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Motives to Humiliation and Praise.

A S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF

ST. MARY WOOLNOTH, LOMBARD-STREET,

ON DECEMBER 19, 1797,

*The Day of General Thanksgiving, to Almighty God,
for our late Naval Victories.*

BY JOHN NEWTON, RECTOR.

Rejoice with Trembling.

PSALM ii. 11.

*And after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds, and
for our great Trespas; seeing that thou our God hast punished
us less than our Iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a
Deliverance as this: Should we again break thy Command-
ments?*

EZRA ix. 13.

L O N D O N :

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1798.

ADVERTISEMENT.

NO other apology is offered for this publication, than the importance of the subject.

Nor is it an exact copy of what was delivered from the pulpit. Had the Preacher previously designed to print his Sermon, he would have written it. But the method, and leading sentiments in both, are the same. A few periods have probably escaped recollection, and some of the topics may be a little more amplified.

It was not till after the thanksgiving-day, that the Preacher considering himself as standing upon the verge of an eternal state, thought it might not be improper to avail himself of
the

the occasion, to attempt at least, in a more public manner, to rouse the careless to a serious consideration of the awful state of the times; and to offer some hints for the consolation and encouragement of those whose eyes affect their hearts^a, and who are continually supplicating mercy for themselves and their fellow sinners.

May our Great God and Saviour, make every reader of this feeble testimony, wise unto salvation! Amen.

JOHN NEWTON.

Coleman-street Buildings,
Jan. 8, 1798.

^a Lam. iii. 51.

A SERMON, &c.

HOSEA xi. 8, 9.

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee.

THE most High God, in the revelation of his will to men, adapts his language to the weakness of our conceptions. Heavenly truths are represented by ^a images taken from earthly things. The metaphors of eyes and hands are used in the scriptures, to raise our thoughts to some due apprehension of his infinite knowledge, his omnipresence and his almighty power ^b. He is likewise spoken of, as deliberating, repenting, rejoicing, and griev-

^a John iii. 12.

^b 1 Pet. iii. 12. Ps. lxxxix. 13.

ing. Yet we are sure that passions like those of which we are conscious in ourselves, cannot in strict propriety be ascribed to the holy and blessed God. No attentive and serious mind can be misled by this figurative analogy. We learn from the same scriptures of truth, that God is sovereign, that^a with Him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning, that his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, and that all his works are perfectly known to him, from the beginning of the world. The more familiar modes of expression are designed to teach us, not what he is in himself, but how it becomes us sinful creatures, to be affected towards him.

Thus though the purpose of God concerning Israel was fixed and unalterable, yet to impress us with a sense of his inflexible displeasure against sin, and at the same time to leave open a door of hope and encouragement for penitent sinners, we read of a debate, as it were, between his justice and his mercy. Justice demanded that Israel should be given up, delivered up to vengeance, to such a destruction as that by which God overthrew the cities in the plain of Jericho, Sodom and Gomorrah,^b Admah and Zeboim. But mercy interposed, pleaded for a respite, and prevail-

^a James i. 17. Isa. xlv. 10. Acts xv. 18. ^b Deut. xxix. 23.
ed.

ed. O Ephraim, O Israel, justice calls aloud for vengeance, but how shall I, how can I give thee up? No, I cannot, I will not, my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled.

Two reasons are assigned, in this pathetic expostulation, why he would still exercise long-suffering towards those who so justly deserved to perish. 1. I am God and not man; the patience of man, or of any mere creature, would have been overcome long ago, by the perverseness of Israel; but he who made them, and he only, was able to bear with them still. 2. I am the Holy One in the midst of thee. In that dark and degenerate day, when the bulk of the nation was in a state of revolt and rebellion, there were a hidden remnant who feared and worshipped the Lord, and who mourned^a for the abominations which they could not prevent. Of these the Lord was mindful, and for the sake of these, deserved judgments were suspended from falling upon the rest.

The people of Israel were for a time, in a state of hard bondage, and were severely oppressed, in Egypt. The Lord brought them out from thence with a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm. He afterwards drowned

^a Ezek. ix. 4. 6.

Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. But he led Israel safely through the deep as upon dry land. In the *barren* wilderness he fed them with manna, and brought them water out of the rock. In the *pathless* wilderness he guided them, by a cloud in the day, and by a fire in the night. He fought their battles, subdued their enemies, and put them in possession of the land he had promised to their forefathers. They were a people whom the Most High selected for himself, as his peculiar treasure^a. He was their God and their king. They were the only people who were, at that time, favoured with the knowledge of the true God, and how to worship him acceptably. He gave them his laws and ordinances. He resided among them, and honoured them with a visible token of his presence in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple. They were likewise under an especial care of his providence. The fruitfulness of their land, did not depend upon the climate, but the early and the latter rain, returned regularly at the stated seasons, by his appointment. And when in obedience to his commands, all their males from the most distant parts, went up three times in a year to Jerusalem, and left their borders destitute of

^a Ps. cxxxv. 4.

human defence ; God so impressed the surrounding nations^a with awe, that though hostile in their dispositions, they never availed themselves of that seemingly favourable opportunity for invading them. Under the reign of Solomon, they enjoyed peace, plenty, prosperity, and wealth, in a degree, till then, unknown among the nations of the earth.

What returns did Israel make to the Lord for all these benefits ? The history of their conduct is little more than the recital of a long series of ungrateful murmurings, disobedience, and rebellion. They resisted his will, broke his commandments, mingled with the heathens, and learned their ways. They repeatedly forsook the Lord God of their fathers, worshipped dumb idols, and practised all the abominations of the nations which the Lord had cast out before them. Their sins often brought calamities upon them, The Lord gave them up into the hands of their enemies ; they suffered by the sword, by pestilence, and by famine. When he slew them, then they sought him^b ; and when they sought him, he was entreated of them. He delivered them out of their afflictions. But they soon forgot his goodness, and returned

^a Exod. xxxiv. 24. ^b Ps. lxxviii. 34.

to their evil ways. He sent many of his servants in succession, to admonish and warn them; but they despised his words, they mocked his messengers, and misused his prophets^a.

Can we wonder, if justice demanded the utter extirpation and ruin of a people so highly favoured, so well instructed, so often chastised, and delivered, and yet so incorrigibly ungrateful, daring, and obstinate! Is it not rather wonderful to hear the Lord expressing a reluctance to execute the sentence so justly deserved, and saying of *such a people*, How shall I give thee up?

But can we read the history of Israel, without remarking how strongly it resembles our own? Have *we* not been equally distinguished from the nations around us, by spiritual and temporal blessings, and by our gross misimprovement of them? We are assembled this day to join in public thanksgivings for public mercies, but we have great cause for public humiliation likewise. We have much reason to rejoice in the goodness of the Lord, but we have reason to temper our joy with trembling, when we compare the state of things around us, with that of Ephraim and Judah in the days of the prophet Hosea^b?

^a 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. ^b Ps. ii. 11.

While too many persons lose their time and temper in political and party disputes, and refer all the calamities we either feel or fear, to instruments and second causes; let us acknowledge that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth^a! Let us consider sin as the procuring cause of all our troubles. Let us recognize his hand in them, and confess that in all the distress he has brought upon us, he has not dealt with us as our iniquities deserve! May our hearts be suitably affected, while I attempt a brief sketch of the abounding evils and abominations, prevalent amongst us, which might justly provoke the Lord, to sweep this land, so long the land of peace and liberty, with the besom of destruction; and then we shall be prepared to praise him for those merciful and signal interpositions of his providence, which afford us some ground to hope, that notwithstanding all our provocations, he will not *yet* give us up.

1. Offences of the same kind, may be heightened and aggravated by circumstances. Thus an insult offered to a benefactor, a parent, or a king, is deemed more grievous than if the person offended was in all respects an equal. In this sense, I fear the sins of Great Britain, are of a deeper dye, than those of

^a Rev. xix. 6.

any nation in Europe; because they are committed against greater advantages and privileges, than any other people have enjoyed. May not the Lord appeal to ourselves, as to Israel of old, What could have been done more to my vineyard^a, that I have not done? After the black night of popish darkness in which Christendom had been for ages involved, Wickliff, the morning star and harbinger of the Reformation, arose in our borders. From his time, we have been favoured with a succession of preachers of the Gospel, and of witnesses to its truth and power. Not a few of these sealed their profession with their blood; and a much greater number suffered in the same cause, by fines, stripes, banishment, and imprisonment. But since the Revolution, and especially since the accession of King George the First to the throne, the spirit of persecution has been greatly repressed and chained up. We are not now called to resist unto blood. Nor is there any Protestant country, where religious liberty is so universally enjoyed, and with so little restraint, as in the dominions of Great Britain.

O fortunati nimium, sua si bona nocent!

Our constitution, the basis and bulwark of our civil liberty, is the admiration or envy of

^a Isa. v. 4.

our surrounding neighbours. It cost our forefathers many struggles, to bring forward and establish this national blessing; but we have enjoyed it so long, and so quietly, that we seem almost to forget its value, how it was obtained, or how only it can be preserved! Wo be to us, if God should succeed the desires and endeavours of those who are disposed to exchange it for licentiousness! Add to this our public prosperity—while we have been principals in many wars, which have spread devastation and misery far and wide abroad, we have had uninterrupted peace at home; and know so little of the calamities of war, that were it not for the increase of taxes, it is probable we should not be soon weary of hearing of battles, and the slaughter of thousands, provided victory declared on our side. Our arms and our commerce have, almost like the ocean, encompassed the habitable globe, and we are become the grand mart and emporium of the earth.

But what have been *our* returns to the Lord for all his goodness! May he not say of us, as of Israel, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me^a. I attempt not to explain the unfulfilled prophecies in the Apocalypse, but the first, second, and third chapters of the Prophecy of

^a Isa. i. 2.

Isaiah, are so obviously applicable to the present state of these kingdoms, that we need look no further to perceive both our sin and our danger. May the Lord soften our hearts for our own sins, the sins of professors of the gospel, and those national sins, which strongly mark our character as a people!

The true Christian sees much cause of humiliation in himself. Though he cannot but take sorrowful notice of what passes around him, he is more ready to scrutinize and blame his own misconduct, than that of other men. He confesses that his *best* is defective and defiled. Though he exercises himself to maintain a conscience void of offence, and dares appeal to the Lord for the sincerity of his aims, he owns that in every thing he comes short. His obligations to the Redeemer are immense, and his sensations of gratitude, and exertions in service, are vastly disproportionate to them. Yet having accepted the atonement, and resting his hope of salvation upon Jesus, though his imperfections humble him, they do not discourage him. But he acknowledges, that if justice were strict to mark what is amiss, his own sins are so many and so great, that he could have no right to complain, though he had a large share of the heaviest calamities incident to this mortal life. They

who are thus minded are the chariots and horsemen of the land in which they live. They sigh and mourn for their own sins, and the evils which they cannot prevent. They have little thanks from the blind, careless, ungodly many around them. They are rather scorned and despised for their singularity, and unfashionable preciseness; but if this nation be spared from destruction, it will be for their sakes, and for the attention with which God regards their prayers. If we had no such persons amongst us, our fleets and armies would prove but a poor and precarious defence. But I trust their number is not small. They are dispersed up and down, throughout the kingdom, and are the salt of the earth, which preserves us from total putrefaction.

2. By professors, we mean, those who assent to the leading doctrines of the gospel, and usually attend where it is preached. I know this distinction is deemed invidious. We are sometimes asked—Why do you appropriate the term gospel to yourselves? Do not all ministers preach the gospel? Most certainly not. The doctrines from many pulpits are contrary, yea contradictory. They cannot be all right. Yea the doctrines from too many pulpits in our established church contradict the articles and the liturgy, which the
preachers

preachers have solemnly subscribed. The articles and liturgy bear express testimony to the universal and total depravity of human nature, the deity and atonement of the Saviour, the necessity of regeneration, a new birth and a new life, of sanctification, and of the abiding influence of the holy Spirit of God to awaken sinners, to produce faith, and to instruct, comfort, and establish those who believe. These points are essential to the scheme of the gospel, as it is set before us by the evangelists and apostles. They who espouse them are called professors—a title which includes all those whom I have already mentioned, but is extended to many more, or at least is assumed by them. Happy indeed would it be, if all who seem to agree in principles, were united in love among themselves, and exhibited in the sight of men, in their tempers, practice, and pursuits, a conversation becoming the gospel they profess. But in the days of the apostles there were those, who while they professed to believe in God, denied him by their works, who were enemies to the cross of Christ^a, and caused the good way to be evil spoken of. We lament, more than wonder, that it should be so now. For human nature is the same in all

^a Phil. iii. 19. Titus i. 16.

ages. And even among those of whom we hope better—Contentions, divisions, the heat of party zeal, the coldness of brotherly love, and a blameable conformity to the spirit and customs of the world, are but too visible. The sins of professors alone, if duly considered, might make us apprehensive that judgment is even at the doors.

3. There are likewise sins so generally prevalent, so familiar and habitual in every rank of life, that they may properly be called national. Because, either by their nature, or their frequency, they mark and distinguish our public morals: to enumerate these, would be a painful and arduous task; but my subject requires me to notice some of the most prominent and notorious.

1. *Infidelity.* Though the sophistry and machinations of the philosophers in France, and of these who style themselves the Illuminati in Germany, have more or less infected the whole of Christendom, with their sceptical and dangerous sentiments, so that we hold them in common with many other nations; and though we have not, like the unhappy French, openly and avowedly renounced the government of God; yet I fear that the worst kind of infidelity (which is still rapidly spreading through the land) is already become

come

come one of our national sins. Formerly most of our free-thinkers, assumed the more modest name of deists; and though they rejected the scriptures, they professed a regard to what they called natural religion; they wrote likewise chiefly for men like themselves, of a speculative and inquisitive turn, and did not appear much concerned to proselyte the common people: they seemed to allow that the principles of christianity, though not necessary to persons of their sagacity, might be useful to preserve the peace and order of society, and to keep the vulgar within some bounds of good government and subordination. I have myself known those, who upon this ground regularly, or at least frequently, attended public worship, not that they desired or expected any benefit from it, but to set a good example to their wives, children, and servants, whom they thought either not competent to understand their more sublime discoveries, or not fit to be intrusted with them. These champions likewise went forth singly to the combat; but now there is a strong compacted confederacy against *all religion*, both name and thing. Neither the mortal, nor the immortal deists are much thought of at present. Philosophers have pushed their inquiries far beyond the narrow views of the deists,

deists, and proclaim themselves to be atheists. They tell us that either there is no God, or that he does not take cognizance of human affairs. To relieve the consciences of men, from those foreboding fears of a future judgment, which are not easily separable from guilt, they boldly affirm death to be an eternal sleep. Though these and similar dreadful tenets, have not obtained the publicity and authority with us, which they have in France, they have spread like a contagion through the kingdom. Multitudes in every degree of life, from the noble to the peasant, have adopted them.

Not that I ascribe the progress of infidelity chiefly to Thomas Paine, or to writers of a superior class in the same line; but they have brought it more into view. Long before the modern philosophers were born, the fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*^a. Infidelity is congenial to human nature. Infidel writings, like the touch of Ithuriel's spear, have disclosed what, for a time, was hidden or disguised: the spirits of many were prepared. They were infidels before, though for want of attention they scarcely knew it, or for want of boldness, were afraid to own it. The effects are evident.

^a Ps. xv. 1.

With many people of fashion, infidelity is fashionable. Their dependants and servants imbibe their sentiments, and so far as their ability reaches, imitate their practice. Every class of society downwards, tradesmen, porters, labourers, and hostlers, are no less pleased with thinking and acting without controul, than their superiors. Thus the bonds of society are weakened, vice, idleness, impatience, murmuring, and insubordination are seen, wherever we turn our eyes. When will these things end? When men agree to cast off the fear of God, they will seldom long accord in any thing else. Man in his natural state is a wild creature, but while his conscience is not quite hardened, while he acknowledges a God, and expects a future state and a day of judgment, though he commits many evils, he is restrained from committing many more, and greater, to which his corrupt propensities would otherwise incline him, and from which he would not be deterred by mere human laws and penalties. Such a sinner may be compared to a lion in the Tower; but an infidel is a lion in the street.

2. The great neglect of the obligations of religion, amongst those who have not explicitly cast off all regard to it, is a national sin.

If a stranger from some remote part of the world, who understood our language, was to see and hear all that passes at a contested election, at our cockpits, gaming-houses, race-grounds, boxing-matches, and many other promiscuous assemblies, what judgment could he form of our religion? Or could he readily believe that we had any? And yet we could not tell him that they were all infidels. Many who live in the habitual neglect or breach of the precepts of scripture, would still be thought Christians; though they have little, but the avowal of the name, to distinguish them from the most determined infidels. And it is to be feared, that such Christians constitute a very great majority of the people of England.

3. The contempt of the gospel of Christ, will I fear be found a national sin, with the exception of the comparatively few who cordially embrace it. I have already explained in what sense I understand the word *Gospel*. When the doctrines of our established church, which in the main are conformable to the confessions and standards of all the Protestant churches in Europe, are faithfully preached; and especially when first introduced into a parish, they usually cause a general alarm, they excite a general opposition. This gospel is shunned and dreaded like a pestilence, and the

strongest exertions are made, to prevent its entrance, or to expel it, if possible. The ministers who preach it faithfully are stigmatized and misrepresented. We learn from Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny, that the name of *Christian* was once so extremely odious, that whoever dared to own it, was suspected as capable or guilty of the worst crimes, though no proof could be brought of his having committed any. The word *methodist*, has a degree of the like effect in our day. It is not now, as when first imposed, the name of a particular sect or body of people, but is applied to all who preach and approve the doctrines of the gospel, if they are not dissenters. And it operates with a kind of magical force; the very sound of the word is sufficient to fill the minds of many people with prejudices against the truth. Neither learning, piety, an exemplary conduct, nor a regular compliance with the rules of the rubric, can always, or often, secure a minister from contempt, if the giddy world think proper to call him a *methodist*. The people prefer those who will prophesy smooth things^a. And in most places they have their wish. Candour itself cannot deny that there are in many parishes of this kingdom, official shepherds who have neither will nor skill, to teach or watch over their flocks; and multitudes of

^a Isa. xxx. 10.

people, who for want of proper instruction, have little more knowledge, of christianity than the Indians in America. Some of us have reason to be thankful to God, and to our superiors in church and state, that we are not discountenanced or molested in the exercise of our ministry. But our path is not the ordinary road to approbation or preferment. There are not many evangelical clergymen who have benefices, and these have been chiefly bestowed by private patronage^a.

4. Because of swearing the land mourneth^b. This generally prevailing enormity, has two branches—First, customary profane swearing, blasphemy, and execration, in common discourse. We can seldom walk the length of a street, without having our ears pained and our hearts wounded, by the bitter imprecations which thoughtless creatures utter against themselves, or each other. It might be expected that this horrid wickedness would be confined to the lowest and most abandoned of

^a Upon the death of the late Mr. Romaine, Rector of St. Andrew Wardrobe, and St. Ann's, Blackfriars, the inhabitants united in a petition to the Lord Chancellor, in favour of his Curate, whom they wished to succeed him in the living. And the Lord Chancellor was pleased to grant their request. I mention this exception with pleasure; because I think it is much to the honour both of his lordship, and of the parishioners.

^b Jer. xviii. 10.

the common people. But it is far otherwise. Gentlemen and noblemen, make a point of distinguishing themselves from the vulgar, by their houses, their dress, their tables, and their equipage; but many of them in their language, take a strange pleasure in degrading themselves to a level with the vilest of the species; so that were it not for their exterior, we might be led to think that they had spent their whole lives among stable-grooms and postillions. And thus by their own proficiency and example, they harden and confirm in their wickedness, those whom they imitate.

The insult offered to the majesty and holiness of God by *common* swearing, contributes greatly to take off a sense of the heinous sin of perjury, or *false* swearing; an appeal to the God of truth in confirmation of a lie. This is the other branch of that swearing for which the land ought to mourn, and, sooner or later, must mourn. Perjury is emphatically one of our national sins. "The multiplicity of oaths, which are interwoven into almost every branch of public business, involves thousands in the habitual guilt of perjury. Many of them, it is true, do not necessarily lead to sin, because honest and conscientious men, may and do, strictly observe them; but it is to be feared, a greater number deliberately and customarily violate

violate these solemn obligations, and take them as often as imposed, without hesitation, and without any desire of complying with them. Not a few of these oaths are either so worded or so circumstanced, that it is morally impossible to fulfil them; and if a person was even to attempt it, he would be thought a busy body or a fool; yet they must be tendered, and must be taken as a matter of form, when nothing more is expected or purposed on either side. The number of churchwardens and constables, who are annually sworn, is very great, and as these offices are chiefly held by rotation, in the course of a few years they take in a considerable part of the middling people in the kingdom. How many, or how few of them, act up to the letter and the spirit of the oaths they have taken, will be known in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. But it is *now* evident, that while many like sheep, tread without thought in the path of custom, content to forswear themselves, because others have done so before them; and some are hardy enough to trifle with God and man for profit, the laws which enjoin and multiply oaths, do thereby furnish and multiply temptations to the sin of perjury. The frequency of oaths, the irreve-

rend manner in which they are often administered, and the impunity with which they are broken, have greatly contributed to weaken the sense of every moral obligation, and to spread a dissolute and daring spirit, throughout the land."

5. Oppression is a national sin, if the grievance be publicly known, and no constitutional measures adopted for prevention or relief. Charges of this nature, have been brought against the exercise of our power, both in the east, and in the west. I pretend not to say how far they were founded in truth, or exaggerated. I confine myself to a single instance, of which my own knowledge warrants me to speak. I have more than once, confessed with shame in this pulpit, the concern I too long had in the African slave trade. This trade, marked as it is, with the epithet **INFAMOUS**, by a vote of the House of Commons, is still carried on, and under the sanction of the legislature. Though the repeated attempts to procure the abolition of this trade have not succeeded, they have doubtless contributed to meliorate the condition of the blacks, who are in a state of slavery in our West-India islands. The mode of their transportation thither from the African coast, seems to be less tormenting and fatal than formerly. How far this trade may have been

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affected by the present war I know not. When I was engaged in it, we generally supposed, for an accurate calculation was not practicable, that there were not less than a hundred thousand persons, men, women, and children, brought off the coast, by the European vessels of all nations; and that an equal number lost their lives annually, by the wars and other calamities occasioned by the traffic, either on shore, without reaching the ship, or on ship-board before they reached the places of sale. It was also supposed that more than one half, perhaps three-fifths of the trade was in the hands of the English. If the trade is at present carried on to the same extent, and nearly in the same manner, while we are delaying from year to year to put a stop to our part of it, the blood of many thousands of our helpless, much injured fellow creatures, is crying against us. The pitiable state of the survivors, who are torn from their nearest relatives, connections, and their native land, must be taken into the account. Enough of this horrid scene. I fear the African trade is a national sin, for the enormities which accompany it are now generally known; and though perhaps the greater part of the nation would be pleased if it were suppressed, yet as it does not immediately affect their own interest, they are passive.

The shop-tax a few years since, touched them in a more sensible and tender part, and therefore petitions and remonstrances were presented and repeated, till the tax was repealed. Can we wonder that the calamities of the present war begin to be felt at home, when we ourselves wilfully and deliberately inflict much greater calamities upon the native Africans, who never offended us? That is an awful word ^a, Wo unto thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled.

6. A proud boasting spirit, and a vain confidence in our own strength and resources, is a prominent part of our national character. Though infidelity, irreligion, contempt both of the law and the gospel of God, profaneness, perjury, and oppression, expose us to his vengeance—though the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and have fallen heavily on a great part of Europe—and though his hand is evidently lifted up against us, yet few will ^b see and acknowledge it. Instead of such a general spirit of humiliation as was awakened in Nineveh by the preaching of Jonah, so well becoming our sins and our situation, we still boast in our fleets and armies. Especially the wooden walls of old England are spoken of as impregnable, and we

^a Isa. xxxiii. 1. ^b Isa. xxvi. 11.

still suppose ourselves to be sovereign lords of the sea. Some late providential dispensations were well suited to shew us, not only the sin, but the folly of this spirit; but the impression, if any, was transient, it soon wore off. The praise justly due to our admirals, officers, and seamen, was readily offered. But unless the king had called us as on this day, to unite with him, in ascribing our success to the Lord of Hosts, who alone giveth the victory, even the verbal offering of praise to God, would have been confined to a few. And still we boast. This arrogant spirit, and especially at such a time as this, is no small aggravation of all our other sins.

I could proceed to further particulars, but my spirits are depressed, and I hope the hearts of my hearers, are duly affected, by what I have already said. Is there any relief? Have we any ground to hope that the Lord will yet say of such a nation as this, How shall I give thee up? I turn with pleasure to this more comfortable branch of my subject.

II. Yes, though we have many causes for trembling, we are not without causes for a humble joy, and thankfulness.

1. I hope the occasion of our present assembling is a token for good. We are met in consequence of a royal proclamation, to join in spirit with our king, who perhaps while I
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am speaking may be entering St. Paul's cathedral, attended by the royal family, both houses of parliament, and many of the nobility, and principal persons of the court. He goes to make the most public and solemn acknowledgement of his dependance on the providence and power of Almighty God, and to ascribe to him to whom it most justly belongs, praise and thanksgiving, for the many interpositions he has favoured us with, as a people, in this season of danger and distress; particularly for the three signal, critical, and decisive victories which he gave us in succession, over the French, Spanish, and Dutch fleets. We remember with what *universal* joy the king's former appearance at St. Paul's, after his recovery from his illness, was entertained by his loyal subjects; and though the introduction of French principles, and French politics, since that period, has not been without mischievous effects, we trust that the joy upon this occasion, will, at least, be *general*^a.

^a I was not mistaken in my expectation. The order and regularity with which the procession was conducted, the peaceful behaviour of the immense multitude of spectators, the serenity and mildness of the weather, so unusual with us in the depth of winter, the almost total exemption from what are commonly called accidents, and the quietness with which the evening closed, I consider collectively, as warranting a hope, that the Lord was pleased to smile upon the day, and upon the design.

Though

Though I cannot suppose that every person in the procession, or among the many thousand spectators, felt the same sentiments of gratitude to God, which induced the king to appoint a day of thanksgiving—yet I consider it as a public and national act, and in this view, contrasted with the atheistical rage and blasphemies of the French Directory and Councils, who insult and defy, not these kingdoms only, but the God whom we worship, I indulge a hope, that unworthy as we are of his mercy, the Lord will put a hook and a bridle in the mouths of these modern Rabbakehs, and will not give us up, as a prey to their merciless rapacity and revenge.

2. When the French formed the design of invading Ireland, they thought themselves sure of success. They probably would have found encouragement in one part of that kingdom, if they could have reached it, and therefore they spoke like Pharaoh, who said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil—and they were disconcerted almost in the same manner. The Lord blew with his wind, and scattered them. Some of their stoutest ships, and many of their men, sunk as lead in the mighty waters^a. And the Lord God did it HIMSELF. We had a strong fleet to watch and oppose them, but they were not

^a Exod. xv. 9, 10.

permitted to come near, or even to see one of their ships. Nor had our boasted naval force the opportunity of firing a single gun in our defence.

3. The suppression of the mutiny, which like an infectious disorder, pervaded all our fleets, was so sudden, so unexpected, and at the time when it was risen to such an alarming height, that all resistance seemed vain, that it can only be ascribed to the mercy and power of God. Then, if ever, was the time, when the proud and the boasters trembled. And while we were thus exposed and defenceless in every quarter, the providence of God laid an embargo upon the fleets of our enemies, so that they could not attempt any thing against us. It is further to be observed, that the mutiny at the Nore, which was the most formidable, as the ships had the full command of the river, so that nothing could pass or repass to or from London; this threatening disaster, which painted terror and dismay in the countenance of almost every person we met in the streets, in the event led to that re-establishment of our marine discipline; without which the strength of our *invincible* navy would have been but like a rope of sand. Well may we say, What has God wrought!

4. In

4. In the close of the year 1795, we felt a scarcity, and feared a famine. Opportunity was presented and greedily seized by monopolizers to raise the corn to such an enormous price, that had it not been for great and liberal exertions, the poor in many places, perhaps in every place, must have been absolutely destitute of bread. What must the consequence have been if God had visited us with a scanty or a wet harvest the following year? For our resource from foreign supplies was cut off in many parts, and rendered very precarious in the rest, by the war. But he is a hearer of prayer. In 1796, the earth brought forth by handfuls^a. Such an abundant harvest, and such a remarkable fine season, for gathering in the precious fruits of the earth, have been seldom known.

5. Our sins have involved us in a calamitous war, and though our sufferings are not to be compared with those of the countries on the continent where the war has raged, it has brought upon us much real distress. Many widows and orphans are bemoaning the effects. The decline of some manufactures, the increased taxes, the advanced price of most of the necessaries of life, are severely felt by the industrious poor, and by many families in the middling and lower classes of society. It is

^a Gen. xli. 47.

well known that there is a number of persons who unhappily employ their abilities and influence, to aggravate the sense of these difficulties, to inflame the minds of the sufferers, to work upon their passions, to alienate them from the government, and to make them long, if possible, for such liberty and equality, as has already reduced France to the most pitiable state of anarchy and misery. That such attempts have not succeeded, that we are still preserved not only from foreign invasion, but from internal commotions, I ascribe to the power of the Great God over the hearts of the children of men; and I consider it, as a farther ground of hope, that he will not give us up.

III. Why would he not give up degenerate Israel, when strict justice demanded their destruction? Two reasons are assigned in my text for his forbearance, which are well suited to encourage the prayers and hopes of those amongst ourselves, who love and fear him.

1. I am God and not man. If we had offended men, or angels, as we have offended our Creator and Redeemer, and they had permission and power to punish us, our case would be utterly desperate. Only he who made us, is able to bear with us. All the attributes (as we speak) of the Infinite God, must of course be equally infinite. As is his
majesty,

majesty, so is his mercy^a. What is the puny power of man, compared with that almighty power which formed and upholds the immense universe? The disproportion is greater than that between a single drop of water, and the boundless ocean. Thus his thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Who can set bounds to the exercise of his patience? When sentence was denounced against Nineveh, they humbled themselves before him, and he suspended the execution. There is at least a peradventure in our favour, Who can tell if God will turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? He has said, At what time I shall speak concerning a nation, or a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, or to destroy; if that nation turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them^b. We do not suppose that all the inhabitants of Nineveh were savingly converted, but they humbled themselves with one consent; they cried for mercy and they were spared. We do not expect a national conversion; and I fear we have little prospect of a national humiliation. But

2. I am the Holy One in the midst of thee. Next to the consideration of his infinite mercy, this is our strongest ground for con-

^a Eccles. ii. 18.

^b Jer. xviii. 7, 8.

solation. The Holy One is still in the midst of us! Degenerate and wicked as we are, God has a people, a remnant amongst us. I have spoken of these already. Their number is small if compared with the bulk of the nation, but if they could be collected together, they would form a considerable body (I trust it is an increasing body), who though distinguished by different names, and dispersed far and wide into different parts of the land, are united by a faith of divine operation, to one Head, and in one common interest and design. They belong to that kingdom which is not of this world, and which (unlike all other kingdoms) cannot be shaken. But their principles lead them to seek the welfare of the communities in which they live. These are under God, *Decus et Tutamen*, the glory and the defence of Great Britain. They are lights shining in a dark place. They are believers, and their faith worketh by love. But as they follow the example of their Lord and Master, the world knows not *them*, because it knows not *Him*. Here and there, individuals, by an unblameable consistent conduct, in a course of years, if they cannot change the hearts of gainfayers, are enabled to stop their mouths, and put their ignorance to silence by well-doing^a. But many persons

^a 1 Pet. ii. 15.

despise them in the gross, and affect to deem them (perhaps in defiance to the checks of their own consciences), either hypocrites or visionaries, credulous fools or designing knaves. But their record is on high. They have access to God and communion with him, by the Son of his love. They have the spirit of prayer, and their prayers are heard. The ship in which Paul sailed to Italy, was preserved from sinking, though apparently in the utmost danger, because the Apostle was on board her. Not only was this servant of God as safe in a storm at sea, as if he had been on shore, but for his sake, the Lord preserved the lives of all who were in the vessel. The state ship of this nation is now in jeopardy, she is brought into deep waters, tossed with tempests, and her rowers^a are almost at their wits-end; but there is a precious *depositum* on board. A people dear to the Lord are embarked in the same bottom with the rest, and we hope their prayers will prevail for the safety of the whole. The French, who know little of christianity, but as they have seen it through the corrupt medium of popery, having triumphed over and melted down, the golden and silver images of their tutelary saints, promise themselves an easy victory over us. They know not that the Holy One of Israel is in the midst of us,

^a Ezekiel xxvii. 26.

and that there are a people here, who are under his special protection. They know not that like Senacherib, their success is wholly owing to their being instruments of his will, like saws or hammers in the hand of the workman, and that when they have accomplished his purpose, he can and he will say to them, Hitherto thou shalt come, and no farther. They have succeeded beyond their own expectations, far and wide upon the continent, but all their attempts and designs against our favoured land, have hitherto been rendered abortive. We hope they will still prove so.

At all events, it shall be well with the righteous^a. Rejoice, believers, in the Lord. You may be assured upon the warrant of his faithful promise, either that he will preserve you from the evils, which our sins give us such cause to apprehend; or if he should appoint you to share in a common calamity, he will make your strength equal to your day, and will prepare you shoes of iron and brass^b, when any part of the road, on which you travel through this wilderness towards your heavenly home, shall prove very difficult and rugged. Pray for grace to sit loose to the world, and you will have nothing to fear. The first Christians rejoiced in the spoiling of their goods, and so shall you, if the Lord calls

^a Isa. iii. 12.^b Deut. xxxiii. 26.

you to the trial. You have the same Saviour to support you, and you likewise have treasures^a, far better and more enduring, out of the reach of violence. The Lord teaches us to consider even the loss of life, as comparatively of small importance, when he says, Fear not them that can kill the body, but can do no more. They cannot do that without his permission. The very hairs of your head are numbered^b. And most of those who have suffered death for him, who died upon the cross for them, have thought the honour of dying in his cause, more to be valued than a thousand lives.

My feelings are painful for you who live without God in the world. I do not wonder if your hearts tremble like the leaves of a tree when agitated by a mighty wind^c. You know not what may come upon you, but you forebode the worst—And should it prove so, you have no resource, no hiding place, no Almighty Friend to whom you may with confidence apply for help in time of trouble. Death, at least, is inevitable; and will you dare to die, (yet die you must) if your heart be unhumbled, and your sins unpardoned? We preach to you a gracious powerful Saviour, who invites you to seek him, and has said, Him that cometh to me, I will *in no wise*

^a Heb. x. 34. ^b Luke xii. 4. ^c Matt. x. 30. ^d Isa. vii. 2.

cast out. Seek him then to-day whilst it is called to-day. Now is the accepted time, the day of salvation. To-morrow is not your own.

But let believers rejoice and be glad. The Lord reigns, *your* Lord reigns^a. He who loved you and gave himself for you, possesses and exercises all power in heaven and earth. Though clouds and darkness are about his throne, and his paths are untraceable by us, we are sure that he is carrying on his great designs, for the glory of his Great Name, and for the extension and establishment of his Church, in a way worthy of himself—worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness. Make his name your strong tower^b of refuge. Hold out faith and patience. Yet a little while, and we hope to meet where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest^c. And to hear those welcome words, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation^d of the world.

^a Ps. xcvi. 1. Matt. xxviii. 18. ^b Prov. xviii. 10.

^c Job iii. 17. ^d Matt. xxv. 34.

FINIS.