

and desiring with as much fervour and zeal to enjoy the ordinances in their utmost purity?

“Do we remember old Puritan, or rather primitive simplicity, self-denial, mercy to the poor, uprightness, and justice? Or are we not herein put to shame by those we easily call Anti-christian or carnal?”

“Hath not one that we judge to be without, equal justice with one we will call a brother?”

“Do we contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, as the things of faith ought to be contended for, with love, patience, tenderness, zeal by persuasion; or rather, imposingly, proudly, carnally, provokingly, sensually, thereby prejudicing the truth; and whilst we are calling aloud for the propagation of the gospel, do we not put stumbling-blocks in the way of the same, and too much endeavour to make good the slander of the world in charging profession with faction?”

“For want of circumspection and care herein, and a due regard to sincerity and uprightness, have not many apostatized, running after fancies and notions, listening to petty dreams, worshiping of angels, and been carried away by their impulses; and instead of contending for the faith, and holding the form of sound words, contended against magistracy, against Scriptures, and against ordinances, too much verifying the prophecies of Peter and Jude, in the following words? [Here follows a quotation from 2 Peter, ii. 1-3, 10-15, and Jude, 4-8, 10-13, 16-19; and then the declaration proceeds thus.]

“Notwithstanding all these evils, and worse, are upon us, and in the midst of us, like grey hairs here and there, and we know it not, our pride testifying to our face, Hosea, vii. 9, 10; and we return not to the Lord our God, nor seek Him for all this, but these things are contended for, and justified under the notion of liberty, it being too commonly said that the magistrate hath nothing to do either in repressing or remedying these things. We do hereby appeal to the hearts and consciences of all fearing the Lord, whether there be not as great cause as ever to lay our mouths in the dust, and abhor ourselves before the Lord for these abominations, whereby the eyes of his jealousy are provoked, and to seek pardon and remedy from himself for these things.

“Add we to these the resistance, hatred, and neglect of the gospel by the generality of men; the contempt and despite done to the sincere professors of it even for the image of Christ in them—(although they have been instruments of many mercies and of the obtaining a just freedom for the nation)—the wickedness, oaths, drunkenness, revellings, and all manner of licentiousness, for which things' sake the Scriptures have said that the wrath of God shall undoubtedly overtake the children of disobedience. And lastly, the impunity of these things, through the neglect of the magistracy throughout the nation; and then judge whether there be not cause that we be called upon, and do call upon each other seriously to lay these things to heart, being greatly abased before the Lord for them.

“Upon the serious consideration of these things, we judge it not only warrantable, but a duty, to call upon you, and ourselves to set apart time to humble our souls before the Lord; to cry unto Him for broken and penitent hearts, that He would turn away His wrath, and be reconciled to us; for the Lord is merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and will by no means clear the guilty, who are only such as go on in their hardened and impenitent hearts, refusing the grace offered by Jesus Christ.

“It is therefore hereby declared, that we and our Council do purpose, by the grace of God, to set apart Friday next, being the 24th of this present March, for a day of humiliation.

“And it is hereby ordered, that timely notice be given to the cities of London and Westminster, who together with the out-parishes, we doubt not, will willingly keep the same day; and that like notice be given throughout England and Wales to have their several meetings upon the same day fortnight; and that copies hereof be printed and published, to be sent to the several parts of the nation, to invite them unto the performance of this duty.

“Given at Whitehall, March 20, 1653.

“J. THURLOB.”
(Secretary of State to Cromwell.)