1795

Two Sermons Upon the Doctrines, Character and Kingdom of Christ

Alden Bradford

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Mr. Bradford's

TWO SERMONS,

Delivered December 28, 1794.
TWO SERMONS,
UPON THE
DOCTRINES, CHARACTER AND KINGDOM
OF
CHRIST,
DELIVERED IN THE FIRST PARISH
IN
CAMBRIDGE,
DECEMBER 28, 1794.

By ALDEN BRADFORD, A.M.
PASTOR OF A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY IN POWNALBOROUGH.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE HEARERS.

—Exalted to be a PRINCE and a SAVIOR, to give Repentance and Remission of Sins. ACTS v. 31.
—A Name written, KING of Kings, and LORD of Lords. REV. xix. 16.

Printed by SAMUEL HALL, No. 53, Cornhill, BOSTON.
1795.
LUKE, II. Ch. Part of 10 & 11th Ver.

—"Behold, I bring you good Tidings of great Joy, which shall be to all People. For unto you is born—a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

In choosing the passage of scripture, now recited, for the theme of this day’s discourse, I have reference to the practice, prevailing among some sects of Christians, of observing a particular day in the year in commemoration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The day, which has been set apart to celebrate this most interesting and joyful event, being supposed to correspond to that, upon which Christ was born, elapsed in the course of the past week.

Though we, who differ in some forms of worship, from most of the established churches in Europe, do not observe any particular day, with the express design of remembering the nativity of our Savior, because we think the time is not precisely ascertained, yet we acknowledge the propriety of meditating upon an event, so important, so interesting to mankind, at some of those
those seasons, devoted to religious contemplation and improvement.

It is the fact—that a Savior is born—It is this fact, upon which our faith is founded: And it is his divine doctrines, his holy and useful life, and his meritorious death, upon which it will be most interesting and instructive to meditate.

To a member of the Church of England or of Rome, who urges the propriety and obligation of observing a particular day, to commemorate the birth of Christ, we might say—that there is some uncertainty, respecting the exact time.* Particularly, there is one circumstance, which shews, that the time, upon which those Churches have fixed for the celebration of it, is not probably the true one, which is this—the Angel, who published the joyful tidings of a Savior’s birth, communicated it to the shepherds, who were “watching their flocks in the fields by night.” For the climate of Judea, though more moderate than ours, is too severe for the shepherds to tend their flocks abroad, during the night, at the season, when it has been supposed Christ was born.†—But it is comparatively unimportant to know the particular time or place of the Savior’s birth: Otherwise, we might suppose, that the inspired

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* The ancient Greek and Roman Churches did not agree in the particular day. The Greeks observed the 23rd of December.

† The inhabitants of Judea consider November, December, and January, as the winter months. Travellers agree, that during these months, the degree of cold is generally such as to make fires necessary. They observe, that there is a very great difference in the degrees of heat and cold between the day and the night—and that the shepherds have some shelter for their flocks in the night-time, through the months mentioned above. It is probable, then, that Christ was born as early as October. We say—“It is probable”—The particular time, we consider uncertain. See Tiarmer’s Observations, vol. III.
inspired writers would have pointed out the day, and enjoined the observance of it.

In a discourse addressed to Jews, who receive only the books of the Old Testament; or to others, who reject the whole of the Bible, on account of some trifling difficulties in chronology, or on account of a few passages, which they cannot perfectly understand—In a discourse addressed to such persons, it would be proper to go into a particular detail of prophecies respecting the Messiah, which were fulfilled in Christ; and of the arguments, on which the Christian's faith is founded.

But a critical dissertation of this kind to the audience, which I now address, would, probably, be considered as unnecessary. If I have ability to increase your stock of knowledge, in the line of speculation and criticism, yet it will be far more important—far more useful—to bring to your remembrance the gracious doctrines of the gospel, and to describe the office and the spiritual kingdom of him, whom we acknowledge to be the Christ, the Savior of the world.—The good tidings of great joy, which have been published, and which are more extensively to be made known, even to all people, are, that there is born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord—whose name is Jesus, who shall save his people from their sins—who is declared to be the light of the world—who is called the Son of the Highest—to whom the Lord God giveth the throne of his father David—and of whose kingdom there shall be no end.

These truths cannot be altered by any circumstances of
of time or place. Were we ignorant, even of the year or the country, which gave birth to this Divine Person—this Friend and Savior of men—it would be of little consequence, as we are favoured with the gracious doctrines, the animating hopes and promises of his gospel: As we have such indisputable evidence, that he is the true Messiah, from the happy effects of his religion: And as we have the most abundant reason to believe, from the past fulfilment of many prophecies, that all those shall most certainly be accomplished, which declare the triumph and the universality of his glorious and peaceful kingdom.

Although it is not two thousand years since Christ came in the flesh, yet he is said to have been ordained before the foundation of the world. Immediately after the transgression of our first parents, they were supported by the promise, that at some future time, a person should appear to deliver them from the evils consequent upon sin, and to put them in possession of that immortality, which they had forfeited.—Of the holy Patriarch Abraham, who lived almost as many years previously to the Savior's birth, as have elapsed from that æra to the present time—Of him, it is said, that be was Christ's day—in vision, or prophetically, it must mean—and that he greatly rejoiced in the glorious

* It will not be supposed to be meant, that the truth of the Gospel History would not be affected if it could be proved, that Jesus Christ did not live in Judea about the time, which the New Testament mentions. Could it be proved, that Christ never appeared in Judea; or, that he did not appear about the time generally believed, the Gospel History must be set aside. This has not been done: but the contrary—that he appeared in Judea, and about the time commonly supposed—the difference of a few weeks, or even months, does not destroy the fact—has been ungainfully proved by the testimony both of believers and unbelievers.
bus prospect. Many prophets and holy men, whose
days were numbered and finished long before the Mef-
fiah personally appeared, believed in the promises, which
had respect to him, and died in faith and hope of a
Savior to come—though they had not the joy of pious
Simeon, who saw, with his bodily eyes, him, whom
God had prepared before the face of all people, for salva-
tion to the ends of the earth—nor, with his immediate
disciples, had the privilege of hearing the gracious
words, which proceeded out of his mouth.

Christians, also, in later times, rejoice, in reflecting
upon the blessed, glorious tidings, which were pub-
lished at a Savior’s birth, and from a thousand argu-
ments and proofs, which press upon their minds, most
surely believe, that through his mediation there are
pardon and peace for the penitent, the faithful and the
sincere, and that they shall participate the spiritual,
everlasting joys of heaven, purchased by the blood of
Chrift, who was once offered for the sins of many.

I propose to state concisely the leading doctrines of
the gospel—to delineate the character of Jesus Chrift,
the Savior of men—and to make some remarks re-
specting the nature of his kingdom.

When man was first created, he was dignified with
the image, and happy in the favor of his Maker. By
transgression, he forfeited that state of innocence and
bliss, in which he had been placed. The voice of the
Deity, which once afforded him infinite delight and
joy, now excites indefcribable terror in his affrighted
mind.* Whilst innocent, he was cheered and com-
forted

* See Genesis iii. 8.
forced with the converse of his God: When he had transgressed, the mere sound of his approach is as thunder bursting on his guilty head. He has lost his Maker's approbation, and forfeited that life, which he had received at his hands. He is no longer allowed the converse of heaven: He is no longer qualified to enjoy it. The sentence of death is pronounced upon him, and he already finds the seeds of mortality working his dissolution—he is hastening to mingle with his native dust. And if he is to exist in another state, he cannot enjoy happiness: for, rejecting the divine guidance and direction, he chooses to govern himself, and yields to the solicitations of his tumultuous passions, which urge him on to those practices, which inevitably lead to misery.

Into such a deplorable situation did sin bring the first parents of mankind. But God entertained thoughts of benevolence and grace. Adam was subjected in hope. A Savior was provided, who, in due time, should appear for the redemption and salvation of all those, who believe and obey his gospel. And all men have need of the blessings and favors, which are dispensed by the Savior. For all have sinned; consequently, are condemned by that law, under which they were first placed, and have forfeited all claim to happiness or existence.

Naturally, mankind appear to be insensible of spiritual and divine subjects, and attached to merely sensual pleasures. Though not disinterestedly vicious—not lovers of sin, as sin—their dispositions and exertions
tions are directed to the pursuit of worldly objects and present enjoyment, regardless of the government of God, to which they ought to submit, and inattentive to his precepts, which direct us in the way of peace. With an accumulation of evil upon the mind, the understanding darkened, being alienated from the divine life, through the ignorance which was in them,—directed by pernicious errors, and governed by the passions, mankind, without the light, assistance and grace of heaven, are subjected to the awful alternative of losing their existence, or of being miserable forever. God, who is love, and who delights in the happiness of his creatures, when man had thus erred, sent his Son to enlighten, to redeem and save him. By Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we are made acquainted with the divine character, will and precepts—he has wrought out redemption for us, by the temptations and sufferings which he endured in the flesh—and through his mediation, there are derived to us the influence and operation of the Deity, to deliver us from the dominion of corrupt affections and debasing passions, which war against the welfare of our immortal souls—and to dispose and enable us to follow the divine instructions, which lead to the participation of spiritual and everlasting joys.

According to the prophecies, which went before concerning the Messiah—according to his doctrine, when he appeared in the flesh—he comes from heaven with meffages of grace to a guilty world, and bestows immortality upon wretched, dying men.—These were the joyful tidings published at the Savior's birth.
If we were on the bed of sickness, how sincerely should we welcome the approach of him, who came with certain remedies for all our pains, and gave to our emaciated limbs the strength and soundness of perfect health! If in bondage to an unpitying foe, who subjected us to all the restraints and services of cruel slavery, what gratitude should we feel toward the benevolent friend, who should unloose the bands of servitude and oppression, and restore to us the blessings of sweet liberty and peace!—What joyful strains of holy gratitude and exalted praise then, ought we to adopt, when we recollect the Messiah’s birth, who has revealed the gracious purposes of heaven, and sanctioned and confirmed the declarations with his blood:—who delivers us from spiritual bondage—from the awful effects of sin—removes the fearful apprehensions of the guilty conscience—bursts asunder the chains of Satan, with which he is binding us down to irremediable destruction—destroys the dread-inspiring power of gloomy death—and points out a glorious immortality to come.

That the Son of God—the image and representative of the invisible Deity—should condescend to appear in the form of humanity; should submit himself to all its evils and distresses; should lead a laborious, painful life, being exposed to the insults and persecutions of bigotted, malicious men; and should at last resign himself to all the excruciating tortures of a shameful, violent death—The contemplation of these unparalleled events might well excite the wonder of Angels, and command their eager admiration. But, for whose benefit
benefit are such sacrifices made—such pains and evils suffered? For us mortals, who by our sins had deprived ourselves of the divine approbation; who were wandering far astray from the divine precepts, in which only is to be found true and lasting peace; and, without thought or reflection, were fast hastening to "irrepealable, enduring death." Stupid, insensible beings! do we continue unmoved by such love, such grace divine?—When we read or hear the representation of such wondrous grace, do we not possess the most grateful sentiments, which language cannot express? But yet, unable to remain in silence, at such a delightful recollection, do we not find ourselves constrained, as it were, to utter the overflowings of our ever-grateful hearts in accents of most exalted praise?

You imagine, perhaps, my hearers, that you contemplate the subject of the Savior's love with sincerest thankfulness. You are ready to say, that you receive most gratefully this merciful dispensation, and that you will cheerfully submit to the directions of the gospel. But this can be known only by your conduct. If you indulge in any vicious habits or practices—if you be under the dominion of sin, and the slaves of your lusts—you, certainly, are not duly affected with the Redeemer's grace, nor have experienced its power on your hearts.—And if the mild language of love and grace will not engage you to suitable returns of gratitude, nor persuade you to a willing compliance with the Savior's precepts, what consideration can be suggested, which will prove effectual to lead you to sincere penitence and gospel obedience?

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Will the terrific language of threatening awaken your fears, and excite you to flee from the wrath to come?—But fear alone, unmixed with reverence and love, is a servile principle. Possibly, however, in reflecting upon the denunciations of wrath against the ungodly, you may be led to think more seriously of a future judgment, and be persuaded to lay bold upon the hope set before you in the gospel. But it should seem, that, by meditating upon the benevolence and grace of God, in the gift of his Son, who publisheth peace on the earth, and dispenses salvation to guilty men, except you were destitute of every ingenuous, grateful sentiment, you would not only feel your hearts expand with sacred joy—but would be careful to express the gratitude you feel, by an obedient, holy life.

The doctrines published by Jesus Christ, who is born the Savior of men, suppose the ruined, wretched state, in which sin involves them. The joyful tidings, which he proclaims, are, that God is reconcileable to erring, guilty man; that there is pardon for sin upon sincere repentance; and that there is salvation for the faithful, persevering Christian.

Were we to consider the doubts and fears of the human mind, when ignorant of revelation—or should we reflect upon the unutterable distress and anguish possessing the affrighted soul, which is conscious of having provoked the displeasure of heaven by its many sins—Should we then recollect the hopes and promises of the gospel, we must acknowledge, that such wondrous grace demands the highest, noblest strains of holy
holy gratitude; and should call forth our sincerest joy, when we recollect the birth of him, who dispenses "blessings so divine on man."

But all the gifts of heaven may be misimproved; and gospel grace may be received in vain.—By sin, we were deprived of our Maker's approbation; and notwithstanding the overtures of mercy, if we continue in sin, we cannot justly expect to be finally interested in those immortal blessings, which are dispensed by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The gospel is the power of God to those, who repent and believe. But, to the wicked, it proclaims not peace. They are still the children of wrath, and are under condemnation. See, then, that ye refuse not him, who speaketh from heaven. For this benevolent Savior, who now invites you to accept salvation, will hereafter judge the world in righteousness, and render to every one according to his works.
THE whole system of revelation from heaven to man has respect to the Savior. All the promises and hopes, which it contains, are dispensed by him; and are represented as flowing through his mediation.—The plan of redemption originated in the benevolence of the Deity: but the blessings and benefits, which his grace designed, he bestdows by Jesus Christ, his Son.

In the early ages of the world, the holy Patriarchs, under all the trials and afflictions of their earthly pilgrimage, were supported by the assurance, that a Savior was already appointed in the councils of heaven, and that, at a future day, he should appear among men, to confirm the hopes and promises, which they had seen afar off, and to bring life and immortality to light.

The law, which God gave the Israelites by Moses, did not supercede, nor render ineffectual, the promises of grace previously made to the faithful Patriarchs, which had respect to a Savior to come. It convinces us more fully of the necessity of a Mediator, to make reconciliation for us—By its rites and ceremonies it prefigured the great, the unblemished, the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God, and points to him, as the only sure foundation of our hope.
Whenever the spirit of God revealed to the holy prophets, future scenes to be exhibited to unborn generations, and enabled them to look forward to events far distant in the womb of time, the delightful, transporting anticipation of the Savior's day was first in their enraptured minds; they dwell on the joyful event with pious gratitude; and delight to describe, in all the beauty and emphasis of prophetic language, the sublime and heavenly doctrines, the divine and perfect character, the spiritual and peaceful, but finally glorious and triumphant kingdom of Jesus the Messiah—Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given—the spirit of the Lord shall be upon him, the spirit of wisdom, of knowledge and understanding—by his knowledge, he shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities—with righteousness, he shall judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth—His name shall be called Wonderful—the mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end—Dominion and glory and a kingdom shall be given him, that all people, nations and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

In our former discourse upon this subject, we mentioned the doctrines of grace, the joyful tidings of which the Savior brings from heaven to erring, sinful man. These are pardon and reconciliation to the sincerely penitent, and the promise of a future and everlasting life of glory to those who faithfully observe the instructions of the gospel, and persevere in obedience to the Savior's commands. We
We proceed to make some observations upon the character of Christ, and concerning the nature of his kingdom among men.

The character of Christ, as a Prince and King, which appellations are often applied to him in scripture, will be attended to, when we speak of his kingdom. It is proposed, previously to make some remarks with regard to his life and conduct, as exhibited, when he appeared in the flesh.

In his disposition, the Savior was mild, gentle, forgiving—in his external deportment, meek and humble—and in his endeavours to promote the present and future good of men, constant and unwearied.

A humble, unassuming deportment is justly considered as an indication of true greatness. Never was such humility exhibited, as we discover in the character of Jesus Christ. He affected not external parade or grandeur. Pride and ostentation never marked his conduct.—Though all the elements were at his command, and he had power to convert the most common substances in nature, into articles of wealth, of elegance and luxury, he condescended to be born of poor, obscure parents—was subject to their commands—and submitted himself to all the evils of poverty, to all the inconveniences of obscurity. What a scene is presented to our astonished recollection!—Behold that tender infant stretched on the coarsest straw, in the cold manger, where the brutal herd are fed—View that youth employed in all the labors and services of poverty, confining himself to an obscure situation,
situation, though he has wisdom to confound the greatest philosophers, and to gain the admiration and applause of the listening multitude—Contemplate that person, in all the maturity of perfect manhood, with the most benevolent purposes in his heart, enduring the cruel insults and persecutions of the fickle populace, and bigotted, malicious priests—Recollect his mild, forgiving disposition under all this shameful, violent abuse; that when he is reviled, he revileth not again; who, for bitter curses and unmerited reproach, returns the gentle language of blessing and forgiveness—Consider that these various scenes were all exhibited in the Savior's life—that it was he who acted these several characters—and acknowledge, that he discovered humility of deportment, and mildness and sweetness of disposition hitherto unparalleled.

Behold the Savior, with all the unaffected dignity of a divine instructor, yet in the mild, endearing language of affection, counselling and exhorting a blind, mistaken people, on subjects most interesting to their future, everlasting peace—See the tear of pity, which he sheds, at the idea of the accumulated woes, which threaten his devoted countrymen—And confess that the most benevolent sentiments—that divine compassion—filled his breast.

If we contemplate the character of Christ, in connexion with the doctrines and precepts, which he delivered, we shall find it consistent, uniform, perfect. His example is the best comment upon that pure and perfect system, which he published to the world. He was harmless, holy, and separate from every sin.
two great commands of his gospel, are, to love God supremely, and our fellow-beings as ourselves. Examine his life, and you will find, that he ever manifested the most disinterested benevolence toward men, and the most perfect acquiescence and obedience with regard to the will of heaven.

As proposed, we shall now consider the nature of the Messiah's kingdom.

When Pontius Pilate, before whom our Savior was accused, asked him, if he assumed the title of King of the Jews, Jesus did not give a particular answer to the enquiry, but replied, *My kingdom is not of this world.* Christ's kingdom is not of this world, in that it is not established and supported in the manner, in which the princes and great men of the earth obtain authority and dominion over their fellow-beings. It is not founded in force or oppression, nor maintained by artifice or intrigue. His kingdom is established in the hearts of his saints, and requires the submission, the obedience of the most secret dispositions and affections of the soul. The kingdom of Christ is a spiritual government, designed to train us up, by holy discipline and warfare with our passions, to glorious triumphs over every debasing lust and worldly principle. It designs our sanctification, and our qualification for pure and perfect joy in a more exalted state.

Such were the gross ideas, such the worldly views of the Jewish nation, that they expected in the Messiah, a powerful temporal Prince, who should subdue all their enemies, and make them superior to all the nations.
tions of the earth. Some of them, indeed, supposed, that Christ's kingdom would be partly spiritual—that he would deliver them from the cruel bondage of external foes, that they might more regularly serve the Lord.*

With such expectations, and being in subjection to a mighty enemy, to rid themselves of whom, such a princely Messiah, as they promised themselves, would have been most joyfully received—When Christ appeared, destitute of kingly power, so unlike his victorious father David, and directed all his exertions to fit them for the future, spiritual world, they saw no beauty in him, that they should desire or respect him. They were exceedingly mortified, that a person of such a humble appearance should pretend to be the Messiah, whom they had represented as a temporal Prince, and by whom they expected great worldly honor and aggrandizement. They were enraged against him, and conspired his destruction.

The mistaken idea concerning the character and kingdom of the Messiah, which so generally prevailed among the Jews, might in part be owing to some of the prophecies,† which apply to him, where he is mentioned as a Prince, and a kingdom is said to be given him, which shall finally triumph over all opposition, and of which there shall be no end.

Because the prophets, in some places, described Christ, as suffering, and in other parts of their writings,

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* See Luke 1. 74, 75.
† The Jews misconstrued them. If they had attended to other prophecies, they must have been convinced that his humility and sufferings were not inconsistent with what had been predicted.
as reigning and triumphing, the opinion has been adopted by some of the Jews, that two distinct persons were predicted—One of whom should suffer and die for their benefit—the other appear in pomp and power, to subdue and to destroy their numerous foes. An idea somewhat similar to this has been adopted by some Christians—that Jesus Christ shall again personally dwell upon the earth, with the power, and in the character, of a temporal Prince.

Indeed, Christ—even he, who once appeared in the humble form of a servant, who led a life of painful labor, who submitted to cruel persecutions and a shameful death—Even he is a Prince and King in Zion: He shall rule in righteousness: The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

All erroneous, oppressive governments are properly the empire of Satan. But he and his agents shall be subdued, and all their works shall be destroyed by Jesus Christ the Son of God. They can continue no longer than he permits. Their power to oppress and deceive mankind shall be taken away. And Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and whose right only it is, shall rule and govern the world. The principles of Christianiety shall become the law of nations, as well as of individual saints; and his gospel, which is a peaceful, benevolent, moral system, shall be triumphant, shall be universal.

Already have the benevolent principles of the Christian religion—I speak not only of individuals, but
but of nations and societies of men—Already have
the benevolent principles of the Christian religion, the
principles of rational, equal liberty, begun to operate,
and have produced their happy effects in various parts
of the civilized world. The mighty monument of civil
and ecclesiastical tyranny, erected by the ignorance and
wickedness of past ages, has received a shock by the
*diffusion* of Christian knowledge and principles, which
is a fatal prelude to its total destruction.

Perhaps, it will be thought invidious, or considered as prejudice, to mention particular countries—But the mind cannot be kept from reflecting upon the great events, which have taken place in the land, in which we dwell, tending to the improvement both of civil and religious systems, which sooner or later will prevail throughout the habitable globe.

When we reflect upon the first settlement of this country by our pious ancestors, who fled from ecclesiastical oppression and persecution—When we recollect the contemporary circumstances and the consequent events of the late contest for civil freedom—When we consider the recent exertions of a mighty nation in Europe, hitherto successful against civil and ecclesiastical tyranny—When we attentively examine these great events, we cannot but acknowledge the hand of providence; and confess, that those prophecies, which foretell the prevalence and triumphs of the Messiah's kingdom, are fast accomplishing.

According to the opinion of many learned divines, the period of Judgment, mentioned in the Revela-

tions, is already commenced. The advocates and adherents of tyrannical governments are in great distress, dreading the ruin of the mighty fabric of despotism, which has hitherto sheltered them. Nor is it an idle apprehension. No longer shall they be allowed to oppress and deceive mankind. The time is fast approaching, appointed in the counsels of heaven, to punish and to destroy that anti-christian power, who has fitten as Queen among the nations: who has deluded the people with her sorceries, and governed with usurped authority; who has persecuted the true followers of Jesus; who has made herself drunken with the blood of the saints; and whose impiety and blasphemies have ascended to the throne of God. But those very nations, which she has been permitted to deceive, and which have acknowledged

* The phraseology of the Revelations, or prophetic visions of St. John, is highly figurative. The predictions, which the book contains, relate to the progress of Christianity in the world; and give a concise account of the state of those countries, where it should be professed. This is admitted by all those, who have studied the Apocalypse with attention—Mede, Sir I. Newton, Lowman, Bishop Newton, Langdon, &c. And whoever will attend to the history of Europe and of the western parts of Asia, for the last seventeen hundred years, will find, that the leading events, which have taken place, most surprizingly correspond to the emblematic representations given in the Apocalypse. It should be considered, that when a Judgment and Resurrection are mentioned, they are to be understood figuratively: the one indicating the suppression of those systems, which contain principles contrary to the gospel of Christ; the other, the triumph of systems and persons, who acknowledge the principles and authority of Christianity. We must put this construction upon those terms, if we will keep to a consistent, systematic interpretation of the book. But when the resurrection and future judgment are spoken of in those passages of the inspired scriptures, which are historical or didactic, we ought to understand them literally. Beside, we are led to admit the meaning of the term judgment, for which we here contend, because the representation given of it, and the circumstances mentioned in connexion with it, make this construction necessary. The judgment of the great antichristian power is this—that it shall lose its influence, be deprived of its usurped, oppressive dominion—that those, who formerly supported this power in its unjust claims, and submitted to its errors and tyrannies, shall be instrumental in judging and punishing it, in that they shall oppose, fight against and destroy it. See Rev. chap. xiv. 7, 8.—chap. xvii. 13, 16, 17.—chap. xviii. throughout. See also Winthrop’s construction of the passages, to which we here refer, in his “Attempts.”
knowledged and supported her usurped, oppressive dominion, God has declared, he will stir up against her: they shall pull her down from her boasted height of power, and burn her with fire.* It is determined by the God of the whole earth, and he hath revealed it to his servants the prophets. He who ruleth in heaven and on the earth will overturn and overturn and overturn, until all nations and people shall acknowledge the authority of his Son, and shall submit themselves to his righteous government.

God, in his providence, seldom operates by miracles. He works ordinarily by the instrumentality of those common laws of nature, which he hath previously established; and overrules the plans and actions of human beings to the promotion of his own eternal purposes. Whilst individuals and nations are pursuing their particular schemes, he is carrying on the great designs of his righteous providence. Indeed, this is the same as operating in what we call a miraculous manner. It is the display of the same infinite wisdom: It is the exertion of the same almighty power.

In recollecting the important events, which, in our days, have taken place, in this or in a distant land, what if we behold not such wonders, as were wrought in favor of ancient Israel, in order to convince the heathens of the vanity of their idols, and to prove, to blind, stupid man, that all the elements were under the control of Jehovah, and that all events were by

* That is, her system shall be set aside, shall be destroyed, by the prevalence of those principles, which acknowledge the equal rights of man.
by his appointment or permission? What if we have not seen the waters of the ocean retire, to prepare a passage for the favored of heaven, and again raising their mighty waves, to drown their cruel oppressors? What if the sun have not been arrested in his daily course, to complete the overthrow of the armies of tyrants, engaged to oppress the friends of liberty and peace? Yet to an attentive observer, there is indisputable proof, that the invisible hand of the Deity is concerned in such astonishing revolutions as we have witnessed.—God can work by other means than these, to accomplish the purposes of his will. He sends famine and pestilence: He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise: He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: He disconcerts their impious plans, and turns their counsels in foolishness.

In the days of these kings, says the inspired Daniel—prophecying of the succession of ancient empires—In the time of these kingdoms, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. Let the faints of the Most High rejoice; that this glorious, peaceful kingdom is already established. The Savior foretold is born. He is made Prince over the kings of the earth: He shall reign in righteousness, and his dominion, which is founded in truth and justice, shall remain forever.

When a people celebrate the natal anniversary of some renowned hero, who has freed them from vassalage to a haughty tyrant, or of some famed patriot, who has sacrificed his fortune, and devoted his life, to secure an important benefit to his country, we hear multitudes
multitudes unite their voices in acclamations of joy, and loud paeans rend the vaulted sky. — But, hark! What celestial sounds burst from the clouds, and strike mine enraptured ears! 'Tis the voice of Angels — 'tis the sacred song of an heavenly host, announcing the joyful tidings of a Savior's birth, and in strains divine, proclaiming peace on the earth, and good will toward men.

Let us, my hearers, — when we recollect the joyful tidings of pardon and salvation published by Jesus the Savior — when we notice the happy effects already produced by his benevolent religion — and when, assailed by the prophetic spirit, we look forward to that glorious era, when the peaceful kingdom of the Messiah shall be extensive as the habitable globe — When we reflect upon these interesting, joyful events, let us join the celestial choir, and repeat, in most exalted strains, the loud Hosanna. Glory to God on high, that there is peace on the earth, and benevolence toward men.

But what is most interesting to every individual, is, whether he have sincere faith in the Savior, and have submitted himself to his government. We profess to believe in Christ, and would hope to partake of the spiritual, immortal blessings, which flow to mankind through his mediation. But do we honor and obey him? Is it our first and greatest care to conform to the holy principles and precepts of his gospel? Are we, from reverence of his divine character, and gratitude for his unmerited favors toward us — Are we determined to follow his commands, and to forego any sensual gratification or worldly pleasure, that we may live as his grace directs? Or, on the contrary, are we unwilling
unwilling to forfake our fins? Do we indulge in any vicious habits? Are we still in bondage to Satan, and the slaves of our lufts? Then we cannot justly apply to ourselves the gracious promises of the gospel of Christ.

It is not merely the drunkard, the thief, the profane swearer, who shew themselves to be destitute of christian principles and gospel grace. All those, who harbor malice and revenge in their hearts, or who allow themselves the irregular gratification of any passion, must be judged to be deficient in regard to those dispositions and affections, which the gospel enjoins, and unworthy the name of Christians. Jesus Christ was benevolent, temperate in the use of worldly goods, holy and pure in all his conduct, diligent and faithful in every duty—And his disciples, he commands to follow his steps.

We should also remember, that he who is mighty to save, is mighty to destroy. The gospel reveals grace and peace to the penitent and the faithful: but against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, it denounces the wrath of heaven. Christ will finally purge out of his kingdom every thing that is unholy and impure; and will punish with everlasting destruction all those who oppose his gospel, and flight his grace.

In the heavenly mansions, Christ has prepared immortal joys for all those, who love and serve him.—What a contrast to this state of suffering and woe, is the blessed abode on high, which the gospel reveals? And has immortality no charms in our view? Are we so much attached to the insipid, joyless pleasures of
of time and sense, that we are determined to pursue them, notwithstanding the mortifications and anxieties, to which it subjects us in this life—notwithstanding the unspeakable misery, to which it exposes us in the world to come?

You must acknowledge, if you will reflect, that the present is a state of trial—not principally designed for enjoyment; that uninterrupted happiness is never the portion of man. *He is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.*—Could I lead you to consider the evils of humanity, it would certainly prove influential in persuading you so to live, as to secure the durable, immortal joys of the heavenly world. Let me shew you that child, which was lately clad in all the bloom of health; or him of maturer years, of manly strength, a few days since in all the vigor of nature—See the malignant disorder marring their former beauty, unnerving their once active limbs, and racking them with pains and distresses, which cannot be described—Or, let us turn our eyes to yonder decrepit fire, tottering down the last declivity, in the painful journey of human life—*his strength is labor and sorrow—his infirmities increase upon him*—sensual enjoyments have lost their relish—and he exists only to experience still greater infirmity and distress.—But where? Where is the tender youth, the person of maturer years, or he who is in the decline of life, thus suffering, thus afflicted, thus in pain and distress? Do you ask? Stay—Perhaps, to-morrow's sun will find you one such afflicted, unhappy object. We have no security against pain and sickness for a single moment. And will not the
the idea of such evils and sorrow persuade you to aspire to the future world of glory, and to prepare for it? Oh, that we could be persuaded to forego sinful gratifications, and to live in holiness and righteousness all our future days! Then we shall partake of the unspeakable glory, hereafter to be revealed, which will infinitely overbalance every sacrifice of sensual pleasure, and all the disappointments and wants, which we here experience.

I conclude with a few passages of scripture, which I think pertinent to the present subject.

*Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone; ele'&a, precious: a sure foundation; and he who believeth on him shall not be confounded.—Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.—Neither is there salvation in any other.*

*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed.—Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.—The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool.—Kiss the son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are they who put their trust in him.*

*How beautiful are the feet of them, that bring good tidings, and publish peace and salvation!—Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.—Seek ye the Lord, whilst he may be found; call upon him, whilst he is near. Let the wicked forfake his way, and the unrighteous man his*
his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon him.

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign to the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious.—The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.—Violence shall no more be heard in thy land; wasting nor destruction within thy borders. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.—Thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates, praise.—And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.