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A

SERMON

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PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH.



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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PITTSBURGH,

To whom the following discourse was delivered, in the regular course of ministerial duty, and by whom it is now made public; it is, with a grateful recollection of the many kindnesses which it has been his happiness to experience, since his residence among them; of the candor and indulgence with which his imperfect discharge of public duty has been regarded; the union and harmony which they have maintained; and the punctuality, seriousness, and decorum with which they have attended upon the public worship of God, and contributed of their substance to the furtherance of the best interests of piety and virtue in the world, respectfully inscribed, with every sentiment of affection and esteem, by their Friend and Pastor,

E. P. SWIFT.

SERMON.

ISAIAH 18, 3.—"All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountain; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye."

THESE words are prophetic, and their place in the great chain of predictions respecting the church, it appears most likely to us, is that which immediately precedes the universal propagation of the gospel, and the introduction of the millennium. The application of the whole chapter, however, is attended with some difficulty: and among other perplexities, it has not been easy to ascertain what nation is addressed in the opening of this chapter.

Several eminent expositors of prophesy, when coming to that era, in which this nation shadowed with wings, is so conspicuously introduced, have said that it pointed out some great maritime power, to be eminently useful in the universal spread of the gospel; but to which christian empire this high honor should be awarded, future events alone could determine.

Perhaps this general expression of uncertainty, first suggested to an American divine, now in his grave*, to study the chapter, and to exhibit his reasons for the conclusion that this nation could be no other than the United States of America. His argument is, to say the least, extremely plausible. This nation is represented as shadowed with wings, and as lying beyond the rivers of Cush. Persons and places in the sacred scriptures, it is well known, are often represented by some appropriate qualities. Pharaoh, because his empire lay along the Nile, a river much frequented by crocodiles, is called the dragon of the river; Rome, because it was built upon seven hills, is called in prophesy the beast of seven heads; and because the Roman legions bore on their standards the representation of an eagle, they are called by our Saviour, the eagles. Now a country shadowed by wings, must denote one whose national

* See Rev. Mr. M'Donald's exposition of this chapter.

ensign or standard contains the image of a bird; and to be shadowed or protected by wings, must distinguish one where this bird is represented, not in a hostile attitude, as was the Roman eagle, but as offering protection. But it is an interesting fact, that the United States of America is the only nation on earth which has, or ever has had, the eagle in this attitude, as its national ensign—bearing in her mouth the ensign of peace, and offering her protecting wings as a shelter to the injured and oppressed of every clime; and therefore it is not unlikely that she is the land here so earnestly and affectionately addressed: for the word Oh, it is supposed, should be translated ho, or hail, a salutation of affection, not of displeasure. This land is situated beyond the rivers of Cush, which were at that period the most remote boundaries of the known world; beyond this a desert of 3000 miles intervenes, and then you approach the Atlantic ocean. This land is beyond the rivers of Cush, and it could not be looked for in this uninhabitable desert. You must then, proceeding in the direction specified, pass the Atlantic ocean, and closing to the first country, the first which meets you is the United States, where, on your approach, you behold in her seaports, on a hundred masts, the ensign of the national eagle spreading forth its protecting wings. Further, the Spirit, by the mouth of the prophet, describes it as a nation which sends its ambassadors by sea; and the United States has been, for half a century past, the only nation on the globe, which was so situated that its ambassadors could not be despatched to other empires except by sea.

Now this country, thus affectionately and solemnly addressed, is represented in the next verse as sending swift messengers to a nation *dispersed, plundered—to a people in terror extreme—a nation of expectation—of expectation and trodden down, whose country rivers have spoiled*—or, as rivers are used in prophesy to denote nations—whose country other nations have depopulated. Now this description undoubtedly answers better to the Jewish nation than any other: a people who have been for near 2000 years literally trodden down, dispersed, and plundered: who have been despoiled of their country; and who are yet emphatically a people of expectation, still looking, as is well known, for a Messiah, who shall be a great national deliverer. As this people are dispersed among all nations, to send *swift mes-*

sengers, to convert them to christianity, is virtually to confer the same benefits upon those among whom they are scattered, and consequently the prophet asserts of this nation shadowed with wings, that it is intended in the counsels of heaven, to fulfil a most eminent and glorious part in the diffusion of the gospel, and in the introduction of the latter day. This strong maritime power, says our expositor, is no other than the empire of the United States, whose high and splendid destiny it is; and this chapter opens with an affectionate and earnest exhortation to her to arise and execute the high and enviable commission which she has received. Whatever be our opinion of this interpretation, it does not affect the bearing of the text itself, which appears pretty plainly to allude to that great event in the history of Christ's kingdom, noticed by Zechariah, Daniel, and John, which immediately precedes the universal establishment of christianity.

The text offers for our consideration, the three following particulars.

I. The event to be accomplished, and to which the nations of men are summoned to attend.

II. The signals of its approach,—the tokens of its arrival; and

III. The duty consequent upon its arrival.

Ever since the implantation of a Church in the world, there has existed two great rival interests—two wide and hostile empires—the kingdoms of light and of darkness—of Christ and of Belial. For the most part, by the divine permission, the latter of these has been ascendant; and many have been the injuries, the persecutions, and unkindnesses which it has inflicted upon the former. Limited in her visible resources; injured by the irregularities and the errors of her professed friends; and resisted in her progress, often by all the force of human authority and the violence of human prejudice, the church of Christ has always been feeble, and often seemed on the point of extinction.

Shall this state of things forever continue? Shall Jesus never be dear—shall the blood of Calvary never be precious, to more than a *few* of the many millions of dying men? Shall the most pure, the most beautiful, the most efficacious, and the most heaven-glorifying system of faith and duty, never be known, and felt, and loved, in pagan climes? Shall

the name which has, among the suffering children of mortality, smitten with the storms of trouble, or wandering through the tiresome pilgrimage of life, a charm to soothe their minds, to sweeten their enjoyments and mitigate their woes, never be pronounced in the pagan cottage, or the Indian cabin? Shall the only name through which lost sinners can be saved, never be published over all the earth? Shall the heathen continue to rage, and kings take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, while a few lonely sojourners of earth only, are found walking in the way to heaven? The Bible, blessed, faithful book, has answered these questions; and our text refers to that final conflict which shall terminate for a season the kingdom and power of Satan below; and these words of the prophet are so far retrospective that they naturally lead us to trace Christ's empire of grace and truth up to that hour in which they shall be finally fulfilled. A certain knowledge of the future condition of the church of God, must, of course, be a matter of pure revelation.

Do the sacred oracles distinctly foretell a period of universal rest and glory to Zion?

Daniel, in the spirit of prophesy, declares, that "in the days of these kings, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

Isaiah, with rapturous delight, tells us that there shall be a time "when there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain; for the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

And to add no more, John saw in vision an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 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 a thousand years should be fulfilled: And in harmony with this, he tells us, that there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever.

On such blessed and consoling passages as these, the friends of God, from apostolic times, have built their expect-

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tations of a glorious day of rest and prosperity to his church before the final end of time. They expect a time when the sentiments and practice of mankind shall fully accord with the gospel,—when holiness shall generally reach a point of devotion far above any thing ever attained by the people of God; the face of nature shall assume a new luxuriance, the seasons a more inviting temperature.

This great event, which must produce an entire revolution in the state and character of five-sixths of mankind, is doubtless to be mainly effected, in Divine providence, by the Gospel of Christ, and the final crisis alluded to in the text, is to come about on this wise. While the gospel of the grace of God rapidly extends abroad in the world, and piety and knowledge progress with ever accelerated march, the friends of christianity on the one side, its open and secret opposers on the other, will become more and more decided in their determinations. The line of demarkation between the kingdoms of light and of darkness will become continually more visible and striking. Efforts on the one hand to diffuse, and efforts to resist, perplex, and darken, on the other, the pure word of God, will increase in nearly the same augmenting proportion. The conflict between liberty and oppression—between the lofty claims of despotic princes, and the growing spirit of freedom and liberty of thought among their subjects—between attempts, on the one hand, to introduce the purer light of the gospel, and overturn antichristian establishments, and on the other hand, to perpetuate the reign of ignorance and of night, will be sharp and portentous; and in these will originate fierce and bloody wars, civil commotions, and conflicting interests; in all which it seems reasonable to expect, that on the whole, Zion will in every instance, gain a decided ascendancy, while every commotion tends to purify her ranks and to give her members a more ardent attachment to the truth, and a purer and loftier tone of feeling. That these direful commotions, which, like a midnight storm, shall gather in the heavens, will, like an impetuous tornado, sweep away the thrones of princes, overturn many ecclesiastical establishments, and for a time abolish all the restraints of law and order in some places, is not improbable: but that christianity shall be wholly exiled from Europe, and all form of religion abandoned for avowed universal atheism, as one

eloquent writer supposes; or that the principles of civilization will be eradicated, and barbarian rudeness and a superstitious tyranny will universally prevail, as is suggested by another, appears improbable, not only because the most dreadful calamities to which the cause of true religion will ever be subjected, seems to have passed already; but because it appears inconsistent with the present state and prospects of society, to anticipate such a speedy and entire degradation of human character; and it is not easy to believe that any gigantic power can arise, capable of the entire expulsion of christianity from the civilized world, even if it were disposed. The burden of those calamities which arise from opposition to the spread of genuine religion, will fall upon its foes; but such may be the effect of inveterate, and in the end, of physical and cruel resistance of the light of truth, and the efforts of its friends, that in *dark and perilous times*, the standard will be finally planted on Mount Zion, and the splendors of the latter day suddenly burst forth upon the world. We say physical resistance, for those bloody wars and desolating judgments, which will convulse the earth and sweep away many of the enemies of God, are not the only martial preparations which prophesy offers for our consideration. The standard and the trumpet alluded to in the text, portend a battle, and that battle which Zechariah and John evidently mention as finally terminating the reign of Antichrist, of sin and infidelity; and which, it seems to us, from the former state of things, must come on, and finally decide the great question between sin and holiness—between despotism and liberty,—between Satan and the great Jehovah. While the most extraordinary efforts are made to spread the gospel, and the most bountiful and wonderful effusions of the holy Spirit to accompany them, so that vast multitudes are converted to the faith of Jesus; there will exist until the very end of Satan's reign on earth, a strong and formidable host of foes to all order and all true religion, to whom the standard of the gospel will ultimately become the standard of war, and the trumpet of salvation the signal of battle; and the final issue between God and his enemies be decided by the sword.

It would take too much of our time to trace along the line of prophecy the progress of the church up to this period, or point out definitely her probable course up to the time

where our text finds her embracing some of all kindreds and nations in her sacred pale. We shall not, therefore, attempt an exposition of those predictions which go before, and prepare the way for this great triumph of true religion; but, passing silently by all those occurrences which distinguish the rise and the reign of the great apostacy, and the slaying of the witnesses, we remark, that each of the inspired seers seem to concur in fixing our attention on that period when the 1260 days terminate, and the vials of the vintage are poured out. And they clearly mark out the events which shall precede and accompany this great and final battle. In the 16th chapter of Revelation, we are told, that the great river Euphrates shall be dried up. This name plainly denotes the Turkish empire, or the chief Mahometan power in the East, and to say that under this the 6th vial shall be dried up, is that it shall be exhausted and waste away. Now when this is done, we are told that a way is opened for the Kings of the East to come forward and take possession of the Holy Land. These men, called the Kings of the East, are no other than the leaders or princes of the lost tribes of Israel, who, converted to christianity by the agency of Missionaries, sent to India and the adjacent parts of Asia, and seeing the Mahometan power overthrown, and all resistance removed, come back and enter into the possession of their ancient and beloved country. Soon after their return the 7th and last vial is poured out, which is the "conclusion of the great drama of 1260 years." "And the 7th angel," says John, "poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 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. 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. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 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." The amount appears to be this, that while the great Latin, or Papal empire, is divided into three parts, and the Spiritual Babylon, or Antichrist, experiences

a signal and complete subversion in Europe, and the great civil powers of the nations who upheld it are overthrown: The remains of this fallen empire "of the man of sin and son of perdition," and the broken fragments of his civil allies, united with all the desperate votaries of infidelity, atheism, and irreligion, which the age affords, driven to a kind of desperation by seeing the gospel extend, and their own schemes blasted, and their strong foundations overthrown, will form a kind of anti-christian "crusade," and march against the land of Canaan to dispossess the converted Jews of their country: and there make a final, combined, and desperate attempt to overcome the church and kingdom of God, and establish their dominion.

Beholding this dreadful combination, and understanding its object to be to spread havoc and desolation among the friends of Jesus, that strong and maritime nation which we have mentioned, aided by other christian empires, and accompanied by many Jewish converts from other climes, will proceed to the Holy Land, the great theatre of the contest, bringing these converted children of Abraham, an offering, as it is said in the last verse of this chapter,—as an offering to Jehovah, of a nation *peeled and trodden down*. This great, ungodly confederacy, taking as allies with them all the unconverted Jews which they can assemble, will first reach the sacred land of Israel, invest the holy city, and commit various outrages upon its inhabitants, garrison the chief cities of Judea, march into Egypt, and finally return to meet and oppose the approaching army of the Lord. With a firm and steady march, this host of Zion will come up against the mighty array of anti-christian wrath and vengeful infidelity, and these two armies will meet in the valley of Jehoshaphat, near the holy city: and there will be fought the direful battle of Amigeddon. In the number of martial warriors—in the tremendous din of war—in the wide and intense fury of the enemy, his curses and his blasphemies on the one side, and the composed and heavenly serenity and benignity of Zion's myriads, on the other,—in the confused noise of battle, and garments rolled in gore, and bodies swimming in blood,—this conflict will surpass any thing which the eye of man has ever beheld, or the page of history has recorded. It will be known in every clime, and attract the notice of every nation. Here on one side will stand arrayed against the kingdom of God, all the remaining atheism, su-

perdition, and impiety of the age, intent on disorganization, havoc and ruin; and assembled to perpetrate the deeds of wrath, cruelty and death,—and on the other, the Jewish converts—the hosts of the living God—the multitude of the faithful disciples of the cross, from many distant lands. There will the Son of God, the everlasting Word, aided by the innumerable armies of heaven, display the transcendent glory of his power. Here collected before him in front of his church, and in the sight of all heaven, is the collected strength and fury of all the remaining enemies of his cross on earth, and *the day of his vengeance* is come. His awful commission from the Most High is the work of destruction. He descends in his wrath to make these, the dregs of human corruption and infidelity, feel that there is a present God in the midst of the earth, and that “the year of his redeemed has come.”

By the joint influence of natural and supernatural means, he will then cut off the sons of wickedness and none shall help them. Of that devoted army he will demand a recompense for all the blood of his saints, and the tears and wailings of those whom antichrist has slain. Then are they to learn that they who have “touched his saints have touched the apple of his eye”—that no “weapon formed for their destruction shall ever prosper.” An appalling voice will perhaps audibly speak to them from the heavens—and a radiance, above the brightness of the firmament, hover over the field of battle. Terrified and confused, the ranks of this ungodly league will be broken; they will, in the fury of despair, fall upon each other: and those who have, from the pulpit and the press, thundered out their anathemas against the piety of the gospel, and at times indulged in an insane and ungodly exultation over its afflicted state, will now see how awfully they were deceived. Here the proud chieftains of insurrection and war against the Almighty Ruler of the universe, will learn that they have been opposing a kingdom which magnifies and swells in proportion as they attempt to resist it,—that it mocks all their unavailing endeavors, and that their contest is but throwing oil to feed a flame which no art or artifice can extinguish—but must press hard upon their retiring and troubled footsteps, and enwrap them in its burning indignation. This awful scene of destruction is distinctly mentioned by Joel, Zechariah, Isaiah and Daniel, as well as John, whose description

only can be repeated. "And I saw," says he, in the 19th chap. 11. 21. "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. 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. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 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. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come, and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 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. 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. 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."

The tremendous shock of this final conflict shall end the terrors, the wars, and the woes of man. The fury of the tempest passes, and it gives place to the calm sunshine of universal holiness, happiness, and peace. Then men "will beat swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks," and wars and devastation shall cease. The knowledge and the glory of the Lord will fill the earth, and for a thousand years it shall be the resemblance of heaven. The Spirit of the Lord shall pour down its blessings until there is no room to receive them. The whole brotherhood of the

earth, shall be one in unity and love: and one song of glory and of praise shall ring all round the globe. Nothing shall be left to limit the progress of this mighty empire of Jesus—to becloud its mild lustre, or impair the tranquillity and felicity of its subjects.

II. Such being the great moral change in the condition of mankind, to be effected by the universal spread and triumph of the gospel, we are to inquire next for some of the indications by which its approach is to be proclaimed, and see if there is any thing now existing that augurs its speedy arrival. The text, as we have said, alludes to the practice of lifting the standard and blowing the trumpet, as the signals of an approaching battle. Now it is manifest that the things, whatever they be, which are denoted by the banner-unfurling, and the trumpet-sounding, do precede the time and the act of commencing the battle itself; and they seem rather to relate to the going forth of the swift messengers to preach the gospel. The trumpet, designed to extend the limits of the human voice, and employed for this purpose on all those occasions on which a general intimation of danger was to be given, or a general and solemn convocation of Israel was intended, we understand in this case as denoting the universal proclamation of the gospel through the world, and the unfurling and uplifting the standard as an exhibition to the children of men, of that system of gospel truth around which all the true disciples of Christ and converts to christianity will rally as the violence of the enemy increases, and as the purity, life, and power of religion progresses in the church of God. This trumpet, then, will, in the sense of the text, begin to sound, considered as the sign of the Saviour's coming, whenever, in the roll of time, the human race arrives at that point at which there is fully begun a final, determinate, and ultimately successful effort, to spread the gospel over the face of the earth, and call the nations to the standard of Emanuel; whenever those who are commissioned to sound, far and wide, the gospel trumpet, shall have taken their fixed stand upon the mountains, and begun generally to assemble converts around the standard of the cross of Christ. Are there, then, any marked, striking intimations, that this trumpet, if not yet heard, is now about to sound? Where shall we turn, to catch the first blast of this auspicious sound? Where shall we seek for the signs of its coming? It appears to us, brethren, that

we should fix our attention upon three objects, each of which will be likely to exhibit to us the indications of that blessed period. We would then say, we must look after the signs of the approach of this great day, in the *World* at large, in the *Church*, and in the *Bible*.

1. Then survey the present state of the world—look at the appearance, the distinctive character of the times in which God has cast our lot, and see if there are not some things in it which portend the near approach of a great change in the earth—the advance of the hour when the trumpet shall sound, or the gospel be universally preached. What, going out from the pale of the church, what should we look for among the mass of human beings, as the tokens of the approach of the Messiah's reign?—Doubtless you will reply,

1. We should expect before that event, among civilized men, an uncommon spirit of inquiry, a period of intellectual and religious study and thoughtfulness: and do you not behold it apparent in a pre-eminent degree? The energy of the human mind seems to be aroused, and there is an intensity of thought, a fruitfulness of invention, and a latitude of investigation, peculiar to modern times. When did the human intellect seem more impatient of the restraints of despotism, or the bondage of superstition? When were the great principles of political, moral, and religious duty—when the unalienable rights of man, more carefully studied, or more clearly unfolded? When were received opinions in science, politics, and religion, more rigidly canvassed—or, in fine, when did man, in every range of thought and investigation, seem more intent upon the discovery of universal truth? When was his pursuit more likely to be crowned with success?

2. Would you not expect a period of rapid and unexampled improvement in every useful art and science; in opulence, refinement, and wisdom, as well as in religious cultivation? After the dull monotony of centuries; after a long night of intellectual inactivity and darkness, the human race, shortly before our Saviour's appearance in the flesh, began to improve; and an eloquent writer has justly said that his was "the age of refinement in literature, and of acuteness in philosophical investigation." With the decay of apostolic piety, an era of mental darkness and ignorance again began; and the night was long and gloomy.—

The Reformation gave a new impulse to society, and from that period to this, the day has been advancing; and does not this striking coincidence justify the opinion that the Almighty Redeemer is preparing the world for a more glorious and universal coming? Whatever may be instrumental in exalting and ennobling regenerate man, is acceptable to the Deity, and may be employed by him to aid in adorning a world which is filled with the glory of the Lord. All useful improvements on the surface of the globe—the impressive monuments of human skill and human toil; all advances in commerce, agriculture, and the arts of life, prepare the world for the better sustentation, comfort, and felicity of that immense population, which, in succeeding ages, it is destined to contain. Never was education so generally diffused, never was the active spirit of enterprise more diligent. Never did science so widely open her hidden chambers to the scrutiny of man, or literature array herself in more rich and splendid attractions.—Never did learning exhibit so vast a field of cultivation, or so great a diversity of luxuriant productions. Almost every thing which contributes to the usefulness and comfort of a human being—which tends to expand his thoughts—to exalt his feelings, and secure the true dignity of his nature; almost every thing which can enhance the worth of the natural productions of the earth—that can diminish the amount of human toil, and yet add to the beauty and perfection of the works of art, is not only in a state of unprecedented advancement, but progresses more in one year than it did in fifty, of most of those of the centuries which have gone by. We are assured by writers profoundly read in the history of the human race, and not remarkably partial to the present age, that in every department of human knowledge, the most splendid instances of originality and talent are afforded, and that science owes more of her brilliant discoveries to this, than to almost any former one. Thus, with a quick, and ever accelerating march, human knowledge is advancing to the most elevated point which the condition of this life, and the imbecility of man, will permit her to ascend, and diffusing more than ever before, over the mass of society, those just sentiments of independence and of order, and those enlarged and enterprising feelings, which, when sanctified by divine grace, may do much to augment the felicity of our species. Ever since infidelity converted one of the most polished

nations of the earth into a clan of assassins, the opinion that learning and refinement insure the progress of virtue and religion, has been exploded; and it is only as viewed in connexion with other facts, that the present state of society, in respect to its public improvements, is deemed one of the most impressive tokens of the near approach of Zion's prosperity.

3. *Would you not anticipate a period of great expectation?* You all recollect, for you have heard it mentioned a hundred times, that just before the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in the world, there was in the east generally an expectation of some great one, who should introduce a new and happy state of things. Roman poets, Pagan oracles, philosophers, and Samaritans, as well as Jews, expressed this anticipation with enthusiastic emotions; and we have the evidence of it not only in the conversation of Jesus with the woman of Samaria, but in the fact that when Herod heard of the star in the east, "he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Now it is an interesting fact, that if you look into the profound speculations of the philosopher, he fails not to foretell the speedy commencement of a golden age of learning, freedom, and happiness. The practical statesman describes in politics, and the scientific mechanist in the useful arts, an age of unexampled splendour and perfection. The philosophizing infidel assures us, that ere long truth shall erect her universal empire, and man be released from the chains of superstition; and ascending from the mazes of his errors, and unburdened of his sorrows, he shall reach that lofty eminence on which her light shall not cease to shine upon him. The Socinian and the Jew, though widely differing from most others in their interpretation of the Bible, both concur in believing that it justifies the expectation of no distant or unimportant change in the state and prospects of mankind. Need we add to this, that all evangelical sects of christians in every clime, are confidently looking and earnestly praying for that long wished for day of Zion's glory?

4. If we are not mistaken in supposing that, as that period rolls on, the dividing line between truth and error, sin and holiness, light and darkness, is to become continually more definite and striking; then would you not expect, as efforts are increased to unfold and circulate the truth, that corresponding endeavors would be made to perplex christianity; and that, in fine, an era of religious thought,

and inquiry into the principles of sacred truth, would become an era of innovation? When have the cardinal doctrines of the gospel, those that give it all its efficacy, and constitute its glory, been more earnestly or learnedly opposed by those who still profess to venerate the Bible? When were many who retain some of the marks of true discipleship, more grossly deluded with the fanciful schemes of a Bible church; of a liberality which would expel all creeds and confessions, and throw the entire mass of professing christians, with all their honest differences of opinion, and their repulsive elements of character, into one confused body, and thus inevitably plunge the whole empire of christianity into confusion, darkness and ruin. When were bolder measures taken by the despotic rulers of the old world, on the one side, to force the human mind down to all the ignorance, superstition, and bondage of the dark ages,—or by unstable and speculating men, on the other side, to run christian liberty into a dangerous and fatal licentiousness, making it the pretext for demolishing all the safeguards of pure religion?

As the strong religious excitement, and great activity of the age, increase, we may expect that a thousand shadowy thoughts, a thousand waking dreams, and wild speculations, with all the foppery of new theological discoveries, and inventive speculations, will be thrown out upon the world, to misguide, if it were possible, even the elect, and confuse unstable souls. These will tend, as their natural result, to arouse the slumbering friends of truth, not only to an able vindication of her principles, but to ardent and energetic endeavors to widen the sphere of her influence in the world. This spirit of innovation is not exclusively confined to religious matters, and, as a prominent sign of the present times, we cannot but deem it an indication of the approach of the Saviour's universal reign. Who would expect that the church of God, tossed for many days upon a troubled ocean, and encountering the fiercest storms, should finally enter into the port of her rest and safety, in the midst of a perfect calm? Should we not expect that when the hearts of God's people are cheered by witnessing the rapid spread of the gospel, and the fulfilment of prophecy, a part of their moral discipline should consist in encountering the evils and dangers which accompany such a state of things as we have mentioned?

II. From the world at large, repair in search of these pleasing indications to the visible church of Christ. On the

portentous signs of the coming, at no distant hour, of a fairer and brighter day than she has ever seen, which her present attitude exhibits to us, it is the less needful for us to dwell; not because they are not far more obvious and striking than any we have mentioned; but because they consist of facts, which have been, for the last few years, so much dwelt upon, that they are sufficiently trite and familiar to this assembly.

Though perhaps full enough has been said, if not too much, about it, yet no one can doubt that the empire of true piety, as well as of visible christianity, is now greatly and rapidly extending, on the whole; and religion is becoming less of an empty form, and more of a vital principle of the heart, than it has been at any former period since apostolic times. There never was an age when the intercourse between distant nations was so easy, or when the state of the world and the sentiments of mankind, afforded half as many facilities for spreading the gospel; and there never was a time when all sects and denominations of christians felt it to be so imperious a duty to attempt the conversion of the world. The universal circulation of the Bible over the whole earth, at an immense expense, will, if no extraordinary impediment should occur, be effected in a shorter space of time than the most sanguine enthusiast could ever have dreamed of. If the Missionary cause should progress for 20 years to come as it has 20 years past, the trumpet of the gospel will be heard in every land, and flourishing churches, with native pastors, will be planted all over the world. If the business of educating ministers of the gospel, continues to acquire as proportionate an increase of deep-felt concern for 20 years to come, as it has, the entire number of the heralds of the cross will be nearly doubled. Revivals of religion, and benevolent institutions, consisting of persons of every age and standing, are rapidly spreading; and charitable contributions are annually increasing. Lofty mountains and homeless wildernesses are penetrated, to search out and christianize savage men. The remotest and most unwelcome shores of human habitation, are pressed by the feet of them who publish glad tidings; while prisons and penitentiaries—asylums and hospitals—vessels and camps—schools and domestic firesides—manufactories and slave plantations, are visited for purposes of christian instruction.

While the scriptures are thus translating and circulating over the whole earth, they have become themselves an object of more critical study and examination; and the work of their translation is likely greatly and more generally to

augment the knowledge of those languages in which they were written. The religious improvement of the young in the knowledge of the scriptures, by means of bible classes, catechetical instructions, and Sabbath-schools, has increased within a few years to a very great extent; and it may be fairly calculated that the next age will bring forward, at least in almost all protestant countries, a generation more universally enlightened and religiously educated, by far, than any which the world has ever seen. While desolate regions, in christian lands,—while youth and children—bond and free—while seamen and Indians—Jews and pagans—are all become objects of the church's extraordinary attention, never was a great and glorious change so universally looked for and expected—never was it so generally prayed for, as at the present time. How many thousands of suppliants does the monthly concert bring to the throne of grace, all having the single object in their approach, of asking for their common Lord, the “heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.” The speedy arrival of this auspicious day, is, we think it may be said, most strongly expected by that part of God's visible church which is most given to effort and prayer for the good of souls; and it is most confidently looked for by them, when their souls are most filled with the love of God, and their desires and affections are most in heaven. Thus it is with the church, and if

3. Finally, brethren, we earnestly approach and humbly ask of the Book of God, when this era shall arrive, and whether it be near, we shall, as far as the human eye can penetrate that veil which overhangs the prophecies, arrive at the same conclusions. It is well known to this assembly that the largest and the most respectable number of commentators on this, have dated the rise of antichrist in the year 606, or thereabouts; and according to them, the 1260 years which end at the commencement of the millennium, will close in the year 1866, or 41 years from this time. We would not, however, presume to pronounce an opinion on calculations so uncertain, and especially when so definite; this, however, we may with safety, that prophecy justifies the belief that the night is far spent, and the dawn of Zion's day cannot be distant.

The last important event which is to precede the destruction of antichrist, as we have already noticed, is the drying up of the mystical Euphrates, or the overthrow of the Turkish empire; and to all present appearance, that event can-

not be distant. That strong Mahometan power has long been waning. While it must, to all human probability, be out-mastered by the Greeks, that government, convulsed by intestine wars, seems to have lost the little wisdom and energy which it ever possessed. The conversion of the Jews, another exceeding important sign of the times, has already commenced. By the Missionaries now circulating the Scriptures and preaching the Gospel to them, both in Europe and Asia, their attention is strongly directed to their ancient land, and there are some striking facts, going to show that they, as a people, are expecting some speedy and eventful crisis in their history. In Germany, Poland, Russia, and in Persia, their prejudices are rapidly giving way; and while many are wavering, and hesitating, some are embracing the Gospel, and saying, as did one, who, after reading the conversion of Paul, exclaimed with a loud voice, "As truly as the God of Abraham lives in the heavens, Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of the living God;" and who, in the same ecstasy, lifted up his hands and prayed, "As truly as thou, O Jesus of Nazareth, art the true prophet and Messiah, I will be thy disciple: have mercy on me—have mercy as thou showedst mercy to the thief at thy right hand! Pray for me, as thou prayedst for thy murderers: 'Father, forgive them.'"

The papal authority, and some secular princes under its sway, are taking a decided stand against the circulation of the Scriptures, and thus assuming that posture of open and growing hostility, which prophecy announces as one mark of their coming downfall. The actual success which has attended missions to the isles of the Gentiles and the continents of Asia and Africa, the revivals in India, and the conversion of whole nations in the southern islands, into the most christian countries on the globe, are events, also, unquestionably fulfilling the predictions of the sacred word. But why should we enlarge? Such, brethren, are the indications that our standard is about to wave over every land—that the trumpet is about to sound. Happy are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear, of that day which kings, prophets and martyrs, and reformers have waited for—which they saw afar off, and were glad. Yes, had God Almighty given the zealous, self-devoted christian his choice of the period in which he should live, could he have fixed his finger upon the point in this world's history more desirable than this? In the ages that are gone, there was no such near and sublime prospect, to animate his exertions

and his prayers. In ages to come, when the conquest is past, and the victory is won, there will be no wide field for enterprise; for then no man shall need to say to his neighbor or his brother, "Know the Lord: for they shall all know him, from the least unto the greatest." Such, then, O ye inhabitants of the earth, are the signals that the trumpet of the gospel is about to sound: and the Great Eternal, from his throne, says unto you, "All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountain: and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye." What is,

III. The duty here enjoined, and to whom is the solemn proclamation made? The extent of the proclamation corresponds with the splendour of the scene to be beheld: It is to all the inhabitants of the world, and all the dwellers upon the face of the earth. At other times Jehovah has addressed his prophetic words to particular persons, cities, kingdoms, or continents; but now, he who maketh the earth his footstool, commands the whole race of man to listen, and in the sublime strains of dignity and authority, he calls all to mark his dispensations, and prepare for the brightness of his coming. As all are addressed, so we may consider, 1. The command as given to the churches, the friends of God. To them he says, Jehovah is ere long to proclaim a universal war against his enemies. From you his dwelling-place, and by you his agents, he is to unfurl his banner, in the sight of all nations, and send out into all the earth, the sound of the gospel, proclaiming the good tidings of peace, to all who believe; and afterward to march against, and utterly rout, overthrow, and destroy, all whom his word has not reclaimed. Observe therefore the movement of Divine Providence; stand upon your watch-towers, and look for the signs of the times,—for the dawn of the day. Listen, with your attention fixed on the mountains of Zion, for the blast of the jubilee trumpet. When the time of sending forth the swift messengers has apparently come; when Jehovah opens a way to the nations, and the prospects of Zion, are such as prophecy designates to the church of God as the season of action and of conquest,—then *awake, arise, and shine*. Then know that the mists which have obscured the early splendor of the sun of righteousness and of glory arising upon the earth, that the dense vapors which have beclouded, to the eye of mortals, the brightness of his beams, are rolling away, and the face of God is about to shine, in a most glorious manner, upon the world.

Arise from turmoiling in the dust; the Redeemer of men is coming in his strength and beauty, to fill your minds with knowledge, your hearts with joy, and a dark world with the light and brightness of his reign. Arise, and put on thy strength, O Zion: adorn thyself in thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem: Come forward from behind the veil of sorrow and misfortune. Ascend the high places of the earth, and sound: Sound the trumpet of thy king; and all that hath breath, shall hear thee. The night is past; the winter is gone; the dawn of prophecy appears. O my people, before you is a world of beings, as immortal as yourselves. By all their ignorance, their wants, and woes, they implore your succour; they stretch out their hands, and offer up their intreating voices to you; they beseech you to deliver them from their terrifying superstitions, from their utter ignorance of the God who made them, and the eternity to which they are bound. They ask you if your hopes of immortal felicity do not spring from the cross, bathed in sacred blood, on which the great, compassionate missionary from Heaven laid down his life for the world; and if the love of ease, of gold, or silver, can induce you to conceal, from a guilty, dying world, around you, the only hope, the glorious mystery of the cross?

2. May we not affirm, that God's proclamation in the text, is especially made to our happy, beloved country? If, as commentators generally believe, some great maritime nation,—what one they cannot tell,—is to arise, and take the most conspicuous part in the conversion of the world, where should we more properly look for this favored nation, than in these United States,—this land where, in an age of persecution, a host of pilgrims, the more devoted christians of that time, first reared the standard of civilization, and in the name of the God of their fathers, with many prayers and tears, solemnly planted the gospel vine? Where, but in this exalted country, in which the exile, —the oppressed friend of man,—finds an asylum and a home! Where despotism has never reared its gigantic throne,—but where conscience is free as the air we breathe! Where, by a train of dispensations, almost miraculous, liberty has found its home, piety its resting place, and human happiness its dearest earthly refuge! Gifted by the God of Providence with the richest soil, and opening, for the expansion of human society, the immensity of its habitable regions; growing in opulence, and able, already, with its own resources, to convert the

world; what land, if not this, we say, did the Spirit of God, intend in this chapter? What land is under half so many obligations as this to the Lord of Providence, or his suffering, ignorant, oppressed creatures? Land of the pilgrims! home of the oppressed, and the brave! empire of plenty, wealth, and freedom! O thou favored of God! the day has come, when to thy destitute borders, to thy savage tribes, and to remote climes and kingdoms, thy swift messengers must be sent. Shake off thy slumbers: take that lofty place, in the family of nations, which God has assigned thee; and he who is Faithful, and True, will go out before thee, and be thy rearward. First in the smiles of heaven, be also first in upbuilding the kingdom of righteousness in the world. Elevate over the destinies of thy land, as the guardians of thy precious and invaluable rights, men who shall descend from the high places of power, to aid in the dissemination of virtue and religion; and let thy deeds of benevolence, and thy maintenance of virtue and piety, not less than thy privileges, be the admiration of the world.

3. This proclamation is made to all mankind; and we may consider the text as prophetic, not less than imperative. When the trumpet sounds through the kingdoms of men, and when the ensign is displayed upon the mountains, then all *dwellers* on the earth shall *listen*; and multitudes shall turn unto the Lord. Nations shall be born in a day; the divine word shall have *free course* and be glorified; and all who ultimately resist it, the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy.

Listen, then, ye mighty emperors, ye potentates of the earth, to the trump of God, and know that your crowned heads must ere long bow to the supremacy of Jesus, or be smeared with blood, and levelled in the dust. Ye haughty kings—ye mitred chiefs of Pagan or anti-christian superstition—ye speculating infidels, know that the Lord he is God alone; by whose inspiration it is declared, that to the Son every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear. When *his* trumpet sounds, hear, believe, and tremble.

Benighted, untaught Pagans, over whose futurity an impenetrable veil is suspended; who, unfriended and unsuccored, breast the storms of affliction and woe, without the divine supports of piety; who, unsoftened and unsanctified by the gospel, are as fierce and cruel as ye are guilty and unhappy; who see not God in the solitude of nature, and commune not with a Saviour in the troubled

moments of death; O *listen*, for it is the trumpet of salvation which breaks the silence of thy forests: it is the sound of mercy which is wafted to thy lonely cottages on the breeze of the evening.

Enslaved Africans—unhappy men! convinced of your wrongs, but unable to redress them; cut off by ignorance from communion with the God of love, as you are by hereditary bondage from the distant shores of the land of your ancestors; *listen*, for when the trumpet shall sound, your cold manacles shall fall, and liberty and redemption shall be your song.

Debased Hindoos, wallowing in filth, and bewildered in the gloomy shades of darkness and of death; the idol whom you invoke cannot help you; but listen to the voice which resounds from the mountains, and is re-echoed from the plains; for it is the voice of the Redeemer of sinners, calling you to the rest of the faithful, the fellowship of Jesus, and the kingdom of Heaven.

In fine, all ranks and orders of men, from pole to pole; palaces, hamlets, cities, provinces, islands, and continents of the world; all ye that dwell on the earth, lift up your eyes unto the mountains, and fly to the ensign which is lifted upon them. Hear the trumpet of God's great salvation, and rejoice, for a Saviour descends to dwell among men: prepare to hail his approach, and attune his praise. Behold the happiness, the peace, the glory, which his gospel diffuses. See how the aspect of nature is changing. Rejoice, O ye nations, and be joyful, O ye people; and from mountain to mountain, from continent to continent, send forth the song of hallelujah. Ye that inhabit the goings down of the sun, and ye who are near his rising; ye who dwell amidst perpetual snows, and ye whom the sultry summer ceases not to scorch, join ye together in the anthems of redemption, and sing of a Saviour's dying love. In all your different tongues, in all your different climes, in all your different forms, all ye that dwell upon the earth, *praise ye the Lord*, and rejoice in his universal kingdom; lift up every voice, tune every vocal power, and together sing of him who bled and died, who lives and reigns forever. He comes to *proclaim liberty* to the captives; to establish truth and holiness, peace and love, wisdom and happiness, over all; and to make his salvation flow as a river, and the fulness thereof as "the waves of the sea." Let all that have being rejoice, and all the people say, even so, come, Lord Jesus.

