

means calculated to increase the piety or animate the devotions of men. The minds of multitudes were eventually unhinged. Many renounced christianity ; and not a few, who retained their profession, ceased to be its zealous and affectionate friends. Real or pretended grievances engrossed their attention ; the bitterness of party aroused their passions ; and, when some were contending for reform, and others opposing innovation, disregard for religion imperceptibly extended its influence. Christianity was stript of its flowers and fruit ; and "a name to live," was almost all that remained in many parts of the Church.

Besides, infidelity extended its pernicious influence, where its doctrines were disbelieved. These are more calculated to perplex than to reform. It is their very nature too, to destroy those motives which curb the vices and stimulate the virtues of men. Infidelity, therefore, by leaving the natural propensities of the mind unrestrained, cherished a train of vices, destructive to the good order and peace of society ; and members of the Church who opposed its principles, became imperceptibly a prey to its practical influence. Yielding conformity to the world, they quench the flame of ardent and affectionate piety ; and "the things which remained, were ready to die."

Even where christianity retained possession of the mind, comparatively few members of the Church, could exult in those powerful and cheering consolations which it has often administered. "The dew and the rain" were withheld from above ; and "the glory of Lebanon," and "the excellency of Carmel and Sharon," languished below. In many parts, its sincere and devout members found the path of religion strewed with adversities. Some, amidst the wreck of nations, were torn from every social enjoyment of life ; others were assailed by the pangs of infidelity in the very bosom of their families ; and many, pondering upon the state of religion in the Church, were "mourners in Zion ;" and, like Eli, "trembled for the ark of God."

In these respects, the Church has experienced the adversity of troublous times. Yet these times of trouble are the very period, which an over-ruling Providence has marked out for the revival of the spirit of religion, for the abundant enlargement of the prosperity of Zion. This coincidence illustrates our Lord's care of religion. It shows, also, that, under His administrations, gloomy prospects may introduce a result, honorable to His grace, and