

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM A CONTEMPORARY AUTHOR.

I FIND the saints are yet in Babylon. Many, very many are conscious of it, and are desirous of coming out of her that they may not partake of her plagues. But they are beset with difficulties. They have lost not the copies of the law of their King, as did their types, the Jews, in the literal Babylon; but they have lost the sense, or rather have been preached out of the sense of the law, and many are even preached out of their common sense. They are sensible of this. But this is not all. There are too many Sanballats and Tobiahs, and too few Nehemiahs and Ezras. The captives, too, are so much attached to the chains that bind them, and so much wedded to the manners of the Babylonians, their captivators, that they are, in many instances, unwilling to hazard the dangers and to encounter the reproaches incident to an attempt to return to Jerusalem. I labour incessantly to convince and to persuade the people who fear God, both out of the law, prophets, psalms, and apostolic writings, that such are their character and circumstances, and to induce them to return. It happens in this case as it did when the gospel was first promulgated—some believe the things that are spoken, and some believe them not. The number of believers is, indeed, very considerable. But when they think of repairing the breaches and rebuilding the temple, some Sanballat says, “Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?” And, to scandalize them, some Tobiah adds his scoff, saying, “Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall!” However, many of the people “have a mind to work,” and the wall will be reared. Out of Babylon they will—they must come; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. And should we never see the day, we will die in the full assurance of faith that the saints will separate themselves from the strangers, and renounce allegiance to their spoilers and captivators. Many of those friendly to a return, are attempting to persuade their communities to arise in the mass and to march in one phalanx, and flatter themselves that they may succeed. However much we do desire such an event, we cannot reasonably expect it: for such an event never happened. No community, either political or religious, ever was reformed in the mass. No people ever, at once, returned from any apostasy. Even when God’s typical people were brought back out of Babylon, of the whole nation but forty two thousand three hundred and sixty at first returned.

I have been interrogated on the subject of a model, or a precedent for the restoration of the ancient order of things. Some seem to think that the New Testament ought to furnish an example of the sort, of some directions for the accomplishment of an object so important. It does, indeed, in some sense, though not in the way which some desire. It teaches us