

SERMONS
ON
IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

BY THE REVEREND
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WITH AN ESSAY ON THE
LIFE AND TIMES OF THE AUTHOR.

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SERMON LXV.

THE HAPPY EFFECTS OF THE POURING OUT OF THE SPIRIT.*

ISAIAH XXXII. 13–19.—Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, in all the houses of joy in the joyous city: because the palaces shall be forsaken, the multitude of the city shall be left, the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks: *until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high*, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, when it shall hail, coming down upon the forest.

IT is our lot to be born in an age of blood and slaughter; an age, in which mankind remarkably exemplify the character given of them long ago by an inspired pen, “Hateful, and hating one another;” an age, which has seen a strange revolution in that Britain that about three hundred years ago had crushed the power of France, and had the crown of that kingdom made over to her by treaty—now everywhere defeated by that very power; an age, in which the cause of liberty and the Protestant religion is in the most alarming danger, from the formidable confederacy of Popish tyrants and their vassals; an age, in which our liberty, our property, our lives, and our religion, which should be dearer to us than all, are no longer ensured to us with the usual firmness of the British constitution, but disputed with a powerful invader; and the issue of the contest is dreadfully uncertain. And in such an age can there be so stupid a soul among us, as to be thoughtless and unconcerned? Sure, if we have any thing of the *man*, the *patriot*, the *Christian*, within us, we must be deeply solicitous about these important interests, and anxious for a remedy to our bleeding country and nation.

I need not detain you with a particular account of the present mortifying and alarming situation of our public affairs. I need not tell you of slaughtered families, mangled corpses, men, women and children, held in barbarous captivity in the dens of savages; routed garrisons, demolished fortifications, deserted, desolated settlements, upon our frontiers. I need not remind you of defeated armies, blasted expeditions, and abortive schemes—of divided, dilatory councils on both sides the ocean—a jangling, unsettled ministry, and an uneasy, murmuring, clamorous people. I need not tell you that

* This Sermon is dated Hanover, October 16, 1757.

our enemies have pushed their conquests with surprising rapidity, and executed all their schemes; while all our attempts to stop their progress have issued in disappointment and mortification; and that they are now become formidable, even in America, where a few years ago they were so contemptible. I need not tell you that our hopes are lowered as to our brave ally, the king of Prussia, who has lately been routed, and obliged to break up the siege of Prague; and who has almost the half of the powers of Europe for his enemies. He stands the single champion of the Protestant cause upon the Continent; and should he be crushed, that important cause would probably fall with him, especially in Germany. I need not tell you how gloomy and discouraging the prospect is before us, from the growing power of French—from their great influence with the Indian savages—from the naked and defenceless state of our country—from the dastardly, secure spirit that prevails among the generality, and from many causes that I need not name. These things are too public and notorious for me to enlarge upon them. Alas! who is ignorant of them? though but few lay them properly to heart.

The great inquiry I would now employ your time and thoughts about is, What is the best remedy in this melancholy case? This, I think, we may clearly discover in the verses I have read to you.

At the time to which this prophecy seems principally to refer, namely, at the destruction of the Jews by the Babylonians, their iniquities were come to the full. It was inconsistent with the maxims of the divine government to delay their punishment any longer. Therefore, the Babylonians were commissioned as the executioners of divine vengeance to ravage their land, destroy their city and temple, and carry away the inhabitants by three successive captivities, till the land was left uninhabited, untitled, and desolate for seventy years. In this time was fulfilled the prophecy in my text: “Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, in all the houses of joy in the joyous city.”* The epithet *joyous* is added with design to aggravate the calamity. “The houses of *joy*” are turned into heaps of rubbish. “The *joyous* city” is made a melancholy waste, overrun with briers and thorns. The men of sensuality and luxury, who were wont to riot in these houses of joy, and to spend their time in pleasure, are now stripped of all their possessions, and feel the reverse of their usual delights in a servile, dismal captivity; and to such, the calamities of war, poverty and thralldom, are peculiarly painful and mortifying. These effeminate souls were never

* Or, as some render the word, “*Burning* upon all the houses of joy,” &c. [Hebrew word] is rendered *burning* in Isa. iii. 24; and it may bear the same version here. In this sense it was literally accomplished in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, when the city and all the houses of state and luxury within it were burnt to ashes.

inured to hardships and self-denial, and therefore must sink the lower under their weight.

I leave you, my brethren, to judge, whether the calamities we fear, should they fall upon us, would not fall the heavier upon multitudes of our countrymen on this account, who have been accustomed to live in luxury and pleasure, and are by these means enervated and unmanned. The epithet *joyous* may also intimate, that the extravagant luxury and love of pleasure that prevailed among the Jews, was one cause of the destruction of their country and nation. Their houses are laid in ruins, because they had been *houses* of guilty *joy*. Their city is made desolate, because it had been unseasonably and excessively a *joyous* city. So the words may be rendered: “Upon the land of my people shall come up briers and thorns, *because** of the houses of joy in the joyous city.” These houses of joy brought destruction upon the inhabitants. Their luxury and pleasure had a natural tendency to destroy them, according to the course of things. They produced thoughtless security and presumption. They turned the attention of the court and ministry from the concerns of their country, to sensual gratifications and amusements. They softened and unmanned the populace, and rendered them impatient of the generous dangers and hardships of soldiers in the field. They tempted them to lay out that substance in diversions and extravagant pleasures which should have been expended in the defence of their country: and luxury and pleasure provoked the God of heaven, who holds the scale of empire in his hand, and lets it rise or fall according to his pleasure. The unseasonable joy of this people at a time when the tokens of the Almighty’s anger were upon them; their taste for mirth and pleasure, when he called them to repentance, brought his heavy vengeance upon them, and he determined to destroy a people that would not be amended by chastisement.

Here also I leave you to judge, whether we and our nation be not in danger from the same quarter. Has not a deluge of luxury and pleasure almost overwhelmed all ranks, from the highest to the lowest? To eat and drink delicately and freely: to feast, and dance, and riot; to pamper cocks or horses; to observe the anxious, important, interesting event—which of two horses can run fastest; or which of two cocks can flutter and spur most dexterously:—these are the grand affairs that almost engross the attention of some of our great men. And little low-lived sinners imitate them to the utmost of their power. The low-born sinner can leave a needy family to starve at home, and add one to the rabble at a horse-race or a cock-fight. He can get drunk and turn himself into a beast with the lowest, as well as his betters

* [The Hebrew word] is generally rendered *because*. So it is rendered in the very next verse; and it may be so translated here, with the same propriety.

with more delicate liquors. On this account, I am afraid this fruitful year, with which a gracious God has blessed our guilty country, will prove a curse to many, who add to their guilt by ungratefully abusing the additional mercies of God towards them. How unseasonable is this taste for pleasure and diversions, at such a time as this! A time, when “the Lord of Hosts calls to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth;” *i.e.* to all the solemn and public evidences of repentance. Now, if ever, these things are seasonable: they are a kind of *decencies* in our present circumstances. But, alas! instead of these, “Behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine;” that is, all the furniture of luxury and festivity, as if they acted upon the *epicurean* maxim, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” And I wish the secret revealed to the prophet with regard to such, may not be equally applicable to our age and country: “It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord of Hosts.”*

The prophet goes on to describe the desolation of Judea and Jerusalem, and to assign the reason why the land should be overrun with briers and thorns during the captivity; namely, “Because the palaces shall be forsaken, the multitude† of the city shall be left, and the noise of it shall cease; the forts and the towers shall be for dens for ever:” that is, for a long time, which is sometimes all the meaning of this word. These places of strength and beauty shall be “a joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks;” where they shall graze to the full, and lie down unmolested.

When the prophet has thus described the utter desolation of the Holy Land, he fixes the time of its continuance, or informs the Jews how long it should last; and that is, “UNTIL THE SPIRIT BE POURED UPON US FROM ON HIGH.” The holy Spirit of God is represented in the Scriptures as the original fountain of all the real goodness and virtue which is to be found in our degenerate world; the only author of reformation, conversion, sanctification, and every grace included in the character of a saint, or a good man. The POURING‡ out of the Spirit is a scripture phrase, which signifies a plentiful communication of his influence to effect a thorough reformation. It is not a *distilling*, or falling in gentle drops, like the dew; but a copious effusion, or pouring out, like a mighty shower, or torrent that carries all before it. Now,

* Isaiah xxii. 12–14.

† [Hebrew word] here translated *multitude*, signifies also the *noise* or *tumult* of the multitude—the stir and hurry of a crowded city.

‡ The [Hebrew] word here rendered *poured*, generally signifies *to be made naked*, *i.e.* to be *revealed* in full power. This may be illustrated by that expression in Isaiah lii. 10: The Lord hath *made bare* his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations;” that is, hath given an illustrious display of his Power. The sense is the same, however we render it; namely, a full exertion of the power of the Spirit to produce a reformation.

as the communication of the Spirit is necessary to produce a reformation, so a *large* communication, or *outpouring* of the Spirit, is necessary to produce a *public general* reformation; such as may save a country on the brink of ruin, or recover one already laid desolate. Without this remedy, all other applications will be ineffectual; and the distempered body politic will languish more and more, till it is at length dissolved. UNTIL this outpouring of the Spirit, says the prophet, “briers and thorns shall come up upon the land; and the houses of joy, the palaces, and towers, shall be heaps of ruins, dens for wild beasts, and pastures for flocks.” UNTIL that blessed time come, no means can effectually repair a broken state, or re-people a desolate country.

But when that blessed time comes, then what a glorious revolution—what a happy alteration follows! Then says the prophet, “The wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field: and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever; and my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, when it shall hail, coming down upon the forest.” These are the blessed pacific effects of the outpouring of the Spirit; and these effectually cure all the ravages of war, and ensure a lasting peace, with all its blessings.

“The wilderness shall be a fruitful field;” that is, the country that had been reduced into a mere wilderness by the ravages of war, and the captivity of the inhabitants, shall again be tilled and improved, and become as a fruitful field, or a Carmel.*

“And the fruitful field shall be counted for a forest;” that is, upon this happy turn of affairs, the country of the enemy, which had been a fruitful field, a mere Carmel, shall be laid waste in its turn, and made a mere forest, a wild uninhabited wood: it shall suffer itself what it had inflicted, and be made a wilderness, as it had made other countries so. This was remarkably accomplished upon Babylon, which had spread desolation through the country of the Jews, according to the prediction of Jeremiah: “When seventy years are accomplished, (in the captivity of the Jews) then I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and will make it perpetual desolations.”† And this is the usual procedure of Providence, to make use of one guilty nation to execute his judgments upon another, and then to execute the executioner. From hence we may prognosticate the future fall of France, though she should now be used as a rod in the divine hand to chastise rebellious Britons.

* [Hebrew word] Carmel, was the proper name of a very fertile mountain in Judea; and hence it is here used appellatively, to signify a country fruitful like the proper Carmel: As if it had been said, “The whole country of Canaan shall be one entire Carmel.”

† Jer. xxv. 12. See also Isa. xxxiv. 11–15. and xiv. 22, 23.

“Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.” *Judgment* sometimes signifies punishment from the hand of God, and sometimes the same with justice or righteousness. If we take it to signify *punishment* from the divine hand, then the meaning is “The heavy judgments of God shall dwell (that is, long remain) upon the country of the enemy, which, though once a fruitful Carmel, is now turned into a wilderness.” In this sense, the prophecy has been literally accomplished upon Babylon, which remains a wilderness unto this day. If by *judgment* we understand *righteousness*, then the meaning is, “Righteousness shall dwell in the land of Judea, which was once made a wilderness, but is now improved into fruitful field, since the pouring out of the Spirit.” And so it *designs* the same with the following sentence: “Righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field.” That is, “Righteousness, which in the scripture-sense often signifies all goodness, or the whole of true religion, or a proper temper and conduct towards God and man; righteousness, in this extensive sense, shall remain in the fruitful field—it shall possess the hearts and govern the practices of the inhabitants; and this shall turn their country into a Carmel, a paradise, a fruitful field.”

“And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” “When righteousness thus becomes the universal principle and rule of action, it will produce peace, quietness, and assurance, or security from danger.” And in consequence of this, “my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation,” &c. They shall remain undisturbed in their possessions, and enjoy the blessings of peace, free from factions at home, and invasions from abroad. In this unmolested and happy situation shall they continue, even “when it shall hail, coming down upon the forest;” or when storms of public calamities break upon other countries, and lay them waste.

You may now have a full view of the regular gradation from truth to truth in my text. Desolation overspreads the country, UNTIL the Spirit is poured out; the Spirit poured out produces righteousness, or true religion; righteousness produces peace, quietness and assurance; and under its influence the inhabitants live in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, even when storms and tempests toss and desolate other nations.

Thus, you see, the outpouring of the holy Spirit is the great and only remedy for a ruined country; the only effectual preventive of national calamities and desolations, and the only sure cause of a lasting and well-established peace. This is the truth I now intend chiefly to illustrate.

And this is the more necessary to be illustrated and inculcated as it is but very little regarded. We all complain that our country cannot be defended, nor an advantageous peace obtained without better regulations; without

timely and vigorous measures, unanimity, courage and public spirit among all ranks. There are some also who complain, that our country cannot be safe or prosperous without a general reformation; that it cannot be expected the undertakings of a guilty, impenitent people, ripe for the judgments of God, can succeed, till their repentance be in some measure as signal and public as their sin. Thus far we look: but, unless we look farther, we do not go to the bottom of things. As all our measures are not likely to be successful without a reformation; so we may despair of ever seeing a thorough, general reformation, *unless the spirit be poured upon us from on high*.

I may illustrate this by the piece of history to which my text refers, and in which it had its accomplishment. The Jews were a numerous and powerful people: their cities were all fortified, especially Jerusalem, their capital; and yet their impenitent sinning, without reformation, rendered them an easy prey to their enemies. But why did they continue impenitent? Why were they not reformed? Was it because they did not enjoy proper means? No: they had the law of Moses; they had the ministry of the prophets, who loudly called them to repentance through a succession of ages, and in the most explicit manner denounced the judgments of God against them, if they should continue impenitent; they enjoyed all the advantages of an extraordinary immediate providence; in short, they had better helps and excitements for reformation than all mankind beside, except such as we, who have the happiness of living under the more complete and glorious dispensation of the gospel. And yet they sinned on still, impenitent and unreformed: no general reformation was carried on by all these means; and even under the hardships of captivity, they still continued the same incorrigible sinners. Hence God complains of them, “When they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name,” as they had done before in their own land.* And what was wanting all this time for their effectual reformation? Why, the Spirit was not yet poured upon them from on high; and while he was absent, they continued unreformed, and their country desolate. But when the time for their restoration came, then the Spirit was poured out. Thus their restoration and the effusion of the Spirit are connected in the divine promise: “I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land; THEN will I sprinkle clean water upon you, (the usual emblem of divine influences†) and ye shall be clean; and I will put my SPIRIT within you.”‡ And when this promise was fulfilled, what was the consequence? Why a glorious public reformation followed, of which you see an account in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

* Ezek. xxxvi. 20.

† John vii. 38, 39.

‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 24-27

They returned to their own land as weeping penitents, according to Jeremiah's prediction, which seems to have had its primary accomplishment in this event. "The children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: (this is a description of the march of the captives in their return to their own country,) they shall go and seek the Lord their God: they shall ask the way to Zion, (Zion, the place where the house of God once stood, which they are eager to rebuild) with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that shall never be forgotten.* And when they were thus brought to repentance, what a happy revolution followed! The scattered captives were collected; they restored their ruined church and state, and again became a free and flourishing people. And what "happened to them will also happen to us, and all nations of the earth in all ages, in like circumstances.

In illustrating the subject I have principally in view, I intend only to offer a few arguments to prove the absolute necessity of a general outpouring of the Spirit, to effect a general reformation.

The arguments for this truth, with which the holy Scriptures furnish us, are so many, that I can only select a few; and they shall be chiefly such as refer to nations, or bodies politic, and not to individuals, or private persons; asserting the Holy Spirit to be the only author of public national reformation, as well as of the conversion of particular persons.

The temporal prosperity of the Jews, who were under a Theocracy, or an immediate Providence, depended in a special manner upon their continued obedience: and their restoration upon their return to obedience, or their reformation. Hence, among the many promises of prosperity and restoration which Moses makes them in the name of God, this is one: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live;" that is, that thou mayest be a prosperous people. "And the Lord will put all these curses upon thine enemies; and he will make thee plenteous in every work of thy hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land for good."† In Jeremiah xxxi, you have many promises made to the Jews, both of temporal and spiritual prosperity, upon their conversion to God: and as the life of all, this is inserted, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write upon their hearts."‡ This is substantially repeated, with an express reference to national deliverance, in the next chapter. "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again to this place, and I will cause them to dwell in safety; and I *will*

* Jer. l. 4, 5.

† Deut. xxx. 6-9.

‡ Verse 31-33.

give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and their children after them,”* &c. Ezekiel speaks in the same strain with regard to the same event: “Thus saith the Lord God, I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things, and all the abominations thereof from thence;” that is, they shall promote a general reformation in their country: and from whence shall this proceed? You find the cause of it in the following promise: “I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh—that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them.”† Zerubbabel was the great restorer of the Jewish church and state, after the Babylonish captivity: and Zechariah informs us that this was the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, for his encouragement, “Not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.” The reformation of the Jews, and their consequent restoration to a flourishing state, is not effected by any human power or means, but by my Spirit alone.‡ And this will hold equally true in every age, especially under the gospel, which is peculiarly the dispensation of the Spirit.

Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, are virtues which have the most happy influence upon human society; and were they universally prevalent, they would effectually prevent all the calamities of war, and ensure all the blessings of peace: and these, St. Paul tells us, are the fruits, or effects, of the Spirit.§ And, therefore, “till the Spirit be poured out from on high,” they will never grow and flourish. Faith, repentance, and every grace are the free gift of God, wrought by the Holy Spirit.** In short, not one soul, much less a whole nation, can be effectually reformed without the power of God. If even a well-disposed Lydia gave a believing attention to the things spoken by Paul, it was because the Lord opened her heart.†† “No man can come unto Christ, except the Father draw him.”‡‡ The Holy Spirit is uniformly represented, through the whole scriptures, as the spring of all the goodness that is in the world—the sacred fire, from whence proceeds every spark of true religion that is to be found in the breasts of any of the sons of men.

* Verse 37-41.

† Ezek. xi. 17-20. See also to the same purpose Ezek. xxxvi. 16-25 od. fin.; and xxxix. 25-29.

‡ Eph. ii. 3. Phil. i. 29. Acts v. 31. and xi. 18. 2 Tim. ii. 26. 2 Cor. v. 17, 18.

§ Zech. iv. 6.

** Gal. v. 22, 23.

†† Acts xvi. 14.

‡‡ John vi. 44.

And the doctrine of the scriptures in this respect, is confirmed by history, and matters of fact, in all ages. When the Spirit is withdrawn, it has been found a truth, that nations and particular persons have degenerated; vice and luxury have gained ground, and religion has declined, and died away; and that too in the midst of the most proper means to promote reformation, and to strengthen the things that remain. Then the most solemn preaching, and the most alarming providences have no effect; but men continue blind and stupid under the clearest instructions, and the loudest warnings; and grow harder and harder, instead of being refined in the furnace of affliction. But on the other hand, when the Spirit is poured out from on high, then the cause of religion and virtue is promoted, almost without means; then sinners are awakened by a word: religion catches and circulates from heart to heart, and bears down all opposition before it. Peter had preached many a sermon before that which we find recorded in Acts the second, and his Lord and master had preached many a one, but with very little success. But now by one short discourse, no fewer than three thousand are converted in a few minutes among a promiscuous, prejudiced multitude, some of whom had been accessory to the death of Jesus Christ but a few days before. And whence this happy turn? St. Peter himself will tell you, it was because then was fulfilled the ancient prophecy of Joel, “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.”* Then too was fulfilled the promise of the blessed Jesus to his disciples; “I will send the Spirit unto you; and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.”† It was this that rendered the progress of the gospel so rapid and irresistible through the world, in spite of the most powerful opposition from all quarters in that age; which, in times seemingly more favourable, has languished and lost ground.

It is my happiness to be able to furnish you with an instance of the like nature, in the review of my own short life. About sixteen years ago, in the northern colonies, when all religious concern was much out of fashion, and the generality lay in a dead sleep in sin, having at best but the form of godliness, but nothing of the power; when the country was in peace and prosperity, free from the calamities of war, and epidemical sickness; when, in short, there were no extraordinary calls to repentance; suddenly, a deep, general concern about eternal things spread through the country; sinners started out of their slumbers, broke off from their vices, began to cry out, What shall we do to be saved? and made it the great business of their life to prepare for the world to come. Then the gospel seemed almighty, and carried all before it. It pierced the very hearts of men with an irresistible power. I have seen thousands at once melted down under it; all eager to hear as for life, and hardly a dry eye to be seen among them. Many have since backslidden, and

* Acts ii. 16, 17. Joel ii. 28.

† John xvi. 7, 8.

all their religion is come to nothing, or dwindled away into mere formality. But, blessed be God, thousands still remain shining monuments of the power of divine grace in that glorious day. That harvest did not continue very long: and now, in the very same places, and under the same ministry, or a better, there are hardly any appearances of it; though Providence has given them so many alarms of late, and such loud calls to repentance. And what can be the reason of such a surprising difference but this, that formerly the Spirit was poured out from on high, but now he is withdrawn; and hence the gospel and the means of grace, which were once so powerful, have now lost their general efficacy, and have either no effect or a terrible one, that is, to harden men more and more.

Now if this be so indeed, that is, if the Holy Spirit be the sole author of that reformation, which is necessary to preserve or restore public tranquillity and happiness, then we may be enabled by this to form some estimate of the present situation of our country and nation. By feeling this pulse, we may learn the state of our political body.

On the one hand, we may discover that God has not as yet abandoned guilty Britons, nor entirely withdrawn his Spirit from this world of sinners. If the Spirit has not been *poured* out in a copious shower of late, he has at least distilled like the dew, and caused some spots of the wilderness here and there to flourish. I have very agreeable accounts from my English correspondents, that many of the clergy there have been roused out of their long sleep; have abandoned the modish, new-fangled divinity of the age, gone back to the forsaken truths of their own articles and the reformation, and preach Christ crucified, and the unfashionable doctrines of grace, with indefatigable zeal and extensive success. This is the more unexpected, and the more promising as it has appeared in a church where religion has been declining for some time, and the things that remained were ready to die. We, I hope, have catholicism enough to rejoice in her recovery, though under another name. Some drops of divine influences have also fallen upon certain spots in America of late. I have, some time ago, given you an account of the promising religious impressions among the students in the college of New-Jersey: and my worthy correspondent, Mr. Bellamy, informs me, "As at New-Jersey college, so in several places in New-England, there have been awakenings, and some hopeful conversions of late: but whether these are to be looked upon as bees flying to the hive before a storm, or as some drops of mercy before a general shower, I cannot tell, but fear the former: for our land, in general, is in profound security, and the cry of our sins has reached to heaven." I have several accounts of the same agreeable import from other hands. And I hope even Virginia is not left a mere barren wilderness, without one fruitful spot in it. Here and there a poor, thoughtless sinner has been alarmed, and turned to the Lord; and even some of Africa's gloomy sons

have become, we hope, the Lord's freemen, and the genuine children of Abraham by faith. These things bear a promising aspect; and we would fain hope, that the Lord has reserved such a remnant among us, that we shall not be made like unto Sodom, and desolate like unto Gomorrah: nor have we reason to complain, with desponding Elijah, that *we only* are left to serve the Lord.

But, on the other hand, it is lamentably evident, there has not been of late any such general outpouring of the Spirit, as is necessary to produce a public national reformation; which is the only cure for a body politic so far gone as ours. We have lost ground indeed before our enemies, and been almost everywhere worsted: but I am afraid vice has stood its ground against the artillery of the gospel; or if it has lost in one place, it has gained in another. By all accounts from Great Britain, and the neighbouring colonies, and by our own observations in this, it appears that the generality lie in a deep sleep, presumptuous and prayerless, even when the bloody sword is unsheathed and brandished over them, and their country bleeds by a thousand wounds. They hardly ever reflect upon their sins as the cause of these public calamities; nor humble themselves under these judgments, as indications of the righteous displeasure of God. Nay, some are arrived to such a daring height of infidelity, as virtually to abjure the divine government, and to avow that they do not think the God of heaven has anything to do with such affairs; but the potsherds of the earth dash themselves together of themselves, and the arm of flesh fights it out. Our country and nation have had the trial of the gospel a long time—the gospel, which is the most effectual expedient to reform the world, which has subdued so many obstinate sinners, and which has peopled heaven with so large a colony from our guilty globe. We have also of late had the trial of the calamities of war—a bloody and savage war with a powerful, exasperated enemy, and their barbarous allies. But, alas! it appears, upon trial, that these means will not do. After all the trial that has been made, alas! it appears that infidelity, irreligion, immorality, and luxury, still stand their ground. Yes, by all accounts, they stand their ground even among the soldiery, and among the inhabitants of our frontiers, whose lives are in danger every hour. In short, a spirit of deep sleep seems to be poured out, instead of a spirit of reformation.

I wish it were evident, that we, in this congregation, have escaped this heavy judgment. And I cannot but hope, some drops of divine influence are distilling here and there among us. But alas! my brethren, I greatly fear, that even we have reason to lament and cry after the departed Spirit of God. I am greatly afraid *we* may be named ICHABOD, *because the glory is departed*.^{*} For what has now become of that inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?"

^{*} 1 Sam. iv. 21, 22.

Where now are the tears, the sighs, and groans of broken-hearted sinners? Where their eager searches and cryings for Jesus? When do we now see attentive crowds in the house of God, hearing as for their lives, with all the natural signs of raised passions in their countenances? Alas! these are rare things now-a-days. In some, vice appears impudent and barefaced, without a veil. Others indulge themselves in a stupid carelessness about religion, and think it enough if they observe some of its fashionable outward forms, while they know nothing of the vigorous, heart-exercises of genuine Christians. In short, if we make our observations upon high and low, and all ranks, on both sides of the Atlantic, alas! we find they go on still in the same old way, as in the time of peace and prosperity. The danger of their country and their own, is no reason with them, why they should repent.

Now this is a sufficient evidence, that the Spirit has not been poured upon us from on high, in a plentiful shower. And this gives us reason to fear, that the furnace which God has kindled among us is not intended to refine, but to consume: or, in other words, that the calamities which we have felt, or which we fear, are rather intended to destroy, than to reform. For you must observe such dispensations, and the means of grace in general, are intended for two very different ends; sometimes to reform and save, and sometimes to harden and destroy. Even Jesus Christ the Saviour came into our world for judgment, as well as for mercy; and is set for the fall as well as rise, of many in Israel. The ministry of the gospel is a *savour of death unto death*, as well as of life unto life. Isaiah was sent as a prophet to the Jews, when their sins were ripening fast, and their national desolation was approaching. And what was he sent for? not to reform them; that was hopeless: but you may read his commission.* “Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not;” that is, you shall enjoy all proper means of instruction, but receive no advantage from them. “Then, said I, Lord, how long?” Isaiah inquired how long the means of grace should be unprofitable to them, and tend to harden them: the answer is, “Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.” I have some better hopes concerning our country: and yet I must say, I have my fears that this awful passage may be fulfilled even upon it. I have my fears that briers and thorns will grow up in our land, or, which is much the same, that it may become the range of French and Indian savages, “UNTIL the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.” And when that period will arrive, whether sooner or later, is among the secrets of the divine counsels.

From what has been said, you may see what we principally want. We want arms, and artillery, and fortifications; we want more unanimity, judg-

* Isaiah vi. 9-11

ment, despatch and frugality in projecting and executing our undertakings: we want more public spirit, courage and resolution among the populace. But, oh! these are not our only, nor our principal wants: *we want an outpouring of the holy Spirit* upon all ranks; and till this want be supplied, nothing is like to go on well with us. We want a general public reformation: and we shall always want it, “until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.” Alas! this want is little thought of; but it is by so much the more dangerous and lamentable. Never will our country and nation be safe, never will Britain or Virginia be out of the reach of some executioner of divine vengeance, till there be a public general reformation: and never will there be such a reformation, “until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.”

Here I must not forget a consideration of still greater weight; unless the Spirit be poured out upon us, thousands of Britons, thousands of Virginians, must perish for ever; perish not in their own country, but in hell; not by the sword of the French, or Indian instruments of destruction, but by the sword of divine justice, and the horrid instruments and torture in the infernal regions. This is a much more melancholy consideration than the ruin of our country. The ruin of souls, immortal souls, for ever!—without any hope of deliverance from among the means of salvation!—oh! what horrid ruin is this! Yet this will be the doom of thousands, unless the Spirit be poured out, to turn and sanctify them. Thousands declare by their conduct whither they are going; they proclaim aloud they are bound for hell; and nothing but the Almighty Spirit can stop them in their mad career. Some of these unhappy mortals may be our friends and relatives; at least they share with us in the same human nature, and therefore should be dear to us. Nay, are not some of ourselves of that number. Even the suspicion of this may strike us aghast, and put us upon thoughtful inquiries into the matter.

Hence it appears, the Spirit of God is the most important blessing, both to our country and our souls, both with regard to time and eternity; and without it, both our country and our souls will be lost in the issue.

Hence therefore you may be directed what to make the principal matter of your prayers to God. Pray for our king, for the ministry, for the parliament, for our governors, councillors, and all our officers, civil and military: pray for the Protestant churches, for our allies, and especially for the king of Prussia;* pray for our army and navy, and for our poor exposed fellow-subjects on the frontiers: pray for good regulations among ourselves, for the weakening of our enemies, and for the speedy return of a well-established peace: pray for own reformation, and for the conversion even of our enemies, whether French papists, or heathen savages: but above all, pray for an *outpouring of the Spirit*. This is the grand, radical, all-comprehensive bless-

* See the beginning of this discourse.

ing: and if this be granted, everything else will go well with us.

To conclude, let me recommend a prudential to you, which you generally observe in temporal affairs; and that is, *to prepare for the worst*. Perhaps our religion may not be that cheap thing to us in time to come, which it has been hitherto: perhaps it may yet cost us our blood and lives. This we may expect will be our doom, if we should fall under a Popish government. And where is the glorious company of martyrs to be found among us? Who of you is willing to embrace a stake, and ascend to heaven in flames, for the sake of Jesus? Jesus, who died for *you*, will expect that some in this place will die for *him*, if they should ever be brought to the trial. And who of you is prepared to give this painful, this last evidence of your love and fidelity to him? Now you have time to deliberate upon it, and put yourselves in readiness: and it is prudence, as well as duty, to improve your time for this end, lest you be surprised unprepared.

Alas! what shall impenitent sinners do, if matters should come to this pass? If they part with Christ, rather than with their lives, they are undone, unless they retract the ruinous choice. And if they should die martyrs in his cause, even this would not save them. An unholy soul cannot ascend to heaven, even from a stake. “If I should give my body to be burnt,” saith St. Paul, “and have not charity,” love, he means, “it profiteth me nothing.”* What then remains, O sinners, but that while you enjoy a few days of peace and liberty, you lay them out in earnest endeavours to obtain sincere religion—a religion that will stand the severest test! and then you are safe, come what will.

I will not take upon me to determine, what will be the issue of this war. But I am afraid, it will issue much to the disadvantage and mortification of Great Britain and her colonies. From the rapid conquests of France, and our own disappointments and defeats, we have reason to fear, either that a desperate war will be continued, till we are undone; till Britain is stripped of some or all her colonies, and perhaps herself become a conquered province of France: or that she will be obliged humbly to petition for peace; which we may be sure will not be granted, but on terms very disadvantageous; and which will therefore tend to weaken her more and more, and allow her enemies time to increase their strength, and enable them to finish with greater ease the conquests they have begun. The Protestant religion is also in very threatening danger; for wherever the arms of France or Austria prevail, there, we may be sure, it will be oppressed. The Popish powers threaten that small part of Europe and America that is free, with the yoke of civil and religious tyranny; while Sweden, Denmark, the seven United Provinces, and other Protestant states, lie asleep, and do not exert themselves to ward off

* 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

the blow. Perhaps we are born to see such tragical revolutions as these: and if so, what awaits us but poverty and slavery, and the loss of all that is dear to us; and are we prepared for such trials as these? or are we so stupid, as not to be alarmed, and excited to prepare, even by the *peradventure* of such things coming upon us? Nothing but real vital religion, which will stand the trial of fire and fagot, and the tortures of the inquisition, will be an effectual preparative for such a time. Let us, therefore, examine whether our religion be such. If it be, we may bravely bid defiance to all the powers of earth and hell, to work our final ruin, and be secure and triumphant in him that loved us, who will make us more than conquerors. But if not, alas! we have no room for one hour's ease and security; but should be anxiously labouring to flee from the wrath to come, whether in this world, or the next. Let us now "seek the Lord, while he may be found; and call upon him while he is near,"* and in this way we may yet escape into the chambers of divine protection, before the gloomy storm breaks upon us.

In the midst of these gloomy views, methinks a ray of dubious hope darts through the threatening cloud, and bids us take a little courage, and mingle some cheerful expectations with our fears. Who knows but the Lord will yet turn, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him. Who knows but he may yet surprise us with an effusion of his Spirit, to purify us, instead of pouring upon us the vials of his displeasure, which we deserve! His ways are unsearchable; the turns of his providence often surprising and unaccountable; and his mercy above all our thoughts. Perhaps he may suffer the power of France to rise to such a formidable height, and us to be broken and reduced to a helpless extremity, that his hand may be the more manifest in her overthrow, and in our deliverance. Perhaps the extremity of calamity may bring us to the knee, as humble penitents before our offended Sovereign, and turn us to him: and then he may appear as our deliverer, when we are sensible of our dependence upon him, and that the help of man is in vain. I am encouraged to hope for deliverance in such an extremity, from a remarkable passage in Deuteronomy, the thirty-second chapter, "The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, *when he sees their strength is gone*, and there is none shut up or left." Our strength is not yet gone we have still a powerful army and navy: and therefore are full of self-confidence. But when this atheistical confidence is mortified, and we are brought to acknowledge our need of the alliance of Heaven, then God may rise for our deliverance.

There is need of preparation for deliverance, as well as for trials and calamities; and to deliver us before we are prepared for it, would not prove a blessing in the issue. To deliver a thoughtless, presumptuous, impenitent

* Isa. lv. 6.

people, while they continue such, would be to encourage their presumption and impenitence, and to make them more daring in sin, and in the neglect of God and religion. To this purpose St. Peter exhorts us, to “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that we may be exalted IN DUE TIME.”* There is a due time for exaltation or deliverance; and if we should be exalted before the time, we should only be exalted upon a precipice, where we should soon turn giddy, and fall again with greater violence. Let us therefore long and pray not only for deliverance, but that we may be prepared for it, so that it may be a real blessing to us in the issue—such a deliverance may God grant us in due time, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

A HYMN.

While in a thousand open'd veins
Contending nations bleed;
While briers and thorns in blooming plains,
And fruitful fields succeed:

While desolation rages round,
Like an o'erwhelming flood,
Where can a remedy be found
To stop the streams of blood?

Eternal Spirit! Source of good
The Author of all peace!
Pour down thine influence, like a flood,
On this wide wilderness.

Oh grant us one reviving show'r,
And let it spread afar,
Thine influence alone can cure
The bleeding wounds of war.

Come Thou' and then the wilderness
Shall bloom a paradise;
And heav'nly plants of righteousness
O'er this wild waste shall rise!

Then peace shall in large rivers flow'
Where streams of blood have run:
Then universal love shall glow,
And melt the world in one.

Then num'rous colonies shall rise

* 1 Pet. v. 6.

From this wide world of sin
To people regions in the skies,
And with bright angels shine.