University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Electronic Texts in American Studies | Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

1-1-1776

The Church's Flight into the Wilderness: An Address on the Times, containing Some very interesting and important Observations on Scripture Prophecies (1776)

Samuel Sherwood A. M.

Reiner Smolinski , Editor
Georgia State University, rsmolinski@gsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas

Part of the American Studies Commons

Sherwood, Samuel A. M. and Smolinski, Reiner , Editor, "The Church's Flight into the Wilderness: An Address on the Times, containing Some very interesting and important Observations on Scripture Prophecies (1776)" (1776). *Electronic Texts in American Studies.* Paper 21.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/21

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Texts in American Studies by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Samuel Sherwood

The Church's Flight into the Wilderness: An Address on the Times, containing Some very interesting and important Observations on Scripture Prophecies (1776)

Samuel Sherwood (1730-83), patriotic clergyman, millenarian, and one of America's most outspoken promoters of Independence, graduated from Yale in 1749. He received an A. M. degree from the College of New Jersey (Princeton), where his uncle, Aaron Burr, was president. Like many of his peers, Sherwood worked as a tutor in anticipation of supplying a pulpit. In 1757, he accepted a call to the church of Weston, Connecticut, where he served as pastor to a small congregation till the end of his days.

Only two of Sherwood's published sermons are known to have survived. *A Sermon, Containing, Scriptural Instructions to Civil Rulers, and all Free-born Subjects* (New Haven, 1774) is an outspoken defense of American liberties. Delivering his sermon on August 31, 1774, Sherwood draws on biblical typology and the English constitution to assert the rights of all free men to be governed by benign rulers. His argument amounts to an indictment of Tory policies in America and includes a lengthy appendix in which the Rev. Ebenezer Baldwin of Danbury, Connecticut, threatens with reprisals by calling on the British Parliament to redress a long list of grievances. Sherwood's most popular sermon of the period is his much cited *The Church's Flight into the Wilderness: An Address on the Times, containing Some very interesting and important Observations on Scripture Prophecies* (1776)—here republished courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society. Delivering his oration in January 1776 in the presence of Gov. John Hancock, Sherwood freely mixes millenarian metaphors and political ideology to incite his listeners to action. Like many of his predecessors, Sherwood readily adapts the mythology of New England's Puritan past to fit the new situation. The apocalyptic flight of the Woman into the howling wilderness of America a century and a half earlier was now reaching its climax in the cosmic battle against the British Antichrist. In this final stand against the English Gog of Magog, Sherwood invokes the Spirit of his Puritan ancestors and calls on all Protestants, all true Americans, to rise in defense of the Church: their sacred rights of religious freedom, political liberty, and the pursuit of property.

Reiner Smolinski
Georgia State University

THE CHURCH'S FLIGHT INTO THE WILDERNESS: AN ADDRESS ON THE TIMES.

CONTAINING

Some very interesting and important OBSERVATIONS on SCRIPTURE PROPHECIES:

Shewing, that sundry of them plainly relate to GREAT-BRITAIN, and the AMERICAN COLONIES; and are fulfilling in the present day.

Delivered on a PUBLIC OCCASION, January 17, 1776.

BY SAMUEL SHERWOOD, A.M.

Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins; and that ye receive not of her plagues. Reward her, even as she rewarded you; and double unto her double, according to her works. In the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double.

Glorious things are spoken of Zion.
He that hat an ear to hear, let him hear.

NEW-YORK: Printed by S. LOUDON.
M.DCC.LXXVI.

DEDICATION.

TO the Hon. JOHN HANCOCK, Esq; President of the Continental CONGRESS; and to all the respectable MEMBERS of that most august ASSEMBLY.—To the brave GENERALS of our armies, and patriotic HEROES, who are spirited by Heaven to exert their superior abilities in the most noble and generous manner, for the defence of our distressed country, bleeding under the cruel and murderous hand of unexampled tyranny and oppression; whom God in his providence, has raised up to be his glorious instruments, to fulfil scripture-prophecies, in favour of this church, and American liberty, to the confusion of all her enemies; the ensuing discourse is most affectionately inscribed and dedicated, by their most dutiful,

devoted, and most obedient,
humble Servant,
THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Author declares his abhorrence of a bigotted attachment to the low singularities of a party, and professes to act on the benevolent and catholic principles of the gospel; therefore hopes his readers will not conceive any obnoxious ideas from the word CHURCH, as he uses it in this discourse, nor indulge or give way to jealousy and prejudice so far, as once to suspect, that he means by this term, to point out any one denomination of Christians, exclusive of all others—as distinguished by their location and other peculiarities. The church, in his sense of it, includes all the worthy professors of christianity, who conduct themselves on their probation here, as those that expect to be judged hereafter, by the great evangelical law of liberty. He fully believes the Apostle, when he says, "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" and doubts not, but this spirit has been plentifully poured out, not only in the New-England colonies, but likewise on his Episcopalian brethren in the Southern provinces, for whom he has the highest esteem

and affection, and would not for his right hand, speak or write any thing that might give umbrage or just cause of offence to such worthy patriots, so ardently engaged in the common cause, and using such vigorous, spirited exertions for the defence and preservation of American liberty. He is fully convinced of the absolute importance of uniting in the most cordial friendship, as christian brethren and fellow-countrymen, in this glorious contest and struggle, and fully sensible, that to give the ark a wrong touch in this critical moment, might be of unspeakably dangerous consequence.—But, however, apprehends no hazard or danger of being misguided by the scriptures of truth, which consideration, amidst all his diffidence, has prevailed with him to comply with the importunity of some of his friends, in consenting to this publication. His earnest wish and daily prayer is, that all differences and disputes may terminate in the firmest union and harmony of those colonies, and that liberty inviolate, may be secured to every individual of every denomination, so long as sun and moon shall endure.

April 1, 1776

An ADDRESS, &c.

Revelation xii. 14, 15, 16, 17.

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place; where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood, after the woman; that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

THIS prophetic book is entitled, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which he sent and signified to his servant JOHN, by his angel; and which he received when in a state of banishment, in the isle called Patmos, for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. It pleased the All-wise and Omniscient God, to give to this his faithful servant, a very full and glorious vision of the things which then were, or of the state of the church at that time; and of the things which should be hereafter, or the then future state and condition of

the church, the seasons of its flourishing and prosperity, and of its declension; its trials and sufferings to the end of the world. Which vision he was ordered to write, for the instruction, support, and consolation of God's saints, in the wars and conflicts they might have with their enemies, in every age and period of time, till the old serpent, the great dragon should be entirely overcome, and his kingdom compleatly destroyed. "And blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the WORDS of his prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time," that is, of their accomplishment, "is at hand." The diligent and serious study of this sacred book ought not to be neglected and despised, nor the things it contains be viewed as idle speculations, and vain empty amusements; but every man is bound in duty, to attend to the things contained herein, as to matters of great importance, with all the wisdom, sobriety and reverence he is capable of. It may with propriety be stiled, "The sure word of prophecy." The apostle John was so highly favoured, as to behold a door opened in heaven; so near to which he was brought as to look in, and see the glorious things transacted there, to confirm his faith as to the truth of these wonderful predictions and prophecies to be accomplished on earth. Chap. iv. 1 and the first voice which he heard, was as of a trumpet talking with him, which said, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." Accordingly God discovered to him all the most remarkable events that should befal his church, and the nations and kingdoms of the world, even to the closing period when the angel should stand up and swear, that time should be no more: Which things he was ordered to pen down in dark, emblematical, and figurative language, the meaning of which, tho' it cannot be fully comprehended in the present dark state of the church;

yet may be so far understood as to afford much support and encouragement to God's people in times of their greatest distress and suffering, and tend to establish their belief of the truth of this part of divine revelation, and of the ruling providence of God which is constantly at work to fulfil and accomplish the events therein predicted and foretold.

WITH a view to assist us in forming just conceptions of the nature and design of these prophecies and predictions, and to lead us to a right improvement of such providences of God by which they are fulfilled, I shall make two or three observations, before I proceed directly to explain the passages that have been read.

1. I WOULD observe with all judicious commentators and expositors that have wrote on the subject, that Popery, or the reign and kingdom of the man of sin, the old serpent, the dragon, its rise and progress, and its downfal and overthrow, is the greatest, the most essential, and the most striking part of this revelation of St. John. There has been a mortal enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, ever since the fall of man, and the promise of a Saviour for his recovery. The old serpent, who seduced man by his temptations, to fall, has ever been using his subtility and malice to defeat the purposes of divine grace, and to destroy Christ's kingdom on earth; and has, in all ages of the world, been successful in stirring up agents and instruments to accomplish this diabolical and hellish design. Among all his crafty and subtle inventions, popery, which exalts the principal leaders and abettors of it, high in the honours and emoluments of this world, seems most cunningly devised, and best adapted to answer his purpose; and has proved the most formidable engine of terror and cruelty to the true members of Christ's church. And this has been the chief subject of

prophecy since the coming of Christ; and was foretold by some of the prophets under the Jewish dispensation. And whatever difficulty and perplexity there may be in many of these dark, mysterious passages, yet in this view, the application of most of them is rendered easy and obvious. As popery has been the greatest enemy, and the greatest corrupter of christianity, we may rationally conclude that more prophecies relate to that, than to any other distant event.

By carefully reading and studying the prophecies given forth by Daniel, St. Paul, and more fully by St. John, it will appear to be clearly and evidently foretold, that such a power as that of the Pope of Rome should be exercised in the Christian church, and should authorize and establish such doctrines and practices as are publicly taught and embraced by the wicked, corrupt members of that mother of harlots and abomination. The time also is signified when, and how long it should prevail; and that at last, upon the expiration of this term, it should be destroyed forevermore.

2. This popish mysterious leaven of iniquity and absurdity, by which the Christian religion has been so awfully adulterated and corrupted, has not been confined to the boundaries of the Roman empire, nor strictly to the territory of the Pope's usurped authority and jurisdiction; but has spread in a greater or less degree, among almost all the nations of the earth; especially amongst the chief rulers, the princes and noblemen thereof. When this great whore of Babylon, or papal Rome is described, Rev. xvii. 1. her bewitching, infatuating enchantments are said to be such, that the kings of the earth have been enticed, and inflamed in their wicked lusts, to that degree as to have committed fornication with her; and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication

or whoredom. They have been so far corrupted and debauched by this mother of harlots, as to sacrifice every dictate of religion and reason, and even common sense, to those alluring arts with which she has been tempting them. The prophet Isaiah had long before this, foretold, "That she should turn to her hire, and commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world, upon the face of the earth." Isaiah xxiii. 17.

When the great red dragon, described, Revel. xii. having seven heads, and then horns, and seven crowns upon his heads, made his first public appearance, his tail drew a third part of the stars of Heaven, and did cast them to the earth. The apostle, under these symbolical characters and attributes of the great red dragon, undoubtedly meant to point out Satan or the Devil with his agents and instruments, who are acting the part of avowed enemies to the church of Christ; and his drawing the stars of Heaven with his tail, must mean his subjecting the princes and potentates of the earth, with great numbers of the clergy, to his tyrannical influence and oppressive scheme of government. The prophets often describe the persecuting enemies of the church, under this emblem and figure. Psalm lxxiv. 13. "Thou breakest the heads of the dragons in the waters, &c." And when God comes to destroy these enemies, he is said "to cut Rahab, and to wound the dragon," Isaiah li. 9. see also Ezekiel xxix. 3. "Thus saith the Lord God, behold, I am against thee Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, my river is mine own, and I have made it for myself." When the frightful monster of a beast, in such terrible array, is described, Rev. xiii. the dragon is said to give him his power, and his seat, and great authority; and all the world wondered after the beast; and said, "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with the

beast?" Which expressions denote the great extent of his power and dominion, as well as the blind infatuation of his deluded subjects who made their boast of it. It is added, "And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations, and all that dwell upon the earth, shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life, of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Now, it can admit of no doubt, but that there are multitudes of this character in other nations and kingdoms, besides papal Rome. This is further evident from chap. xiv. 8. when the angel comes to proclaim the fall of Babylon, the reason given why God thus proceeded in righteous vengeance and wrath, is this, viz. "Because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Her's was a kind of Circean cup, as one observes, with poisoned liquor, to intoxicate and inflame mankind to spiritual fornication. The prophet Jeremiah hath assigned much the same reason for her destruction, chap. li. 7. "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunk; the nations hath drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad." When the sixth angel poured out his vial, Rev. xvi. Three unclean spirits like frogs, are said to come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, which are said to be spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. These unclean spirits here compared to frogs, a very low-lived, inferior kind of animals, who are peeping and croaking in the dark holes and corners of the earth, most probably represent popish, jesuitical missioners, or the tools and emissaries in general, of anti-christian, tyrannical power, who are the spirits of devils, and have free access to the kings of the

earth, and are said to be gone forth through the whole world, and are industriously using all their most artful stratagems, and diabolical craft and subtility, to impose upon mankind, and to engage them in the support and defence of the kingdom of Satan, in opposition to the mighty host marshalled up by the Lord Almighty, for the overthrow and destruction thereof. These scripture prophecies and predictions that have now been cited, to which more might be added, were it necessary, make it abundantly evident and manifest that the anti-christian, tyrannical scheme of popery, in one shape and form, and another, was to have a very extensive spread and influence, not only thro' the territories of papal Rome, but thro' all the nations and kingdoms of the world in general, and that the kings and princes of the earth, as well as their subjects, were to be much intoxicated and infatuated therewith; to the great distress and perplexity of the true church of Christ, which, so far as I have been able to observe, has not been suitably noticed and attended to by expositors and divines that have wrote on the subject; the want of which has occasioned much perplexity and obscurity in their comments on some passages, which, in the right view of them, are full of significance and importance. For instance, that passage in the xiii. chap. of this mysterious book, where the image of the beast is spoken of, "I confess," says a great expositor, "I know not what the image of the beast is, distinct from the beast itself." The reason of which was, no doubt, his limiting and confining these prophecies to so narrow a circle, as papal Rome. Every man of common sense, knows that the image of a thing is something different from the thing itself. Therefore, to make sense of the language here used, we must suppose that the apostle intended to describe another persecuting tyrannical power, in some nation or kingdom of the world, which

was a lively figure and resemblance of that exercised at Rome, the head-quarters of tyranny and persecution.* Whether that persecuting power be intended, that has in years past, been so cruelly and barbarously exercised in France, and other popish countries, against the humble followers of Christ, to the massacre and destruction of so many thousands of protestants†; or whether there be a reference to the corrupt system of tyranny and oppression, that has of late been fabricated and adopted by the ministry and parliament of Great-Britain, which appears so favourable to popery and the Roman catholic interest, aiming at the extension and establishment of it, and so awfully threatens the civil and religious liberties of all sound protestants; I cannot positively determine. But since the prophecies represent this wicked scheme of anti-christian tyranny, as having such an extensive and universal spread over the earth, like Nebuchadnezzar's tree which reached unto heaven, and the light thereof to all the ends of the earth, it need not appear strange or shocking to us, to find that our own na-

* See the appendix.

† In the war with the Albigenses and Waldenses, there were destroyed of them, in France alone, one million.

From the first institution of the JESUITS, to the year 1450, that is, in little more than thirty years, nine hundred thousand orthodox Christians, were slain. In the Netherlands alone, the duke of ALVA boasted, that within a few years, he had dispatched the amount of thirty six thousand souls; and those all by the hand of the common executioner. In the space of scarce thirty years, the INQUISITION destroyed, by various kinds of torments, a hundred and fifty thousand Christians. Besides these, an innumerable multitude have been persecuted to death, throughout all Europe, by the cruel hand of tyranny and persecution. As to the number that have been, and may yet be slain in America, in the war and conflict with the beast, and the image of the beast, it cannot yet be ascertained.

tion has been, in some degree, infected and corrupted therewith, and that some of our princes and chief rulers have had a criminal converse and familiarity with the old mother of harlots; and been sipping of the golden cup of her fornication, so as to be intoxicated, if not wholly drunk with the poisonous liquors. "Before what is called the reformation, the man of sin reigned triumphant in our mother-country, without much check or controul; which reformation was not set on foot on the purest principles of genuine christianity, nor carried to perfection by King HENRY the Eighth, who is so celebrated as the author of it. In the reign of Queen MARY, the doctrine and ceremonies of the catholic religion were re-established, and the Pope's authority and jurisdiction acknowledged in full; and a very cruel, severe persecution rigorously carried on against the innocent, conscientious professors of the protestant religion; and a most tragical scene of bloodshed and slaughter exhibited, as ever England beheld.

IF we pass from this dark and bloody period of English history, and come down to the reign of the STUART family, we shall find three or four of our kings successively, seduced and infatuated by the enticing and bewitching inchantments of the old whore of Babylon, to that degree, as to drink deep of the intoxicating wine of her fornication, to the entire destruction of two of them; and to the great distress of the nation in general. How far the present ministry have walked in this enchanting road, and how fond they are of the kind embraces of this old filthy harlot, the world will judge from their open attempts to propagate and establish popery, that exotic plant, in these northern regions; which is not a native of our benign soil, nor of our heavenly Father's planting; and their gathering up of armies professedly Roman catholics to dragoon us

into slavery and bondage, or massacre and butcher us and our families, and lay our pleasant country in desolation and ruin.

3. SINCE these prophecies and predictions, relating to the trials and sufferings, the wars and conflicts of the church with her anti-christian enemies and adversaries, may be justly taken in such a large, extensive sense and latitude; we may rationally conclude that many of them have reference to the state of Christ's church, in this American quarter of the globe; and will sooner or later, have their fulfilment and accomplishment among us. The providences of God in first planting his church in this, then howling wilderness, and in delivering and preserving of it to this day, are in a manner unequalled, and marvelous; and are reckoned among the most glorious events that are to be found in history, in these latter ages of the world. And there are doubtless yet more glorious events in the womb of providence, which the present commotion thro' the nation and land may (however unlikely in the view of some) be the means of bringing to pass. There is no part of this terraqueous globe better fitted and furnished in all essential articles and advantages, to make a great and flourishing empire; no part of the earth, where learning, religion, and liberty have flourished more for the time. And as to the rapid increase of its inhabitants, and swift population, it cannot be paralleled in all history. There is no part of the world where its inhabitants, through such a large extent of territory, are under such bonds and obligations, from self-interest, to keep in the strictest union and harmony together. They have every motive and inducement to this, that can well be conceived of. And this union, by the blessing of heaven, is become as general, perfect and complete, as could well be expected in such a corrupt disordered world as this in which we live.

THESE United Colonies have arisen to such a height as to become the object of public attention thro' all Europe, and of envy to the mother from whence they derived; whose unprovoked attack upon them in such a furious hostile manner, threatening their entire ruin, is an event that will make such a black and dark period in history, and does so deeply affect, not only the liberty of the church here in the wilderness, but the protestant cause in general, thro' the christian world, and is big with such consequences of glory or terror, that we may conjecture at least, without a spirit of vanity and enthusiasm, that some of those prophecies of St. John may, not unaptly, be applied to our case, and receive their fulfilment in such providences as are passing over us.

I DO not mean to undertake a nice, exact calculation of the periods pointed out in this prophetic book; nor to range thro' the history of the world for events to find their accomplishment. I am of opinion that the church of Christ in every age, may find something in this book applicable to her case and circumstances; and all such passages that are so, may lawfully be applied and improved by us accordingly. There are many cases which happen, that bear a near likeness and resemblance to each other, and which the same prophecy may well suit, in the most material parts of it. It has pleased that God who exercises a universal providence over all things, so to dispose and order events, that the calamities and afflictions of the church, in some measure, run parallel one to another; and all the former efforts of that tyrannical persecuting power, called the *beast*, may be the types and figures, as it were, of his last and general effort against the faithful witnesses of Christ, and the true members of his church.

THESE preliminary observations may assist us in explaining and improving these prophecies of St. John;

particularly the passages that have been read, to the consideration of which I now proceed.

VERSE 14. "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent."

THE woman in this passage, is represented in verse 2. as in a pregnant state, travailing in birth, and in violent pangs to be delivered, which is doubtless designed as an emblem of the true church of Christ. She is elsewhere spoken of as the spouse of Christ, who owns himself to be her head and husband. A woman, we know, is the weaker sex, and looks to her husband for support and protection. So the church has always been the weakest part of the world, in herself considered, and had her dependence on Christ her head, for preservation and safety in times of peril and danger. This woman, the church, being in such a near relation to Christ, the brightness of the Father's glory, and express image of his person, amidst all her own natural weakness and infirmity, has never appeared contemptible; but the most glorious society that ever existed in our world. She is the king's daughter, *all glorious within*. She is spoken of, verse 1. as being cloathed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; which is a magnificent description of her comeliness, beauty and lustre. She is enlightened, invested and adorned with the rays of Jesus Christ, the great Sun of righteousness, which makes her form illustriously bright and majestic. She is in such a state of dignity and triumph, as to have the moon, with all sublunary enjoyments and terrors, under her feet. And on her head, to compleat her glory, a crown of twelve stars, an emblem of her being under the light and guidance of the twelve inspired apostles, who had been improved as master-

builders under Christ, in laying the foundation of this honourable society, and were such useful and distinguishing ornaments to it. One would think that such a society as this, would have nothing to fear from all the combined powers of earth and hell; and indeed, they have not in reality, since stronger is he that is for them, than those that are against them. However, they are not exempted from trials and sufferings in this world. We find, when the great red dragon appeared with his seven heads and ten horns, that frightful monster the devil instigated the tyrannical persecuting powers of the earth, against this harmless and innocent woman, the amiable spouse of Christ. He had impudence and boldness enough to make an unprovoked attack upon her, which occasioned her to leave the imperial and wealthy abodes of earthly grandeur and magnificence, the courts and palaces of emperors and princes, and retired to some obscure, solitary condition, for the sweets of liberty and peace. This furious attack of the great dragon on the woman, was an event of such importance, as to produce war in heaven between the angels of light, and the angels of darkness. See verse 7. "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels." This Michael was the tutelar angel and protector of the Jewish church. Daniel x. 12. And he performs here the same office of champion for the Christian church.

HE, and the good angels who are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, were the invisible agents on one side, as the devil and his evil angels were on the other. The visible actors in the cause of christianity, were believers, whether in a civil or ecclesiastical character, with the glorious martyrs and confessors. And in support of the opposite side, were the persecuting powers of the world, with the whole dark train of

the artillery of hell. In this great conflict and war, let it relate to what period of the church it will, which I am not anxious to determine with mathematical certainty; we find that those on the side of God and true religion, overcame their formidable enemy, with all his confederate powers, by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. They were of such a brave, heroic spirit, as to chearfully expose themselves to the greatest dangers in this glorious cause; an many of them actually met death in the terrible conflict. But they fell, as one observes, to rise, and triumph, and reign. The dragon being thus defeated and vanquished at his headquarters, pagan or papal Rome: He takes a wider scope and range, thro' the other nations and kingdoms of the earth. He was doubtless greatly enraged at the ill success of his first encounter, and marshals up all his forces abroad, and proceeds with violence, to persecute the woman which brought forth the man-child. Upon this the woman has a second flight into a more distant and solitary wilderness, "unto her place"; to prepare her for which, two wings of a great eagle were given her, which is not mentioned in her first flight; and probably she did not then need them. There seems an evident allusion here, to what God said to the children of Israel, Exod. xix. 4. after their deliverance from cruel oppressive slavery in Egypt, when encamp'd before Sinai, and on their way to the good land of Canaan, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles wings, and brought you unto myself." He was not conducting them from a land of liberty, peace, and tranquility, into a state of bondage, persecution and distress; but on the contrary, had wrought out a very glorious deliverance for them, and set them free from the cruel hand of tyranny and oppression, by executing his judgments in a most terrible and awful manner, on the Egyptians, their enemies; and was now, by his kind providence, leading them to the good land of Canaan, which he gave them by promise, for an everlasting inheritance. Hence, as the trials and sufferings of the Christian church were parallel in some measure, with those of the Jewish, and there is a great similarity and likeness in the manner of God's dealings with the one to the other; it must be evident, that expositors have been mistaken, when they represent this flight of the woman into and the wilderness, as denoting the church's going into greater peril, danger and affliction, where she was to be more violently distressed and persecuted, for a long time. The word WILDERNESS might possibly suggest to their delicate, but inattentive minds, this frightful and shocking idea. It is true, our fathers had the difficulties of an uncultivated wilderness to encounter; but it soon, by the blessing of heaven on their labour and industry, became a pleasant field or garden, and has been made to blossom like the rose. The passage, in its most natural, genuine construction, contains as full and absolute a promise of this land, to the Christian church, as ever was made to the Jewish, of the land of Canaan. It is, in an appropriate sense, "her place"; where she is nourished, from the face of the serpent. And the dealings of God in his providence, in bringing his church from a state of oppression and persecution, into this good land, are very parallel and similar to his dealings with the Israelites, in delivering them from the tyrannical power of the haughty, cruel monarch of Egypt, and conducting them to the good land of promise in Canaan. Thus, they that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings, as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

THUS the church, in this difficult, distressed season, whenever it happened, was supported and carried, as it were, on eagles wings, to a distant remote wilderness, for safety and protection. And what period or event is there in all the history of her trials and persecutions, which these expressions more exactly describe, and to which they can be applied with more truth and propriety, than to the flight of our fore-fathers into this then howling wilderness, which was a land not sown nor occupied by any ruling power on earth, except by savages and wild beasts? It is an indisputable fact, that the cruel hand of oppression, tyranny and persecution drove them out from their pleasant seats and habitations, in the land of their nativity; and that the purest principles of religion and liberty, led them to make the bold adventure across the wide Atlantic ocean; for which they surely needed the two wings of the great eagle, to speed their flight, and to shelter and cover them from danger, while seeking a safe retreat from the relentless fury and shocking cruelty of the persecuting dragon; and a secure abode for unadulterated christianity, liberty and peace. It is remarked by the inspired penman of this prophecy, and is worthy of notice, that when the woman fled into the wilderness, she came INTO HER PLACE. This American quarter of the globe seemed to be reserved in providence, as a fixed and settled habitation for God's church, where she might have property of her own, and the right of rule and government, so as not to be controul'd and oppress'd in her civil and religious liberties, by the tyrannical and persecuting powers of the earth, represented by the great red dragon. The church never before this, had *prime occupancy*, or first possession of any part of this terraqueous globe, in any great extent of their territory. In all countries and kingdoms wherever Christianity had been planted, be-

fore its introduction into this American wilderness, the ruling powers in possession of the property, and right of jurisdiction and dominion, were in opposition to this benevolent institution; and the church had to make her way through the greatest possible difficulties and dangers. While thus in an enemy's land, her persecutions and oppressions, her bloody trials and sufferings furnish out of the chief subject of her history from her beginning to the present day, in other parts of the world, from which she is not wholly exempted in this. However, her degree of peace and quiet rest has been greater than she has ever known since she has had existance and being. When that God, to whom the earth belongs, and the fulness thereof, brought his church into this wilderness, as on eagles wings, by his kind, protecting providence, he gave this good land to her, to be her own lot and inheritance for ever. He planted her as a pleasant and choice vine; and drove out the Heathen before her. He has tenderly nourished and cherished her in her infant state, and protected and preserved her amidst innumerable dangers. He has done wonders in his providence for our fathers, and for us their sinful posterity: They, and we have many a time, stood still, and seen the salvation of the Lord. The woman, the church of Christ, has such a gift and grant from heaven, of this part of God's world, for the quiet enjoyment of her liberties and privileges, civil and religious, that no power on earth can have any right to invade, much less to dispossess her of them. And every attempt of this kind to oppress and enslave her, must be absolutely unrighteous, and a gross violation of justice and truth. He that has all power in heaven and on earth, who will soon destroy the man of sin, and all his confederate powers, by the spirit of his mouth, and brightness of his coming, declares in this prophecy, that the "woman" shall

be nourished and preserved in her place here described, "from the face of the serpent." The serpent spoken of, is the great dragon, called the Devil and Satan; the chief directing agent in all the dark plots of tyranny, persecution and oppression; from whose malignant rage, the church has a promise of future protection. This old serpent shall never be permitted to shew his deformed face, much less to lift up his monstrous head, and frightful horns in this place here given to the woman for a safe retreat and secure abode, "for a time, and times, and half a time"; which probably means, "to the end of the world," or till all the times and periods spoken of in this prophetic book are fulfilled and accomplished. I know that expositors take these expressions, "for a time, and times, and half a time," to include only the period of one thousand two hundred and sixty days, mentioned verse 6, and so understood the phrase "for a time," to mean one prophetical year, and "times," to mean two years, and "half a time," an half year; in the whole, three years and a half: But it seems more natural, and more agreeable to the phraseology of scripture, as well as the connection of these prophecies, in the events foretold, to interpret this passage as signifying all future time indefinitely. Or, if we apply it to distinct periods, the first expression, "for a time," I should think, might, with great propriety, be taken for the time or period, that hath already been mentioned. This construction appears natural, and not in the least forced or strained. Then the "times" will mean such times or periods as follow after the fulfilment of the above; and the "half time," must signify the closing period, when time is near run out, and just come to an end. Taking the passage in its proper connection, and plainest and most obvious sense, we may well understand it as containing a prophetic promise to the church, of safety

and preservation, during the period that had been described above, and thro' all succeeding times, even to the end of the world. Not but what the old dragon, with his black train of tyrannical persecuting powers, might greatly afflict and distress her. Yet, with all his cunning, art, policy and power, shall never be able to establish his enslaving doctrines, nor to erect his head and horns, to exercise his usurped authority and uncontrouled dominion, as in papal Rome. We may expect, however, that he will be putting forth most violent struggles and efforts for this base, malignant purpose.

One objection of weight, I have against the current opinion of expositors, who interpret the passage, "a time, and times, and half a time," to signify the same period as the thousand two hundred and three-score days, is, that this is dishonourable to the sacred writer, and shews that he rather meant to puzzle and perplex his readers, than to enlighten and instruct them. I believe that all will allow, that the language used in the 6th verse, is more plain and intelligible, and has a more fixed and determinate meaning, than that in the 14th verse. Now, to suppose the same period of time, is described in the one, as in the other, is to suppose, that the Apostle, after he had described a thing in a plain, easy way to be understood, proceeds on to involve the same subject in a cloud of mysticism, darkness and obscurity, which could not tend, very much, to the improvement and edification of Christ's church. It is usual with all good writers, as they advance on their subject, to elucidate and illustrate their meaning more and more, to set it in a plainer and more intelligible point of light. And this is, especially, the tone of all inspired writers, and of St. John in particular. The light of revelation is like the path of the just, shining brighter and brighter in every page, till we come to the close of it.

BUT, should my explanation of this passage, after all, be disputed, and the time, times, and half time, allowed to include no more, altogether, that the period of twelve hundred and sixty years, which I have taken to be included in that expression only, "a time," yet it will not materially affect my scheme. For, on the old plan of exposition, it is supposed, that after the expiration of these twelve hundred and sixty years, the trials and sufferings of the church will be chiefly over; and that a scene of great peace, prosperity and happiness will open and commence. Hence, if the prophetic promise in the text, extends no further than to that happy and blessed period, the church will safely get through the long storm and tempest, raised by the dragon; and so, be ready for a share in the blessings of that glorious and happy period to succeed; during which, we need not be very anxious about her safety, considering other precious promises that are made in her favour.

THE serpent is said, verse 15, "to cast out of his mouth, water, as a flood, after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood." This, perhaps, is one of the artifices, says a learned expositor, which these enormous creatures make use of, "to beat down their prey," when flying from them. The common signification of a flood is an inundation of water, &c. The psalmist sets forth extreme dangers, under the notion of a flood. Psalm lxix. 15: "Let not the water-flood overflow me." And the violent assaults, and subtle temptations, and sudden incursions of the Devil and his instruments against the church, are compared to a flood, Isaiah lix. 19. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the lord shall lift up a standard against him." Which prophecy may refer to, and have its accomplishments in the present state of the church, about which we are treating. The oppressive and persecuting power here figuratively described, under the emblem of the serpent, which occasioned the flight of the woman, the church, into this wilderness, whenever it has prevailed, has been full of the most inveterate malice and envy against her; and used every art and stratagem to extirpate and destroy her from the earth. Hence, the flood which the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman, may very naturally and properly be interpreted to signify all the subtle temptations, artful schemes, and machinations of our enemies and adversaries, to ensnare and corrupt us, and to destroy our liberties and privileges, that we might be embarrassed again under the old tyrant, the dragon, and patiently submit to the iron yoke, and galling chains of cruel oppression and bondage; which machinations and contrivances have been too many to be enumerated in a short, concise discourse. Every one acquainted with the history of our country, of the New-England colonies in particular, must know, that there have been floods issued from the mouth of the old serpent, after the woman, to effect her destruction and overthrow. Whenever a spirit of despotism has run high, and a lusting ambition after arbitrary power and lawless dominion has prevailed; when the dragon dare venture to put on and wear his long horns; the woman in the wilderness has felt the grievous distressing effects. At such seasons, jesuitical emissaries, the tools of tyrannical power, have been employed to corrupt her doctrines, and lead her into the belief of the darling doctrines of arbitrary *power, passive obedience and nonresistance;* who, like the frogs that issued out of the mouth of the false prophet, who are said to have the spirit of devils, have been slyly creeping into all the holes and corners of the land, and using their enchanting art and bewitching policy, to lead aside, the simple and unwary, from the truth, to prepare them for the

shackles of slavery and bondage. Thousands and millions of money, have, at one time and another, been expended for the purposes of bribery and corruption, to accomplish this malignant design. Evil, wicked men have been entrusted with the chief command in one province and another, where the door has been open, to act as tools of a corrupt administration and tyrannical power, in forwarding and ripening their deep-laid schemes, for the destruction of the woman. The colonies in America will not soon forget the cruel and tyrannical administration of Sir Edmond Andros, at Boston, and his evil designs against them in general; and Lord Cornbury, at New-York; the late insidious and traiterous conduct of Bernard and Hutchinson, is still more fresh in every one's mind; and like-wise of Gage, Carlton, and Dunmore, who, by their base, perfidious and cruel behaviour, have rendered themselves universally odious and detestable to the American colonies. In these and such like ways, not to mention the unrighteous statutes restricting and interdicting our trade and commerce, the stamp-act, &c. we have had floods poured forth from the mouth of the serpent, which at length, have brought on a civil war. The dragon finding his artful temptations on the one hand, and his cruel menaces and threatenings on the other, ineffectual to gain the woman to a compliance with his terms, has at length become wroth with her, and brought over his troops and armies to make war with the remnant of her seed. But, blessed be God! all his efforts and struggles have hitherto been unsuccessful; for the earth helped the woman. Verse 16 "And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth."

If this is taken in the literal sense, to signify that gross terrestrial element which sustains and nourishes us, it is strictly true; in which sense some of the prophecies have been, and yet will, no doubt, be accomplished. The earth has ever helped the woman since the arrival to these shores, with every article necessary to her comfortable support. She has never wanted for nourishing food, and good raiment; has never known the distresses arising from scarcity of bread, pinching hunger and famine; has always, from the first settlement and cultivation of the country, had things convenient for her, and, as I trust, been contented with her lot and condition. The earth has, in a very remarkable manner, thro' the blessing of Heaven, been profuse and liberal in her precious fruits and productions, the year past, when the dragon has been wroth with the woman, and using all possible schemes and contrivances to distress her, and starve her into a compliance to his despotic and arbitrary rule, by shutting up her ports and harbours, and interdicting her trade and commerce, and cutting her off from all supplies from her fishery, a very useful and necessary branch of her trade and livelihood, by which thousands were maintained. I say, when the woman has, in these, and in such like ways, been distressed, she has been helped in a very extraordinary way, by the earth. Our crops of all kinds have been plentiful. Our fruit-trees loaded with fruit, and pressed down with their burdens. Our granaries are full. There is such an uncommon plenty of all kinds of good provisions for man and beast, that some inconsiderate persons are ready to esteem it rather a curse, than a blessing; as we know not how to dispense with, or dispose of it. But not to enlarge here.

Should we take the expression in a figurative sense, to mean the men of the earth, and earthly powers, it may still, with truth and propriety be applied to our present case. For as the oppressive measures pursued by the British parliament, strike at our temporal inter-

est and property, as well as our civil and religious privileges, it will engage those of an earthly temper to exert themselves in the present struggles; by which means the earth helpeth the woman. And besides, the vast advantage of these American plantations, in point of traffic and merchandise, to all such as trade in ships, will doubtless, if the present system is pursued, engage the kingdoms of the world, and the merchants of the earth, to espouse the cause of the colonies to such purposes as will, in their operation, greatly help the woman against the flood cast out of the dragon's mouth.

And not only the earth, but the God that made it, nourisheth the woman in the wilderness, amidst the most violent and cruel attempts of a tyrannical and persecuting power, and has raised up persons of a martial, heroic spirit, and endowed them with skill, courage and fortitude, to defend and protect his church. The flood of the dragon that has been poured forth to the northward, in the Quebec bill, for the establishment of popery, and other engines and instruments that have been set to work, to bring the savages down upon us, to our utter destruction, have been chiefly swallowed up by our late successful enterprizes against them; and the woman has received a great addition of strength from this quarter, as a door is opened for breaking up the seat of the dragon in Canada; and for bringing in the Heathen tribes, perhaps, the fulness of the Gentiles, into firm league and friendship with her, for her future defence and protection. So that instead of being carried away with this flood, she stands on more firm ground, and is better established than ever. Should we extend the meaning of the phrase, so as to take in other neighbouring powers of the earth, they have likewise helped the woman in her distresses and troubles, by affording a competent supply of military instruments and warlike

stores for her defence and protection; when all possible precaution had been used by her enemies, to deprive her of these useful articles, so necessary for self-preservation; and these other powers seem so friendly disposed, that it is highly probable, should the serpent continue to persecute and distress the woman, that they will soon open their mouth, and swallow up the whole flood, even all the fleets and armies which the dragon may cast out of his mouth.

The probability or conjecture of neighbouring nations continuing to help the woman, the church, to that degree, as to swallow up all the floods, the serpent may cast out of his mouth after her, is founded, not only on their present friendly appearance, and the part which their interested views may lead them to take in the present controversy, but on the sure word of prophecy. See Rev. xvii. 16, 17. "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore; and shall make her desolate and naked; and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will." These ten horns, doubtless mean some of the kingdoms and princes of the earth, that have, for a long time, been under the influence of the beast, the great whore of Babylon, and had a great share with her, in the cruel and bloody work of tyranny, persecution and oppression. But the time is coming, and perhaps near at hand, when their league and friendship with her, will be dissolved and broken; and their love turned into hatred and a spirit of revenge. They will turn with warm zeal and violence against her; and use all their strength and power for her destruction and overthrow. These shall hate the whore to a degree beyond what they ever loved her, and shall make her desolate and naked. They shall strip her of all her costly ornaments which they have lavished away upon her, and

effectually humble her insolence and pride, and expose her to public shame and disgrace; in the heart of their indignation and zeal, shall eat her very flesh, and burn her with fire. They will do the most thorough execution upon this old harlot, by whom they had been so long infatuated and deceived; and wholly break up the stupid schemes of idolatry, with all the monuments of it, and bring the abettors and instruments of tyranny and persecution to their condign punishment. This God will put into their hearts, by a strong and powerful impression, to fulfil his will; and they shall agree in it, to perform his purpose and design. This prediction or prophecy, it is thought by judicious expositors, refers to the destruction of papal Rome, or to the demolishing of the popish hierarchy in general; and that the kings of France are pointed out, as the principal instruments to effect it. They have, in years past, contributed greatly to her growth and advancement; and done much at the cruel work of persecution. It is not impossible, nor improbable, that the time is coming, when their hearts will be turned against her, and be improved by Heaven, as the principal authors of her overthrow and ruin. France has been satiated with the blood of Protestants, and 'tis to be hoped, will never thirst after it any more. She has already shewn some tendency towards a reformation; and therefore my be judged very likely to effect such a revolution. It appears from verse 17, that the infatuation of Popish princes will be permitted by divine providence, only for a certain limited period, till the words of God be fulfilled. And then their minds shall be turned and their eyes opened; and they shall ruin and destroy all oppressive, tyrannical combinations, more eagerly than they established them. Should our honourable Continental CONGRESS, see fit, in their great wisdom, at this difficult juncture, to open a free trade, and correspond

with that nation, in a way in which our threatened rights and liberties might have such security and indemnification, as to be in no hazard or danger of any future enchroachment on them, the spirit of liberty might spread and circulate with commerce; and from small sparks, kindle up into a bright and inextinguishable flame, in that, and in other kingdoms of the earth; and so hasten the fulfilment of this prophecy, in the entire destruction of the beast, or man of sin, and in the complete and glorious salvation of God's afflicted church.

THE dragon in this situation, is represented as much embarrassed in his black system of polities, in a state of great perplexity, and high paroxism of passion. Verse 17. "He was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Which may refer to the present war that is carrying on with such heat and fury against us; which seems chiefly levelled against those who most strictly and conscientiously adhere to the pure, uncorrupted doctrine and worship of our pious forefathers; and have not been seduced nor perverted from the right ways of the Lord, but still keep God's commandments, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, in his pure gospel. Amidst all our declensions and back-slidings, our divisions and heresies, our contentions and separations, there remain yet in the land a godly remnant of the true seed of the woman, who have not been enticed away to worship the beast, nor prevailed upon to receive his mark; who have never apostatised nor departed from the faith and practice of the church, as first planted in the wilderness; but have continued stedfast and immoveable amidst all the storms of temptation, and violent assaults of the adversary. And these seem the principal objects which excite the wrath and resentment of the dragon, and against

which, the whole artillery of his indignation and vengeance has been pointed and aimed. Who, tho' few in number, yet with such other helps and advantages as they are furnished with, will overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. Their fidelity, courage and zeal is such, that should it come to a case of extremity, they will not love their lives unto the death. But this part of the prophecy will admit of a different interpretation, and as well suit the present times.

By the "remnant of her seed," we may understand those worthy, true members of the church, staunch friends to liberty and the protestant religion, who remained still in the mother-country, and did not come over with her when she took her flight into this wilderness. There has, ever since the settlement of these colonies, been numbers of pious, godly persons, on the other side of the water, who have been friendly and well-disposed towards us, and have used all their power and influence to promote our growth, our wealth and prosperity. This remnant of the seed of the woman, since our troubles have begun in America, have exerted themselves to their utmost in our favour, to divert the impending storm of vengeance from lighting on us; have made most moving and affecting speeches in parliament, on the subject; have published many useful pieces in vindication of the colonies; and have been, to the last degree, faithful in corresponding with their friends on this side of the Atlantic, to inform of the intrigues and dark plots that were contriving against us. These things, together with the disappointment, shame and disgrace that have attended the enterprizes of the dragon against us, have roused his wrath against them likewise, which appears by a very severe and extraordinary proclamation, published to forbid this correspondence between them and us, on the highest pen-

alty. And from the commotions that began to be raised among them therefor, should this civil war continue, it is highly probable, that within the term of another year, it may flame forth from the very bowels of the kingdom, where it seems to be already kindling up, and where our brethren, which keep the commandments of God, will unavoidably be distressed. But in the issue hereof, it is to be hoped, that the dragon will be wholly consumed and destroyed; that the seat and foundation of all tyranny, persecution and oppression, may be for ever demolished; that the horns, whether civil or ecclesiastical, may be knocked off from the beast, and his head receive a deadly wound, and his jaws be effectually broken; that peace, liberty and righteousness might universally prevail; that salvation and strength might come to Zion; and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ might be established to all the ends of the earth.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We learn from what has been said, the true cause, as well as the deplorable effects of all dissentions and violent commotions amidst the Christian states and kingdoms of the world; which, like terrible earthquakes, to which they are compared, often shake them from the centre, and convulse them to death and ruin. If we trace them up to their time, source, and origin, we shall presently find, by the help of scripture-light, they all proceed from the inveterate envy and malice which the dragon has against the woman, and the war and contest he is carrying on against her, and her seed. This is plainly held forth in these prophecies of St. John, and is the grand subject of them. It has, from the beginning,

been the constant aim and design of the dragon, sometimes called the beast, and the serpent, satan, and the devil, to erect a scheme of absolute despotism and tyranny on earth, and involve all mankind in slavery and bondage; and so prevent their having that liberty and freedom which the Son of God came from heaven to procure for, and bestow on them; that he might keep them in a state of servile subjection to himself. He has been, and still is the chief counsellor and directing agent in all the dark plots of oppression and persecution against God's church, to effect her destruction; that his own wicked scheme of tyranny might have a full establishment on earth, and bear down all before it. And it is truly marvellous what success he has been permitted to have in accomplishing this malignant design: How, not only men of lower abilities and less discernment have been deluded and infatuated by him; but many kings and chief rulers in church and state, of whom better things might have been expected. Such, after they have been made drunk with the intoxicating wine of his fornication and whoredom, have been his chief instruments in this cruel and bloody work. They are of such dark complexion in their counsels, and pursuing such black designs, that they are represented as "ascending out of the bottomless pit, to make war against the faithful witnesses and servants of Jesus Christ, and to kill them." And who can count up the numbers that have been slain by them? Rivers of blood have been shed, at one time and another, in this terrible war and conflict which the tyrannical, persecuting powers of the earth have been instigated by Satan, to carry on against the church of Christ. In the first beginning of the Christian dispensation, ten persecutions followed one after another, while the government of Rome was in the hands of pagan emperors.

In this struggle between Paganism and Christianity, thousands of martyrs and confessors were most cruelly and barbarously tormented, and put to death. These horrid massacres of the saints may be emblematically, or figuratively represented in the 6th chapter of this prophetic book, in the 9th verse of which, the apostle is said to have seen under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And after Rome became Christian, or rather Papal, and the man of sin made his public appearance, the woman and her seed, the humble followers of Christ, fared yet worse, and were more hardly and cruelly dealt with than ever, by their persecuting enemies, who are inwardly galled in their consciences, and said to be tormented at their pure doctrines, plain faithful remonstrances, and exemplary lives. See chap. xi. 10. When this great red dragon was mounted on high, with his seven heads and ten horns, the first object on which he exercised his tyrannical and persecuting power, was the church, represented in these prophecies by the woman and her seed. Hence, when she appeared pregnant, ready to bring forth children, when the gospel began to have success, and new converts were born, and added to the church, this dragon stood ready to seize and devour them, like a hungry lion, eagerly waiting for his prey; and has persecuted her with rage and fierceness, not only thro' the imperial populous cities of Italy and Bohemia, France, Spain, and England, and thro' their colonies and plantations, even to the uttermost ends of the earth. When she took the wings of the great eagle, and, under the protecting providence of God fled into the wilderness, he continued wroth with her, and poured forth floods of his indignation and vengeance against her. "Wo to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea," says the apostle, "for the devil is come down

to them, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." This dragon, the great enemy of God, and of his church, whatever shape or form he has assumed, whether that of the spotted leopard, with the feet of a bear, and the mouth of a lion; whether his horns have been ten, or only two, like a lamb or goat, giving life unto the image of the beast; yet he has in every appearance, when he had opportunity, discovered the like fierceness and cruelty of tempter, thirsting for the blood of the saints. When his shape and form has wore a milder aspect, he has yet spoke as a dragon; and when times would allow of it, exercised all the power of the first beast, causing the earth, and them that dwell therein, to worship him; giving forth tyrannical mandates and decrees, that as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed: Gathering all into his service, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, slaves and savages, catholics and barbarians, to accomplish at any rate, his black and dark designs; passing the most vigorous acts, and severe edicts against those who refused compliance; enacting by his omnipotent power, that they should not buy nor sell, nor carry on any trade or commerce by land or sea. Now, the administration seems here described, that has for a number of years, been so grievous and distressing to these colonies in America, claiming an absolute power and authority to make laws, binding in all cases whatever, without check or controul from any; which has proceeded in the exercise of this despotic, arbitrary power, to deprive one of them, of their most essential and chartered privileges; sent over fleets and armies to enforce their cruel, tyrannical edicts, which have involved us in all the calamities and horrors of a civil war; which have destroyed many useful lives, burnt two of our flourishing towns, captured many of our vessels that fell in their way, prohib-

ited and destroyed our fishery and trade, forbidding us to buy or sell, and taken in a hostile manner, in a way of piracy and robbery, our interest and property, and threaten us with general destruction, for no other reason than that we will not surrender our liberties, properties and privileges, and become abject vassals and slaves to despotic and arbitrary power. I say, the administration seems described, and appears to have many of the features, and much of the temper and character of the image of the beast which the apostle represents, which had two horns like a lamb, and spoke as a dragon. And the language of our pusillanimous foes, and even their adherents amongst us, seems plainly predicted, Rev. xiii.4 "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him."

2. From what has been said, we see reason gratefully to acknowledge and adore the kind, watchful providence of God, in preserving his church, the woman and her seed, amidst the storms and tempests, the commotions and convulsions that have been occasioned by the oppressive tyrannical powers of the earth. The great dragon, her formidable enemy, notwithstanding his mighty strength and power, cruelty and rage, has always been overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, in all her wars and conflicts with him; which, instead of answering his design to crush and destroy her, have ever been over-ruled by her all-wise benevolent king, to promote her growth and advancement in the world. The church, though often surrounded by the flames of persecution, like the burning bush which Moses beheld as a type and emblem of it, yet has never been consumed. The gates of death and hell have never prevailed against her. Christ has been with her from the beginning, agreeable to his divine promise; and will so continue to the end of the world.

The blood of the saints and martyrs that has been shed, and flowed down like rivers and seas, has been like seed planted for the church, and made it spread thro' a wider compass, and grow faster in the world. All the combined policy of earth and hell has not been able to overthrow and demolish this building of God, who has established it, and will preserve it by his almighty power, till all the purposes of his redeeming love and grace are accomplished in the complete salvation of his chosen ones. It must be confessed, that the trials, afflictions and distresses of the church have been very great; but these have been as a purifying furnace, to cleanse her from dross and corruption, and to make her shine brighter in all the graces and virtues of Christianity. Her enemies and adversaries, in all their furious attacks and malicious encounters, have never gained any considerable and lasting advantage to themselves; but generally have come off with loss, disappointment and shame; and had their own weapons, and the blows they have struck, retorted back on them, with redoubled force and vengeance. God promises to give power to his faithful witnesses and servants, "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies. And if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed." Rev. ii. 3, 5. If the enemies of the church, in the wars they set on foot, take any of her members captive, they themselves shall go into captivity; and he that killeth them with the sword, must be killed with the sword: Agreeable to the great law of retaliation, which is wisely adopted at this day, by the honourable Continental Congress; and the execution of it in full, is warranted and justified by this, and other passages of sacred writ. Those that have undertaken to distress and persecute the woman and her seed, the faithful servants of Christ, have ever found the interprize dangerous and ruinous to

themselves. When the wicked persecuting tyrants of the earth, appear to have great power and strength, some of a selfish and timerous turn of mind, may inadvertantly think it safest to pay worship and allegiance to them, and receive their mark, and shelter and protection under their wings, from the impending storm: But they are most artfully deluded and mistaken. "The same," says the apostle, Rev. xiv. 10. "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night."

3. We may, in a peculiar manner, notice the kind dealings of God in his providence towards this branch of his church, that he has planted as a choice vine, in this once howling wilderness. He brought her as on eagles wings from the seat of oppression and persecution, "to her own place," has, of his unmerited grace, bestowed liberties and privileges upon her, beyond what are enjoyed in any other part of the world: He has nourished and protected her from the face of the serpent, and preserved her from being carried away to destruction, when great floods of his wrath and vengeance have been poured forth after her. God has, in this American quarter of the globe, provided for the woman and her seed, a fixed and lasting settlement and habitation, and bestowed it upon her, to be her own property forever.* In

* As the church has such a gift and grant of this good land, from that God to whom the earth belongs, and the fulness thereof; the present war set on foot by the British ministry and parliament, against her true and worthy members, the American sons of liberty, to dispossess them hereof, is not only felonious and murderous, as stiled by the noble Lord Mayor

this just view of the distinguished favours of heaven toward our fathers, and, us their sinful posterity, while on the one hand, we see abundant cause for thanksgiving and praise to our almighty preserver, and most gracious benefactor; we may on the other hand see the greatest reason for the deepest humiliation, repentance, and contrition of heart, for our vile abuse and misimprovement of these privileges and favours. What an amazing low sense have we had, of the worth of the uncommon gifts and bounties of heaven? How awfully have they been slighted and undervalued by us? What astonishing stupidity, ingratitude and unthankfulness has reigned in our hearts? How lukewarm and indifferent have we been, in the most important concerns of religion? How careless and unconcerned about the interest and welfare of the church of Christ? How backward to come into fellowship and communion with her, and to attend the rites and ordinances which distinguish (at least outwardly) God's children from the profane wicked world?

---

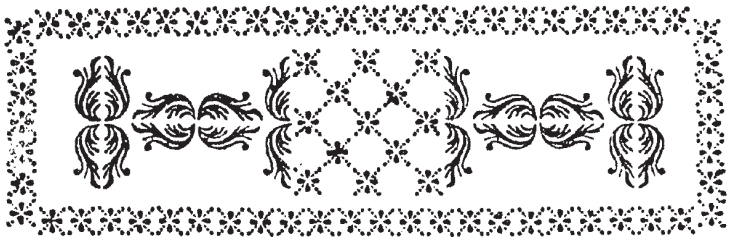
of London, in his excellent speech on this subject; but seems likewise a very bold and daring attack upon the sovereign prerogative of that Being, who is the Great Lord Proprietor of all, to whom vengeance belongeth; who has already interposed in a very signal manner, to display his awful vengeance against this wicked nefarious undertaking, by plunging four thousand of these our malignant foes in the ocean, with an hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling of their property; by setting fire to two of their ships with lightening from heaven; and by a late very sweeping storm on the coasts of Great-Britain, to an immense destruction of both men and shipping; by which, and other remarkable providences in our favour, we have incontestible evidence, that God Almighty, with all the powers of heaven, are on our side. Great numbers of angels, no doubt, are encamping round our coast, for our defence and protection. Michael stands ready, with all the artillery of heaven, to encounter the dragon, and to vanquish this black host.

How does iniquity abound among us, and the love of many wax cold? How has the gold become dim, the most fine gold changed? What awful backslidings and declensions in this land, once dedicated to the Lord as a mountain of holiness, and an habitation of righteousness, liberty and peace? Surely the great head of the church, who knows our works, must have not a few, but many things against us. We have, in a great measure, lost that lively faith, zeal and brotherly love, so conspicuous in the temper and conduct of our pious fore-fathers, and added such a beauty and lustre to their characters. The true and noble spirit of primitive christianity is scare to be found among us; have lost our first love, the love of our espousals, and kindness of our youth. Our churches decline in doctrine, worship and discipline; and have had awful schisms and rents made in them. A spirit of contention, division and separation has prevailed to the great wounding of the church, and to the dishonour and shame of all her promoters and abettors thereof. How have the Prophets, the faithful witnesses of Christ, been despised and treated with contempt; while prophesying in sackcloth; and the woman, the true church, in her plain dress of gospel purity and simplicity, been ridiculed, and thought to have no beauty or comeliness in her? How eager have many been, in their attention to lying deceivers, the frogs that have issued out of the mouth of the false prophet; and charmed and captivated with their croaking nose, full of discord and confusion? How has the beauty of this pleasant land of Immanuel been defaced, and its glory spoiled by the little foxes treading down our tender vines; and by the inroads of the wild boar of the wilderness? These things are justly matter of deep and serious lamentation, as they are doubtless the causes of the present calamities and judgments with which we are visited.

4. As there still remains among us, a godly remnant that have not apostatized from God, nor departed from the faith of the gospel; and as these prophecies on which we have been treating, will, many of them, most probably have their fulfilment in this land; there are yet solid grounds of hope and encouragement for us, in this dark and gloomy day. Tho' we may, in God's righteous providence, be sorely rebuked and chastised for our woful apostacies, declensions and backslidings; yet we have, I think, good reason to believe, from the prophecies, so far as we are able to understand them, and from the general plan of God's providence, so far as opened to view, in past and present dispensations of it, that we shall not be wholly given up to desolation and ruin. It is not likely nor probable, that God will revoke the grant he has made of this land to his church. His gifts as well as calling are without repentance. It does not appear probable, that a persecuting, oppressive and tyrannical power, will ever be permitted to rear up its head and horns in it, notwithstanding its present violent assaults and struggles. Liberty has been planted here; and the more it is attacked, the more it grows and flourishes. The time is coming and hastening on, when Babylon the great shall fall to rise no more; when all wicked tyrants and oppressors shall be destroyed for ever. These violent attacks upon the woman in the wilderness, may possible be some of the last efforts, and dying struggles of the man of sin. These commotions and convulsions in the British empire, may be leading to the fulfilment of such prophecies as relate to his downfal and overthrow, and to the future glory and prosperity of Christ's church. It will soon be said and acknowledged, that the kingdoms of this world, are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ. The vials of God's wrath begin to be poured out on his enemies and adversaries; and there

is falling on them a noisome and grievous sore. And to such as have shed the blood of saints and prophets, to them, blood will be given to drink; for they are worthy. And they will gnaw their tongues of falsehood and deceit, for pain; and have the cup of the wine of the fierceness of her wrath; and be rewarded double. The Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings; and they that are with him, are called, and chosen, and faithful. May the Lord shorten the days of tribulation, and appear in his glory, to build up Zion; that his knowledge might cover the earth, as the waters do the seas; that wars and tumults may cease thro' the world, and the wolf and the lamb lie down together, and nothing hurt or destroy throughout his holy mountain.

AMEN.



APPENDIX.

By another Hand

IN the thirteenth chapter of Revelation, the apostle saw in vision, two beasts coming up; which, as far as I am acquainted, expositors have generally explained as a two-fold figurative representation of the same event. But to me it appears, that as the beasts were very diverse, the one from the other; so very different events were figured out by them. It is said, verse 1 "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea," i.e. out of the church, "having seven heads, and ten horns," &c. And in the 11th verse, it is said, "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth," i.e. of an earthly extract, springing up from very terrene, sensual motives, "and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." This first beast here described, has been well explained by expositors, and applied to the *man of sin*, to the rise and establishment of popery. But this second beast, with equal justice and propriety,

may be considered as figurative of, and fulfilled in what is called, King Henry's reformation. Every one that is acquainted with the personal character of that prince, cannot but be sensible, that the motives by which he was influenced to separate from the church of Rome, were of a very terrene, sensual, earthly nature; fitly described by the beast's coming up out of the earth. "And he had two horns," civil and ecclesiastical power, "like a lamb," with a more mild, benign and favourable aspect on the church, than the first beast. King Henry, when he broke with the Pope, assumed the chief and supreme authority in the British church, as well as nation; here decyphered by the "two horns." And "he spake as a dragon." Witness, the many hot and cruel persecutions that have been carried on in the kingdom, since the reformation, to the destruction of multitudes of the faithful servants of Jesus Christ. Altho' Henry assumed headship in the church as well a state; yet it was a work of time to get himself acknowledged and established in that character; in the accomplishment of which, he may be said, "To do great wonders," &c. Verse 13, 14. "Saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live," i.e. the first beast, the Pope.

The apostle Paul, prophesied of the man of sin, 2 Thess. ii. 4. and describes him as one, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." Claiming to be the head of the church, and assuming supreme, sovereign, absolute authority in it, is here pointed out as the grand, peculiar, and distinguishing mark and character of the man of sin; most clearly and plainly fulfilled in

the Pope. Consequently, headship and supremacy in the church, must be the peculiar and distinguishing features of this image of the first beast, which the second beast required to be made. And what can be a more clear, plain and express fulfilment of this prophecy, than that supremacy in the church, given to our kings, ever since the reformation, by the British ecclesiastical constitution? Where can we find any thing in all history, that bids so fair for an accomplishment of this emblematical prediction, in the rising of the second beast? Nothing but a fond partiality, of applying every thing that is bad, to the Pope, can, I conceive, prevent out embracing this application of the prophecy.

"LET not those who are friends to the episcopal form of church government, look upon themselves pointed at, by any thing I have here said. For real episcopacy does not imply an alliance between church and state; nor necessarily require an earthly head of the church; much less to invest the king with that character, as every one must acknowledge who will plead for episcopacy as the primitive form of the church, set up by the apostles. Because all the kings of the earth, in their day, and for many years after, were so far from being esteemed heads of the church, that they were not so much as members in it."

THE time prefixed for the continuance of the first beast, is "forty and two months." See verse 5. But the number of the second beast is mentioned in the 18th verse. "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: For it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred threescore six." Expositors have, many of them, supposed that this number intended the period from the time the apostle's

receiving this vision, to the rising of the first beast. But as this is the number of the second beast, if it be applied in such a manner, it must be taken for that period between the rise of the first, and of the second beast. But as the continuance of the first beast was limited to forty two prophetic months, or a thousand two hundred and seventy seven years; so this number six hundred sixty six, may denote the duration of the second beast.

THE END.

Set in IM Fell English,
a typeface originally cut in the late sixteenth century,
probably by Christoffel van Dijck (roman & small caps) and
Robert Granjon (italic). The electronic version was digitized and
furnished by Igino Marini (http://www.iginomarini.com/fell.html).
A few adjustments have been made in the text to accomodate
modern users. The long s (ſ) and its ligatures (ſt, ſi, ſſ, ſh,
and ſl) have not been used. The headpieces and tailpiece
are reproductions of those used in the 1776 edition.
Composition and adaptation of the original
design by Paul Royster.

The introductory essay and the text of
The Church's Flight into the Wilderness appeared in *The Kingdom,
the Power, & the Glory: The Millennial Impulse in Early American
Literature*, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company,
Dubuque, Iowa, 1998.

Copyright © 1998 by Reiner Smolinski.