them that they had "left their first love," and admonishes them to "remember from whence they had fallen, and to repent, and do their first works, or he would remove their candlestick out of its place;" their light should cease to shine before men, and spiritual darkness ensue; which shows the necessity, even for those that have been favoured with divine light and knowledge, to live in a state of continued watchfulness and dependence on heavenly aid; otherwise they may gradually depart from a sense of that love which engaged them to inquire after the right way, and lose sight of those things they were favoured at first to see clearly, was their duty to practise, and thus miss of that plain highway which had been cast up for them to walk in with safety; and in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err.

He further assures all that "overcome," that is, by submitting to the operation of divine grace, to bring the soul from under the government of the natural, animal spirit, which held it in bondage, and thus conquering its greatest enemy, that they "shall eat of the tree of life;" the spiritual flesh and blood of Christ, the nourishment that sustains the quickened soul, "which grows in the midst of the paradise of God;" that state of happiness here on earth, witnessed by all in whom the true order and economy is restored, "whose conversation is in heaven."

8. And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

9. I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich;) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of satan.

10. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

As in the preceding epistle, John was commanded to write, "these things saith he that holdeth the seven stars," &c. Here his command is to write, "these things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." The same form and order is continued through the succeeding epistles; the characters and attributes, being mostly taken from the preceding manifestations of Christ, described in the first chapter, and applicable to the matter of each epistle, which again is closed with an exhortation answerable thereto.

Here he comforts the spiritually minded, assuring them that he "knows their works, and their tribulation and poverty." This is the consolation of the righteous in all their afflictions, that they are under the immediate protection and care of him who views their situation with tender regard, and knows what is best for them; and also supplies the want of outward enjoyments, making them rich with the treasures of his heavenly kingdom.

"I know, saith he, "the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not;" who neither see the necessity of, nor look for, the immediate teachings of the Holy Spirit, to render them such; but imagine they fully understand the doctrines of Christianity, and sufficiently comprehend the end and design thereof, through the strength of their rational powers, and can thereby regulate their conduct, and perform their religious devotions. But, notwithstanding their confidence in their opinions and practices, he owns them not, but charges them with being "the synagogue of satan," that is, of unbelievers; and their religious professions he calls "blasphemy."

He then encourages his enlightened followers, to "fear none of these things that they were to suffer," from that arbitrary spirit of persecution which should

"cast some of them into prison, that they might be tried," and warns them that they should "have tribulation ten days," or at ten different times, assuring such as are "faithful unto death, that he will give them a crown of life," and that "he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." The soul that hath witnessed a dying to the spirit and dominion of the animal life, the final separation from it, through the dissolution of the body, will be without hurt.

12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where satan dwelleth.

14. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

16. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

He informs the enlightened, living members of the church in Pergamos, that he knew "their works" and peculiar trials, arising from their dwelling amongst the very powers of spiritual darkness, even where the seat of unbelief is; and also that they had "held fast his name," that is, his power, in which only is strength and preservation; and "had not denied his faith," even at the time when "Antipas his faithful martyr was slain amongst them." Nevertheless, he had a few things against them, because there were some "that held the doctrine of Balaam," who, although they had been favoured to know the divine will, yet taught, for the sake of outward advantage, to temporize and join in idolatrous worship and licentious practices, and were still amongst them; and some others that "held the hateful doctrine of the Nicolaitanes," threatening them withal, that unless they repented, he would "quickly come, and fight against" the transgressors "with the sword of his mouth:" that same power represented by a sword having two edges, which, in the passive soul, by separating it from the powers of the natural part, prepares the way for its enjoyment of heavenly consolations, becomes to the stubborn and disobedient their condemnation and punishment.

Moreover, he promises to them that overcome, "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written," that is, the heavenly power which enables them to persevere in grace, which the natural man is entirely ignorant of.

The white stone is a metaphorical expression, taken from the practice of engraving in white marble the names and characters of mighty conquerors after their decease, in honour to their memory; who, whilst others can read the inscription, they cannot themselves either know, or derive any benefit from it. But the name that Christ engraves for those who conquer under him, although not read or understood by the world, is known by themselves to be that living power which is their joy and consolation here in time, and their assurance and confirmation that it will continue to be so in a glorious immortality; thereby showing the vanity and unprofitableness of worldly glory, compared with the honour which cometh from God.

18. And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things, saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

19. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

20. Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach, and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

21. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not.

22. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into a great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

24. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden:

25. But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come.

26. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.

27. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

28. And I will give him the morning star.

29. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

He commands to write to the illuminated members of the church in Thyatira, that he knows their "labour and charity, and service, and faith and patience, and their works, and the last to be more than the first." Notwithstanding which, he has "a few things against them, because they suffer that woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach, and seduce his servants to commit fornication"—to teach from the abilities of the natural understanding, and to promote the setting up of a form of worship agreeable thereto, and even to comply with the prevailing customs so far as "to eat things sacrificed to idols," (which was frequently offered as a test by the persecutors, and those that complied with it, were exempted from suffering,) of which he "gave her space to repent"—to come to a sense of the pure spiritual nature of the gospel—"but she repented not." He therefore threatens that he "will cast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her," by owning her as a teacher of religion, and joining in her carnal manner and form of worship, "into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." And that he would "kill her children with death"—a carnal, lifeless ministry can only beget converts or children into a form, or outside profession of religion, which is a state of spiritual death, although they may have a name to live—"and that all the churches shall know that he searcheth the reins and hearts, and will give to every one according to his works."

But unto those that have been favoured with the openings of divine knowledge, he speaks, "and to the rest in Thyatira;" the honest hearted, as many as have not been drawn aside with those doctrines, "and which have not known the depths of satan," of that spirit of unbelief that can imitate the true worship, and recommend its inventions, he "will put upon them no other burden;" but those things which they have already, he charges them to "hold fast," to suffer no innovations or alterations to be made "until he come," until he manifests his will further to them. And promises that to those who "overcome, and keep his works," such as he before commended, that are wrought in the ability of his spirit, he will give "power over the nations." All the religious contrivances and performances of men, and the strength of nations exerted in their support, will be broken to pieces, and fall before this power, when he ariseth to tread down, and consume his enemies, "as the vessels of a potter are broken" with the stroke of a "rod of iron." Even as he received of his Father," so it will be fulfilled. And further, "He will" give them the "morning star:" through his illumination they shall be the morning light, in the dawning of the day of his Almighty power over the world.

CHAPTER III.

1. And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead.

2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard; and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch,

I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

4. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.

5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

6. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

And unto those who have been favoured with spiritual understanding in Sardis write; He "knows their works, that they have a name to live, but are dead"—they have forsaken the principle of spiritual life, and are trusting to their own understandings to direct their religious performances—and he charges them to be watchful and "strengthen" the remaining impressions of light, that are almost extinguished and ready to die, for that their works have not been found perfect before God: and informs them, that unless they "remember how they received and heard" his word in their souls, and "hold fast" and cherish the small remaining appearance of it there, he will come upon them at unawares, to pass the final sentence of their future condition, at an hour that they know not. Yet there are "a few names, even in Sardis," that have "not defiled their garments," the covering of the Holy Spirit with which their souls were clothed in the day of their espousals, when stripped of the rags of nature. And "they shall walk with him in white," for he pronounceth them "worthy." And all that overcome shall be clothed in white raiment, the garment of pure righteousness; and shall have an evidence of divine acceptance in their souls, even the record and witness of eternal life, imprinted therein, which shall not be blotted out, but he will "confess them" to be his redeemed ones, "before his Father and his holy angels."

7. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true; he that hath the key of David; he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.

8. I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

9. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of satan, (which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie;) Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11. Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12. Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.

13. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy and true, that hath the key of David"—that "openeth" the spiritual eyes of the humble to see, and their ears to hear divine and spiritual things, and their hearts to understand judgment, whilst these things are shut up and hidden from the wise and prudent of this world.

He knoweth "their works," and hath set before them an "open door"—an entrance into his heavenly kingdom—which "no man can shut;" their faithfulness in having laboured in the "little strength" afforded, and in having "kept his word" to be their teacher and director, and not denied his power. He will make those that neither look nor wait for the immediate influence and assistance of his Spirit to qualify them for the performance of their duties, to come and worship before their feet, and to know that he hath loved them.

But those that keep the word of his patience, whereunto he has set them forth as spectacles to the world, to angels and to men; as if appointed to be reviled, defamed, buffeted; to be accounted the filth of the world, and the refuse and offscouring thereof; to suffer persecution and death for the sake of his cause and testimony; these he will keep in the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth the rulers and governors thereof, who, in church or state, have exercised arbitrary power and dominion over the lives and consciences of men.

He then charged his followers to hold fast that which they had already attained to, that none might take their crown—the reward of faithfulness—and tells them, those that overcome, he will make pillars in the temple of God, that shall go no more out. They shall be known to be the favoured servants of God, inhabitants of his holy city, the new Jerusalem which cometh down from heaven—that state on earth in which the faithful are enabled to do his will, through that name Christ writes upon them, even his heavenly power with which he arms them.

14. And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

17. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.

19. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

And to those that have been enlightened in the church of the Laodiceans write; "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness" for God in the souls of men; even that eternal power by which he began, and created all things; who "knows their works," and because they were lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, would "spew them out of his mouth."

They had got into a form of godliness, and were at ease in the practice of such rites and ceremonies as they could perform in their natural abilities. And thus the strong man, armed with religion, kept the house, and his goods were safe. But for this he rejects them, because they accounted themselves "rich and increased in goods," and had need of no immediate teachings of the Holy Spirit. Had got the scriptures of the Jews, and of the apostles; and ministers to instruct them; and ordinances instituted for their observance; and therefore knew not that their immortal souls were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

He, therefore, counsels them to buy of him gold tried in the fire; that is, to let his spirit operate in their souls, to separate and cleanse them, from the corruptions and directions of the natural part, even as gold is separated from its dross by fire, that they may become pure and fit to receive heavenly treasure—the true riches, "and white raiment"—to part with the deceitful covering of their own performances, for the garment of pure righteousness, wrought in them by his power, that they may be clothed, and that the shame of their nakedness do not appear. And to anoint their eyes with eye-salve—to attend to those ideas of spiritual things, that are at times excited in them by a supernatural principle, the true eye-salve, by which they may come to see.

He then informs them that he loves those whom he rebukes and chastens; and that he standeth at the door and knocketh. This is the way that Christ manifesteth himself to men, by knocking and calling at the door of their hearts; which, to the stubborn and rebellious, is, at times, in conviction of terror and wrath; but, to the humble and passive, who "open the door" to receive him, he is the comforter who "will come in, and sup with them, and they" shall partake "with him" in a spiritual communion of that heavenly food, that nourishes the immortal soul. And those that "overcome" the powers of the natural part, he will grant to sit with him in his "throne" of grace and glory, "even as he overcame, and is set down with his Father in his throne" of light and immortality, dominion and majesty.

Although the foregoing epistles to the seven churches, have nothing in them which foretells or describes the subsequent history either of the true church, or the false profession of Christianity, yet they contain much useful information to all, respecting the pure, spiritual nature of the gospel; and point out divers doctrines and practices as offensive to God, that were severely reproved. As these doctrines and practices do not appear to have arisen, or crept in amongst them, through any failure or neglect of outward performances, (as that is no where charged upon them,) but through their turning from the principle of divine life in their souls, so the means whereby those who were the occasion of these censures, might come to witness repentance, and be restored to the favour of God, are no where mentioned to consist in any works that the natural man can perform; neither is it such works that are therein approved or commended, and which the churches are exhorted and encouraged to continue in, and hold fast, but such only as are wrought in them by the Holy Spirit.

As in each of the epistles there is a particular address to all that have ears, calling upon them to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, it appears certain that the exhortations, cautions and warnings contained therein, continue to demand the solid attention of such at this day. And in proportion to the degree of light they are favoured with, the same line of conduct followed by any professors of the Christian religion will incur—and without timely repentance they will receive—the like condemnation and punishment: and the performance of the duties therein enjoined will be required of all.

And, moreover, from these epistles, as well as from the writings of the apostles in general, we may learn that the second coming of Christ is inward and spiritual. And that his kingdom is not of this world; although

his overruling power will be manifested in his providential government of it. But his kingdom is in the hearts of those who submit to the divine principle, and permit it so to operate, as to leaven body, soul and spirit, producing the fruits of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And these are as certainly the subjects of his heavenly kingdom, and as truly the members of the new Jerusalem, the holy city of God, as those will be, who become citizens hereafter, when that spirit of prejudice, infidelity and idolatry is so overcome, that by his ruling in the hearts of mankind generally, all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of Jesus Christ.

And those who look for him to come in person, and establish an outward kingdom, or expect that mankind will be any otherwise changed in their nature, to prepare them to become his subjects, than by each individual submitting to, and following the teachings of divine grace in their own souls, will be as ignorant of his appearance, and as much disappointed in their expectations, as the poor Jews were, at the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; who were looking for a Messiah, who, they imagined, from their apprehensions of the prophecies respecting him, would be a powerful and victorious prince, who would deliver them from their outward enemies, honour their temple and worship, and firmly establish their political consequence.

07. PART II. The overruling providence of the Almighty, shown to be the power which would produce a reformation from the state of spiritual darkness, in which the degenerated church would be involved

PART II.

Wherein is foreshoun the overruling Providence of the Almighty, in producing a reformation from that state of spiritual darkness into which the professors of the Christian religion degenerated: and which nothing short of the inward revelation and power of Christ could discover, or restore them from: which power all mankind must come to acknowledge, and bow down unto, ascribing to him the glory, after they have wearied themselves in the multitude of their own fruitless inventions.

CHAPTER IV.

1. After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven; and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

2. And immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

3. And he that sat was to look upon, like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald.

4. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

5. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

After the apostle had been thus enabled to comprehend the manifestation, or heavenly vision, respecting the seven churches of Asia, he then "looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven:" that is, he was favoured to see the state of religion in celestial purity, and heard "a voice as of a trumpet," calling him to come up into that state, in order to show him things which must be hereafter.

And immediately he was in the spirit—in the vision of eternal light, which is day to the soul; in which all things are present—and beheld the supreme Almighty power on the "throne" of absolute dominion; whose ways, viewed in this light, are clear, and equal, just and righteous, represented by the precious stones, although they are dark and mysterious to the natural understanding of man.

"And there was a rainbow round about the throne"—or an evidence of the diversified communications of eternal light to the true church in its different states, as well through the dispensation of the law as prior thereto, and since the coming of Christ in the flesh:* all of which referring to, and according with, the pure, immutable laws and principles whereby, as upon a throne of absolute dominion, the divine power ruleth and governeth human events: and whereby effects are always rendered conformable to their causes.

"And round about the throne were four and twenty

* As in the rainbow are represented all the different modifications of light in the natural world, referring to one common source. Editor.

seats—the evident state of quiet settlement in the natural spirit, when the soul, under divine counsel, governs, and all things are brought into accordance with the laws and principles round about which, as a throne, the seats were placed. “And upon the seats” the representatives of the spiritual Israelites, and Christians, “sitting, clothed in white raiment”—the robes of righteousness with which the soul that is united to the principle of spiritual life is clothed. “And they had on their heads crowns of gold”—the evidences of their victory over every opposing power of darkness. “And out of the throne proceeded lightnings”—contending of passions*—“and thunderings”—events claiming so-

* Should an inquiry arise, Why are “contending of passions” represented as proceeding out of the throne? it may be answered in explanation—that as the throne represented the seat of the divine government in his rational creation, in accordance with his immutable laws and principles, so all the light and information divinely communicated to man, concerning his social duties and his relations in society, in his different states of religious advancement, are in full accordance with those laws and principles—that after great spiritual darkness had overspread the church, the human mind was incapable of emerging all at once, but was gradually brought forward as from a renewed morning dawn to further discoveries of light—that the degrees of light received by many in those advancing periods, though in accordance with the original laws and principles—“the throne”—not having yet brought them to the perfect day, their passions were brought into operation in their honestly “contending” for their faith in the manifestations of light received, in opposition to the tyrannical spirit exercised against them. The same kind of observation may, perhaps, with suitable modifications, be applied with relation to “thunderings and voices.” Editor.

lemn attention—"and voices"—sentiments of men, or of societies or nations.

6. And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

8. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

9. And when those beasts give glory, and honour, and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

"And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal," clear and transparent:* "and round about the throne were four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind."† They could see those that were

* As the sea, in general, is understood to represent a state of unsettled, fluctuating religious opinions, perhaps the "sea of glass like unto crystal" may be a symbol to represent a system of pure and correct opinions, without cloud or obstruction—founded in divine truth and righteousness, and conformable to the laws and principles of the divine government of creation. At which the redeemed having arrived, they attain to the experience of a solid settlement, illuminated with the clearness of divine light, and incapable of fluctuation, as glass is solid, and crystal clear. Editor.

† The term here translated "beasts," relates to characters before them in faithfulness and experience, whose steps they followed, as well as those that were behind them in darkness and superstition. These are the representatives of the different states and conditions of men from the four quarters of the earth, who, in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, feared God and wrought righteousness, and thus were accepted of him.

And the first living creature “was like a lion”—courageous and victorious—“and the second was like a calf”—inoffensive and docile—“and the third had a face as a man”—the appearance of a rational being—“and the fourth was like a flying eagle,” which soars aloft, and is a bird of prey. “And the four living creatures had each of them six wings”—the power which raised them above the sordid cares and pleasures of the animal life, which stood in competition with their duty—“and they were full of eyes within;” their inward spiritual senses were quickened to see the law written in their hearts; “and they rest not day and widely different from the term beast hereafter used, as applied to the fallen, persecuting state—the latter expressing a character wholly adverse to the divine government. But, as the former relates to states of acceptance in the divine sight, the author believed it right, and much more in accordance with the original Greek, to adopt the term *living creatures*. A term well suited to denote the living subjects of the divine government who were not included under the heads of the spiritual Jews and Christians—but scattered amongst the human family generally—and who, by obedience to the law written in the heart, were divinely illuminated and qualified to stand in the midst of, and round about the throne—that is, in the fulfilment of the requisitions of the divine laws and principles, though strangers to the outward manifestations dispensed to the professing Jews and Christians. *Editor.* night, saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was" seen to be holy, when the arising of his pure light dispelled the darkness, "and is," when it hath withdrawn itself; "and is to come," in the clear manifestation of the day of his power and holiness.

The true spiritual worshippers, on beholding those that are in darkness, as to the outward knowledge of pure spiritual religion, yet who, by submitting to the righteous law of God in the heart, according to the measure of grace received, become worshippers of him, rendering him glory, honour and thanksgiving, "cast their crowns before the throne;" that is, they do not ascribe their salvation and victory over the powers of the natural life to their outward knowledge of the truth, or their natural abilities to conform their lives to it, but to the operation and efficacy of divine grace in the soul, "saying, thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

CHAPTER V.

1. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.

2. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3. And no man in heaven, nor in the earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

The "book written within and on the back side" sets forth, that all things, past, present, and future, are as clear to Almighty perception, as if they were written in a book. The state of the professors of Christianity in succeeding ages, and their falling away from being the meek, humble, followers of Jesus, to become the bloody tyrants and murderers of his innocent lambs, and such like events as are the subjects of these revelations, are implied by the writing within. The particular circumstances of the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the nature of that pure religion and spiritual worship which he came to establish, which had been foretold by inspired prophets, recorded in the scriptures of truth, and practised by his spiritual followers in the face of the world, is signified by the writing on the back side.

"The strong angel," represents the strong desires of religious men, whose understandings are so far enlightened as to throw off the shackles of prejudice, to search after the truth, and the knowledge of such future events as have been the particular subjects of the prophecies of scripture; inquiring after the opinions and conjectures of learned men, and studying their commentaries and explanations, in hopes of finding out their true meaning and signification. "And no man in heaven," amongst the professors of religion, who compose systems of faith, doctrine and worship; "nor in the earth," amongst the rulers of governments, who impose them upon men's consciences; "neither under the earth," the spiritual officers under them, with all their religion, wisdom, and accomplishments of learning, together with the powers conveyed by ordination, was either "able to open the book,"—to unfold the subjects of the prophecies, "or to look thereon"—not even to discover the true meaning and tendency of the plain practical precepts of Christianity. Their presumptuous attempts and impositions have produced and confirmed the errors in religion and governments, which subsist at this day, and which must eventually prove their dissolution. In the prospect whereof, the apostle "wept much," because no man was found worthy to open, and to read the book, or to "look thereon"—neither to discover future events, nor the pure, spiritual nature of the religion and worship recommended to mankind.

He was then encouraged by "one of the elders," saying unto him, "Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." This assures us, that those who are sincerely desirous of searching after the truth, and are become sensible of the insufficiency of human wisdom or power, or any natural qualifications to lead them thereto, and, therefore, are seeking for that wisdom which is from above, shall be favoured with divine assistance to receive the instruction necessary for their respective stations in the deep things of God, and to understand those things which he has revealed through his inspired servants. And to these the holy scriptures are found to be truly "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect; thoroughly furnished (with precepts and examples) unto every good word and work."

Whilst the wise master-builders, who trust in their own wisdom and learning, or human opinions and conjectures, do "wrest the scriptures to their own destruction."

6. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

9. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12. Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14. And the four beasts said, Amen, and the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

The apostle then "beheld, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and of the elders, a Lamb, as it had been slain," overlooked and disregarded, "having seven horns," the weapons of the true Christian's spiritual warfare, mentioned Ephesians 6. First, the girdle of truth: 2nd, the breastplate of righteousness: 3d, shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: 4th, the shield of faith: 5th, the helmet of salvation: 6th, the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God; and 7th, praying always in the spirit. These Paul calls the whole armour of God. And he had also "seven eyes," which are the "seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth." The whole power and wisdom of God, manifested to man, are centred in him, (seven being used to express the complete number, which the reader will observe is common throughout these Revelations.)

"And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." On this manifestation of Almighty power and wisdom to mankind, through our Lord Jesus Christ, "the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps," that is, sanctification of spirit, "and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song"—not a repetition of the experiences or thanksgivings of others, but that which arose from the living sense they had of his worthiness to open the understandings of man to know the things of the spirit—"who had been slain," from the foundation of the world, in the hearts of men, through sin and unbelief, even amongst his professed followers, as well as in that body of flesh, "the veil in which he came

to do the will of God," and tread the untrodden path to glory, in the new and living way of perfect obedience and self-denial, consecrated for all to walk in with safety. And who "had redeemed them unto God by his blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation; and made them unto God, kings" to bear rule, in dominion over the transgressing nature; "and priests," to offer the acceptable sacrifice of pure obedience, and to worship him in spirit, in the beauty of holiness.

And he beheld, and heard the voice of many, that were divinely enlightened, "round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders," an innumerable multitude, join in ascribing to the Lamb that was slain, power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and honour, and blessing. "And every creature which is in heaven"—amongst the professors of religion—"and on the earth"—such as bear rule in the world—and those that are in office "under" them; "and such as are in the sea"—in the uncertainty of religious opinions and conjectures—"and all that are in them"—in their ways and practices, the governors and the governed; the leaders and followers of religious opinions—must all come to bow, (as the apostle foresaw,) before "the Lord God and the Lamb." And in the prospect thereof, the "four living creatures" said, Amen; and the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.*

* It may be proper to remark, that this second part of the Analysis represents, in the view of the author, the process of illumination in the mind of the apostle, in order to prepare him for the whole field of duty in his after communications—and not, therefore, standing in exclusive relation to the third part, which would, perhaps, seem to the common observer to be more peculiarly connected therewith. Editor.

08. PART III. Through the opening of the seals is discovered the propagation of the Christian religion\u2014first in life and power\u2014afterwards in several stages of declension. Remarkable circumstances occurring before, and at the time of its restoration to primitive purity

PART III.

Through the opening of the seals is discovered the propagation of the Christian religion; first in life and power, and afterwards in several stages of its declension. Remarkable circumstances which took place both before, and at the time of its restoration to primitive simplicity and purity.*

CHAPTER VI.

1. And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were, the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come, and see.

2. And I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals." Although the manner of his birth, public ministry, and miracles, answered to the prophecies of the scriptures respecting the Messiah, yet they were sealed from the wisdom of the world; even from those who were ad-

* John was commanded, chap. i. 19, to "write the things which he had seen, the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."

mirers of the law and the prophets, and expected his coming: which appears from their numerous objections. But he was only known to those whose spiritual eyes and ears were opened.

And, notwithstanding many were convinced when they saw the miracles which he did, and believed in his name, yet he committed not himself unto them. He knew their faith was founded on the conviction of the natural understanding; and he needed not human testimony, for he knew what was in man. But honest Peter's confession was acceptable to him, because it arose from a divine evidence, to which he answered, "Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

This act of believing was not merely the assent, or acquiescence, of the natural understanding to the evidences proposed to it; but it was a passive submission to the operation of God in the soul, and, therefore, the work of God; as Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." And when the people required a sign, that they might see and believe, he directed them to an inward and spiritual knowledge of him, which was life to the soul.

The multitude, when the five thousand had eaten of the loaves and fishes, could testify, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world," yet they would have taken him by force to make him a king. They did not understand the nature of his spiritual kingdom, which was "not of this world," although he had

declared that "The kingdom of heaven is within you." The prophecies were a sealed book to their understandings, which could only be spiritually opened.

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of thunder." The manner and circumstances of his death, which drew from the centurion the confession, "certainly this was a righteous man"—his resurrection from the dead, and ascension—the extraordinary effusions of the Holy Spirit—miracles wrought by his apostles—the destruction of Jerusalem, which he had foretold—and the Christians fleeing away from it before that calamitous period, were all events claiming solemn attention.

The proclamation made by the first of the four living creatures, which was like a lion, is expressive of the boldness with which the apostles preached the gospel of Christ, and the spiritual conquest that succeeded. The "white horse" represents not only the purity of life which eminently distinguished the preachers of Christianity, and shed an attractive lustre to all around, evincing its divine original, but also the strength and courage with which, notwithstanding the united opposition of the powers of the world—of rulers, priests, and people, they were enabled in a short time to propagate its doctrines far and wide, and establish a system of important and practical truths, adapted to the comprehension of common capacities, being designed for common benefit; not to amuse the heads with nice speculations, but to amend the hearts of men, by practising the precepts of their Lord and Saviour, through the aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit and grace of God, enlightening their understandings to discover sin and evil in its rise and conception in the heart, and enabling them to overcome and subdue their propensity thereto, by bringing the soul from under the dominion and bondage of the natural powers, and raising in it a new and spiritual life.

"And he that sat on him had a bow," that power from on high—a divine and spiritual qualification which our Lord commanded his disciples to wait for, to fit them for their office; which, as he governed and directed their gospel labours, reached to the consciences of their hearers, answered to the witness of God therein, enforced conviction, crowned his followers with victory over the transgressing nature, and went on conquering and to conquer his outward opposers.

Although there were early symptoms of declension discovered by the faithful pastors, who also foresaw that a greater degeneracy would overspread the church, which, according to Egesyppus, began to be visible about the year 110, by its gradually departing from its original purity, yet, as no very material alteration in the direction of ecclesiastical affairs took place until after the middle of the second century, the opening of this seal may include a period commencing at the birth of Christ, and continuing to the year 156.

SECOND SEAL.

3. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come, and see.

4. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon, to take peace from the earth; and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

The doctrines of Christianity continued to spread and prevail, through the convincing evidence of its divine origin, and the excellency of its precepts; and many of different nations, impressed with a sense and love of truth, embraced the profession of it; insomuch that their numbers increased greatly, notwithstanding the severe persecutions carried on against them. The proclamation, "Come, and see," being made by the second living creature, which "was like a calf," is expressive of the slaughter made upon many of those

unresisting victims by their barbarous persecutors; and, also, of the docility with which others followed their religious teachers; many of whom had degenerated from the internal life of godliness into external observations. The minds of the people being thus led to sensible objects, the power of godliness which so eminently distinguished the lives of the early converts, was less conspicuous, and the profession of Christianity gradually declined in worship, doctrine, and practice.

The horse was now "red." Notwithstanding the faithful testimony of many of the fathers in the second and third centuries against all resistance and violence, a strict purity and holiness of life being, in general, much departed from, Christians at length became warriors.

"And power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth: and there was given unto him a great sword."

Notwithstanding the writers of the second century attribute the rapid progress which Christianity had made into many different countries, to the power of God, the energy of divine truth, and to the extraordinary gifts which were imparted to its teachers, yet, as if these qualifications were not sufficient, learned men were now sought after, and there was an accession of philosophers and literati. And by the establishing of councils, "of which, (saith Mosheim,) we find not the smallest trace before the middle of this century," the whole face of the church was changed; the privileges of the people were by them diminished, and the power and authority of the bishops greatly augmented.

At their first appearance they acted in the name of the people. But they soon changed this humble tone, extended the limits of their authority, turned their influence into dominion, and their councils into laws, and openly asserted that Christ had empowered them to prescribe to his people authoritative rules of faith and manners. The Christian doctors now employed the arts and evasions of rhetoricians and sophists in defence of religion.* And the notion of their succeeding to the character, rights and privileges of the Jewish priesthood, was also propagated with great industry, and became a source of honour and profit to the ecclesiastics.† These took care to avail themselves of that ascendency they had gained over the minds of the people; and at length of the emperor Constantine, also, who made profession of Christianity, and greatly enlarged the powers of the superior orders of the clergy, to the punishing of those who dissented from their unwarrantable impositions, by which peace was taken from the earth. Great controversies and contradictory decrees arose about consecrating Ceocilianus bishop of Carthage, and other cases of the exercise of ecclesiastical powers. Parties, in their turns, were accused and acquitted. Some were banished, and others were put to death.

The opening of this seal may include a period of 162 years from after the middle of the second century 156 to A. D. 318, at which time the emperors Constantine and Licinus having triumphed over their col-

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 235.

† Ib. vol. i. p. 47.

leagues, a profession of Christianity became the religion in vogue, and great changes succeeded.

THIRD SEAL.

5. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come, and see: and I beheld, and lo, a black horse: and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts, say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

The name or profession of Christianity continued to exist. But as human invention took the seat of divine wisdom, so human policy was substituted for divine grace; and the ordination of men to the ministry, instead of the call and qualification of the Holy Spirit.

The proclamation was fitly made by the third living creature, whose "face was like a man"—a rational being; but the event fully discovers the insufficiency of human abilities to lead to happiness under any profession of religion.

"And I beheld, and lo, a black horse." The impure mixture of Jewish and heathenish rites and ceremonies, the introducing of images, canonizing and invoking of saints, and other superstitious inventions, gradually reversed Christianity into idolatry, which to it is most abhorrent. The visible profession was therefore no longer the light of Christianity, but the blackness of spiritual darkness.

The reader will take notice that the expression is not as before, "And there went out another horse," &c. But "I beheld, and lo, a black horse." Accordingly we find, that the directors of ecclesiastical affairs, instead of zealously propagating their religion abroad, were otherwise engaged. "He that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." They were employed in weighing different opinions and conjectures; balancing controverted doctrines; and determining by different councils what were to be received as matters of faith; imposing their contradictory decrees, as each party had the power in their hands, under the penalties of pecuniary and corporal punishments. For those vain fictions, which an attachment to pagan philosophy and popular opinions, had engaged the greatest part of the Christian doctors to adopt, before the reign of the emperor Constantine, were now confirmed, enlarged, and embellished in various ways, and, according to Mosheim's account, that emperor introduced amongst the bishops new degrees of eminence and rank.

"And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny."

In the church in early times it was found necessary to raise some contributions for public uses; of which the support of the poor, erecting edifices, and occasionally administering to the wants of those who laboured in the work and propagation of the gospel abroad, under circumstances which required relief, appear to have been the principal part. These contributions had been voluntary, and answered the general purposes: for as these wants were confined within narrow limits, they were easily satisfied. And many contributing very liberally from motives of brotherly kindness and benevolence, a foundation was laid in many places as a stock or public fund; and when human wisdom and policy gained the ascendency, the zealous ecclesiastics artfully propagated the notion that munificence to the church would atone for sin, and purchase future happiness: and, accordingly, it soon became enriched with secular possessions. Many of the great found it easier to give freely than to live well; and many others now found means to sanction their ambitious projects, and their most unjustifiable methods of gratifying their avaricious desires of accumulating wealth, by dividing their spoils with the church—that is, with the mercenary priesthood—all which greatly contributed to increase their wealth.

The bishops, in order to get the revenues into their own possession, relieved the deacons from the charge of the administration, into whose hands it had been originally given, or intrusted, by the apostles. And now, having none to control their ambition, or oppose their proceedings, they soon undertook to exact pecuniary rewards, which they authoritatively demanded, as the conditions and price of their spiritual

commodities. Their “wheat,” for the fine and delicate palate, and their “barley,” for the more gross, the vulgar and superstitious.

“And see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” As in the purest ages of Christianity there were some that were but mere formalists or worshippers in the outward court, so in this time of spiritual darkness there were some who, notwithstanding they were blinded with the general prejudice of the divine authority of the church to impose matters of faith, and religiously conformed to her decrees, yet they also laboured to impress the necessity of holiness of life; and were diligent in visiting the sick and afflicted; encouraging them to seek for an inward communion with God, and the consolations of his spirit: that “wine” that animates the drooping soul; and "the oil" of joy and gladness which comforts the mourners in Zion.

Although there were a few of these who appear to have been highly esteemed and respected, yet it was in the general a time of famine and extreme scarcity. "Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.* Not a scarcity of zealous ecclesiastics, for they were very numerous; but their chief views were the advancement of their own power and interest. And to this end their doctrines and labours were principally directed, by promoting a scrupulous observance of external rites and ceremonies, and superstitious acts of devotions, and a liberal compliance with their pecuniary requisitions, which were too generally considered as the means of conciliating the divine favour, and satisfying every obligation of duty.

The bishops of Rome had gradually acquired a superiority over the other bishops from the beginning of the reign of Constantine.† About the year 310, Lucina made Marcellus her heir, and gave him all her great substance. "From that time," saith Polydor, "the bishops of Rome were greatly enriched,"† which enabled them to effect a greater appearance of splendour and magnificence than the other bishops, by which mortals too often form their ideas of pre-eminence and dignity—and this superiority was at different periods advanced, until, in the year 498, Symmachus was elected supreme bishop.

During the ages of gross superstition which succeeded, there arose a few individuals endued with light and

* Amos, iii. 11.

† Mosheim, vol. i. p. 458.

sense to discover the enormities abounding in the church, and fortitude to bear their testimony against them; yet the power of darkness was so great, and the dominion of priestcraft so firmly fixed, that their attempts were quickly frustrated, and, generally, their lives became a sacrifice to the vindictive clergy. But about the year 1134, some light began to arise on the revival of learning. Gratian having composed an abridgment of the canon laws, which, before, were very defective, and could not be explained in the schools,* his epitome was unanimously adopted, and the study of it was considered as a branch of academical learning, and, shortly after, was introduced amongst the number of the sciences; as was also the civil law, or famous Pandect of Julian; which was found, revived, and became a grand object of the labours and studies of the learned. Colleges were erected in several parts of Italy, which animated other European nations to imitate their example; so that a spirit of inquiry began to revive in some places, and the human mind to emerge from that state of stupidity in which it had been involved.

Though the views exhibited in the opening of the third seal seem to have been embraced in the space of 180 years, ending with 498, yet, as spiritual darkness continued through succeeding ages in which the

human mind sunk into a state of profound ignorance and barbarity, and, as the opening of the seals appears to indicate periods of considerable change of views and principles in the religious world, it may be considered as properly extending to about the year 1134.

* Mosheim, vol. xi. p. 366.

FOURTH SEAL.

7. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come, and see.

8. And I looked, and behold, a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was death, and hell followed with him: and power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

As the revival of learning excited an inquiry into religious opinions and practices, it had a tendency to open the way for the more general reception of those reformed doctrines that were taught by Peter, and Henry Bruis at Albi; by Arnold of Brescia and others. Those doctrines were embraced by many at Lyons and other places. Thus, by the year 1140, the number of the reformed was very great, and the probability of its increasing alarmed the Pope, who wrote to several princes to banish them from their dominions; and he employed learned men to write against their doctrines.*

About this time Peter Waldo, a wealthy citizen of Lyons, became a zealous leader amongst them. He translated the scriptures into the vulgar language; and from them taught and inculcated a doctrine much more conformable to the gospel of Christ than that professed in the Roman church. After him they came to be denominated Waldenses. They were also called Cathari, from the professed purity of their life and doctrine. From Lyons, too, they were called Leonists, as those who were situated about Albi, a city of Languedoc, were called Albigenses.

The popes and clergy, exasperated at these efforts

* Foxe's Acts and Mon. p. 92. Phil. ed.

to cast off the yoke, and unveil the mystery of iniquity, made these Waldenses and Albigenses feel the weight of their vindictive resentment. Most of their teachers were dragged to the stake, and it was only the increasing number and power of their adherents rendering them formidable, that, for the present, rescued them from sharing the same fate. The proclamation of "Come, and see," was fitly made by the fourth living creature, which "was like a flying eagle," as expressive of the spoil and plunder of this period.

"And I looked, and behold a pale horse." Although the doctrine and practice of these reformers was not the pure "white," which distinguished the first ages of Christianity—the general darkness being too gross to admit of a full display of light—yet it was a great remove from the blackness of the established church; many of whose dark innovations and impositions they detected and exposed in their proper colours.

About the year 1248, under the despotic papacy of Innocent the 3d, a cruel and bloody war was raised, and carried on against the Waldenses and Albigenses, under the blasphemous appellation of the holy war. Indulgences were freely granted to those that engaged in it. They were persuaded that they were engaged in the cause of heaven; and that its gates were open to receive all that fell in that holy warfare;* and they re-

* Mede observes, p. 503, 504, that in this war, in France alone, there perished of these poor Waldenses and Albigenses, a million. In the Netherlands the duke of Alva boasted that he had despatched thirty-six thousand. In the space of a little more than thirty years, the inquisition destroyed one hundred and fifty thousand.* And Sanders confesses that an

* Newton, vol. xi. p. 279.

ceived a plenary indulgence for the remission of all their sins. By such detestable artifices the pope and clergy raised armies in their cause, regardless of the guilt of sanctifying the most flagitious crimes, under colour of the means of obtaining eternal happiness. And the detestable office of the Inquisition was also established.

Thus they were slain and destroyed by every invention that cruelty could devise, and men devoid of the feelings of humanity, and hardened to the ferocity of beasts, could execute. Put to flight—spoiled every where of their goods and dignities, and dispersed into different lands. Some fled into Provence and the Alps. Some withdrew into Calabria. Some passed into Bohemia, Poland and Livonia; and others obtained a refuge in Britain. So that, notwithstanding “they went not out” of their own choice, to propagate their doctrines in these several countries, yet they carried their tenets with them. And, although that absolute sway of priestly dominion over the consciences of princes and people was so rivetted and firmly fixed, that almost every where they came, power was given to him that sat on them, whose name was death, and to the grave that followed with him, to suppress through the terrors of death, and, as it were, to bury up their doctrines and principles for a time, yet they were not innumerable multitude of Lollards and Sacramentarians were burnt throughout all Europe.

Amongst the most zealous promoters of this execrable war, we find Dominic Guzman, a Spaniard, a fanatic, exercising the most furious and bloody cruelty, who contrived the dreadful tribunal of the inquisition. This man was ranked by the Roman Catholics in the number of the saints!

altogether extinguished: but divine Providence so ordered it, that by these means the seeds of the reformation were widely scattered.

This seal may properly include a period of 282 years, commencing A. D. 1134, and continuing to A. D. 1416—the time of the martyrdom of John Hus, and the beginning of the reformation by the Bohemians. The succeeding events respecting the propagation of the reformed doctrines, until the year 1555, (at which time such protestants as followed the Augsburg confession of faith, were secured in the free exercise of their religion,) are hereafter treated of under the calamitous events proclaimed by the trumpets.

FIFTH SEAL.

9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge, and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11. And white robes were given unto every one of them: and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

"I saw under the altar." Through the gradual unfolding of gospel light, the eyes of many were opened to discern the absurdity of that idolatrous superstition, and the guilt and impiety of those detestable artifices which the church of Rome had imposed, as acts of piety and religious devotion, divinely instituted, and as the means of obtaining eternal happiness. And also to see the spiritual nature of the Christian dispensation, that it is only by and through the operation of divine grace that mankind can be raised out of the fall, into a state of acceptance with God; which principle was now discovered to be the soul and substance which had animated and engaged so many pious worthies to yield their bodies a willing sacrifice at the altar, "for the word of God," and in support of "the testimony" which they held for the truth manifested in them, and against the errors, corruptions and cruelty of their persecutors. Unshaken from their faith by flatteries or menaces, they nobly supported their testimony in the midst of tortures, and undauntedly sealed it with their blood.

"And they cried with a loud voice, saying." Many pious people, who considered the injustice and cruelty these constant martyrs had endured for their faithfulness to God, were humbled under awful apprehensions that their patient sufferings called for vengeance from him "who is holy and true"—"who will judge in righteousness for the poor" and "reprove with equity for the meek of the earth;" and that his judgments would be poured out upon its guilty inhabitants unless averted by timely repentance.

"And white robes were given unto every one of them." The dawning of the day of gospel light, having discovered and exposed the absurdity of many opinions and institutions which antiquity and custom had rendered sacred, and that they had only been founded in superstition and credulity, and supported by ignorance and prejudice, by this means those innocent sufferers, whose memories had been branded with the ignominious title of heretics, enemies to God and his church, and such like opprobrious epithets, were delivered from the foul reproaches their adversaries had cast upon them, and found to be the Lord's redeemed ones, and faithful witnesses. And thus they recovered their deserved fame, and were secured against the malignant shafts of prejudice and superstition.

"And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season."

As the apostasy from the purity of the primitive church was gradual, and did not gain the ascendency over the minds of all who professed the Christian religion at one time, nor arrive at its height in one age, so, notwithstanding there were numbers who longed for a thorough reformation in doctrine and practice, and that every species of antichristian authority might be obliterated from amongst them, yet their honest endeavours were opposed by others as dangerous innovations. For, though the ecclesiastics disclaimed the authority of the church of Rome, and parted with some of her gross absurdities and impositions, yet, for the most part, they were very tenacious of retaining in their own hands all the power and profit their temporal princes saw fit to intrust them with; and to withstand the reforming of such things as appeared likely to diminish either their authority or emoluments.

Thus human policy and priestcraft, which ever sullied the brightness of gospel light, had too much influence in the establishment of their religious systems.

The property of the church, of which the first ministers of the gospel claimed no share but what necessity required, was assumed by the clergy; who also reserved and enjoined the payment of tithes: an imposition which even ecclesiastical avarice did not extort, until the ages of gross darkness and ignorance; and for which, not the least shadow or grounds of claim could be derived from the New Testament, or the original practice of the Christian church.

The necessity of human literature, and ordination to the work of the ministry, was revived, and laws were made to exclude all such as were not thus qualified, however they might be gifted by the Holy Spirit, and fitted by their own experience of the work of sanctification: notwithstanding it was allowed that divers illiterate persons had contributed much to the promotion of the reformation, and men of eminence had maintained that vital religion and piety could never flourish until it was totally separated from a dependence on learning and science, and nourished by the holy simplicity that reigned in the primitive ages of the church.

They likewise reformed but partially. Divers remains of the former superstition in rites and ceremonies, and too much of human invention, tradition and art continued in their worship. But, what was of more pernicious consequence, they undertook to prescribe rules of faith and manners, and exerted their endeavours to force those, who, from tenderness of conscience, dissented from them, into a uniformity and submission to their authority, by the penalties of imprisonment, confiscation, banishment, and even death.*

Thus, those that boasted of being the successors of the Lord's true witnesses—the protestant reformers and martyrs—became the executioners of those that

* It is worthy of observation, that the laws enforcing uniformity, and the punishments enacted against dissenters, by the protestants, appear, in some instances, to be copied from the Romish laws against the reputed heretics of their day. A very unworthy original!

were "their fellow-servants and brethren that should also be killed as they were."

This seal may include a period of 85 years, commencing A. D. 1555, the time of the diet held at Augsburg, and continuing to the time of the breaking out of the civil war between king Charles the first, of England, and the parliament, A. D. 1640.

SIXTH SEAL.

12. And I beheld, when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind:

14. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places;

15. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains:

16. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

"And I beheld, when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake." The reformation established in England by queen Elizabeth was far from being easy to many tender consciences; and the

subsequent laws and canons, for enforcing uniformity, became more grievously oppressive under her successors to the sincere hearted, who, under different denominations, dissented from the established church, because they could not comply with her arbitrary and unwarrantable impositions. Which oppression continually increased, until the Almighty was pleased to arise and assert his own Omnipotence.

That spirit of sincerity which was dear to him, had long been groaning under oppression; crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true! dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Whose sighs and cries entered into the ears of the Lord; and at length those who could not be prevailed upon to hear, and plead the cause of his innocent seed, were made to feel the weight of his indignation.

The tyrannical principles adopted, and arbitrary measures pursued, under king Charles the first, which were chiefly directed by archbishop Laud, became so disgustful and intolerant, as to produce, under the permission of divine Providence, the beginning of a great concussion, or shaking of the heavens and earth—a revolution in government and religion, perhaps the most remarkable in its circumstances, progress and effects, of any that had ever taken place in any age, kingdom, or nation. The civil powers revolving successively from the king to the parliament; then to the army; to councils of officers; and to the commonwealth under different administrations, with, and without a protector or single person. And then back through a council, the army, the parliament, and to monarchy again. The ecclesiastical authority likewise changed, from episcopacy to presbytery, and to independency, until its shackles were suspended; and many of the honest hearted in the different denominations, ways and worships, whose spirits God had reached, who were sincerely seeking after peace of mind, and the revelation of the gospel of Christ in greater purity, came out from amongst them, and united in a separate, regular society, which disclaimed all human power and authority in matters of religion. Then independency succeeded; and again presbytery; next episcopacy; and papacy was advancing fast under king James II. which, with the arbitrary powers of absolute monarchy he had assumed and exercised, were terminated by the establishment under king William and queen Mary.

"And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair." Through the struggles that took place during these convulsions, the holy scriptures, which the several parties professed to be their sun, or fountain of spiritual light, were made subservient to the interests of each. Sermons were preached, exalting the divine and unlimited authority of monarchy on the one hand, whilst others were as zealously crying up the rights of resistance, and the lawfulness of the use of carnal weapons on the part of the people. And at different periods the same class were found on either side of the question, as it best suited their interest, ambition or safety. By these means the obligations of duty contained in the precepts of the scriptures, as related to king and people, government and religion, were perverted by their glosses and explications.*

That toleration and liberty of conscience is the doctrine of the scriptures, is very evident—being laid down in many clear precepts; such as, the parable of the

* Until by their various applications of them, continually contradictory to each other, the views of the people, as respected them, became so completely confused and darkened, as to be represented by the figure of "blackness, as sackcloth of hair."

Editor.

wheat and the tares growing together—the apostle's direction to let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind—his declaration to the Corinthians, that they had not dominion over their faith, but were helpers

of their joy—that whatsoever is not of faith, is sin—and the injunction of Christ, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." These, and such like plain and direct precepts of moral and perpetual observation, were trampled upon by the different parties. "When the Presbyterians got the spiritual sword into their own hands," says Neil, "they used it little better than their predecessors the bishops. Both the Scotch and English used great endeavours to enforce uniformity. Most of the sermons before the House of Commons at their monthly fasts, spake the language of severity, and called upon the magistrate to draw his sword against the sectaries." "They also had a law enacted against certain errors, or heresies, therein mentioned, which ordained the punishment of them with death without benefit of clergy; the seventh of which was the denying that the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God." "Which shows," saith Neil, "that the Presbyterians would have made a terrible use of their power, if it had been supported by the sword of the civil magistrate."

Although the Independents were at first for a toleration, to include themselves and the Anabaptists, and, afterwards, for a general liberty of conscience, yet, when they got the power, they soon suppressed the worship of the Episcopalians; forbidding the use of the common prayer book, even in their private houses;

and severely persecuted the rising Society of Friends.*

"Thus, some of those who so lately came out of the furnace of affliction, under which they had cried down national churches and ministry, and maintainance too, fell under the weight of worldly advantage—got into profitable parsonages and dignities—and what was worse, turned absolute persecutors of others for God's sake."†

When the power of the bishops was to be taken down, it was strongly urged by the dissenters, and was resolved by parliament, that for the bishops, or any other Christian ministers, to be in commission of the peace, was contrary to the precepts of Christianity, and a great hinderance of their spiritual functions.‡ But many of the ministers of each party, as they got into power, not only held commissions of peace, but of war too! And the greater part seem to have been deeply engaged in the policies of the times: and thus, not only disregarded the precepts of Christianity, but, in many instances, outlived and contradicted their own avowed principles. Oaths were not only commanded, and preached up as lawful, but the solemnity and obligation of them, trampled upon by kings, parliaments,

* It will appear hardly safe to ascribe the liberty granted by their leaders to any other motives on their part than human policy, when we consider the frequent persecutions by fines, whippings and banishments, that began in their government in New England as early as the year 1634, at the instigations of their priests, and were carried on with determined resolution against the Baptists and all others; amongst which were some of their most respectable members, who owned they could not come up to their standard.

† Gough.

‡ Neil, vol. ii. p. 345.

armies, clergy and people, just as suited their different purposes; the numerous instances of which, mentioned by Neil, would induce a belief, that for the most part not only the plain precepts of the scriptures were violated, but common probity, honour, and conscience, were sacrificed to the circumstances of the times.

Praying, as well as preaching, abounded. The God of love was mocked by solemn invocations of the different contending parties, for him to accompany the direct violation of his laws, with his power and presence, and to enable them to vanquish and destroy the enemies of his gospel; that in the name of Christ, the prince of peace, they might establish his kingdom on earth, which he had declared “was not of this world, else would his servants fight;” who, although he could have commanded legions in his service, yet, as he would not have the enemies of his religion destroyed, (which the blind zeal of some of his followers had urged,) so neither would he have his own life, nor the lives of his immediate and innocent followers preserved by acts of violence.

At other times prayers were directed against the spreading of errors and pestilential doctrines; as the different parties accounted some opinions; which again they allowed of, as being no breach of charity and Christian communion: and even when it lay parallel with their interest, prayed for the preservation of some whose doctrines and practices they had once accounted most obnoxious and heretical.

Many fasts were instituted by the different parties, which—as Neil observes of the monthly fast, which had been continued almost from the first sitting of the long parliament until A. D. 1649—were in great measure for strife and debate, and generally a prelude to acts of violence and persecution.*

I wish the reader to know, and bear it in remembrance throughout, that I am far from mentioning these transactions, either with a view to revive ancient prejudices, or to reflect the least censure upon those successors of any of the parties who disown their exorbitant practices, which have contributed to the introduction or increase of scepticism, and an overflowing torrent of infidelity and licentiousness. But my design is, to show, by a clear statement of those facts, that are already in many people's hands, the exact fulfilling of the prophecies. For which, in some instances, and particularly the present, it appeared necessary to descend into many particulars, (as it was a period, until the restoration of king Charles II., wherein the scriptures were much cried up in words,) in order that the reader might be furnished with facts to enable him to judge of the propriety of the application.

After the restoration, the doctrines and precepts of Christianity were not only made to give way to the maxims of human policy, as before, but the king and many of his courtiers having in their exile, in a season of indolence, contracted habits of voluptuousness, sensuality, and libertinism in sentiment and morals, through the example and encouragement of the court, the nation, in too general a way, became very corrupt and licentious in their manner of thinking and conduct. Debauchery, rioting and intemperance took place to a great degree, and it became fashionable to ridicule every appearance of religion and sobriety.

* Neil, vol. iv. p. 27.

"And the moon became as blood." Many typical ceremonies, figures and symbols, although abolished, and under the feet of the primitive church, had got up in the night of apostacy, and were but partially reformed from. And some that had not the least shadow of foundation in the scriptures were retained, and imposed upon such numbers, in such a vigorous manner, and under such severe penalties by the Episcopalians, as to awaken in the nation a dislike to the order of bishops; and also in the dissenters such a spirit of resentment and retaliation as to procure the punishment of death and other penalties to be inflicted on the obstinate imposers thereof. Thus "the moon"—figures and symbols—became the cause of the shedding of "blood," and continued to be so throughout the greater part of the time of the succeeding revolutions.

The Presbyterians, notwithstanding the solemn protestation which had been enjoined by the parliament, on the whole nation, and their repeated professions of only desiring the reformation of episcopal

government, according to archbishop Usher's plan, under which they could unite with, and continue in the church, yet when they got the power, and these terms were offered, they chose, under the then existing circumstances, to prolong the war, rather than part with the opportunity of imposing their own typical rites and ceremonies, and suppressing of others; and no terms of accommodation were acceptable short of the solemn league and covenant, and compliance with their directory.

The Independents also discovered a like disposition when consistent with their own power and policy.

Again, on the return of monarchy, when the greater part of the Presbyterians would have accepted of archbishop Usher's model, the bishops—notwithstanding their repeated professions—when they had fully obtained the power, appeared unwilling to abate in the least from an exact compliance with many things that appeared very foreign from the essential part of religion. Such as the cross in baptism; the use of the priestly vestments; bowing at the name of Jesus, and at the altars, &c.

It appears very extraordinary, that men of understanding and learning, as there were many amongst the different parties, and all under great professions of zeal for religion and the glory of God, should be such sticklers for the observation of trifling superstitious ceremonies. The Episcopalians risked the convulsing of the nation by enforcing theirs, with the penalties of the loss of property, liberty and life. And the Presbyterians and Independents, when in power, punished a non-compliance with their symbolical ordinances; disregarding the former just and sensible reasoning of their predecessors on their own behalf, when offered now, by those that for conscience sake could not comply with their unjust and arbitrary impositions, to wit:—

"That such ceremonies as man hath devised, and which are known to have been abused to the purposes of idolatry and superstition, ought not to be used in the worship of the Almighty; and even such things as were once commanded for a particular occasion, and afterwards permitted to be used in condescension to the weak, yet when they are known to have been abused to the purposes of idolatry, they ought, like the brazen serpent, to be abolished."* And all this

* Neil, vol. ii. p. 36.

blind and intemperate zeal was found amongst those men that could trample upon the divine precepts of the gospel which were of perpetual moral obligation.

Notwithstanding these things were so, it is neither safe nor generous, although too common a practice, to comprehend any whole body of men under one general character. It appears there were many in the different parties that were grieved at the latitude taken in their measures; and others that were so disgusted as to separate from them, and search after a more pure and undefiled religion elsewhere.

"And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth." This was fulfilled in a twofold sense upon the bishops and other dignitaries, doctors and pastors, the spiritual stars of the different parties. First, by falling from an unremitted attention to the duties of their stations, as religious lights, to the exercise of earthly power and policy, and the promoting of oppression and persecution. And, again, by being shaken out of their places, "even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Driven about by every wind of doctrine that arose highest, into a compliance with the requisitions of the ruling party. Or driven from their power, parsonages, benefices, cures, livings, dignities and offices in church and state, universities, and colleges. First, the Episcopalians by the Presbyterians; then such of these as would not submit to the engagement by the Independents and their adherents. And both the latter parties again by

the Episcopalians.

"And the heaven (the religious establishment) departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." The expression appears particularly adapted to the state of the revolutions in religion at that period. For, although the ecclesiastical powers were for a short time suspended, yet they were not entirely abolished, but, as it were, "rolled together;" and were afterwards again unfolded, until they arrived at their former full powers.

"And every mountain and island were removed out of their places." Not only the greater governments, the three British kingdoms, but the "islands," the lesser governments, and dependent colonies, "were removed out of their places"—out of that state of allegiance and subjection in which they had stood, and which they had so solemnly promised to the different powers.

"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free man"—those that considered themselves bound by their allegiance, and those that asserted their freedom from it, by the conduct of the different party—each in their turn, through the vicissitudes of the war, and changing of measures, seeking their own security by "hiding themselves in the dens"—that is, by retiring to secret places for safety; "and in the rocks of the mountains," that is, the fortresses and strength of the different governments to which they applied for protection and preservation in their distress.

"And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand." This appears to be expressive of the terrors and consternation of those of the different parties, who were either seeking their own immediate security, or were awakened to a sense of the justice of their sufferings. It also appears that many amongst the different parties, and men of piety in general, looked upon the train of national calamities as divine judgments, inflicted upon a corrupt, sinful and persecuting generation.

CHAPTER VII.

1. And after these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

2. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their forehead.

4. And I heard the number of them that were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand, of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

"And after these things I saw four angels"—four different professions of Christian light and knowledge, "standing on the four corners of the" government, "holding" and withstanding the breathing of God's Spirit, "that it should not blow upon the earth," to furnish rulers with wisdom to govern with equity to all, in the fear of the Almighty; each endeavouring to exalt their own party, and oppress others—"nor on the sea," to settle the instability of religious opinions, that like the raging waves were foaming against, and overwhelming each other—"nor on any tree;" to influence and direct the firm and strong opposers of

tyranny and oppression to pursue such measures as would lead to a settlement in peace.

"And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God"—that light and knowledge which, since the dawning of the reformation, had been gradually arising, and had so illuminated the minds of many men, as to enable them to discover the false glosses and pretensions of the different parties.

"And he cried with a loud voice," through these men, who, in numerous judicious publications, declared their sentiments freely to the four different professions, "to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea:" saying, hurt not the government, by getting your own party established; nor the unsettled state of religion, by setting up your own opinions and conjectures, "till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads"—until such as are favoured with divine light and knowledge may so investigate the different systems formed by human wisdom, and proposed to be established by human power and authority, as to clearly point out their inconsistency with the principles and practices by which the primitive Jews and Christians were distinguished as the sealed servants of God. By which it was clearly manifested, that as "He was not a Jew who was one outwardly, nor that circumcision which was outward in the flesh, but he was the Jew that was one inwardly, and circumcision was that of the heart; in the spirit, and not in the letter;" so neither did Christianity abolish those typical ordinances, when their dispensation was ended, (which God had once commanded,) to substitute others in their places: much less did it consist in the observation of rites and ceremonies which he never commanded at all. But to be a Christian, the soul must witness a being quickened by hearkening to the voice of the word of God; and be brought from under the dominion of the natural powers of man, by which it had acted: that, by being born of the spirit of life, it may become a new creature; made capable of worshipping, and doing the will of God, by hearkening to, and following the teachings of his spirit. Those only being the children of God, that were led by the spirit of God, by which they were sealed unto the day of redemption.

"And I heard the number of them that were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." A very small number, comparatively; by which it appears that the figment of the priests, of water baptism, which they call the seal of the covenant between God and man, was entirely excluded.

5. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

6. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

7. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

8. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

The sealing of an equal number of each tribe shows, that a scrupulous uniformity in outward observations was not essentially necessary. That there might be diversity of practices amongst the Lord's true sealed servants. But it was by their faithfulness to the manifestations of duty, according to the measure of grace received, that they were approved: each endeavouring to attain to the excellency in virtue pointed out by the names of the different tribes—the Spirit bearing witness with their spirits, that they were the children of

God.

9. After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

12. Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen.

"After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations," &c. "stood before" the seat of supreme power, that their integrity might be tried by the standard of truth. "And before the Lamb," that their meekness and innocency might be manifested, "clothed in white robes." Not religious creeds and systems practised by the powers of the natural part; but the covering of God's Spirit upon the immortal soul; the garment of pure righteousness. "And they had palms in their hands." Emblems of their flourishing condition, as David saith, the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; and also of the beginning of a sabbath of rest, and rejoicing, after gathering in the fruit of their labours, as the children of Israel were commanded to take branches of palm-trees, on the first day of the sabbath, after they had gathered in the fruit of the land, which was to be held with rejoicing seven days. "And cried with a loud voice," ascribing their salvation to the righteous Judge, who sitteth on the throne of absolute power over the kingdoms of men, and unto the meek, patient, suffering Lamb of God, under whose banner, armed with his armour, they had gotten the victory.

"And all the angels stood round about the throne." All the divinely enlightened, who were for liberty to the tender consciences of all, clearly saw that it was a supreme power that had brought it to pass, by turning wise men backward, defeating their purposes, and making their knowledge foolishness; causing the will, power, and councils of the wise in the wisdom of the world, and the strong in the arm of flesh, to become subservient to the opening a door of liberty to tender consciences in general. Which being manifest to the wise in heart, they prostrated themselves, "and worshipped God," ascribing "Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power and might to him for ever and ever." In time and in eternity.

13. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?

14. And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat:

17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

At the opening of the fifth seal, the souls under the altar of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, were clothed with white robes, although they were to rest a little season. This season being now fulfilled, it was found through the arising of pure gospel light, which dispelled the prejudices of superstition, that not only those who had laid down their lives for the testimony of Jesus Christ, but that all in every nation, kindred, tongue and people, who had submitted to the operation of his spirit, to be led and actuated by it, according to the measure of grace afforded, so as to become sanctified thereby, however distinguished by name, or heretofore condemned by selfish bigotry, were also accepted of him. And that it was the same secret life and virtue of Christ, which brought many that were remote from the outward name of Christianity, or in a superstitious profession of it, into an inward communion with him, and that inspired his martyrs with fortitude to bear their testimonies faithfully, according to the degree of light afforded, which now had enabled its followers to come out of great tribulations: having washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and manifesting by their patient sufferings, the pureness of their doctrines, the reasonableness of their practices, and the innocency of their lives, that they were his sincere followers. Therefore are they, according to the declaration of the elder, "before the throne of God"—left at liberty to stand upon their feet in a religious capacity; to be judged by him, and not as heretofore, by the will and caprice of men, blinded by interest, superstition or prejudice. "And to serve him day and night in his temple." In the new man, dedicated to his service, in which they worship him in spirit.

"And he that sitteth on the throne"—that beareth rule over, and governs them, "shall dwell amongst them," to be their king and lawgiver. "They shall hunger no more," by wandering in the barren mountains of empty profession, seeking there for spiritual refreshment to satisfy the immortal soul. "Neither thirst any more," by striving in the natural ability, through the performance of outward ceremonies, or acts of devotion, to draw water to satisfy the thirsty soul, at the well the fathers had drank of; for "whosoever drinketh of this water, shall thirst again."* For they had tasted of the water that Christ gave, and it was "in them a well springing up in eternal life."

"Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat"—neither shall their doctrines and principles be condemned by the testimony of the scriptures. Notwithstanding the clamour and outcry of an enraged priesthood, who apprehended their craft was in danger, they will be found by men of candour and liberality to be perfectly consistent with the precepts of Christianity. Nor shall the "heat" of superstition be able to procure any more laws to be made to suppress them.

* John, xii. 13, 14.

"For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne" of absolute dominion over all, shall feed them with that spiritual food which is from heaven, which is meat indeed to the spiritual immortal soul. "And shall lead them unto living fountains of waters"—the consolations of his spirit—"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes"—shall take off the restraints and oppressions laid upon them by unrighteous laws.

This seal may include a period of 49 years, beginning A. D. 1640, and continuing to the establishment under king William and queen Mary, and the act of toleration, passed in 1689, for the relief of protestant dissenters; with some particular clauses to favour the people called Quakers.

CHAPTER VIII.

SEVENTH SEAL.

1. And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

Episcopacy being established in England, and Presbytery in Scotland, peace was again restored to the kingdom. Yet it was manifest that amongst the clergy in power, the spirit of persecution outlived the passing of the act of toleration. In England, some of the high church party, not only opposed the passing of the several acts made for the relief of the Friends, respecting their affirmation, or endeavoured to mould or cramp them in such manner as to defeat the intended benefit, but also used endeavours to bring them under suffering by fresh penal laws. But the times were changed.

and more liberal sentiments with respect to religious liberty, generally adopted by men of sense and candour, than had prevailed heretofore, by which their designs were exposed and frustrated.

In New England, notwithstanding the persecution of Friends had subsided in a great degree, through a train of successive occurrences of a very serious and interesting nature, as the Indian war—the loss of their charter—their political contests amongst themselves—and their general infatuation in the business of witchcraft, which had necessarily drawn off their attention, yet, after the act of toleration took place, and the state had returned to a settlement, some of the clergy discovered a propensity to revive former oppressive measures; which so far prevailed, that, in the year 1705, an act was really passed to renew persecution against Friends. But, upon their application to the queen and council, it was repealed, and declared null and void.

In Scotland also, some of the clergy at times discovered a like inimical disposition; and, in the year 1714, instigated the magistrates of Aberdeen to pass a law of the corporation, which was intended to disfranchise the people called Quakers: who, on petitioning the queen and council, procured an order prohibiting the execution of said law, so far as it affected them.

Notwithstanding the high church clergy could not succeed in their endeavours to frustrate the favourable intention of the legislature towards the Society of Friends as above mentioned, yet many of them did not neglect the means they had in their power of being vexatious; and gratifying their malignant dispositions, by pursuing the most exorbitant and oppressive measures respecting their tithes, and other ecclesiastical demands. Although the legislature had pointed out an easier and less expensive method of recovering such claims, not exceeding ten pounds, in a summary manner by two justices of the peace, yet, as they were not restrained, they (or some of them) chose the more grievous methods of prosecuting in the exchequer and ecclesiastical courts: which they carried on in such a barbarous manner as discovered an insensibility to the common feelings of humanity, or the disreputation that would naturally result from such conduct, pursued by any other set of men but ecclesiastics. As if they apprehended their sacred characters exempted them from the censures or reproaches that the meanest laymen would incur by going to law for groats, pence, and single farthings. For such trivial sums, many Friends being sued, solemnly excommunicated and imprisoned.

Divers attempts were also made to prejudice the minds of the people and the government against their religious principles, by reviving and publishing calumnious tracts against them; which were speedily answered, their ungenerous aims detected and exposed, and their acrimonious and injurious assertions refuted and disproved; with which, and with the different publications on the part of the clergy, and Friends' vindications of the brief account of their sufferings, which they laid before parliament, they had at times these kinds of controversies on their hands till the year 1740.

After they had thus defended their principles with their Christian weapons, and disproved the ungenerous attacks made upon their reputation, the mouths of gainsayers being stopped, this species of abuse seemed to die away for a little season.

One would naturally conclude from the tenor of the conduct of the high clergy, that they were the only class of men that were left insensible of the state of the British nation in general, with respect to its advancement in the knowledge of civil and religious liberty. For such conclusion, their patronizing the cause of Sacheverel, justifying the cruelties and oppressions of their order, inveighing in their sermons against the dissenters, and raising the outcry of "the church is in danger," because the moderate party could not join with them in their senseless impositions, and exorbitant jure divino claims, would appear to furnish sufficient grounds.

Although their illtimed pretensions, and the clamour raised thereon, could stimulate the passions of the vulgar, and excite party animosity to a great degree, it also had a good effect in arousing men of talents to defend the cause of liberty, and expose in their true colours the absurdity, unreasonableness, and inconsistency of their measures. Amongst their opposers divers men of liberal sentiments distinguished themselves by their masterly performances. At length, either by their being convinced of their errors, or awakened to see their own conduct in the light in which it was viewed by others, or by becoming more liberal in their own sentiments, these religious controversies ceased, and thus "there was silence in heaven for a little space of time."

This seal may include a period of 61 years, beginning at 1689, and ending 1750.

09. PART IV. Calamitous and warlike events to occur through the same period of time with the opening of the seals, proclaimed by the sounding of the trumpets

PART IV.

Calamitous and warlike events which took place throughout the same period of time with the opening of the seals. Persecutions of the Christians. Wars between the Jews and Romans. Divine judgments inflicted on the empire. After the empire embraced the profession of Christianity, and human wisdom and authority assumed the government of the church, great contentions, internal wars, and persecutions succeeded. The pope sends forth the propagators of his religion, the locusts that were like unto horses. The four angels loosed that were bound in the great river Euphrates. The mighty angel whose face was like the sun. The little book open and its contents explained.*

2. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God: and to them were given seven trumpets.

3. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having

* From the manner in which the translators of the Book of Revelations have arranged their work and divided it into chapter and verse, it would seem that they were not aware of the propriety of considering the book otherwise than as one continued chain, in constant succession, of such mysterious doctrines or events, as the apostle was called and qualified to communicate. It is probable that whatever divisions of subjects were originally made by the apostle, were neglected, or lost, by the ignorance of transcribers in the dark ages. It is, howa golden censer: and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4. And the smoke of the incense which came from the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand.

5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

The solemnity of the angel's standing with the golden censer, and offering the incense with the prayers of all saints, at the golden altar, is expressive of that pure enlightened state, in which the early Christians, instructed by the examples and precepts of their Lord and Master, and assisted by his Spirit, freely offered not only their prayers, but their lives, and all they enjoyed, when required by him that sat upon the throne, in his spiritual kingdom. Offerings of a sweet smelling sacrifice unto God. Numbers of those innocent Chrisever, evident, that the different prophecies are distinct from each other; and to be considered as distinct openings on the mind of the apostle; each separate view being carried through under the figures particularly adapted to the scenes to be represented, and passing through the same portions of time with each other, so far as the circumstances under each opening, and adapted to each figure respectively, were to be transacted in the times of each other. Thus the disclosures made under the several characters of the opening of the seals—the sounding of the trumpets—the witness—the woman—the beast, &c. are all different views, relating more or less to the same periods of time with each other, according as the circumstances to be represented were adapted to the characters made use of; and were no doubt written

by the apostle at different times, according as his mind was renewedly opened. Editor.

tians were put to a severe trial of their faith; being persecuted to death in Jerusalem and other places.

The taking of the fire from the altar, and casting it into the earth, is expressive of the execution of the justice of the Almighty on the self-righteous Jews, for their disobedience and persecutions, and impiously imprecating the divine vengeance on themselves and their offspring. When Pilate washed his hands, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person, they answered, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

"And there were voices"—mutual accusations and complaints, exciting to rebellion, and to punishment. "And thunderings"—awfully alarming circumstances, portending the divine judgments; which induced the Christians to leave Jerusalem before its destruction by the Romans; being warned by the signs which Christ foretold should precede that calamitous event. "And lightnings"—the contending of passions—not only amongst the declared enemies, but the different factions of the Jews, destroying each other with great barbarity. "And an earthquake"—the overthrow of the Jewish polity and government.

After they had by a resolute defence, and an infatuated delusive confidence that they would be divinely assisted, rejected all terms of accommodation or submission offered by the Romans, and provoked them to determine the utter destruction of the city, they fought like men driven to despair and madness, until reduced in number, and suffering the utmost extremity by famine, of which many thousands pined away, they were at length entirely subdued, and their city destroyed by Titus, about A. D. 70.

In this war, in a short space of time, (according to the translator of Eusebius,) besides the number of Romans that were slain, above three millions of Jews lost their lives, in their different cities and fortresses; and many thousands were carried into captivity, exposed for public shows, and given to be devoured of wild beasts; of which number, in Jerusalem alone, one million were destroyed, two hundred and seventy thousand of whom had come from different places to the feast of the passover.

Thus those politic Jews who were looking for their Messiah to come, would judge by their natural understandings of the fitness of his outward appearance, as the wise and prudent Christians, who are looking and praying for his kingdom to come, would judge of the suitableness of his spiritual appearance, to answer the purpose of a Redeemer. They did not want a meek, humble Saviour, to lead them by his instruction and example, in a way of the cross to their own understandings and conceivings, and altogether inconsistent with their ideas of political preservation, into his kingdom which is within—a kingdom of immaterial souls, redeemed, and brought from under the government of the natural part; but they wanted a powerful prince to save them from outward difficulties—to redeem them from the oppressions of the Romans, restore the splendour and glory of their outward temple and worship, and firmly establish their political consequence. And this once highly favoured nation, who, biassed by their prejudices, would not countenance a Messiah and King, whose terms of admission were so contrary to the business, the happiness, and enjoyments of life, and, as they apprehended, with the very existence of civil government, “lest the Romans should come and take away their place and nation," were thus in a few years deprived of their place—their city and temple destroyed—their worship suppressed—their nation almost extinguished, and the remnant dispersed by these very Romans.

6. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound.

7. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth, and the third part of trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

"And there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth." Severe persecutions were frequently revived, and carried on against the Christians. The Jews, after they had obtained some respite, and began to grow considerable, notwithstanding their former sufferings by the Romans, at times excited their cruelties against those innocent sufferers. But these enemies of the gospel of peace, were, in a remarkable manner, permitted to be the executioners one of another.

In the reign of Trajan a destructive war was carried on between them in many parts of the empire, in which many hundred thousands of both nations were destroyed. And in the reign of Adrian, the Jews were again dispersed, their castles and towns demolished, and 530,000 slain with the sword; besides great numbers that perished by famine and pestilence; and with such loss and slaughter of the Romans that the emperor forbore the usual salutations in his letters to the senate.

There were also destructive internal wars amongst the Romans. Mutinies of soldiers, and emperors murdered by their subjects. And in the reign of Gallienus, there were thirty tyrants or usurpers, in different parts, contending with the sword for the empire.

In the reign of Gallus, the Scythians made incursions, and so overran the state, that not one nation subject to the Romans was left unwasted by them. In the reign of Probus there was a great famine throughout the empire, in which great numbers were famished to death. A pestilence also spread far and wide for the space of fifteen years, and was said to rage with such violence at one period, that five thousand died in one day. There were likewise several earthquakes, which are mentioned by different authors, that appear to have been considered by the emperor Antonius Pius, as divine judgments on the persecutors. In writing to the commons of Asia, in behalf of the Christians, about the middle of the second century, amongst other things he saith of them,* "It is their desire in God's quarrel rather to die than to live: so that they become conquerors, yielding their lives unto death, rather than to obey your edicts. It shall seem very necessary to admonish you of the earthquakes which have, and do happen among us; that being therewith moved, you may compare our estate with theirs. They have more confidence to God-wards than you have. You, during the time of your ignorance, contemn the religion of the immortal God, banish the Christians which worship him, and persecute them to death. If any, therefore, hereafter, be found thus busied in other men's affairs, we command that the accused be absolute and free, although he be found such an one, (that is, a Christian,) and that the accuser be grievously punished."

* Eusebius, lib. iv. ch. 13. 62.

These extraordinary calamities were considered by many as divine judgments, inflicted on a persecuting government. And yet the hardened mercenary pagan priests, had the craft to excite and stir up the resentment of the people against the Christians; charging them with being the cause of those calamitous visitations, in that they had provoked their deities by bringing their worship into disrepute, whereby their sacrifices were neglected. And these senseless charges were made the ground for raising severe persecutions, which were carried on with fiery rage; that "one third part of the trees," the firm and strong, were destroyed. "And all green grass was burnt up;" all that appearance of greenness in religion, the product of the natural part, which, in times of outward prosperity, flourisheth like the grass of the field, and yet cannot endure the heat of fiery persecution, like the grass withereth, and is burned up.

Amongst the professors of Christianity there were many, who, in times of ease, had made a figure, and distinguished themselves by their zeal for external performances, yet, who, when these trials came on, manifested more concern for their own personal safety than for the cause of religion; and sought security either in secret hiding places in foreign countries, or in complying with the religious tests imposed by the persecutors.

About the year 258, Gallienus, the emperor, published his edicts in favour of the Christians, and persecution thence ceased for a long time, in which the church degenerated greatly, chiefly through the ambition and pride of the clergy; till about the beginning of the fourth century, persecution began to revive under Dioclesian.

8. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;

9. And the third part of the creatures that were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

When, through the innovations which human policy and superstition had been gradually introducing into the profession of Christianity, the substance had become nearly lost in opinions and conjectures, and the doctors and teachers were engaged in frivolous controversies, like raging waves, foaming one against another, "a great mountain," the Roman empire, "burning with fire," that is, with party rage, on the triumph of Constantine and Licinus, was cast into this "sea" of confusion.

Notwithstanding Galerius and Maximine had made public confession of their guilt, recalled their decrees against the Christians, and acknowledged the justice of the divine judgments in their destruction, and Constantine and Licinus had published their edicts, ordering the property and possessions of the Christians to be restored, yet afterwards Licinus, (whom Constantine had admitted as his fellow in the empire, given him his sister in marriage, and committed to his government a considerable part of the nations subject to the Romans,) moved with envy, stirred up a war against Constantine, and raised a persecution against the bishops, whom he considered as his favourers. He shut up some of their places of worship, and destroyed others. "Neither," saith Eusebius, "was he persuaded that they in them prayed for him, but thought that they made supplication to God, and did all for the emperor Constantine. And for this cause he broke out into a furious rage against us."

Constantine, after several battles, having conquered Licinus, and put him and several of his party to death, an appearance of tranquillity was again restored. "But after this peace," saith Socrates, "there ensued wars and deadly hatred amongst the Christians themselves."

Although few years passed without councils of bishops being held in one or other of the provinces, yet, instead of settling the disputed doctrines and opinions, the violence with which they were conducted, the unintelligible terms which they introduced into their creeds and definitions of faith, and imposed by dint of authority upon others, not excepting even the famous council of Nice, not only served to increase and perpetuate the controversies then subsisting, but to furnish ground for starting new ones, and to fill the world with mutual rage, and mutual persecutions.

Tumultuous riots frequently happened, occasioned by the elections of bishops; especially to those rich sees that had become distinguished objects of sacerdotal ambition. Their contentious janglings about places and power, and new fangled figments, were often productive of slaughter and bloodshed, and the

driving away of the vanquished party, or destroying their religious houses and property; and thus "the third part of the sea became blood."

When the profession of Christianity became the religion in vogue, the pagan priests, of course, adopted it; and to secure or advance their interests and power, undertook to be the advocates thereof: it now, in external appearance, differing little from the Gentile religion. And through the strife and animosity that arose about ambiguous phrases and terms, and unmeaning ceremonies, the small appearance of true life that remained was diminished. "Thus the third part of the creatures that were in the sea, and had life, died."

Divers plain, practical rules of discipline and order, by which the doctrine and practice of the apostles and primitive Christians might have been preserved, and carried safely over this sea of uncertain and contradictory opinions and conjectures, were either explained away, or interpreted to suit the ambitious views of the designing ecclesiastics. And thus, "one third part of the ships were destroyed." And the people, instead of being instructed by the precepts, and encouraged by the shining examples of the apostles and eminent martyrs, to seek for, and steadily persevere in a life of morality, virtue and piety, were led into a belief that religion consisted in a senseless veneration for their relics or images.

10. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters:

11. And the name of the star is called wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

As the animosities amongst the ecclesiastics rather increased, notwithstanding the remedies heretofore applied, and the repeated interference of the civil magistrates, about the year 372, the power of the bishop of Rome was raised above the other bishops; and he was allowed to examine and judge their differences; which was afterwards confirmed by council, A. D. 378.*

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 290.

And, although his authority was long opposed by some of the great dignitaries in the east, it was generally submitted to in the western empire. And so far as he could extend it, he made the separatists of different denominations feel its effects. Thus this great Roman "star fell upon the third part of the rivers and fountains of water, burning as it were a lamp"—armed with fiery zeal to enforce his opinions upon others, and cloaking his cruelty with the pretence of having only in view their spiritual improvement, as if he only wanted to enlighten them. "And the name of the star is wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood"—the situation of these dissenters was made bitter. They were harassed with penalties, deprived of their places of worship, and frequently of their substance, and their leaders banished.

About the year 430, Celestinus the bishop of Rome, presumed, saith Socrates,* to challenge to himself secular power and authority, and banished even the Novatians out of Rome; who, before the beginning of this century, when Innocentus drove some of them away, had flourished there, enjoyed their many churches, and had under them great congregations. And, although the Romans commended them for their uniform consent, as touching the faith, yet they deprived them of all their substance. Thus "many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter."

12. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened,

* Eccl. lib. vii. chap. xi. p. 379.

and the day shone not for a third part of it; and the night likewise.

13. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Wo, wo, wo, to the inhabiters of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound.

Although the celibacy of the clergy had been commanded by the council of Eliberius, A. D. 305, and an idolatrous veneration for images and relics, with many ridiculous pagan rituals, and days of feasting and fasting, had been introduced by Sylvester, A. D. 318, and these things had been much practised, and zealously preached up from that time forward, yet in some places a more simple manner of worship was observed, and these unnatural and idolatrous practices rejected, until in the year 386, pope Siricius held a council of bishops at Rome, wherein they were solemnly enjoined. Yet there were some who opposed, and zealously preached against those dark innovations; particularly Jovinian, and others, who fled to Milan, and there encouraged their brethren to continue in the ancient practices of the primitive Christians; teaching that those who lived according to the rules of piety and virtue laid down in the gospel, practised only the ancient ceremonies, and lived in moderation and temperance, and virtuously, though in the married state, were as likely to obtain the rewards of virtue, and as much entitled to them, as the superstitious practisers of the burthensome observations imposed by these decrees. But in the year 390, a council was held at Milan, which ordered a strict observance of the decrees of the council of Rome, enforcing the same with penal laws.

Thus, "the third part of the sun," the scriptures of truth, "was smitten,"—their light was not permitted to shine; "and the third part of the moon." Those typical ceremonies which had been practised by some of the early Christians, and which the opposers of the new innovations desired only to observe, "were smitten," by adding certain mysterious circumstances to the using of them, and ascribing powers and virtues to their observance, which were never intended; and intermixing with them so many pagan rituals, that their light was darkened. And those "stars," Jovinian and others who had preached against these dark, idolatrous practices, were silenced, or banished, by the emperor; who answered their sensible judicious reasoning with the terror of penal laws; so that these lights were "smitten." From this time the very appearance, and true form of the primitive church, was lost amongst the Romans.

An angel then solemnly proclaims, "Wo, wo, wo, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the voices of the trumpet of the three angels that were yet to sound," as containing still greater calamities, and more terrible plagues than the foregoing.

Notwithstanding the too general darkness that prevailed at this time, divers of the fathers (as they are called,) who lived about the latter end of the fourth, and beginning of the fifth centuries, particularly Jerome, Austin, and Chrysostom, were apprehensive that a season of more dreadful misery and distress was approaching, and should quickly arise out of the church, by the spirit of antichrist; which, according to their own, and other explications of the prophecies of Daniel, of the Apostles, and particularly of the Revelations, was now at hand: as the powers of the civil government were declining fast, and the ecclesiastical advancing upon its ruins.

Several writers in the second century, as Justin Martyr, Irenius, and Tertullian, were of the judgment that the power of the Roman state was "that which letteth," or preventeth, the "man of sin" from exalting himself into the throne of God; which they assigned as the reason why they prayed for the preservation of the Roman empire; as the fall thereof would be the establishment of antichrist; and the greatest calamity hanging over the world was only retarded by the continuance of it.

Tertullian, who lived about the latter end of the second century, on his expounding these words, "Only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way," says, "who can this be, but the Roman state? The division of which into ten kingdoms, will bring on antichrist."

Origen in the third, and Lactantius, Cyril, and others in the beginning of the fourth century, wrote much to the same purpose. Jerome, who also wrote to the same effect, and was now a witness to the barbarous nations beginning to tear in pieces the Roman empire, exclaims, "He who hindereth, is taken out of the way, and we do not consider that antichrist approaches." Austin and Chrysostom were much of the same sentiments. The latter, in one of his homilies, speaking of antichrist, asserts, that "when the Roman empire shall be taken out of the way, then he shall assume the power, both of God and man."

About the year 374, the Burgundians rose from their seats upon the Vistula, with an army of 80,000 men, to invade Gallia; and being opposed, seated themselves on the northern side of the Rhine, over against Mentz. The Vandals had fled over the Danube in the latter end of the reign of Constantine,* and were settled in Pannonia, by that emperor; where they lived quietly till the year 377, when several Gothic nations, flying from the Hunns, came over the Danube, and were settled in Maesia and Thrace by the emperor Valens; but the next year they revolted, called in some Goths, Allans, and Hunns, from beyond the Danube, routed the Roman army, slew the emperor Valens, and spread themselves in Greece and Pannonia as far as the Alps. In the year 380 they were checked by the arms of the emperors Gratian and Theodosius, and made a submissive peace. From this time they remained pretty quiet, and subject to the Romans, till the death of the emperor Theodosius, in the year 395, when they began their ravages under Alaric.

The following winter, it appears that great bodies of the northern nations from beyond the Danube, crossed over that river on the ice; and being joined by their brethren within the empire, they overrun and laid waste many fine provinces; being re-enforced by others of those barbarians, that passed the Danube at different times, and joined them. During these confusions, divers Roman provinces revolted, and set up kings or rulers of their own; and thus became independent of the empire. The barbarians at length divided their conquests by lot, and the emperor, for the sake of peace, confirmed them in those seats by his grant, A. D. 413.

* Newton on Daniel.

CHAPTER IX.

1. And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit:

2. And he opened the bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

3. And there came out of the smoke, locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power;

4. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

5. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

6. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

How the see of Rome became more rich and magnificent than the others, and the ascendency of the power of its bishops, have been already related. This superiority, however, advanced but gradually; as appears by the determinations of several councils in the beginning of the fifth century; which acknowledged a kind of supremacy in the see of Rome, but agreed that its bishop should not be called the prince of priests, or the chief bishop, but only the bishop of the chief see. In this century, however, we find the bishop of Rome called councils there to determine the affairs of other provinces, and their metropolitans.

About the year 450, saith Mosheim, Leo, commonly called the great, asserted with vigour and success the authority of the Roman pontiffs. It appears that his influence and authority were great, from the manner the general council of Chalcedon was conducted; which consisted of six hundred and thirty bishops. Doctrines and opinions which before had been solemnly condemned, were now confirmed and established as orthodox. These right reverend fathers crying out, "We believe as pope Leo doth; anathema to the dividers and confounders; we believe as saint Cyril did; thus the orthodox believe; cursed be every one that doth not believe so too."

This was followed with a scene of disorders hardly to be conceived: the emperors sometimes taking part with one side, and they, with the bishops, publishing edicts to enforce conformity; alleging that the peace of the church depended on it: and then, being obliged to give way to the turbulence of the opposite faction, recalling these edicts, and issuing others, for the peace of the church. Bishops were mutually accusing and deposing one another, and cursing the determinations of the different councils, and those that adhered to them. Parties, in their turn, were banished and recalled.

In this confused state of ecclesiastical affairs, Anastasius, who succeeded Zeno in the empire, A. D. 492, when he saw the great sedition that reigned in the church, called the people together, and told them, "He would be emperor no longer." But seeing this, they quieted themselves, and requested him to continue their emperor.

In the year 498, Symmachus was elected supreme bishop, and styled by Ennodius, "Judge in the place of God, and subject to no human tribunal." And now, saith Mosheim, was laid the foundation of that enormous power, which the popes afterwards acquired. And thus "a star fell from heaven to the earth"—to the exercise of temporal authority and jurisdiction.

"And to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit," of human wisdom and contrivance; "and there arose a smoke out of the pit." All the doctrines and opinions, however inconsistent, that had obtained the stamp of orthodoxy, and all the absurd ceremonies and figments that

had acquired the title of divine institutions, that had been hatching since the beginning of the apostasy, now streamed forth, "as the smoke of a great furnace;" to the darkening of "the sun"—the light of the scriptures of truth—and of "the air"—the breathing of God's spirit; that they should not qualify men for usefulness in the church, or even for their private devotions. It was now solemnly decreed, that every province should observe one order of divine service; and even forms of morning and evening prayers were enjoined.

"And there came out of the smoke, locusts upon the earth:"—the whole tribe of ecclesiastics, bred up, and qualified in the smoke, for the ministry; which had increased so fast, that whole armies might have been raised out of them. They were now arranged in regular degrees of rank and order;* which was settled by successive councils. The ecclesiastical canons were also incorporated with the civil laws.

"And unto them was given power, as the scorpions

* Such as patriarchs, exarchs, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, archdeacons, monks, friars, &c.

of the earth have power"—that is, in the venomous stings which they have in their tails. "And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth"—that religious sobriety that grew up and flourished, agreeably with the laws of government—"neither any green thing"—people of pious, innocent lives—"neither any tree"—the firm and strong opposers of new innovations. For it was common when serious opposition was made to any new impositions, craftily to put them off, until a more favourable opportunity offered; and then, when they succeeded, and a precedent was once obtained, whatever objections were afterwards made, they were imposed, as being of divine authority; and those who would not submit, were made to feel the sting. But the objects for them to practise their arts upon, were, "those men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads"—the superstitious, the wicked, the idolatrous votaries of the church; and those barbarous nations which had overthrown the empire, and which they now began to convert to the church.

"And to them it was given that they should not kill them; but that they should be tormented five months." Accordingly they were harassed with penances, with corporal punishments, to atone for crimes; some of them inflicted with great severity: with pecuniary requisitions for dispensations and indulgences, praying souls out of purgatory, absolutions, christenings, caster offerings, and such like trumpery. The living were deceived into liberality, and the dying were, in the weak moments of despondency, frightened to purchase future happiness of these devouring locusts, by bequeathing to the church their earthly possessions.

The "five months," which is 150 years, does not by any means limit their duration; but is the period from the election of Symmachus, A. D. 498---at which time the foundation of the pope's temporal authority was laid---to the year 648; in which, through their vigilance and craft, they had so far overcome every obstacle to his ambition, that he ventured to control even the emperor himself.

The papal power had been greatly exalted by Justinian, on his conquest of Italy, A. D. 552. But it afterwards received a mortifying check, by some of the emperors; who, incensed at the zeal with which the agents of the papal authority enforced the worship of images, confiscated their possessions in Sicily, Calabria, and Apulia, withdrew the bishops of these countries, and the various provinces of Illyricum, from their jurisdiction, and subjected them to the bishop of Constantinople; which produced great contests. But in the year 606, the supremacy was again introduced by the grant of Phocus the tyrant, and the artfulness of the subordinate clergy.

"And their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man." All the advantages that could be gained over the weakness, credulity, or fears of mankind---princes, or people---were immediately seized and secured; so that the miserable dupes were left without remedy, to endure in their states, or families, the torment occasioned by those imprudent measures, which they had precipitately entered into; oftentimes more grievous than death itself; and heightened by the aggravating circumstance, that they were entailed on their posterity.

7. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold; and their faces were as the faces of men.

8. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

9. And they had breastplates as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses running to battle.

10. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

11. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue he hath his name Apollyon.

12. One wo is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

In the year 649, the pope ventured boldly to display his authority, by condemning in council the emperor's edict, that he had opposed the preceding year; which was intended to hinder the angry monks from propagating strife and contention about an opinion held by the Monotholites, which he apprehended was impossible to be determined to the satisfaction of both parties. The bishop of Rome, not only condemned this emperor's edict, but thundered out the most dreadful anathemas against the Monotholites and their patrons; who were solemnly consigned to the devil and his angels.

Having now firmly fixed his own authority, he zealously set about extending the bounds of his jurisdiction, by converting the remainder of those pagans that were settled in the empire, and other neighbouring nations. And he met with considerable success; either through the artifices practised by the ecclesiastics to impose on the ignorance and credulity of those superstitious barbarians, the gaining over their sovereigns, or compelling them by fire and sword to embrace Christianity, or a profession of it; which now consisted in liberality to the church, an entire submission to the pope, and a stupid veneration for the clergy, and in the performance of superstitious ceremonies, not only altogether unworthy of the name of religious institutions, but so absurd as to be a disgrace to reason and humanity; and which, instead of promoting the true spirit of religion, appear to have been studiously calculated to draw off the human mind from such researches as must have a tendency to detect both their power and practices.

In 751 pope Zachary approved of the deposing of Childeric, the French monarch, in favour of Pepin the usurper. And his successor, Stephen, A. D. 754, solemnly dissolved the obligation of the oath of allegiance: and in return for this condescension, had the exarch of Ravenna given to him; and an oath taken by the French monarch, and upon his government, to secure the immunities of the clergy.

By these means, whatever opposition was made, the power of the popes increased, until about the year 984, it came to its height; when the emperors were divested of whatever ecclesiastical authority they before had exercised; which was now assumed by the universal bishop.

"And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle." This is expressive of that strength and resolution with which they set out as preachers, prepared to encounter difficulties, in order to propagate their doctrines. "And on their heads were as it were crowns like gold"—the dominion they obtained over mankind, and the golden rewards they accumulated or sought after. "And their faces were as the faces of men." They could appear to those to whom they came, like men reasoning only for their benefit. "And they had hair as the hair of women." They had an exterior covering or adorning that was seducing to the superficial and unwary. "And their teeth were as the teeth of lions"—greedy to devour: like the false prophets and false teachers, "eating the fat, and preparing war against such as put not into their mouths." "And they had breastplates as it were breastplates of iron"—were fortified with hardness of heart against the feelings of humanity. "And the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses running to battle"—they were so combined in strength, and their powers so rivetted on the minds of people, and so interwoven with the laws and constitutions of civil governments, as to enable them to carry on their warfare against the rights and reason of mankind, with the sound of terror to any that dared to oppose them. "And they had tails like unto scorpions; and there were stings in their tails"—their practices became precedents to succeeding ages, to enforce impositions that were like scorpions to torment mankind with their stings. "And their power was to hurt men five months." This is expressive of the time of duration of that abject state into which mankind had now sunk under the dominion of this ghostly power of darkness, which continued 150 years without any apparent recovery from it.

In addition to the gross ignorance which succeeded the irruptions of the northern nations, who, being strangers to civilization and decorum, destroyed the monuments of literature and science that fell in their way, another circumstance which contributed to the perfecting of this antichristian dominion, was a notion, that was publicly advanced, and rapidly spread through the European provinces, that, according to saint John, after a thousand years from the birth of Christ, satan was to be let loose. Hence, prodigious numbers gave over to the clergy their lands and treasures, and prepared to wait the event: imagining that Christ would descend to judge the world. Others devoted themselves by oath to the service of the churches and priesthood; whose slaves they became, in the most rigorous sense of the word. And all this from a stupid notion that the Supreme Judge would, as a consequence, look upon them with a propitious eye. The opulent attempted to bribe the Deity by rich donations to the sacerdotal orders, who were looked upon as the immediate vicegerents of heaven. New rites and ceremonies were introduced. The rosary of the virgin was instituted, which consisted of fifteen repetitions of the Lord's Prayer, and one hundred and fifty salutations of the blessed virgin; and the multiplication of saints was also now thought necessary, to calm the anxiety of trembling mortals. And yet corruption and licentiousness reigned with a horrid sway, and had generally affected all ranks and orders of men. Ecclesiastical dignities were sold without shame to the highest bidders; and the most stupid and flagitious wretches were thus frequently advanced to the highest stations in the church.*

That mankind were mostly involved in this state of

* Mosheim, vol. ii. 155 to 200.

darkness and depravity during this period, is acknowledged by historians generally: and Gendebrand, who was a Roman, and cannot be suspected to have any view to the explanation of the prophecy, fixes the time of its duration to 150 years.

Although divers attempts were made by kings and emperors, to oppose and check, the arbitrary, tyrannical impositions of the pope, the power of those locusts, during these five months, was such as to

frustrate all their endeavours. And the clergy bore such sway in all councils and legislative bodies, as well as over the consciences of high and low, that any resistance to the will of the pope, generally terminated in the fall or submission of those potentates who attempted it; and they were either deposed and their subjects absolved of their allegiance, and others set up in their places, or, through the terrors of excommunication, forced by their own vassals and subjects to desist, or superstitiously dreading the precedents of divine judgments, continually revived in their view, brought to submit to the most ignominious treatment which vindictive pride and malice could inflict. Emperors and kings were made to prostrate themselves before the pope, and to kiss his toe*—to hold his stirrup, and lead his horse, like servants—to stand barefooted, during his pleasure, at his gate, in the cold—to walk barefooted, and be scourged by monks—to have the imperial crown kicked off in contempt with his foot—to lay prostrate for him to tread on their necks—and finally, to compound with him for such terms as he saw meet to impose.

Successive attempts were also made by some superior

* See Fox's Acts and Monuments.

persons in councils and synods to check the progress of superstition and idolatry, which generally in the end proved alike ineffectual:* as in the council of Rheims, A. D. 994, and in others which followed in France, in Flanders, in England, in Italy, and in Germany.

Early in the eleventh century, a religious society was formed at Orleans. Its principal members were twelve canons—men eminently distinguished, according to Mosheim, for their piety and learning—and it was composed, in general, of people far from being of the meanest condition. They rejected all rites and ceremonies, and did not admit of any spiritual virtue or efficacy in the sacraments, but placed the whole of religion in the elevation of the soul to divine and spiritual things, and the internal contemplation of God. They were condemned to be burnt alive, A. D. 1017.†

This was quickly succeeded by others of the like stamp in different parts, who bore their testimonies against many of the superstitions of the times: but, in general, they soon suffered a similar treatment, unless, to save their lives, they renounced their principles.

Such also was the power of these “locusts,” that it destroyed the solemn obligations of duty between children and parents, and between the people and their rulers. Subjects were induced to withdraw their allegiance from, and even to bear arms against, their lawful sovereigns; and princes were compelled to withhold their protection from, and even to destroy, their innocent and unoffending subjects. And all the advantages gained by the clergy over men in behalf of the pope in the former period, when his power was fully established,

* Newton, vol. ii. p. 241.

† Ib. vol. ii. p. 239.

he claimed and enforced as his just rights, and improved to his further advantage; supporting his pretensions by the former precedents; until he arrived at such a degree of arrogance and presumption as to bid defiance to all laws, human and divine.*

The powers and practices of this dismal period, also became precedents, which, like "scorpions," have grievously tormented mankind with their stings, long after they began to emerge from this state of spiritual darkness and barbarity. Witness their bloody contests with sovereign princes, for power and

prerogative—their horrid croisades, and savage massacres, of the poor Waldenses, and Albigenses, and other conscientious dissenters—their barbarity in propagating their religion with fire and sword—and the unwarrantable impositions and claims of the clergy, over the consciences and property of men. These have been "stings," the torment of which is, in some measure, felt to the present time, in every government where their influence has been extended.

"And they had a king over them"—their spiritual head, and supreme director—"who is the angel"—the fountain and dispenser of that religious knowledge, or rather religious folly, brought up from "the bottomless pit;" who is properly called the destroyer. "One wo is past"—the height of its strength and force is over. It is past the zenith of its power. "And behold, there come two more woes hereafter."

Through the instigation of the popes and clergy, the mad project of taking Jerusalem was set on foot; which spread like an epidemic amongst princes and people: so that old and

* See Fox's Acts and Monuments.

young, men and women, priests and monks, merchants and peasants, were eager to assume the cross, and set out in this holy war, as it was termed. They accomplished their object in the year 1099; taking Jerusalem by storm, and destroying all, old and young, who did not profess Christianity. They massacred above seventy thousand Musselmen, burned all the Jews found in the place, and established a kingdom there, which subsisted upwards of eighty years; when it again fell into the hands of the Musselmen, after many fruitless expeditions, in which the popes made a prey of their votaries. In the thirteenth century the crusaders were totally extirpated out of that called the Holy Land: and thus ended this barbarous and inhuman contest; which, according to some accounts, cost the Europeans above two millions of persons.

13. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God,

14. Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

15. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year; for to slay the third part of men.

16. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

17. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone.

18. By these three were the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

On the sounding of the sixth trumpet, John "heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar"—that is, from four executive powers, which are here represented as the executioners of divine justice; being the "horns of the golden altar which is before God,---saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels"---four professions of light and knowledge, "that are bound," by the arbitrary power of ecclesiastical tyranny, supported by civil governments, "in the great river" of protestantism; whose

doctrines were now spread far and wide, like the waters of "the great river Euphrates." "And the four angels were loosed" ---to wit, the Bohemians or Hussites---the Rustics---the mad men of Munster---and the Lutherans, Calvinists, and all that united in the Protestant league. "Which were prepared for (or at) an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year." Some at one time, and some at another---some for a longer, and some for a shorter period; "for to slay the third part of men"---to spread devastation, terror, and destruction over "the third part" of the Christian world. And the horsemen were very numerous. And thus he saw the "horses"---the propagators of those doctrines---in the vision of eternal light; "and those that sat on them"---governing and directing their proceedings---"having breastplates of fire"---that is, zeal and party rage---"and of jacinth" ---the precious stone of liberty---"and brimstone"---which is, revenge for former injuries.

"And the heads of the horses"—the leaders of the several parties---"were as the heads of lions"---bold and courageous. "And out of their mouths issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone"---their proclamations breathed forth the spirit of party rage, and zeal for liberty, and external ordinances; and revenge for the injuries they had sustained. "And by these three were the third part of men killed"---by the zeal and party rage about liberty, the contention about the virtues and number of outward ordinances, and by the spirit of revenge, which the contending parties breathed one against another.

That the insurrection of Munster* will be admitted as applicable, is very probable; their wild practices having been long held up by succeeding persecutors, as a reason whereon to ground their determined cruelty to the poor anabaptists of following ages, who were not only innocent of their conduct, but altogether disclaimed their unchristian practices. Those mad enthusiasts had cried up adult baptism; and this was made a handle against all that afterwards practised it, however innocent in their lives, or dutiful to the government they lived under.

It is also very probable that the war of the Rustics,† as they were called, will be allowed its place in the application; of which Mosheim writes,‡ "That in the year 1525, a prodigious multitude of seditious fanatics, arose like a whirlwind, all of a sudden, in different parts of Germany; took arms, united their forces, and waged war against the laws, the magistrates, and the empire in general; laying waste the country with fire and sword. But in a pitched battle, fought at Mulhausen, they were defeated, destroyed in great numbers, and Munzer, their ringleader, taken, and put to death. As many of these people, notwithstanding their inconsistent conduct, had propagated an opinion, which was also held by many eminent reformers, "That a great reformation would take place, through the influence of the Holy Spirit," this doctrine was afterwards looked upon as odious; and the wild practices of these people were frequently revived in remembrance, to brand the cha-

* An hour.

† A day.

‡ Vol. iii. p. 210.

racters of innocent men, who, conscientiously dissenting from the established forms and practices prescribed by the different parties, were pressing after a more thorough reformation.

The war of the Hussites and Bohemians,* appears to have arisen in part, or at least to have been hastened, by a desire to revenge the barbarous massacres of John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, in violation of the safe conduct granted them; their enemies declaring that no terms were to be kept with

heretics.

Mosheim, treating of this dreadful war, says, "The acts of barbarity that were committed on both sides, were shocking and terrible beyond expression. For notwithstanding the irreconcilable opposition that there was between the religious sentiments of the contending parties, they both agreed in this one horrible point---that it was innocent and lawful to persecute and extirpate the enemies of true religion---and such they reciprocally appeared in each other's eyes. And it is difficult to determine which of the two carried their cruelty to the greatest height." And again he adds, "It must be acknowledged that the Hussites had imbibed the most barbarous sentiments, with respect to the obligations of executing vengeance upon their enemies; against whom they breathed nothing but bloodshed and fury, without any mixture of humanity and compassion; and such they also considered some others that did not join with them, whom they extirpated with fire and sword. The council of Basil, in order to put an end to this war, invited the Bohemians to their assembly, but to no purpose. Their messengers returned

A month.

without having effected any thing. Afterwards this council sent into Bohemia, Eneus Sylvius, and others; who, upon allowing the Calextines the use of the cup in the holy sacrament, satisfied them in the point they had chiefly at heart: and thereby this numerous and powerful sect were reconciled with the Roman pontiff."

Thus this desolating war, which for a number of years had been conducted with mutual party rage, fierce contentions about external rites and ceremonies, and a barbarous spirit of revenge against one another, vanished away in this smoke: and those who had a more substantial reformation at heart, were left to shift for their lives by flying to the mountains, and other places, for safety: who were afterwards distinguished by the name of "the Bohemian Brethren."

On a due consideration and examination, the conduct of the Lutherans and Calvinists* will appear equally pertinent to the prophecy. The only material difference between them and those already mentioned, appears to be, that the former were heady, rash, and foolish in their proceedings, and did not long continue; especially the two first mentioned; whilst these, being more politic and "wise in their generation," or more successful, have been able to hold out, and establish themselves. Of the propriety of the application, the tumults, seditions, and horrible bloodshed, with which those ruinous wars in Europe have been conducted, bear ample proof. Whereof William Law writes,† "The light which broke out at the reformation, abhorred the bloody superstitious zeal of those Catholic heroes. But what followed from this new-risen reforming light? What

* A year

† Address to the Clergy came forth of these holy croisades? Why wars, if possible, still more diabolical. Christian kingdoms, with blood-thirsty piety, destroying, devouring, and burning one another, for the sake of that which was called popery, and that which was called protestantism."

But it was not only in opposition to the papists these practices were found, but in their other wars. Protestants against protestants, and papists assisted by protestants, against other protestants assisted by papists, have miserably shed one another's blood; hiring and forcing men to kill one another, who were ignorant of, and altogether unconcerned in the quarrel.

The established persecuting principles, even of Luther and Calvin, (notwithstanding their former solemn and judicious declarations to the contrary,) as well as of their followers, respecting the lawfulness of putting those they accounted heretics, or seducing separatists, to death, and their practices founded on these pernicious maxims, are evidently applicable to the prophecy. The banishments and deaths procured by Luther and Calvin themselves, and the many burnings and other grievous sufferings of the Mennonists and other dissenters from their establishments, inflicted by their followers, and the precariousness of the title by which these dissenters for a long time afterwards held the little indulgence granted them, are facts well authenticated.

Thus a zeal for liberty, which each party sought for themselves—their contradictory opinions about ceremonies and doctrines—and a spirit of revenge for injuries, were, in a great measure, the stimula to carry on these wars and persecutions. Of which, saith Mosheim,*

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 459.

"The disputes that arose between the protestants, respecting the eucharist, predestination, &c. were conducted with intemperate zeal. The spirits were heated, the flames of controversy kindled anew, with violence and fury, that to extinguish it, seemed to be a task beyond the reach of human wisdom or human power to accomplish."

Yet, Luther, on his separation from the church of Rome, did not appear to be so bound by conscience to his opinions and doctrine, as to be willing to risk his own life for them, although he afterwards imposed them at the risk of the lives of others. For it appears, that, at a time when he apprehended the danger of himself and party, he wrote a letter of submission to the pope; and also consented to publish a circular letter, exhorting all his disciples and followers to reverence and obey the dictates of the holy Roman church. "Had the court of Rome," saith Mosheim,† "been prudent enough to have accepted of the submission made by Luther, they would have almost nipped in the bud the cause of the reformation." On such a slender thread did this great event hang, so far as it depended on the wisdom and faithfulness of man to support it.

19. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails; for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

20. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 189.

21. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

"For their power is in their mouth"---to blow the trumpet of liberty, and thereby stir up zeal and party rage; and kindle up the coals of contention about smoky opinions and ceremonies, into a devouring flame; and to breathe forth the spirit of vengeance; turning resentments into brutal revenge, and gratifying it by barbarous acts of aggression. "And in their tails"---in the examples they left, which became precedents; for their precedents were like unto "serpents"---spirits of self-sufficiency---here was reformation enough---so these great reformers believed, and so they practised. "And had heads"---were collected into creeds, religious systems, and arbitrary rules of faith and conduct. "And with them they do hurt"---by

countenancing and encouraging the practices of the papists, and hindering men from looking forward, and pressing after higher or greater attainments.

"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the work of their hands"---their idolatrous inventions---"that they should not worship devils"---should not yield the sovereignty of their consciences to man's arbitrary prescriptions or impositions---"and idols"---whether presented to the senses or the mind, if submitted to, they are equally the objects of idolatrous worship; or whether they are more glorious and alluring, or less desirable in appearance, as "they can neither see, nor hear, nor walk"---have not the exercise of one living, spiritual sense; neither can they bestow one spiritual benefit upon their votaries. "Neither repented they of their murders"---their bloody wars and barbarous persecutions; having the example of protestants now to justify them, of which they frequently put the sufferers and their advocates in mind---"nor of their sorceries"---their invented trumpery to impose upon mankind; in some of which the different parties so far agreed, as to confine divine favours, and the necessary participation of spiritual nourishment to the immortal soul, to depend upon outward rites and ceremonies, dispensed by the priests; although, like the ancient sorcerers, they differed in the manner of letting out, or retailing their spiritual gifts. For the papists now argued, that the church had an equal right to impose, by its authority, many rituals as a few. "Nor of their fornications"---their spiritual whoredoms, for such are all acts of devotion and worship imposed by authority, or performed in the mere will and power of human abilities. "Nor of their thefts"---their unjustly taking from men their property, as the forfeiture of their consciences, or for the support of an antichristian ministry.

CHAPTER X.

1. And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun; and his feet as pillars of fire:

2. And he had in his hand a little book open. And he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

3. And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

4. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

5. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven,

6. And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

7. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

This mighty angel was that light and knowledge which, through the mighty power of God, broke forth in England, in the disciples of John Wickliff. It had long groaned under the power of the church of Rome. And when that power was rent from off the nation, its witnesses, the sincere-hearted puritans, were alike oppressed and persecuted under the Episcopalians. When their power was shaken and removed, the same adulterous spirit, under the name of Presbytery, set up to persecute all whose minds the Lord had

enlightened to see, and who were faithful to separate from their deadness and formality; in which the same beastly power ruled and directed, that was so hateful to God and man in the other establishments. Independency and Anabaptism also appeared; and there was a stirring of heavenly life amongst them. But they also fixing in their forms, lost the life and simplicity which the Lord had blessed and owned. And when the Independents obtained temporal power, they, like their predecessors, were for enforcing their standard upon others, and equally cruel in persecuting the Lord's witnesses against their formality.

"There was also one appearance more pure, and nearer to the kingdom, than all these, which was, of 'seeking and waiting,'" saith Isaac Pennington, who lived at the time, "but death overcame this also, by making a form of it."

Thus this "mighty angel," of light and knowledge, was "clothed with a cloud" to the wisdom of this world. Each party in whom it had appeared, was for fixing in their own form, as if the life and power of religion was there; and the blessing of the Lord, which was not to any form, but to the pure spiritual life that was in the soul, left them to arise in those, who, in more simplicity and sincerity, were witnessing against the deadness, formality and oppression of those behind them. And thus, his appearances were as diversified to the natural understanding of man, as the "rainbow."

"And his face was as it were the sun." The professed views of the promoters of each reformed establishment had been, to ground their systems on the doctrines and precepts of the scriptures---"the sun:" and a reformation being now effected by the Spirit of Christ, which dictated them, its principles were, therefore, perfectly answerable thereto. "And his feet as pillars of fire"---his standing was firm, and not to be moved from bringing to pass the divine purposes; making the zeal and party rage of man subservient thereto.

"And he had in his hand a little book open." Those whom the Lord had now qualified to be instruments in the advancement of his kingdom, being gathered into his infallible light, saw the reformation in government and religion, which he designed by his power to effect in the world, as plain as if it was in an open "book:" which some of them were constrained, not only to declare to the rulers, priests and people, but also to publish their prospects thereof as a warning to all.

Isaac Pennington,* in speaking of the adulterous spirit---that is, the natural understanding of man---undertaking to act and direct in the worship of God---saith, "No paint can hide, no profession, no practice, no duties, no ordinances, no ministry can avail, or conceal her. The Lord will pursue her with the cups of his indignation, until he hath made her manifest, and brought her down to the very pit; where the feet of Sion shall trample upon her for ever. Sing, sing, O inhabitant of Sion. Dost thou not behold the crown of pride going down apace? The decree is sealed against her. She cannot escape. Yea, she is fallen, she is fallen. She is already taken in the snare. The eye of my life seeth it, and rejoiceth over her in the living power. Her earth also shall be made desolate, and burnt up, with all that is found therein. All her settlements shall be shaken." He also expresses in divers other places, the clear prospects he had of the downfall of that antichristian spirit, in all its appearances; together with the powers that uphold and support them.

Samuel Fisher,† speaking to the powers of the English nation, of the unhappy connexion of the university and clerical interests, with that of the state, saith, "I here assure you, from the Lord, the cleaving of that mire and clay of the clergy's counsels to your iron, will never hold; but the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, will smite your image that stands on such a mixed, brittle bottom, in the feet and toes of it,

that it shall fall, and become, before the word and spirit of

* His works, p. 81.

† Ibid. p. 590.

the Lord, in the mouths and hearts of his people, as the chaff of the summer-thrashing floor. Yea, as stubble before the wind, and the angel of the Lord pursuing it. And such as look inward---whose eyes and hearts are toward the Lord, rejoicing in his highness whose excellency is in the clouds, and hoping in his mercy, they are come within the ken and clear sight of Rome's utter ruin, in all three of her appearances in this nation."

Divers others wrote to the same purpose, which for brevity's sake I omit. What is here already, and will be presently noted, of these two Friends' solemn declarations, is sufficient to show that "the book was open in the hand of the angel."

"And he set his right foot upon the sea"---of unsettled religious opinions---"and his left foot upon the earth"—upon the powers of government--"and cried with a loud voice"---by his messengers in many countries and nations; proclaiming the everlasting gospel of life and salvation, the approaching day of the Lord's power, and the downfall of the kingdom of antichrist. "And when he cried, seven thunders uttered their voices"---solemn warnings to engage the attention of mankind, such as our Lord declared should precede his coming; to wit, deceivers coming in the name of Christ; setting up human wisdom and authority, to prescribe and establish the means of salvation by him. False prophets---men assuming the name and office of ministers of Christ, from mere human qualifications. Wars, and rumours of wars, both internal and foreign. Earthquakes, famine, fires, and pestilential disorders.

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, John was about to write, and heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not;"---they were now to have a time of trial, to see what fruit they will bring forth; and he left without any further extraordinary calls, or providential warnings: being already sufficiently admonished, both by precept and example. Of which Samuel Fisher* writeth, "That after all the high professions of religion, their prophets, priests, princes, and people, of all forms, living still, for all this, unreformed, because not turned to that light which would show every one his shameful, sinful self; some in the practice of one evil, and some in another, and every one in his own, that likes him best; and believing it will be spared, and excused, though it live in him, or he in it, till he dies; so that the best of the parish are yet as the beasts that perish. Being all lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God: having all this while a form of godliness, and denying the power thereof. For which, therefore, having as eye-witnesses, borne, and in this nation, well nigh finished their testimony against you, that ye may remember ye were warned in time, and be excuseless, and speechless, when God himself comes as a swift witness against you, for your adulteries against him, and comes nigh unto you, even in your consciences unto judgment, Christ's own disciples, God's own hidden ones, who suffer from you for it, are now utterly and eternally turning from you."

"And the angel"---that mighty power of God---"which I saw standing upon the sea,"---of unstable religious opinions, and upon the earthly powers of government, "lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware"---

* His works, p. 554.

declared by his faithful servants in the name and power of the God of truth, "who liveth for ever and ever, who created the heavens"---who is the author and finisher of faith, and all true religion—"who created the earth, and all things therein"---the rulers or governors, and the governed; "and the sea"---the unsettled state of religious opinions, produced in consequence of his convictions in the soul,* by which he is drawing all back from the grand apostasy, to the true fold of rest, that he who had arisen, and manifested his power, would again arise, and so execute his judgments, as "that there should be time no longer"---to those that opposed his kingdom, and usurped his authority and prerogative.

Amongst the remarkable declarations to this effect,

* The idea here meant to be conveyed is, not that the Divine Being is the author of confusion, but that the impressions of his love on the conscience excite uneasiness under false views and opinions entertained, and hence a conviction of their incorrectness. Thus, reflection becomes excited, and the mind prepared to embrace new views from time to time, as light is gradually unfolded, and experience advances: and hence different opinions and conclusions are from time to time in sincerity adopted, according as the mind becomes prepared for further discoveries—all tending forward toward that purity of doctrine and practice intended by Divine Wisdom.

But real confusion—the state generally represented by the figure of "the sea"—arises from different individuals or societies fixing in opposite opinions and conclusions, and zealously contending against each other for their rectitude; instead of patiently improving under the light from time to time unfolded, and in an humble sense of human weakness and blindness, waiting for further discoveries, with mutual love and forbearance toward each other. Ed.

the following is noticed of Isaac Pennington.* "My soul hath still in remembrance the grievous shakings and rendings that have been in this nation, which entered deep into the bowels of it, and made every heart ache, and every heart astonished. This nation was settled in religion and outward peace; but yet there was a spirit within, which had been long groaning under oppression; whose sighs and cries entered into the ears of the Lord. And he rose up in his fury and jealousy, and rent the heavens, and rent the earth. So breaking the very foundation of both, that men generally were amazed, and wondered what would become of all. The former religion was almost buried in confusion, and in danger of being utterly lost. A long-spun corroding war were we entangled in, which administered no hopes, nor likelihood of peace. The hand of the Lord reached through all these dominions. Magistracy, ministry, the common people, the people of God, (both such as were accounted so, and such as were indeed so;) the line of confusion was stretched over them all. They did all reel and totter like a drunken man; as if they had been so to fall, as to rise up no more. But behold, how suddenly and unexpectedly was there a settlement of all again. The nation settled in peace; magistracy settled; ministry settled; the common people settled; and those which were shaken in their spirits, got into their several ways in religion, and settled again. Thus there was a general healing of all again, save only a few, whose spirits God had so reached, that their wound was incurable. And unless somewhat had been brought forth which the world can-

* Preface to his works.

not know, (nay, the religious spirit of man, which is below, can no more reach it, than the common spirit of the world,) they had remained miserable, lost, scattered and confounded to this day. But the Lord hath, in infinite mercy, visited them in the season of distress: and there hath a little foolish thing broke forth, (at which, all the wise and religious in the spirit of this world cannot but stumble,) which hath administered

relief, and discovered the foundation whereon they also can settle. So that now, there is, as it were, a universal settlement. As every creature is gathered into the centre, which is proper and suitable to its spirit to bottom on. Now this I have to say to all. Let every one look to his foundation. For the Lord can arise again; yea, and will arise again, and shake once more; and then the heavens and the earth, which have not a true foundation, cannot but fall. If the earth be not founded upon, and settled in righteousness, its present establishment will not stand. If the heavens be not founded upon, and settled in truth, they will melt, and pass away before the fire of the Lord. There is a spirit that mourneth deeply to the Lord, groaning inwardly; and his ears are open to it; and he will plead the cause of his seed. And the churches, and religions, wherein the seed of the serpent can live and flourish, shall wither and come to an end. Dust is already become the serpent's food. The spirit of man, in all his exercises of religion, knoweth not the bread of life. But the dead feed upon the dead; and the dead spirit of men loves to have it so."

And again, he saith,* "We may appear great ene-

Page 2.

mies to you, because we witness against your ways, and tell you what the end of them will be; but are we enemies to you indeed, whose desire is to save you from this great wrath, which hath already entered into the earth, and seized on some? Should we sooth you up, and not witness these things to you which we infallibly know? How shall we answer it to the Lord our God, or to your souls, when we shall appear before him? If we were in your condition, would we be content to be let go on, and be overtaken with this great destruction?"

Samuel Fisher also, speaking of those several religious ways and worships, gathered by the wisdom of man, from the letter of the scriptures, and set up by human power, saith, "I tell you in the name and dread of the living God, whether you will hear, or forbear, of the bringing down of that Babel, which you all agree to build upon it. And what work will more attend this great catastrophe of that chaos—even the old heaven and earth, the worldly rudiments of which begin to melt, and the frail foundation thereof to shake, that they may remove, and the new one come in place, that must remain, will, as the Lord lives, make the ears to tingle in time to come, that refuse to hear of it from the tongues and pens of the Lord's prophets, to whom it is revealed; and their minds shall be amazed, and their hearts shake and shiver, that harden themselves against the troublesome testimony of it."

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound"—these solemn warnings which have been rejected, and kept out of sight, will be revived and brought into view, and "the mystery of God will be finished, as he hath declared by his servants the prophets."

8. And the voice which I heard from heaven, spake unto me again, and said, Go, and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea, and upon the earth.

9. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up: and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

11. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

The apostle was then commanded to "take the little book out of the angel's hand, and eat it up." This is expressive of the state of those people to whom these declarations were made: who, being warned, and having time afforded to weigh, consider, and digest them, instead of turning every one from the evil of his ways, have rejoiced and made merry, as if the danger was over, and as if they were not come to pass: not considering that the long-suffering of God calleth to repentance: and that those who being often warned, harden the neck, and will not turn to the Lord at his reproof—who hearing, will not hear, and seeing, will not see, when things are plain, will be left to fall backward, "and be broken, and snared, and taken." And where the leaders of a people do long cause them to err, both themselves, and those that are led of them, are destroyed. Thus, however sweet the eating up of the book may be to the taste, it will in the end, be bitterness and wo.

"And he said unto me, thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." Thou must again represent, in a clear manner, what the religion, temple and worship are, which the Lord requires in this spiritual dispensation. And also the certain destruction which will come on all the self-sufficient, formal professors of it.

10. PART V. Representation of the state of pure religion, exhibited under the character of the Lord's witnesses

PART V.

Containing a representation of the state of pure religion, exhibited under the character of the Lord's witnesses, from the time of the visible suppression of the life and power of godliness in the church throughout the time of the former periods. Showing what the witnesses were—how they prophesied in sackcloth—were slain—arose and stood upon their feet. After which, the apostle proceeds to represent their exaltation into heaven. With a summary view of the downfall of all power and authority, both in government and religion, which oppose the counsel and determination of Divine Providence, "That the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER XI.

1. And there was given me a reed, like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

2. But the court which is without the temple, leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

3. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

4. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth.

5. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

6. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters, to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

His having the reed, or measuring rod, given him, shows, that it was not his own opinion or judgment he was to depend upon, but the standard of truth. "And the angel stood, saying, Rise and measure the temple and the altar"---the religion and worship of Christianity in its purity—that as he was to prophesy before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings, through a succession of ages, it might be a standard of certainty, to distinguish it from the corruptions that would be introduced into the visible profession of it, and from the opinions and conjectures of the natural understanding of men in their endeavours to effect a reformation.

As man turned from the teachings of the word and Spirit, and in his own fallen wisdom assumed the office and character of a minister of Christ, a ceremonious worship gradually changed Christianity in name to idolatry. The visible profession, the outward court, was no longer Christianity. It was, therefore, not to be measured, nor taken into the standard; it being neither the temple nor altar of God.

As the outward court was given to the Gentiles, that is, to the natural understanding of man, (which is the Gentile spirit,) in the year 318, they had so degenerated from the practices of the primitive church---the holy city---that the purity and simplicity of its worship and institutions were trampled under foot by arbitrary power. Which, from the time of pope Siricius, and the determination of the council of Milan, A. D. 390, continued for the space of 1260 years, or forty-two months.

The professors of the Christian religion having been gradually leaning to the powers of human wisdom and sophistry to defend their doctrines, in the year 273 this became more apparent in the council held respecting the controversy with Paulus Samosatenus, bishop of Antioch; when the secular power was called on to enforce their decrees, by depriving him of his palace and dignity. From this time, in place of the guidance and authority of the WORD and SPIRIT, which were the life and power of the Christian church, human wisdom and human authority were advanced to bear rule.

As in the purest ages of the church, there were some who were not sincere in their profession, or fell away, so when it became apostatized, the Lord raised up some, from time to time, to be witnesses against the impositions of human inventions: who, although blinded in many things through the superstitions and prejudices which prevailed, yet as they were faithful to hold up to the world, that measure of truth, light and word of life conveyed to them, it was the testimony of the same living word and spirit which supply the golden candlesticks with oil; and from thence shine, as God's witnesses, to the world. Although "clothed in sackcloth"--in filthy garments, they are the Lord's anointed ones, before whom the great mountain shall fall. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

"And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies." That is, those in whom the word and spirit of the Lord hath begotten a testimony for him, however they may be despised of men, and accounted enemies for his sake, the testimony which they have borne, will, in time, enforce conviction; that the word of the Lord will not return void, but will kindle a zeal that will overcome their opposers; and those that "hurt them must," in the end, "in this manner be killed."

"These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy." The impositions of the priests (being contrary to the practices of the primitive Christians and the teachings of divine grace) were so detected and exposed by the witnesses, that those to whom they prophesied, convinced of the deadness of their religious performances, could no longer consider them as the showers of celestial rain, or heavenly consolations to the soul thirsting after righteousness. Which appeared by many sincere, honest hearted people, labouring in their own abilities to find out new ways to conciliate the divine favour, and procure to themselves that heavenly comfort the immortal soul panted after.

"And have power over waters." Societies separated from the established religions, are called waters. These, through the testimony of the witnesses against the tyranny of the oppressor, have been aroused to defend their opinions, and assert their liberties, with the carnal sword; thus "turning the waters into blood;" and smiting earthly governments with all plagues, as often as permitted by Divine Providence.

7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

8. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

9. And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

10. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

11. And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

"And when they shall have finished their testimony" ---have fully exposed the corruptions that had been introduced into religion, and clearly established the purity and spirituality of the Christian dispensation, the ecclesiastical power---"the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit," of human contrivance---"shall make war against them"---shall reason against their testimony, as inconsistent with the laws and policy of human society; oppose their doctrine, and persecute the supporters of it; and finally prevail to suppress, "and kill them." This was effected by the several protestant governments of Europe, who, like the papists, assumed the power to establish systems of faith, and directories for the worship of God. And thus, human wisdom and human authority again usurped the place of the word and spirit: denying the necessity of, and striving to prevent, any further or greater reformation.

It had been the testimony of many of the martyrs, that a reformation would arise through the influence of the Holy Spirit: and many amongst the reformed, who dissented from the new establishments, retained this belief; until through the influence of John Menno, they were mostly brought to unite with his catechism: which expressed a dislike of that doctrine, of the approach of a marvellous reformation in the church, through an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit.

As in the year 273, human wisdom was conspicuous in the decisions of the church, and human authority was called in to enforce its decrees, from this time the word and spirit were evidently excluded from the supremacy, and "prophesied" only "in sackcloth"—their testimonies were subjected to the control of human wisdom and power for 1260 years. At the expiration of which time, we find, that in England, after king Henry the VIII. had thrown off the power of the church of Rome, and assumed to himself the supremacy in matters of religion, the parliament and convocation confirmed it; and it was solemnly enacted, A. D. 1533, "That the king had full power and authority, to reform, redress, restrain, order or amend, all such matters and things whatsoever, which by any spiritual authority or jurisdiction, ought, or may be lawfully reformed, redressed, restrained, ordered, or amended, most to the pleasure of Almighty God, and increase of virtue in Christ's religion."* It does not appear, that either the pleasure of the Almighty, or the increase of Christian virtues, were any objects of king Henry's pursuit.

The little reformation that took place, seems rather to have been admitted for political purposes. For although after divers struggles, the Bible was permitted

* Neil, vol. i. p. 9.

to be read in the English tongue, yet the sanguinary laws that succeeded, and the barbarous executions which took place in consequence thereof, manifest that it was not intended that people should understand the sacred writings in any other manner, than according to the directions of decrees, and letters patent, which were commanded to be believed and obeyed. And thus the consciences and faith of the people were placed under the absolute disposal of human power.

In this situation things continued under his successor, Edward VI. And notwithstanding some further reformation took place in rites and ceremonies, during this reign, yet some persons of strict and virtuous lives, were burned to death on account of religion: and it was now said by the papists, that they saw men of harmless lives might be put to death for heresy, by the confession of the reformers themselves.

"And their dead bodies"—their testimonies which were slain—"shall lie" in this fair and conspicuous "street"—the broad highway between papists and protestants—"of the great city," the profession of Christianity; "which spiritually is called Sodom," from its corruptions, licentiousness, and wallowing in impurity; "and Egypt;" from its tyranny and oppression of the Lord's people; and from their priests, like the magicians of Egypt at the command of their prince, practising rites and ceremonies to imitate the power of God; "where also our Lord was crucified," spiritually, in his witnesses, as he was personally, at Jerusalem, by the Jews.

"And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations," that is, they of the several sorts of religious professions, founded on human wisdom and policy, which are the waters on which the great whore sitteth: "shall see their dead bodies;" their testimonies lying dead---disregarded, and trampled upon, "three days and a half," viz: the day of the power of the papists, which was again fully restored by queen Mary---the day of the power of the Episcopalians---the day of the power of the Presbyterians---and half the day of the power of the Independents---"and shall not suffer their dead bodies," that is, their neglected, slain testimonies, "to be put in graves"---to be buried, or hidden out of sight. They affording a refuge to some of the parties persecuted, and applying to the prevailing powers on their behalf; setting forth the practices of the primitive Christians, and faithful martyrs since; as the sufferers also did in their own defence; by which means their testimonies were kept in view; although they were slain, lay dead, disregarded, and trampled upon by each party, in forming their own religious systems, and in their subsequent practices.

"And they that dwell upon the earth:" the rulers and governors thereof, "shall make merry"---shall rejoice that their barbarous practices are sanctioned by others. "And send gifts"---embassies and mutual congratulations; "because these two prophets tormented them" in their arbitrary proceedings.

Emperors, kings, and rulers, who before had been considered as tyrants, and supporters of idolatry, were now styled, Most Christian, and Catholic, and Defenders of the Faith: or from being heretics or usurpers, were now allowed to be lawful rulers. The church of Rome, which had been the whore of Babylon, became the mother church; and the bishop of Rome, who had been the beast, and antichrist, became his holiness; or a brother in Christ. The Episcopalians were elder brethren to the Presbyterians, as these were reverend brethren to the Independents and Baptists. Each party flattering those in power, although they reciprocally censured the religious opinions of each other.

"And after three days and a half"---the Papists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians having each had their day of power, and the Independents being in the middle of their day of power—"the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet." There was now a people raised up to own and witness the WORD and SPIRIT of God in life and power, to be their teacher, lawgiver and leader: to disclaim all human wisdom and contrivance in divine worship, and all human authority and coercive penalties in the discipline of the church of Christ: and to see that every thing which had been introduced into Christianity, without the authority of God's Spirit, must be parted with; and that the true Christian life, which is a new and heavenly birth, brought forth in the soul, must be witnessed by all that would merit a title to the Christian name.

"And great fear fell upon them which saw them." Like unto the fear of the Moabites when they sent for Balaam to curse the children of Israel---the type of Christianity.

Perhaps there never was a period of more diversity of religious opinions, than the one in which George Fox appeared, to preach the true living gospel of Christ, which had long been buried in mystery and superstition, or smothered with human conjectures and opinions. Notwithstanding the different parties were contending amongst themselves, they generally united together in opposing his doctrines.* Though he was a person little conversant amongst men---uneducated in arts, languages and sciences---unversed in the various modes of divinity---unprotected by men, and subjected to the mobbings of upwards of one hundred opposers from the press, besides the misrepresentations which teemed from the pulpits, yet, in opposition to the pride, policy and power of a learned priesthood, and a prejudiced people, with a bigoted magistracy at their head, he was made instrumental, through the simple doctrine of the cross of Christ, to the turning many thousands, not from one form into another, but from spiritual darkness into spiritual light---from a state of spiritual death, to a life of righteousness: and, in some instances, from habitual vice to a course of strict virtue.

The tenor of his doctrine was to wean men from systems, ceremonies and outside religious contrivances; and to lead them to an acquaintance with themselves, by a most solicitous attention to what passed in their own minds: directing them to a principle of spiritual life, manifested in their own souls; which, if duly attended to, would introduce rectitude of mind, simplicity of manners, and a life and conversation adorned with every Christian virtue; and to the enjoyment of that true and substantial peace, which the panting soul had been looking for, and longing after, which is the effect of righteousness.

The success and fruits of his ministry show, that he was endowed with qualifications and authority superior to those conferred by universities, or the appointment or ordination of men. And the system of discipline he

* Phipps, p. 210.

was led to establish, for the well ordering and managing the affairs of society, has been found sufficient to answer the purposes for which it was instituted; and to manifest the superiority of that wisdom by which it was dictated.

Amongst other things which exposed George Fox and his fellow believers to personal abuse, was, that they viewed the customary modes of salutation, uncovering the head, bowing the body, and using complimentary speeches and titles, as owing their origin to pride on the one hand, and folly and parasitical artifice on the other; and, therefore, esteemed it their duty to bear a public testimony against these customs, by declining compliance therewith.

Their manner of address, though singular, and contrary to fashion, was neither absurd nor inconsistent with reason or propriety; yet it begat general dislike, filled the magistrates, ecclesiastics and laics with indignation, and exposed Friends to grievous abuse in their persons: being often beaten, buffeted, stoned, imprisoned and fined, for no other reason than their declining to take off their hats, and to give the customary titles of adulation to men.

Their doctrine, their circumspect conversation, their plain dealing and honest testimonies against religion without righteousness, carrying with them strong reproof to hypocrisy and lifeless profession, were little less offensive to many of the ostentatious and formal professors of the age.

But what contributed as much as all the rest, to fasten in the minds of the people an aversion, too deeply rooted to be easily eradicated, was, their opinion that the gospel ministry was free; and that every true gospel minister ought to minister because it was his indispensable duty, arising from an immediate divine call and qualification; and that no person ought to preach for hire: but that in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ they ought to give freely to the people. And their practice corresponded with their doctrine.

They also declared that the Lord would bring down the antichristian ministry, and the antichristian means by which it was supported. And therefore believed it to be their indispensable duty to refrain from the payment of tithes, as unlawful in the sight of God, whatever they might suffer from men on that account. These things touched the teachers of every other denomination in a very tender part—their interests—and, as Gough expresses it, raised against them a combined host of foes, such as have been able to overturn kingdoms. The priests and pastors of every other class, however at variance amongst themselves, generally took the alarm, and united in exertions against these hated reformers, to paint them in hideous colours: to impress upon the magistrates and the people, the most unfavourable opinion of the doctrine and conduct of those men, who, in the face of the whole world, had so widely deviated from the common conduct of mankind, and broached opinions, in their view, so pernicious.

Biased by prejudice, and blinded by passion, their representations of this people transgressed the bounds of candour and of truth. The pulpits, in the solemn hours of divine worship, were converted into vehicles of calumny and fiction. Every ridiculous story was circulated to their disadvantage, and all manner of pains taken to represent them, not what they were, but what their adversaries would have them thought to be.

The press, seconding the efforts of the pulpit, spread undeserved reproach widely, and to ages yet unborn. Men of letters, leisure and abilities, warped by the popular voice, without giving themselves time to consider this people and their doctrines attentively, joined in the common cause against them. This confederacy of enemies could vilify their reputation, abuse their persons, plunder, imprison and grievously persecute them; but could neither overset their confidence in divine support, nor prevent the increase of their numbers, till they became a considerable body; not more remarkable for the singularities of their profession, than for the uniform practice of every Christian virtue, and the iniquity and severity of the sufferings inflicted on them, through three successive revolutions of government. When, at length, obtaining a toleration, they gradually overcame the unfounded prejudices raised against them, in the view of men of candour generally, as has been before related.

12. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

13. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and in the earthquake were slain of men, seven thousand; and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

The apostle having described the state of pure Christianity in the character of the witnesses down to the same period of time with the two former representations, he then proceeds to exhibit a general view of their exaltation, and the overthrow of formality and superstition.

"And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither." Men of liberality, of all persuasions, on examining the principles and practices of this people, who professed the word and spirit to be their leader, have found they were perfectly consistent with the religion and morality pointed out in the scriptures of truth. And that it was not from any perverseness or obstinacy they differed from others in

those things which rendered them singular, but from clear apprehensions of duty. They being humane, sociable and kindly affectionate; seeking the good of all men; insomuch that none but those who disregarded the witness of God in their own consciences could blame or reproach them for insincerity.

Many publications have declared these sentiments respecting them; among others, the following observations of the late governor Livingston, of New Jersey, is entitled to respect, from his known and approved moral, political, and literary character.*

"As to my own part, I doubt not that the gospel may be preached without that immense apparatus of human erudition, an expensive education, and libraries of theological books. An apparatus that hath but too often proved the means of inflating with literary pride, and terminated in 'that wisdom by which the world knew not God:' while it arrogantly despised, as 'the foolishness of preaching,' that by which 'it pleased God to save them that believe.' Indeed, I know it may, because I know it has been, and still is. The apostles had not this kind of preparation. Excepting St. Paul, they were all illiterate fishermen and mechanics; and

* American Museum, vol. viii. p. 255.

George Fox alone, has, without human learning, done more towards the restoration of real unadulterated Christianity, and the extirpation of priestcraft, superstition, and ridiculous unavailing rites and ceremonies, than any other reformer in Protestant Christendom has with it. But the apostles and primitive evangelists were, you say, in preaching the gospel, illuminated and directed by the Holy Spirit, and therefore wanted not the assistance of systematical codes, and folio volumes of cabalistical criticism. They were so; and who dare, in modern times, or at any time, preach that same gospel without the like illumination and direction. If without it he pretends to preach any gospel, I am sure it would be a gospel of his own making, or that of his scholastic preceptors."

I might add the testimonies of other eminent men, which for brevity's sake I omit. However, I have not the least doubt, but the more strictly and generally the principles and doctrines of this society come to be examined and considered, the more fully consistent with reason, sound philosophy, and the religion of Jesus Christ, they will appear. And as the spiritual blindness, occasioned by prejudice, comes to be removed, such religious systems and modes of worship, as are formed by human wisdom and contrivance, supported by human power, or pecuniary means, and performed in the mere strength of the natural abilities, will also appear to be neither consistent with reason, with true philosophy, nor the spiritual nature of the gospel dispensation; and therefore not the true religion of Jesus Christ. And thus the two witnesses, the Word and Spirit of the Lord, will, by a great voice, saying, "Come up hither," be restored to their place and dignity, which they held in the primitive church; though in a cloud to the superstitious, whose religion consists in outward ceremonies, and acts of devotion taught by the precepts of men.

"And the same hour there was a great earthquake"—a great revolution in government at the same time of the witnesses ascending. "And the tenth part of the city fell." The tenth part of the profession of Christianity fell from its assumed power and dignity.

"And in the earthquake were slain of names* of men, seven thousand"—the complete number of all the titles of ecclesiastical honour and dignity, whereby the locusts, bred up for the ministry, in the smoke of human wisdom, are distinguished in the exercise of their lordly, Gentile dominion; a dominion, long since furnished by the dragon, who gave the beast his power, and great authority, and which has been continued in succession down to the present time. This succession will now be so broken, and the power

so lost, that, as Dr. Chandler observes, "Not all the men on earth, nor all the angels in heaven, can restore it." These were names of men, given by men, and not by the Holy Spirit. For true Christians assume no names, or titles of dignities; having but one Master, even Christ, and they are all brethren.

"And the remnant were affrighted," appears to apply to the people of Great Britain, who have long given their strength to the beast, after his power was shaken, and a door might easily have been opened for the removal of all ecclesiastical authority. Through the selfish views of men, overruled by the providence of the

* Though the word "names" is omitted in the common translation, it is noted as having a place in the Greek.

Almighty, this power was restored and preserved, until his judgments against the great whore should be fulfilled; when they will leave religion free of all restraints, and "give glory to the God of heaven." That is, acknowledge his supreme power and right to rule and reign in the kingdoms of this world; and to govern and direct the consciences of men, without any interposition or restraint, much less punishment, by their authority. Which only will be the way to fix their government on a permanent foundation, and to enjoy the protection and blessings of Divine Providence.

14. The second wo is past; and behold, the third wo cometh quickly.

15. 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.

16. And the four-and-twenty elders which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

17. Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

18. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

19. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

After the destruction of the great apostate city has thus commenced, in the fall of the tenth part thereof, as a certain sign and prelude of her full and final overthrow, we are informed that "the second wo is past, and behold, the third wo cometh quickly." He that hath often warned, long waited, and given space for repentance, will go on, as he has begun, until he make an end.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet, in the wars and calamitous events attending, will be convincing to all that are religious, that the remarkable visitations through divine judgments, and the great overturnings and revolutions which will take place, will not be such as commonly happen in the kingdoms of men; but will be indisputable evidences that the Lord has arisen, and manifested that power and authority by which he will proceed to overturn all the opposers of his peaceable reign and government; until "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever"—in time here, as well as in eternity. And the heavenly host joined in solemn adoration, worship, and thanksgiving to God, for the manifestation of his great power.

"And the nations were angry," that they should be disturbed in their settlements; and angry, because they had, at the expense of justice and equity, and at the risk of public tranquillity, nourished those false prophets, who had cried, "Peace, peace," because they put into their mouths; and because they had smitten, rejected, and oppressed the Lord's messengers, who had faithfully warned them in his name, that the Lord would certainly arise, to overthrow the whole kingdom of antichrist; and that all those governments and establishments that supported it, must necessarily fall in its destruction.

"And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, is come." That the eyes of mankind should be opened to see the dead state of the soul, until it is quickened by a divine principle; and that all the religious exercises performed in the strength of the natural abilities, however devoutly and zealously accomplished, are in themselves dead, and therefore offensive to God. Having this perception, they will be enabled to judge who have, and who have not, been his true followers.

"And the time is come that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets;" in manifesting the truth and certainty of their mission, by bringing to pass the things which they declared at thy word. "And to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great." Although they had been abused and despised for bearing the cross of Christ, and preferring the fear of God to the favour of men, they will now be esteemed and respected for their sincerity; whilst those that "corrupt the earth," by committing fornication with the rulers and governors thereof, will be cast down and destroyed.

"And the temple of God was opened in heaven;" it will be evident to pious, religious people, in general, that only the regenerate, the pure in heart, are the true spiritual worshippers of God; that they are his temple, in which is "the ark of his testament"—his divine law written, and his will manifested; as the law of Moses was written and deposited in the ark outwardly, the type. "And there were lightnings"—contending of passions: "and voices"—sentiments of parties exciting to action: "and thunderings"—awful visitations, by fires, and famines, and such like solemn appearances of the pouring down of the Almighty's judgments: "and an earthquake"—a revolution; "and great hail"—a great mortality by pestilential disorders.

11. PART VI. The primitive Christian church under the character of a woman

PART VI.

Account of the primitive Christian church, under the character of a woman—the persecutions she met with—the war in heaven—her final flight into the wilderness, and the time of her continuance there—persecutions carried on by the beast and his image, during the time of her absence, against every attempt for a reformation amongst the remnant of her seed, which approached toward her external appearance in her primitive state, and endeavoured to keep the commandments of God.

CHAPTER XII.

1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman slothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2. And she, being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and, behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

7. And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon: and the dragon fought, and his angels,

8. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

"And there appeared a great wonder (or sign) in heaven." Answering to the earnest expectation of all that waited for the spiritual consolation of Israel, but a wonder and astonishment to those who in their carnal conceivings were imagining that the kingdom of Christ would come in outward glory and splendour. "A woman clothed with the sun." That is, a church about to be established, that fully answered the divine prophecies recorded in the scriptures of truth, and that abolished the Jewish types, figures and ceremonies; and thus "had the moon under her feet."

The crown of twelve stars signifies the twelve apostles, who were sent forth as lights into the world; and the success of their mission crowning their travail. "And she, being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and

pained to be delivered." This represents the earnest labour, care and travail of the church and her faithful pastors, that her members might be preserved from carnal ordinances, and outward observations of meats, drinks, washings of the body, days and times, and such like ceremonies; that they might pursue those things which reach the spiritual, immortal soul, which must, therefore, be spiritual; that thereby they might be renewed into the image of Christ. That as he was, even so they might be, through his power, in this world, pure, holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven"—that is, among the professors of religion. "And, behold, a great red dragon"—a bloody spirit of infidelity, which opposed and persecuted the Christians. The heads and horns represent the larger governments and less executive powers, which determined and executed the sanguinary mandates.

"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." Many who, from their offices, had been accounted as lights in the church, were drawn from their proper stations by the tail of the dragon. That is, by precedents, imitating the unbelieving Jewish and Gentile doctors; assuming arbitrary powers over the consciences of men, which they began to impose in the second century; and in the third, practised like earthly tyrants.

"And the dragon stood before the woman, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." He destroyed the children at Bethlehem, but missed the child he sought after. He crucified our Lord in the flesh, but could not stop the effusion of his Spirit. He persecuted his members, and seduced many from the faith, yet the man-child was brought forth, a pure, holy, heavenly birth in the soul, that no acts of barbarity or tyranny inflicted on the material body could reach or destroy. "Who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." This will appear a mystery to the natural understanding of man; more especially as the children of the night have had a long time of revelling, rejoicing and triumphing over the Word and Spirit, whilst they prophesied in sackcloth: which true man-child, restored to its original state and order, is to bear rule over nations, as well as individuals. Even that power of Jesus Christ, which "smote Rahab, and wounded the dragon," will also reduce the fiery, ravening, lion-like nature of man, to such a state of humility, that a little child, begotten in this power, shall lead them, notwithstanding so many of his professed followers cannot believe in his promises, or trust in his arm for preservation.

"And her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne," and retained in the heavens until these times, which are the times of restitution of all things that ever have been out of order, which have been spoken of by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began.*

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." As the natural man, through human qualifications, undertook the office of pastors, and teachers of Christianity, a form of godliness gradually began to take place; that about the middle of the second century, certain outward typical ceremonies, which had been practised by some of the apostles, on certain occasions, were considered as having some secret spiritual virtues united to them, which, through these means, were conveyed to the spiritual immortal soul. This appears

* Acts iii. 21.

from the controversies which arose about that time, and shortly after, respecting the celebration of Easter, and other rites equally insignificant. From this time, the woman, the true church, apparently began her flight into the wilderness. For she did not flee altogether; but through these means, the minds of the people

began to be bewildered; though the visible form was not wholly departed from for a considerable time. And notwithstanding there were some that bore testimony to the spiritual nature of the church of Christ, in every succeeding age, yet such was the generally beclouded state of the human mind, that they were only considered as mystics, visionaries, or heretics; and their testimonies so far rejected, as not to be considered even as a foundation for a general reformation for the space of 1260 years; or until the time of John Huss, who was a disciple of the famous Wickliff, and suffered martyrdom about the year 1416.*

He, speaking of the reformation of the church, saith, "I believe there shall arise a new people, formed after the new man, which is created after God; of which people, new clerks and priests shall come, and be taken; which shall hate covetousness and glory of this life, labouring to a heavenly conversation. Notwithstanding, all these things shall be brought by little and little, and wrought in continuance and order of times, dispensed of God for the same purpose. And this God doth, and will do, of his own goodness and mercy, and for the riches of his patience; giving time and space of repentance to them that had long lain in their sins, to amend and fly from the face of the Lord's fury; until

* Fox's Acts and Monuments, p. 580, London edit. 1610.

at length all shall suffer together; and until both the carnal people, and priests, and clerks, in process and order of time, shall fall away, and be consumed, and eaten of the moth."*

Protestants, in general, have esteemed John Huss a true martyr of Christ, and professed to believe that his prophecy would in time be fulfilled. As he and Jerome of Prague, both foretold, that their enemies would certainly be called to judgment, after one hundred years come and gone; which was looked upon to have been strictly fulfilled, in the wars and separations from the Romish church which took place at the reformation. And it is worthy of notice, that Luther began to write against the pope about the year 1516.

Having got forward in point of time, in order to show the fulfilling of the 1260 years, I now return to the order of the history.

"And there was war in heaven." That is, there were disputes and controversies respecting religion. "Michael and his angels fought." Those that believed in the providence of God, in revealed religion, and that Christianity was a divine institution, fought with their spiritual weapons, and patient sufferings unto death—"and the dragon fought, and his angels"—infidelity, the supporters of Paganism, and denyers of Christianity, with their bloody weapons of persecution and cruel tortures inflicted on these unresisting victims—"and prevailed not"—the effects of Christianity on the lives of true believers, had been so conspicuous as to appear a demonstration of its divine original; and its evidences, to the candid inquirer, were found worthy of belief.

* Fox's Acts and Monuments, p. 580, London edit. 1610.

"Neither was their place found any more in heaven." Their ridiculous, absurd, and inhuman rites and ceremonies, their debauched lives, and barbarous practices, were so detected and exposed, that they never recovered that superstitious veneration for their religious character, in the minds of the people, which aforetime they had long held. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent," self-sufficiency; "called the devil," from his arbitrary tyranny, "and satan," because of unbelief and opposition, "which deceiveth the whole world, he was cast out into the earth," to be a tool for government—"and his angels"—the Gentile priests, augurs, and whole rabble of diviners were cast out with him.

10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

12. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Wo to the inhabiters of the earth, and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child.

14. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place; where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." This is expressive of that general joy and gladness of the Christians, in the triumph of their religion, when Gallienus, the emperor, published his edicts in their favour, about the year 258; in the prospect that they should no more, as formerly, be considered by the people as enemies to religion, and, therefore, the causes of the divine displeasure: nor, as more lately by some emperors, at the instigation of their sorcerers, accused of preventing their oracles from returning answers, which they would not do while the Christians were near. For this cause some of them had been banished away, and others severely persecuted. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb," in the strength of which, many meekly suffered. "And by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death;" preferring the answer of a good conscience, to the enjoying of the pleasures of sin for a season.

"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." Rejoice, ye sincere Christians that dwell in the pure life of religion. You are conquerors, even through sufferings. But,

"Wo to the inhabiters of the earth, and of the sea."

From about the time that Gallienus published his edicts in favour of the Christians, their outward affairs grew more prosperous. They came into great favour at court. Many were in offices of government, and also in the army.* Some of the bishops of the chief cities, who before had been aspiring after dominion, appear to have been invested at this time with a kind of superiority, or metropolitan authority, over provinces;† which was soon followed with a train of vices; insomuch that pride and ambition, hypocrisy and dissimulation, and insolent tyranny, became predominant among the bishops, and superior orders of

ecclesiastics.

About the middle of this century, Gregory, bishop of Neocesaria, and after him, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, ordered the passions of the martyrs to be registered, and their memories annually celebrated with oblations and sacrifices.‡ And a little after, Felix, bishop of Rome, consulting the glory of the martyrs, ordained that sacrifices should be celebrated annually in their name. By the pleasures of these festivals, and some other pagan rituals that were introduced, many of the Gentiles were gained over to the profession of Christianity; which, for about a century past, had been adopting into its services a certain air of heathen mysteries, by which it resembled them in many particulars; and it was now becoming a sea of uncertain conjectures; and its bishops, like raging waves, overwhelming one another.

"Wo, therefore, to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea, for the devil is come down to you in great

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 213.

† Euseb. vol. iii. p. 145.

‡ Mosheim.

wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." After about forty years, or upwards, of peace, Dioclesian the emperor, who had grown insolent in power, and assumed divine honours, began to punish the officers of the army, and deprive them of their dignities, unless they would renounce Christianity; and now, saith Eusebius, "one or two of them very heartily, not only renounced their dignities, but also endured bitter death for their constancy." The ministers at court appeared to be the next objects of their cruelty; for Maximian joined Dioclesian in these persecutions. They afterwards fell upon the bishops, alleging that they would bring them back again to the religion of their ancestors; which they had rejected, by devising every one such laws as he thought good. About five or six years after the first onset, the persecution became general in those parts of the empire which were under the dominion of the above-named emperors, and continued to rage at times with great fury for near ten years together. In this period, notwithstanding great numbers apostatized, or conformed to the requisitions of the magistrates, yet many suffered the most cruel torments their adversaries could devise, with remarkable constancy, which are largely treated of by Eusebius.

He, speaking of the cause of these calamities and conduct of the bishops, after having described their prosperous state, during the long calm above-mentioned, saith,* "But after that our affairs, through too much liberty, ease and security, degenerated from the natural rule of piety, and after that one pursued an-

* Eccles. Hist. p. 140.

other with open contumely and hatred, and when that we impugned ourselves, by no other than ourselves, with the armour of spite, and sharp spears of opprobrious words, so that bishops against bishops, and people against people raised sedition; last of all, when that cursed hypocrisy and dissimulation had swam even to the brim of malice, the heavy hand of God's high judgment, after his wonted manner, began softly, by a little and little, to visit us; so that the persecution that was raised against us, took his first original from the brethren which were under banner in camp. When, as we were touched with no sense or feeling thereof, neither went about to pacify God, we heaped sin upon sin; thinking, like careless epicures, that God neither cared, neither would visit our sins. And they, which seemed our shepherds, laying aside the rule of piety, practised contention and schism among themselves. And whilst they aggravated these

things, that is, contention, threatenings, mutual hatred, and enmity, and every one proceeded in ambition like tyranny itself, then, I say, then the Lord overthrew from above the glory of Israel."

After reciting several threatenings and providential judgments from the scriptures, he proceeds, "All these aforesaid were in us fulfilled, when we saw with our eyes the oratories overthrown, the sacred scriptures burned in the open market place; and the pastors of the churches, some shamefully hid themselves here and there; some other were ignominiously taken and derided of the enemies, and, according to another prophecy, shame is poured upon the pates of their princes, yet it is not our drift to describe the bitter calamities of these men, which at length they suffered:

neither is it our intent to record their dissention and insolency, practised before the persecution, but only to write so much of them, whereby we may justify the divine judgment of God."*

"What in the mean time was seen to fall out against the presidents and pastors of churches, and after what sort the just judgment of God, revenger of sin, made them keepers of camels, and of the emperor's horses, (and this he did for a punishment due to their deserts,) moreover what contumelies, what reproaches, what diversity of torments they suffered for the ornaments and treasures of the church, what pride and ambition reigned in many of them, how rashly and unlawfully they handled divers of the brethren, what schisms were raised among the confessors themselves, what mischiefs certain seditious persons of late stirred up against the members of the church which were remnants, whilst that daily with might and main they endeavoured to excogitate new devices, one after another, how that unmercifully they destroyed, and brought all to nought, with the lamentable estate of bitter persecution, and, to be short, heaped mischief upon mischief; all these aforesaid I mind to pass over with silence, supposing it not to be our part, either to rehearse or record them; inasmuch as I am wholly bent, and carefully minded, to overslip and conceal the memory of them."

From the year 311, Constantine, the emperor, appears to have been considered as head of the church. He called divers councils in order to settle the controversies among the bishops. And, when he had conquered Maxentius at Rome, and Licinius had overcome

* Eccles. Hist. p. 171.

Maximinus in the east, and destroyed his principal officers, children and relations, together with the enchanters, priests and augurs at Antioch, the whole empire in the year 318, in a manner, submitted to the religion of the conquerors, as has been already related. Insomuch, that the dragon, that spirit of infidelity and tyranny, could no longer reign in paganism, but was transferred to the governors of the professed Christian churches, who now ruled with earthly power and policy. Numerous rituals had for a long time been gradually creeping into the church; and, from the year 314, had flowed in like a deluge, through the policy and craft of Sylvester, bishop of Rome, in order that Christianity might not appear inferior in pomp and splendour, to the worship of the Gentiles; thereby the more readily to gain them over. Many of these were imposed now by authority, and those that did not conform were persecuted.

"And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle." That is, the determinations of two councils; the one held at Rome, the other at Milan; (two provinces of the great Roman empire, the ensign of which was an eagle;) the decrees of which were rigorously enforced, as has been already related; so that every remaining appearance of the true church, "flew into the wilderness"—was banished from the visible profession of it, that it was never recovered for the space of 1260 years. This some interpret to be the fulfilling of the number expressed, by the time, times, and half a time; which have been exactly fulfilled. But

the true meaning is, the time given to antichristian authority to prevail and prosper, as is expressed also by the prophet Daniel—that is, the time of the government of human wisdom and authority, by the determinations of councils, enforced by civil power, until the pope became supreme---the times of the papal beast; first, the time of darkness, in which the pope arrived to the height of priestcraft, and absolute dominion; and then the time of his passing the zenith of his power, in which the true church attempted to discover herself, under the severe persecutions carried on against her innocent children, the Waldenses, &c.---and half the time of the tyranny of established protestantism: "from the face" ---the visible appearance, "of the serpent"---the spirit of self-sufficiency, manifest in the outward profession and face of Christianity.

"And the serpent"---that spirit of self-sufficiency, "cast out of his mouth"---his emissaries and speakers, "waters," that is, opinions, "as a flood," that spread far and wide, "after the woman"---the true church; that she might bear all the reproaches arising therefrom; and that all the abominations which superstition had introduced, might be laid at her door, to swallow up her good name.

"And the earth helped the woman." Different governments, at sundry times, opposing priestly innovations, "opened their mouth," and cleared the primitive church of having any share in commanding, or instituting them; and thus "swallowed up the flood," which infidelity "cast out of his mouth."

"And the dragon"---this spirit of infidelity, "was wroth with the woman,"---the true spiritual church of Christ---"and went to make war with the remnant of her seed"---with every endeavour for a reformation which was attempted by pious, religious persons, that lived in the fear of God, and had the testimony of Jesus;

his living witness in their consciences, which is the spirit of prophecy: whilst the dragon, the spirit of infidelity, concluded it had either ceased, or was connected with his authority and superstitious performances.

From the time human wisdom and human authority were absolutely put in force in the church, in the year 273, there were just 1260 years to the time of slaying the witnesses, and confirming human power to impose, and human authority to enforce all matters appertaining to the church; which was in 1533, in England, as has been already related, and by the Protestants of Germany, near the same time. And from the time of her taking absolute leave of the outward court, 390, was 1260 years to her restoration, 1650. There was also exactly 117 years from the time of suppressing the witnesses, 273, to 390, at which time the visible appearance of the true church was lost. So there was just the same number, 117 years, from the time of the witnesses being slain until they arose, and restored the true power and authority of the church of Christ.

12. PART VII. Explanation of the beast that arose out of the sea\u2014of the second beast that arose out of the earth, and their numbers

PART VII.

Explanation of the beast that arose out of the sea

--of the second beast that arose out of the earth, and their numbers--the true church of Christ discovered

--the everlasting gospel preached by a new commission from God--spreading of the knowledge of the principles of liberty--determination of mankind to enjoy it--short view of the fall of superstition and ecclesiastical power--change of government in America--heavy judgments on oppressors there.

CHAPTER XIII.

1. And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads, and ten horns; and upon his horns ten crowns; and upon his heads, the name of blasphemy.

2. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

3. And I saw one of his heads, as it were, wounded to death: and his deadly wound was healed; and all the world wondered after the beast.

4. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemics: and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

6. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

7. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9. If any man have an ear, let him hear.

10. He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea"--the sandy foundation of the false church: for as soon as the human understanding undertakes to comprehend the things of the Spirit of God, without supernatural light,

that individual or society is on this slippery foundation, ready to slide into a sea of uncertain conjectures and opinions. This happened to our first parents—to the old world—to the descendants of Noah—to the offspring of Abraham—to the Jews after they were again restored—and quickly to the Christians, notwithstanding they had all these warnings before their eyes. Such is the spiritual blindness of the natural understanding of man.

"And I saw a beast"—an arbitrary ecclesiastical power--"arise out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns." The same governments and executive powers, that were the supporters of the dragon's tyranny, a little newly modelled. In the support of infidel tyranny, the great earthly powers of the empire, were the heads which directed the persecutions, and had the crowns. Now it is the ecclesiastical powers that are the heads, that promote persecutions. The earthly powers, greater or less, are made the executioners of the bloody mandates of this cruel beast. The subjects of his persecutions are given over to them; and they are the tools; the horns to destroy; and have the crowns ---the rewards and the reproaches.

Thus, when the church of Rome by her croisades and inquisitions, had destroyed above a million of conscientious dissenters, her historians say, they were not put to death by the pope and bishops, but by the civil magistrate. Thus also the several Protestant societies have desired to clear their church. Like the old adulteress, she eateth and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

"And upon his heads the name of blasphemy," that is, blasphemy to call their church the church of Christ; and to call the authority by which they act, (which they received from the great red dragon,) the power Christ has given to his church, is blasphemy.

"And the beast which I saw"---the ecclesiastical tyrant---"was like to a leopard:" a fierce spotted animal, alluding to the changeable appearance of this ferocious beast, spotted with diversity of opinions. Those which at one time were orthodox, at another were decreed heretical: and again, the former prevailing opinions were condemned; and those that had been rejected, solemnly declared to be the true Christian faith.

"And his feet were as the feet of a bear." Here he began to stand on the superiority assumed by the four metropolitan bishops. "And his mouth as the mouth of a lion," to roar out his terrors, and greedy to devour innocent lambs. "And the dragon"---the tyrannical spirit of infidelity---"gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." And this is all the power and authority the clergy of any denomination can produce, to authorize them to impose upon the rights and consciences of men.

"And I saw one of his heads,"---that is, the great ecclesiastical power in one of the seven governments, "wounded as it were to death"---through the spreading of the principles of the Waldenses, Albigenses, &c.: "and his deadly wound was healed:" first, in part, by his destroying and suppressing them; whom Rinerius, a Dominican and inquisitor general, acknowledged to have lived rightly before men, and to have believed rightly all things concerning God;* and more effectually, as will be shown hereafter.

"And all the world wondered after the beast"—were amazed at his wonderful powers, so far exalted above all civil authority---"and they worshipped the dragon"---that tyrannical spirit of infidelity---"which gave power to the beast"---"and they worshipped the beast"---the arbitrary ecclesiastical powers, which formed their religious systems, invented their ceremonies, expounded the scriptures, took charge of their souls, and promised them future happiness---"saying, Who is like unto the beast?" What other power can do such great things; or, "who is able to make war with him?"---to attempt an opposition to his measures.---"And there was given unto him a mouth"---his decrees, his bulls, and his bishops, priests and

ministers

* Newton, vol. ii. p. 247.

..."speaking great things," about his absolute power and authority, to depose rulers, to dispense with promises and oaths, and to absolve from the guilt of, and tolerate, thefts, and even murders; as may be seen largely treated of in Fox's Acts and Monuments, supported by authorities. "The barbarous institutions of trials by single combat, by fiery ordeal, and by the cross, were also solemnly sanctioned by the pontiffs and inferior clergy; who encouraged these odious superstitions, by accompanying the practice of them with the celebration of what they called the Lord's Supper, and other rites, to give them a Christian aspect."* "And blasphemies," calling their abominable, idolatrous inventions, and tyrannical, dragon-like powers, good and Christian.

"And power was given unto him to continue," or make war, "forty and two months." To reign triumphant over every appearance of the true wisdom, power and authority derived from Christ only. Which is the same period of 1260 years, beginning when Jovinian, and all others who had persevered in the primitive simplicity, were entirely suppressed, A. D. 390, and continuing until it was overcome by the power of the Lamb, A. D. 1650.

"And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name;" by assuming divine attributes; such as universal Bishop, infallible Judge, Vicar of Jesus Christ, and God upon earth. "And his tabernacle;" the indwelling of his spirit in the hearts of his people, and them that are regenerated, whose dwelling and conversation is "in heaven;" calling

* Mosheim, vol. vii. p. 140.

them mystics, heretics, enemies to Christianity, and such like blasphemous epithets; and pronouncing that accursed, which the Lord himself hath blessed.

"And it was given him," through that spirit of infidelity which prevailed, "to make war with the saints" ---the true Christians---"and to overcome them. And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." "And all them that dwell upon the earth"---the rulers and governors thereof---"shall worship him; whose names are not found written in the book of life." Who do not witness a testimony in their souls, of the pure innocent life "of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world." Through self-sufficiency of the natural understanding, and unbelief in a divine and supernatural life, enlightening the immortal soul, they will obey his precepts, submit to his decrees, and even make war upon their dutiful and unoffending subjects, to destroy them with cruel tortures at his request.

"If any man have an ear, let him hear." If he is not so confident in his own judgment and apprehensions, as to suffer prejudices to close his ear, let him hear what is delivered by the apostle in the authority of Jesus Christ. "He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity." That is, those religious establishments that captivated, and ruled over those who dissented from them with arbitrary power, must be captivated and overruled by arbitrary power. "And he that killeth with the sword;" those that supported their assumed authority by the sword, shall be cast down, and deprived "by the sword."

"This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptance;" because it is a divine revelation which was delivered with great solemnity; and those that refuse to hear, will be left without excuse, on account of the example set before them. For when the Almighty exhibited his over-ruling power in the affairs of Great Britain in the

17th century, among other extraordinary manifestations of those judgments by which he will accomplish his purposes, the Puritans, and Independents, who had but a short time comparatively supported their authority, and suppressed others with the sword, were, contrary to human probability, absolutely deprived of their power, and themselves grievously oppressed and persecuted by the sword. How then ought those to open their ears and be alarmed, who have been permitted, through the long-suffering of God, to wax old in iniquity and oppression.

"Here is the patience and the faith of the saints:" they know that his power is sufficient, and that he will fulfil all his pleasure. That his counsel, and not men's, must stand. Therefore in patience they possess their souls, having a living faith in his promises, and not daring to put a hand in their own wills, to steady his ark, although the rugged oxen should ever so violently shake it.

11. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men.

14. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

15. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed.

16. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth." That is, out of the earthly governments, as the first beast rose up out of the sea, of corrupt unstable opinions. As the pope and his clergy had infused into the minds of their superstitious votaries, the delusive persuasion of the efficacy of indulgences, they took care to convert them into a lucrative and scandalous traffic; which greatly obtained and gained ground in the beginning of the sixteenth century. For the corrupt ecclesiastics, finding their account in it, encouraged and nourished ignorance and superstition, immorality and licentiousness, for the sake of traffic in indulgences, expiations, &c.* These, with numerous other exactions, became very burdensome, wherever the papal power extended. And the desire natural to sovereigns, of delivering themselves from a foreign yoke, and of having the application of those immense sums, which were annually carried out of their coun-

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 175.

tries, or enjoyed by an overgrown clergy, was the main spring, on their part, of effecting the reformation.

It is evident that, in many places, the protestant doctors were encouraged, not from any zeal for the advancement of true religion in the sovereigns, but from a desire to relieve themselves of a foreign yoke, reduce the unreasonable powers of the clergy, and deprive them of their usurped possessions, and to get themselves, or their sovereigns, declared head of the church; whereby their ambition was not only gratified, but their authority extended, and their revenues greatly augmented.

It is also evident, that a reformation or reduction of the privileges, powers and possessions of the clergy, was considered as a matter of political necessity. The cause of king Henry's breaking with the pope, and the uses he made of his ecclesiastical powers, are too well known to be ascribed to religious motives. And nothing can exhibit the leading principles of the main body of the clergy in their proper light, more truly, than the consideration how complying their consciences were, in turning from the pope's religion to Henry's, from his to Edward's; then, under queen Mary, back to the pope's, and from that to Elizabeth's, just at the will of a single person; and regardless of their solemn oaths. But then it must be remembered, their tithes and livings were at stake---motives too powerful for the clergymen of St. Paul's describing to withstand, "whose god is their belly; who mind earthly things."

"And he had two horns like a lamb;" seemingly very innocent powers; a power to decree rites and ceremonies, for decency and comely order in divine worship, and articles of faith for the sake of uniformity;

and power to enforce them, to prevent schisms in the church.

"And he spake like a dragon." The voice of councils, laws, and ruling ecclesiastics, was like the voice of infidelity; to burn, hang, whip, torture, banish, and deprive of privileges and possessions on account of religion.

"And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast, before him." To make creeds and systems of faith, and ordinances, liturgies and directories; and to ordain priests to officiate and administer their rites and ordinances.

"And causeth the earth, and them that dwell therein, to worship the first beast." It is remarkable how fully this has been verified. Whenever the clergy have turned with the ruling power, how importunate they have been to get laws, for securing to themselves the tithes and emoluments, and for punishing non-conformists. Thus they cause the government, "and them that dwell therein, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was" now fully "healed."

"And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men." Exciting the rulers to such diligence in compelling men to attend the public worship, as to appear as if they really were influenced with zeal for the cause of religion. "And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth," the rulers and governors, "by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast." That is, the zeal and alacrity, with which people, formerly negligent, now flock to their places of worship, in the sight of, and under the terror of penal laws: "saying to them that dwell on the earth," to rulers and governors, "that they should make an image to the first beast"—that from the encouragement which has arisen from the fear of punishment, a few executions might be expected to produce a general compliance with the established worship.*

"And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast"—that it should not be a mere dead image for them that chose to worship, but, "that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship it, should be killed."

"And he caused all, both small and great, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads"—either to communicate with them, or openly comply with their worship. "And that no man might buy or sell"—might not enjoy his common privileges, without being able to produce in hand a "mark," or certificate of his legal compliance—"or the name of the beast," that is, of belonging to his church; "or the number of his name;" of that class that are of the number of his firm supporters.

"Here is wisdom; let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666." And this is all the most wise and learned of this world can attain to, in setting up forms or likenesses of the true spiritual religion, worship, and authority of Jesus Christ. They cannot arrive at the complete number seven, the true Sabbath of rest; in which they that wait for, and follow divine wisdom, come to know a rest from their own works, as God did from his.†

* Neil, vol. iv. p. 353.

† In order to show the time in which the first beast grew to his full height out of the Latin tyranny, we may observe that

CHAPTER XIV.

1. And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many in the year of Christ 318, the power of human wisdom to decree rites, and determine matters of faith, was generally acknowledged; many gross superstitions adopted, and the professed supporters of the Gentile worship overcome. Out of the church, now a sea of confusion, arose the beast to whom the dragon gave his power. This period seems also to be pointed out by the early Christians, as the time when Christ should be crucified in his spiritual appearance.

Saint Barnabas, the companion of Saint Paul, in his epistle, discovers, saith bishop Newton, "the name of Jesus crucified in the number 318. And other instances," saith he, "might be produced, if there was occasion."

If to the year 318, we add the number of the beast, 666, it brings us to the year 984, the period described as the most debauched and wicked, the most illiterate and ignorant of any since the time of Christ. The power of the beast was now exalted above every power, and strengthened with a new order of Monks to support it, which about the year 980, sprang out of this corruption, worse than any before; being more drowned in superstition and ceremonies. To the year 984, add the number of a man, 666, it brings us to the year 1650.

From the early part of this last number, many attempts were made for a reformation; as in the year 991, by the council of Rheims; which was quickly followed by others in succession in different countries, as has been already related. But all human endeavours were either suppressed, or as they succeeded, exhibited the number of the man, and ended in the number of the beast; that is, in ecclesiastical tyranny, derived from the Romish church; and nothing short of "the spirit of life from God," could restore the true order and authority of the church of Christ.

waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

3. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth.

4. These are they which were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

5. And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God.

"And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand." After all the endeavours of human wisdom and authority exerted in promoting a reformation, had ended in the number of the beast, that pure gospel light which had long been striving to dispel the clouds of antichristian darkness, now brake forth with such clearness through instruments raised up by its power, as to discover the pure spiritual order and government of the primitive church of Christ; in which holy mountain he bare rule in the meek, humble, lamb-like nature, in the hearts of his true followers, the "hundred forty and four thousand," who were also mentioned in the seventh chapter, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. "Having his Father's name written in their foreheads"—showing out of a good conversation, they have lived and walked as the faithful servants of God.

"And I heard a voice from heaven"—from the professors of religion, "as the voice of many waters;" that is, many opinions and conjectures about the nature of Christ's kingdom, and the government of his church. "And as the voice of a great thunder"—awfully alarming instances of the divine judgments which have been heretofore mentioned more particularly. "And I heard the voice of "harpers," making melody with divine grace in their hearts, to the Lord. "And they sung as it were a new song"—not in the oldness of the letter---"before the throne"---the Judge of souls, and Searcher of hearts, and before the glorified spirits. "And no man could learn that song," but the true spiritual worshippers, "who were redeemed from" the ways and worships imposed by human power, and came to be taught by the Spirit of Christ in their own souls. It was, therefore, a different matter from the singing practised by men, which any man might learn.

"These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins." They were not captivated with any enticing allurements of this world, but kept themselves as the spouse of Christ, to "follow" the leadings of his Spirit, "whithersoever he goeth:" not being tied up by systems, but whereunto they had attained, walking by the same rule with all faithfulness; and daily pressing forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus; begotten into his image and likeness: and as he was, so were they in this world; holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; "being the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb." "And in their mouth was found no guile." They walked in sincerity before the Searcher of hearts; and were "without fault before the throne" of infinite purity and perfection.

This was the man-child which the woman, the true primitive church, had travailed for, and brought forth. (Not a single person, but the hundred and forty-four thousand, united in one spirit, under one head,) which had been caught up to God, and to his throne; and now revealed through the Father sending the Son of his love to open the spiritual eye that had been blind, and the spiritual ear that had been deaf; and preparing himself as the morning to meet those who follow on to know him, that they may live in his sight.

6. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

7. Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth." As the gospel had been lost to man in the apostasy, there were none qualified to preach it by any ordination, or succession of ministry amongst men; but there must be a new receiving of the everlasting gospel, by a new commission from on high; by which the Lord's messengers were endued and sent forth, as sheep amongst wolves, as in the beginning of the primitive church: to travel through different countries, calling upon rulers and governors who have committed fornication with the great whore, "and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people"—the many waters on which she sitteth—in order to open men's spiritual eyes, and to turn them from seeking after the knowledge of spiritual things in the darkness of the carnal understanding, to the light of Christ in their own souls; and from the power of satan—of an unbelieving mind—to the power of God, to be led and governed by it; that they might receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God"—no longer dishonour him, by suffering your consciences to be governed by the directions of men, and by covering your unchristian lives with a cloak of religious profession; but turn to his fear in your inward parts, to learn the beginning of wisdom, that thereby you may, through divine grace, be enabled to "give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come." The awful display of his overruling power is now manifesting itself; by which he will eventually reduce the most stubborn and rebellious into subjection.

Therefore "worship him that made heaven"---who is the author and finisher of faith, and all true religion. "And earth"—the rulers and governors, as well as the poorest subject. "And the sea"---all those unsettled opinions and conjectures, which have arisen in consequence of his convictions in the soul, exciting in it a sense of the deadness and idolatry of a formal ceremonious worship.* "And the fountains of waters"---the leaders of sects, whose minds he had enlightened, but who, although they had forsaken the forms they had lived in, instead of waiting in his counsel, to have their understandings further opened in spiritual things, had, in their own wills, become promoters of others equally void of life.

8. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

* See note at p. 197.

9. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice. If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

10. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

12. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

13. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

"And there followed another angel,"---that is, the light and knowledge of the principles of civil and religious liberty. By the removing of the prejudices of superstition, many came to see the nullity of the claims of the supporters of religious establishments, and their inconsistency with, as well as direct opposition to, the nature and temper of the Christian dispensation; and therefore could say, in the certain prospect, by way of anticipation, "Babylon is fallen;" and on beholding its commencement, could repeat, "is fallen," even "that great city"—the whole ecclesiastical establishment, "because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication"---intoxicated them with her spiritual whoredoms, so as to excite persecutions, wars, cruelty and wrath amongst men.

"And the third angel followed them"---the determination of mankind to strive to obtain the enjoyment of that liberty which they apprehended to be their natural right: and to be no longer imposed upon by the craft and oppression of superstition and tyranny. "Saying with a loud voice"---publishing their sentiments to the world, "If any man worship the beast"---the tyrannical church of Rome, "or his image"---other religious establishments; "or receive their mark," either secretly or openly, "the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God:" that is, they shall be made to drink of the cup of that wrath, cruelty and misery, which they once gave unto others, now "poured forth without mixture, into the cup of indignation: and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone"---that is, with fiery zeal and rage to destroy their power, and revenge for former injuries and oppressions---"in the presence of the holy angels"---the Lord's faithful, enlightened followers---"and in the presence of the Lamb," whose authority they had despised.

"And the smoke of their torment"---their external ceremonies and monstrous opinions about predestination and other doctrines, which came out of the bottomless pit of human wisdom and conjectures, and about which they have shed so much innocent blood, now "ascendeth up" like mere smoke and vapour, and will appear no better "for ever and ever"---neither in time nor in eternity.

"And they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." They have no rest when the light of the day has obliged them to open their eyes, to see their condition and standing, nor when the day is over, and the sun has for ever set upon them, and night involved them in the miseries and darkness which they have deliberately chosen for their portion.

Many who have been favoured to see with a good degree of clearness into the state of government, not abiding in the patience, have run on in their own wills to correct things that are wrong and out of order, and thereby transgressed the commandments of God, and got into confusion and darkness. But---"here is the patience of the saints." They are made willing to endure and to suffer, for the truth's sake, and for the testimony thereof which is given them to bear; and to wait for the arising of the Lord's power. "Here are they that keep the commandments of God"---they dare not break one of the least of his commandments to bring about or hasten their liberty; but wait in "the faith of Jesus," trusting their cause to him; knowing assuredly that the Judge of all the earth will do that which is right.

"And I heard a voice from heaven"---from the sincere professors of Christianity, of different denominations, "saying unto me, Write"---it will no longer be a matter of bare possibility, but of certainty to be written

down---"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." Those that have followed the leadings of his grace, so as to witness a death to the dominion of the power of the natural part, which holds the soul in bondage, and a new birth unto righteousness, in which it comes into the glorious liberty of the children of God, have an evidence that the sting of death is taken away: and the judgment of others, respecting the dead, will not depend, as formerly, upon their dying the members of some particular church, or in the belief of certain opinions accounted orthodox; but those, whose innocent lives manifest that they are the children of the

Lamb, will be pronounced blessed, although they had been excommunicated or accursed of men, "from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit"---it bears testimony "that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them"---are approved of God and man, as examples worthy of imitation.

After thus giving a short representation of the final destruction of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, the vision is continued, to show, in a retrospective view, how and where that power began to manifest itself, which will eventually overrule and destroy every opposition to the kingdom of Christ.

14. And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

"And I looked, and behold, a white cloud"---a visible prospect of a change taking place in government, that would be favourable; although the means of bringing it to pass were veiled to the eye of presumptuous man, who is too ready to ascribe all to his own knowledge and policy. "And upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man." The Lord Jesus Christ, who by his power was coming to rule in the kingdoms of this world, although in a cloud to the wisdom of it. "And in his hand was a sharp sickle"---the instruments he makes use of to effect his purposes.

"And another angel came out of the temple"---the light and knowledge of the principles of civil liberty, now spreading in British America---"crying with a loud voice"---first in publications; afterwards through committees; and finally, through their representatives in Congress. Declaring to the world that their motive in resisting the operation of the British laws, was, their being founded in oppressive principles, and, therefore, unjust; and solemnly appealing to the Almighty to aid their cause; for the time of trial was come. They must now make opposition; for if they should once submit to the principle contended for, and it became established, all future attempts would be fruitless; therefore now is the time; "the harvest of the earth," that is, the government, "is fully ripe."

"And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped"---the United States of America were entirely released from the government of a foreign power, both in civil and ecclesiastical affairs.

That this is what is here pointed out, I think no one will hesitate to believe, who attentively considers the circumstances. There is nothing like the conquest of one country over another, but barely a reaping of the government. Nothing like one ruler destroying another, and succeeding in his place, but only the separating with a sharp sickle the former governor from the government; without those terrifying pictures of the dreadful slaughter and carnage, which are represented as the attendants on the overthrowing of

ecclesiastical tyranny in those governments, where they are so united with the civil powers, and so firmly supported by them, that nothing short of violent concussions and overturnings can separate them; and in which the overruling providence of God will be more manifested, in punishing the beast with the same measure of cruelty and barbarity, which he had meted to others.

Here the revolution was accomplished with such a succession of natural means, as to appear like one of those events which casually take place in the kingdoms of this world; the politician hardly discovering the power of him that sat upon the cloud; ruling and turning the passions of men, to make them subservient to his purpose: great and wonderful in its effects on the Christian religion; and therefore, well worthy of a place in these Divine Revelations.*

* It may have occurred to the reader's observation, that the explanations given by John Jones, have represented a change of scene from one nation or country to another. Recollecting that the book was understood by him as referring chiefly to the progressive state of religion, and to nations only as they stood in connexion therewith, this will of course be reconciled; different nations of Europe taking successively their rank in religious importance, as the different advances of religious light and knowledge have been manifested in them. Under this view, it will not appear strange that the author should be prepared to apply to the United States of America, such parts of the prophecies as appeared to him to be clearly, and only, descriptive of transactions there, which, in his apprehension, had a direct connexion with the progress of religious light and knowledge.

That the advance made in our republic, in favour of religious liberty, by the rejection of all national control over religious sentiment, and the constitutional establishment of entire freedom therein, is a circumstance of great importance, as it relates to the religious world, must be admitted by the unprejudiced mind, who has calmly viewed the progress of things as they have become developed before him. Great responsibility then, must, in this point of view, rest upon this nation. And happy will it be for us, if in a course of uncom-

17. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.

19. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.

20. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horses' bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

"And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven." This signifies that light and knowledge in favour of liberty to all mankind, which proceeds from a sense of religious duty; being founded on the precept of our blessed Lord, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do you even so unto them." This angel "also having a sharp sickle."

"And another angel came out from the altar"---where a solemn covenant had been made, and vows offered up to God in favour of liberty; imploring his aid against the oppressor on their own behalf. "And he had power over fire"---that is, party zeal and rage.

mon national prosperity, our national sense of the principles of universal justice, and the equal, unalienable rights of all men, become not insensibly more and more relaxed. And if through the increase of outward ease, libertinism and licentiousness, an imaginary security be not suffered to divert our vigilant attention from our best national interests; and thus prepare the way for a retrograding spirit, gradually, and at unawares, to prevail, by means of the secret working of the same species of self-sufficient ambition, which has ever been the bane of the Christian religion in other nations. Ed.

"And cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters" of arbitrary power that have grown out "of the vine" of corrupt, oppressive governments, "for her grapes are fully ripe." The cry of the oppressed is heard in the land where slavery had been clearly seen to be repugnant to true religion, and solemnly declared to be hateful to God and man: and, what is worse, new laws have been made to strengthen the bands of oppression, with cords of iniquity.

"And the angel"—the minister of divine justice, "thrust in his sickle into the earth"—into the governments that support slavery---"and gathered the vine" of this corrupt oppressive power, "and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden without the city"---that is, without the borders of the old Romish ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and, therefore, not a punishment for religious, but secular tyranny.

"And blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horses' bridles"---that is, until the executioners of divine vengeance were stayed, as by a bridle in the hand of him that saith, "Hitherto thou shalt come, but no further." "By the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs," which is equal to two hundred miles.*

This is a subject worthy of the most serious attention, as the one will follow after the other as certainly as the "vintage" succeeds the "harvest;" and, from the description here given, the latter will be attended with

* The eighteenth chapter of Isaiah appears to be remarkably descriptive of the same circumstances and transactions.

more dreadful calamities than the former. The people of these states are loudly called upon by interest and duty, immediately to proclaim a solemn fast; to implore the Father of mercies, that he may graciously mitigate the impending calamities, and, as a Father pitieth his children, pity those that are now, like the returning prodigal, humbly seeking his face: and crave that in the inflicting of his just correction, he may have compassion, and in the midst of judgment, remember mercy, and look to, and accept their solemn fasting, according to his appointment; which is, "To undo the heavy burdens, to break every yoke, and to let the oppressed go free." Without this, we have no reasonable ground to believe or expect, that he will spare the transgressors in this land, any more than he did the people of Judah, to whom the prophet Jeremiah declared, in the name of the Lord, "Ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour, and ye had made a covenant before me. But ye turned and polluted my name. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every one to his neighbour. Behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine."

13. PART VIII. Calamitous events under the remainder of the sixth and under the seventh trumpet, on the pouring out of the vials

PART VIII.

BEING A SUPPLEMENT TO PART IV.

Containing an account of the calamitous events under the remainder of the sixth, and under the seventh trumpet; on the pouring out of the vials of wrath; occasioning great overturnings and revolutions in governments—the overthrow of all religious establishments, and the powers that uphold them—the three unclean spirits like frogs, explained.

CHAPTER XV.

1. And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous; seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

2. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God;

3. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

4. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

5. And after that I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

6. And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

7. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever.

8. And the temple was filled with the smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

"And I saw another sign in heaven"---amongst the professors of religion---"great and marvellous," "seven angels," or messengers, "having the seven last plagues"---the means whereby the Almighty will accomplish his purposes---"for in them is filled up the wrath of God." "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire;" as in chapter 4th, there was before the throne a sea of glass like unto crystal, where the faithful see the wonders of the Almighty in the great deep, (for the spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.) This sets forth the warfare of the true Christian, from the time he was permitted

liberty of conscience through the fiery zeal of party; and his way being slippery as glass---easy to the natural part to slide off, yet clear and transparent to the enlightened mind.

"And them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name"---who neither worshipped him secretly nor openly, nor were numbered among his supporters---these John saw "stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God"---the melody of divine grace, of which the Jewish harp was a type.

"And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb"---the true spiritual singing of the inward Jew; the redeemed Christians that had now been living witnesses of the overruling power of the Almighty in their own preservation and deliverance; in the living sense whereof they return him the grateful tribute of humble thanksgiving; "saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear before thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?"---thy power and authority---"for thou only art holy"---thou only teachest holiness, and leadest thy followers into the practice and life of it---"for all nations shall" leave their inventions and idolatries, and "come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest"---have not only been published to the world, but examples exhibited as a warning to mankind, as have been already related.

"And I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened." This was not an outward temple built with hands, but the living sanctified servants of God, made a spiritual building, wherein is the tabernacle of witness; the testimony he has given his people to bear. It is opened in heaven—held up to the view of the professors of Christianity; and however contemptible it appeared in the eyes of superstitious prejudice, to those who had thrown off its shackles, it was manifested to be the testimony of truth.

"And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen"—to show the justness of these judgments. "Having their breasts girded with golden girdles"---the girdle of truth; the word which the Lord had spoken, and which they are now commissioned to execute. "And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels, seven golden vials full of the wrath of God." Although they received their light and knowledge from the temple, and were commissioned there, they did not bring these vials of wrath from thence, but received them from one of the four living creatures; which I take to be the third, whose face was like a man---had the appearance of one whose actions and advice were perfectly consistent with reason. Thus human wisdom is made the blind instrument of executing the determinations of the overruling providence of God, "who lives and reigns for ever and ever;" in time, and in eternity.

"And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power." Mankind are taken up with such carnal apprehensions, and ideas of the glory of God, and of his power, as to imagine there will be some extraordinary manifestation thereof; either by Christ personally appearing on earth, to establish his kingdom outwardly, or by his changing the dispositions of human nature, so as to remove the necessity of taking up, and daily bearing the cross; that notwithstanding the temple is opened, they cannot "enter in," until the "seven plagues" have removed this blindness and dispelled the smoke.

CHAPTER XVI.

1. And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

2. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

3. And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

4. And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

5. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus:

6. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

7. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

8. And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

9. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

10. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

11. And blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

12. And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple"--- the general sentiment and tenor of political publications, calling for a free investigation of the principles of civil and religious liberty, and a restoration of those rights which had long been withheld from mankind--- "saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth"--- upon the governments of the world.

"And the first went and poured out his vial upon the earth"---upon the government of the American British colonies, and produced the independence of the United States---which has been like the falling of "a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image." Not only by defeating a scheme which had long been persisted in, of extending the bounds of ecclesiastical jurisdiction in America, but also by cutting off all religious establishments that were there: by which it has been manifested to the world, that government can subsist, and become more strong, and firmly united, by granting equal liberty to all; and that religion can flourish, and harmony subsist amongst men of different religious persuasions, in a manner scarcely ever known, and always interrupted, in establishments. This was therefore a noisome and grievous sore to the worshippers of ecclesiastical power; like the plague of the bile to the magicians of Egypt, who could not stand before Moses, because of the bile.

"And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea"—the unsettled state of religious opinions in France —"and it became as blood." Its supporters were persecuted to the shedding of blood, by which it stank, as loathsome as "the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea"---those that were alive---who had their souls quickened by the principle of spiritual life, yet, through the prejudice of education, in the simplicity of their hearts, continued in the observation of the rites and ceremonies of the old establishment, were disregarded, slain and killed by the destroyers of superstition, who involved the sincere with the hypocrite, in one common destruction.

"And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters"---that is, upon societies of dissenters, and upon the leaders and founders of systems---"and they became blood"---were persecuted and punished.

"And I heard the angel of the waters"---that is, the more enlightened members or favourers of these dissenting societies, say, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art" worshipped by the sincere in heart, without force or compulsion, "and wast" worshipped and adored before these were invented, "and shalt be," when they are all gone into perdition, "because thou hast judged thus"---hast accounted them worthy of being punished---"for they have" persecuted and "shed the blood of" sincere, conscientious nonconformists; "and the prophets" that witnessed against their carnal impositions; "and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy."

"And I heard another out of the altar"---the voice of strict justice, in behalf of those that had suffered by their oppressions and persecutions, "say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun"—that is, upon the scriptures of truth; through the attacks made by deistical and infidel philosophers; denying the prophecies and revelations which are therein recorded, and the religion and morality therein recommended, to be divine communications from God. "And power was given unto him to scorch men with fire"---that is, with party zeal and rage, on behalf of deistical or infidel philosophy on the one part, and on behalf of religion and worship on the other. "And men were scorched with great heat"---felt severely the burning zeal and party rage with which they were actuated. "And blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues;" by denying his providential government on the one hand, and on the other by calling their inventions and traditions, holy and divine ordinances, and their usurped power over the property and consciences of men, the authority of the church of Christ. "And they repented not to give him the glory."

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast"---the whole antichristian power of the church of Rome---"and his kingdom was full of darkness"---their ridiculous and absurd rites and ceremonies, substituted in the place of Christianity, had shut out the light of the gospel, and involved them in this deplorable state, in which "they gnawed their tongues for pain," "and blasphemed the God of heaven," by seeking relief in following their dark, superstitious practices, and abominable idolatrous inventions; or by turning infidels and mockers of religion.

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates"---that is, upon the great river of established protestantism---"and the water thereof was dried up." All those unstable opinions and practices, which human wisdom and authority had introduced, "were dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared"---that they may no longer be deterred from embracing Christianity by considering it as a religion of human policy and superstition; and sanctioning wars, violence and shedding

of human blood: practices directly opposite to the benign spirit of the gospel.

13. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

14. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

15. Behold, I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

16. And he gathered them together into a place, called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon.

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs." They were loquacious and impudent, and not produced in the common way of living generation, but such life as the magicians of Egypt could bring forth by their experiments, and which originates from spawn.

The first "came out of the mouth of the dragon"---the old spirit of infidelity. The arguments of his speakers and defenders that opposed the doctrines of Christ in favour of Jews and pagans, are now revived and refined in favour of human reason; but discover themselves to be the spawn of the old dragon. Human reason is now to be exalted, and all the advantages mankind have derived from age to age, through divine communications, are now ungratefully ascribed to this supreme guide and director, in contradiction to our constant experience, the testimony of a cloud of witnesses, and the knowledge we acquire by observation of the powers and dispositions of human nature. And some of these, though they abhorred the cruelties of the beast, have encouraged the acting of the tyranny of the dragon up to its full height.

And the second "came out of the mouth of the beast,"—the supporters of and aspirants after religious establishments—some refinement of ecclesiastical power, only what may be necessary to control dissenters; barely sufficient to secure and uphold a national religion, and secure to themselves its livings, and other lucrative offices; and to continue the oppression of tithes, and other priestly exactions, imposed by the beast in the dark ages of his tyranny. Some of these refiners in different countries, have boldly intruded themselves into the houses, the bed-chambers, and even the kneading-troughs of the beasts out of whose mouths they were spawned.

"And the third came out of the mouth of the false prophet"—some endeavours in man's wisdom to restore true worship, and reform the ministry; which must end in disappointment: like those of old, "who kindled a fire, and warmed themselves with the sparks of their own kindling," but in the end, had to lay down in sorrow.

Far be it from me to discourage any stirring of the true life, which can only be brought forth by the finger of God: (Exodus viii. 19.) whether its appearance be in strength, or in weakness. If we sincerely believe in the testimony of Christ, we must believe in his declarations, that "we know not what to pray for, but as the Spirit helpeth our infirmities:" "That the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." And the reason he assigned is a most just one, "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." It is thus only, that living, immaterial, spiritual souls, can approach the Father of spirits, either in imploring him, graciously to supply those things for themselves, or others, which the Holy Spirit impresses them with an evidence of the necessity of, and influences them to ask for; or to offer the grateful tribute of thanksgiving

and praise, for mercies and favours received: the outward voice being only the declaration of the inward act of the soul. Not as a medium necessary to convey this spiritual sense to that God who is a spirit—which were absurd to suppose—but only for the edification and benefit of the hearers.

None of those imitators, therefore, that can go through a round of religious performances, without a sense of that divine influence, are the worshippers the Father seeks; and their devotions are neither performed in spirit, nor in truth, but in the conceivings of the natural understanding, and in lies: which is the reason so many ask, and receive not, because they ask amiss.

And that preaching that can be begun, carried on, and ended, in the mere will and power of human abilities, however refined and spiritual it may appear, or however zealously performed, is not the preaching of the cross of Christ; nor is such ministry derived from him, but out of the spawn of the false prophet. And some in this kind of ministry, have soon manifested that their kingdom was of this world, by discovering more zeal in sowing the seeds of, and encouraging, political discord, than in teaching the doctrines of Christ, or in inculcating the meek, patient temper and disposition which is the characteristic of the followers of his spirit; which breathes "peace on earth, and good will to men."

"For they are the spirits of devils"—that is, of overbearing, arbitrary powers—"working miracles." The first teaches that human nature is in its perfect state, and that human reason is its supreme guide and director; therefore, in a political capacity, the governments said to be founded in reason, must be submitted to in their commands, although they carry in their face the appearance of the most barbarous despotic tyranny. In theory they make a most miraculous display of the happiness that may be produced by the exertions of reason. The second teaches that a connexion between church and state, is necessary for the existence of the body politic, and the promotion of religion; therefore ecclesiastical laws must be enforced, though they should be burdensome and oppressive: for by supporting this connexion, governments have been long preserved in a miraculous manner. And the third, the false prophet, teaches men to arm with enthusiastic rage, at the delusive sound of religious and civil liberty; and to oppose government, and kill, destroy, or spare, the supporters of it, at the arbitrary will of their leaders: whose motives for resistance perhaps originated in the basest principles; the disappointment of their own ambitious projects, the prospect of gratifying them, or of enriching themselves by spoil and plunder.

Thus these "unclean spirits go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world;" inflaming the minds of men, "to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

"Behold, I come as a thief." The abrupt manner in which this caution is introduced, as well as the expressions of it, imply a more than common necessity for all to watch, that they may be partakers of the blessing which cometh thereby; lest the dreadful day steal upon them at unawares; and they not having on the "garment of righteousness," should be found "walking naked," notwithstanding all their false delusive coverings, and their "shame" be manifested to all.

"And they were gathered together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon." This does not appear to mean any one particular place or country, but in each, a place of certainty to receive the end determined.

17. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple in heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

18. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

19. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

20. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

'And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air.' Clearly discovering that these events were the fulfilling of the testimony of the Holy Spirit, spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets.

'And there came a great voice out of the temple in heaven'---the general voice and acknowledgment of religious men, on beholding the clear manifestation of the overruling power of him that sits upon the throne. 'Saying, It is done'---the word of the Lord will be fully accomplished. 'And there were voices'---the sentiments and declarations of men exciting to action; 'and thunders'---the awakening alarms of awful judgments---'and lightnings'---the contending of human passions---'and a great earthquake'---a great revolution in government---'such as was not since men were upon the earth; so mighty an earthquake, and so great'---such mighty overturnings of empires, kingdoms, and states. 'And the great city'---the great profession of Christianity---'was divided into three parts'---Papacy, Prelacy, and Presbytery. 'And the cities of the nations fell'---all national establishments of religion fell. 'And great Babylon,' the mother of harlots, 'came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.' The just judgments by which he will cause her to be punished according to her deserts.

'And every island fled away'---the smaller dependent governments, that had been as horns to support and execute the decrees of ecclesiastical power, 'fled away.' 'And the mountains'---the greater governments, that were her strength and confidence---'were not found.'

'And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven'---a great mortality by pestilence, exceedingly heavy---'and men blasphemed God, because of the plague of the hail.' Instead of repenting of, and forsaking, their oppressions, their immoralities, licentiousness, and vain sinful amusements, which have incurred these just, though severe judgments, they will too generally ascribe to natural causes, the awful dispensations of an overruling Providence.

14. PART IX. Discovery of the great whore who made all nations drunk

PART IX.

Discovery of the great whore, who made all nations drunk—her blasphemies—her sorceries—her drunkenness with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. The beast that carrieth her. Her overthrow by the horns of the beast. Mankind anticipate her fall. A description of it. Lamentation of her merchants. She is never to rise any more. Blood of the prophets found in, and charged upon her. The eyes of mankind generally opened, who praise the Lord for executing his judgments upon her. They now discover the true church, adorned as a bride for her husband.

CHAPTER XVII.

1. And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters;

2. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

3. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls;

having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

5. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

'And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials'—which appears to have been the seventh, who had the power of opening or discovering the testimony of the spirit to the understandings of men;—'and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.' That is, upon many different religious societies, whose professions and systems are founded on opinions and conjectures, and therefore are unstable as waters. The natural understanding of man, assuming the power of judging of divine things, is the adulteress, and usurpeth the prerogative of the spirit of God, by which only they can be discerned and known. 'With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication'—have embraced and adopted her impositions—'and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication'—have been intoxicated, so as to believe that her power and authority were derived from Christ, and her institutions holy and divine ordinances.

'So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness'—into that state in which the professors of Christianity, by forsaking the teachings and authority of the word and spirit of God, became bewildered and lost in the smoke of uncertain conjectures; out of which arose this 'scarlet coloured beast on which the

woman,' the adulterous spirit, sitteth; being the supreme judge and director in the determinations of this beastly tyrant. 'Which was full of names of blasphemy'—blaspheming God, by assuming his prerogatives, and by calling evil good, and good evil. 'Having seven heads and ten horns'—the ecclesiastical establishments in seven greater governments, and ten executive powers to enforce obedience.

'And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour;' not the fine linen, pure and white, the righteousness of saints. She has taught her lovers that purity of life was not necessary. Her saints were to sin daily in thought, word, and deed; and to believe that it was possible, through divine grace, to overcome sin in this life, was accounted antichristian doctrine with her and her votaries. Her ornaments were of another kind, more delightful in the view of the world; 'gold and precious stones'—a splendid, pompous religion and worship, to attract the senses, and a mighty confidence that Christ hath paid the debt for, and that his righteousness will be imputed to, her followers; and this she calls faith. She has also her sacraments; a profound mystery, by which she pretends the promises in scripture made to the Lord's redeemed children are applied and sealed to her sinful followers; and these are her 'pearls of great price.'

'Having a golden cup in her hand.' The vessels of the Lord's house are poor, weak, earthen vessels; foolish and contemptible in the eye of man's wisdom, although they contain heavenly treasure. But here is a learned ministry that can expound the scriptures, and administer her ordinances; can preach, and pray, and sing. A specious profession, but 'full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications,' which she imposes on her intoxicated votaries, as the ways and means appointed by Christ to become heirs of his salvation.

'And upon her forehead was a name written.' As the true followers of the Lamb had his Father's name written in their foreheads, and being redeemed from the world, could not be conformable to its ways, customs, and manners, and were therefore distinguished in their conduct and conversation, and were also sealed with the holy spirit of promise, the earnest of their inheritance, so the false church hath a name in her forehead, which is MYSTERY. Thus, although her followers live in the daily practice of sin, yet they trust they are, in some mysterious way, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. And notwithstanding they feel no evidence of divine approbation, but at times conviction and terror, indignation and wrath, yet they are encouraged to hope these are but suggestions of the enemy, and that they are nevertheless, in some hidden mysterious manner, the chosen people of God, and heirs of eternal salvation: but in the spirit of truth they are seen to be in the mystery of deceit and hypocrisy---in the spiritual whoredom of 'MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, and abominations of the earth.'

Here is the mystery. Few would have turned aside into her adulterous bed, if they had not been made drunk with her sorceries. She speaks fair words: does not draw people into the worship of her idols, calling them such. She invites them to come to the worship of God, to hear a godly ministry, and to partake of godly ordinances. This spirit was beginning to work in the apostles' days, by setting up a form of godliness, but denying the life and power. Here she taketh the simple with the cunning of the whore in the Proverbs. 'I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry; with carved works; with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed it with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. I have peace-offerings with me. This day I have paid my vows.'

Such were formerly, and such remain to be, the allurements of the false church; a fair show of externals to captivate the senses, and divert the mind from seeking an inward acquaintance with God, and pondering the path of life: and lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine out in their hearts, she tells them

those powerful convictions which alarm their consciences, are not from the Holy Spirit, for that has long ago ceased. Thus she hath cast down many wounded, and many strong men have been slain by her.

6. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

7. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8. The beast that thou sawest, was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder (whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world) when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

9. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

10. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

11. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

'And I saw the woman'---this spirit of deceit and idolatry---'drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration,' that she should, under the profession of the spiritual religion of Jesus, for the sake of her abominations, turn the persecutor of his sincere, meek, lamb-like followers; and thus crucify the Lord in his spiritual appearance.

'And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of' this deceitful 'woman, and of the beast that carrieth her;' the ecclesiastical establishments in seven great earthly governments, and ten executive powers. 'The beast that thou sawest,' that is, ecclesiastical and civil powers united in arbitrary tyranny, 'was,' among the degenerate Jews, 'and is not' now, being abolished; but 'shall ascend out of the bottomless pit' of human contrivance, 'and go into perdition.' 'And they that dwell on the earth,' all rulers and governors, 'shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life'---in that living power manifested in the soul, which only, 'from the foundation of the world,' could preserve men from submitting their consciences to the power of delusion. They shall wonder when their eyes become anointed to see the odiousness of that tyrannical 'beast, that was' amongst the Jews, who, for the sake of their types, persecuted the substance, but now is done away; 'and yet is' beginning to open the way to arise in the profession of Christianity also.

'And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven' great governments which form the Roman empire. 'And there are seven kings,' or powers, that are absolute. 'Five are' already 'fallen'---passed away and gone---'and one is'---which is the imperial. 'And the other is not yet come'---which is the government by councils of bishops---'and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.' 'And the beast'---the civil and ecclesiastical powers united in absolute tyranny over the bodies and souls of men, 'which was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven'---that is, he is a partaker and practiser of all the cruelties, barbarities, hypocrisy, pride, blasphemy, and extravagance of the whole seven, 'and goeth into perdition.'

12. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

13. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

15. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

16. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

17. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

18. And the woman which thou sawest, is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

'And the ten horns which thou sawest, are ten kings,' or executive powers, 'which have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings'---that is, arbitrary for a short space of time only, to exercise tyranny like the beast. 'These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength to' the exercise of arbitrary tyranny. 'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them.' They shall oppose the peaceable kingdom of Christ, because his followers cannot join in wars and violence in support of their government; 'But the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings.' They will be made sensible through the manifestation of his great and overruling power, that counsel is his, and sound wisdom, understanding and strength; and that to him belongs the kingdoms of this world, and he giveth them to whomsoever he will. 'And they that are with him,' his sincere servants and testimony-bearers, 'are called, and chosen,' for his work and service in the earth; and are 'faithful' to his divine requirings. And in this day of his overruling power, those who persecute his faithful followers cannot reasonably expect to establish their government on a permanent foundation.

'And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues'---different societies, and in different countries, that have established systems of religion and worship, prescribed by human wisdom and policy; and of different tongues, each speaking the language of their founders; and being forms of godliness without life and power, are, therefore, unstable as waters.

'And the ten horns,' or governments, which shall exercise arbitrary tyranny for a short space of time, 'these shall hate the whore'---that spirit of deceit and hypocrisy---'and shall make her desolate and naked'---strip her of all power and pecuniary support---'and shall eat her flesh'---seize upon her substance---'and burn her with fire'---root out and destroy her entirely, in their zeal and rage against her. 'For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will'---he hath turned that spirit of infidelity which she nourished, and that wrathful temper of war, revenge, and rage, which she kept alive and encouraged, against her. 'And they agree, and give their power and strength' to the exercise of arbitrary tyranny, 'until the words of God' respecting her 'shall be fulfilled.'

'And the woman'---the spiritual adulteress, 'which thou sawest, is the great city'---the apostatized profession of Christianity, 'which reigneth over the kings of the earth'---sits upon, and guides them like beasts, to do her will and pleasure.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1. And after these things, I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

3. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

This angel represents that general knowledge of the principles of true religion, which so spread and prevailed as the professors of it came to be divested of the prejudices with which their minds had been intoxicated, that they have great power over the advocates of superstition; insomuch that the earth became so enlightened with the glory of it, that the general voice of men of observation was, by way of anticipation, 'Babylon the great is fallen;' who can now repeat, from a certainty of the commencement of her final destruction, 'is fallen,' 'and is become the habitation of devils'---that is, of arbitrary tyrants; 'and the hold of every foul spirit;' of infidels and unbelievers; 'and a cage,' or receptacle, 'of every unclean and hateful bird,' that can soar aloft above every restraint of religion and humanity; and subsist by prey, spoil and plunder. 'For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication;' they have cherished a wrathful spirit of persecution, war, and violence, under a profession of Christianity. 'And the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her;' they have adopted her superstitious impositions, and oppressed their subjects with grievous burdens to support her; have deprived them of their natural rights, to make them bow down to her; and have led them to slaughter as beasts for her sake. 'And the merchants of the earth,' such as trade in places of power and profit; her great dignitaries, as well as the smaller, of chancellorships, deaneries, parsonages, cures, livings, tithes, and stipends, are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

4. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues:

5. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

6. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double, according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double.

7. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

This is expressive of the desires of all truly religious persons, that the sincere-hearted who are seeking to serve the Lord in uprightness, may 'come out' of her ways and worships, her professions and deceit, even in her most specious and spiritual appearances, that they

'be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues;' and also sets forth the certainty and extent of her punishments for her works of iniquity; which are to be rendered unto her 'double.' And as much as the dignities and profits of her spiritual officers have raised them above, and have procured them reverence and honour from, the rest of mankind, so much she will be degraded, disdained, and tormented; and that suddenly, while she thinks herself secure. 'I sit a queen, and am no widow'—my power is connected with, and upheld by the civil authority and constitution, and my dignities, places and livings, so desirable an

object for the supporters of government to obtain for their sons, that whatever befalls the societies of dissenters that are unprotected, I shall be in perfect safety, 'and shall see no sorrow.'*

* See Guthrie, p. 193.

8. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burnt with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

9. And the kings of the earth who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

10. Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

11. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth her merchandise any more:

12. The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine-wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

13. And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

'Therefore shall her plagues come in one day'---they shall befall her at the same period of time. 'Death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burnt with fire;' she shall be utterly destroyed with fiery zeal and rage---'for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her,' and hath determined her overthrow.

And the earthly powers 'who have committed fornication, and lived deliciously with her,' combining together against the rights of mankind, and partaking in the spoil, 'shall bewail her,' 'when they see' that all her religious ordinances and inventions, which had been accounted so sacred, holy, and efficacious, and her power, which had been looked upon such a strength and support to the state, are all but 'smoke,' and vanish away, as she is consuming. 'Standing afar off for fear of her torments.' Striving to secure their own safety, and grievously lamenting the great apostatized church; that glorious profession of Christianity, that had sanctioned their vices and their crimes, and assured them of an admission into the kingdom of heaven hereafter, although their conduct manifested they were not members of it: for in one hour is her judgment come.

'And the merchants of the earth,' those who have had the disposal of her temporal revenues, her endowments, and dignities, 'shall weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more.' The merchandise of pomp, splendour, and profitable preferments; of mysterious ordinances, and ceremonies, accompanied with a high profession of Christian piety and devotion, to allure and secure the respect of the more refined and stately worshippers, as well as baser wares, and grosser metals and materials for the vulgar and superstitious. And choice dainties and perfumes to attract to her service. 'And fine flour, and wheat, and wine, and oil, and beasts, and sheep'—every thing that could affect and captivate the senses. 'And horses, and chariots'—her spiritual offices, combined in strength and regular order, to propagate and support her doctrines and worship. 'And slaves, and souls of men,' who have risked honour and conscience, and body and soul, in her service.

14. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

15. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off, for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

16. And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

17. For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every ship-master, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

18. And cried, when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city?

19. And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea, by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

'And the fruits that thy soul lusted after,' livings, honours, titles, dignities, and endowments; 'and all things which were dainty and goodly, are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.' 'The merchants,' who traded in, and were 'made rich' by her traffic, 'shall stand afar off,' for fear of being discovered to be of her party, and so partake of her torment, 'weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city!' That splendid profession of religion, that was so finely 'clothed' with Christian excellencies, and at the same time possessed of riches and honours to gratify the ambition, 'and precious stones,' to deck out her votaries with, 'and pearls'—the means of securing their salvation, which is the pearl of great price, which she promises to her followers, on easier terms than that of parting with all to procure it; for in a short space of time 'so great riches,' such vast prospects, and flattering delusive hopes, are all vanished.

'And every ship-master'—the superior orders of the clergy, who supported her measures, and carried them safely over the opposition made against them in councils, parliaments, and assemblages of states; and all the subordinate degrees; and as many as make a trade of preaching her unstable religious opinions, 'stood afar off, and cried, when they saw the smoke of her burning'---her ordinances and inventions, for the sake of which she had promoted wars and persecutions, ascend into the air as smoke, and vanish away as she was consuming. 'Saying, What city,' what other kind of institution or establishment, 'is like unto this great city?' to afford such universal means of honour and riches. 'And they cast dust on their heads,' crying and lamenting grievously, that great profession of religion, 'wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea'---the means of carrying and supporting her power and prerogatives, which arose out of the sea of confusion and disorder, 'by reason of her costliness'---her profusion in conferring rewards on her supporters; 'for in one hour she is made desolate.'

20. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

21. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

22. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a mill-stone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

23. And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

24. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

'Rejoice over her,' ye sincere Christians. Pure religion will not suffer in her fall. 'And ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.' She persecuted and contemned you, because you could not submit your consciences to her disposal, nor traffic in her merchandise, but exposed and detected her deceitful wares in all her appearances.

'And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great mill-stone, and cast it into the sea.' This sets forth, that amongst this confusion and wreck of superstition, light and understanding will so prevail, that Babylon will be cast down suddenly and destroyed, 'and be no more found at all;' neither in any of her former appearances, nor in a new and professedly more spiritual state.

'And the voice of her harpers,' her deceitful and hypocritical singers, and her heathenish musical inventions which she has introduced into her worship, adapted to please the carnal ear of vain man; all these contrivances 'shall be heard no more in her.' 'Nor her craftsmen of whatever craft they be.' 'And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in her'---there shall be no more holding up her doctrines as the light of the gospel---'nor the voice of the bridegroom, nor of the bride'—she shall receive no more converts into her communion; for her merchants were not the meek, humble followers of Jesus who exercised no dominion or lordship, but they were 'the great men of the earth;' the princely Gentiles; 'and by her sorceries'—her ordinances and inventions, 'were all nations deceived.'

'And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.' However she might have affected to clear herself, by delivering the subjects of her persecutions over to the secular powers, the Holy Spirit chargeth it all upon her. Or however reformed she may be from her former severities, or tolerant in her present principles, whilst she continues in any of those idolatrous and oppressive practices, which the true prophets and martyrs testified against, and sealed their testimony with their blood, she makes herself guilty thereof, and at her hand it will be required.

CHAPTER XIX.

1. And after these things, I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia: Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

2. For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

3. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

4. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

5. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

7. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

9. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

10. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

'And after these things, I heard a great voice of much people in heaven'---the general voice of the professors of Christianity, 'saying, Alleluia; salvation, and honour, and glory, and power, unto the Lord our God.' They are now convinced of the nature of his salvation, and display of his power; and in the living sense thereof, they ascribe the honour and glory thereof to him, and not to any outward religious performances, or the mistaken exertions of men, who, intoxicated with delusive imaginations, endeavoured to procure a reformation in religion by acts of violence, and to promote the peaceable kingdom of Christ by wars and tumults. 'For true and righteous are his judgments, for he hath judged the great whore'---that spirit of deceit 'which did corrupt the earth'---all earthly governments---'with her fornication,' covered under different appearances, by leading the mind from the principle of spiritual life, into her adulterous bed---into external observations and acts of devotion which the natural powers of man can perform. 'And hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand'---who yielded their lives for his cause and testimony. 'And again they said, Alleluia.' And her external ordinances and absurd opinions rose up like 'smoke,' which vanisheth away 'for ever and ever'---are of no use to her, in time or in eternity.

'And the four and twenty elders'---the representatives of the spiritual Jews and Christians---'and the four living creatures'---the representatives of the different states and conditions of those who in every nation, kindred, tongue and people had feared God and wrought righteousness, 'fell down and worshipped God who sat on the throne,' overruling the determinations and passions of men, and rendering them the blind instruments to execute his judgments, 'saying, Amen,' praise the Lord.

'And a voice came out of the throne'---a certain evidence from God, that their rejoicing will now be triumphant and permanent---'saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.' 'And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude,' and the voice of many different societies, and the voice of awakening manifestations of divine power, claiming solemn attention, 'saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' 'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him,' and forsake our outward performances, and apply to him who had compassion on our weakness, and preserved us by his good Spirit, although we knew it not. Let us give the glory and praise to him alone, and no part to our graven images: 'For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.' His church hath come out of the wilderness, leaning on the breast of her beloved; waiting for his counsel, and following the leadings of his spirit in support of his testimonies, whereby he will establish his kingdom in the souls of men, which consists in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in which his will is done on earth, as it is done in heaven.

'And to her it was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.' She will no longer be opposed, as formerly, by the ministers of deceit, who taught that the saints must sin daily, and that even their best duties were sinful; and that there was no redemption from the power of sin during this life.

'And he said unto me, Write'---it is now a matter of certainty to be written down---'Blessed are they which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb'---who have attended to his calls and knockings at the door of their hearts, and have opened the door, and let him in. 'And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.'

'And I fell at his feet to worship him.' This represents the danger of giving that veneration to men, or opinions, which are only due to God. This has been the stumbling-block of many. When they have been visited by divine grace, instead of attending to its discoveries, they have placed their dependance on some instruments who have communicated to them, 'true sayings of God;' or on the opinions of such as they esteem good men, and thus have given up their own judgment, which the Lord would have exercised and supplied with true wisdom. The danger of this, the apostle warned the newly convinced, in his epistle, to avoid. 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols.' And here the angel delivers this positive injunction, 'See thou do it not;' which appears to be intended as a warning to mankind, that after the wreck and downfall of superstition, they may not place their dependance on instruments, who are but 'fellow servants that have the testimony of Jesus;' but that their whole dependance may be on God, and their veneration and worship directed to him alone; 'for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'—is that which reveals his mind and will in the soul; and will instruct and lead all that faithfully attend to it, in the true and saving knowledge of God, which is life eternal.

See the continuation of this part hereafter.

15. PART X. Propagation of the pure doctrines of Christ, under the character of a White Horse, as in the first ages of Christianity

PART X.

BEING A SUPPLEMENT TO PART III.

Containing an account of the propagating of the pure doctrines of Christ, under the character of a white horse, as in the first ages of Christianity. War between the beast and the earthly powers combined, against Christ and his army. The beast and false prophet taken. The remnant to be slain with the sword. Satan bound. The souls that in part 3d had been seen under the altar, and afterwards stood upon their feet, are now exalted to reign with Christ, throughout the Millenium. Gog and Magog explained.

11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called the Word of God.

14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16. And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

'And I saw heaven opened.' The state of religion, as it was in the middle of the 17th century, in Great Britain: when the establishments were overturned, and the pure truth discovered. 'And behold, a white horse.' This represents, as in the first promulgation of the doctrines of Christianity, the purity of life, as well as the strength, courage, and fortitude, with which its preachers and propagators were distinguished. 'And he that sat on him was called Faithful and True.' He called his servants to faithfulness in the improvement of the talents committed to them: and although it was a day of fiery trials, they never found him a hard master, requiring what he did not on sincere obedience fully enable them to perform; and for which he did not graciously reward them with heavenly peace.

'And in righteousness he doth judge and make war.' This was the work he sent forth his spiritually qualified ministers for; to preach up righteousness, (and testify against the deceit,) and discover the hypocrisy of a profession of religion without it: and to war with the powers of darkness in the earth, and 'spiritual wickedness' in high places.

'His eyes were as a flame of fire.' He anointed the eyes of his servants to see the delusions, of endeavouring to comprehend and restore the pure spiritual religion of Jesus, through the powers of the

natural understanding; and furnished them with zeal to bear their testimony against all the false coverings and transformings of that spirit of deceit; and against 'all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,' who held the truth, or a profession of it, in unrighteousness. 'And on his head were many crowns.' This signifies the general conquest he will make in his spiritual appearance.

'And he had a name written, which no man knew but himself.' Which is his living, quickening power, manifested only to the spiritual, immortal soul; whilst the wise and learned world thought it consisted in a name of Christianity, received in some mysterious way by the performance of outward ceremonies, which were supposed to be accompanied with some secret, hidden, heavenly virtues, on the priest's pronouncing the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, when officiating, and conferring his ordinances.

'He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood.' In which he arose to shake the heavens and the earth; to tread down his enemies in his wrath, and trample upon them with his fury; discovering also his supreme authority in the awful manifestation of divine judgments, which were yet mixed with mercy and forbearance; that the man of wisdom should discern his power, hear the rod, and him who hath appointed it.

'And his name is called, THE WORD OF GOD.' This was his name in the beginning of creation. This was the word that was made flesh; and which the apostle saith, dwelt in us. And this is the word which the apostles preached: the word of faith, nigh in the heart, even 'Christ within the hope of glory.' And though his name was forgotten, or wilfully misapplied to the Scriptures during the apostacy, by those ministers of the letter, who made a trade of preaching them, and who, in order to be looked upon as preachers of the word, artfully applied to them that name and attribute of Christ, yet it is the name by which he is again known, and which is applied to him only, by his church in the restoration.

'And the armies which were in heaven, followed him.' The sincerely religious, who enlisted under his banner, in their labours in his cause, followed the leadings of his spirit in the strength and power he vouchsafed to them, to promote the work of righteousness and peace in the earth.

'And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations.' This is that sword which will destroy and smite the nations that oppose his spiritual kingdom. And it goeth out of his mouth,--it was solemnly proclaimed by the mouths of his faithful prophets, speaking in his name, and will in due season accomplish his purposes; notwithstanding the supporters of superstition may put far away the evil day, and may endeavour to uphold their authority, and old smoky divinity; or like the magicians of Egypt, strive to bring up new life out of the spawn thereof, to imitate the power of God. The word of the Lord hath gone forth, so that they, and all the powers of the earth to support them, will be but like the vessel of a potter under the stroke of a 'rod of iron,' in the hand of him 'who treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God'—who will turn that wrathful temper of war, violence, and revenge, which they have promoted, to the accomplishment of their own destruction.

'And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written.' Not only on the awful garment of majestic power, with which he now clothed himself, but on the living members of his body, the Church, who owned him as supreme ruler over the conscience, above all human power and authority; thereby declaring to the world, that he is 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.' And rather than disobey his divine law, written and manifested in their hearts, or balk the least testimony he gave them to bear, they patiently suffered the loss of goods, liberty, and life.

17. 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;

18. 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.

'And I saw an angel standing in the sun.' After many sincere-hearted Puritans, and other dissenters from the different establishments in England, had patiently suffered in support of the cause of Christianity, as far as they were favoured to see into its purity, as the knowledge of the scriptures became general, the eyes of great numbers were opened to see the inconsistency of those things which so many had faithfully suffered for their non-compliance with; who, joining with these dissenters, they thus became numerous societies.

When the Lord had arisen to tread down the oppressors of his conscientious followers, after a door was fairly opened to obtain free liberty of conscience for all, this 'angel standing in the sun'—this forward spirit of man, that would be judge of divine things by the scriptures, thought that he had discovered therefrom, that the triumph of the whore of Babylon was now nearly at an end; and that the kingdom of Christ— their new formed systems of Christianity—was to be established by outward force upon her ruins.

'And he cried with a loud voice'—it was the cry of many of the prophets of that day—'saying unto all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven'—to that vulturous brood, that in the midst of all their high professions of pure religion, were soaring aloft, above the door, Christ Jesus, and ready to seek for and devour their prey—'Come, and gather yourselves together, unto the supper of the great God.' Come and partake of the feast he is providing for his chosen people Israel.

'That ye may eat the flesh of kings'—may share amongst you their riches and their spoils. 'And the flesh of captains'—the commanders under them. 'And the flesh of mighty men'---men of influence, wealth and power, who have sided with them. 'And the flesh of horses'---the propagators of their religion. 'And of them that sit on them'---the directors of ecclesiastical affairs. 'And the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great'---those that have stepped forth in the cause of freedom, and those that have considered themselves bound by their former allegiance; and all that oppose your purposes in any wise, kill, slay, destroy, seize upon, and confiscate their property, and divide it amongst the saints, to enjoy, and live upon, as their portion. This is very clearly expressive of the state of those that effected the death of king Charles the first; and the numerous executions, confiscations, and sequestrations that afterwards took place amongst his followers, and the non-conforming clergy, as also of all others that opposed the prevailing powers.

19. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

20. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone.

21. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

'And I saw the beast'---the ecclesiastical power---'and the kings of the earth'---the rulers of government---'and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and his army.' He had now arisen in a way contrary to the wisdom and expectation of the world, to restore Christianity to its original foundation and purity. His instruments were despised by the learned professors of Christianity; yet gifted and qualified with power from on high, by him that sent them forth, and directed their labours. But as their doctrine struck at the foundation and life of a carnal ministry---tithes and hire---they were soon marked out by the priests, as objects of their vindictive rage: who, as early as the year 1648, procured a penal law to be made, which appears to have been intended to have taken off at once those new reformers, by whom Christ restored his name and attribute of The Word of God.*

By this law, 'the denying that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God, was declared to be heresy, which, whosoever should

* Neil, vol. iii. p. 592.

maintain, should suffer the pains of death, as in case of felony, without benefit of clergy,' and divers sentiments of George Fox and his friends, respecting the religious ordinances and ministry of human institution, and their denying the use of warlike arms, were accounted errors punishable by imprisonment, until the offender find sureties that he shall not maintain the said errors any more. But he that defeateth the counsel of the wise, caused their designs to be frustrated, and prevented them of the power to get their sanguinary law executed.

However, in the next year, the clergy began to wreak their vengeance on George Fox, by exciting their hearers to abuse him personally, as well as to procure his unlawful imprisonment at different times. From this year forward, he and his friends were frequently abused, beaten, stoned, wounded by different means, (of whom numbers died of their wounds and bruises,) pilloried, whipped, imprisoned in filthy dungeons, and exposed to the most grievous sufferings; women as well as men: from which many were only released by death. All this they patiently endured for the cause of Christ, accounting his sufferings greater riches than the treasures of the world; and choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

And these barbarities were inflicted by the hands of men who made a great stir for chartered privileges and profession of zeal for God and pure religion; of whom, saith Neil, A. D. 1649, 'There was a great appearance of sobriety both in city and country,' the Presbyterian ministers appearing indefatigable in catechising, instructing and visiting their parishioners.

But, under all the appearance of sobriety and virtue, a root of bitterness remained unpurged out in many; ready, on the least opposition, or provocation, to break out into acts of open violence and vindictive abuse: the common people being as much prone to tumult and excess of riot, as in a more licentious age; which dispositions are scarcely less opposite to the genuine spirit of Christianity, designed to promote peace on earth, and good-will to men, than profaneness and immorality.

Although the Society of Friends took great pains in laying the cruelty and injustice of their sufferings before Cromwell, the protector, and those in power, they do not appear to have obtained any redress; but persecutions were continued, and the priests grew more insolent and outrageous in their abuse: frequently entering their religious meetings with a mob, whom they stimulated to abuse this inoffensive people; sometimes with casting dirt and stones, wounding them therewith, or falling on them with clubs, pitchforks, and other weapons; striking, bruising, pulling and hauling them about. At other times, firing of guns,

beating of drums, and bawling and hallooing like bacchanalians. And, sometimes, after they had thus made the place of meeting a place of lawless riot, they would prevail upon the magistrates to imprison this harmless people for holding riotous assemblies.

Such was the superstition of those times, that many of these people, going to their religious meetings, were taken up by officers, under pretence of breaking the Sabbath; had their horses impounded, and sometimes they were taken from them. They were also for this supposed offence, punished by fines, distress of goods, or imprisonment, and some by cruel whippings.

On the meeting of the parliament which Richard Cromwell convened, the persecuted Friends presented them with a printed account of their sufferings, exhibiting a relation of above one hundred and forty then in prisons, and of one thousand nine hundred, who had suffered in the last six years; twenty-one of whom died in prison; generally by hardships, or by violent abuses. But the prejudices of the age ran in a current so strong against this people, as to bear down every sentiment of compassion, and prevent their obtaining relief.

They were also exposed to great spoil and depredations in their property, by unreasonable fines, and exorbitant distraints, for their conscientious refusal to pay tithes, and other ecclesiastical demands. For the present preachers, notwithstanding they had represented tithes as a relic of Judaism, when in the possession of the Episcopalians, having now, by the revolutions of the state, succeeded to the ecclesiastical revenues, they manifested the genuine spirit of the priesthood; being as tenacious as their predecessors, of the power, the privileges, the incomes, and the perquisites of the sacerdotal office, and as oppressive in exacting and recovering them of those, who, from a conscientious scruple, withheld them. Proving that priestcraft in all denominations is the same.

For further particulars, I refer the reader to Gough's history of the people called Quakers, in which he will find a particular account of them and their sufferings: as also many misrepresentations, and false assertions, respecting them, made by Neil and other historians, detected and disproved, and their prejudice and partial bias laid open, and exposed to view. There he will find instances of the innocence, meekness, and patience of the true followers of the Lamb, under a complication of grievous trials and sufferings, inflicted with such barbarity as must excite his commiseration. And there he will also find instances of the persevering, insatiable cruelty of vindictive priests, and their blind devotees, scarcely to be paralleled, or found amongst any other class of mankind, and which cannot fail to fill the humane mind with amazement, detestation, and horror.

'And the beast was taken,'—the ecclesiastical power which had so arbitrarily usurped the prerogative of the Almighty, in assuming authority over the consciences of men;—'And with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him;'—that had inspired soldiers with astonishing resolution and courage to fight for the cause and kingdom of Christ, and produced such wonderful zeal for God and religion, in city and country, that the whole nation was said to be civilized. 'With which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast,'—that had submitted their consciences to the direction of the Presbyterian covenant and discipline—'And them that worshipped his image,'—the ordinances and institutions of the Independents; and their Savoy confession of faith, so sacredly inviolable, that both the freedom of speech, and liberty of the press, were to be violated in its favour.

Although the miracles of the false prophet could deceive those that had the mark of the beast, or who worshipped his image, they could not deceive the Lord's faithful servants. These saw through the deceit,

and faithfully admonished both rulers and clergy, that the Lord, who had permitted the former powers to be shaken, to make way for the tender consciences of his people, who had been oppressed, would not permit them to usurp his power; but would certainly cast them down. Of which several of the Friends faithfully warned Oliver Cromwell. Namely, George Fox, Samuel Fisher, Edward Burroughs, and Thomas Aldam. Edward Burroughs wrote to him largely, putting him in remembrance of his former humble condition of mind, in which the Lord had blessed him; of his present exaltation, and revoltings, and of his seeking to establish his power by unjust means: and reminding him of the persecutions carried on under his name and authority, for which the Lord would certainly call him to an account. And afterwards, in a conference with him, in which Oliver endeavoured to clear himself from having any desire to persecute his friends, Edward desired him to 'consider, what is the cause that what thou desirest not to be done, is yet done? Is it not that thou mayest please men; that thou mayest do the false teachers of this nation, and wicked men, a pleasure?'

Divers others admonished him in the name of the Lord, that whilst he suffered the righteous to be persecuted for conscience sake, his government should not be established. The aforesaid Thomas Aldam, as a sign to him, rent his cap, saying, so shall the government be rent from thee, and thy house.

Samuel Fisher, in his message from the Lord to Oliver Cromwell, and the Parliament, Anno 1656, amongst other things, expresses himself thus: 'And it shall come to pass, saith the Lord, that if you shall yet hearken to my counsel, the light in your conscience (which whosoever lives according to, not turning aside into the darkness, cannot live beside the Scripture, but lives the life of it;) and shall wash you, and make you clean, and put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, and cease to do evil, and learn to do well, and undo the heavy burden of my people, and break every yoke from off their necks, and let my oppressed ones go free, then will I bless you, and you shall be a blessing upon the earth. Then shall your light break forth out of obscurity, and your darkness shall be as the noon-day: and I will unite you that are the heads of the people together in your councils; and you shall repair the breaches of these nations, and build their wastes, even the desolations of many generations; and ye shall be the restorers of paths to dwell in; yea, you shall honour me, and I will honour you, and make you truly and eternally honourable, saith the Lord. But if you shall still continue to be self-seekers, and men-pleasers, and servers of your own ease, your own honours, your own interests, base ends, and earthly concernments, and shall be proud, and stubborn, and stiff-necked against my counsel, making your necks as an iron sinew against all my reproofs; and will not come down, and give up yourselves to be guided by my word, which is nigh you, even in your very hearts and mouths, and shining clearly as a light within you, and there checking and condemning you when you do amiss, or go astray to the right hand, or to the left; and shall rebel against me, so as not to let my people go, but hold them still in slavery and servitude, to your own lusts, and lawless wills; then I testify this day to your faces, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will not honour any one of you that shall so despise me, so as to use you in my service, or to own you in any thing you take in hand, in order to the deliverance of the nation.

And as for you, even you, all you powers, priests and people in these nations, to whom my people are a reproach, I will enter into judgment with you, and recompense all your wickednesses upon your heads, and repay unto you the things you do to my chosen, saith the Lord. And I will bring you into contempt, that are now honourable in the earth; and shameful spewing shall be upon all your glory. And I will blast, blind, and confound you in all your councils, and reject all your confidences; and ye shall not prosper in them. And ye shall reel to and fro, and stagger, and be as filled with drunkenness; and I will dash you to pieces one against another. And you shall labour in the fire of anger, and attempt many things, but your ways

shall not prosper. And I will rain down snares and stumbling-blocks upon you; and my word, which you stumble at, out of the mouths of babes and stammerers, shall be unto you, precept upon precept, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that ye may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. And your whole way shall be as slippery places in the dark; and ye shall be driven on, and fall therein. And you shall look to your seers, but behold darkness; they shall not be able to guide you; they shall be as blind as yourselves. And though they shall flatter you with the name of Sion, so long as you feed and pay them, and cry, peace, peace, while you honour them with your thanks for their pains, and with your praises, and put into their wide-mouthed purses, and though they shall say, we see, yet the vision of that destruction that is coming upon you and them, shall be as a book sealed;

a thick cloud shall cover them; the day shall be dark over them; the sun shall set upon them, and it shall be night unto them, so that they shall not divine. Yea, the understanding of all your prudent ones shall be brought to nought; and ye shall know that I the Lord have sent my servant to speak all these words in your ears, at this time, saith the Lord Almighty, whose counsel shall stand in the midst of all man's thoughts, and who will work, and none shall let it.'

'What shall one then answer the messengers of the nations? even this, that the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people have betaken themselves unto it: but the formal professors and dissembling hypocrites, hireling priests, and fawning prophets, and all proud oppressors, wicked opposers, and persecutors of Christ in his people, can have no share in it, but are shut out into the lake.'

In the year 1659, the long parliament was restored; upon which there were great congratulations about the mercy of God towards his Israel. Of whom Samuel Fisher writes, 'If they persist yet in their professed resolution to establish the pope's pay on their preachers, contrary to their oaths to extirpate popery, root and branch, (which they have sworn the nation to endeavour,) and to persecute such as cannot be perjured together with them, they have not long yet to subsist, without a whirlwind from the Lord, as fast and safe as they seem to sit, falling with pain upon their heads; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.'

Isaac Pennington also warned the parliament in a very solemn manner; but all these declarations and warnings appear to have had no effect, but were disregarded. Selfish views seem to have been the predominant principle. The Presbyterian clergy were very active in getting their confession of faith, directory, and catechism established, and additional penalties imposed on the people called Quakers. New laws were also made for the continuance and recovery of tithes, and augmentation of smaller livings. Thus saith Neil, 'Presbytery was restored to all the power it had ever enjoyed; and the ministers of that persuasion were in full possession of all the livings in England.'

Such was the exalted state of this 'beast,' the ecclesiastical power, and such the respectable condition of the 'false prophet,' their priesthood, when these both 'were taken, and cast alive'---going on, and acting---'into a lake of fire'---the zeal and rage of the Episcopal party---'burning with brimstone;' that is, with revenge for the injuries which they had suffered.

The tide having turned in favour of restoring the king, this measure was zealously promoted by the Presbyterians, with a fond, deceptive expectation that their church would be the established religion; and the Episcopal party were insidiously decoying them into the delusive snare. They valued themselves upon their supposed superior influence, and ambitiously desired to secure all the merit and glory of the restoration to themselves. The court party artfully connived at their measures, and the king gave them encouraging promises; and they were often, when the hope of an exclusive establishment began to fail,

cajoled with an expectation of a comprehension; yet the Episcopal party frustrated all attempts of this kind, and seemed to triumph in their disappointments and sufferings. Many of them were at once dispossessed of their livings and preferments, and soon they were every where, except in Scotland, suspended, and deprived of all ecclesiastical power and dignity: the temper of the Episcopal clergy having been sharpened against them, and irritated towards the king, in consequence of his having consented to the establishment of Presbytery in Scotland.

By the manner of their conducting their negotiations—the confounding of their counsels—their being beaten from one position to another, as they eagerly grasped, as it were, at straws, to save themselves from political destruction—and their final, full defeat, the prophetic warnings and declarations of Samuel Fisher and others appear to have been fully and minutely verified.*

The king, soon after their political overthrow, favoured the scheme of the bishops to oppress them with penal laws, and from this time forward persecutions were frequent and severe.

The gratification of their own ambition, and the resentment they entertained against all who had been the cause of their sufferings, appear to have been the governing principles with the Episcopal party, from which nothing could engage them to depart.

'And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat on the horse.' The society of those called Quakers, in general, looked upon the restoration of king Charles II. as a signal instance of the interposition of Divine Providence, restoring peace and order to the distracted nation; of which they were not wanting re-

* Various historians were recurred to by the author, for corroborating evidences of the truth of the statements given of those events, amongst whom the inquiring reader is referred to Neil, the lord Clarendon, and Baxter. Ed peatedly to remind both king and people. And if these had looked upon it in the same light, with becoming gratitude and thankfulness, they might have been preserved in greater propriety of conduct.

At the intercession of Margaret Fell and others, the king released about seven hundred of their friends, who had been imprisoned under the preceding governments, and an order was drawn up for permitting them the free exercise of their worship; but the ratification and issuing of it was obstructed by some who disapproved of any toleration. At length the insurrection of the fifth monarchy men furnished these with the pretext they wanted to commence their oppressive measures.

Some of the inferior magistrates, who retained their places and their inimical dispositions, continued to be vexatious as formerly: and, on the breaking out of the aforesaid insurrection, the king, by his proclamation, forbade the Anabaptists, Quakers, or fifth monarchy men to assemble or meet together, under pretence of worshipping God, except in some parochial church or chapel, or in private houses by persons therein inhabiting. In consequence thereof, the Friends were again exposed to fresh and severe persecutions: although by the dying testimony of the sufferers at their execution, they were declared to have no part in, or knowledge of, their plot. And thus justice, the characteristic virtue of good government, was designedly violated, by involving the innocent with the guilty, to gratify the resentments of clerical intolerance; which, as yet, durst not discover fully its ambitious views to the more numerous and powerful dissenters.

In London, above three hundred and forty Friends were committed to Newgate, and so crowded together that they had scarcely room to stand. The persecution spread with similar violence over most parts of the

nation, insomuch that several thousands of them were imprisoned. George Fox and Richard Hubberthorn drew up a declaration of their abhorrence of plots and warring, but it was seized at the press. However, they quickly drew up another, got it printed, sent some copies to the king and council, and published the rest in their justification, to the nation at large: upon which, and a personal application to the king, he sent out a proclamation, forbidding soldiers to search any houses without a constable. Afterwards, when some more of the insurgents were brought to suffer, they also publicly cleared this injured people, by declaring they had no hand in, or knowledge of, their scheme or insurrection. This, with other evidences, and their continued intercessions, prevailed upon the king to issue out a declaration, ordering the Quakers to be set at liberty, without paying fees.

Although the fierce current of persecution was, for the present, in some measure stopped, and the Friends that were prisoners set at liberty, yet it was not long till they were again persecuted by the revival of old laws, made in the reigns of Henry VIII. and queen Elizabeth; which were now perverted to the punishment of this inoffensive body of people; who, shortly after, were singled out as victims to fresh penal laws, in addition to the old ones revived against them.

The parliament being devotedly resigned to the measures and influence of Episcopacy and a bigoted ministry, brought in a bill directly levelled at this society, enacting new penalties for refusing to take oaths; and also to suppress their religious meetings. Upon this, divers Friends attended the house, and expostulated with them upon the injustice of the proposed act, which must involve so many innocent persons in sufferings, merely for the cause of God; exhorting them to consider, that they might as well make a law that they should not pray in the name of Jesus Christ, as one to forbid them to assemble for divine worship; which they dared no more to refrain than Daniel did to pray to the true God, although it was contrary to the king's decree: desiring the house to reflect on what guilt and disrepute they might bring upon themselves, by making a law, the execution whereof must produce grievous sufferings to thousands of innocent people, who, in justice, ought to be protected by law.

They also reminded them of the king's declaration, to which they had never forfeited their right: having always demeaned themselves peaceably and inoffensively to their neighbours, and submissively to the government. Therefore they could not be restrained in matters of worship and conscience towards God, without wounding the king's honour, and violating the public faith.

Their arguments were supported by the abilities of divers eminent speakers, yet the bigoted party, influenced by the imagined interests of Episcopacy, prevailed against reason, right and justice; and the bill was passed into a law. In consequence thereof, great persecutions and imprisonments ensued; so that, by this and other oppressive penal laws, the sincerity of the members of this society was put to a severe test. But the unwearied patience and fortitude with which they bore their sufferings, to the loss of substance, liberty and life, is an irrefragable proof of their integrity, and that they were sustained by divine support, to bear hardships, above the power of mere humanity to endure, and with a firmness which the persevering malice and cruelty of their persecutors could never overcome.

They were dragged from their business and their beds; taken up in the streets and highways, and sent to prison: frequently beset in their peaceable meetings, and beat in such a manner, as if their assailants determined their murder. Divers of them died of the wounds and bruises they received. After their adversaries had wearied themselves, in gratifying their vindictive barbarity by personal abuse, they would then send numbers to prison; and upon whatever pretence, or however illegally committed, when brought to court for trial, they were generally made offenders. The judges appear to have been chosen, more for

their passionate spirit against dissenters, than for their conscientious reverence to equity and legal justice: frequently manifesting their little regard thereto, or even to decorum; and discovering their intemperate party rage, and palpable partiality, in the seat of judgment; influencing the juries by undue means, to bring in unjust verdicts, and loading the prisoners with abusive insulting reproaches. In many instances, such disregard to the rights of the subject, such open mockery of law and justice, were exhibited, as rendered the courts no better than a popish inquisition.

The non-conformists, in general, suffered much in their persons and property, under the greater part of the reign of king Charles II. and the beginning of the reign of king James his successor: but the heaviest weight of sufferings fell upon the scorned Quakers, who had administered no just occasion. By their plain testimonies against the hypocrisy and outside sanctity of the formal professors of religion, and the profanity, debauchery, and contempt of seriousness, which prevailed, as well as against a carnal ministry, which produced such corrupt fruits: by their honest admonitions to the king, and others in authority, and by their absolute refusal to pay tithes, and all other ecclesiastical demands, and their prophetical warnings of the absolute overthrow of all that usurped power, assumed by the antichristian hierarchies, of all sorts, (some of which have been already related, in the explanation of the Little Book,) they became soon marked out, as objects for the gratification of bigoted rage and clerical vengeance.

While other societies of dissenters could temporize, so as to forbear meeting together, or by concealing themselves in private, elude the searches of their adversaries,* the Quakers, strangers to dissimulation, continued undaunted in asserting the prerogative of

* Neil saith,* 'the dissenters continued to take the most prudent measures to cover their private meetings from their adversaries; they assembled in small numbers, and frequently shifted their places of worship, and met together late in the evenings, or early in the mornings. There were friends without doors, always on the watch, to give notice of approaching danger. When the dwellings of dissenters joined, they made windows, or holes in the wall, that the preacher's voice might be heard in two or three houses. They had sometimes private passages from one house to another; and trap-doors for the escape of the minister, who went always in disguise, except when he was discharging his office. The doors were always locked, and a sentinel placed near, in case of an alarm, that the preacher might escape.'

But the Quakers,† he says, 'were so resolute as to assemble

* Neil, vol. iv. p. 443.

† Neil, vol. iv. p. 326.

Christ, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS;' whose testimony they regarded above the unjust laws of men, and all the cruelties and tortures they might be permitted to suffer, for their conscientious discharge of duty, in that way they were persuaded was acceptable to him. They therefore valiantly kept up their meetings in the hottest persecutions; satisfied that no law of man could exempt them from obedience to the law of God, nor rescue them from his righteous judgment, if they should violate it.

This their persecutors would needs consider as flying in the face of government; and being offended at their unshaken constancy, as baffling their scheme of totally subduing all the different sects, they exerted every effort of their malice, and their power, to make them bow to their unrighteous impositions.

Such a combination of foes being apparently disposed for their utter extirpation,* under the pressure of afflictions and calamities, the most feelingly distressing, openly at the Bull and Mouth, near Alder's gate, from whence the soldiers and other officers dragged them to prison, till Newgate was filled, and multitudes died by close confinement in the several jails.'

* The bishop of Peterborough* declared publicly in the steeple house, at Rowel, (after he had commanded the officers to put the conventicle act in execution,) 'Against all fanatics it hath done its business, except the Quakers; but when the parliament sits again, a stronger law will be made; not only to take away their lands and goods, but also to sell them for bond-slaves.'

Divers other bishops were zealous abettors of severity, though many had the prudence to lay by, and resign the odium

* Gough's history, vol. ii. p. 305.

there appeared for them no human help. Yet trusting in that Divine Being, in whose service they had engaged, and for whose cause they were persecuted, and supported through all by the testimony of an approving conscience, they firmly bore the utmost malice of their vindictive persecutors without shrinking; patiently enduring a long and painful fight of afflictions, till by their constancy they even wearied them out, and at last attained quietness. And through the overruling providence of God, baffling and confounding the wisdom and counsel of the wise and prudent, making them subservient to the opening a door of liberty to his oppressed people, according to his word, they became a numerous society, tolerated by law, and standing on their feet, as has been already related.

The sentence threatened being so remarkably fulfilled on their first persecutors, leaves no room to doubt, that 'the remnant will be slain by the sword of him that sitteth on the horse,' when he suddenly ariseth to give reward unto his servants the prophets, and to destroy them that corrupt the earth. 'Which sword proceedeth out of his mouth'—was faithfully proclaimed by the mouths of his servants, in his name and power.

'And all the fowls were filled with their flesh.' The executioners of divine justice, the vulturous brood, who of enforcing the persecuting laws to the magistrates, and inferior clergy; many of whom used their utmost efforts to find out, and encourage the most profligate wretches, to get them to turn informers, and descended into such acts of meanness, to palliate, cover and screen these favourite sons of the church, when detected in their perjuries, palpable extortions and frauds, as were truly dishonourable to any but clergymen.

are watching for their prey, will be filled with the spoils which the griping hand of priestly avarice has extorted from its lawful owners.

CHAPTER XX.

1. And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand.

2. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and satan, and bound him a thousand years,

3. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season.

4. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

'And I saw an angel come down from heaven.' This is the extraordinary manifestation of divine power, light and knowledge to mankind. After all their exalted reason, their vain efforts to comprehend spiritual things, and their confidence in their natural abilities to do the will of God, have utterly failed---when they have wearied themselves in the multitude of their inventions—when all hands shall wax feeble, and all knees shall be weak, they will then be convinced of the necessity of immediate divine illumination to discover, and the assistance of divine grace to enable them to perform, their duty. And this will be a key to unlock their darkened understandings, and rend the face of the covering cast over all people—the vail that is spread over all nations—whereby it will be clearly seen that all the exertions and conjectures of human reason to discern or fathom spiritual things, are but a bottomless pit, and can only produce smoke, that will vanish away before the presence of the Lord; and this conviction will be 'a great chain in the hand' of Almighty power.

'And he laid hold on the dragon'—the bloody spirit of infidelity—'that old serpent'—self-sufficiency—'which is the devil'—arbitrary tyranny—'and satan'—unbelief in immediate divine influence—'and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him.'

As the convictions above recited were as a chain to bind, so the awful judgments, and evident demonstrations of an overruling Providence, will make such impressions on the minds of men, as will be like a seal set upon him, 'that he shall go out to deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years shall be fulfilled; after that he must be loosed a little season.'

'And I saw thrones'—seats of legislative and executive power—'and they,' the nations, 'sat on them, and judgment was given unto them.' They will see the necessity of applying for wisdom to him, by whom kings rule, and princes decree justice, to guide them in true judgment in their decisions.

'And I saw the souls'—the living representatives,

'of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God,' who had once been discovered to be his righteous servants, but were to rest for a season, until their fellow servants, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

When the exertions of human wisdom and power to effect a reformation, had only produced the number of a beast, there was a people raised up by the same principle of life, to own, preach and bear testimony to, the living Word and Spirit of God: who disclaimed all ecclesiastical establishments, as well as human

inventions, in their religion and worship: 'who had not worshipped the beast, nor his image; neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, nor in their hands'---neither openly nor secretly---and having by their fruits manifested the efficacy of their religion, and themselves to be Christians in nature, and by the general voice of men of liberality esteemed such. After the overturning of all superstition, their doctrines and principles will come to be the only profession of Christianity;* and thus 'they shall reign with Christ' in his spiritual kingdom, 'a thousand years.' 'But the rest of the

* The reader will observe that the reference is here to doctrines and principles; and these referring to the spirituality of the Christian religion, as distinguished from the various forms of ceremonious, lifeless profession. It is proper then, as noticed in the Introduction, still to consider principles—and in the present age, to regard men as in connexion therewith, only so far as they may, by their works, and the purity of their conduct, demonstrate that they are members of the true spiritual church, and thus manifest themselves to be truly the successors of those valiant disciples of Christ, whose conduct, life and sufferings have been thus held up to public view.

Ed.

dead lived not'---none of those professions who worshipped the beast, or his image---none of those religious systems that were set up by human wisdom and contrivance, will be revived again, 'until the thousand years are finished.'

'Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection'—whose soul hath been quickened by the word of God, and by attending to it, raised from a state of nature to a state of grace. However he may have been contemned or despised by a deluded world, he was not without an evidence of divine favour and regard, in which he could lay down his life in peace; for 'on such the second death,'—the separation of the soul from the body---'hath no power.' And now the remembrance of their virtues will be honoured of all, as examples worthy to follow---thus, 'they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.'

7. And when the thousand years are expired, satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God, out of heaven, and devoured them.

10. And the devil that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever.

'And when the thousand years are expired, satan,' the spirit of unbelief, 'shall be loosed out of his prison.'

Human reason will then contrive to revive some parts of the old religious systems, which were not to live till the thousand years were finished, that the natural powers of man, without immediate divine assistance, may be sufficient to act in, and perform. 'And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth'—shall endeavour to spread their principles far and wide, by deceiving mankind, 'Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.'

As the names of Gog and Magog are introduced abruptly, and appear to be an interruption to the sense, and attended with more than ordinary obscurity, in order to remove the difficulty, it is only necessary to consider what is meant by this name in Ezekiel: where we find it is applied to the whole rabble of ecclesiastics, and self-sufficient teachers, that opposed the reformation in religion, brought forth by the word and spirit of the Lord. And the destruction of Gog and Magog, there spoken of, is no other than the destruction of Babylon pointed out in the Revelations; to express which, the same figures are used. And the burying of their bones, is the destroying of their systems. Their doctrines, and even the most refined opinions and conjectures of human abilities, respecting divine and spiritual things, are found to be but dead men's bones, without life or power; therefore necessary to be buried, that the land may be cleansed.

From this it appears, that a humanly qualified ministry, which had lain dead during the thousand years, will then arise to deceive mankind: and shall so prevail as to engage multitudes to oppose the pure doctrines of Christ, and the spiritual worship of his true followers. 'And they went up on the breadth of the earth'---engaged the rulers of government on their side;---'And compassed the camp of the saints about;'---began to restrict them of their liberties and privileges:---'And the beloved city'---restraining them in the exercise of their Christian discipline. 'And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.' That is, a zeal will be excited amongst men, by the overruling providence of God, that will overcome the enemies of his church and people.

'And the devil that deceived them'---that overbearing spirit, that was striving to bring them under the oppressions of humanly invented systems---'was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are.' The propagators of those systems shall be cast down from their usurped authority and dominion, and be brought under subjection, as in England the powers of the Presbyterians and Independents were, 'and there tormented,' by being kept under, and prevented from arising, or having it in their power to exercise dominion any more.

16. PART XI. Awful representation of the day of judgment

PART XI.

The apostle exhibits an awful representation of the day of judgment, in the trial of departed souls on leaving the darkness of time, by being separated from the body, to enter into the light of eternity, and appear before the throne of immaculate purity, justice, and righteous retribution.

11. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.

'And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it.' In whatever degree a vain confidence may embolden the sinner to brave the fear of death, when a separation from that life which inspired his resolutions takes place, his delusion must quickly vanish. When the poor soul, stripped of all its coverings, is introduced before the dread tribunal of eternal light, which is day, and justice, which is the judgment of it, what inexpressible anguish, torment and bitterness must succeed in the room of a false hope, and dependance, of being accepted of that God whose offers of mercy they had obstinately rejected—of that Saviour whose life they crucified, and who is now their tremendous Judge: 'from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away'—all the deceitful glosses of the necessity for rulers of governments to transgress the divine precepts, and all the pretended regard for the honour and preservation of religion, offered in excuse for oppression, and all acts of devotion and worship substituted in the place of obedience, 'fled away, and there was found no place for them.'

'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.' Then it is the small and low are placed before the great and mighty, as they stand before the throne of awful majesty. 'And the books were opened'—the secrets of all hearts revealed to open view, with that clearness as if they were written in books—'and another book was opened, which is the book of life'—the record of eternal life which God hath given his people; a witness in their souls, by which they certainly know that they are his living children. 'And the dead were judged out of those things that were written therein'—that were thus manifested and revealed—'according to their works.' 'And the sea'—the instability of religious opinions—'gave up the dead which were in it'—those who had departed out of time in that state. 'And death'—that separation from the divine principle, in which the soul hath assumed a state of self-sufficiency, or sinned out the day of divine love and mercy, whereby the light of God's spirit is rejected, and hardness of heart ensues, and it is left in darkness, which is death; separated, and blotted out of the book of life. 'And hell'---the revelation of terror and wrath in the soul, which sinners often feel, through the awakening calls of mercy, and yet return to

their old courses again, or choose some easier manner than Christ hath appointed, to get from under the painful operation intended for purification and refinement, which is thus prevented. These 'delivered up the dead,' who in those states and conditions had departed this life. 'And they were judged, every man according to his works.'

'And death and hell'---those states of darkness and alienation from God, 'were cast into the lake of fire; which is the second death;' whereby the soul is left under the irremediable sense of that extreme anguish and tribulation, which at times had been lessened, or entirely smothered up, during its connexion with the body, by partaking of its pleasures and enjoyments.

'And whosoever was not found written in the book of life'---who had not lived and acted under the influence of the living principle of eternal life, so as to be in nearness and conjunction therewith---'was cast into the lake of fire,' that state of horror and indignation, which, during life, the soul at times had a terrifying, tormenting foretaste of; and in which it is now involved, without remedy, for ever.

17. PART IX. Continued. Summary view of the state of religion, succeeding the revolutions which had been prophetically foretold\u2014representation of the order, &c. of the church of Christ

PART IX.

CONTINUED.

Summary view of the state of religion which succeeded the revolutions. Representation of the order, authority, and government of the church of Christ. What are the qualifications of its members, and who are excluded.

CHAPTER XXI.

1. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

6. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end: I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life, freely.

7. He that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

8. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

'And I saw a new heaven'---a new state of religion and worship, taught by the Holy Spirit, and performed under its influence. 'And a new earth'---a government, ruling in the fear of God, without violence or oppression. 'For the first'—the deceitful likenesses of religion which were taught by the precepts of men, and the governments which protected and imposed them, 'were passed away, and there was no more sea'---no more contrary opinions, clashing one against another.

'And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven'—the order, government and discipline introduced into the church, by the Spirit of Christ, and supported by his authority, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' By following his instructions, and acting under the influence of his power, she became adorned with the practice of those virtues which are the peculiar ornaments of the Christian church. 'And I heard a great voice out of heaven'—the acknowledgment of religious people generally, 'saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men'---the place of the ark of his testament, wherein his will is manifested to men. 'And he will dwell with them'---his presence and glory will accompany them. 'And they shall be his people,' redeemed from the spirit of the world, to serve him in sincerity and holiness. 'And God himself shall be with them, and be their God'---their protector and preserver. 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,' by utterly removing every means of oppression with which they had been afflicted. 'And there shall be no more death'---no more of that spiritual death and darkness in the soul, which comes by its rejecting the principle of life. 'Neither sorrow nor crying.' It is now a time of rejoicing, as expressed by Isaiah; 'For the ransomed shall return with everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee from them:' 'for the former things are passed away.'

'And he that sat upon the throne,'---the supreme governor of all, 'said, Behold, I make all things new.' 'And he said unto me, Write'---it is a matter of certainty; the determinate counsel of him, 'whose words are true and faithful.' 'And he said, It is done.' As it was thus said on the pouring out of the seventh vial, to show that the overthrow of all tyranny would then be suddenly accomplished, here he shows that the joy and happiness of his people will now be completed, and remain permanent in him, who is the author and finisher of their faith, that 'will give to him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely'---replenishing consolations to the soul.

'He that overcometh,' by denying himself, taking up his daily cross, and following him in the way of regeneration, 'shall inherit all things.' 'But the fearful,' who do not love God above all, and are therefore contriving for themselves, 'and the unbelieving,' who do not believe in the witness which God giveth of his Son, nor in his power to redeem them from the dominion of sin, 'and the abominable,' who delight in sinful gratifications, 'and the murderers,' of whatever description, 'and the whoremongers, and the sorcerers,' who pretend by outward performances to confer divine favours, 'and idolaters,' those who pretend to worship God without the assistance of his Spirit, and all that suffer other objects to captivate their affections, 'and all liars,' shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone'---that state of horror and separation from God, 'which is the second death.'

18. PART XII. Restoration of the true church discovered, and its glory described

PART XII.

BEING A SUPPLEMENT TO PART VI.

The restoration of the true Church discovered by an angel. Its glory described. The glory of the Lord and the Lamb is the light of it. Nothing that is sinful can enter into it. The river and tree of life. There shall be no more curse. Invitation to all, to come and partake of the waters of life. Those that add to, or take from the things contained in the prophecies of this book, threatened.

In this part, the remarks being few, are inserted in, or added to the verses: the former order is departed from, to avoid unnecessary repetitions.

'And there came unto me, one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues.' As he came to him, chap. xvii. to show him, in the spirit, the mystery, and idolatry of the great mother of harlots, which sat upon many societies; with the judgment of God that was to be executed upon her. For though she trampled upon the precepts of Christ, and the practices of the primitive church, whilst it remained in the wilderness for 1260 years, yet all this time, she was, in different appearances, mistaken for the true church; and nothing short of the illumination of the Holy Spirit, could discover the deceit. Now he came, saith John, 'and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.'

When the true church was restored by the power of Christ, the natural understanding of man, bewildered through the blindness of prejudice, could not discern her, although she was eminently distinguished by the practice of those virtues that are founded on the precepts of Christ, and the examples of his apostles.

'And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,' on its way to be established upon earth; which none but those whose spiritual eyes were opened, could see.

'Having the glory of God'---dignified by him for the tabernacle of his testimony. 'And her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone.' The light of Christ, the corner stone laid in Zion, elect and precious, which the wise builders rejected; but whosoever believeth thereon, shall not be confounded, or left in darkness; for it is 'clear as crystal.'

'And had a wall great and high'---even salvation hath the Lord appointed for walls and bulwarks. 'And had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.' Which represents that their keepers are favoured with divine light and knowledge, to enable them to judge of the true Jews, who are circumcised in their hearts and ears; the qualifications by which they are admitted.

'On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates; on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates.' Which shows that it is accessible to the four quarters of the earth.

'And the wall of the city had twelve foundations; and in them the names,' not of national churches, nor decrees of councils, opinions of men, nor corrupt practices, although sanctioned by ages, but only 'the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.'

'And he that talked with me had a golden reed,' the pure standard of truth, 'to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the walls thereof.' The entrance by which her living members are admitted, and the Christian means which are their defence and preservation; that her gates might be righteousness, and peace might be within her walls.

'And the city lieth four-square'---extendeth to the four quarters of the earth. 'And the length is as large as the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs.' The number of the apostles multiplied by thousands, to show that the same divine principle can raise up thousands equal to them in the knowledge of the things of God, and furnish them with the same spiritual qualifications for the government of his church in all parts thereof; by which 'the length, and the breadth, and the height of it, are equal.' And the Lord will be known to be one, and his name one, throughout the whole earth.

'And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits'---the number of the apostles and patriarchs multiplied together; being the representatives of the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed servants of God; to show that the same care and travail prevails in the church, and the same power and authority is her wall of preservation---'according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.'

'And the building of the wall of it was of jasper'--it was not done in the darkness of conjecture or carnal apprehensions, but in the clearness of the precious light of truth. 'And the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.' There were no ambitious views, nor secret mysteries to be concealed.

'And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

'The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.'

The purity of the lives of the apostles, and excellency of the order and government of the primitive church, as also of the new Jerusalem, founded upon the same living principle and power, to those whose understandings are spiritually illuminated, shed a divine lustre, as much superior to the contrivances of human wisdom, as these precious stones are to the counterfeit, deceitful imitations of them.

'And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl.' Each distinguished by its peculiar excellency, pointed out by the names of each of the patriarchs.

'And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.' The way of holiness, wherein is light and understanding to walk by; in which the way-faring man, though a fool, cannot err.

'And I saw no temple therein'---no outward building to limit the divine presence to; 'for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it.'

'And the city had no need of the sun;' that is, of the scriptures; 'neither of the moon,' symbolical ordinances, 'to shine in it,' 'for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'

'And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it.' The way by which nations shall come to witness salvation, will be by submitting to, and walking in, this living principle of light. 'And the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.' As they have heretofore gloried in their own shame, in serving their lusts and pleasures, they shall serve and honour it with their gain and substance; which the Lord himself saith, he will dedicate to the God of the whole earth, and the service of his truth.

'And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day.' No articles or conditions that were set up in the night, shall exclude the tender conscience, or shut him out of its communion; 'for there shall be no night there.'

'And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.' For the nations that will not serve it, shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. Isaiah lx. 12.

'And there shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.' Whatever profession they may make of serving the principle of truth, they shall be shut out, and none shall be permitted to enter, 'but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life;' who walk in the light of life, and have a name written therein; an evidence of divine acceptance.

34C

CHAPTER XXII.

'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal.' This is that living water of which our Lord said, whosoever drinketh thereof, it shall be in him a well springing up unto eternal life; this spake he of the spirit, which they that believe on him shall receive—'proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb'—thereby showing, that by coming under his government, the soul becomes replenished as a watered garden, by the spiritual consolations of the waters of life, which make glad the whole heritage of God.

'In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month.' As man becomes subject to the grace of God, manifested in him through Jesus Christ, and walks in the way thereof---the street of this holy city, he is favoured to partake of the fruit of the tree, which yield-eth a constant supply of spiritual food for the immaterial soul. 'And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.' Those Christian virtues, dispositions and tempers, which will flourish as leaves of the tree, will change the manners of nations, and dispose them to heal their differences in an amicable manner, with mutual equity and justice.

'And there shall be no more curse'---no more the curse of war, and the attendant calamities. 'But the throne of God, and of the Lamb, shall be in it'---nations shall bow to his righteous sceptre; 'and his servants shall serve him.'

'And they shall see his face'---shall behold his glory in the inward manifestation of his spirit; 'and his name shall be in their foreheads'---they shall profess him openly, and the fruits will appear in their circumspect lives and humble walking before him.

'And there shall be no night there'---no need to grope through dark conceptions to know the will of God, for his law is written in their hearts. 'And they need no candle'---no man to teach them, for they are taught of the Lord. 'Neither light of the sun'---of the scriptures of truth---'for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever.'

'And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true'---they will certainly be fulfilled. 'And the Lord God of the holy prophets, sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.'

'Behold, I come quickly.' They that receive him in the way of his manifestations in the soul, know him come, to sway his righteous sceptre in their hearts; and are partakers of the promise. 'Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.'

'And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.' This appears to be intended to caution mankind not to suffer their affections to be captivated, to those who are made instruments for their spiritual illumination.

'Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.'

'And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.'

'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.' Although the Almighty furnishes men with grace sufficient for their salvation, as its operations offer no violence to the faculties and powers of nature, it may be resisted, and they remain, after all its strivings, unjust and filthy still. 'And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.'

'And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.'

'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; the first and the last.'

'Blessed are they that do his commandments'---that attend to his voice in the soul, to hear and obey it---'that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'

'For without are dogs'---such as turn from the principle of truth, and lick up their old vomit again---'and sorcerers'---who are only acting from imitation---'and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.' These are all excluded, although they may dream that they are eating and drinking in his presence, during the day of their visitation; but as they let it pass over without improvement, they are shut out in darkness.

'I Jesus have sent my angel,' my light and knowledge, 'to testify unto you these things in the churches: 'I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning-star;' the first-begotten of the Father.

'And the Spirit,' by his inward calls and convictions. 'And the bride.' The church by her labours and travails for the good of mankind, 'say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come: And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' It is offered freely by Christ to all.

'For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.'

'And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.'

'He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be with you all. Amen.'

Chapter 19

19. Conclusion

HAVING now gone through with my explanation of this book, before I take leave of my readers, I would just call to their recollection, that the same spirit of prophecy, which opened these Revelations to the apostle John, did also manifest to others of the apostles, a general prospect of the same religious transactions, as are here thrown before our view: which is clearly evidenced by their communication of their prospects to those to whom they wrote. They warned the churches of the danger of being deceived by the false appearances of religion which would arise amongst themselves. They pointed out in explicit terms, the arbitrary power which would be exercised to the oppression of the faithful. They beheld the great declension which would ensue. They saw the power of the deceiving spirit set up, and the man of sin exalted. And they also saw the exaltation of the kingdom of Christ, after this man of sin should be revealed and overthrown. A few of their most remarkable expressions to this purport, are, to show their accordance, here inserted.

2 Thessalonians, chapter 2. 'Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed,

the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that when I was with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. Even him whose coming is after the working of satan; with all power, and signs, and lying wonders; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.'

1 Timothy, chapter 4. 'Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.'

2 Timothy, chapter 3. 'This know also, that in the last day perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their ownselves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false-accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God: having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. From such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts; ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth. Men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.' Chap. 4. 'For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto Fables.'

2 Peter, chapter 2. 'But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers amongst you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they, with feigned words, make merchandise of you. Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.' 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. But chiefly them that walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government.* Presumptuous are

* The government of the Spirit of Christ, which alone must rule in his church.

CONCLUSION.

they; self-willed: they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.' 'These as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption. And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots are they, and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls. An heart have they exercised with covetous practices: cursed children: which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.'

See also the General Epistle of Jude.

These prophetical informations, together with the book of Revelations, which I have attempted to explain, having, with the most indisputable certainty, been written a long time previous to many of the transactions so clearly pointed out in them, while they conspire to afford the most satisfactory outward evidence, to the reality of divine communications being made to men, furnish solid ground to all those who seek the exaltation of the kingdom of pure righteousness, and love the simplicity thereof, whereon to rest a steadfast belief, that when the works of darkness shall be fully made manifest, the Lord Almighty will, in his abundant goodness and mercy, dethrone the spirit of self-sufficiency in the hearts of men, rebuild the desolations of many generations, and cause to shine forth in its own original brightness, the glorious gospel light of his son, Jesus Christ. To him, the strength of whose right hand is all-sufficient to effect the purposes of his own will, be dominion and praise, for ever and ever.

The following CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE is inserted for the gratification of the curious reader, who may choose to compare the dates, collective numbers and coincidences therein with historical records, rather than as a necessary appendage to the foregoing work.

| | A. D. | Number of years. | A. D. |

| --- | --- | --- | --- |

| Destruction of Jerusalem | 70 | | |

| The church said to retain its purity till | 110 | | |

| Outward observations began to be looked upon as essential, and were accompanied with an air of heathen mysteries; disputes arose concerning them, and men's minds became bewildered, so that they lost sight of its spiritual nature—thus the visible church began her flight into the wilderness | 156 | | |

| The testimonies delivered from age to age, respecting the pure spiritual nature of Christianity were rejected, and not considered even as a ground for a general reformation for the space of | | 1260 | |

| until John Huss published his vision of the restoration of primitive purity in the church, wrought by the Holy Spirit—who (J. H.) was martyred | | | 1416 |

| Gallenus, the emperor, published his edicts in favour of the Christians. Festivals were instituted in memory of the martyrs. Many heathen rituals were introduced. Some bishops assumed metropolitan authority over provinces, which was followed with a train of vices | 258 | | |

| Heathen rituals were increased, as were the unwarrantable powers of the bishops, and continued | | 1260 | |

| until their powers began to be abridged; their vices exposed, and many of their ceremonies rejected by Luther and his supporters | | | 1518 |

| Human wisdom and authority assume the place of the Word and Spirit in the government of the church | 275 | | |

| From which time these two witnesses prophesy in sackcloth, their testimonies being subjected to the control of human power for | | 1260 | |

| until they were killed by the beast | | | 1533 |

| and after three days and a half arose and stood upon their feet | | | 1650 |

| Christ crucified in his spiritual appearance. Human wisdom and authority established in the church, out of which arose the beast, to whom the dragon gave his power | 318 | | |

| This tyrannical power continued during the number of the beast | | 666 | 984 |

| and the number of a man | | 666 | |

| until Christ arose in his spiritual appearance, and was owned by his people King of kings and Lord of lords | | | 1650 |

| The beast, through the power given him by the dragon, made war with, and overcame the saints; the simplicity of the true church was banished, to give place to supersti- | | | |

| tion and idolatry, and thus the woman flew into the wilderness. | 390 | | |

| --- | --- | --- |

| The woman nourished in the wilderness for a time, times, and half a time. The beast prevailed and prospered forty and two months. | 1260 | 1650 |

| until the true church was restored by the Word and Spirit | | |

| Symmachus elected supreme bishop, which was the star that fell to the earth, which opened the bottomless pit; out of the smoke of the pit came locusts. | 498 | 150 |

| which hurt men five months. | | |

| First, by artfully bringing them under the dominion of the pope, and exalting his power until he ventured to control the emperor. | | 648 |

| When the pope assumed a power superior to every power on earth. | 984 | |

| these locusts again hurt men, by their artifices overcoming every attempt to lessen his tyranny or reform religion for five months. | | 150 |

| Until some light began to arise, learning to be encouraged, and the principles of a reformation to spread. | | 1134 |

| From the time the church began her flight into the wilderness. | 156 | 117 |

| was. | | 273 |

| until the witnesses were supplanted. | | 117 |

| and from that time was. | | 390 |

| until she took her final flight. | | |

| From the beginning of the reformation and discovery of the true church by John Huss. | 1416 | 117 |

| was. | | 1333 |

| until the witnesses were slain. | | 117 |

| and from that time, while they lay dead, was. | | 1659 |

| until they arose and stood upon their feet. | | |

APR 19 1950

sermon index

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ
and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net

