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# Two Sermons Upon the Doctrines, Character and Kingdom of Christ

Alden Bradford

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Vickery
Bradford, Alden 1795

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 choofing the paffage of fcripture, now recited, for the theme of this day's difcourfe, I have reference to the practice, prevailing among fome fects of Chriftians, of obferving a particular day in the year in commemoration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jefus Chrift. The day, which has been fet apart to celebrate this moft intereffing and joyful event, being fuppofed to correfpond to that, upon which Chrift was born, elapfed in the courfe of the paft week.

Though we, who differ in fome *forms* of worfhip, from moft of the eftablifhed churches in Europe, do not obferve any *particular* day, with the exprefs defign of remembering the nativity of our Savior, becaufe we think the time is not precifely afcertained, yet we acknowledge the propriety of meditating upon an event, fo important, fo intereffing to mankind, at fome of thofe

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 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

* The ancient Greek and Romiſh Churches did not agree in the particular day. The Greeks obſerved the 23d 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 Tlarmer'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 *he saw 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 ungainsably proved by the testimony both of believers and unbelievers.

ous prospect. Many prophets and holy men, whose days were numbered and finished long before the Messiah *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 salvation 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 published at a Savior's birth, and from a thousand arguments 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 Christ, 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 Christ, the Savior of men—and to make some remarks respecting 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 indescribable terror in his affrighted mind.* Whilst innocent, he was cheered and comforted

* See Genesis iii. 8.

forted 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 meſſages 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

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?

Will

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 hold 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 publiſhes 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, ſuppoſes 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.*

# DISCOURSE II.

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 beſtows 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 counſels 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

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, unaffuming 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. The

two

two great commands of his gofpel, are, to love God fupremely, and our fellow-beings as ourfelves. Examine his life, and you will find, that he ever manifefted the moft difintereftted benevolence toward men, and the moft perfect acquiefcence and obedience with regard to the will of heaven.

As propofed, we fhall now confider the nature of the Meffiah's kingdom.

When Pontius Pilate, before whom our Savior was accufed, afked him, if he affumed the title of *King of the Jews*, Jefus did not give a particular anfwer to the enquiry, but replied, *My kingdom is not of this world.* Chrift's kingdom is not of this world, in that it is not eftablifhed and fupported 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 oppreffion, nor maintained by artifice or intrigue. His kingdom is eftablifhed in the hearts of his faints, and requires the fubmiffion, the obedience of the moft fecret difpofitions and affections of the foul. The kingdom of Chrift is a fpiritual government, defigned to train us up, by holy difcipline and warfare with our paffions, to glorious triumphs over every debafing luft and worldly principle. It defigns our fanctification, and our qualification for pure and perfect joy in a more exalted ftate.

Such were the grofs ideas, fuch the worldly views of the Jewifh nation, that they expected in the Meffiah, a powerful temporal Prince, who fhould fubdue all their enemies, and make them fuperior 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, as

* See Luke i. 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 Chriſtianity 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 Revelations,

tions,* is already commenced. The advocates and adherents of tyrannical governments are in great diſtreſs, dreading the ruin of the mighty fabrick 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 ſitten 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 ſurpriſingly 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 "Attempt."

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 overules 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 controul 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 enterprize: 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—propheſying 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 ſaints 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 pæans 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, aſſiſted by the prophetic ſpirit, we look forward to that glorious æra, 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 forſake our ſins? Do we indulge in any vicious habits? Are we ſtill in bondage to Satan, and the ſlaves of our luſts? 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 ſlight 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 diſtreſs, which cannot be deſcribed—Or, let us turn our eyes to yonder decrepid ſire, 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; elect, 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 thine 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 forſake 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 deſart 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.*