

The Right Way:
OR
A DIRECTION

FOR
Obtaining good Successe in a
weighty Enterprife.

Set out in
A SERMON PREACHED
on the 12th of *September*, 1648.

BEFORE THE
L O R D S
On a day of Humiliation for a Blessing on a
TREATY between His MAJESTIES and
the PARLIAMENTS Commissioners.

By *W. Gouge*.

JER. 4. 21.
עֲדָה נִתְּנָה לָנוּ אֶשְׁמָעֵהּ קוֹל שׁוֹפָר

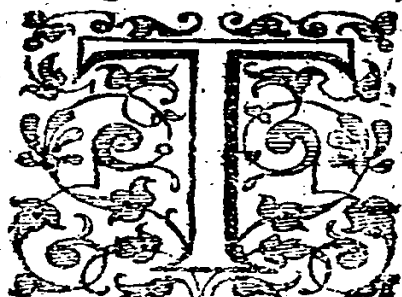
Εἰς ἀγῆλας ἀκλυσταὶ καὶ ἀπτενίστα βλάβετε μὴ ἀπὸ ἀγῆλων ἀναλαβήτε, Gal. 5. 15
Οὐκ εἰς ὄρεθ' εὖ βάλλας καὶ βάλλας τοῖς ὀμοσθεῖς. Τεῖλο τὸ μοχθηρότατον
ἢ ἐλασσόνταί, Greg. Naz. Orat. 14. 5 6.

Quid est Pax? De incertis non judicat: incognita non confirmat, &c. Aug.
Enar. in Psal. 147.

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Spread-Eagle in *Pauls Church-yard*, M. DC. XLVIII.

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE HOUSE
OF
PEERS
Assembled in
PARLIAMENT.

Right Honourable,



THE Occasion of Your appointing this Sermon to be preached, was a Matter of no small moment. It is thus expressed in Your own Order: A day appointed to be observed by both Houses of PARLIAMENT, for publike Humiliation, and to seek God earnestly for a Blessing upon the Treaty.

The weightiness of this work is declared in the Sermon following pag. 33, 34.

The End of this Treaty, is to close up and heal the breaches of this Land.

A pious End!

So great is the Breach, as it giveth great and just cause of deep Humiliation. I may in this case apply

The Epistle Dedicatory.

the Prophets lamentation for Jerusalem (*Lament. 2. 13.*) unto England. What thing shall I take to witness for thee? What thing shall I liken to thee, O England? For thy Breach is great, like the Sea.

Not without cause therefore have You set apart this day for publike Humiliation.

To make up this Breach is a matter of great difficulty.

Hic labor, hoc opus est----

It is beyond the wit and power of man to do it.

Good reason therefore there was to appoint the day of Humiliation to be a day also to seek God earnestly for a blessing upon the Treaty.

If the breach be not stopped by a Treaty, by what may it be stopped?

Can it be hoped that it should be done by sword? The Law is dumb while the Sword is drawn.

Will Conquerors yeeld to an Accommodation? Having the staff in their own hands, Will they not stand upon their own terms?

By force men may for a time be kept in awe. But that A.W.E. is no good keeper of a lasting peace.

Right Honourable, It will be Your Wisdome and Glory, to help on this Treaty, Usque ad aras: so farre as may stand with piety and verity: with safety and security of Church and State.

That under G.O.D, Ye may be happy instruments hereof, two things are requisite, both on Your own behalfe and also on the behalfe of all the People of this Land, whom a good issue of the Treaty doth concern.

The grounds of this difficulty are set down, p. 34, 35
Virg. Æn. lib. 6.

Silent leges in
ter arma. Cia
pro. Milon.

Malus est custos
diuturnitatis,
metus.
Cic. Offic. 4. 2.

Homini gratia
Numinis reverentia non est
violanda.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

1. *Sound Repentance.*

2. *Hearty Prayer.*

Our sinnes, our sinnes have made the breach. Our Repentance must make to the repairing of the breach. The people repented them for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel, Judg. 21. 15.

Their Cause was just, yet they repented when they saw how great the breach was. They did not so much glorie in their victory, as grieve for the destruction of a Tribe in Israel.

And is not the breach made among us a great breach? Surely it is great like the Sea. Who can heal thee, O England?

He, and He only, who may most properly be called, The repairer of the breach. To him therefore let us pray and say, O GOD, thou hast cast us off: thou hast scattered us: thou hast been displeased: O turn thy self to us again. Thou hast made the earth to tremble: Thou hast broken it. Heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh.

All outward endeavours of workmen will be in vain, unless the Creatour doe also inwardly work. Know for certain, that more may be done by prayers to GOD, then by perswasions with men.

My Lords, It concerneth You most of all to take care of this Matter: for the LORD hath made You, together with the Honourable House of Commons, Pillars to support this State.

Mention is made of two Pillars which Salomon made in the Temple: The one whereof he called יָכִין Jachin: and the other בּוֹאֵז Boaz.

De victoria sibi non tantum gratulantur, quam de clade tribus & fracturae conquerruntur. Wolph. Serm. 9. in Judg. 21.

Quis opponit? Deï se viant. Hier. Com. in Isa. 58. Frustra operas omnia molitur extrinsecus, nisi Creator intrinsecus latenter operetur, &c. Noverit vos plus proficere orationibus quam exhortationibus. Aug. de Bon. vid. 6. 18.

יָכִין & בּוֹאֵז sunt propria nomina aliter derivata: יָכִין

Those

The Epistle Dedicatory.

per, exit inde
rectum.

Alterum à
obfirmavit, inde
robur.

Those two words are used as proper names. The former importeth, straitnes. The later, strength.

If Pillars whereon Edifices doe rest be not as Jachin and Boaz, streight and strong, they cannot be serviceable. If they be not streight, but crooked, the building resting on them, may sway aside. If they be not strong, but weak, and the burden resting on them, heavy, they may fail, and the building fall.

Integrity and magnanimity will do much for quieting our present distractions.

The LORD pour upon you the spirit of Counsel and Courage.

My Lords, I am

Your humble Servant

Blackfriars London.
19. Sept. 1648.

and hearty Orator

William Gouge.



The Right Way.:
OR
A DIRECTION
FOR
Obtaining good Successe in a
weighty Enterprife.

EZRA 8.21.

*Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Abaya, that
we might afflict our selves before our God, to seek of
him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and
for all our substance.*



His text is taken out of the first of those * *Ezra, Nete-
miab, Esdras.*
three Historicall books, which the holy
Ghost saw meet to be recorded for all ages,
concerning the state of the Jewish Church,
after their return from their seventy years ca-

pitivity under the *Babylonians.*

They had three famous Patriots, who each of them
one

Three Patriots
came from the
captivity to Je-
rusalem.

one after another, came to *Jerusalem* for some special good to the Church of God.

Zorobabel extruixit Templum. Civitas extruilla est sub
Necmia, Hier.
6. 13. Comment.
in Efa.

1. *Zerubbabel*, to re-edifie the Temple: which, notwithstanding the many impediments which he met withall, at length he effected.

2. *Ezra*, to reform Religion: which notwithstanding the many corruptions he found there, he brought to passe.

3. *Nehemiah*, to make up the wals of their City, for their better safety and security: which notwithstanding the many oppositions made against him, he accomplished.

That which is here spoken of in my Text, was done by the second of those Patriots: who was a pious Priest, and a prudent Governour.

That he came to *Jerusalem*, to reform Religion, and to settle the true worship of God, and a good government in the Church, is evident by this testimony given unto him, *Ezra had prepared his heart, to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach him Israel statutes and judgments*, chap. 7. 10. So much is also evident by that charge which *Artaxerxes* King of *Persia* in his letters patents thus gave unto him, *Thou art sent to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand, and to carry the silver and gold which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel*, &c. chap. 7. 14, 15, 23.

The end which he aimed at, being a very weighty and worthy end, he prudently used the best means, that he could finde warranted in Gods Word, for good successe in his undertakings thereabout. That means being here set down in my Text, I passe by all the passages, and directly come to my Text.

The

The Contexte.
Esdra restituit
legem. Aug. de
Mir. S. S. 6. 2 c.
33.

The Summe of it is, *A Direction for obtaining good success in a weighty enterprise.* The Summe of the Text.

I suppose that this generall Summe, doth sufficiently demonstrate how reasonable this Text is for our present occasion: which is to crave a blessing of God upon the Treaty to be had betwixt his Majesties and our Parliaments Commissioners.

The first particle in my Text, translated *then*, is in the Hebrew a copulative conjunction *Uau, and*. It knitteth together the care that *Esra* had in gathering together such persons as were needfull for him, and might be usefull and helpfull unto him (*verse 18, 19, 20.*) and the means which by Gods Word was warranted for procuring a blessing upon their endeavours. Thus he joyneth humane helps, and divine assistance together. He doth *this* and *that*. To omit humane warranted helps, is to tempt God; as the devil would have Christ done, when he bid him cast himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, there being ordinary means whereby he might safely descend, *Mat. 4. 5, 6.* To trust to humane helps without God is to neglect God, and to presume: as *Asa* did, *2 Chron. 16. 12.* *In his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the Physicians.* Thereby he brought Gods wrath upon himself.

The meaning of the words.

Humane helps and divine blessing must go together.

The intendment of the copulative particle in this place is well expressed by this conjunction of time, *Then*. For he gathered them together that should help him, and *then*, sought a blessing of God.

When he saw it meet that a Fast should be kept, then he proclaimed it, *I proclaimed*, saith he. *Esra*, who did this, was appointed by the King of *Persia*, under whose jurisdiction all the Jews then were, to be a Governour: For the King appointed him to set other Magistrates over

Governours must proclaim Fasts.

the people, *chap. 7. 25.* which sheweth that he had authority over them. At least he was, under the King, the chief Governour of these Jews that went along with him. This therefore which here he doth, is an authoritative act. He doth it as a Governour. Governours use to make proclamations.

To proclaim implieth two things,

1. To give publike notice and warning of a thing to be done. This useth to be done openly by an Herald or publike Crier. The * hebrew word implieth that it was done by voice;

2. To lay a charge upon those to whom that notice is given to observe the same.

Thus the solemn feasts of the law at their appointed times were proclaimed, *Levit. 23. 4.* Thus *Jehoshaphat* proclaimed a fast, *2 Chron. 20. 7.* and the King and people of *Nineveh*, *Jon. 3. 5, 7.* Herein wicked *Jezebel* did impiously imitate a pious practice, *1 King. 21. 9.*

That which was here proclaimed was a fast. A religious fast is a forbearing of bodily refreshments to make one fitter for pious duties.

Fasting and
prayer must go
together.

A fast is here synecdochically put for prayer also. Thus much is evident, by this phrase added in this direction, *To seek of God a right way:* and by joyning together these two (*verse 23.*) *We fasted and besought our God for this.* Oft are these two fasting and prayer joyned together, as *Nehem. 1. 4.* *Daniel 9. 3.* *Luke 2. 37.* *Mat. 17. 21.* *Act. 13. 3. & 14. 23.* *1 Cor. 7. 5.* This word, *fast* is oft used synecdochically, for prayer also, as *2 Chron. 20. 3.* *Jer. 36. 9.* *Jonah 3. 6.* A fast, simply and singly considered in and by it self, is but such a bodily exercise, as profiteth little. *1 Tim. 4. 8.* *For as meat commendeth us not to God (1 Cor. 8. 8.)* so nor fasting. But fasting joyned with prayer

prayer is of singular use (it being rightly and duly used:) and that in three especial respects:

1. It's a means of quickning a dull spirit, and rousing up a drowsie body. Ye know that eating and drinking use to send vapours into the head which make a man drowsie in body, and heavy in spirit. Now fasting preventeth these impediments, and thereupon putteth a kinde of life into a man, and maketh him to pour out his spirit in prayer the more ardently.

Fasting a help to prayer.
In jejuniis, &c. quam plurimum adjuvatur oratio, Aug. Probe Ep. 121.

2. It enableth a man to continue longer in his devotion. A man after eating and drinking cannot so long hold out in duties of piety as he that fasteth. Besides that time which useth to be spent in eating, drinking, and other refreshments and delights, is by fasting gained for prayer and other sacred duties. Well observe the most ardent and long continued supplications in Scripture, and you shall finde them supported by fasting.

3. Fasting is a visible testification of our ardent prayer, and of our earnest desire to obtain that which we pray for: in that, by our voluntary abstaining from our bodily food and other delights of the body, we shew that we prefer the thing that we pray for, before them. Yea fasting is not only a testification of our humiliation, but it is a means to humble the soul the more: for that is the use of outward rites, both to testifie the inward disposition of the soule, and also to help it on the more.

Jejunium est adiutorium orationis, &c. Nam oratio illa est fortis que fit in humilitate. Chrysost. Hom. in Mat.

The place where this religious duty was performed is first indefinitely set down, under this relative, *there*. It hath reference to *ver. 13.* where mention is made of *Exas* gathering together such as should go with him to *Jerusalem*. At that place where they were gathered together, *there* they kept this fast.

עֵי הַיָּרְדֵּן

הַיָּרְדֵּן

The river A-
bava.

2. In particular this place is set out by a river which ran along by it: for it is here said to be, *at the river Abava*. This name is thrice used in this Chapter: as in this text, in the 15, & 31. verses. We do not elsewhere read of this name, either in sacred Scripture, or in any other Authour. The Septuagint translate it, *αβυ*. Some take *Abava* to be the name of a Town: and this river to be so called, because it did run to *Abava* (as *vers. 15.*) Many rivers are called by the names of those Towns which they run along by. This may be the same that is by other Authours called *Adiava*. *Josephus* in the eleventh book and fifth Chapter of the *Antiquities of the Jewes*, saith, That this fast was kept by *Euphrates*. It may be that this river did stream out of *Euphrates*, or into it, as sundry rivers did in sundry places.

A fast kept by
a river side.

*Legimus a Deo
nonnullos exan-
ditas in excelsis
montium: unde
intelligitur mo-
gi valere pa-
rentis affectum,
quam petitionis
locum. Aug. de
unit. Eccl. c. 16.*

But not to insist upon the title, certainly the place which is here described by the river, was a fair and fit place for the *Israelites* to assemble themselves together in: like that place which was by a rivers side near to *Philippi*, where praier was wont to be made by Christians, *Act. 16. 13.* There were in the Countrey of *Babylon* many sweet rivers, and goodly pastures, yea and woods too. Hereunto the Psalmist alludeth, *Psal. 137. 1, 2.* in these words, *By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down, &c.* They being many, and the place convenient, there they perform their solemn sacred duties. The affection of him that praie-th is more regarded then the place.

In passing from the charge to the ends of giving it, we may observe a change of number. The charge about such a thing is thus set down in the singular number, *I pre-claimed*: But the expression of the ends in the plurall, thus, *That WEE might afflict OVR selves, &c.* The former

act of proclaiming the fast, belonged only to the chief Governour, which at that time *EXTRA* was to those Jews: but the later acts, of afflicting themselves, and seeking of God a right way, were common duties appertaining to them all; and for the good of them all: In which respect the number is justly and fitly altered, and these plurals used, *WE, OVR, VS.*

That which is here set down as one end of their fasting, in this phrase, *That we might afflict ourselves*, sheweth the extent of a true fast. It must be a fast that may be felt: and that so farre, as they who keep it, may finde and feel a want of that which they have forborn. This may be one branch of a Christians self-deniall, voluntarily to forbeare that which nature requires, and not to afford unto it that which it craveth. *Afflicting themselves* here meant, extendeth both to mens bodies, and also to their souls: For a mans self doth not consist of body only. This extent of a fast is by the law thus expressed, *Ye shall afflict your souls*, Levit. 16. 29. The body is afflicted, when it is denied necessaries, so much and so long as it is very sensible of the want thereof: by a sympathy the soul also may therewith be afflicted. But the soul is further afflicted, when it is grieved and disquieted upon the apprehension of Gods displeasure and wrath for sin, yea and for offending his fatherly goodness: and is thereupon deeply humbled and cast down. By this kinde of afflicting ones self, the body is kept under and brought into subjection, *I keep under my body and bring it into subjection*, saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. 9. 27. Here he useth two words which carry much emphasis, *I keep under*, and *I bring into subjection*. The former word is taken from a Champion or Wrestler that striveth for the mastery: for it hath reference to the

The extent of a fast to afflict ones self, *תענוּת*

Body and soul afflicted.

Non dixit, perdo & punio: sed castigo & in servitutinem redigo: quod Domini est, non hostis. &c. Chrys. Hom. 23. in 1 Cor. 9.

verse,

*Castigo corpus
meum, hoc est,
adversus carnem
pugna. The-
opail. in loc.*

*Difference be-
twixt keeping
the body un-
der, and negle-
cting the body.*

verse, where mention is made of men that strive for the mastery. The later word hath reference to Masters that prudently keep their servants under, especially when they begin to wax insolent or wanton. By the body he means the old man, which is called a body of tin; *Rom. 6.6.* and the flesh which lusteth against the spirit, *Gal. 5. 17.*

Quest. Doth not this seem to justify that which the Apostle condemneth in this phrase, *ἀποδεία σωμα?* neglecting or not sparing the body? *Col. 2. 23.*

Ans. Surely no. There is a great deal of difference betwixt the Apostles mind and meaning in the one and in the other place. For

1. In the former place the word *body* is taken figuratively as was observed before. In the later, properly.

2. In the former place, a man is only restrained from such things as might please the body, but be a prejudice to the soul. In the later the nature of man is weakened.

3. The beating down, mentioned in the former place better enableth a man to holy duties: but neglecting the body, in the later place, doth oft disfigure him therunto.

4. The former is warranted by Gods Word, and required therein, *Ephes. 4. 22.* The later is from mans vain invention.

5. The former is a matter of truth and sincerity: the later of hypocrisy and superstition.

In a word, by keeping the body under the corrupt flesh is tamed: and yet the strength of a mans outward body not impaired: but by neglecting the body, a mans outward body consisting of flesh and bone is weakened, and yet the corrupt flesh not subdued.

The afflicting of themselves mentioned in my text is a branch of that holy *revenge*, which is reckoned up among the fruits of godly sorrow, 2 Cor. 7. 11. and it is an evidence of a *broken spirit and contrite heart*; which David stileth *the sacrifices of God, which he will not despise*, Psal. 51. 17.

Because hypocrites in an apish imitation of the upright, plead that they *afflict their souls*, Isa. 58. 3. it is here required that it be done *before God*. Now all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him (Heb. 4. 13.) As a beast cut up, is in all the inward parts and intrals opened before the Butcher: or an anatomy before the Chyrurgion: So are all the things of a man without and within, known unto God. God discerneth our secret thoughts and inward disposition, *Thou understandest my thoughts as farre off*, saith the Psalmist, Psal. 139. 2. It is proper to God alone *to search the heart and try the reins*, Jer. 17. 10. That therefore is said to be done *before God*, which is done from the heart, inwardly, sincerely.

Duties of piety to be done before God.

לפני אלהינו

Oraturus sedet, quod non sit relictus nisi in conspectu Dei, hoc est, in intimo cordis. Aug. ad simpl. l. 2. q. 4.

This the servants of God doe the rather, because God is their God in an especiall manner. *Before OVR God*, saith this holy Priest and servant of God. Indeed the Lord is a supream Sovereign over all. *All are his servants*, Psal. 119. 91. yet the *Israel of God*, the Church of God is a *chosen Generation, a royall Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People*, 1 Pet. 2. 9. Who now should doe, that which they undertake, *before God*, if not they, who have a speciall right to say of him, *OVR God*? This right they have by vertue of their union with Christ: who thus saith, *I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God*, Joh. 20. 17.

The Lord is speciall the God of Saiants.

Besides by this speciall relation *their God, Jehovah*, who is the only true God, is distinguished from the gods of

The Lord is not as an Idol.

the Heathen, even from idols, *Which have mouths but speak not : eyes, but see not : ears, but hear not, &c. Psal. 115. 5, 6, &c.*

To seek of
God is to pray.
לִבְקֹשׁ אֱלֹהִים

That which followeth in these words, *to seek of him*, setteth down the most proper end of a Fast, and of the extent thereof, by *afflicting ones self*, which is subordinate to *seeking of God*. *To seek of God*, is all one as to pray unto God, and call upon him. They are therefore oft joyned together, as *synonima*, words or phrales of one and the same signification. *Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and you shall finde*, saith Christ, *Mat. 7. 7. I am sought of them that asked not for me, I am found of them that sought me not*, saith the Lord, *Isa. 65. 1.* In these and many other like places, to ask and seek, are put for the same duty, namely, to pray. The Metaphor of *seeking* implieth a carefull using of means for obtaining that which we desire. In this respect the Church thus saith, *I will seek him whom my soul loveth*, *Cant. 3. 2.*

Now because God only could give that which in my text was sought, they make their addresse to God to seek of him.

What a right
way is

דֶּרֶךְ יְשׁוּעָה

That which they seek is here in generall said to be *A right way*. This may be taken literally or metaphorically. According to the letter it implieth a safe and prosperous journey : namely, That the Lord would be pleased so to direct them, as they might not wander out of the way : nor by enemies, or any other means forced to fly this way and that way, but that they might safely come to *Jerusalem*, which was the end of their journey. In this sence it is said of God, in relation to his people at another time, *He led them forth by the RIGHT WAY, that they might goe to the city of habitation*, *Psal. 107. 7.* That thus much is here intended, is evident by the reason of this Fast, thus

set down in the next verse, *For I was ashamed to require of the King a band of souldiers, and horsemen, to help us against the enemy in the way.*

Metaphorically a *Way* is put for a mans conversation or course of life, and this is counted a *right way*, when it is ordered according to the rule of righteousness which is Gods Word. To this purpose the Psalmist thus praieth, *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: And thus promisseth, I will runne the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart, Ps. 119. 27, 32.* This way is called a *good way*, Jer. 6. 16. and a *perfect way*, Ps. 101. 7, 6.

Though the literall fence of a prosperous journey be here especially intended: yet it may also be extended to the metaphoricall fence of a good course of life.

That which they here seek, they seek for many:

1. For themselves. *For VS.* say they, for every one is his own keeper, and hath a charge of himself: every one must care for himself and for his own welfare: and every one is to give an account of himself to God, Rom. 14. 12.

2. They seek a right way for their little ones. Hereby are meant their children: such as could not seek their own good. The Hebrew word *תפ* *taph*, is indeed of the singular number, and never used in the plurall, yet translated in the plurall, *little ones*: for it is a collective word, and signifieth a company of children, and of such as can scarce go. Or if they do go, they do it weakly and staggeringly. They waddle, as we speak. The verb that cometh from the same root, is applied to the gate of haughty women, and thus translated, *Mincing as they go, or tripping nicely*, Isa. 3. 16. The children comprised under the Hebrew word, were such as they, of whom God thus saith, *There are more then six score*

What to be
praised for.
1 Our selves,

לנ

2 Our children
ילדים

thousand persons, that cannot discern betwixt their right hand and their left, Jon. 4. 11. They that were of age and understanding, whether male or female, Governours or under government, joyned all together in the Fast, and are comprised under this particule *VS.* But the *little ones*, who could not joyn with them in that holy duty, are here distinguished from them, and are praised for.

3 Our substance

וכלל
רכושנו

3. With little ones they joyn *all their substance*. That also they pray for. Under this phrase, *All our substance*, cattell of all sorts are comprised, as bullocks, kine, horses, camels, asses, sheep, goats, even all kinde of living and unreasonable creatures, that they carried with them, and were for their use: and all manner of household stuff; and other goods that they had; even the silver and the gold, and vessels that were given to the use of the Temple, whereof mention is made, chap. 7. 15, 16. &c. The hebrew word is רכוש *recush*. It useth to be distinguished from *souls*: namely, from persons that had reasonable souls: as Gen. 12. 9. where it is said, *That Abram took Lot and all their substance, and the souls that they had gotten*: and Gen. 14. 21. where the King of Sodom said unto Abram, *Give me the persons* (heb. *souls*) *and take the goods* (heb. *substance*) *to thy self*.

Temporalia si
desuerint peten-
da sunt. Berno
de 4. modis
et 2d.

Thus these Jews extended their humble and earnest supplication unto God, not only for themselves and their children, but also for their outward estate: even their temporall and worldly commodities.

This of the meaning of the words. The logicall resolution of them follows.

The resolution
of the text.

The Summe of the text being as you heard, *A Direction for obtaining good success in a weighty enterprise*, Two generall points are especially set down therein.

1. The

1. The *Means* used, which was a *Fast*.

2. The *Ends* why the means were used.

About the means there is expressed,

1. A *Preparation* thereunto.

2. The *Execution* thereof.

The *Preparation* was by a *Proclamation*.

The *Execution* is set down, *vers. 23*.

The *Proclamation* is amplified,

1. By the *Person* that caused it : *I proclaimed it*, saith the Governour.

2. By the *Place* where the means was appointed to be used, and that

1. In generall, in this relative particle, *there*.

2. In particular, *At the river Ahava*.

The *Ends* were two.

One subordinate, *That we might afflict our selves*. Here the particles of the plurall number *WE E, O V R*, are remarkable.

The other end is the most principall, *To seek of God*.

The former is amplified by the *Person* before whom they afflicted themselves, who is stiled their God : *Before our God*.

The later is amplified by the *subject matter* that they sought, *A right way* : and by the *Objects* for which they sought it.

The *Objects* were of two kinds.

1. Persons. *Themselves*, and their little ones.

2. Things. *All their substance*.

Theologicall Observations hence arising are these,

1. From the Person that enjoyed all, I observe, That

Publike duties must have their sanction from publike Go-

vernours.

Theologicall
observations.
Observ. 1.

Rex episcoporum
synodum Constantinopolitanam
convocavit.
Socr. l. 5. c. 8.

To such Governours it belongeth to observe the passages of Gods providence, and to consider what warrantable publike duties are by the direction of Gods Word called for, at such and such times, and thereupon to enjoin a publike observation of such duties: to give warrant and liberty for performing them: and to see them duly done.

observ. 2. 2. From the Proclamation I infer, That *Warning is to be given before hand of publike, solemn, sacred duties.*

The Proclamation mentioned in the text, was made to give all the people notice and warning of the Fast. This is the rather to be done, that all of all sorts whom it concerneth may from their severall habitations assemble together: and that they may have some convenient time to prepare themselves thereto.

3. From the Means here enjoyed, which was a Fast, it is evident, That

observ. 3.
Oratio non fit
propter jejuniū,
sed jejuniū
propter oratio-
nem. Chryl.
hom. 15. in
Mat. 6.

Fasting is an especiall help to extraordinary praier. Their meeting was to pray. Their fasting to do that duty more powerfully. Praier is not for fasting, but fasting for praier. It is here said, that they fasted to seek of God a right way: and the issue thereof is thus expressed, *vers. 23. So we fasted and besought our God for this, and he was intreated of us.* Most of the powerfull and effectuall praiers recorded in Scripture, were poured forth on a day of fast. Christ saith of a devil, that by no other means can be cast out, that it may be cast out by praier and fasting, *Mat. 17. 21.*

4. From the Place where this Fast was kept, which was at the river *Abava*: an open and common place, never before set apart: It may be inferred, That

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synodum Constantinopolitanam
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4. From the Place where this Fast was kept, which was at the river *Abana*: an open and common place, never before set apart: It may be inferred, That

In time of need any convenient place may be taken for duties of piety. Observ. 4.

I say, in time of need, because when there is free liberty for people to meet together in publike places set apart for publike duties, it is their duty and it will be their wisdom to take such opportunities, and to make the best use of them that they can. But when such places cannot be conveniently resorted unto, bounden duties are not thereupon to be neglected. This is to make the substance give place to the circumstance. Christs promise of being with his, is thus indefinitely set down, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* Mat. 18. 20.

5. From the Persons that observed the duty, set down in the plurall number, under this particule *WE*, it may be gathered, That

For obtaining common and publike blessings, means are joyntly to be used by all whom it concerns. Observ. 5.

The Proclamation here made tended, to that end, namely to gather them all together for performing the duty mentioned. A little after this, when another occasion of performing a publike duty was given, they were not only by Proclamation summoned together, but also a strict penalty was laid upon such as should not come, Chap. 10. 7, 8. By the assembling of many together, men mutually stir up the zeal, and inflame the affection of one another: and when many joyn bodies and spirits in performing one and the same duty of piety together, that duty is the more honourable to God, and the more powerfull and prevalent with him. If God account himself honoured by one mans calling upon him, he is the more honoured by many mens joyning together therein. As the gathering together of many waters makes the stronger.

Ut nobis mos est pro universis orare, sic & ubique fundimus preces. Iacoph. in 1 Tim 2.

Loquuntur quasi ex uno ore: idcirco orantibus fuit impenetrabilis & efficax sermo. 2^a P. serm. 6. de orat. Dom.

Ex cetera & congregatione multa est fortitudo. Vbi enim fuerint duo aut tres, &c. Chrys. hom. 10. in Heb. 10.

er stream, and the voices of many together, the louder sound, so the joynt prayers of many. This very reason is pressed in his Majesties Proclamation for a publike generall solemn Fast, July 3. 1625. in these words, *In humble hope and confidence, that when both Prince and people together throughout the whole Land, shall joyn in one common and solemn Devotion, of sending up their faithfull and repenting prayers, to Almighty God at one instant of time, the same shall be more available to obtain that mercy, help and comfort from him, which in the present important occasion, this Church and Common-wealth doe stand in need of.*

6. From the subordinate End, which was to afflict themselves, I gather, That

Observ. 6.

A solemn Fast must be such an one as may be felt.

For this end of old they fasted long. *Esther* required, *That they should not eat, nor drink three daies night or day, Esth. 4. 16.* In those hot countries, they could longer forbear food, then we in these cold countries can; and therefore did forbear till they were afflicted. For this end in *Nineveh* they restrained even their beasts from fodder and water, *Jon. 3. 7.* They did also put on sackcloth with ashes, and lay in sackcloth and ashes, *Esth. 4. 1, 3.* All this was to afflict themselves the more, and to bring under their bodies. If a Fast be discreetly ordered, it will tame the rebellion of the flesh, it will binde and keep in compasse inordinate, and exorbitant motions, and subdue immoderate appetites. It will so restrain such things as might hinder prayer, as the soul will be much more free to flie up aloft.

7. From the Person before whom they fasted, namely, *Before God*, I observe, That

Jejunium si discretione regatur, omnem carnalis rebellionem edomat, &c. extra ordinarios morum in cippo claudit & arctat Cypri, Ser. de Jejun.

Observ. 7.

Duties of piety are to be performed as in Gods presence.

We ought to doe nothing, but as in Gods presence : so, as setting God before us. The word *לִפְנֵי הַבְּהֵלֶק*, whereby *Enochs* walking before God is set out, *Gen. 5. 24.* and which is required of *Abram*, *Gen. 17. 1.* implieth a constant, continuall setting of God before their eies. It is of the seventh hebrew conjugation, which importeth a frequent and constant performing of a thing. Learned and judicious *Tremellius* and *Iunius* translate that word *indefinenter ambulare, continually to walk.* If we must in every place, and in every duty that we take in hand, do it before God, much more must we so perform duties of piety, which have a kinde of immediate respect unto God, and wherein we have immediately to do with him. These are most sincerely to be done, because God beholds the very disposition of men, and their purposes while they are in their hearts.

Deum omnium mentes voluntateq; in ipsis adibus clausis peccatoris latebris intuetur. Cypr. Serm. 5. de lapsis

8. From this speciall note of relation *O V R*, here applied to God, thus, *Before our GOD*, it appeareth, That

The Lord is in speciall manner the God of his Church.

observ. 3.

Namely, of those that professe his name and believe on him. Therefore such do not only apply it to themselves, but also others give it unto them : as *Nebuchadnezzar* an Heathen Monarch stiled the Lord, *the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*, *Dan. 3. 28.* and *Darius* another Heathen Monarch, said to *Daniel*, *Thy God whom thou servest, &c.* *Dan. 6. 20.* This is a ground of strong confidence to believers.

9. From the *principall End* of the Fast, which was, *To seek of God, or to pray to God*, it is most manifest, That

Praier is the most principall means of obtaining blessing *observ. 9.*
blessing from God.

Quod Deus per
suam promissit
clementiam per
sanctorum im-
plet preces.
Hier. Com. in
Dan. 9.

This means God himself hath prescribed and enjoyn-
ed for that end: Thereunto hath he made many precious
promises. Hereupon Saints in all ages have used this
means, and found it to be effectual. That which through
his grace he promisseth upon the prayers of his Saints, he
performeth.

10. From the subject matter that is desired, which is
right way; it appears, That

observ. 10. A prosperous journey may be sought of God.

Men in their journeys are subject to many dangers.
The divine Providence can keep them safe from all their
dangers: Yea, he can so order it, that by mistaking of a
way, they may avoid some dangerous plots of enemies
against them. *Austine* relates a story much tending to that
purpose; That in his journey he came to a two-waite
way, or to a place which wene two waies. In that which
led most directly to his journeyes end, an armed troop of
the Donatists lay, to seize upon him; but he ignorantly
fell into the other way, whereby he escaped that troop,
and going the wrong way, though farthest about, came
safely to his journeyes end, and praised God for that mi-
stake of his way. God giveth to such as seek it of him,

Angels to keep them in all their waies, *Psal. 91. 11.* The
Heathen supposed that there were certain gods who di-
rected such as called upon them in their right way, and
gave them a prosperous journey. These they called

Evoni. But indeed it is *Jehovah* only that is properly the
director of our waies, *In all thy waies acknowledge him, and
he shall direct thy paths*, *Prov. 3. 6.* This may also be ap-
plied to the metaphorical interpretation of this phrase, *A
right way.*

11. From the first sort of *Persons* for whom they pray,
which were themselves, I collect, That

Nobis ipsi ac-
cidit, ut in quo-
dam bivio false-
remur; & non
tremus per eum
locum, ubi ope-
riens transiit
nostrum Dona-
tistarum, quibus
armata subse-
derat: atq; ita
factum est, ut
coquo tendeba-
mus, per devium
circuitum veni-
remus: cogni-
tiq; insidii il-
lorum, nos gra-
tularemur er-
rass: atq; inde
gratias agere-
mus *Leo. Aug.*
Enchirid. ad Lau.
sap. 17.

Men must especially seek blessing for themselves.

Every man is nearest to himself: and a man's self is the rule of the love of his neighbour: for thus saith the Law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* Mar. 22. 39. I may make from hence such an inference as the Apostle doth from a Bishops ruling his own house, *If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?* 1 Tim. 3. 5. In like manner if a man know not how to seek his own good, how shall he take care for the good of others?

Observ. 11.

12. From the second sort of *Persons*, which were their *little ones*, I further observe, That

Blessing is to be sought for our young children.

Observ. 12.

Even for such as cannot seek in for themselves. Their welfare is a means of continuing not the world only, but the Church also in the world. We are mortall, and shall not always abide here to serve the Lord. As our fathers, who served God in their generations, are gone, so shall we after a short time: God knows how soon. But by procuring Gods blessing on our *little ones*, they may grow up, they may know God and serve him in their generation, after we are taken from them. Thus may the eternall God be everlastingly served by mortall men: one generation serving him after another. To sharpen our prayers, and strengthen our faith in craving a blessing for our *little ones*, we may plead before God that which God himself saies of the children of the *Israelites*, that they were *born to him*, and were *his children*, Ezek. 16. 20, 21. On this ground, though our unworthinesse make us fear that God may curse them rather then blesse them, because they are *ours*, yet we may herewith uphold our spirits, that they are Gods children, *born to him*: and thereupon pray that God for his own sake would blesse them.

13. From the *Things* for which God was sought, which are here called, *All their substance*, it appears, That

Observ. 13. Blessing may be sought of God for our temporall estate.

Omnia ista bona sunt, & Dei munera sunt. Ne putetis quod aliquis illa poterit dare, nisi unus Deus. Aug. Enar in Ps. 35.

The fourth Petition of the Lords praier (*Give us this day our daily bread*, Mat. 6. 11.) giveth evidence to the truth hereof. Though, through mans ordinary abuse of the goods of this world, Christ stileth them, *Mammon of unrighteousnesse*, yet he advileth us to *make to our selves friends thereof*, Luk. 16. 9. They are necessary for the very being of our bodies. Life, health, strength, are preserved by them. They may be a means of continuing the Ministry of Gods Word and Ordinances among us: and we by them may be many waies helped, even about the service of God.

These are the distinct Instructions which this text affordeth. They are many and weighty. It cannot be expected that I should handle them all at this time in any large manner. I will therefore collect one generall observation, wherein the main scope and drift of the text shall be set forth: and which shall comprise under it, most, if not all, of the points before noted: It is this,

The generall
Doctrine.

In a matter extraordinary, extraordinary means must be used.

To shew that this doctrine is the main intendment of my text, two things are to be demonstrated.

1. The *Case*, that it was extraordinary.
2. The *Means*, that they were extraordinary.

Each of these may be made manifest in seven particular branches a piece.

The extraor-
dinary case of
the Jews,

1. These Jews were in a *strange land*. So is the land of their captivity stiled, *Ps. 137. 1.* where thus they say, *How shall we sing the Lords song in a strange land.*

2. They

2. They were at this time *captives*: for notwithstanding this, and a former return from the place of their captivity, they were, even after this, counted and called, *children of the captivity*, Chap. 10. 7. 16.

3. The name of a Jew, was odious among the Heathen. Many envied them for their religion and professions sake. When *Zerubbabel* went to *Jerusalem* he found *adversaries*, *Ezra* 4. 1. when afterward *Nehemiah* went, he found those who much envied that there was a man come to seek the welfare of the children of Israel, *Neh.* 2. 10. *Haman* could suggest to the King of Persia, That the laws of the Jews were divers from all people, and that it was not for the Kings profit to suffer them, *Esth.* 3. 8. Yea many laid wait for *Ezra* and his company in the way, *vers.* 31.

4. They had no outward guard of horse or foot, for *Ezra* was ashamed to require of the King a band of souldiers and horsemen to help them against the enemy in the way, because they had spoken unto the King, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good, that seek him, *vers.* 22. Thus they engaged Gods honour in this case, which maketh it the more extraordinary.

5. Of themselves they could not go the right way. Their seeking this of God implies as much.

6. They had the care of many little ones lying upon them. This made their case the more difficult.

7. They had a great charge with them: as their own cattel and goods: and a great summe of silver and gold, which the King and his Councellours had freely offered unto the God of Israel: and store of vessels for the service of God, *v.* 33. Chap. 7. 15.

Do not all these particular circumstances make their present case to be more then an ordinary case?

Answerably the means which they used were extraordinary: as is evident by a like number of particular instances.

The extraordinary means which the Jews used.

1. A publike *Proclamation* was made to call them all together, and to give them warning before hand that they might come prepared. Proclamations use not to be made but in weighty matters.

2. A *Fast* was enjoined. Fasting hath been before noted to be an extraordinary act of piety.

3. For want of a Synagogue, or a Temple, they continue their fast in the open air *by a river side*. This was more then usuall.

4. They extend their fast to *afflict themselves*, that they might sensibly feel it.

5. They do it not in appearance only, but really, in truth *before God*.

6. They do not only wish for what they needed, but they earnestly *seek* it of God.

7. They plead a speciall relation betwixt God and themselves, in this phrase, *O V R God*.

Lay together the particulars of their *Case*, and of the *Means* that they used, and you shall finde the one and the other to be extraordinary: yea you may also observe all the particulars of the text couched within this doctrine, *In a matter extraordinary, extraordinary means must be used*.

Extraordinary cases.

1. Obtaining of regaining blessings.

This course hath Gods Church taken throughout all ages, in all manner of extraordinary cases: and that

1. For obtaining good things.

2. For removing evils: and both these about spirituall and temporall, publike and private matters.

For *good things*, extraordinary prayer hath been made, when Saints and servants of God have seen them

need-

needfull *then* to be granted; or when they have been *withheld*: or when they have been *withdrawn* and taken away.

This may be exemplified in sundry particulars.

Moses earnestly prayed for a good *Governour* to succeed him, *Numb. 27. 16.* Christ spent a whole night in prayer immediately before his choosing of *Apostles*, *Luk. 6. 12, 13.* The *Apostles* ordained *Elders* in every Church *with prayer and fasting*, *Act. 14. 23.* The Church *fasted and prayed* when *Barnabas* and *Saul* were separated to the work, whereunto God called them, *Act. 13. 3.* The like course should be taken by us in ordaining *Ministers*, and setting *Officers* in their severall places: yea and in enterprising weighty affairs of more then ordinary concernment.

Speciall blessings extraordinarily prayed for.

Much more ought this course to be taken when desired and expected blessings are *withheld*. This was *Hannahs* case, which mov'd her to *weep and fast*, and *pour out her soul before the Lord*, *1 Sam. 1. 7, 15.*

Most of all isthis to be done, when blessings are *withdrawn* and taken away: especially if they be *spirituall* blessings. The sensible presence, powerfull assistance, and sweet comfort of the Spirit, being *withdrawn* from *David*, upon the great sins which he committed in the case of *Bathsheba* and her husband, he penned the one and fiftieth Psalm, which manifesteth an extraordinary wrestling with the Lord, to have those blessings restored to him again. His wrestling in this case was like *Jacobs*, who would not let the Lord go unless he blessed him, *Gen. 32. 16.*

Evils against which extraordinary prayer is to be made, are sins or judgements.

Against sins, such prayers are to be made, to prevent them,

2. Preventing or removing evils.
Hoc est totum quod desideramus, i.e. peccatum et peccati Aug. de ver. rel. g. 6. 11.

them, or redresse them. For preventing sinne, Christ commandeth his Disciples to *watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation*, Mat. 24. 41. By temptations men are drawn to sin. By being freed from the temptation or assisted and supported in being in the temptation, sin may be prevented, Gen. 20. 6. & 39. 7, 8, &c.

For redressing sin after we are fallen into it, two things are to be praied for:

One that God would be pleased to pardon it. It was an earnest praier in this case that he poured out, who thus praied, *For thy names sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquitie: for it is great*, Psal. 25. 11. And again thus, *According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions*, Psal. 51. 1.

The other is, that God would work in us repentance, as he who thus praied, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned: for thou art the Lord my God*, Jer. 31. 18. The more dangerous the temptations unto sin, whereunto we are subject, are, and the more hainous the sins are whereinto we have fallen, the more earnest ought our praiers, in this case to be.

Judgements, against which extraordinary praier is to be made, are such as are threatned, and in that respect to be feared; or executed, and in that respect felt. Against the former, the King and people of *Nineveh* fasted and cried mightily unto God, *Jon.* 3. 7, 8. Thus was that doom reversed and judgment prevented. The like may be done in a preparation to a judgment before it be put into execution. *Haman* had prepared a terrible massacre to destroy all the Jews: but before his cruell plot began to be put in execution, *Mordecai, Esther*, and all the Jews, *Fasted three daies together* (Esth. 4. 16, 17.) Thus the execution of that judgment, so prepared, was prevented.

Executi-

How judgements to be praied against.
Ipse Dominus frequenter suam mutat sententiam. Nam propositum erat percutere mortem & perdere populum sed postea rogatus à Moyse, reconciliatus est populo suo
 Ambr. Offic. l. 3. c. 12.

Execution of judgement may be considered either in the beginning, or in the full accomplishment of it. A judgement was begun when the *Philistims* were gathered together to *Mizpeh*: but *Samuel* cried unto the Lord, and the Lord destroyed them before *Israel*, 1 Sam. 7. 7, 10. On *Ananias* the judgement was executed to the full, in that he was taken by his enemy, bound with fetters, and carried to *Babylon*: but when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly, and so was freed from that judgement: For he was brought again into his kingdom, 2 Chron. 33. 12, 13. As extraordinary prayer, in these and other like cases, is to be made on our own behalf, so also on the behalf of others. *Moses* his mighty prayers (by one of which God was moved to say, *Let me alone*: and in another *Moses* himself was moved thus to say, *If thou wilt not forgive their sin, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book*, &c.) were made in the behalf of others, *Exod.* 32. 10, 32.

Weighty grounds there are to presse this point of extraordinary prayer in extraordinary cases.

1. We shew thereby that we take notice of Gods foot-steps, that is, of his carriage towards us, and of his dealing with us.

2. We give evidence that we are answerably affected: In that according to the need wherein we stand of his favour, we doe the more earnestly seek it: and the more heavily we feel his hand lying upon us, the more deeply we are humbled, and doe the more earnestly desire that it may be removed from us. Surely such a disposition cannot be but very acceptable unto God. God much approves those who prize his favour and blessing above all other things, and who are much grieved upon the apprehension of his displeasure against them. Now extra-

Reasons for extraordinary prayer.

1 Thereby is shewed how we are affected with Gods dealing with us

*Nonne oratio
sic tepida est,
vel potius fri-
gida, & pene
nulla, ut neq;
hec in nobis cum
dolore adverta-
mus? Aug. ad
Simplic. l. 1.
quæst. 2.*

ordinary praier, for obtaining his favour and blessing, or for removing his wrath and judgements, gives proof of such a disposition. There are many who (like mill-horses still going round in their usuall tract) content themselves with an ordinary manner of praying: and never take the occasions which by the divine providence are offered for extraordinary praier. So cold are their praiers and livelesse, as they are never troubled at the fruitlesnesse of them, but think all is well in that they are not such Atheists as never call upon God. These plainly discover that small, or no notice at all, that they take of Gods dealing with them. Yea they doe further discover a senselesse and wretched disposition, in that they care not to use the means that are sanctified for obtaining the good things whereof they stand in need, or removing the evils, which lie heavy upon them. Thus it comes to passe that they want many blessings, which otherwise they might have: and lie long under many judgements, which might have been removed, if the fore-said means had been duly used.

a Extraordinary praier is extraordinarily powerfull. *Grasertiter, & dic Deo, In necessitatibus evae me. Tunc finiantur istae necessitates. Aug. Nediib. ep. 71.*

2. Another ground to presse extraordinary praier in an extraordinary case, is Gods usual dealing with men according to their dealing with him: even according to the manner and measure of seeking this or that of him. Praier more then ordinary is more then ordinarily powerfull. In stance, this in my Text: for thus it is said, *ver. 23. We fasted and besought our God for this, and he was intreated of us.* Many and admirable have been the effects of praier and fasting recorded in Gods Word: and those sometimes for preventing or removing great judgements: and sometimes for obtaining or regaining singular blessings. Proofs hereof you heard before. This in general I dare boldly affirm, That praier and fasting, being rightly used,

sed,

fed, was never used in vain : but some speciall and extraordinary effect followed thereupon.

Though that particular for which *David* praied and fasted, *and lay all night upon the earth*; namely, the life of his sick childe, were not granted (2 Sam. 12. 16, 18.) yet was not that extraordinary means, which he used, in vain: For

1. That humiliation, supplication and afflicting of himself, was a service warranted by Gods Word, and acceptable unto God.

2. Though God restored not to the childe his naturall life : yet he bestowed upon it eternall life : which may be inferred out of these words which *David* used to comfort himself, *I shall goe to him*, 2 Samuel 12. 23.

3. God gave him another son, and that of the same mother, a *Salomon*, a *Jedediah* (2 Sam. 12. 24, 25.) A Prince of peace, beloved of the Lord, who, by Gods appointment succeeded *David* on the Throne. It is observable how the Lord had respect to *Ahabs* humbling himself before God : for thereby he was moved to put off the judgement denounced, all his daies, 1 King. 21. 29.

True it is, that hypocrites have thus expostulated this case with God, *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge?* But the fault is there laid upon themselves, *That they fasted for strife and debate, &c.* Their fast was not such an one as the Lord had chosen: *So as the Lords hand was not shortened, that it could not save : nor his ear heavy, that it could not hear : but their iniquities had separated between them and their God, and their sins had hid his face from them, that he would not hear,* Isa. 59. 1, 2.

Let us therefore that do what is warrantable, do it uprightly and fervently : so may we do it in faith, and be sure to have it accepted. *All things are possible to him that believeth*, Mark 9.23. Surely we fail of much benefit that we might receive from our prayers, for want of faith.

3. By extraordinary prayer extraordinary honour is due to God.

3. I might here adde, that by fasting and prayer, which is an extraordinary humbling of our selves before God, and an extraordinary manner of craving blessing of him, extraordinary honour is done unto him : for the more we humble our selves for his displeasure, and stoop under his strokes, the greater testimony we give, not only to the greatnesse of his wrath and indignation : but also to the justice and equity of his judgements : and the more earnestly we call on him for favour and blessing, the greater evidence we give of our high esteem of them. Now by how much the more God is acknowledged and justified in his judgements, and by how much the more Gods favour and blessings are prized, by so much the more is the Lord glorified. For Gods honour is much set forth in and by mans acknowledgement of his justice and mercy. And who would not doe to his uttermost what he can to set forth the Lords honour ? This third ground of the fore-said duty is the weightiest of all the rest.

Nihil magis agendum est Christianis, quam ut in omni opera ejus Dei gloria predicetur.
Hier. Com. in
1 Cor. 10.

If these motives be not of force to enforce this duty of extraordinary supplication, in an extraordinary case, I know not what motives may be of force to enforce a duty.

Come we now therefore to the Application of the Point.

1. Too great cause of just complaint may here be taken up, by reason of mens slight and carelesse observing those

Lamentation
for mens
sighting falls

those means which are warranted and prescribed by Gods Word, for pacifying his wrath, and procuring his favour. The Lord may justly upbraid to us our fasts, as he did to the *Israelites* before mentioned, *Isa.* 58. 3, &c.

This complaint may justly be taken up, not only against the prophaner sort of people, but also against many that look *Sion-ward*. There be of them that on our monethly daies of fast, not only forbear to joyn with the assembly of Gods people in those solemn sacred duties: but also follow their secular affairs: yea their pleasures and pastimes, in a kinde of dislike, if not a detestation of these duties. I will not lay to their charge their disavowing of these duties, as it so be they thought fasting and praier unlawfull: but their disesteem of our monethly daies enjoyed by publike authority. The authority was first his Majesties Proclamation, straitly charging and commanding, *That a Generall, Publike and Solemn Fast be kept and held on the last Wednesday of every month, during the troubles in the Kingdome of Ireland.* This Proclamation was given the eight day of *January* in the seven-teenth of his Majesties reign. It hath been also ratified by sundry Orders and Ordinances of Parliament, for a due observing thereof; and it hath continued now almost seven whole years, and that upon just and weighty causes: for the very ground of that Proclamation still remaineth, namely, *The lamentable and distressed estate of Ireland.* Now why this monethly fast should not be duly observed, I see no good reason. It may be, that it is disesteemed by many, because it is enjoyed by authority. But that seems to me a strange reason, that that which is a ground warranted by Gods Word (as out of this text we have formerly shewed) should be a

The ground of
our monethly
fasts.

reason to flight it. I know not how it comes to passe, but so it is, that mens mindes are averse from such things as are enjoyned by authority, though they be things lawfull and agreeable to Gods Word. Never were Orders and Ordinances of Parliament more slighted then now, and that in things that concern their own good. *O tempora! O mores!* To what times are we reserved? What are the mindes and manners of men?

Fasts may be continued while the occasion remains

But it may be, that another thing scruples their consciences, namely, the set times of fast, that it is such a day in every moneth.

I grant that if there were not a continued occasion of this constant course, there might be some ground of scruple: but that particular ground of enjoyning this monethly fast, still remaining, and other weighty grounds also more nearly concerning us, namely, the troubles of our own Kingdome, why should we not persevere in using the means for averting Gods wrath, and the fearfull effects thereof from us? That which is recorded of the *Jews* annual fasting, in certain set moeaths, seventy years together (because the judgements, which moved them first to take up those fasts, continued so long) may be a warrant for our continued monethly fasts. For they are so mentioned by the Prophet (*Zech. 7.5. & 8.19.*) as they are rather ratified then disavowed.

No marvel that Gods judgements have so long lien upon us, and our neighbouring Nations, seeing the means of removing them are by most either despised, or too much slighted.

The great complaint of pious Christians in former times was, that publike fasts were not enjoyned by publike authority. Sometimes a dozen, sometimes more years passed in this Land and Kingdome without any publike.

Publike fasts in former times rare,
Quid mirum si Christianis temporibus iste mundus tamquam servus jam sciens voluntatem Domini sui & faciens digna placis vapulet multis Aug. viii. ep. 122.

publike fasts, and yet sundry Parliaments called in those years: sundry Armies sent forth, and sundry judgements inflicted. I can remember a solemn fast proclaimed, and most solemnly kept in the year 1588. upon the approach of that Spanish Armado, that carried the stile of *Invincible*. Admirable was the blessing that followed upon that fast: for soon after, that proud *Armado* was strangely dissipated. I doe not well remember another publike fast betwixt that and the first year of King *James*, wherein was such a raging Plague, as we have not heard of the like before in this Land. Thereupon a weekly fast was enjoyned by publike authority, till it pleased God to remove that plague.

Very few publike fasts were betwixt that and another greater plague, in the year, 1625. when there was also a weekly fast enjoyned by publike authority: at which time God gave a very gracious return to the prayers of his people: for the plague decreased much faster then it increased, and in short time from the number of five thousand two hundred and five that died in one week, it came so utterly to cease, as not one at all to die of that sickness.

If it be said, that in thosetimest wherein there were so few or no fasts, God exceedingly blessed this Kingdom, I answer:

1. That God might put off his displeasure for neglect of those duties, till after and worse times, and that he may in these our daies, remember that neglect. Such an answer doth *Jeremy* give to the men of *Judah* that made such an objection, *Jer. 44. 17.*

2. Though there were not such extraordinary means publicly used: yet they were by pious and devout Christians privately, and that frequently and fervently used.

Frequent fasts
of old in pri-
vate.

Ne-

Never was a Parliament called, never was an Army sent forth, never was there any publike weighty occasion, but that such Christians as are before mentioned, assembled together, by praier and fasting, to seek a blessing of God. I well remember, that at that very time when the Gun-powder treason was discovered (a Parliament being summoned) there were many assemblies that by praier and fasting, earnestly sought of God a blessing upon that Parliament. Have we not cause to judge, that God had a gracious respect to the praiers of his children, who almost miraculously discovered such a dangerous, devilish and matchlesse treason, as the Gun-powder treason was.

Thorow the good providence of God, we have had more fasts by publike authority enjoyned, in the reiga of our present Sovereign, especially since the beginning of this Parliament, then before time from the beginning of the Reformation of Religion. But they have been so sleightly and carelessly performed, as we have cause to fear, that this among other sins, hath been one that hath caused Gods heavy wrath so long to lie upon us. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

But to leave complaints, the Doctrine which you have heard largely handled, doth justifie that courle which the great Council of this Land hath taken about this daies fast. The means that we use, hath been shewed to be extraordinary. He that sees not that the case wherein we now are, and the occasion of this daies solemnity is extraordinary, is blinde, and cannot see far off.

I will not now stand to aggravate this civil war (the severest of Gods judgements) nor bring to your minde the houses, Towns, and Cities that have been burnt or plundered, or spoiled: nor the distressed estates of many who

The weighty
occasion of
this daies fast.

The calamities
of these times.

who in a night of a rich *Job* have bin made a poor *Job*: nor the abundance of blood that hath been shed: nor the alienation of affections, and bitter contentions that have been betwixt such as have been near in blood and alliance, in neighbourhood and friendship, yea also and betwixt such as professe in truth and sincerity to seek the right and perfect way of the LORD: neither will I here insist upon the errours, heresies, and blasphemies that in these daies are published: nor the great rent that is made in this Church by schisme. These and other like occasions of humbling our selves deeply before the LORD, and of crying mightily unto him, I now let passe.

The particular occasion of fasting and praying on this day is to obtain a blessing from heaven upon the Treaty betwixt his Majesty and our Parliament, that is now thorough Gods blessing agreed upon.

Surely this is a very extraordinary case, and that in regard of the *Necessity, Excellency, and Difficulty of the matter undertaken.*

i. Such have been the evils of this civil war (whereof a taste was given before) and many of them do so continue to increase more and more, as there is a kinde of necessity of a good accommodation for composing our differences: and for settling a safe and well-grounded Peace: which cannot better be effected then by a Treaty. Such divisions, such contentions, such confusions there are in this Kingdome, as it is in danger to be utterly ruined, if some speedy course be not taken to repair, close up and heal the breaches thereof. It was in the case of a civill warre, that the chief Commander on the one side, said to the other, *Shall the sword devour for ever? Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the later*

The necessity
of a Treaty.

end, 2 Sam. 2. 26. Bitternesse there must needs be in such a kinde of warre, because on which side soever the victory falleth, *Israelites*, members of the Church, Professours of the faith are destroyed. Though the conquered did presse that bitternesse, yet the Conquerour gave over thereupon. O that they who thorow the divine providence have been kept from the extremity of this warre, would lay to heart the condition of them that have felt it: not of them only who have been on the other side: but of many also who have been on our own side! They would then see a necessity of a fair composing our differences, and of yeelding to an accommodation, *usq; ad aras*, so far as may stand with the truth and purity of Religion.

Weighty matters to be treated on.

I might hereunto have added the benefits of peace. But these have bin distinctly and largely set down in my Treatise of the Churches conquest, on Exo. 17. 16. §. 96.

2. The main and principall matter of this Treaty, shews the excellency, weight and worth of it. It concerns King, Parliament and Kingdome. The prerogatives of the one, priviledges of the other, and liberties of the third. It concerns the Church and Common-wealth, and the good government of both. It concerns the settling of a distracted Kingdome in peace and quietnesse: and the establishing of Religion in truth, purity and power. It concerns the reconciling of adverse parties, even such as have been in open hostility one against another; and thereby to put an end to a long, unnaturall, bloody, civil war. What more weighty matters can be treated about.

The great obstacles that lie in the way.

3. The difficulty of bringing this Treaty to a good issue appears in these and other like particulars: That principles, of old learned, must be unlearned: That long resolved judgements in sundry cases, must be upon better information, unresolved: That *jus divinum* held in opposite cases must be cleared and demonstrated to which case it

it belongeth : That inbred scruples of conscience must be rooted out : That imbittered and alienated affections must be altered : That incensed and exasperated spirits must be calmed : That hostile friends must be reconciled : That vast debts must be discharged : That the arrears of numberlesse souldiers must be satisfied : That restitution of ships, goods, lands, heriditaments, livings, offices, and other interests must be made : That indemnity for manifold outrages must be given, and a generall oblivion of wrongs must be granted ; and burthens of the Kingdome taken off.

Now who can hope that these and sundry other difficulties can be removed for settling a good lasting peace. Yet surely they must be removed, ora sound peace will hardly be settled. God to whom all things are possible can do it. *He can exalt every valley, and make low every mountain and hill : He can make straight that which is crooked, and the rough places plain. He can cause the Wolf to dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard to lie down with the Kid : and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the fatling together, and a little Childe to lead them : and the Cow and the Bare to feed : their young ones to lie down together : and the lion to eat straw like the Oxe.*

God can overcome all difficulties.

Isa 40.4.

11.6.7*

The God that hath promised to work such strange works can remove the afore-said difficulties, and greater then them. But he is to be sought unto, and the more difficult the case is, the more earnest and fervent must our praier be. *When Herod had apprehended Peter, and put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternians of souldiers, intending to bring him forth to the people, and to slay him : praier was made without ceasing, or instant and earnest praier was made of the Church unto God for him, and God so heard their praier as he delivered Peter, A.C. 12.4. &c.*

God more then ordinarily to be sought unto

Hester cum ha-
beret necessitatē
interveniendi
pro populo suo,
quem Rex ubi-
cunq; in regno
ejus esset, jussit
rat tractari,
oravit ad Do-
minum: coquebat
enim eam ma-
gna necessitas,
&c. Aug. de
Gra & lib.
arb. o. 21.

Who would have thought that the mischievous device of *Haman*, should have turned to such an advantage unto the Church as it did? But that was from the Lord, and obtained by fasting and praier, *Esth. 4. 17.*

O let us make earnest and instant praier without ceasing to our God, that he would send down his Spirit to be a Commissioner among other Commissioners that are to treat about peace: yea that his Spirit would be in every of the Commissioners, and in our King and Parliament also, to bring their spirits to yeeld to that which may make to a good peace: So as *mercie and truth may meet together, and righteousness and peace kisse each other, Psal. 85. 10. The Kings heart is in the hand of the Lord as rivers of water: he turneth it whither he will, Prov. 21. 1.*

This phrase, *Rivers of water*, may be here used *metaphorically* or *literally*. If *metaphorically*, the *metaphor* may be taken from Gardiners, or marsh-keepers, who use to let in streams of water into their gardens, orchards, or medows, when and where they think good: and to let them out when they will. If *literally*, the phrase may have reference to former acts of Gods turning waters from their naturall course, as it pleased him. *For the Lord caused the sea to go back*, and thereby saved the *Israelites*, but destroyed the *Egyptians*, *Exod. 14. 21, &c.* He made also the waters of *Jordan* to stay their course, till all *Israel* passed over into *Canaan*, *Josh. 3. 16.* To these evidences of Gods power over the waters hath the *Psalmist* reference, *Psal. 114. 3, 5.* where he thus saith, *The sea saw it and fled: Jordan was driven back. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? and thou Iordan, that thou wast driven back? The Lord also opened a rock, and the waters gushed out: they ran in the dry places like a river, Psal. 105. 41.* The *Apostle*, in reference herunto, saith, *That the Rock followed them,*

them, 1 Cor. 10. 4. by the rock metonymically he meaneth the waters that flowed out of the rock; and they, by Gods ordering providence ran along in those places whither the *Israelites* removed their severall stations, and so followed them. The Lord also upon *Elyah's* smiting the waters of *Jordan*, divided them hither and thither. So did he again, when *Elisha* went over *Jordan*, 2 King. 2. 8, 14. It is also noted, that when the armies of *Judah*, *Israel* and *Edom* were in a dry place where was no water, unexpectedly there came water, and the country was filled with water, 2 King. 3. 20. This was done by the Lord. It is expressly said, *Psal.* 107. 37. that the Lord turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground. And again, *vers.* 35. He turns the wilderness into a standing water, and dry grounds into water-springs. All these and other like instances evidently demonstrate, that the Lord hath such power over rivers of water, as he can turn and order them; as it pleases him. Now waters running in rivers have a violent course. He therefore that can turn them, can much more turn the hearts of Kings. Kings are men: and the Almighty altereth in the hearts of men, even he motions of their will, that he may do by them, what he will do by them. To instance this in Kings, God turned the heart of *Pharaoh* to *Abram* (*Gen.* 12. 19, 20.) of *Abimelech* to *Isaac* (*Gen.* 26. 11.) of another *Pharaoh* to *Ioseph* (*Gen.* 41. 39.) Of *Achish* to *David* (1 Sam. 17. 6.) Of *Ahab* to *Elyah* (2 King. 1. 15.) Of *Iehoram* to *Elisha* (2 King. 6. 32, 33.) Of *Nebuchadnezzar* to *Jeremiah* (*Ier.* 39. 11, 12.) to *Daniel* and his three companions (*Dan.* 2. 48, 49.) Of *Evilmerodach* to *Iehojachin* (2 King. 25. 27.) Of *Cyrus* to the Jews (*Ezra* 1. 1.) Of *Darius* also to them (*Ezra* 6. 7, &c.) Of *Artaxerxes* to *Ezra* (*Ezra* 7. 6.) and to *Nehemiah* (*Nehem.* 2. 8.) Of *Abasuerus* to *Esther* and *Mordecai* (*Est.* 2. 17. and 6. 10.)

Agit omnipotens in cordibus humanis etiam motum voluntatis eorum ut per eos agat quod ipse voluerit.
A. de gra. & lib. Arb. c. 21.

6.10.) Of *Agrippa to Paul* (*Act. 26.28, 32.*) and of many others. If thus the Lord have the Kings heart in his hand, much more the hearts of others. Kings, by reason of their supreme power, and the dependence of many on them, use to be most resolute and inflexible in their purposes. He then that can turn *their* heart, whose heart can he not turn? God so hath the wils of all in his own power, as he can make them inclinable whither he will, and when he will: yea though they be many consulting and consenting together about the same thing. For *multitudes* are but as many waters (*Rev. 17.1, 15.*) He that can turn the one, can turn the other. Though most of the Tribes had held with the house of *Saul* against *David*, yet God so wrought upon their hearts, as all the Tribes of *Israel* came to *David*, and said, *Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh*, 2 *Sam. 5.1*. And when they had revolted from *David* to *Abalom*, a while after all the people were at strife to bring king *David* to his throne again. Yea the men of *Judah* having also revolted from *David*, it is noted, that the heart of all the men of *Judah* was bowed even as the heart of one man unto the King, 2 *Sam. 19.9, 14*. There was a Councell of malicious enemies gathered together against the Apostles: but upon the advice of *Gamaliel*, they all agreed to let the Apostles go, *Act. 5.40*. Thus we see how God can make Councils and multitudes to yeeld to good advice, though it be against their former principles.

Were our hearts well disposed to the duty of praier which we have in hand, and did we perform it in faith and with fervency, it might be said of our performance, as it was said of that performance which the *Jews* did in my text, *So we fasted and besought our God for this, and he was intreated of us*, v. 23.

F I N I S.

*Omnia n. volun-
tates ita sunt in
Dei potestate,
ut eas quo vo-
luerit, quando
voluerit faciat
inclinari Aug.
d: Gra & lib.
Arb c. 20.*