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THE
SHEPHERD
OF
ISRAEL,
OR
God's *Pastoral* Care over His
PEOPLE.

Delivered in Divers Sermons on the Whole
Twenty-third P S A L M.

Together with
The DOCTRINE of
Providence

Practically handled
On M A T T H. 10. 29, 30, 31.

By that Reverend and Faithful Minister of the Gospel
Mr. OBADIAH SEDGWICK, B. D.

Perfected by himself, and Perused by those whom
He intrusted with the publishing of his Works.

L O N D O N,
Printed by D. Maxwell for SA. GELLIBRAND at the BALL
In S. Pauls Church-yard, 1658.

unfortunate A Brooke 1677

OF

THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

ASSOCIATION

OF THE

PROFESSORS

OF THE

ARTS AND SCIENCES

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF

THE

STATE OF

NEW YORK

IN THE

YEAR 1850

To the Christian R E A D E R.

A L L Books of worth relating to Christian Religion, after that Book of books *קראן*
הקדושים The holy Scriptures, are but Conduit-pipes to conveigh unto particular uses those most pretious Truths which are in general comprised in them; as a full Cistern supplied immediately out of the One, True, Living Fountain of all illivening Truth, the Onely, Very, Living God. The highest end of Scripture-bred Faith, in reference to Believers, is the Salvation of their Souls; yet doth this Honey-comb likewise drop much sweetness unto them whilst they are in the body; for it giveth them rest in perplexities, security in dangers, advantage in losses, abundance in wants, comfort in troubles, stability in changes, content and quietness in all, even the most distracted conditions, enabling them to live continually upon that *אל שר* that All-mighty, All-sufficient God, who is ever flowing out in the oil of gladness to those whose hearts are kept up, open and empty, through Faith to receive of his fulness. Two special Brests of Consolation the Lord affordeth to Believers, that they may by Faith suck sweetest comfort from them, that is to say, special Promises, and Special Providence, both which are so advantageously drawn out, and held out to

believers in the two ensuing Tracts compiled by that man of Name Mr. OBADIAH SEDGWICK, according to the wisdom and skill in the work of the Ministry given to him, that he who shall stay the Reader with any long Preface from a present reaping the fruit of the labours of such an Author, on such a Subject, must needs put himself upon an Apology, which we chuse rather not to need, then to make use of in this case. And therefore Christian Reader we shall onely assure thee, that these two Tracts upon *Psal. 23.* and *Mat. 10. 29.* are the genuine labours of the Reverend Author now with God; the care of whose Manuscripts is by his *Will* committed to us: We leave the following Tracts to thy study, and thy study to Gods blessing, with heartiest desire, that through Gods blessing on thy studies, the Authors ends of these his labours may be attained in thee, which we are most assured were *Thy good, and Gods glory.* We would be glad in exchange for what is now by us handed to thee, to receive from thee hearty prayers for

March. 26. 1658.

The unworthy servants of the
Lord JESUS,

Humfry Chambers.

Simeon Ashe.

Edmund Calamy.

Adaniram Byfields.



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AN EXPOSITION

Upon the 23^d.

PSALM.

PSAL. 23. 1.

*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall
not want.*



Hether the whole book of *Psalms*, were penned by *David*, as *S. Austin* conjectures, or rather, some by *David*, some by *Asaph*, some by *Moses*, some by *Solomon*, as *Eusebius*, *Athanasius*, *Hilary* and *Hierom* conjecture, it is no necessity to argue; sure we are that they are all of them dictated by the *Holy-Ghost*, and then it matters not much whose pen wrote them.

Many of them (questionless) ow themselves to *David*, of which (as *Athanasius* and others well observe) some are onely

narratory, others are monitory, others are prophetic or predi-
ctory, others are petitional or precatory, others are laudatory
or eucharistical, others are deprecatory, others are consolatory,
and most of them are mixt, sometimes with petition and de-
precation, sometimes with petition and praise; so sweetly di-
verse is the Spirit of God in this book of Psalms.

This Psalm (which by Gods grace and assistance) I intend
to go through, is a singular Psalm of David, as you may read
in the Title מִזְמֹר לְדָוִד *Mizmor le David* A Song or Psalm of
David. It is partly

Eucharistical, praising for blessings received. Every mer-
cy should be answered with a harmony of thanks.

Prophetic, assuring himself (and under that the whole
Church) of the perpetuity and continuation of mercies: The
people of God are like a golden phrase in a parenthesis, shut in
both ways with mercies.

Q. It is a little canvased by Writers, *when and upon what oc-
casion David penned this Psalm?*

The occasion
of the Psalm.

Sol. 1. Some do conjecture that he penned it upon that fa-
vour which Achish King of Gath shewed unto him when he refus-
ed him with the city of Ziklag upon his flight and escape from
Saul. Upon the experience of which goodness from God,
he wrote this comfortable Psalm.

2. Others rather, and the most that I have seen, imagine it
to be written by David at that time when God had given him
possession of the Kingdom, and much prosperity and rest. In the
which goodness of God he doth delight himself, and from
much experience concludes by faith, an assurance of Gods con-
stant and everlasting providence over him.

3. Others yet go a stranger way, imagining David here to
bless God for Christ, his onely shepherd, and who fed him
with all sorts of blessings, spiritual and temporal.

The conjectures are several, for my part I rather encline to
the middle.

The Parts of it.

The Psalm it self contains in it three parts,

1. A general proposition of Gods providence and good-
ness, v. 1.

2. A particular exposition of it, and that by two *Allegories*
or similitudes: One of a *Shepherds* care expressed in
the

the four first verses of the Psalm.

Another of an *Host or courteous friend* most liberally and exactly entertaining his guest in verse 5.

3. A *believing conclusion* in the last verse; that this bountiful goodness shall be a continual goodness. *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the dayes of my life.*

In the first of these you have again observable, two things,

1. A special relation [*The Lord is my Shepherd.*]

2. A special illation [*I shall not want.*]

The Lord is my Shepherd] Jehovah is my shepherd. He who is a most perfect Essence of himself. He who gives and conserves things in their essence and being. He, lastly, who is most faithful, true, sure, steadfast in his promises, who gives reallity or being unto them. The sense of the words.

This *Jehovah* (saith *David* here, both for himself and all the Church) is my *Shepherd*.

This name *Jehovah*, is as I may so speak, the most eminent of all the names of God, it carries that in it which is all in all and as it were above all; *Viz.* the verity or fidelity of God, making good all his goodness to us. The Hebrewes make it to be an invariable and ineffable name, and it hath no pronouns affixed unto it, nor doth it admit any demonstrating article before it, and it wants the number of multitude, it is a name singular and proper to God.

And *David* adds (this *Jehovah* is my *Shepherd*) The Vulgar Edition renders it thus, *regit me* governes me or rules me, which is too loose and general. The *Septuagint* better, *ποιμαίνει με, pascit me*, feeds me. The Hebrew goes rather to the participle of the present tense *Jehovah pascens me*, which we render, my shepherd, or feeding of me.

I will not insist any longer on the Grammar of the text; the Proposition is this,

That the Lord Jehovah himself is the Pastor or Shepherd of his servants.

D.

There is scarce any one Metaphor in all the Scriptures through which God doth seem more delightfully to express himself then this of a shepherd, see at your leisure, *Esa.* 40. 11. *Ezek.* 34. 23. *Zach.* 13. 7. *Pf.* 80. 1, *Give ear O Shepherd of Israel.* The Lord Jehovah himself is the Pastor or Shepherd of his servants.

For the opening of this assertion, know

The Title of 1. That the title of Shepherd may be taken two wayes in
shepherd, taken Scripture.

Properly. First *properly*, so it notes a particular calling or condition of
life, which any person hath in looking to, caring for and watch-
ing over sheep, those the most simple, gentle, fruitful, innocent
of all irrational creatures. Thus *David* at first was a shep-
herd, and *Josephs* brethren were shepherds, and *Jacob*.

Improperly. Secondly, It is taken *improperly*, when the moral parts of a
shepherd are applied to any. Thus also in Scripture is it ap-
plied.

Applied to Sometimes to *Gods Deputies*; who are of two sorts, either
Gods Deputies such as in office should look to the *bodies* of men, as Kings^e and
Magistrates Princes, whom God calls shepherds; thus *Cyrus* is stiled a shep-
herd, *Thou art my shepherd*, *Esa.* 44. 28. and *David*, was set
up to be a shepherd to feed his people in *Jacob*, and his inheritance
in *Israel*, 2 *Chron.* 28. 4.

Ministers. Or such whose care is conversant about the *souls* of men; thus
the ministers of God are stiled shepherds in *Ezek.* 34. they
are in that one Chapter *thirteen times* called so. See also
Ier. 3. 15. & 23. 4. *Peter* hath that charge of a shepherd to feed the
flock, thrice put upon him by Christ, *Joh.* 21. 15. and he earnestly
preffeth it on all *Ministers* to feed the flock of God, 1 *Pet.* 5. 2.

God himself. Sometime to *God himself*, as here in this Scripture and many
other above mentioned.

Who hath all the properties of a good shepherd. 2. This title of shepherd is to be applied to God onely in a
right sense, not that he doth every thing which every shepherd
doth, (for there are shepherds of whom the Prophet speaks
that *feed themselves with the sheep and clothe themselves with
the wool and regard not the flock*; see their description and
their judgment too in *Ezek.* 34.) but because he hath all those
properties which a good shepherd hath.

Eight proper- In Scripture I find these properties of a good shep-
ties. herd,

Science. 1. One is *Science*: *I am the good shepherd, and know my
sheep*, saith Christ *Joh.* 10. 14. The shepherd, must have a double
knowledge of sheep. One, is a *distinguishing* knowledge, by
which he must discern sheep from goats, and his own sheep from
the flocks of others.

Another is, *a skilful knowledge*, by which he must understand how to handle them or deal with them. In both these respects God is a *Shepherd*: for he knows who are his and separates them from all the world, not only in the work of *Election*, but also in that of *Vocation*, and *Sanctification*; and there is none who knows better how to order and handle his people than He, for he is the *God of all Wisdom*, and the *Father of all Mercies*; He can skilfully guide and rule them.

2. A second is *Providence*. The good shepherd provideth *Providence*: pasture and water for the sheep, and alwayes that which is *wholesome*, lest the sheep rot and die: as he is not negligent *Wholesome* that the sheep want feeding, so he is diligent that they have *Pasture*. wholesome feeding. Such a shepherd is the Lord over his people, *Ezek. 34.13. I will feed them upon the mountaines of Israel by the rivers. And v.14. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their folds be.* The best feeding for the sheep is on the mountains, and the best drinking for the sheep is at the running River: Marshie Valleys and dirty puddles quickly rot them.

The Lord will provide *sufficient pasture*, and the best too: *Sufficient Pa-* Mountains and Rivers are sufficient and best. God will feed *sture*. his people with the most sacred Ordinances, purest Truths, and divinest Comforts, with sound Doctrine, sincere Milk, wholesome Words.

3. A third is *Guidance*. The good shepherd goes in and out *Guidance*. before his flock; the sheep are simple things, apt to wander away and to err, and therefore the shepherd guides them by his Whistle, by his Crook, by his Dog, and sometimes leads the way himself: Such a shepherd is God to his people. He shewes them the way in which they should go, *This is the way, walk in it*: and directs their pathes and leads them by his counsel, by his Spirit, by his Word, by his Rod. He doth not leave them to the misguidance of sin or Satan, or the World, or their own hearts, but by his mighty Spirit both layes out their way, and leads them therein too; He is their God and Guide to death.

4. A fourth is *Vigilance*. The sheep are weaponless, weak, *Vigilance*. unarmed creatures, and they have many and strong enemies, as the Lion and the Wolf, and the Dog, they may estsoons become

come a prey unto any of these, if the shepherd doth not watch, and hearken, and look unto them. *Jacob* watched night and day, *Gen.* 31.40. Such a Shepherd is God over his people; *his eye is ever over them*, 1 Pet. 3.12. And, *he that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep*, *Psal.* 121.4. He is the pillar of fire; he is at hand and near, he hath a constant care and regard unto them least any evil befall them, *Psal.* 91.10. & 121.7. or that they run into any evil.

Defence.

5. To which as a part may be added *Defence*. Hence it is that the shepherd hath his *Fold* to keep the sheep in the night, and his *Staff*, which is for defence as well as restraint; and his *Dog* to give notice of danger in the day: And you read how *David* rescued his sheep out of the mouth of the *Lion*, and out of the paw of the *Bear*. In this regard also is the Lord a shepherd to his people, he is the defence of his people, therefore in Scripture called the *Shield* and *Buckler*, the *strong Tower*, a *Rock*, *munitions of Rocks*. *He is my defence*, saith *David*, *Psal.* 59.9. The Prophet *Zachary* calls him *a wall of fire round about his people*, *Zach.* 2.5. Not a wall of earth or stone, that will moulder away, and this may be beaten down; but who will set upon a wall of fire? indeed through a few sticks of fire some may haply venture, but through a wall of fire none can. *The Eternal God is thy refuge*, and underneath are the *Everlasting armes*, *Deut.* 33.27. The Church hath an eternal God, and that God hath everlasting armes. Arms import his strength, and Everlasting import the perpetuity of his defending and upholding care. 'Tis true that the Church hath many enemies, and as the sheep are too weak for the *Lion* and *Bear*, so is the Church for her enemies, but then the shepherd is strong and can rescue and deliver. Therefore ye read in *Ezek.* 34.14. that as God would feed his people in a good pasture, so he would have a care also that they might lye down in a good fold: not only mercy but custody is theirs.

Coverture.

6. The good shepherd does not only provide Pasture but *Coverture* also for the sheep: He hath his *shady* places from the Sun, and *retiring* places from the Stormes, to refresh, as well as to *Flesh* the sheep. Even such a shepherd is the Lord to his people: the *Lord is thy keeper*, the *Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand*, saith *David*, *Psal.* 121.5. He is not only

a God

a God of Graces, but also of Consolations unto them. He shades them with many testimonies of his love, and so gives rest to their souls.

7. A seventh property of a good shepherd, is, *Tender Prudence*: For in a flock of sheep there is great diversity, one part may be *strong sheep*, and they are *driven*; another part may be *weak lambs*, and they are sometimes *carried* by the shepherd. Some of the sheep may be *sound* and well, others may be *diseased*; some keep in better, others are more apt to stray. Now the good shepherd prudently orders them all, he sends his dog after the wandring sheep, if the whistle fetcheth it not in; and he separates the sound from the unsound, taking care to heal them, &c. After this manner doth God deal with his people who are of several ages, abilities and dispositions as it were. *Weak, and beginning, and tender Christians* he gently leads, and as it were, carries them in his bosome, *Isa. 40. 11. Straying Christians*, he calls upon them by his Voice in the Word, which if it serves not, he pursues them by his Rod, by afflictions. *Diseased and fallen Christians* he heals by his Spirit; and if their falls be scandalous, it is his will they be separated a while from the rest of the Flock by Excommunication, to prevent infection of others, and to work recovery in them.

8. Lastly, *Diligence* and care lest any one sheep be lost and perish. The good shepherd would not lose any of the least of all the flock. In this regard also is God the shepherd of his people, whose care extends even to an immortal perseverance of every one of his people, *that none of them shall be lost*. None of them shall perish, and therefore gives them not only Antecedent and preventing, but Subsequent, and assisting, and establishing grace.

And thus ye have the Analogies 'twixt God and a shepherd. Yet I must premise two things before I come to the Application, *viz.*

1. That God is *Pastor summus*, the chief Shepherd: if any be shepherds they are but *deputed*, therefore let them take heed how they deal with the flock.

2. That God is *not an Hireling* who feeds the flock of another, but a shepherd who feeds his own flock.

There:

Use 1. There are several Uses to be made of this. The first shall be Information. for Information. Is the Lord Jehovah the shepherd of his people?

Wicked men are madly foolish. 1. That *wicked men*, those evil Beasts (as the Scripture stiles them) *are madly foolish*. 'Tis true, they long to be worrying of the sheep, and to be fleecing and scattering of them, and to suck the blood of them. And it is true again, that the sheep are unarmed, and weak of themselves: What can a poor sheep do against a strong Lion, or a subtil Wolf? But then their Redeemer is mighty, the Lord himself is the shepherd of his flock: are you able to deal with the Almighty God? *are ye stronger then he?* are you mad? will you never cease to wrong that flock which God hath gathered in mercy, keeps with love, watcheth over with power, and hath professed that *he who toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye?* will ye be found fighters against God?

The godly are interested in the affection and care of God. 2. That *good people* they are interested in the highest affection and greatest care of God. This word Shepherd, doth comprehend in it *omnem pietatis, amoris, & suavitatis dulcedinem & sollicitudinis affectum*. There is Love in it, Pity in it, Providence in it, Tenderness in it; all kind of care, of defence, of good in it.

They are to be better esteemed then others. 3. That good people are *to be better esteemed then others*: They are the sheep of Gods pasture; and sheep you know are a staple commodity, the whole land is the better for them. Of all people godly people are the best, and even the worst are the better for them, and beholding to them. Though we deride the sheep for filliness, yet we are beholding to the sheep for our clothing. Wicked men deride holy persons for their simplicity, but it is for their sakes that wicked men live at all, and enjoy any outward blessing.

But I shall pass from this Use unto another more pressing the conscience; *viz.*

Use 2. Doth David, though in his Kingdom, though abounding, though strengthened on all sides, yet raise up his heart above all with this, that *the Lord is his shepherd*: This was it which he accounted above all, &c. Then let us carefully try in what relation God stands to us, *or we to him*: Can we say with David, *The Lord is my shepherd*, that we are the sheep of his pasture.

Try in what relation God stands to us, and we to him.

Premise a few things with me.

Five things

1. *All the cattel in the world are not sheep*: There are subtil Foxes, and there are ravening Wolves, and there are fierce Dogs, and there are filthy Swine and Goats. Satan hath his herd, as God hath his flock; the sheep of God are called a little flock, in comparison of the rest of people, very little.

Premised.

All are not sheep.

2. If the *Lord be not thy shepherd*, ah, how miserable and forlorn art thou! What wilt thou do? on whom dost thou rely? how canst thou expect any mercy from him? he is none of thy shepherd; or defence from him? he is none of thy shepherd, &c.

Thou art miserable if God be not thy shepherd.

3. *You may deceive your selves*: Perhaps you have but *sheeps clothing*, but are not sheep: You seem to be the people of God, come and flock together to hear his Voice, but obey him not: look and speak gravely and demurely, but your hearts are rotten, full of all hypocrisie and filthiness, &c.

You may deceive yourselves

Or perhaps because you find some resemblances in you of the sheep, that you are harmeless, live quietly, do no body any wrong, therefore you conclude that you are sheep. Why? Even a lost sheep may be this. *Negatives* in religion are like negatives in Law, of no force.

4. Do you not know that if you be not sheep, that at the last day you will be ranked among goats? and you shall be for ever excommunicated from the presence of the Lord?

If you be not sheep you will be ranked amongst the Goats.

5. You can infer no comfort from God unless he be your shepherd. David having groundedly affirmed, The Lord is my shepherd, then concludes, I shall not want: All the excellency and goodness in God is of no comfort to thee, if the Lord be not thy shepherd.

No comfort can be inferred from God, unless he be our shepherd.

Object. But how may we know that the Lord is our shepherd?

How may we know that God is our shepherd By the Properties of sheep.

Sol. To resolve this, let us see what are the choice properties of sheep, and by these we may judg whether the Lord be our shepherd.

1. One property in them (which the Scripture doth express) is *Obedience*. This Christ himself delivers in *Job. 10. 4*. When he putteth forth his sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his Voice. The property of the shepherd is to go before the sheep, to shew them the way and path; and

the property of the sheep is to know the Voice of the shepherd, and to follow him. The Lord as a shepherd unto us goeth before us, and shews unto us the paths of Righteousness, and the wayes of Salvation; he saith, *This is the way, walk in it.* And if we be his sheep, we will not onely credit his rules and directions, but we will obey his voice, walk in those holy and heavenly paths. Now try your selves whether there is in you that obediencial respect unto God, as there is in the sheep to the voice of the shepherd.

1. The sheep *readily follow the shepherd*: There is not such ado with them, but as soon as he whistles or calls they are apt to come in.

2. Let the shepherd direct or lead them up to the mountains, or down to the valleys, *they are ready still to follow him.*

3. *Whatsoever the season be*; whether Summer or Winter, fair or foul; they still know the voice of the shepherd, and follow him. Why, is it thus with us? Brethren! I grant unto you in some sense you do know the voice of the shepherd, you hear him often speaking unto you, but sheep follow the shepherd. Why now? do you follow the leading voice of God? What do you? There is the voice of Satan, and there is the voice of the World, and there is the voice of your own Lusts and Hearts; whose voice do you follow? The voice of thy great shepherd is, *Repent, and Believe*; His voice is, *Walk before me and be thou perfect*: His voice is, *Redeem the time, do good, &c.* Do you obey this voice of God? do you tread, as it were, in his steps, and walk in his paths? can it be said of you as it was of David, Psal. 40. 8. *I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy Law is within my heart.* Or, as of Cornelius, Act. 10. 33. *We are all present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.* We can say, That we are all here present, but God be merciful unto us, we cannot say, That we are there. fore present to hear all things commanded of God: Perhaps we come to *hear a voice*, but not to *obey the voice of God.* But brethren! mistake not your selves, if you care not for the guidance of God; though he leads you by the voice of his Word, and of his Ministers, and of his Spirit, yet you will follow your own wayes, be, live, do what you list: alas for you! you are

are stubborn and rebellious creatures, you are far from the propertie of sheep which know the voice of the shepherd and follow it.

2. Another property of sheep is *Meekness* and *Patience*: Meekness and Of all the irrational Creatures in the world, a sheep is one of Patience, the meekest and patientest. Come near to a Dog and he will bark, defeat the Wolf and he will howl, &c. but the Sheep quietly passeth over all; give him rich or lean pasture, he feeds on both quietly; Smooth or strike him, he bears all; yea, kill him, and cut the throat of him he stirs little. And therefore the Prophet expresseth the wonderful patience of Christ by this of a sheep, *Isa. 53. 7: He was oppressed and he was afflicted, and yet he opened not his mouth, he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth.* Now what is the meekness and patience of our natures? If you rage like Lions, roar like Bears, snarle like Dogs, you are not sheep: If revilings, disgraces, reproaches, injuries, losses befall us, how can we bear them? Bear them we must, but with what quietnesse, with what self-denial! When men curse, can we blesse? when they do us evil, can we do them good? can we humbly wear good things, or quietly bear evil things? Or do we not turne every condition into sin, wrinkle it all over with impatience and discontent? When we are on the Mountains, then feeding in the Valleys pleaseth us; and when in the Valleys, O then the Mountains are pleasantest. Yea, and in point of injury, it is not with us as with the sheep, but as with the Ass, if we be stricken we kick presently; we will do no right, and we will bear no wrong.

3. A third property of sheep is *Usefulness*: It is the most serviceable creature in the world. Serviceable to God, for it was most used in Sacrifices of all sorts: Serviceable to man, the milk of sheep serviceable, the flesh of sheep serviceable, the fleece of the sheep serviceable, all about it and of it is useful: Thus is it with us, if we be the sheep of God and he be our Shepherd: we are not barren and unprofitable. See how the Church or people of God are described by Solomon, Cant. 4. 2. *Like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, &c. whereof every one beareth twins, and none is barren among them.* And David describes them, *Psal. 1. 3. To be like the tree planed by the Rivers*

of waters, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. And Christ describes them to be like the good householder, who brings out of his store new and old. Now reflect on your selves, are you not rather unsavoury salt that is good for nothing? or like carrion which infects and poysons? Why? wherein doth your usefulness and profitableness appear? wherein is the Lord bettered by you? how do you live to his glory? what one soul is the better for thee? Thou hast a family, wife, children, servants, people, dost thou burn amongst them as a candle? do they partake of any heavenly counsel? just reproof? seasonable encouragements, &c? The barren Christian is his own Grave, Satans Lodge, Religions Scorn, and the Wonder amongst men; for he is but a Ghost walking amongst the living.

Unity.

4. A fourth property of the sheep is *Unity* and *Peaceableness*. Where do ye see sheep to fight one with another, to devour one another? they fold together, go out together, feed together, and lye down together.

In Judgment.

Therefore it is said, That as there is *one Shepherd*, so there is *one sheepfold*, Joh 10. 16, &c. By this, saith Christ, shall all men know that ye are my Disciples if ye love one another, Joh. 13. 35. And then where shall we almost find a sheep? What shall I say? There is *one God*, there is *one Mediator*, there is *one Baptism*, there is *one Faith*, but *one Shepherd* and *Lord*: O that I could say, That all who profess themselves sheep were one sheep-fold.

In Affection.

I beseech Evodias, and I beseech Syntiche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord, Phil. 4. 2. Where is this *Unity* in judgment? If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, be like minded, have the same love, Phil. 2. 1, 2: Where is this *Unity* in affection? How I pity the divisions, the scatterings, the tearings; what of Pagans? no, of Christians; what of titular Christians? nay of those who would be real Christians, who tear the names, the wayes, yea, the souls, yea, the everlasting estates each of other. One Table cannot hold them, one family cannot, one Church cannot. If one heaven shall hold you hereafter, why shall not one sheepfold hold you now? Well, I say no more: Thus did not Christ do, thus did not the Apostles of Christ do; dogs do thus, sheep do not use thus to do.

There

There may be many other allusions which I cannot now insist on, onely these are the chiefest. Try your selves by them, if you can upon due examination find that your hearts do obediently hear the voice of God, can patiently submit to God, are profitable to Gods glory, can affectionately knit and comfort with the rest of the flock of God because they are sheep, you may be confident the Lord God is your shepherd.

The next *Use* shall be for comfort and support unto those who upon these, or any other good grounds do find that the Lord is their shepherd: the comforts appertaining to them are many, I shall but mention some.

Use 3.

Comfort to those who find the Lord to be their Shepherd. You have the chiefest Shepherd to be yours.

1. In general, thus, you have 1. *the chiefest Shepherd to be yours*, even the Lord of heaven and earth, and is the great Governor of all things, and is the most excellent in all glorious perfections, to whom none of the gods may be compared. You are the choicest flock of the chiefest God.

2. *The best Shepherd*. Some shepherds do abuse, and injure, and scatter the flocks, and the most exquisite of deputed shepherds fail exceedingly in their care, or love, or diligence, for they are but men; but your Shepherd is not like them, he excels them all, and will not fail towards you in any one Article or point which the shepherd is to perform to his flock.

The best Shepherd.

2. But more particularly thus, you have 1. *a most wise Shepherd*; One who is able to discern the estate of his flock, and likewise the particular estate of every sheep, to know what is best for it, and when to administer to it. As God can discern between the precious and the vile, the good and the evil, so can he distinguish twixt the strong sheep and the weak lambs. He knows how to consider of age and time, of strength and weakness, and how to make use of his staffe or of his rod, &c.

A most wise Shepherd.

2. You have *a most good Shepherd*: You shall have pasture enough all your dayes, he will withhold nothing that is good from you: the shepherd will provide for his sheep, and see that nothing be lacking unto them. *They that fear the Lord, shall lack no good thing; the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want*, saith David here: Jehovah is my Shepherd, i.e. He who is a most perfect Being of Himself, and will accomplish all his promises, &c.

A most good Shepherd.

3. You have *a most tender Shepherd*; One who will not

A most tender Shepherd.

rigorously exact upon you, nor be slowre nor strange unto you; if he doth send out his dog after you, it is onely to reduce you from wandering, and as soon as ever the sheep looks towards the flock he rates him off presently; you shall have no more, nor no longer afflictions then are needful.

And as he is tender in *corrections*, so in his *directions*. *Jacob* faith of his sheep, *The flocks and herds with yong are with me, and if men should over-drive them one day, all the flocks will die, I will drive on softly as the cattle shall be able to endure*, Gen. 33. 13. Why! thus it is with the Lord to his servants: He will not over-burden them, he layes on them but an easie yoke, and onely things necessary, and leads them a gentle pace, *Esa. 40. 11*. From one degree of grace to another, step by step, he stands not upon fulness, but faithfulness; and if he discern any of his servants to be more weak, he doth graciously take them up into his arms, and carries them along with more consolations; *he gathers the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his bosome*, *Esa. 40. 11*.

A most faithful
Shepherd.

4. You have a *most faithful Shepherd*; One who will never intermit his care over you. He doth continue with gentleness to look unto you while you are lambs, and stedfastly looks after you while you are sheep.

Other shepherds may either through vanity step away, or through necessity be called home, or through injury be prevailed upon, or through sleepiness forget their care, but the Shepherd of Israel is alwayes present, and is alwayes vigilant. He will never leave his flock, and also take care that his flock shall never leave him, none shall take them out of his hand.

A most loving
Shepherd.

5. You have *the most loving Shepherd*; He loves you with the highest degrees of love in all kinds. He is yours in the *love of friendship*, you are in a sort, one with him, (*that they may be one*, faith Christ, *as thou and I am one*). He is yours in the *love of complacence*, you are his *Hephzibah*, the onely people of his delight, and *in whom his love doth rest*, as the Prophet saies. He is yours in the *love of benevolence*, He wisheth you that good as to none the like: whereas you deserved to be sacrificed to his wrath, he gave a lamb, his own Son to become a sacrifice, thereby to spare and save the souls of all his sheep. He

is yours in the love of beneficence, He doth bestow upon you the greatest good that may be; most of your estate lies in spirituals; your graces, your comforts, your pasture, your refreshings are holy, heavenly, which of all good are the most excellent good.

6. Lastly, you have *the most rewardful Shepherd*; Alas! when you after feeding a long time in the fullest and sweetest pastures bring forth perhaps but a fleece, and a lamb, a little good, yet he lovingly accepts it, and bestows on you eternal life. *Fear not little flock, saith Christ, it is your Fathers pleasure to give you a Kingdom.*

A most rewardful Shepherd.

Thus have you the *comforts*, but then I pray you with them take also *some directions*. Have you such a Shepherd as Jehovah? then be *counselled* in a few particulars,

Use 4.

Counsel to the sheep.

1. Be *contented with his pasture*. If the Shepherd think it good to shift the sheep from leas to leas, or from the Vales to the Hills, the sheep are contented to go.

Be contented with his pasture.

God is pleased to feed us sometimes in the Vallies with much plenty, variety, ease, delight; and sometimes again he is pleased to drive us to the mountains, to a shorter, sharper condition of life; if we be his sheep we must be still contented with his pasture. He knows that though feeding on the mountains be more short, yet it may be more wholsom; cattel alwayes fed in the Vales, are either for disease, or death: our conditions never change but either to prevent, or to recover an evil.

2. *Carefully regard his voice*. You cannot make the least fray but his whistle is at your ears, his Word or his Spirit beats at your consciences.

Carefully regard his voice.

Now hear his voice, feed onely in his pastures, wander not after any pastures besides, though they seem more plentiful or more delightful: my meaning is, keep onely in his wayes, according to his directions, and be not withdrawn or wander, through any enticements of sin or the world. Though other pastures seem more pleasant, yet they are full of thorny bushes. You cannot feed long on them, but you are caught and scratched, and shall hardly escape without much loss of your fleece: you may a while delight in a sinful way, but your consciences will pay for it, and your graces. You cannot return without a

Great

great diminution of the one, and a strange vexation of the other : he who will wander for to get some pleasant evil, must necessarily be less good and more troubled. And what defence have you when you hearken not to your shepherd, but wander? you are the silly sheep *alone upon the mountains of Gilead*. Admit that thou hast more delight, yet what delight can be taken in a delight unprotected and unwarranted?

Object. But I shall come back again.

Sol. But is it not better for thee to be kept in by the shepherds whistle, then to be brought back in the Lions mouth? to be alone in the fattest pasture amongst Lions and Wolves, and no shepherd near, here can be nothing but continual fear and danger.

Thrive under
his feedings.

3. *Thrive under his feedings.* It is true, that for the substantial parts of pasture, all the sheep of God speed alike, but yet there are differences in grounds, some are more rich than others. And if any people in the world have enjoyed a difference, you of *London* are the people. Ah! the soyl that you have lived in all your dayes; how thick are the piles of gras? how full of rivers? how watred with showers? what variety of gifts? what excellency of studies? what diligence of pains? what constancy of Word and Sacraments? what golden opportunities publick and private?

If God feeds us in a more plentiful pasture, Oh let us take heed we wrong not his goodness by barrenness! that we yield no fleece or very poor, but strive to grow, not from knowledg to pride, and from pride to carelessness, and from carelessness to dissoluteness; but from knowledg to faith, from faith to love, from love to obedience, from one degree of obedience to another.

Cleave together
as the flock
of one sheep-
herd.

4. *Cleave together as the flock of one shepherd:* The Wolf, it is his property to scatter the flock, and then to make a prey of one after another. It is Satans wile and his instruments if it be possible to divide the flock of Christ, to cause divisions, jealousies, separations, that so what could not be obtained by their unity, might be effected by their differences: But of all things strive against division. Remember how earnestly your Shepherd the Lord Jesus at his last laboured with his Disciples for

Love

Love and Unity. You have enemies enough, you need not sharpen your tongues one against another. Is it truth which you would? let it be maintained with Unity; pluck not down the house, though you do dispute about the flowers in the garden. If there were more humility among Christians, and charity, and wisdom, there would be more affectionate Unity, they would love each other better, speak better each of other, interpret each other better, &c.

5. Lastly, If God be your shepherd, *Then be not disquieted at his dealings with you*: Sometimes the shepherd will handle his sheep to try how it proves; sometimes he doth cut the sheep very close, sometimes he lets his dog out which nips the sheep sharply, and fetcheth blood again, but all is for the good of the sheep; afflictions which thou complaineest of so much, this is all their work, they preserve thee from being a lost sheep.

Be not disquieted at Gods dealings with

P S A L. 23. I.

— *I shall not want.*

YOU have heard of the Relation 'twixt God and David, *The Lord is my Shepherd*. Now I proceed to touch upon the Illations, or that which David infers from thence [*I shall not want.*]

The words in the Original are *לֹא אֶחְסָר* *Lo Ethsar*, which some render, *I shall not fail, or break, Non deficiam*. Others, Nothing shall be wanting unto me. *Nihil mihi deerit*: *חָסַר Chasar* (from whence the word comes, signifies both, not only *desse* and *deficere*, but also *carere*, *indigere*, *penuriam pati*, *inopia laborare*: q. d. I shall have enough. The Lord is my Shepherd, and I am sure he will take care for me, he will always provide for me.

There are some who are very nice in their observations. David saith not, *Nihil deest*, nothing is wanting; this, say they, is *Vox beatorum in patria*, but *Nihil mihi deerit*, nothing shall

be wanting, or I shall be supplied; this is *Vox sanctorum in via*. But to leave nicities you see the proposition clearly.

Doct.

The flock or
people of God
shall not want.

That the flock or people of God shall not want; they are cared and well provided for.

The Scriptures are abundant to give testimony to this, *Psal.* 34. 10. *The yong Lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall lack no good thing.* *Jer.* 32. 40. *I will not turn away from them to do them good.* *Psal.* 84. 11. *The Lord is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory and no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly.* *Mat.* 6. 33. *All these things shall be added to you,* he speaks of meat, and drink, and clothing, *v.* 25. But for the better explanation of this assertion, these things are to be discussed.

1. *In what sence it is to be taken, when David saith, I shall not want.*

2. *How far it is to be extended, whether to his soul or body, or both; whether to Temporals or to Spirituals.*

3. *How it may appear that the flock of God shall not want, and why.*

4. *Then the useful application of all this unto our selves.*

In what sence
this is to be
understood.

2. *In what sence the Assertion is to be understood, [I shall not want]* The reason of the Quere is, the many miseries, and streights, and crosses, and calamities unto which the Saints of God are exposed.

Cleared by di-
vers distincti-
ons.

For the resolution of this Question, there are divers Answers given by Divines :

1. There are two sorts of things :

Some things
make the con-
dition good
and happy.
Others make it
Delightful.

Some which do conduce to *make the condition good and happy.*

Others which do serve to *make the condition smooth and delightful.* As about an house there are Pillars and Rafter, &c. which are the bones as it were and absolute ingredients; and there are the Varnishings and Paintings which do set forth the house. Or as in a Garden there are profitable fruits, and there are pleasant flowers only to look on and smell. So it is with us, there are some things which make our hearts truly good, and tend to our everlasting Salvation; there are other things which do only serve to chear and refresh us in our passage. Now

when

when *David* saith, *I shall not want*, they conjecture this to be the sense, *scil.* Nothing shall be wanting to me which concerns the making of my estate truly happy, though delightfuls may be wanting, yet principals shall not.

2. Some things are $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1. \text{Redundant.} \\ 2. \text{Necessary.} \end{array} \right.$

Those things are *Redundant* without which a man may well pass over his condition of life. As a man may well serve God, though he have not an estate of riches or honour comparable to another, or alwayes equal to it self. Some things are Redundant, and some things are Necessary.

Those things are *Necessary* without which a person cannot well serve God, as our *daily bread*, for which Christ would have us to pray: Our bodies cannot be fitted to duty without these external and necessary supplies of food and raiment. Even a good man, a *David* may want superfluities; his Table may not be variously furnished, nor his garments gaudily embroydred, nor his coffers excessively stuffed and piled. But yet he shall not want necessities, though he be not sure of plenty, yet of enough. The Prophet saith, *That his waters shall be sure and his bread shall not fail*, Isa. 33. 16. He doth not say, His *Wines* are sure, but *his Waters*; and he doth not say, His *Feast*, but his *Bread* shall not fail. Though he hath not alwayes what he needs not, yet he shall have alwayes what is needful. Though he hath not the Lace, yet he hath the Garment; though he hath not the Sawce, yet he hath the Meat; though he hath not the Palace, yet he hath the Chamber; though he hath not the Softness, yet he hath the Bed; though he hath not what he may Spare, yet he hath what he may Use.

3. Of necessary things, some are *Desirable*, and some are *Seasonable*. Those things are *desirable* which have any kind of good in them. Those things are *seasonable* which have a kind of conveniency or fitness in them. It is granted, that there are many desirable Goods which a good man hath not many times: *Hezekiah* may be in *sickness*, and want health; *Joseph* may be in *prison*, and want liberty; *David* may be in *exile*, and want countenance. Health, and liberty, and favour are good things in their kind and order. Of necessary things, some are Desirable, and some are Seasonable.

Yet no *Seasonable good shall be want* : When Health is good for him, *H Ezekiah* shall recover ; when Liberty is good for him, *Joseph* shall be loosed ; when favour and dignity are good for him, then *David* shall return and be settled.

Compare outward things among themselves, so we stile some of them good, and some of them evil ; prosperity we call good, and adversity evil ; health we repute to be good, and sickness evil ; fruition we esteem to be good, and losse to be evil. But compare all of them to the exigence of a good person, so either of them are good ; when he hath health, that is good ; when he hath sickness, that is good ; *It is good for me*, saith David, *that I was afflicted*. A good man may want this thing and that thing, but he shall not want any thing that is good, nor when it may be good for him.

Good things
may be had Ex-
plicitly or In-
terpretatively.

4. Again, Divines say, That good things may be had two wayes, either,

Explicitly, When a person enjoyeth the individual or particular things ; suppose health, strength, liberty, friends and other comforts.

Interpretatively, When a person enjoyeth that which is equivalent to those things. A Citizen may not have a Garden, a Farm, Sheep or Oxen, yet he hath thousands in his purse which are equivalent to all these.

Thus do they say of a good man, That either he enjoyeth the very particular good things which he needs, or else those things which are equivalent to them: nay far exceeding of them. Though he cannot have much Lands, yet he hath many Graces ; though he cannot have the countenance of men, yet he hath the favour of God : though he cannot enjoy quiet abroad, yet he setteth peace within his conscience, which are blessings instead of all other blessings, and can revive his heart infinitely beyond the presence of all external things. He that hath but one Diamond, may have far more then he who hath a thousand stones digged out of the Quarry. So, &c.

Distinguish
between Ab-
sence and In-
digence.

5. You must distinguish 'twixt *Absence*, and 'twixt *Indigence*. *Absence* is when something is not present. *Indigence* or want, is when a needful good is not present. If a man were to walk, and had not a staff, here were something absent. If a man were to walk, and had but one leg, here were something where

whereof he were indigent. It is confessed that there are many good things which are absent from a good person, but no good thing which he wants or is indigent of. If the good be absent and I need it not, this is no want; he that walks without his cloak, walks well enough for he needs it not. As long as I can walk carefully and cheerfully in my general or particular calling, though I have not such a load of accessories as other men have, yet I want nothing, for my little is enough, and serves the turn.

6. There are two sorts of wants,

In some part of the condition,

In the heart and affection :

As a man may abound in his *condition* and yet want in that of his *affection*. He may have abundance in honour, in estate, in wealth, and yet through an endless covetousness, and vain discontent he may be in want, still complaining, murmuring, craving. Solomon deciphers this man in *Eccl 4.8. There is one alone and there is not a second, yea he hath neither child nor brother, yet there is no end of all his labour, neither is his eye satisfied with riches, &c.* So a man may want something in his external condition and yet abound and not want in that of his inward affection. Though he hath not the outward thing, yet he wants it not, for he is contented with the absence of it, and can now as pleasedly eat with a little, as formerly he did with much; and content himself with a plain and mean condition, as with a swelling pompous estate. So that a good person wants not, for either he hath the good, or else is as well pleased and contented, as if he had it; and to speak freely all a mans wants, or fulness, are rather in respect of his mind, then of the things themselves. For a man may want what he hath, and what he hath not he may not want, if the mind be discontentedly unquiet; the man who hath much, hath indeed nothing; *What do all these things avail me,* saith Haman, *as long as Mordecai the Jew sits at the Kings gate?* *Esth 5.13. i.e.* they are as nothing to me. So on the contrary, if the mind be framed and composed to contentation, though a man hath not the thing, yet he wants it not, *i.e.* he feels not the want of it, he is as well as if he had it; eats his drie bread, and lies on his hard bed, and walks as cheerfully as he that swimmes in all excesses.

There are two
sorts of wants,
In some part of
our condition.
In the heart
and affection.

Distinguish be-
twixt reall
wants and ima-
ginary wants.

7. Lastly, you must distinguish twixt *real wants* and *imaginary wants* : a want to the person, and a want to the corruption : a child is sometimes clamorous for a knife, and sometimes he cries for bread ; when he cries for bread, his father ariseth and fetcheth the loaf, the child shall not want bread ; but when he cries for the knife this he shall not have, the father will not satisfie his wantonness, though he will supply his wants.

Our corruptions are still craving and they are always inordinate, they can find more wants then God needs to supply. As they say of fools, they can propose more questions then twenty wise men need to answer. They in *James* 4.3. did ask but *received not* and he gives two reasons for it. 1. This *asking* was but a *lusting*. V. 2.] *Ye lust and have not* : another, they did *ask to consume it upon their lusts*, V. 3.] God will see that his people shall not want, but withall, he will never engage himself to the satisfying of their corruptions, though he doth to the supply of their conditions. It is one thing what the sick man wants, another what his disease wants. Your ignorance, your discontents, your pride, your unthankful hearts may make you to believe that you dwell in a barren land, far from mercies (as melancholly makes a person to imagine that he is drowning, or killing, &c.) whereas if God did open your eyes as he did *Hagars*, you might see fountains and streams, mercies and blessings sufficient, though not many, yet enough ; though not so rich, yet proper and every way convenient for your good and comfort.

And thus have you the genuine sense (so far as I can judge) of *Dauids* assertion *I shall not want*, I proceed to the second *Querie*.

Q. 2. How far the verity of this Assertion extends, whether to soul and body, to spirituals and temporals.

Sol. I answer briefly, it holds firm of both, both soul and body are the object of Divine Providence, and of Divine Love, and both of them are serviceable to Divine Glory.

1. That *the soul shall not want*, the Scriptures are abundant. It shall have Grace and Glory, there is redemption for it, righteousness for it, sanctification for it, and salvation, there is the Word to help it, the Sacraments to help it, afflictions to help it,

How far the
truth of this
assertion ex-
tends.

The soul shall
not want.

it, and the Spirit of God still to help it : all almost that you can conceive the soul to stand in need of for spirituals may be referred, either

1. To *justifying Grace*, but that the soul wants not, it is united to Christ and partakes of his righteousness and of remission of sin in his blood.

2. To *sanctifying Grace*; and this the soul hath too, it shall not want of so much holiness as shall save, and though the vessel be not yet full, yet it is still filling, the God of peace will sanctify throughout, and the righteous shall be as the Sun which encreaseth more and more to the perfect day. He who hath little shall have more, so much every Saint shall rise unto, as shall make him fittest in his place to glorify God.

3. To *strengthening and assisting Grace*. You shall not want the eye of God to guide you, nor the hand of God to uphold you, who did not want the love of God to convert you.

4. To *comforting and refreshing Grace*: You shall never want proper comforts nor seasonable. He who is the God of all grace, will also be the God of all consolations unto you. Onely you must go to the *wells of salvation*, and keep in the *paths of righteousness* if you would not have your souls to want in spirituals.

2ly. That *the body shall not want* in respect of *temporal*: take them in any kind, and as *suitable*, and *necessary*, and *seasonable*, and in the senses above expressed, it is so cleer that it needs not further confirmation, yet to prevent all doubts and scruples it shall manifestly appear in the resolution of the next inquiries, viz.

Q. How it may appear that the people of God shall not want and why.

Sol. 1. It may appear by a series of experimental instances. Go and enquire into their estates, and you shall find many of them, that God hath supplied them, not onely *ad saturitatem*, but *ad ubertatem*, they have had not onely for necessity but for variety, not onely *ad supplimentum* but *ad ornamentum*, not naked but rich supplies, not onely helps but also delights: as you may see in *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Mordecai*, and many others. Yea the *disciples* (who if any, were most necessitous) yet they had their food and raiment, they had such a sufficiency,

ficiency that Christ imposeth it on them by no means to be solicitous or anxious but quietly to rest contented with an assurance that they should never want. 'Tis true you may find some of the servants of God more streightened then others, and the same persons at one time more necessitous then at another, yet still their condition was such as they might upon good ground say, *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.*

By the wonderful supplies of God unto his people.

It may appear *by the wonderful supplies of God unto his people* rather then they should want. Sometime God hath created helps unto them, *Manna* in the Wilderness; Sometimes he hath extraordinarily multiplied the means of sustenance to them, kept a little stock alive, as it were; the *barrel of meal did not fail*, and the *cruse of oyl did not waste* to preserve *Elijah* and the *Widow*, 1 King. 17. 15. 16. and so the *Widows oyl* for to help her in her streights, 2 King. 4. 5, 6. Sometimes he hath preserved them without means as *Moses* and *Elias* forty days to walk in the strength of one meal. Sometime he hath strangely commanded the creatures to serve and help and succour his servants, as a *raven* to feed *Elijah*. Is it probable that they shall want whose help providence doth undertake even by miraculous operations.

By the unchangeableness of his word.

3. *Shall not heaven and earth pass away before any one word of God doth fail?* The creatures shall be dissolved into nothing, and men (as they are) into falsities, but the word of God shall alwayes be found a truth. Now what abundance of obligations are these by which God hath tied himself that his people shall not want any thing that is good. *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, Heb 13. 5. *No good thing shall be withheld*, Psal. 84. 11. Who is it that promiseth? is it not the Lord God? and what wants he to make his word true? Wants he power? no! wants he will? no! why if he hath willingness and power and fidelity it cannot be, that they shall want.

By his present donations.

4. Fourthly, *consider his present donations*: Not onely his continued supplies of your bodies to this very day from the womb, but likewise his singular expressions to your souls. Hath he not done great things for your souls? What do ye think of *Iesus Christ*? Is he not an invaluable and incomparable gift? His blood is more precious then gold and silver: he is the very happiness of your souls: and what do you

you think of the *graces of Gods Spirit* which infinitely exceed the rubies and the pearls, they are the image of God and our choicest excellencies. Or what think you of *heavenly glory*, is it not beyond all comparison and expression? Why now tell me, will God not suffer his people to want the greatest, and will he be wanting in the least? Will he freely give them many things worth worlds, and will he not give them bread and raiment? If he gives us Christ, *how shall he not with him give us all other things* saith the Apostle, *Rom. 8. 32. q. d.* it cannot be otherwise, never imagine the contrary.

5. Fifthly, *his special affliction to his people*: What are his people (think you to him) the Scripture calls them the people of his love, of his delight, his beloved; what not that betokens love? he knows them above all the people of the earth; you see that he clothes, and feeds, and supplies his very enemies, those whom he calls the generation of his wrath and curse; he makes his Sun to rise upon them, and drops many blessings on them, the unkindest vessels receive of him many mercies: will any do for them that hate him, and not for them that love him? for enemies and not for friends?

6. His *singular relations*. The Lord is to his people, as a father to his children. *2 Cor. 6. 18. I will be a Father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* Again he is to his people as an husband to the wife. *Thy Maker is thine Husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, Isa. 54 5.* Why the Lord takes care of all the family of the earth: his hand opens it self and fills every living creature; he feeds the Ravens that cry unto him, will not have the mouth of the Oxen to be muzzled, clothes the grass of the field. *Can a woman forget her sucking child? yet will I not forget thee, Isa. 49 15.* And is it not more then probable that he will take care to provide that his wife, that his children shall not want: would any be careful that the servant be supplied, and be careless whether the child doth want or no? will any take care that all the family have provision, and yet care not whether the wife hath ought?

7. Lastly, *take the acquittances and acknowledgments* of all the servants of God that they have made unto the Lord and delivered under their own hands. *The Lord hath blessed my*

By the Acquittances of all the servants of God.

Master greatly, and he is become great, and he hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men-servants and maid-servants, and camels and asses. This was spoken when Abraham was old, Gen. 34.25. Compared with v. 1. Jacob, saith for himself, *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and all the truth which thou hast shewen unto thy servant, for with my staffe I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands,* Gen. 32.1. Joseph saith to his brethren, *Haste you, and go to my father, and say unto him, thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me Lord of all Egypt,* Gen. 45.9. David is often at it in this Psalm all over, and in Psal. 16.5. *The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup, thou maintainest my lot :* V.6. *The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea I have a goodly heritage.* Not that I speak, saith S. Paul Phil. 4.11. *in respect of want, but I have all and abound,* v. 18. Yea, peruse all the Scripture and tell me where you find any one Saint (being himself) ever to complain in regard of want.

Obj. But now it is objected against all this, that there are no people in the world that are in such want as the people of God for outward things, none so fleeced as they, and so exposed, and so spoiled, and destitute as you may see in the Scriptures and all over the world.

Sol. 1. You know that all these outward things are promised not peremptorily, but 1. *With condition, if good for them :* 2. *With exception of the Cross.*

I beseech you, tell me, whether it is better for a man to fast in a Feaver, then to eat? eating is not good for him at such a time. So, &c. Again, which is better to keep Christ or a mans worldly state and comforts? 'Tis true, if a man may enjoy Christ and the things of the world too, it is not necessary to abandon either, but when these two stand in Competition, that either the life must be lost or the goods in the ship; either my goods must be forsaken, or Christ: Why, a Christian judgeth not this to be a loss, to be a want, so that he may enjoy Christ still.

2. You know what the Apostle speaks in 2 Cor. 4.8. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. In losses, and perplexities, and distresses for Christ.*

The

The Christian may say to the world as Christ did to his Disciples, *I have meat which you know not of*, so saith he, Comforts, supports, satisfactions which the world knows not of. He hath more content in bonds and sufferings, then in liberty and confluences; he feels not the want which a sensual and carnal heart imagins.

Now I come to the Application of this point to our selves. Shall not the flock or people of God want? then you who take your selves to be the people of his pasture, give ear and hearken this day unto two things:

Use I
The people of
Gods pasture
must hearken.

- 1. Your *Sins*,
- 2. Your *Duty*:

1. *Your Sins*: That you suffer your hearts so to be crackt with *fears*, and your minds to be filled with *cares*. The Lord be merciful unto you, how dejected your eyes are sometimes? how distressed your thoughts are sometimes? how feaverish your spirits are and ready to sink to the very dust and grave? you are at your wits end, why! what's the matter? doth some singular guilt lye upon your conscience? No! Do you apprehend in you the terrors of Gods disp'easure? No! Have you slighted the wayes of God or voice of God? No! Is a parent dead? a wife dead? a child dead? is the hand of God in any heavy measure upon you? No! What is it then that thy countenance is cast down, that thou walkest so solitarily, looks so heavily, speaks so mornfully; that sighs multiply in thy brest, and tears rise up in thy eyes, and trembling appears in thy joints, and paleness in thy face? O, I shall want, I shall fail, my means and supports will not hold out; I shall come to poverty, to penury, my estate is short, the oil is almost all run out, and the meal is even neer spent, and the imaginations of it do even crush my heart and soul.

But as the Lord answered *Job*, too much complaining in his condition, so may I say unto you thus dejecting your souls, *Job* 38 2. *Who is this that darkneth council by words without knowledg.* When *Saul* prophesied naked, but, say they, *Who is his father?* that say I unto you, who by your distrustful imaginations, and excessive perplexities darken the intentions and

the truths of the Almighty, and walk in the shadow of your own fears, but who is their father? *Hast thou not heard? and hast thou not known from everlasting that the Lord fainteth not? nor doth he ever forsake his people:* Lay aside thy vexing thoughts awhile, and suspicious imaginations, and solely regard what shall be spoken unto thee, and judg how unjustly and foolishly thou dost challenge God, and needlessly encreasest fears, and sadness, and bitterneffe, and dejections upon thy own Spirit.

Thou hast no reason to conclude thou shalt want. What hath God been unto thee for time past.

1. Thou hast no reason at all to conclude *that thou shalt want.* Consider, *What hath God been unto thee already?* Hath he been unto thee as a dry and barren wilderness? Or as the *Ostrich*, that *hardens her self against her yong ones as though they were not hers,* Job 39.16. Dost thou not hitherto live? and who hath been the fountain of that life? Hast thou not hitherto been fed? and who is it that gives us our daily bread? Hitherto thou art preserved, redeemed, susteined, fed, clothed, cared for, the Lord hath not forsaken thee; nay, the testimonies of his providence are to be found upon thee and thine this very moment: thou canst not conclude on a future want, by the experience of any antecedent want; from the womb to this day the accounts are clear 'twixt God and thee, he is not indebted at all, nor canst thou justly challenge him for any neglect of thee.

What is the nature of God for time present

What is the nature of God for the present: Is he like man, that he should change? or the sons of men, that he should cast off? He is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever, and with him there is no shadow of change.

Was he God All-sufficient? Is he not so still? thy loving and Compassionate God? is he not so still? thy Almighty God? is he not so still? Is he deceitful? or is his hand shortened? doth he cease to be God, or to be thy God? If the Fountain still lives and runs, why shouldest thou imagine to dye by thirst? If the Sun still shines, why shouldest thou fancy nothing but darkness? If the Lord still lives, and lives to be the God of thy mercies, Oh how unreasonably sinful is it to kill thy self with fears of want?

What is the promises of God for the time future,

What is the promise of God for the future? hath he undertaken thy sustentation, preservation, supports, necessary comforts and good for a week, or a moneth, or a year? are his promises (which

(which are the treasuries of all thy good, and the chambers of all thy mercies) clouds only which rain a while plentifully, and then fall off? or are they not rather Wells of Salvation, Inexhaust Springs, running from generation to generation. There is yet much in reversion, thou hast not all in possession, but the better part of thy portion is yet in thy fathers hand. When thou art dead and gone, and rotten, his word of promise shall be a faithful and effectual Word to support the children of many future years which thou shalt never see. And therefore how justly blameable art thou to cry out and to sink with the fear of Want? when as thou hast a God who hath provided for thee, and blest thee; doth provide for thee, and blest thee; will provide for thee, and blest thee.

2. *Thou hast all the reason in the world to conclude that thou shalt not want, whether thou considerest,*

That *Fulness*, infinite fulness which is in God: his goodness is unsearchable, the depths thereof are bottomless: He is an All-sufficiency. The child's stomach may be too large for the mothers milk, and the sons spending too high for the fathers estate, and a mans occasions too many for his friends help. But Divine goodness is such a Common as cannot be overlaid: Though there be not Water enough for a few ships in the River, yet there is water and room enough for all the ships in the world on the Sea. That great God who feeds a whole world every day, he is able enough to sustain thee all thy dayes.

That *Willingness* that is in God to do thee good. I grant that power alone is not sufficient for confidence, but power and will both are.

Obj. Of that we doubt.

Sol. Tell me what is imaginable to thy mind which may breed in thee a confidence, yea an undoubted assurance that God is willing that thou shalt not want.

First, Would *special Relation* 'twixt thee and him produce it? The wife is confident when the stranger is not; the child fears not when the servant doth. Now *God is thy Father*, thou art *his Child*, he is *thy Husband*, thou his *Spouse*. If any thing will make us careful and bountiful, it is Love; if any love will make us so, it is that love which is in such near Relations,

Thou hast all Reason to conclude thou shalt not want. Considering The fulness that is in God.

The willingness that is in God.

Grounds of persuasion that God is willing to do us good. Special Relations.

Express Affirmation.

Secondly, Would *Affirmation*, a Word or Speech of God assure us thereof: When a father manifests his care and intention of good, now all fear is quieted: If he should take the child abroad, and say, Son, be not troubled, thou hast hitherto had experience of my love and care, be confident a father hath natural affections to a child, he oftentimes pincheth himself to help a child. My estate is good, my affections unto thee are great, take my word, I will take singular care for thee as long as I live. Why! this would satisfy and cheer up any rational spirit.

Thus the Lord sayeth to us in his Word, Be not disquieted, trouble not your selves in vain, fret not, vex not, fear not, hitherto I have helped you, and I am an All-sufficient God and your Father, never think that I will forsake you, I have said, *That I will never leave you nor forsake you, whom I love, I love to the end*; do not think of me worse then an *Infidel who provides not for his own family*.

I have done you good, and I will never turn away from doing you good: I tell thee, I will withhold no good thing from thee, but will be thy God and guide unto death. Doth not the Lord say all this in the Scriptures, and should not this possess us of his willingness that we shall not want.

Singular Obligation.

Nay, Thirdly, Will not an *Obliging Promise* only, but an Emphatical seriousness in the manner of his promising, persuade us that he is willing, we shall not want. Protestations, Asseverations are usually more inductive to assent and persuasion then naked Affirmations or promises. Now the Lord hath not only said a Word, but made a Promise, he hath not only made a Promise, but also a kind of Protestation or Asseveration, that you shall not want. What is that Expression in *Psal 37 3. Verily thou shalt be fed*. Verily, (*i. e.*) As true as I am God I will take care of thee that thou shalt not want. What is that unparallelled Geminatio in *Heb. 13 5. I will never, never, never, never, never leave thee nor forsake thee*; but this I will ever, ever, ever, for ever and ever take care of thee.

Obligation, or Oath.

Nay, if Affirmation, and Promise, and Asseveration will not yet assure, yet an *Obligation*, an *Oath* may put an end to all doubt and controversy. But the Lord hath *sworn by himself*: You have his Oath that he will not fail you, (dare you think that

that the Lord will be guilty of a lie, or which is worse, of perjury?) but in blessing he will blesse you, and will assuredly do you good *with his whole heart, and with his whole soul*, Jer. 32. 41, &c.

2: Your *Duty*: To be humbled for vexatious cares and fears, Their *Duty*: and then to *cast your care on God*, and to walk with that alacrity of spirit in your callings as becometh the people of that God who hath so undertaken all your supplies that you shall not want. *Phil. 4. 6. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God.* 1 Pet. 5. 7. *Casting all your care upon him for he careth for you.*

Two things will I here propound unto you,

1. The *Motives*,

2. The *Means*.

Motives.

1. The *Motives*, which shall be drawn,

1. From the *evil Inconveniences* of not trusting on the Lord your Shepherd to supply your wants. They are very many: From the evil inconveni-
ers of not trust-
ing on the
Lord.

1. It is a *Dishonourable* thing not to cast your care on the Lord. You do dishonour

It is Dishonour

To God.

1. *Him exceedingly*: What will people think of a Father whose children cry out upon him, That he will not allow them food and raiment? The father suffers in the want of the child, as much as the child: what inglorious thoughts are hereby fastned on your God? as if he had no merciful affections unto you, nor tender intentions, nor knowledg of your necessities, nor compassion to help you, nor faithfulness to perform his Word, nor wisdom to discern what were good for you.

2. *Your holy Profession*: How apt are people to fasten all miscarriages of godly men upon Godliness it self. You make the Wayes of God, and Practice of Religion to be blasphemed by your intolerable dejectedness, and fears, and sadness. They will not imagine that there is that strength in grace to satisfy the heart, nor that power in holiness to comfort the heart; and that trusting in God is but a fond reed, which can no better enable the soul in strength or support it with any cheerfulness in wants. Yea, what distinction do you make in your behaviour 'twixt a Believer, and an Unbeliever? 'twixt a Christian, and

To your holy
Profession.

and a Pagan? Do not the Heathens after this manner? what can they do less then this? what do ye more then they?

It is an Un-peaceable thing. 2. It is an *Unpeaceable* thing: You lose all your peace until ye can rest upon God by faith for your supplies. You lose your taste of God, of mercies received, of your self by Unbelief. The Stone never leaves running till it comes to the Center, nor the Ship tossing till it comes to an Anchor, nor the soul disquieting it self till it comes to a resting on God. If you will not trust God for your future supplies, of necessity you must bear your own burdens of imaginations and fears; either you must be quiet in resting on his care, or perpetually unquiet by yielding to your own carefulness. For there is nothing which can quiet the soul but God: You want the Creatures, and the Creatures wanted, will trouble you, you would supply your own wants, but no man can be a God to himself. So that if you be far from Faith you will be far from Peace.

It is a Prejudicial thing. 3. It is a *Prejudicial* thing: None want more then they who will not trust on God to support their wants: if you want Faith, you must want Mercies. Unbelief is the iron bar against the mercies which we want, as unthankfulness is the grave of the mercies which we have received. You shall go out with abundance of thoughts, labour with abundance of fears, come home with abundance of grief, lye down with abundance of discontent, and tosse the night with abundance of vexations; all which shall be your torments, but not your helps; your additions of evil, but not ministers of any good unto you.

It is a very sinful thing. 4. It is a very *Sinful* thing: Of all sins Unbelief is one of the greatest, and a causeless Unbelief is the greatest of all. The lesser the thing is, and the more able the giver of it is, and the more faithful he is, and the more experiences we have had of his goodness and fidelity, the more vile is your unbelieving of that God: Now it is more offensive to him, more aggravated by circumstances.

From the good that will come unto you. Secondly, From the *God* that will come unto you by trusting on God for the supply of your wants.

You shall honour God much. 1. You shall be able hereby to *Honour God* very much. Unbelief is a cloud over all his Attributes, but Faith gives glory to God, it doth exalt God, and it doth enable us in our callings to ex-

exalt God, and the more we advance his glory, the more we advance our own mercies, and, *those that honour me, I will honour*, 1 Sam. 2. The Christian should look at Divine glory more then at his own supplies: How did *Job* advance him when he said, *Though he kill me, yet will I trust on him?* And *Abraham* glorified him much when *against hope, he believed in hope*; This is like a Christian who hath a God and dares trust on him, live upon him, and in the midst of all evils and necessities can triumph with Faith, yet the Lord is my God, my Shepherd, I shall not want; He will be my God and guide to death, he will never leave me nor forsake me. Yea, you shall honour him in your callings, if you do believe on him, you shall look up and pray, look up and trade, look up and hear, and read, and meditate, and do all your duties readily, chearfully, constantly; whereas others can neither read, nor pray, nor work, nor direct, nor any thing else for want of Faith, and for fear of want.

Two evils befall them about duties who do not trust on God for their future supplies; either *impatient Diversions and Abstractions*. It is *vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his Ordinances?* Mal. 3. 14. Or, *violent IncurSIONS and Distractions*. Our tongues are Praying, but our thoughts are Projecting; our ears are Hearing, but our hearts are Murmuring. We are not where we are, we do not what we do; our bodies are in one place, and minds in another; they work one thing, and the soul another. So that God hath no *Duty* at all, or little in all duty, till we can trust in him; and consequently no *Glory*.

Two Evils about duties for want of Faith in Divine Providence.

2. You *engage the Lord to your help* by trusting on his Pastoral care that you shall not want; as Faith honours God, so it engageth God. There are two things which engage God to the help of his people. You engage the Lord to your help.

1. His own *Faithfulness*; and therefore is he said to *remember his Covenant* and his Word, and to do it for his *Names sake*, because he will not suffer his *faithfulness* to fail. As the Apostle spake concerning a fuller Sanctification, *God is faithful who will also do it*, that may be said of necessary supplies in externals, God will bring them in, he will give them because he is faithful who hath promised.

2. *Our faith in trusting on his faithfulness.* So the Prophet, *Isa. 26. 3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.* Our believing in God though it be not a *Deserving Argument*, yet it is an *Ingaging Argument*. If we be not behind with our *Faith*, he will not be short in his *Mercies*. *The men of Judah prevailed because they rested on the Lord God of their fathers,* 2 Chr. 13. 18. As water fetcheth water; strength came because they relied on strength: God will own our Conditions, if we do own his Promises. When you come by faith unto the Lord, and say, Lord! this is thine own Word of Truth, upon which thou hast caused me to trust, by reason of it I withdraw confidence from all other, and have committed all my comforts, all my supplies, all my expectations into thy hands, and do depend on none but thee, assuredly the Lord will be faithful and very good unto that soul.

Your supplies
will relish the
sweeter.

3. As your merciful supplies will come in the sooner, so will *they relish the sweeter upon believing*: You shall certainly enjoy, and comfortably enjoy. When you rest on God to get supplies, the supplies being gotten, rest is gotten with them; you shall not only handle his goodness, but delight your selves in the abundance of peace.

Two things will befall us upon our trusting in God; *viz. Peaceable exemptions*; you shall expect your helps without turbulence: And *Comfortable possessions*; you shall enjoy your supplies without bitterness.

Your supplies
will be more
durable.

4. Lastly, Supplies as they are more comfortable upon believing, so *they are more durable*. Faith hath the longest lease to hold any blessing from God: of all mercies those are best kept which are best got; that which we believingly get from God, is alwayes most carefully preserved by God.

The Means to
enable us to
Trust.

Secondly, *The Means to enable our hearts to trust on God* for the supply of our wants, and to be perswaded that he will never fail you, are these,

Take heed of
those things
which beget
fear of want.
Ignorance of
God.

1. *Take heed of those things which beget and multiply fears of want.* v. 8.

1. *Ignorance of God*: Men who walk in the night are most apt to fear: an ignorant mind, and a troubled heart, or an hardened heart usually are companions. For that which settleth the

the affections and composeth them is *Knowledge*. There are three things in God, whereof if a man be ignorant he will be much in cares and fears of want.

One is *Gods Fulness*: If he apprehends not a fulness in all Of Gods Ful-
and every of Gods Attributes, his soul will fear and care. ness.
I conceive that God is fully able to supply one want, and not many, or many of my wants, but not all, or all my personal wants, but not my domestical wants; all my wants heretofore when I was a single person, but not all now, when my charge encreaseth and multiplies by children and servants. He who thus conceives of God, no more then of a half God, of a God of the Valleys and not of the Mountains, one who can supply low and mean, but not high and great wants; few and not many wants, former wants, but not present, present but not future wants, extremely mistakes the fountain of supplies, and must necessarily be tossed and crucified with perpetual waves and darts of rolling fears and cutting cares. And therefore if ever you would preserve your souls from fears of want, know, study to know by the Scriptures, how full and All-sufficient that God is, who undertakes your help, that he is an Universal good and infinite, able to satisfie the desire and need of every living creature. Thy wants in comparison of all the wants of the creatures in the world, is not so much as a farthing to a thousand pounds: That God who can supply all, hath all supplies in himself; yea, he can give bread also as well as water, and extend his provident care to thine, as he hath continued it to thy self. Multitudes may cause difficulty, where the nature is finite and limited; many pails will quickly empty and sink a pond, but they make no diminution nor variation where the goodness is infinite; all the men of the world cannot draw the sea dry.

A Second is, *Gods Affectionateness*: Though you know his Of Gods Af-
Power, yet if you be ignorant of his Love, you will tire out fectionateness.
your spirits with fears of want. Forasmuch as we generally conceive that Love is the hand of Bounty which turns the key and gives out all our supplies: If the child questions his fathers Love, he will quickly grow jealous of his fathers Allowance. So is it with us, if we be doubtful of Gods affection, we will be fearful of Gods supplies: True, say we, *whom the Lord loves he*

loves to the end ; them he will never leave nor forsake, but whether he loves us or no we doubt, and therefore we can neither boldly go to him and ask, nor confidently rest upon him to expect A misperswasion of Gods love or a doubting thereof is a root of little love to God and of much unquiet fear in our selves every way.

3. Gods immutability.

A third is *Gods immutability* or *unchangeableness*. It cannot be but that he should fear much want, who doth fear and suspect Gods constancy. If we conceive of God, as of a creature, that he is off and on, now he loves, now he hates; one while who but we, and shortly lookt on as never knowen; one while the purse runs; and within a few daies the door is shut. I say if we do thus ignominiously think of God as of men, that though his goodness be sweet, yet it is but short, and though he can do enough for us yet his mind may be altered or his promise broken, no mervail our hearts be full of fears when they are so empty of the true knowledge of God; who is as affectionate to his peoples good, as he is very much able, and as unchangeable in his intentions of their good as he is liberal in the expressions of it. Thou maiest justly say, what if my friend should fail me? what if my Parents should die? what if my ship should split? what if the thieves should come in? what if my own life should change? but thou canst never say, what if God should die? or what if God should lie? or what if God should break and fail?

Confidence on the creature.

2. *Confidence on the creatures*. You will never be exempted either from idolatry or trouble, if you place confidence on any creature, either you must imagine the creatures to be infinite shields against all evil, or infinite Sunnes of all good and so quiet your selves, but this is idolatry. Or you must conceive the creatures to be mutable clouds, weak hands, withering trees, unable principles of your good, and changeable instruments; on which while you fix your thoughts, how do your thoughts beget thoughts, and sparkle up suspitions, and encrease many fears? v. g. But if he dies, I have no other to provide for me; but if the ship miscarry, I am broken and undon; but if such a thing fail, I may run my countrey; but if he should not continue his love and bounty, I and mine may go a begging; write it down you lose your rest if you settle on the creatures. There

is no resting upon a restless object; all the world is but sea, doth a man think to lie quiet in the sea? did you ever see a stone fixed in the aire? There are natural principles of inableness, and of instability in the creatures, and though they may exceed us in duration, yet their operations and services are so under a superior restraint and disposal, that the mind and heart of man can never draw any certainty, either of power or readiness to supply its wants and necessities. It hath not all our good in them, nor doth it give out all the good it hath, and when it doth, the cock may be turned and then the water stops, God may dispose the heart another way, & though a person hath many thoughts of doing us good, yet man soon dies, suddenly dies, gives up the ghost and where is he? he perisheth and his thoughts perish with him.

Man is subject to changes, Active and Passive. Yea every man is alwayes subject to many unavoidable and passive changes, sicknesses, losses, deaths, and therefore he who leans on man must necessarily be hazarded with many a thought and fear, such an one is dead, and now there's an end of thy hopes, and a spring of thy griefs and fears. Every man may be in a thousand minds and therefore he who depends upon man may be still under a thousand fears.

3. *Forgetfulness of mercies received* and former experiences of Gods good hand unto us. The *Israelites* had their mercies written in water, and therefore their hearts were drowned with murmurings and fears: they remembred not the high hand of God, how powerful it was, and how ready to work good unto them, and therefore they still lusted, and whined, and cried out, shall we die for thirst, and *can God spread a table in the wilderness?* The Apostle saith, that *Experience breeds hope*. A person who hath had experience of Gods goodness and faithfulness, that when he was in such a streight and exigence and sought the Lord, and trusted on him, and he heard him; why! if the same or another exigence befall him, he will not be much dismayed but will remember the works of old, and conclude future help from former experience. But if we bury our experiences, we do then suppress our hopes and raise up our fears. If we think not at all of any good which God hath already done, or thinking of it do not stir up our hearts upon that experience.

Forgetfulness
of mercies re-
ceived.

perience to bless God and to rely our selves on him, now fears and doubts of want will encrease and throng upon us.

Ob. Oh ! I shall now perish, mine must now want, I have no friends now to set me to work, or to drop in help, or to find out support.

Sol. But thou forgettest the dayes of old, thou forgettest him who *clave the rock in the wilderness, and rained down Manna from heaven* ; thou remembrest not the day when the Lord sent in such an help that thou never imaginest, and gave thee such a friend as thou never thoughtest on, and found out such a way and imployment for thy good to help thee and thine : and hence is it that thou art slow to believe on him, and art now so oppressed with thy own imaginations and doubtful fears.

The life of
sense.

4. *The life of sense.* This is a life of cares and fears when men will live by sight and not by faith and judge of God onely by what is before their eyes, and by the visible probabilities of carnal means onely : as if God could do no more then their reason can reach, or their senses can discern, or then he makes shew of unto them before hand. Now every wave will toss our boat and every cloud will darken our heaven. One while we will be cheerful because we see the means rising towards us like the Sun in the morning ; another while we will be fearful, because the same Sun is ready to set and to decline us. When the creatures open themselves then we will live, when they shut themselves (like the flower which depends on the Sun) our spirits will faint within us and we cry out, *There is none to help us.*

All things in respect of us, whether Spiritual or Temporal, are very variable to sense, capable of many and sudden changes and therefore are grounds of doubtfulness in the mind, and fearfulness in the affections.

Inordinate love
and affection.

5. *Inordinate love and affection.* Whatsoever a man overloves or overcraves, breeds either much doubt that he shall not have it, or much fear that he shall lose it. The covetous men are more subject to fear then any, though they have much plenty, yet they eat, and work, and scrape, as if they of all the people in the world, were most necessitous, and should come to poverty. Cares of getting, and fears of wanting, are the con-

continual burthens and loadings of their lives. In all temporals this holds true, that much love is much trouble, and he who eagerly enlargeth his desires, doth necessarily encrease his fears; the naughty heart which will not trust God to provide, hath this judgment on him, that God lets a turbulent suspicion prevail upon him, that the creature will perhaps not bring in enough unto him, and his desires are far too wide for his supplies. It cannot but be a vexing torment when a greedy child sucks at a dry breast, and a covetous spirit draws hard at an insufficient and unsatisfying object. Strong desires cannot be denied without much grief, and are never satisfied without much fear. That man to whom much is not enough, if he should enjoy never so much, would yet want more. The very Heathens observe that the covetous person is of all men the most needy, what he hath, he wants, and he wants also what he hath not. Therefore if ever you would have hearts exempted from vexations of fear, endeavour first to have them cleansed from covetousness of desire. If the foot did not swell so much the shoe would fit you well enough: it is onely the corruption not the condition that wants.

6. *Pride of heart* is also another ground of fear of want. I am confident that many complaints and troubles arise onely from pride. If all things were duly examined there is bread to feed on, bed to lie on, house to cover them, clothes to warm them; yet tears break out, what shall we do? and how shall we live? The Commentary of this distrustful expostulation is but this, we have not enough to go in the fashion, or to go so high, and feed so high, and live so high, as formerly we did, and what's this but pride? Pride of heart.

Obj. I would not go like no body, but in some fashion live as others.

Sol. Nay then thou art proud and childish, that another's coat is finer then thine, and thy piece of bread is not so big as his. Brethren, if our humility were more, our wants would be less; God doth not ingage himself for superfluities: every one of his children shall have what is good and enough, though many things which belong to greatness and state (being need-
less) may be withheld.

7. The last ground of fear of want (which I shall mention) Unbelief.

is *unbelief*. This is the sin which is like death called in Scripture, the *king of fears* which withdraws the soul from the fountain of goodness, and from the springs of peace. The heart in streights will not be quiet, unless it can see the good it wants or be assured of it, but unbelief shuts the eye from looking on Gods All-sufficiency, and the ear also from crediting his assurance or undertaking of our helps. It withdraws us from our help and how then can we but be perplexed with the presence or expectance of want. If I do not trust God, my conscience finites me with terror; and if I would trust him, my unbelief withholds me by fear. Every way unbelief begets fear. If I deal with man I suspect his constancy, if with God his fidelity; the creature cannot, and God will not help me: either he makes no promise unto me; or if so, why hath he not all this while performed it? Had he meant me good, he would long ere this have done me good.

Two things breed fear in man, *inevidence of good, improbability of good.*

Unbelief works on both these; take it at the best, it looks on good from Gods gift and promise, onely as probable, perhaps I shall have it, perhaps not, and now though there be some hope, yet there is much fear: and take it at the worst, it looks on good as inevident, God will deny it, I shall not have it, and now hope is perished, and fears of want break in like an armed man. If by unbelief you fall off from your succours, you must necessarily sink down into your fears, extreme distractions will be your companions where divine faithful promises are not your staies and support.

Secondly, *Acquire and exercise some things, which will enable you to trust on God for the continual supply of your wants.*

Exercise some things which will enable you to trust on God. Make it evident that God and you are in covenant. 1. The first and principal thing which I would commend unto you, is this, *Be seriously and steadfastly industrious to make it groundedly evident to your souls, That God and you are in covenant* and this may breed in you a confidence that you shall not want.

David reasoneth so in this place. *Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want, q. d.* The Lord is my God, he hath undertaken for me all my life, therefore I am not solicitous. Christians are

are exceeding faulty in this, to make sure of God, and yet it is the way to make sure all his mercies. The Mathematicians must have some principles granted unto them; and if once you assent unto those truths, they will thence infer many infallible and undeniable conclusions. Among Christians this should be a principle made firm that God is their God, and then they may quietly sit down, and confidently conclude all comforts for soul and body. Come unto a person under want and bid him to be of good cheer, God is Allsufficient, and hath promised to withhold nothing that is good, and he is faithful who hath promised and cannot deny himself. Why! this is the answer, but we doubt whether the Lord be our God; the father will be good to his children, and God will be faithful to them who are in covenant, but we doubt of our relation, and therefore fear our supplies. Therefore at length be wise and industrious, it is a thing possible to cleer your interest in God, and I assure you it is a thing that will be useful and comfortable unto you. *They that know thy name, will trust on thee*, said David: He speaks (as I conjecture) of an experimental knowledge in some acts and fruits of Gods goodness. How much more if we knew that the Lord is our God, that Allsufficiency is ours, mercifulness it self is ours, faithfulness it self is ours, shall we both confidently and cheerfully repose our selves on him?

2. *Meditate much on the promises of God and on his nature* and this may be a means to quicken your hearts to trust on him that you shall not want.

Meditate much of the Promises, and on his nature.

Give arguments and grounds for to excite faith and raise it, A sheep cannot feed upon stones, nor a man walk on the water, nor faith work without a foundation to stand upon. Shew unto your souls out of the word how good God is, and how ready to do good, how Allsufficient he is, and likewise how faithful to perform his word, how immutable God is and gracious. Then in your wants and occasions, work on these things, compell your souls to meditate on them and to draw out strength. It cannot be, that the Lord should leave me, or that I should want. He is an *Allsufficiency*, what shall he lose more now then ever by doing of me good? or wherein should he be less able to supply me now then heretofore? if he gives not, his treasury is not encreased; and if he give, it is not

thereby diminished. He is a *loving God*, a Father. Why! I my self am a father, and would help my child, should I acknowledge affections in man and deny them in God? I have given to strangers, and will not God give to children? who should the Lord be ready to help, if not his own people?

He is a *faithful God*, I have his word, that *hath been tried seven times*; all his people in all ages of the world have found him as good as his word; it is impossible that he who hath promised should lie. I would not break my word, and shall I think that God, that truth it self cares not what he speaks.

He is an *immutable God*. *I die*, saith *Joseph*, but *God will surely visit you*. The heavens may crack asunder, and the world be resolved into nothing, Parents may forsake, and friends may be weary, and estate may fail, *my flesh may fail, and my heart may fail, but God who is the strength of my heart will be my portion for ever*.

O my soul! how can it be that thou shouldst want? if it were an empty, poor, weak, thin creature thou were to rely on, then &c. But it is a Full, an Allsufficient infinite God and Goodness: Or, if it were one whose estate were large, but affections streight; one great in power, but slow in love and kindness, then, &c. But it is thy Father, as well as thy God, thy Husband as well as thy Maker; thy most merciful God, as well as thy most powerful God, on whom thou art to depend; or if it were one sufficient for ability, and enclineable in affection, yet unfaithful of his word, careless of his promise, whose words were smooth complements, and deceivable flatteries, and meer pretences, &c. But it is a faithful God, One whose expressions are his real intentions, and have ever been sealed up with seasonable performances.

Or were it one who for a time onely hath undertaken thy supplies till thou were of age, and strength and trading, but then would desert thee to thy own skill and faculty of provision, thou shouldst be his pensioner no longer, then the *future times* might justly be looked upon with present fear of want.

But thou hast a great God, a good God, a faithful God, an unchangeable God to cast thy supplies on and that hath undertaken

taken thy supplies, therefore fear not, nor be disquieted, *trust on the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.*

3. *Make use of experiences* and this also may be a means to enable you to trust on God for your supplies. The *experiences of others*, who have trusted in God, and still found his provident care. *Your own experiences*, how oft he hath prevented you with mercies unthought, unsought. Wilt not thou trust on him still whom thou hast found to be thy friend, and thy fathers friend? hath he done thee all this good, that now thou shouldst question his goodness, and suspect his faithfulness? Try his word seven times, it will hold, see *Psal. 12. 6.* and 18. 30.

4. *Be careful to walk uprightly.* Unevenness is the path for fearfulness: our eye will fail us, as often as our foot deceiveth us; No man can be so thoroughly confident upon God, who hath been adventurous to sin against God. A good God and a good heart can well meet and embrace each other, but sinfulness takes off boldness. *Walk before me, and be upright, and I will be God Almighty to you*, thats the Covenant. A guilty heart is afraid of presence, or else of acceptance; either to look on God, or that God will not look on it. Faith cannot work but upon a Promise, now the Promise is, that *God will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly*, *Psal. 84. 11.* Thou wilt never be able to outstand thy fears of want, if thou be not able to withstand thy delights in sin. If sinings conquer our hearts, fears will conquer our faith. But he who can *wash his hands in innocency, may even go and compass the altar.*

No man is so quiet in conscience, so free in prayer, so cheerful in living, so able in believing as the upright person.

5. *Be diligent in your callings.* He who eats the bread of idleness, may well resolve to drink the waters of carefulness. Times of idleness are usually the times of great temptations, or of doubtful vexations. When we are active in our callings, then God lets out our supplies, and delivers them into our hands: but when we sit idly musing, then are we filled mostly with desires of evil or wants of good; vain minds hatch nothing but vain fears or cares.

6. I might have added to these, more helps against our unbelieving fears of want, *v. g.*
 Thankfulness. *Thankfulness* for what we have had, which is a method to fetch in what we want : no man rightly thanks God for a mercy, but stores up another mercy by it.
 Contentment. *Contentment* with our Condition : and earnest and much prayer.



P S A L. XXIII.

Vers. 2. *He maketh me to lie down in green Pastures ; He leadeth me besides the still Waters.*

TH E former Verse was a generall account or description of Gods Pastoral care over his people, and this Verse is a particular explication thereof, wherein you have,

1. A *sufficiency* of good which God provides for his sheep, expressed in two terms, *Pastures, Waters.*

2. A *conveniency* of good which he provides, the Pastures are green, and the Waters are *still.*

3. The Spring or cause of the one, and of the other. *He maketh me to lie down, &c. He leadeth me, &c.*

So then you have here all that is requisite and desireable about our conditions, *v. g.*

1. Here is *fulness* [*Pastures and Waters*] Pastures alone are not enough for sheep, but they must have Waters too. Waters alone are not enough, but they must have pastures also, both are here conferred on *David, Pastures, and Waters.*

2. Here is *Goodness.* Though there be Pastures, yet if they be not wholesom, the sheep are not fed, but destroyed by them.

Though there be waters, yet if they be not *still*, but violent and turbulent, the sheep are not refreshed but overwhelmed by them; but *green* Pastures are best to feed on, and *still* Waters are best to drink at; and these, both these, in the goodness of them, as well as in the fulness of them. Not meer Pastures, but *green* Pastures; not meer Waters, but *still* Waters are provided here for *David.*

3. Here is *well-pleasedness.* Though we have Pastures, and such as are green; and though we have Waters, and such as are still, yet if our minds, if our hearts be not still, be not pleased, be not delighted, be not content and quieted; if we have pleasant estates, yet not pleased minds; still waters, yet if not still hearts, &c. the barren Wilderness is then all one to us, as the green Pastures; and the dirty puddles, or violent torrents all one as the *still* and quiet waters; if we cannot rest in the *green* Pastures, nor drink at these still waters, where shall we rest? where shall we drink?

But saith *David, He maketh me to lie down, Accubare facit,* quietly, thankfully, cheerfully to feed on these Pastures, and to drink at these waters. I need not to murmur, nor yet to straggle, but God hath given me a good Estate, and a fit mind for fruition of it.

Out of all this there are these four Propositions observed. Propositions, *blē, viz.*

1. That God doth provide enough, or sufficiently, for his people [*Pastures and Waters.*]

2. That God doth provide the best of conditions for his people [*green Pastures, and still Waters.*]

3. That God doth accord the hearts and conditions of his people together [*He maketh me to lie down in green Pastures, &c.*]

4. That all the kinds of our good, with the comfortable de;

delights of them are from the Lord [*He maketh me. He leadeth me.*]

For the first of these I shall but touch a little on it, because it is Virtually included in the last Proposition which I observed out of the former Verse.

Doct.
God doth provide enough for his people.

That God doth provide enough, or sufficiently for his people. Here David hath Pastures and Waters; and they are as much as the sheep doth need. If you look on copies of record or instances in Scripture, you will see the point fully cleared. *Abraham*, he had enough and enough, Gen 13.2. *for he was very rich in cattel, in silver, and in gold.* *Isaac* the man waxed great and went going (or went forward) and grew until he became very great; for he had possession of flocks and possession of herds, &c. Gen. 26.13, 14. *Jacob*, he had enough and to spare, as you may see in Gen 33.11. *Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee, because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough: Who gives us all things richly to enjoy,* 1 Tim. 6.17 Many more instances may be given, but these are enough at once.

For the better Explication of it, these particulars are inquirable.

1. What and when it is enough, in respect of a mans condition?
2. Why the Lord provides enough for his people?
3. Wherein this may concern us?

What and when 'tis enough.

Quest. 1. What and when is it enough, in respect of a mans condition?

Sol. For the Apprehension and Decision of that, premise a few things.

Enough is a Medium betwixt two extremes.

1. An *Enough*, is (in the general) a *Medium*, or *middle estate* 'twixt two extremes: There is an estate wherein a man may have too little, and that's lesse then enough; and there is an estate wherein a man may have too much, and that's more then enough; and there is a middle estate 'twixt these, wherein a man hath conveniency or sufficiency, and that's enough. *Solomon* himself doth thus branch it in Prov. 30.8. *Give me neither poverty nor riches (i.e.) Neither too little nor too much, feed me with food convenient for me;* that was enough. So then *Enough*, is when there is no defect, and no excess; when there

there is not more then our condition requires, nor yet less. Like the gathering of the *Manna*, *he that gathered much, had nothing over, and he who gathered lesse, had nothing under.* A bird hath two wings, if she had more they would be an hinderance, if less, a want.

2. Provision may be esteemed enough, either to our

Enough, is either
To Nature.

1. *Nature*; which being purged of disease, and considered as a meer appetite, is satisfied with little.

2. *Grace*; which qualifying and enriching the heart with supernatural excellencies and objects, enables a man to say of lesse then a little, it is enough.

To Grace.

3. *Lust and Corruption*; of which we may say as *Solomon* did of the four things, *The Grave, the Barren Womb, the Earth and the Fire*, they are never satisfied, they say not, It is enough, *Pro. 30. 15, 16.*

To Lusts.

3. *Enough to our Conditions* is not to be judged by the quantity or number, but rather by the quality and effectual efficacy.

Enough to our
Conditions.

Not by the Quantity. It may be enough, though a man hath an estate less then others, a man hath leggs enough, though not so many as an horse. The mill may have water enough to drive though it hath not the Sea. The shoe though it will not fit a gyant, yet it may be big enough for a child. My estate may not be so high, so pompous, so abounding as another mans, yet it may be sufficient for me. Nay, compare the estate with it self, it may be taken in much, it may be restrained and shortned, it may be much less then it hath been unto me, and yet it may be enough. If the cloke which hangs to the ground, and the band which flotes down to the girdle were cropt and clipt, they may yet be long enough. When *Gideons* thousands were reduced to three hundred, there were men enough for the service. So when God doth remit, or sink, or tap a mans condition, when he doth, as it were, open a vein and let out some of his abundance, yet there may be blood enough, estate enough left behind; much may be lost and yet enough still remain.

This is not
judged by the
Quantity.

But by the *Quality and Efficacy*: And in this respect the supply or provision may be esteemed enough, when it is sufficient.

But by the
Quality and
Efficacy.

When sufficient to the preservation of
Life.

1. To the *Preservation of life*, of natural life; our Saviour

calls

calls it enough, if it be *daily bread*, and the Apostle expounds it if it be *food and rayment*.

To the order
and place of
life.

2. To the *order or place of life*: That may be enough for one man, which is too much for another. Counsellors, Guards, variety of attendance and of creatures, all these are but enough for a King, a great person; a greater degree is required to make enough for one person, in an order or place of life then for another, set in a low or mean condition; a leathern shoe may be enough for the foot, when yet a more costly thing is but fit and convenient for the head.

To the execu-
tion of our Du-
ties in the cours
of our life.

3. To the *execution of our duties in the course of our life*: If there be such a stormy tempest that the mill may be broken to pieces, or but a meer breathing of the air that the sails will not stir; why here's too much and too little; but when there is such a blast as sets the sails on turning, there's enough. If in my course of life I have not so much as hoyseth me off from serving of God; nor so little as denyes me power to serve him, but I have that by virtue whereof I may well honour him in a diligent and faithful and cheerful discharge of duties without any just distraction, I have then enough. When it is sufficient for the duties of my place, it is enough.

For a persons
ability rightly
to use and ma-
nage.

4. For a *persons ability rightly to use and manage*: A dish of milk may be enough for a child who hath but a weak stomach to digest, abundance may be too much for some spirits which are better able to command themselves under a narrow then under an enlarged estate. Though a Tradesman hath not all the money in the City, yet he may have stock enough. A mighty stock to some men is but as a mighty bow to a child which he cannot bend nor use. So then God gives enough to his people (*i.*) sufficient for their preservation, sufficient for their particular station, sufficient for execution of duties, and sufficient for their ability rightly to use and imploy.

Why will God
give enough?
Not too little.
It would be a
wrong to him-
self.

To his Good-
ness and All-
sufficiency.

2. But why will he give them enough or sufficient (*i.*) neither too much nor too little. *Sol.* I will give you the reasons of both.

1. *He will not let his people have too little*:

1. Because this would be a *wrong to himself*, he should be injurious to his,

1. *Nature*: His *Goodness* and his *All-sufficiency* would lose much of their honour: What! good, and yet not good enough

enough to his own ! All-sufficient in himself and to others ! and yet not a sufficiency to his own servants ! keeps a full house for others, and will he not allow bread to his children ?

2. *Kindness and Affection* : Love is bountiful and liberal ; To his kindness. But how will this found ? great love and no care ! high affection, and yet not provide what is necessary and sufficient ! Affection. Who will say the father loves the child , or the husband the wife , when neither food nor rayment are allowed unto them ?

3. *Truth and Fidelity* : Have we not his bonds for what is needful and what is good : Though his wisdom may see somewhat more , may be somewhat too much, yet his faithfulness binds him to allow us what is enough and sufficient. To his truth and fidelity.

I 1: *And a wrong to his people* : occasionally it may through their own infirmity and Satans subtilty. It would be a wrong to his people.

1. *Dispose them to independance on God*. Beggers will not frequent the house where nothing is given, and we bring not our buckets to a dry cistern. God should endanger all dependance if he should restrain his hand in meer necessities ; men are not apt to believe that God will do much , who yet doth not subminister no not sufficiencies. Dispose them to independance on God.

2. *And to indirect and irregular practises*. *Least I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain*, Prov. 30.9 Scantied conditions usually occasion enlarged corruptions ; if God will not help us, we are too apt to help our selves. If he puts not out his hand of goodness, we are quick in thrusting forth our hand to wickedness. To indirect and irregular practises.

3. *To extreme distractions*. God would have his people to serve him without fear, and to live upon him without care ; to mind their work, and leave their wages to him : but how can this possible be, if he did not give them enough ? Fears of want will arise if sufficiencies be denyed, and cares will multiply when a man hath not bread to eat, nor water to drink. To extreme distractions.

4. *To extreme discouragements*. They will have no heart to serve that God whom they cannot find good unto them : as God loves a chearful giver, so he loves a chearful server ; we ought to serve a good God with a glad heart, not pensively, dejectedly, as if we were weary of his work. But if he will not allow his servants doing his work not so little as will afford To extreme discouragements.

strength unto them for his work, they must necessarily either not serve him at all, or else with wearied and discouraged spirits.

It would be a
wrong to the
Profession of
Godliness.

III. *And a wrong to the whole profession of Godliness:* Generally men are of mercenary spirits, they are not able to pry into the *Arcana* of Religion, to discern the inward excellencies and the hidden comforts of it, but are led both in their opinions of it, and affections unto it, upon sensible and visible motions: If they see wickedness to flourish, and godliness to pine; profaneness to abound, and godliness to want; an evil course to have enough and to spare, and a good course to starve and famish, they will readily judge that that which men call Religion and Godliness, how good soever it may prove in the reverſion, yet for the present it is certainly the worst, and hardest, and barrenest service. God doth invite the sinners of the world to abandon their ignominious and soul-destroying courses, and promiseth unto them a more happy change. Speaks unto them at the least of sufficiencies and necessities, the want of which if they should discern in his best and most faithful servants, here were bar enough and scandal. Not what is said, but what they see doth most move and affect these. But God will honour himself, his Nature, all his Attributes; He delights in the dependance of his servants, and in their regular course, and would have them to serve him intently without distraction, and chearfully without discouragements; and he seriously minds the honour of holiness, and therefore at the least he will give what is enough and sufficient.

Not too much.
Then
He might have
too little.

2. *He Will not let his people have too much neither.*

I. *Because if they have too much, perhaps he might have too little.* The Physicians say, It is alwayes good so to eat as to rise with an appetite. God doth so distribute good to his, that they should still depend upon him for good: When the *Israelites* were full they kicked, and forgate the rock of their Salvation. When the *Prodigal* had all the estate in his own hands, he presently left his father. Give me not riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord, saith Solomon, Prov. 30. 8, 9. A great estate is seldom without great pride. When the great dinner is eaten, men usually bid Farewell, and take their leave. God hath least duty ordinarily from those on whom he confers most plenty.

Be-

2. Because, *If they should have too much they might have too little*; 1. too little in *Spirituals*, while they have too much in *temporals*, too little in *graces*. *The three children and Daniel thrived better with the Pulse, then the rest with the royal allowances.* The sheep thrive best upon the short mountains, and Graces most in a moderate estate; the long cloke hath tript up many a mans heels. Humility is more low, and faith more high, and love more strong, and prayer more fervent, and duties more constant, and the heart usually best and most heavenly in a time of meanness, then in a time of fulness and greatness. O how handsomely have men rowed in a River, who have been cast away in a large Ocean. The *Frier* lookt very gentle and meek till he became an *Abbot*, and *Julian* was somewhat tolerable till he became an *Emperor*. Much earth usually is a flamer to our earthly lusts, and a quencher of our spiritual motions.

2. *In comforts*, when our graces sink our comforts do also sink; when our duties waver, our comforts do also vary and alter. No man can have more, or the same degree of spiritual peace and joy, who decays in the spiritual stock, or in the employment and exercise thereof, I mean in his Graces.

Too much may be a snare to our Graces, and prove an heavy burden to our consciences. *Ergo*: Other reasons might be added to all these, to prove that God will give his people enough, (.i.) Neither too much nor too little, but what is sufficient.

1. He is Wise, wisdom gives what is best, and what is fittest.

2. His people must praise him, even for outward blessings, *Ergo*, They must have what is sufficient.

Now let us come to the Application of this point. Doth God provide enough, and what is sufficient for his people? *Learn* then they may learn,

1. *To be contented with their conditions*: This is the very *To be content* inference of the Apostle, 1 Tim 6. S. *Having food and rayment ed with our let us be therewith content*; (.i.) To be well pleased, to be satisfied: not to grumble, and murmur, and to be complaining, and still craving. Christians ought to pass their conditions over with much thankfulness to God, and much quietness of spirit,

rit, and with much chearfulness of behaviour, every way to be contented, since God doth, and will alwayes afford them enough.

Because this is the most proper Use and beneficial that can be made of the Doctrine, I will therefore enlarge a little on it.

Consider therefore a few Particulars.

You need no
more then
enough.

1. *You need no more then enough*: Why should ye not then be contented with your enough? If you have more then you can eat, why! that's taken away from your table; if you have rayment more then you can wear, why! that's laid aside; its all one as if you had them not. Your superfluities are uselesse and needles, like a crutch that a healthy man cares not for. All other things besides what is sufficient, are either for your Variety or for your Torment; usually they are made the servants of some lust, and the occasions of much fear.

No more then
enough is best

2. *No more then enough is best*: You know the Proverb, Enough is as good as a feast. When a man hath no more then enough, he hath that which is best.

For his Soul

For his Soul: Great estates are many times the bane of Souls. Rich men are apt to be high-minded, and Prosperity breeds many times Apostacy; of all Christians the poorer sort are usually most rich in Faith, in Zeal, in Fervency of Duty; they have most leisure, and pleasure, and delight in conversing with God. Solomon saith, *That a mans abundance will not suffer him to sleep*. I may say, in some sense, It will not suffer him to wake and work; a man can hardly bear great estates and great duties together.

For his Body

For his Body. Ask the Physicians, What diet is best? and they will tell you, that *Moderata dieta est optima*. Look on the poor man who labours hard, and the rich man who lies still, or those that feed on fulness, or those who eat only the bread of sufficiency, these have more health, better colour, greater strength, &c.

For his De-
light.

For his delight and peace. We do exceedingly err, my brethren, when we match in our fancies great comforts and great estates together. O, say we, if we had so great an estate as such, we would live as merrily and at hearts ease as they. But as the great Roman answered him who commended his new

shoe.

shoe how neatly it did sit on his foot ; but said he, You do not know where it pincheth me. Or as the Emperor said of his Crown when he lookt on it with tears, If you knew the cares of this Crown you would never stoop to take it up That say I, You see the outside of a greater estate , but you do not see the inside. You see the field of corn, the high mountains, and low valleys, and great employments, but you do not see the many thornes, and the many tempests, and the many inundations that all this is subject unto. How little such enjoy either God or themselves , how often their consciences are wounded , their sleep broken, their hearts shot through and through with secret fear and guilt.

For his *Accompts* : We may justly say of enlarged estates as For his Ac-
compts. we do of enlarged relations , if relations do multiply, obligations do multiply ; the single man hath not so many duties on him as the father, the master, the minister, &c. So if estates be encreased , our accounts unto God are thereby encreased. To whom much is given, much more shall be required : Your greater honours and greater wealth are a greater part of your stewardship, for which we must be accountable unto God.

Object. Yes, will many say, If we had enough we had reason to be contented, but alas we have nothing.

Sol. Who art thou that thus disputest ? good or bad ; If *Bad*, though thou hadst all the world yet hadst thou in effect nothing, for number things by blessing, then thou hast nothing. Nothing is left unto thee.

But if thou be a *Good* man, a right Christian, why sayest thou then, That thou hast nothing ? There is no good man but hath in *Spirituals* that which is worth all the world. And for *Externals*, surely thou hast something. When didst thou sleep last ? where didst thou lie last ? was it not in thy own house ? what didst thou eat last ? was it not food ? what hast thou now on ? is it not rayment ? how art thou at this time ? why, O Christian ! though God , and Christ, and Grace, and Heavea be the chiefest of things, yet in thy Arithmetick, are outward mercies, many outward mercies Ciphers only , to be reckoned as nothing ? Is lodging nothing, house nothing, sleep nothing , food nothing, rayment nothing, health and strength nothing ?

Object.

Object. True, they are something but not enough, had we enough of all these, or some of these, then we had something indeed.

Sol. And how much must goe to make enough unto thee? Thou canst not acknowledg it to be enough, unless thou findest it in variety and superfluity, but a good heart indeed, would confesse it to be enough if there were sufficiency. Thou hast enough for food, but not enough for surfeit; enough for use, but not enough for trouble; enough to further, but not enough to hinder thee in thy Christian course; and what hurt is this?

Object. But if I had as much as such and such I had enough.

Sol. I remember a story of a man whom *S. Chrysostom* did faine to be in prison, O, saith he, if I had but liberty I would desire no more! he hath it. O then, if I had but for necessity! he had it. O then had I for a little variety! he had it. O then had I any office were it the meanest! he hath it. O then had I but a magistracy, though over one town only! he hath it. O then were I a Prince, and then a King, and then an Emperor, and then an Emperor of the whole world, and then, with *Alexander*, he weeps that there are no more worlds. He who saith not that sufficiency is enough, will never say that plenty is enough. If thou hadst a greater estate, thou wouldst have a greater heart; the eye would not be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. He is happiest who needs but little; and he who hath most, hath with all, this unhappinesse, that there is no certainty of keeping, nor no measure in his desiring.

Use 2. A second *Use* therefore shall be of *Direction* unto us to get those Qualities which may enable us to see when we have enough, and to overcome those qualities which are never satisfied.

Get those qualities that will make us contented. Holiness of heart.

1. To get those qualities which will make us cordially to acknowledge that we have enough; *viz.*

i. In general. *Holiness of heart* will quickly discern enough or sufficiency in the estate. There are two things which a wicked heart cannot find; It cannot find *excellency in Spirituals*, nor *sufficiency in Temporals*. Till the heart be taken up with God

God it cannot rest quiet with temporal possessions. It cannot limit it self here, until it be limited by him who is unlimited.

A good God, and a good heart, and a little of outward estate will go far. Little is a Sufficiency to him who with it enjoys an All-sufficiency. Therefore get an holy heart; thou dost hereby procure a transcendent estate in heaven, and always a sufficient estate on earth. Godliness is that which works contentment, and contentment is that which makes us see that we have enough. Men do but puzzle, and maze, and disquiet themselves with endless craving of earthly things, until they partake of God and holiness. The more holy a man grows the more he is in heaven; and the more heavenly the soul is, the less need it sees of worldly things. A whole world will not satisfy a worldly spirit, but little of this is enough to him who desires and strives to feed his soul more then his body.

In particular get these Graces, v. g.

1. *An exceeding love of heavenly things*: Why is it that many Heroick spirits have trampled upon all the world, and rejected them as dross and dung: That they have changed high estates for low, and rich estates for poor; *Moses chose afflictions with the people of God, rather then the honour of the Court.* Surely they did set the highest estimations and affections on Gods favour, on Christ, on heavenly things. That which can enable a person to become nothing, and to be content with the loss of all worldly things, so that he may enjoy God and Christ, that same will more easily enable him to be satisfied and contented with a little, much more with a sufficiency; *It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive,* said loving Jacob. And, *let him take all, since my Lord the King is come again,* said Mephibosheth. So the Christian, *It is enough, God is mine, and Christ is mine, I have him whom my soul loveth, and any thing now is enough.* Love of heavenly things ever drowns and swallows the desire of earthly things.

2. *Humbleness of Heart*: Look on all persons blazoned in Scripture for humility, and you shall find them acknowledging and blessing for a sufficiency, *Jacob, David, Paul.* According as the heart is, so is the estate to the heart. A great vessel must have much water to fill it, but a little water will fill a little vessel.

If the heart be great, 'tis not easie to define what will be enough unto it, but a little estate is sufficient for a little heart.

There are three things which Humbleness enables one unto; to see even little mercies, to bleſs for all mercies, to be contented with any mercy.

Self-denial.

3. *Self-denial*: You ſee that a man that hath *appetitus caninum*, endleſs in eating, unſatiabſe after all feedings, a diſeaſe called the *Wolf*, a ravening appetite: If this diſeaſe were removed, a leſſer quantity by far were enough for that mans ſtomach. There are in every man natural neceſſities, and preternatural neceſſities; natural deſires and corrupt deſires. Corrupt deſires are like ſome womans longings, filled with vanity and alſo with variety. Our luſts alwaies put us upon a greater expence to ſatiſſie them, then our natures. If then you would behold an enough to your conditions, ſtrive much to deny ſinful fancies, ſinful affections, ſinful cravings, which are like ſome beggars who will never be ſerved. When a man hath many mercies and comfortts yet he is unquiet, he muſt have more, for more eaſe, for more vanity, for more bravery; till this man can deny the motions, fancies, importunities of his corrupt heart, he will never have enough.

Faith.

4. *Faith*. It hath two properties; one to make us *unſatiſfiable about the things of heaven*: another to make us *quietly cheerful with any condition on earth*. In ſpirituals, faith gives ſcope to the heart, but in temporals it bridles and moderates. Faith will either ſee food enough or ſawce enough; either it ſpreads our table with the creatures, or elſe with Gods loving kindneſs in Chriſt, which is a good meal. If a Chriſtian could attain unto two things, he would ſay, I have enough. One is if his heart could ſubmit to Gods provident diſpenſation. Another is, if his heart were aſſured of future proviſion. Now faith works both of theſe. Firſt, it ſubmits my heart to my preſent condition, it ſeeth the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in any eſtate be it never ſo mean, that divine providence ſets it out for me, and ſaith, There is this day thy daily bread. Secondly, it bears up the ſoul for the future, ſeeing a ſpring in providence, and an undertaking not only for one day, but for all the dayes of our lives. There is a market every day of the week for a Believer.

Theſe

These are the special Graces which will make us satisfied even with a little, and still to find enough.

To which let me add some gracious considerations, properly and usefully adjutant to the same end, *v. g.* Gracious Considerations.

1. Often consider *how unworthy a creature thou art.* A deep meditation of our sins avails much to a further mortification of our sinful desires: when I consider how many my sins are, and how hainous, and how meritorious, I rather wonder that I am not in Hell then on Earth; I rather admire that I have any mercy, then so little. Ah brethren, he who deserves every moment to be sentenced into hell, hath reason to say, It is mercy enough that I yet live, and have time granted to prevent that sentence. He who deserves not a bit, not a rag, not any breathing, not any good, may see occasion and confess, O Lord! I have enough (who though I have forfeited every mercy, and deserved every misery) yet I have health, I have food, I have raiment, I have many, many daily mercies. Observe it experimentally, when any persons are touched with a deep meditation of their sins, the least mercy will seem mercy to them; O! it is well, it is mercy, it is enough, God deals exceeding gratuitously with me, it is more then I could expect, it is as much as I need!

2. Often consider, *how changeable these outward things are:* How changeable these outward things are The greater quantity is subject to as much vanity, and to the same uncertainty, as a moderate allowance. He who hath thousands may see them smoaking away as soon as he that hath but shillings and pence; and usually the highest conditions are most hazarded with alterations.

I see no difference 'twixt a large and moderate condition but this, That in the one a man is like a Traveller on the land, whom now and then a thief may assault and surprize; in the other, he is like a Ship richly laden at sea, which either the roving Pirates, or the violent Tempests, or the soking Sands, or the splitting Rocks may in a moment shiver to pieces. But both are like a cloud, which may be quickly driven; or like a flower, which may be quickly withered, even a posie of flowers may wither as soon as one naked flower. And why then, O my soul! shouldest thou strive for great things, and not rest satisfied with any thing? when as every thing here below is too mean for

thy dignity, too weak for thy safety, too uncertain for thy possession.

How little did
satisfie thee
heretofore.

3. Often remember, *how little did satisfie thee heretofore*. The time was, how thou didst serve God day and night with many tears, fervent prayers, affectionate obedience; and also didst chearfully go on in the discharge of thy particular calling, when thou hadst not comparably so much as now thou hast. There was not that easiness of lodging, that fairness of habitation, that daintiness of feeding, that softness of clothing. Why! was little, very little, very well and enough then? and is not much, very much a sufficiency and enough now? Could I eat and blest then, should I feast and vex now? could a dish of green herbs satisfie heretofore, and should not plenty be enough at this time? Surely, O my heart! thy allowance was enough at the lowest, and when God hath more enlarged it, dost thou now well, more and more to dispute it, and cavil at it? O my unthankful heart! The portion of God is sufficiently good, only thou, thou art degenerately vile and bad.

The shortness
of thy life.

Hac Noſſe.

4. Often ponder *the shortness of thy life*! What a stir is here! and infinite reaches after a few more shadows! O how a man contrives, strives, stirs, stretcheth body, soul, conscience, all, to enlarge his treasures, and in the midst of all, the great God gives a commission unto Death, Go, strike him, take him speedily out of the land of the living; and this man dies, and gives up the Ghost, and where is he? where is his soul? where are his projects? where are his greatnesses? You see how much he leaveth behind, the comfort, benefit, use whereof he never had; the least of the least of the most he had, had been enough for him, and many more whose lives are so suddenly struck off as his. Well, let it sink into you; a little meat is enough for a weak stomach, (much turns not into nourishment but disease) and a little estate may be enough for a little time: Our life is not long, it is but a short Tale quickly told, we must part with every thing. Paul makes that a reason that we should be content with any thing, 1 Tim. 6. 6.

The estates and
behaviours of
others.

5. Frequently look over *the estates and behaviours of others*, far beyond thee in Grace, far below thee in Plenty: Their charge is far greater, their revenue is far shorter, these have many children, thou hast but few; they have little estate, thou hast

hast much ; they feed together, they pray together, they bless together, they chearfully bless God for their enough. Should poverty say, It is enough ? Should meanness say, It is enough ? and yet plenty complain, and yet abundance grudge, and be unsatisfied.

6. Once more : *Be able to see that though there be not much in thine own hands, yet there is exceeding much in thy fathers hands.* Thou hast not all thy estate at once ; it may be enough unto any that when he hath dined, there is one preparing again for his supper. Though there be not much in thine own hands, yet there is much in thy fathers hands.

Secondly, *To overcome those unsatisfied qualities* which know no measure, nor when it is enough. These unsatisfied qualities must be overcome.

You will never be able to see a sufficiency in your conditions, till those sinful qualities be mortified. I will mention some of them.

1. One is *Covetousness* ; this is like the *Grave*, which never saith, *It is enough.* Or, like *Solomons horse-leach, which cries, Give, give,* Prov. 30. 15. The Apostle prays the Hebrewes to *be content with such things as they have* ; but how might this be learned ? Why, saith he, *let your conversation be without covetousness,* Heb. 13. 5. Covetousness is nothing else but an impotent and boundless appetite that can neither use what it hath, nor put a period to what it desires ; but as in the sea, one wave riseth above another, so here every desire of having is out gone by a new desire of getting. If you could melt the heavens into gold, or the elements into silver, and estate the covetous man into all the dominions of the world, yet his greedy soul would never say, *Forbear, it is enough.* But as the fishes are still sucking and drawing in even in the vastest ocean, so the covetous spirit is still panting, complaining, gaping, grasping, gripping in the fullest condition.

Non quod habet numerat, tantumque non habet, optat.

Poor man who knows no God but earth, enjoys neither God nor earth, his only happiness is a fancy of what he wants, and his great misery that still he desires that which will never satisfy his desires. Well then, if ever you would come to see a sufficiency and an enough in your conditions, beseech the Lord to keep your hearts from covetousness. If your affections be only for earth, you will never have enough of earth.

Emulation and
Envy.

2. *Emulation and Envy.* This is one of the great sins and an expensive sin, and a sin which makes us to exceed our conditions. It is generally with us as with those that run in a race, who look on those before them; so do men and women fix their eyes on others beyond them in place and condition, they must feast as others, be apparelled as others, go, and spend like others. People count it a disgrace in any thing to fall lower then others in their places, and then no marvel they have nor enough, when more then their estates is vainly mispent in an expensive emulation.

Intemperance
and Luxury.

3. To which we may add another sin of *Intemperance and Luxury*, wherein persons sacrifice large estates to their bellies and appetite. It was spoken (I think) of our Nation, That we build as if we should live for ever, and eat as if we should die presently. It was a singular *Encomium* which *Erasmus* gives of the life of *S. Jerome*, that *maxima pars debetur studio, minima somno, minor cibo, nulla otio*. But with us it is quite contrary, sleeping, and eating, and drinking devour most of our lives and estates. The *Athenians* spent most of their time in telling of news, and some of this City all their time in feasting and carousing. If Christians were wisely *Parcimonious*, they might find time enough for their souls, and estate enough for their bodies; but while they live only to eat, they eat out all their livings.

We do not drink to satisfy thirst, nor eat to satisfy hunger, but shameful spewing is in our feasts, and, as if *Sardanapalus* or *Heliogabalus* were still alive; we devise choice of dainties, and so to satisfy a sensual appetite, we at once crack our souls, and our bodies, and our estates, in a moment waste all. Had we Roman appetites and Christian diligence, we might have enough not only for necessity but also for charity.

Pride and Vanity

4. *Pride and Vanity.* God gives a man enough if he be humble and sober; but when can a vain mind fix, or a proud and haughty spirit settle? Thou hast enough for thy condition, but not enough for the fashion. When vulgar People will infinitely swell above their places and ranks, as if they were the children of Kings, adorn themselves with Diamonds and Rubies, and Pearls, and with the most costly apparel; this is one (amongst others) of the reasons why so many Citizens crack and fall. An ordinary,

ordinary Citizen who is newly set up, and might have had enough for the support of him and his, on a sudden shrinks into nothing, and what's the reason? only Pride and Vanity. The needless Jewels, and the superfluous Ornaments, and the incongruous dressings and attirings, if they had been spared, there had been now food and raiment left; but pride is a costly sin, and the high way to beggery; coarser garments, diet, lodging would serve thee and thine very well.

5. *Some secret haunts of closer transgressions* are likewise the reason why many cannot see enough. As *inordinate sports* where men venture all that God hath given them upon the cast of a die, or throw of a bowl; and which is worse, they make their estates to bear up their sin of *Uncleanness*, not knowing that this is the way to bring them to a morsel of bread. All these sins are of such a malignant influence to a mans estate, that if he hath much they will bring it to a little, and if he hath little they will bring it to nothing; shame and infamy, want and poverty, are the just returns and fruits of them.

6. I might mention more sins which will not let us see that it is enough, as *discontentedness, unthankfulness, passionate forwardness, &c.* all which are a cloud to darken the goodness and sufficiency of our estates: would we pray earnestly to the Lord, and wrestle with him, and never give over until he had subdued these vile and sinful qualities, we should find that God did enough for us, and clearly acknowledge that only our *Lusts*, not *Estates* did want.

If God gives enough to his people, then they may be advised, Use 3.
Of Advice.

1. *Diligently to serve him*, to expend themselves totally in his service: they need not distract themselves with fears nor cares; hath not God given unto them enough? And why doth he give them enough, but that without distraction or discouragement they might intend his glory in the duties of their general and particular callings.

2. *Cheerfully to serve him*. Sufficiency should produce alacrity. Thy master is a good master, while thou art doing of his work, he allows thee enough, and when thou hast done his work he will bestow on thee an exceedingly exceeding weight of glory. To serve God Diligently.

Only.

3. *Only to serve him.* As thou shalt have no comfort, so thou hast no need to supply thy self by any indirect or wicked ways. Should a lie be found in thy mouth for gain? or for did flattery in thy carriage for advancement? there is no need of these, thou art well, thy God is All-sufficient and hath given sufficiency to thee. The treasures of wickedness will quickly fail, but a little shall hold out long enough to him who dares to trust and serve a God.

Use 4.

To go into the
way of getting
enough

Here are we all informed to go into the way of getting Enough. It is the common voice, If we could have but enough, we would desire no more. Wouldst thou indeed have enough? why! then get the Lord to be thy Shepherd, and beseech him to make thee one of the sheep of his pasture; all his sheep are cared for, he provides enough for them. While the Wolves and Dogs range and hunt up and down, the sheep are quietly feeding; give up thy self in Covenant unto God and he will be allsufficiency to thee.

Thus much for the first proposition, That the Lord provides Pastures and Waters for his people. Now I proceed to the second, which respects the quality of this provision, *Green Pastures*, not pastures only, but *Green pastures*; not waters only, but *Still waters*, this is the goodness of Gods provision for them.

Hence observe,

Doct. 2.

As God provides a full estate, so the best estate for his people.

That as God provides a full estate, so the best estate for his flock or people. Pastures, which are Green, and Waters, which are Still. As *Abram* though he gave gifts unto the children by the Concubines, yet he gave the Inheritance to his son *Isaac*; so though God doth give many things to other men, yet he gives the best things unto his own people. In *Isa. 25. 6.* Their provision is called a *Feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the Lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.* A Feast is nothing else but the choicest dainties of a market, and in the chiefest feast you cannot exceed the chiefest things to be eaten, and the choicest things to be drunk. Here is Fat and Marrow, and here are Wines well refined; in a word, here is the best of all provision. In *Isa 26. 2.* There is mention of a *Vineyard of red wine*; Wine for the sweetness of it, *red wine* for the choiceness of it, (it signifies a generous and a sparkling wine) and a *Vineyard of this* for the fulness and

and largeness of it. And a *Marriage Feast*, Mat. 22. not a funeral feast. What shall I say more? in Psal. 16. 6. their provision is called *Pleasant places*, and a *goodly heritage*. *The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.* The lines (i.e.) The possessions, are fallen unto me (by a blessed and good providence) in pleasant places, in *amœnis*, or *jucundis*; I have a goodly heritage, *speciosam hereditatem*, a very fair estate. And in Psal. 84. 11. God thinks nothing too good for them, they shall have *grace and glory*, and if there be any thing else which is good, that's theirs. Grace is the best thing on earth, and Glory is the highest thing in heaven: both are theirs, and if there may be supposed any other thing that is good, *No good thing will he withhold from them*: Thus for the point in general.

Now for the particular discovery of it, these inquiries must be resolved,

1. Of what estate and condition this is averred?
2. In what respects the estate of the people of God is best?
3. Why so?
4. Then the useful Application of all this to our selves.

Quest. 1. Of what estate and condition this assertion is averred?

Of what estate
this is averred.

Sol. To omit many things there is a three-fold estate of Gods people:

1. Their Spiritual estate.
 2. Their Glorious estate.
 3. Their Temporal estate.
1. Their *Spiritual estate* consists of an holy Union with God in Christ; in which they are partakers of the Divine Nature, and receive the first fruits of the Spirit. All those essential graces which make them to exceed evil men as much as reason doth make men to exceed the beasts that perish. Take all the wicked men in the world, they fall totally short of the weakest godly man in spirituals, for either they are utterly without God (their minds being darkned, and hearts seared, and senses reprobated) or else those gifts and spiritual abilities which they have, are no way comparable to those of the truly godly. The knowledge of the Pharisees did but puff them; the knowledge of the Disciples

ples did humble and guide them. The *faith of Simon Magus* it differed in the very formal nature of it, from the *faith of Simon Peter*; the one was raised upon sight, and necessary conviction; but the other was raised by, and founded upon Jesus Christ. The *repentance of Judas* was far short of the *repentance of Peter*, *Judas's* repentance was but terror and despair, but the other was conversion, and mixt with faith.

None of them all have that really holy and new nature whereof every godly man is a partaker, and therefore in Scripture, the worst of them are called *Swine*, and *Dogs*, and *Wolves*, and *Lions*, and the best of them are called *Foxes* and *Serpents*, yet are they all beasts: they have either a professed want of an holy nature, or else but the profession and shew of it: and the *substance* which the godly have, must needs be better then the *shadow* which the wicked have. And as the people of God have the best in spiritual graces, not an *historical* faith onely, but a *justifying* which is better: not *trouble of conscience* onely, but *Godly sorrow* which is better: not *despair* for sin, but *recovery* from sin, which is better: not a *shadow* but the very quality of all saving graces which is best of all: so they have the best in *spiritual priviledges*, they are sons, they are heires, they have such liberties, and immunities which no evil man hath; no wicked man is so freed from the law, nor from wrath, nor hath that liberty of access unto God, &c.

Spirit. priviledges.

Spir. comforts. Yea and the best in *spiritual comforts*: all the comforts about the soul in evil men, are but an active delusion of the Devil, or passive stupidity of their own spirits, *Et tanto prejer quanto insensibilior*: saith Saint *Austin* in Ps. 55. p. 375. Edit. Basil.

But of this there is little or no question, save that some would of late make us believe that Reprobates and Elect, good men and bad, may go hand in hand for all sorts of Graces, and to differ onely in the business of perseverance: they forget that the Scriptures speak of hypocrites as well as of Apostates.

Of their glorious estate.

2. Their *glorious estate is best*: Of this there is no doubt by any Christian Spirit, their glorious estate is better then their Spiritual estate on earth, and therefore much better then any temporal condition whatsoever. In heaven they shall need no temporals, and there all their spirituals are perfected.

Cleer-

Clearest knowledge, not dimme or in part, as here below. *Purest love*, not mixt, as &c. *Fullest union*, not interrupted as here below. *Highest joy*, not broken, as here below; whereas the wicked shall in hell more perfect their sins, and more encrease their damnation and misery.

So then God provides the best of conditions for his people, if you speak of the spiritual, or of the heavenly condition; if Grace be the brightest Star on earth, or Glory the fairest Sun in the firmament, then Gods people surpass all in these respects.

3. Their *Temporal estate* consists of the outward things of this life, wherein also the people of God have the best: I do not say they have the greatest, but they have the best. When *Jacob* and his family came down into *Egypt* they were seated in the land of *Rameses*, in the best of the land, Gen. 47. 11. and afterwards when they encreased unto hundreds of thousands, they were planted in *Canaan* the choicest soil in the world, a land flowing with milk and honey and wherein they were fed with the kidneys of wheat, or with the tops or finest of wheat.

Obj. These instances are peculiar.

Sol. Psal. 37. 16. *Better is the little of the righteous, then the plenteous Manors or riches of any wicked*: I know that this part will seem a very Paradox unto you, and therefore I will descend unto the second enquiry which being resolved will yield light unto it.

Quest. 2. In what respect the condition of Gods people for temporals is best?

In what respect their condition for temporals is best.

For the understanding of it premise these particulars;

1. If you judge of *Best* by *Most* of the same kind, it is not affirmed by way of individual comparison that the temporal estate of a godly man is best. *Dives* had more then *Lazarus*, and the *rich Fool*, then the *poor Disciples*: but quantity is no argument or touch-stone for excellency: the jewel is less in quantity then the free-stone, and yet much more excellent and better.

Not best because most.

2. If you judge of the bestness of condition by *sense* and the estimation of worldly men, who can in earthly things see nothing but the earthliness of them; it is likewise granted that those *iniqui estimatores*, blind arbitrators do cast and reject the men.

Not best to sense, and in the estimation of worldly men.

temporal condition of good men, as we do gold because it is too light, and wants bulk and weight

A Temporal condition wherein a man may get as much as ever he can, (though *de modo* & *de medio* all be challengeable) this seems best in the dazled eye, and false scale of a worldly judgment.

Not best in an absolute comparison to all other things.

Pf. 4. Lift thou up, &c.

But for quality they have the best.

Their waters come out of the sweetest Spring.

3. If you judge of a bestness in an *absolute comparison to all other things whatsoever*; so the temporal condition of Gods people (even in their own judgments) is not best, they do prize Gods favour, and Christ, and Grace, and Glory better.

But in a coordinate comparison, in a comparison of things in the same order *i.e.* compare the temporal estate of the people of God, with the temporal estate of wicked men: for the qualities, the people of God have ever the best. And that I shall make evident by many instances.

1. Their *Waters come out of the sweetest Spring*, and their Estates come out of the best hand; the droppings of a Spring, are sweeter then the flowings of the Sea. *The gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim, is it not better then the Vintage of Abiezer?* said Gideon, *Judg. 8. 2.*

The estate of evil men (look on it at the best) is but the fruit of a common providence: but the estate of the godly, is the gift of special love and favour, an estate and a loving pardoning God too. It comes from a reconciled God, as well as from a bountiful God, from a Father as well as from a Creator. Now any estate coming from a God reconciled unto us is best. The loving kindness of God doth raise the estate above all, it raiseth it above life, which is the best of all temporal estates, *Pf. 63. 3.* When *Ahasuerus* was displeased with *Haman*, all his honours and wealth were bitter unto him. A small thing given by a King out of a gracious affection, preponderates the largest condition which lies under his wrath.

Their temporal condition is more sanctified and blessed.

2. *Their temporal estate be it never so little, is more sanctified and blessed; and therefore it is best.* When God communed with *Abraham* for the best of good things, he doth not say in giving, *I will give unto thee, but in blessing, I will bless thee: and thou shalt be a blessing.* An estate unblest, is like meat that is raw, of which the more a man doth eat, the more he doth endanger his life: or like the corn in the ear, which if a man

swal-

swallows, it may choke him. *Sodom* seemed more pleasant and rich, but fire and brimston rained on it; so &c. Our sins have sowed a curse and a snare through all outward things, and there they stick untill a divine benediction doth weed them out and winnow them as it were: A wicked man though he hath a fuller table, yet it is a snare; and though he fills his mouth, yet the wrath of God may go in with the meat; he hath the curse and the vexation of the creatures, with the possession of the creatures. But the estate of the righteous, It may be said of it what *Isaac* said of *Jacobs* garment, It is like a field which the Lord hath blessed. They have the inheritance and the blessing too. He bleisseth the habitation of the just, Prov. 3. 33. *Esaü* had an estate fair enough left unto him, but *Jacob* had a less estate, yet a better, because he had the blessing with it. One draught of cleer water is better then a Sea of brackish and salt water.

3. That estate is best which is best used. If a man hath not a heart to use the estate, but keeps it onely as a prisoner (*pecunia sua* dicunt quam velut alienam domi clausam sollicito labore custodiunt) or if he doth use it but then in a sinful way (*bona appellant ex quibus nullus illis (nisi ad res malas) usus* *Cypr. Ep. 2. est. *) which is a furtherance not a hinderance to good; wicked men have golden fetters. He falls infinitely short of him, who though he hath a lesser estate for the abundance, yet hath a better estate for the use and improvement. Their estate is best used,

Now evil men for the most part either have no heart at all to use their estate, they onely are the Jaylors of mercies, and inclosures of blessings; just as the bowels of the earth are filled with rich Mines, and yet are not rich.

Or else they do spend their estates upon their lusts, in drunkenness, luxuriousness, and all other beastly voluptuousness, for which sinful abuses they shall be judged another day. Their estates are but hinderances to obedience, and furtherances to sin. Amplior summa dignitate et honore, Major exigitur usura penarum. Cypr.

But godly men have an heart given them from God to use their estates, (for their own necessity, for the help of others, and for his glory). They have mercies, and taste of them; they have goods, and do good with them; and Christ will take notice thereof in the day of judgment, that they fed and clothed

clothed him and gave him a cup of cold water. I think that a little meat, and a good stomach, and a plain house, with a good eye, and a hard bed with a sound body, is much better then a feast where a man hath no stomach at all to eat; then a gawdy room where a man hath not an eye to see; then a down-bed, whereon a mans pain will not suffer him to lie. That estate which a man can use and best use is the best estate.

They have
more peace and
comfort.

4. *That estate is best in which a man hath most peace and comfort.* If a man hath abundance of wealth, and abundance of vexation: If he hath a float of dignities and a flood of fears, the unquietness of his mind will quite alter the goodness of his estate: there can be no happiness where there is no quietness. *Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, then great treasure and trouble therewith, Prov. 15. 16. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, then a stalled ox and hatred therewith, vers. 17.* We may say of all outward things without peace, what Solomon saith of a brawling woman, *they are a continual dropping.* Now take any wicked man in the world with the fairest estate, there is not that peace under it or with it as with the estate which a godly man enjoys.

There are two kinds of peace which are precious and confer much to our comfort on earth;

One is the *peace of conscience*,

Another is the *peace of contentment.*

A wicked man in the fullest of his temporal estate, enjoys neither upon right and sound grounds.

He enjoys no *peace in conscience.* *Suspirat in convivio, vigilat in pluma*, said Cyprian in Ep. 2. Still he carries his own torment with him said S. Austin, *Bene esse cum malo non potest, sibi ipsi tormentum est. Ipse enim est poena sua quem torquet conscientia sua; fugit ab inimico quo potuerit, a se quo fugiet, quisquis malus est, male secum est.* It is ever evil with an evil man. And then what is all the world to a man, a galled conscience is like a sick stomach which cannot abide the sight of meat; all that thou hast, thou wilt rather desire thou never hadst, then to look on them with an accusing and troubling conscience. Thou hast got them, but not by right; thou hast possessed but not rightly used them, and unjust gettings, and sinful employings prove thy greater torments. The evil

In Psal. 36.
(alias) 17.
p. 195. Edit.
Basil.

man hath *multitudinem opum & mancipiorum*, &c. but the righteous person though he hath but a dish of green herbs, yet with it hath a good conscience which is as a continual feast. Whatsoever he hath, he hath peace with it. S. *Austin* upon those words of *David*, *Psal. 37. Delectabitur in multitudine pacis*, elegantly speaks it thus, *Aurum tuum pax, prædium tua pax, vita tua pax, Deus tuus pax*. Thy gold shall be peace, thy silver peace, thy possessions peace, thy life peace, thy God peace. The evil man hath thornes in his estate, and thornes in his conscience; *He walketh upon thornes*, saith *Solomon*; but the path of the godly is plain, the estate of the godly is good, and their peace is surpassing. Auguſt. loc. cit. p. 191.

Nor doth he enjoy the peace of Contentment: *Godliness with contentment is great gain*, so the Apostle. Godliness alone is gain (a very good portion) and contentment alone is gain, but Godliness with contentment is great gain. No condition is any thing if a man be not contented. What is an husband if the wife like him not, or a child if one delight not in him, or any mercy if a man picks a quarrel with it? If we say, I have no pleasure in it, it is a very vexation to us. Now an evil heart is like that evil spirit 'twixt *Saul* and the people, it doth breed a disquieted restlessness, and a perpetual dislike of a mans condition. Prov. 22. 5

There is not only an excess of distastefulness, *ne prædo vastet*, or *ne percussor infestet*, or *ne inimica cujusque temptationis invidia calumniosis litibus inquietet*, as S. *Cyprian* speaks, but also an excess of distastfulness, like a Bee whipping from this flower to that; or like a wave running on the shore, and then hurling back into the sea again: a man knows not where to settle, or what he hath, or what he wants. But the good man hath a good estate, and a contented heart; as *Eli* said of the Word of God, *Good is the Word of the Lord*, that he saith of his condition, *Good is the portion of the Lord*; this I like, and that is fit, and all is well. No estate like that wherein a man can enjoy God, and himself, and the estate all together. In Epiſt. 2. ad Dcn.

5. *That estate which is more stable and enduring is the best.* Their estate is We do not esteem of Tenure by life as we do of Free-hold, for more Stable. life is a most uncertain thing That which is little for the sight, may yet be much more for the future then a large bulk for the present.

present : Ten pounds a year for ever is better then an hundred in hand. Thou shewest me the large bulk and bodie in honours, or riches, or friends and revenues that wicked men have, and perhaps frettest at thine own infelicity and simplicity of getting; but, saith *David*, *The little which a righteous man hath, is better then the riches of many wicked*, Psal. 37. 11. He doth not simply say, The estate, but the rich estate, the riches, not of one, or a few, but of many wicked. And why better? he gives the reason in ver. 17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken*. A weak arm is far better then a broken arm; all the strength, and power, and wealth (which are the only arms of the wicked to support them) they shall be broken.

Suppose a Merchant had an hundred thousand pound in a ship which were even now ready to sink into the midst of the sea, and another man had forty pound in good land, which of these two had the best estate? the lesser now is the best, because, *extra casum & periculum*.

The temporal estate of wicked men is seldome long lived, it is full of so many diseases, either of pride or oppression, or covetousness, or fraud, or luxury, it cannot hold out, and therefore their pompous estates are compared to things of an abrupt existence. To the *Chaff*, which a puff of wind disperseth. To the *Grass*, which the face of the Sun quickly withers. To the *tops of Corn*, which are soon cut off, Job 24. 24. To the *unripe Grape*, Job 15. 33. *He shall shake off his unripe grape as the Vine, and shall cast off his flower as the Olive*. A little shaking disperseth his estate, as a little noise doth a flight of birds. Nay, to a *Dream* and night Vision, Job 20. 8. A dream is but a fancy of a thing, and a quick fancy, built and undone (like a bubble) with a breath in a few moments. But the temporal estate of the righteous is more permanent. The wicked saith, *That his house shall abide for ever*: He saith so; God saith otherwise, *That it shall be cast down*; but God saith, *That the righteous shall possess, or, inherit the earth*, Psal. 37. 22. *and their house shall be built up*. Not that there is not a mutability in the Temporal estate of a good man, but that there is that undertaking for it, and promise of upholdment for it, which is not for another mans.

6. Lastly, Not to over-work this point; *Do but consider what losses*

losses an evil man sustains with the greatness of his temporal estate and then you will confess that the temporal estate of a good man is far better.

Consider the losses an evil man sustains with the greatness of his temporal estate.

If you would make a valuable estimate and just account how great a mans estate is, you must not only look what lands or wares he hath, but wicthal you must deduct all debts and all losses. If he owes more then he is worth, his estate then is reckoned to be worse then nothing, and if that which he loseth farr exceeds what he possesseth. if he gets a penny and loseth a pound, or gets one pound and loseth a thousand; alas, he is a poor fellow! I apply this, if you deduct the debts and the losses from a wicked mans estate, you shall find him poorer then Job upon the dunghil. He owes more then soul, or body, or estate can ever pay or ransome.

S. Austin upon those words of David, in Psal. 37. (The ungodly borroweth and payeth not again) expresseth himself much to our purpose. *Quanta accepit peccator pro quibus non solvit?* How many things, saith he, hath the sinner borrowed for which he hath not paid? *Accipit ut sit homo, Accipit corporis formam. Accipit in corpore distinctionem sensuum, ad videndum oculos, ad audiendum aures, ad oderandum Nares, ad gustandum palatum, ad contrectandum manus, ad ambulandum pedes, salutemque ipsam corporis. Accipit etiam amplius Mentem qua possit intelligere, qua possit capere veritatem, qua possit justum ab injusto discernere, qua possit indagare, desiderare, creatorem laudare & inherere illi.* Page 196.

To all which receipts of body and mind, I add, *Accipit insuper amplius, divitias, dignitates, &c.* he hath received also wealth, &c. *Sed non bene vivendo reddit: Non reddit ea à quo accepit gratias agendo:* He doth not pay the fruit of all these either by an holy life or by true thankfulness. *Imo rependit mala pro bonis, blasphemias, murmur, adversus Deum indignationem.* He requites ill unto God (and so increaseth his debts) by his blasphemies, by his murmurings, by his frettings against God.

And as he owes more then he can pay, so he hath lost more then ever he wil or can be worth; yea, though he had all the world. *Quis graviore damno patitur qui amittit pecuniam,*

August. loc. cit. *an qui amittit fidem?* Who hath the greater loss (saith S. Austin) he who hath lost his Money, or he who hath lost his Faith?

So say I, The loss of money (nay let me turn that word) the gain of money is not so great as the losse of the soul. But an evil man to gain the world doth lose his soul, for a mess of pottage he sells his birth-right.

It is otherwise with a good man and his temporal estate; he brings in the rent of his mercies, Thankfulness and a good Life; and doth only use his blessings, and so he saves his soul and preserves his blessings too. Indeed his lands are charged with a quit-rent of Thankfulness, and a perpetual Homage of Knights service.

Thus have you briefly the confirmation of the Assertion, That God doth provide the best of conditions for his people. Now to the last enquiry:

Why doth God provide the best for his people?

Quest. 3. Why doth God provide the best for his people?

Sol. I answer briefly,

He loves them best.

1. He loves them best, and therefore provides for them best: Special love is ever a spring of special blessings. *He loved the people of Israel above all people, and therefore gave them a possession above all lands, Deut. 7. 7.*

His Covenant is with his people.

2. His Covenant is with his people, both for Spirituals and Temporals. Now the Covenant contains the choicest and chiefest blessings.

Christ hath purchased for them the best of all things.

1 Cor. 3. 21, 22, 23.

3. Christ hath purchased for them the best of all things. All things are yours (saith the Apostle) whether Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christs, and Christ is Gods. Why amongst the all (which he saith) are yours, doth he mention the world, and not rest in the spiritual priviledges and advantages? because if there be any thing in all the world that may be better for them then other, they shall have it. Christ hath procured for them not only the highest mercies in heaven, but also the sweetest mercies on earth.

Use
For Information.

I comenow to the Application of all this unto our selves. Doth God provide the best of conditions for his people? thence may we be informed of many things,

1. That

1. *That the condition of the godly is much better then the men of this world do judge it.* The condition of the godly is much better then the men of the world judg it. Godliness is no parched Wilderness, no barren Heath, nor like the Mountains of *Gilboa*: It hath the *Greenest Pastures*, and the *Stillest Waters*.

In Scripture, the paths of Piety are the steps of Prosperity. Worldly men account a man, taking a course to sink his temporal estate, his fortunes as we call them and hopes, if once he retreats from the broad way of Licentiousness into the narrow way of holiness. But of this I am sure that the great and wise God, who only hath power to bless, and best chalks the wayes and methods of bettering our estates, I say he hath expressly set down, The presence of holiness and practice of holy obedience, as the onely best way to obtain the only best blessings.

Read at your leisure *Deut.* 28. from v. 1. to v. 14. How every way blessed is the way of holy obedience? Blessings above, and blessings below, blessings within, and blessings without; blessings on our selves, blessings on all that belong unto us, all kinds of blessings, necessary blessings, and delightful blessings, all degrees of blessings, plenteous goods, a good treasure, and all furtherances in season. Peruse the place.

David was of the same opinion: That the man who was godly, who did decline the way of sinners, who did chuse, meditate, and delight in the law of the Lord. Why? he was like a Tree planted by the rivers of Water, his leaf should not wither, and whatsoever he did should prosper. See *Psal.* 1. 2, 3. *Solomon* doth declare the like in sundry places of the Proverbs.

Object. But now some are apt to object, Experience shewes the contrary. Gods people have not the best, nay the best of them have sometimes the worst outward conditions; why? they have not that honour, and dignity, and estimation in the world as other men have, they are ill spoken of and disgraced. But Gods people have not that honour that others have.

Sol. Whether they have as much honour as all other men have, I will not dispute, but sure I am, they have better honour then all wicked men whatsoever. But fully to unedge this objection, I answer,

To have all men to respect one is impossible, so dishonourable.

1. *To have all men to honour or respect one, as it is impossible so it were dishonourable.* What evil have I done (said one) that this man commends me? Some mens applause are like some beggars benedictions, not worth the having. There are two conditions which are woful; one is when all men speak ill of me; another is when all men speak well of me. It is very presumptuous that I have no goodness, when every man is either my friend or else my enemy.

To have honour from an evil man is no honour.

2. *To have honour from an evil man is little or no honour:* An evil tongue is reputed no Herald for our praise, and no dead flie for our disgrace.

Godly men have the proper motives of honour and respect.

3. *Godly men have the just and proper motives of honour and respect:* Who ever is Virtuous is honourable; the Heathens saw so far. How much more is Holiness a foundation of esteem and regard? It is the fault of any if they do not countenance and regard godly persons: their excellency is hidden, and likewise it is contrary to an evil way, evil men either see it not, or hate it.

The godly have honour from the best: God doth honour them.

4. *Yet the godly have honor from the best; from God, from his servants, yea, from the very wicked themselves.* God doth honour them with the most excellent Names, with the most noble Relations, with the most glorious Graces, with the most royal Priviledges and Titles.

Good men honour them.

Good men who can judge aright do honour them above all the people in the world. They honour them that fear the Lord: they are to them as the precious Jewels, the strongest Gates, the choicest Pillars of the world.

The wicked do honor them.

Yea, the very wicked do honour them; secretly they confess their excellencies, and either living or dying with all their souls would exchange conditions with them.

That which men count a disgrace is the only excellency

5. *Lastly, That which men count a disgrace, is the only excellency on earth.* True holiness and a pious life; It is as if one should rail at a King for wearing his Crown. Holiness is the Crown of crowns on earth. I had rather enjoy holiness with any estate, then any estate whatsoever without holiness. Dost thou account him rich (saith S. Austin) whose purse is full of money, &c? Is not he rich whose heart is full of Innocency?

But Gods people are under afflictions and sufferings.

Object. But how can their estate be best which is so driven

ven by afflictions and sufferings.

Sol. To this I answer,

1. If you speak of Afflictions in common course of providence, *evil men are as much afflicted as they*; they are as capable to lose a child, a friend, a wife a husband, a parent, an estate as any good people whatsoever. There is not a greater mutability for the things themselves in one mans estate then in another, and generally good men are more secured that way then the bad.

Sufferings
two fold.

1. Natural.
So evil men are
as much afflicted
as they.

For besides the afflictions of providence, the great sins of evil men pluck down upon them the strokes of Vengeance, and they live not out half their days.

2. *The temporal estate which they have with mystical afflictions as they are the bodie of Christ, is a far better estate then all the temporal exemptions and securities of evil men.* To suffer for Christ, it is a glorious thing and happy. See 1 Pet. 4 14. Yea, it is a more eligible thing then freedom and peace. *Moses when he was come to years* (not when he was a child and could not dive into things) *refused to be called the son of Pharaohs daughter, chusing rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches then the treasures in Egypt.* Of all men believers are highest, and of all believers, True Martyrs: The Passive part of Christianity is the most honourable, as the Passive work of Christ was most beneficial. If thou shouldst suffer for a milion of years, it were nothing to that Eternity of Glory whch thou shalt receive. To this purpose *S. Austin.*

2. Mystical.
So their temporal estate
with afflictions
is better then
the exemptions
of evil men.
Heb. 11. 24.

3. All their afflictions in any kind, though they may lop off the branches, yet they strengthen the root. *The estate is not crushed but mended, not impaired, but raised by them.* Is the gold the worse for being purified in the furnace? or the wheat the worse for being winnowed?

Their estate is
not impaired
but raised by
afflictions.

Vna in vite pressuram non sentit, integra videtur sed nihil inde manat: Mittitur in Torculari, calcatur, premitur, &c. in Torculari fractura pressura est. The Vine is most fruitful, the Grapes yield out their juice most, when in the Wine-press.

2. A second Information is this, That if God provides the best estate for his people, then *they have miserably*

They miserably delude themselves who apostatize from God and his wayes, thinking to better themselves.

cheated and deluded themselves who have apostatized from the wayes of God (in which they did formerly walk) and come over to the paths of wickedness, imagining thereby to advance and better their temporal estate; like Demas, who forsook the Apostles and embraced this present evil world. Ah foolish people and unwise! how much hast thou lost to get a little which must be quickly lost? Dost thou value innocency, or integrity of heart, peace of conscience, or the favour of God and his blessing on thy condition at so poor a rate, for a little more in the visible bulck?

Had not *Gebazi* been better to have remained an honest servant, then by *lying* to have got a *change of garments*, and a change of constitution, *he was a leper to his death*? Were the Israelites ever better in the publick estate of affairs, then when they were best in the truth of the right Religion? Thou goest into the warm Sun but from Gods blessing. No man betters himself by becoming wicked: Nor can he, in the event, advance his estate by corrupting his soul. What is the Stream to the Fountain, or the Creature to God, or a whole world with his curse? Were it not better to have enjoyed thy little and Gods love, then by a miserable exchange to disinherit thy self of the hopes of heaven, and of all the comfort on earth.

3. Lastly, Be here Informed, That if God provides the best of conditions for his people, *then all the wicked have but a poor condition of it.* In Scripture their places are called *slippery places*, and the Lease of their habitation is but for a moment. *Desolate cities, and houses not inhabited.* Instead of *Green Pastures* and *Still waters*, they are said to *feed on husks*, and to inhabit *the parched Heaths and a dry Land*: What is there in all the Wine when the Spirits are Extracted, or in the Meat when the juice is squeezed out?

Object. O how men magnifie, how great, how rich, how full such and such are, how the world seems to stoop unto their service and ends, and they have what heart can desire.

Sol. But we are much mistaken: Evil men have indeed as much as comes to nothing, and *all is nothing if it be not a comfort*: Either they have no comfort and delight at all in what they have, or that delight which they have is the very bane of their souls and estates. They make their estates to serve their
lusts,

lusts, and then their lusts utterly consume their estates; with all that they have, they have also an angry God, a guilty conscience, an unquiet spirit, nothing blessed, all cursed, poor in their plenty, miserable in their jollities, despised in their honors, abominable in their lives, horrible in their deaths, Others waste their estates, the grave rots their bodies, and hell receives their souls. If the finger of God appears against them and writes their doom, like *Belshazzar*, their joints smite one the other even in the midst of all their carousings. If conscience be stirred and begins to rage they vomit up all again, and like *Judas* throw back the thirty pieces of silver. If crosses, sicknesses, or death draw neer, they have no comfort or hope at all. Ah Brethren, if you love hope in death or comfort in life, or blessing for ever, away, away, with all wickedness, it is the way of your curse, and ruine, and shame, but not of your prosperity, nor honour, nor safety, nor delight.

Since God doth provide the best of conditions for his people, *how much are many of his people*, (if yet they be so) and *Gods people* how great a cause have they to be humbled and repent for this, *that they do not alwayes judge their conditions to be so.* *Asaph* should be humbled for that they do not condemn himself for a very fool, and as a beast for censuring *judge their* his estate to be worse then the wicked mans. *Their strength is* condition to be *firm, they are not in trouble, they are not plagued as other men,* best.
v. 5. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, for all the day *Pf. 73. 12.*
long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning, v. 13, 14.
Jeremiah the Prophet also, and *David* in a fit are both in the same tune of discord.

Ob. But we do not so will some reply, we know that we serve the best God, and do enjoy the best good: 'Tis true for amplitude of estate we fall short, but for comfortableness and goodness of estate we do exceed all evil men.

Sol. Well! the voice is *Jacobs*, but come neer, let's feel *Evidences of* whether you have on the rough garment upon this smooth *misjudging our* skin. *condition.*

1. *Envying and fretting at the condition of others* undeni- *Envying and*
 ably argues a misjudging of our own condition as best. *fretting at the*
 mine be the Wilderness, and his the Paradise; if mine be the *condition of*
 Prison, and his the Palace: Why is it, O Christian! that *others.*
decaies honour is like to kill thee? would this be, if thou hadst
 not

not *Hamans* Spirit? Why is it that, like the Toad in the Fable, which envied the greatness of the Ox, thou art ready to burit thy self for being behind and not equal to others in estimation, in dignity, in credit, in wealth, &c. If the precedency of others, if Gods farther blessings on others be (as the *Canaanites* to the *Israelites*) the thorns in thy sides, and pricks in thy eyes: if you cannot look on the estate of others without trouble and indignation, assuredly you do not really judge your own condition to be best for you.

Constant de-
jections about
our temporal
condition.

2. *Constant dejections* about thy temporal condition, argues too cleerly that thou art not satisfied in this point, that God hath provided the best. When any good for us is apprehended this causeth hope; when it is possessed, this causeth joy; It is onely evil that which we judge to be evil upon us, which causeth grief. Thou art seldom without a fear in thy heart, a tear in thy eye, a sigh in thy brest; this yields no comfort, and that is but a cross: Thou serveest God in the abundance of all things with such a dull, heavy, aukard spirit. I fear, O thou forgetful Christian! I fear that thou judgest of the bestness of a temporal estate, as Tradesmen do of Chapmen, they are the best who bid the most, thou dost judge of bestness not by quality but by quantity; for in an ordinary estate thou art uncheerfully sad, and in an enlarging estate, thou art then onely alive; the addition of the creature, not the benediction of God prevails with thee.

Endless com-
plainings.

3. *Endless complainings and dislikes* may convince thee that thou art not convinced of the bestness of thy estate: thou canst pick a quarrel with every mercy, and like a Lawyer find a flaw in every deed; thy condition is unto thee as thy Watch, still out of order, and like a book printed, that still hath Errata's at the end to be corrected: This is too much, and that is too little; one thing comes too soon, another too late. This is not pleasant enough, and that is not handsom enough, and I know not what is good enough. If it be thus with thee as with that odious Atheist who if he had been present at the creation, would have directed God a little better; so if thou be able to correct Gods wisdom, and better to guide the hand of his goodness, thou art far, too far from acknowledging the portion which he hath cast upon thee to be best. Thou takest it ill as *Joseph* did,
when

when Jacob laid his right band on Ephraim and his left on Manasses, &c.

4. *Present burthens we never judge to be the best conditions.* Present but- For goodness is not burthensom, and no wise man is weary of ^{dens we judge} what he believes to be convenient for him. Ah! why is it not to be the (man) that Gods mercies seem very burdens to thee! thou art ^{best conditions} sick of many a mercy which God hath given to thee; weary of this child, and anon wouldst be rid of that; weary of husband, weary of Parents, weary of friends, weary of this Trade, weary of that, yea sometime thou curst thy blessings, thou likest every mercy but what thou hast: doest thou well thus to do?

5. Lastly, If thou believest that God hath provided the best ^{We do not quietly sit down.} for thee, *why doest thou not quietly sit down?* If thy pastures be green, why doest thou not lie down in them? if thy waters be still, why doest thou not drink of them alone. But art ready to break over into the Desarts and to suck at stollen waters. I mean to exceed all lawful bounds and to put forth thy hands to unlawful courses. Doest thou believe that God hath provided the best for thee, when thou imaginest that unworthy sinnings against God will better thy estate; to slip into the way of curse, to steal one handful of profit. Brethren, these Articles shew unto us all, how infinitely short we are in acknowledging of the goodness and wisdom of Gods providence towards us: that though he doth provide sufficiency for us and conveniency for us, yet we do not judge it to be so.

Ob. Yea but for all that, will some reply; There be some crosses, and some inconveniencies in our present conditions, and ^{but there are some inconveniencies in our present condition.} we cannot but see them, and feel them too; therefore blame us not if we do not alwaies judge our estates to be best, when as alwaies they are not so.

Sol. To this fond Objection, I answer,

1. It is but thy ignorant simplicity to expect *any temporal condition in this life, without some inconveniencies or other.* ^{There is a mixture of inconveniencies in every temporal condition.} We may fancy such a condition in our estates, as some do a Church on earth, without sin; so a condition without some crosses; but all conditions may answer concerning it, as the creatures in *Job 28. 14. 15.* did about wisdom, *The depth saith, it is not in me, and the sea saith, it is not with me;* who ever saw the clearest.

est day without some clouds? or heard the sweetest musick, which needed not to have the strings presently tuned again? There are four things which of necessity contract some particular inconveniences in the best of temporal estates, v.g.

Which ariseth

From the natural defectiveness of the creature.

1. One is the *natural defectiveness of the creature*. Do you think to dig pure gold out of the mine, or to bring pure wheat out of the field, or to find white sugar in the cane. The creature cannot spring up any entire excellency, but it self being but a borrowed being, a weak being, a mixt being, necessarily it can yield but a weak, but a broken, but a mixt delight, and semi-satisfaction.

The vastness of the mind of man.

2. Another is the *vastness of the mind of man*, which outgoes the creature infinitely. The slow creature cannot keep pace with the swift mind of man, or that empty shadow satisfy that great substance. You may as soon comprehend the heavens in your hands, as totally satisfy the soul of man by the creatures. Two things are impossible, 1. to fill the extensive capacities and reaches of the soul, with these earthly shadows. 2. To form the operations of the creatures just to our fancies and imaginations, that the creatures shall just think, speak, act, fall in, how, when, how much and not otherwise then we would in our fancies have them.

The over-ruling disposition of God.

3. A third is the *over-ruling disposition of God*, who in every estate sets the evil against the good, and tempers our sweetest cup with some bitterness, and our best wine with some sharpness, as you see the most fertile ground, with much corn, to bring forth many weeds; so God will have it, that even our neereest comforts should have something of the cross in them. The great and wise God, as he doth temper the bitterest afflictions of his people with some comforts, so he doth allay the sweetest comforts of his people with some bitterness.

Our own sinfulness.

4. A fourth is *our own sinfulness* which doth sow all our mercies, and ever and anon makes them taste like crosses: our own pride, folly, discontent, turnes even our mercies into crosses.

This mixture in our temporal condition is best.

2. But then secondly, *this mixture in our temporal condition is best*. The Physitians do hold that if the Elements did remain pure in our bodies, there could be no subsistence of us, but they must be mingled, and qualified, and tempered, and by that

that temperature of contrarieties is our life best preserved. Suppose you had nothing but fair weather all the year, that the Sun should still shine bright, Alas would ye say, all would be burnt up. This would be like the day of judgment all on a fire. And suppose you had nothing but rain all the year, why this were as bad, this, like the deluge of *Noah*, all would be drowned. You see then that a variety of weather is best for the earth, and so is a variety in our conditions best for us. To see our comforts to be let out, and drawn in; to help, and then to fail; Sometimes to prove much contentment, and anon to be at a stand, and to produce no delight. I say this convenient inconveniency, this delightful undelightfulness, this pleasing crossing, is a condition best for us. If our conditions did yield us no comfort at all, we would certainly loath them; and if they did yield us no crosses, we should certainly dote on them. If they were all sorrow unto us, we should grow weary of life; and if they were all pleasure unto us, we should grow forgetful of heaven. We would suppose that *Adam* were got again into Paradise, from which by too much earthly delights we should presently fall. The wise God hath seated two things in all our temporals to correct our inordinate affection to them, one is a *mutability for being*, a fading flower, a turning tyde, a running glass, they are but a blast and a vapour. Another is a *mutability in their working*; they are like a snake which hath the smoothest skin, and yet the deadliest sting: so our outward delights may set against us and be our bitterest crosses. And yet many times the crossings in the creatures, are our best safeguards against the delights and pleasures in them. The pleasures of them might have been our sea to drown us; had not the crossings of them been our plank to save us. The crosses which we do sometimes meet with in our temporal conditions, either make us good, or keep us safe. The Mariner is beholding to the tempestuous weather, that he hath put into a safe harbor. It is a dangerous thing to enjoy a condition on earth onely of sensual delight. I stedfastly affirm it, That *our estates will be our curses, if sometimes they be not our crosses.* Heaven onely is the place where all is pleasure, and hell onely is the place where all is misery; but this life is a *vale for tears*, as well as an *hill for pleasures.*

Use 3. Since God doth provide the best of conditions for his people, Be perswaded to let his people henceforward be perswaded *accordingly to judge* judge of our *and esteem of their conditions as best.* condition as best. Two things I will here propound.

- { 1 Motives to esteem our conditions best.
- { 2 Means to enable us so to judge of them.

Motiv:s to it.

The Motives are

We have cause so to judge.

1. You have all the cause that may be so to esteem and judge, whether you look on your temporal conditions.

If we look up- on our Tem- porals in the causes of them.

In the causes of them. Why! they come from the highest love, and choicest wisdom of God; doth not God love you above all the people of the world, and doth not his wisdom discern all differences and comparisons? if his love be for you, and his wisdom for you, surely he then doth and will provide the best for you.

In the suitable- ness of them.

In the *suitableness* of them, whether to your,

To our exi- gences.

1. *Exigences*, or to 2 your *services*; take the whole latitude & estate of your Spirits, and of your wants, your conditions cannot be better for you then now they are: you see perhaps that in one or another particular, things might be better, yea, but consider, an estate to answer all your personal exigences in the general, now the present is best for you.

To our services

2. And also consider what special *services* God expects from you, and what ends he hath in his providence towards you; now the present estate is best serviceable to those ends. In the other condition that you think best, you see the goodness, but do not see the illness, the ingredients with it, cares, fears, troubles, and dangers. You cannot tell whither your hearts would be carried, how they might give out themselves, how far they might venture, were your temporal condition otherwise. There is more water in the sea, ai, but there's more tossing; the mountain is higher, ai, but it is colder.

You will be more enlarged in the service of God.

2ly. You will be *more united and enlarged in the service of God* by judging your temporal conditions to be best. When you are praying, you will pray; when you are hearing, you will hear; and when you are reading, you will read; and when you are meditating, you will meditate; you will in all holy *ser- vices, Hoc agere*, mind, intend the work, in serving of God you

you will serve him Whereas if you misjudge your temporal estates, as evils, as meer crosses, as needy and defective supplies, you will either have dead hearts or distracted hearts in the service of God. When you should be striving with God to mend your hearts, then will your minds be contriving how you may mend your estates; when you should be earnestly seeking for mercy, then will you be vexingly thinking how to be rid of your trouble; and whiles your eyes are reading the good word of God, your thoughts are rising up against the good providence of God towards you.

3ly. You will hereby be enabled to pay in your rent for You will be the your temporal mercies. Our chief rent for our mercies, is more thankful. thankfulness.

Consider (O man) though thou hast but an *hard bed*, yet thou canst *sleep soundly* on it, (so cannot many who lie in beds of down) and this is a great mercy: Again, though thou hast but a *little meat*, yet thou hast a *good stomach* to eat and digest it, and this is more then if thou hadst all the delicacies of a feast. Again, though thou hast but a *poor wife*, yet she *loves thee intirely* and is careful every way for thy good, and this is more then if thou hadst the finest, bravest, idlest, graceless gallant in the City. O when a man comes and considers of his condition, and looks on this mercy, and then on that, and then on another, and puts the case to himself, which of all these have I deserved? None. Which of all these could I want? Not one. This is an help to my soul, and that to my body, and another to my family: That we see our many mercies, like many bees, every one of them bringing honey to the hive: Now the heart begins to be affected with Gods goodness; O Lord what is thy servant that thou art thus mindful of him? *I am less then the least of all thy mercies, thou hast dealt well with thy servant, the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage*; I desire to bless thee, the God of all this mercy; to love thee, the God of all this goodness; to serve thee, the God of all my condition, which is the best condition for me.

4ly. It is the *only way to lead a comfortable life*; a dislike and It is the only misjudging of our estates causeth two evil effects. First, it way to lead a *drowns all our mercies*; mercy is no mercy to him that likes it comfortable life. not

not. Secondly, *It drowns all our comforts*; mercy hath no taste to him: *Manna*, though very sweet, (like wafers made with honey) yet it was despised by the *Israelites* as a course, ordinary, poor, dry fare, because they out-grumbled every mercy, and every condition. What portion of delight or comfort did all the dignities, and all the riches of *Haman* afford unto him being discontented? you see in Musick one jarring string spoils all; and in the body, the ache of one tooth takes off the sense and pleasure of all our health and strength. So if a man hath an ill eye on any one mercy he possesseth, the vexation about that one, swallows up all the joy in all that belongs unto him. But if you would live, and live comfortably; if you would taste the mercy of a mercy; the comfort and juice of your comforts; look on your own mercies and conditions as best for you. Then thy wife and thou wilt rejoice together, then thy heritage will be a pleasant heritage indeed; then thy children will be in thine eyes as Olive Plants (and not as nettles) round about thy table: all thy relations will be sweet unto thee. I assure thee that if thy heart be thus raised and framed to judge of thy temporal condition as best, this will be the issue and good of it. Thy head will be more emptied of vain cares, and thy heart of vain fears, and thy mind of turbulent temptations, and thy brest of breaking discontent. Thou wilt look on God as on one that loves thee, thou wilt better relish his Ordinances, perform thy duties, thou wilt be more fruitful in thy place, more upright in thy walking, and more cheerful all thy days.

Means enabling us thus to judge.

You must be able to see more then your estates.

Secondly, the *Means*, enabling of us thus to judge.

I shall not stand long on this, for it will have a more full handling in the next assertion, briefly, thus,

I. You must be able to see more then your estates if you would see your estates to be best: Alas! if you can see but the shell and the rinde of your estates, I confess you see but little, and not enough to satisfy and content: what is any creature which we possess? what can it of it self confer or contribute towards our comforts? one man hath much more of it then thou, and yet hath no use of it, or comfort in it at all.

If thou couldst see God in thy condition, in much love and wisdom ordering the lines for thee. If thou couldst see God with

with thy condition looking on thy soul with much reconciled favour in Christ, thou wouldst prefer thy condition above the dignities of the greatest Monarch. When *Diogenes* was in his Tub, *Alexander* the great came unto him and bade him desire some special thing of him. Why! (said *Diogenes*) *Stand aside and let me enjoy the light of the Sun.* He preferred the light of the Sun, and his poor Cell, before all the favours of a King. If thou hadst but the light of the Sun, if the Lord make his *candle to shine upon thy head*, as *Job* speaks, *chap. 29. 3.* If thou couldst see the *light of his countenance* upon thee, it would put more joy and gladness then all the increasing of corn and wine can do to evil men, *Psal. 4. 6, 7.*

2. If you would judge of your conditions as the best, *do not look only on the defects, but mostly on the usefulness of them.* Do not look only on the defects, but mostly on the usefulness of them. There are two times when we can think well of mercies. One is when we want them and greatly desire them. Another is when we have lost them and greatly bewail them. — And why in these times do we judge so well of our conditions? because now we consider only the goodness and usefulness of them, and not their imperfections and defectiveness. Strive to see that in the fruition of a mercy, which thou canst see in the absence of it, how comfortable a good, how useful a good, how fit and necessary a good for thee?

To this end beseech the Lord to open the eyes of thy mind, even in thy possessions, that thou maist see that his goodness towards thee in his mercies, what an exceeding furtherance they are unto thee in the wayes of God, what remedies they are unto thee against carking cares and many sinister temptations, what easeful helps they are unto thee, either in thy general or particular calling, or both.

3. *Strive to make those natural defects which thou findest in thy condition, thy spiritual helps, and those crosses which fall in, to be thy spiritual medicines.* Strive to make thy natural defects in thy condition thy spiritual helps. Observe thou in any of thy outward comforts that they are not so fully and so constantly comfortable? thence raise up thy heart to the God of all comforts, and say, O Lord, this is but a creature, a weak stream, a meer flow-er, a restrained foundation. Thou art good and wise in giving but feeblar comforts in earthly things, that so I might learn to set my choicest affections and desires on thee who art an absolute

solute goodnes, and a most complete happines. And so for the crosses thou meetest in thy temporal condition, struggle not so much about them, but reflect on thine own heart, what is in it there to be purged out by those crosses? Usually our private crosses in our conditions, are private medicines which God useth to shew unto us, and purge out of us that excess of secret pride, vanity, corrupt affections, &c. and to keep our hearts more humble, watchful, careful, closely to walk with him. This were an excellent way to bring us to judge our conditions to be best, when either the comforts of them make us more thankful, and the crosses in them make us more heavenly.

Above all strive
for Faith.

4. Above all *must you strive for Faith*, which will in every thing acquit the Wisdom of Gods providence, though for the present you see not that special good and use of every one of your temporal mercies, yet Faith will conclude, That must be best which comes from the wisest God. And have patience awhile (carefully walking with God, and doing good in your places) and you shall find there is not any one particular mercy conferred on you by God, but it shall have its operations for good unto you. If every affliction shall work for good, much more shall every mercy work for good unto them that love the Lord. S. *Austin* was a very voluptuous and untoward child, and a great grief to his mother *Monica*, who yet did shed many tears, and put up many prayers for him, and at length God did convert him, and made him the chiefest of all the comforts that ever she had. Many a woman hath a very evil and unkind husband, so hath many a man a very evil and perverse wife: perhaps either of them complain as if their conjunctions were the most unhappy. Nevertheless, it falls out oft times that the good wife converts the ill husband, and the good husband converts the evil wife, and then how exceedingly is the condition blest? However, the good wife may perhaps bless God that ever she matched with such an evil husband, or, *à contrà*, the good husband that ever he matched with such an evil wife. For it hath been the singular means to make them both to consider their wayes and hearts, and to reform and turn unto the Lord.

Beg of God
contented Spi-
rit,

5. Lastly, If you would judge your conditions to be best, *beg of God for contented Spirits*. Contentment it is that Grace which

which matcheth the mind and the condition together, and makes our hearts to fall evenly and smoothly with our estates, as one well ordered wheele doth with another in a rightly composed Watch. Every thing is a great mercy to an humble heart, and every thing is a good mercy to a contented heart. But I will not enlarge in this, because I shall insist more fully on it in the next Proposition.

One Use more and then I have done with this point, and it shall be for Instruction to the people and flock of God. Since their Shepherd doth provide *Green Pastures* and *Still Waters* for them, hence to learn these duties; viz.

1. *They should return the best of services, because God gives unto them the best of blessings.* Ordinary performances do no way answer extraordinary mercies. If we did pick up our comforts in the open Commons, it were an almes unto us, that God would make any provision; but to spread the choicest table for us to bring out the richest wine, to give us mercy in mercy, and mercies with mercy, and the mercies of mercy, a temporal mercy and his spiritual favour, a temporal mercy and peace in conscience, a temporal mercy and gladness of heart, to sugar our wine, to dress our garden, not only to give blessings, but to bless our blessings. Should we be sinfully barren under all his goodness? God forbid! Should any what, and how, of services serve the turn, all the world would cry shame on us: The best of our souls, with all our strength, with all our might, with all our heart, the best of our bodies, the best of our graces, the best of our affections, the best of lives only answer, best answer for the best of conditions. We should exceed others in fear, in love, in delight with God, in zeal for God; in our hearts, in our carriages, in our duties, in our conversations, who by God are made to exceed all others in our spiritual, yea, and in our temporal conditions. Should we think any thing in us, of us, about us, from us, too good for his glory, who thinks nothing in heaven or earth too good for our comfort?

2. *They should return most thanks, because they receive the best of conditions of God.* There are two occasions or grounds for choice thankfulness. One is where the kindnesses are free. Undeserved favours should be like an heavy weight which instantly

Use. 4.
Instruction.

Return the best
of services since
God gives the
best of blessings

We should re-
turn most
thanks who re-
ceive the best of
Conditions.

stantly mounts up the empty scale. Another is where the *mercies are choice*. When they come, as it were, from the very art and study of Love: When they are the Quintessence of affection. The people of God have no more desert in them of mercy than any other (*I am not worthy*, said Jacob, *if the least*) and yet they have the chiefest of mercies for heaven, and the choicest of mercies for earth. If the poorest must bless for the meanest of mercies, if every man must bless for the thinnest mercies, should not we be thankful for the best? It is but justice that we should bless most, who are most blessed. If we deserve not the least, O how thankfully should we acknowledge for the best? If every mercy should be a finger to make the strings to sound, what a fuller harmony? how our mouths should be filled with praises which are filled with blessings?

They should
return most
Love.

3. They *should return most love*. There are two causes of much love from us to God. One is when *much is forgiven*: Another is when *much is given*. The choicest mercy in forgiving, the choicest bounty in giving. These are the Cords of Love, these should twine and indear our affections to God. O! how should we be knit and cleave unto him? how should we delight and solace our selves in a God so good in himself, and so good unto us?

Object. 'Tis true, That temporal mercies are not in their own absolute nature very high, nor yet in a comparison with heavenly graces so high and so desirable.

Sol. Yet you know that *pro statu Viatorum*, they are most necessary, and being sweetned with the *Superaddita* of divine love and special blessing, they are now even tokens from a reconciled God, and may the more affect us with love to God, because they spring from his special love to us.

They should of
all people
have the stillest
minds.

4. They *should of all people have the stillest minds who drink of the stillest waters*. Whatsoever our condition is, if it be but food and raiment, we ought to be contented, for every condition is good. If we ought to be quietly contented with any condition, surely we should be abundantly contented with the best condition.

Let them be
Chearful.

5. If their condition be best *let them be Chearful*. It is a reasonable and a very comly sight, That a very good God should be served with a very glad heart. Though a swagge-
ring

ring Jollity misbefseems any man, yet a prudent Alacrity befits every Christian. What cause hast thou to fret and vex, or to pine away, and to walk with perpetual clouds in thy countenance who hast the best expectations for the future, and the best possessions for the present? Deut. 28 47. *Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and gladness of heart for the abundance of all things*, Ver. 48. *Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things*, &c.

An uncheerful Christian usually is unthankful, and feeds more upon his wants than his fruitions; his uncomfortable walking is the shame of a good God, the grave of all mercies, a stumbling-block to others, and ordinarily provokes some special cross upon himself. Be it that thy estate is none of the largest, yet value somewhat the presence of God, and the blessing of God. *Elkanah* valued himself to be better than ten sons to his wife *Hannah*. And is not Gods presence and love able to answer many, many a thing? is it not better than a Kingdom? No more but this, God gives unto thee these comforts that thou mightest serve him comfortably.

6. Lastly, *Be for ever faithful to that God, who is most bountiful unto you*. As he hath known you above all the people in the world, so do you stedfastly adhere unto him above all the people in the world. God gives unto you the best of conditions, then there can be no motive to draw you away from the paths of righteousness: You can never better your selves; you must necessarily change (if you do so) for the worse. More honour, and dignity, and riches, and such like advantages, they may be Arguments to *D misshenes*, to *Judas*, to *Demas*, who simply conceive a greater access of worldly state, by a greater excess in sinful states. But they are no Arguments to him, whose condition is already the best. He can get nothing either in spirituals or in temporals by deserting of God; *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul*, said Christ? Happy art thou (O Christian!) if thou knowest thy happiness. Thou hast the best God, the best Soul, the best Earth, the best Heaven. Rest in thy condition: Thou hast reason enough to trample under thy feet all temptations, to revolt *Thy estate already is the best*.

Be for ever faithful to that God who is so bountiful to thee.

The Wel-plea-
sedness of Da-
vids heart with
his Condition.

Having finished the *Sufficiency* of the condition which God provided for *David*, and the conveniency or *goodness* of that condition, I now proceed to the third and last particulars, which contain the *Well-pleasedness* of Davids heart with this his condition, wrought in him by the God of his mercies. *He maketh me to lie down, &c. and he leads me, &c.* There are divers sorts of lying down :

1. *In the Bed* : *When I lie down* (said Job chap 7. ver. 4.) *I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone ?*

2. *In the Grave* : *They shall lie down alike, and the worms shall cover them*, Job 21. 26. This is a lying down in the Grave. Though men be unlike in the conditions of Life, yet they are all alike in the conclusions by death ; they wear different Garments among the living, but all put on the same Mantle of corruption in the pit.

3. *Miserable* : *We lie down in our shame*. So Jer. 5. 25. No people can long walk in their Sins, but at last they are wearied out, and forced to lie down in their Sorrows. We will flie out with our Sinnings, but then lie down we must in our Shame.

4. *Judicial* : *His bones* (said Zophar of the wicked, Job 20. 11.) *are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust*. Those sins which we would not forsake being Living, they will not forsake us when we are Dead. The guilt attends us in Death, the pleasure of which we would not renounce in Life. They will be our Inditements before the Judgment Seat, which were our Seducements against the Voice of the Mercy Seat.

5. *Comfortable* : And this is either the sweet rest and peace of conscience (of which perhaps *David* speaks, Psal. 4. 8. *I will lay me down in peace*) or the delightful composure of the mind with our conditions, of which *David* here speaks, *Thou makest me to lie down in green pastures*.

The Phrase I confess may note two Qualities more in his condition. 1. One, the *Safety* of it : That God did so undertake his protection, that he might securely rest himself. In dangers, standing up, is the posture, but lying down is a gesture of supposed safety. 2. Another, the *Satiety* of it : That God did so accomodate the estate he had and his minde together, that he

was comfortably and delightfully pleased therewith, as an easie bed to lie on, as a pleasant good to feed on. And therefore mistake not the Phrase. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.* It doth not at all import a careless, voluptuous, idle life, but only a contented, well-pleased and comfortable life.

The Proposition is this,

That God doth give his people minds and hearts wel-pleasingly, and comfortably, and quietly to possess their outward conditions. Doct. 3
 He doth not only give unto them the things, but the fruition of his people hearts well-pleasingly to possess their outward conditions. Psal. 16.6.
 things; not only presence, but enjoyment; not only bread, but power to eat it; not only a portion, but a power to take it and to rejoice with it. So Solomon, in Eccles 5. 18, 19. This harmony of well-pleasedness, you may perceive in Jacob, descending on one moiety of his estate, I mean, his children, *These are the children which God hath graciously given thy servant*, Gen. 32. 5. David is in the same key, in divers places; read Psal. 16. 8 & 119. 65. Jabez obtained the same in 1 Chron. 4. 10. And Paul had it even to admiration in Phil. 4. 11, 12. But for the Explication of this Assertion, these inquiries must be satisfied.

1. What this quiet and comfortable well-pleasedness with our temporal condition is?

2. How, and in what respect God gives it to his people?

3. Why given to his people?

4. Then what usefull Application of this to our selves?

Quest. 1. *What this comfortable or quiet well-pleasedness with our estate is?* What this well-pleasedness with our estate is.

Sol. I conceive of it thus; *It is a singular gift of God, whereby our minds do approve, and our wills and affections remain satisfied and delighted with those outward blessings which are bestowed upon us in any kind.*

1. *It is a singular gift of God*] There is in Musick the Instrument on which we play, and the Hand with which we strike it, and a certain musical skill. Without that certain musical skill, the hand may use and strike the instrument, make a sound and a jar, but that special Skill or Art is it which makes the harmony. Thus is it in our possessions: there is the estate, and It is a singular Gift of God

there is the mind, and there is the well-pleasedness. The estate may in some sense be the Legacies of men; and our minds may be reckoned the gifts of nature, but to have our minds harmoniously consenting with those estates, this is the special gift of God. Solomon expressly calls it *the gift of God*, in Eccles. 5. And S. Paul styles it *the strength of Christ*, Phil 4. Psal. 16. 6. *The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage.* In the former verse David sets out his happiness [*The Lord is the portion of my cup, and of mine inheritance, thou maintainest my lot.*] In this verse, his well-pleasedness with his outward condition which God had allotted him, he looks on it as pleasant and comely, we may be considered in a threefold estate, either, 1. In our *Created estate*, where, as God saw every thing which he made to be good, so man was delighted with that condition as best. 2. In our *Corrupted estate*: and here comes in a threefold jar by sin; One *with God*, a second *with our selves*, and a third *with our conditions*: As the earth was cursed to bring forth thornes of molestation, so our hearts are cursed, and bring forth thornes of vexation. The sea is not more full of tossing waves, then our hearts are of unquiet dislikes. We are inordinate in our Love, impatient in our Desires, and alwayes restless with our Fruitions. 3. In our *renewed estates*, where divine grace doth discover, and in some measure cure all those principles of discord with our estates, as the vanity of our minds, the mistakes of our judgements, the covetousness of our wills, the pride of our spirits, the discontentment of our affections, &c. and in stead of them, plants in us quieting and well-liking qualities of Faith, of Meekness, of Humility, of Patience, of Self-denial, of Sound Judgment, and Heavenly Wisdom, of Contentment and Thankfulness, &c. Divine Grace is that to well-pleasedness as health is to the body; while sickness is upon us the beere hath an ill taste, and the meat doth smell, and the chair is uneasie, and the bed is too short, and the night too long, and the day too troublesome, all is amiss because our bodies are amiss. But when Health comes, all is suddenly turned, the palate then doth taste and relish, our lodging is easie, we can sleep in the night and work in the day, all is well because we are well. Thus here, while we are meer sinners, we can quarrel with every mercy; this is a burden,

that's

that's a cross, we would be rid of this, we mislike that; we are weary of God, and weary of his mercies, and many times weary of our selves. But when grace hath healed our distempered natures, then our eyes do see, and our hearts do like all: we see house to be mercy, wife to be mercy, husband to be mercy, children to be mercy, estates to be mercy, all to be good, very good, because God hath made us to be so. So that this is a truth, well pleasedness with our condition is Gods special gift, for First, He onely hath power over our minds to set them right. Secondly, He onely can cure the principles of dislike, and Thirdly, He onely can enable us with the principles of well-pleasedness, *ergo*

2^{ly}. As the cause of it is above us, so the *Seat of well-pleasedness* The seat of *is within us*. The Soul is the general seat of it, but in particu- well-pleasedness
lar, *the mind of man and his afflictions*. A man is as his mind is, *is within us*,
and the estate of a man is as his mind is: If his condition hath *in the mind*.
all the reall conveniences and respectivenesses to his wants that may be, if yet his mind doth not believe and judge it to be so, there will be no well-pleasedness.

It is not the presence of what we do possess, which causeth well-pleasedness with it. We oft times think thus, had we such a comfort more, or had we this a little mended, then all would be well with us; but we are mistaken: the wine may be sweet, and yet every pallate cannot relish it; nothing will quiet, which comes to an unquiet spirit; you must make the ship to lie still, before you make the goods to lie still. Till you can bring your minds to see the special providence of God towards you in all your estates, and to see the peculiar serviceableness (as it were) of his mercies unto your occasions, and likewise to judge of them as every way best suiting, and agreeing, and answering your proper and just exigences, you will never be well pleased

The *Mind* which is the seat of Well-pleasedness, must have in it;

A power of *Observation*, to mark the wayes and effects of Divine Providence.

A power of *Judication*, to discern how proper and congruous our conditions are;

A power of *Determination*, to approve of our allotments
and

and to rest satisfied ; *I have enough, Joseph my son is yet alive* (said *Jacob*) so here the Christian, I have considered all things, and I do find upon the account, that the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, I have a goodly heritage : I do confess that the wise and good God hath indeed provided for me the most proper and best mercies.

In the Will and Affections 3. But then as a *Mind* approving the condition, so likewise the *Will* and *Affections* complying with the condition are the seat of this well-pleasedness too. A man may see reason enough to like what he possesseth, and yet he may have no comfortable fruition of it at all : If his will be froward and murmuring and his affections impatient and grieving, is there any harmony now in this ? No : But thus it must be ; The Mind must discern and approve, the Will must elect and consent, and the Affections must rejoice in the condition as good, and this is Well pleasedness.

How far doth God give this to his people ? *Quest. 2.* How far forth God doth give this unto his people ?

to his people. *Sol.* I answer ;

They have it in respect of habitual disposition First, They have it in respect of *habitual disposition* : there is a nature of well-pleasedness in them, enclining, and disposing, and exciting of them to judge well of their estates, and to like them, and delight in them.

And in respect of habitual dominion. Secondly, They have it in respect of *habitual dominion* : consider their course and trade of life, and conversing with their estates : Though as in the playing of a lesson, a string may now and then slip and jarre, yet the main is musical ; so though Christians may now and then, in respect of particular times and occasions, be fretting with their condition, as *Jonah* ; or condemning of it, as *Job*, or disliking of it, as *Asaph* ; yet you know the patience of *Job*, and you read that *Asaph* beset himself, so that habitual well-pleasedness, had the *habitual dominion*.

They have it but in a measure. Thirdly, They have it but in measure. 'Tis not well-pleasedness in the perfection of degrees which they have, 'tis a lesson which they are still learning, they are not so well-pleased, but that they need to be better well pleased.

And but with a mixture. Fourthly, And consequently but with mixture. It is with the minds of evil men, as with the flood of *Noah*, in its strength which

which covered all the earth, and the highest mountains, so their minds are wholly covered with the depths of displeasedness: And with the minds of good Christians, as with the same waters, but much abated: or as with a rose which hath a sweet leaf, and yet many prickles about it, so here is much sweet well-pleasedness, and yet sometimes some sharpness, some ruggedness, some dislikings.

5. But then this *is with conflict*. What the Apostle speaks in general, *that the spirit lusts against the flesh, and the flesh lusts against the spirit*, Gal. 5. 17. that is true of every particular Grace and its opposite Corruption. The people of God have in them a principle enclining them to like and delight in, and to bless God for their conditions: and they have in them also a principle of frowardness, pettishness, enclining them to dislike and to jarre with their mercies. Their corrupt nature doth dislike their condition, but their renewed nature doth dislike these dislikings, and conflict with these conflictings; and as they do attain their growth in spirituals by opposition, so they do attain to further well-pleasedness by contention; they do not approve any disliking risings, or expressions, nay they do condemn them, and grieve for them, and by much prayer and faith they do strive to keep the mind in tune, to be thankfully well-pleased with all that God hath done for them, or on them.

Quest. 3. Why doth God give unto his people a well-pleasedness with their conditions. Why doth God give this to his people.

Sol. Reasons hereof may be these;

First, *His promise is that he will withhold no good thing from them*, Psal 84. 11. If he will withhold no good thing then he is to withhold will give unto them well-pleasedness, which is a very good thing. God's promise is a good thing.

Secondly, *The estate of the godly (be it more or less) is a blessed estate* (as I have formerly shewed) *The Lord blesseth the habitation of the just*, Prov. 3. 33. But blessed it is not, unless well-pleasedness be given with it: it doth not differ from the possession of the wicked, who eat and grumble, and receive and curse. Nay no estate were as good as an unpleasantness with a fair estate: if our minds approve them not, it is with us as with an arm out of joynt, which is no help but a very torment unto us. The estate of the godly is a blessed estate.

Thirdly.

The Lord
would have his
people to be
thankful to
him.

Thirdly, The Lord would have his people to be exceeding thankful unto him for what he gives, and likewise to serve him according to his great goodness. A disliking heart is alwayes an unthankful heart: he must first make them to be well pleased with his mercies, if ever he would find them thankful for them; nor can they be made reasons of better service, unless first we see them and like them as fruits of kind love unto us.

Use 1.

It may inform
us that God
hath but a few
people on earth,
because but a
few well pleas-
ed with their
condition.

Doth God accord the minds and estates of his people, give unto them the best estates and the best minds to be well pleased and delighted, to *lie down in their Green Pastures*? then it may inform us, *that God hath but very few people on earth*. The Philosopher lighted a candle, and looked amongst a multitude of men to find a man; and the Prophet would have them to *run too and fro through the streets of the City to find a righteous man*. The same may we do through the world, and run, and search whether you can find a man or a woman well pleased with their conditions. Look on *Ministers*, any people, and charge, and living, please them better then what they have: their people are so unteachable, and their means is so short, and their labours are so ineffectual, and their respects are so few. Look on *Tradesmen*, any calling is better then theirs; every one gets more then they, they have so many losses, and so many bad debts, and such thin custome, and such an hard time of it. Look into *families*, either the husband purposely abandons the wife, for he likes her not: or the wife she is abroad with others, for she cares not for her husband; or if you find them together in place, yet they are asunder in their affections. He is not the *covering of the eyes* to her, and she is not the *pleasant Roe* to him. Descend from that relation to another; Of *Parents and Children*: The Children they complain of the Parents, that they are too harsh: the Parents they cry out of the children that they are too loose and stubborn. Or from them peruse the relation of *Masters and Servants*: What one servant almost of a thousand that is pleased? either one Master wants *religion*, or another wants *compassion*, or another wants *bounty*: or the like exceptions have the Masters against the Servants, either they are too *slow*, or too *proud*, or too *negligent*, or too *unthristy*, still too too *undutiful*. Of all men we conceive that
men

men *mighty in estates and in honors*, they should be well pleased, who have barns full of corn, chests full of money, dayes full of honour, but like the higher Cedars and Trees, those of highest place are tossed and bowed, and banded with perpetual agitations of endless restlessness and dislikes. And for *poor men* they conceive that they have a dispensation to murmur and clamour, and vex, and to spend all their dayes in unthankfulness, and inquietness. What was spoken of the houses of the *Egyptians*, *there was not one house where there was not one dead*, that may be safely said of all the houses on earth there is not an house wherein there is not more or less, a person displeased with his condition.

Four things I will briefly propound unto you,

First, the *Greatness* of this sin. Secondly, the *causes* of it. Thirdly, the *dangers* of it. Fourthly, the *helps* and *remedies*.

First, The *greatness of this sin*: by not being well-pleased and quieted with our conditions. The greatness of this sin.

1. It is a *Debasing* sin: the more Atheism is mixt with any sinning, the greater is that sin; for now we do not onely sin against God, but do as it were un-God our God. It is a debasing sin.

And what is a displeasedness with our conditions, but even a secret denial of God? we do judge our God, sit upon him in judgment for his acts of providence; as *Joseph* would have directed the hand of his father in point of blessing, &c. And if we deny the attributes of God, we do virtually deny God himself (for he is especially the same with his attributes). Now if we be so outrageously displeased with our conditions we do accuse God that he wants wisdom, that he knows not what is good, and best for us. It is a sinning with an high hand, and therefore the more hainous and fearful.

2. It is a *most unkind* sin. *Ingratitude* (even in the construction of the Heathens) was such a sin, he was supposed to be stained with any sin, who was guilty of this; and God takes notice of it as a sowler blemish, *Do you thus requite the Lord?* Now to be habitually displeased with our conditions, what is it but unkindly to render for the kindness of Gods love and mercy? for a man to fall out with his kind friend, is a foolish act; but to fall out with him for his kindness, this is an intollerable miscarriage. If the Lord should lay bonds upon our feet,

aches on our bones, sickness on our bodies, losses upon our estates, yet ought we to be well pleased therewith in regard of that authority he hath over us, and in regard of our sinful guilt which deserves much more misery than we do feel; we may quietly say with *Job*, *Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and not evil?* But when the Lord in stead of misery shall express mercy; not one mercy, but many; not improper, but convenient mercies; not thinne, but deeper mercies: give a man strength, and health of body, multitude of friends, success in trade, an ingenuous and meet yoke-fellow, perhaps religious, beautiful, and goodly children, spread a table for him from one end of the year to another, nay supply him not onely for meer necessity but for variety. And this person shall now never eat but curse; never drink but vex; never look on a mercy but with an evil eye, a slighting thought, a displeased spirit, cannot talk but he murmurs, cannot sleep but he sighs, cannot be alone but he weeps, but he frets, but he repines, as if he were weary of mercies, of God, of himself. Ah! how fowl, how sordid a return is this? I bless thee; may God say, and is this answered well by thy cursing of me? I feed thee, and thou ragest; I clothe thee, and thou vexest; I provide for thee and thine, and yet thou disrelishest all my love, all my goodness, all my kindness.

It is a most unreasonable sin.

3. It is a most *unreasonable* sin: 'Tis true that there cannot be any just ground for any man to sin, yet some kinds of sinning may assume more Apologies than others. As when a man commits a sin through *ignorance*, he may pretend that if I had had knowledge to have discerned it, I would not have so adventured: and when the poor man steals, he assumes an Apology, had I riches, or had I bread, I would not do it. But this kind of sinning, to be displeased with Gods merciful providing for us, is like the theft of a rich man when he steals from the poor, there is no cause for him so to do, and it is without all excuse. When the Lord took away *Jonas's* gourd and *Jonah* was there-with displeased, *Doest thou well to be angry?* said God unto him *i. e.* is there any sufficient cause given unto thee for this distemper. But suppose you had seen *Jonah* fretting and vexing himself under the comfortable shade of his gourd: might not the question then have been put home unto him, *doest thou well to be*

angry?

angry? This is our very practice: when God gives us many mercies, many sweet comforts, and by the presence of them shades us from many miseries and troubles, yet even under the shadow of his mercies are we grumbling, and murmuring and displeased. What Apology? what plea? what ground for this? if we wanted the mercy, we might pretend something; but enjoying the mercy and yet repining; it is a sin the more intolerable, by how much the more irrational.

4. It is a *very sinning sin*: my meaning is, that it is a sin It is a very sin- productive of many sins; a womb as it were or a fountain of ning sin. them. The Harlot or Adulteress is in Scripture reputed one of the highest transgressors, not only in a formal sense, because of the absolute vileness of that sin: but also in a causal sense, because of the productive influence of that sin, *she encreaseth transgressors*, saith Solomon. Ill-pleasedness with our conditions, it is a kind of a mother sin, a sin which brings forth many sins.

Sins of omission, taking off the mind and heart from many duties which otherwise would, and should have been performed, of counsel, of love, of mutual prayer, mutual help.

Sins of intermission: filling the mind in holy duties with abundance of earthly and sinful thoughts.

Sins of commission: O how much malice? how much revenge? how much heart-burning? how much defaming? how much unbelief? how much pride? how much wrath? &c. live, grow warm and strong by this sin: Nay sometimes blasphemies against God, sometimes the murders of others, and sometimes self-murders; these are the sins of sins, yet owing of themselves oft-times to an heart ill-pleased with its condition.

Secondly, the *Causes of this displeasedness without conditions*; Besides the general cause, which is that sinful diseased- The causes of displeasedness in our natures (*a diseased man can like nothing*) there with our conditions. are many peculiar and more immediate grounds thereof, v. g.

1. A *special vanity of mind*, which makes us quickly sick and A special vanity weary of every condition: as it is with a weak stomach there is ty of the mind. a kind of *fastidium* upon it, that it cannot insist on one dish long but it desires a change of diet. The like vanity is there upon our spirits which cannot settle on any outward thing long,

but it longs to be rid of it, and skip from it, as the Bee from one flower to another : whiles a mind onely vain, meets with an object that is onely vanity, it cannot be much or long pleased, because not at all satisfied.

A foolish erroneousness of mind.

2. *A foolish erroneousness of mind*, creating a kind of happiness and perfection in the creature, as if it were sufficient to breed absolute comfort and delight ; the which whiles we fondly fancy, and finding experimentally instead of all satiety, much defect and many unanswerablenesses : now we grow displeased and murmuringly accuse our conditions, as *Rachel* did *Jacob* because he gave her not children ; that they are but a barren womb, or a dry tree, or a brackish river, or a broken arm. This is ever true, that he who over-rates the creature, will either be displeased that it falls short of his expectation, or else will run himself into further troubling dislikes by repeated essays of another condition then his own. Whereas in truth, to draw full contentment from any worldly thing is nothing else but the study of the Philosophers stone, which breaks many a mans brain and estate to make mountains of gold, when onely the shew of it is all that can be attained and no more. We do fruitlessly vex our hearts and oppress our conditions, and shall never be pleased, whiles we believe that the outward things which we possess or expect, can be an absolute good unto us, or efficient causes of well-pleasedness to our minds.

Envious comparison.

3. *Envious comparison* : when we cast an ill eye on our own estates, because God doth cast a good eye on another mans condition. The Heathen saw this truth, that *Invidus alterius rebus macrescit opimis* ; Another mans Palace, is the envious mans Prison. It is a frequent experience, that as a man of moderate stature seems but a Dwarf if he stands by a Giant, or a woman of real comeliness but a homely creature when she stands by another of rich attire and singular beauty ; so whiles we compare our convenient estates with others exceeding conditions, their Sea swallows up our River, and we are most apt to dislike our Grove because it is not a Forrest : Oh, other mens children they can behave themselves thus and thus ; others servants they are so and so careful, and diligent ; others wise thus and thus loving ; others houses and tables thus and thus furnished

nished, others are thus and thus respected and applauded. This is just *Hamans* distemper, whose heart was almost broken because the King put honour upon *Mordecai*, though *Haman* had honours and estate enough, as much as would have served forty better men then himself. And it was *Ahabs* disquietment too, who though he had a kingdom, yet envying *Naboths Vineyard*, he could not eat nor sleep.

4. *Unthankful Comparisons*, And indeed odious, when we do not compare our conditions with our own deserts (which were a way to make us acknowledge Gods mercies, and to bless for any thing) but the worst of our own conditions with the best of other mens. There is in every outward condition, *aliquid velatum & aliquid revelatum*, there is the skin of it, and the flesh of it; the foot, and the shoe; the body, and the garment. Even they who seem to enjoy all delight to outward appearance, yet look into their closets and the utmost and inmost rooms of their estates, they have many singular inconveniences, they are put upon hazards and such streights of conscience sometimes, that a poor-honest man (if he knew all) would not change his brown bread with them for all their greatness. But now this is our gross foolishness, we look only on the outside of other mens conditions, what friends they have, what respects they have, what confluence of honours and wealth they have; what variety of diet and attendants they have, and so we see nothing but that which to some is a kind of heaven upon earth. And as for our own conditions, our eyes are fixed only on our sores, our Arithmetick can cast up no mercies but miseries, such a loss, such a cross, such slightings, such hard dealings; like *Solomens* Chapmen, who say of our conditions *they are naught, they are naught*; or like the Church, *Come and see if there be any sorrow like my sorrow!* What well-pleasedness can possibly be expected from us, while we drown our own mercies, and look on nothing but our miseries, and yet veil all the miseries of other men, and see not the clouds and nights, but only their day and sun.

5. *Proud Arrogancy*. There are three things which will incline us to distaste our mercies. One is when we make them but Tributaries to our merits, as if they were only the rent due to our deserts, whereas they are almes to beggars. Another is when

Unthankful
Comparisons.
Iniqua comparatio quæ fit inter disparata.

Proud Arrogancy.
Annon mendicis qui panem parit? Austin.

when we make our selves the only Judges of good and evil. A third is when we will make our conditions the Slaves of our Lusts. The proud man is guilty of all these, and therefore he cannot but be displeased with his condition. For, he cannot see mercy to be a free Gift, but a just Debt; as if God did owe him the Homage of Providence. Nor can he subject his stout Spirit to the Wisdom of Divine Dispensation; a *vain man* is he, and *would be wise, though he be like a wild asses colt*, Job 11. 12. And whatsoever he hath, he makes it the servant of some lust or other, which is alwayes craving and distast-
ing.

Infidelity, covetousness, ex-
ceedingness in af-
fection, corrupt-
ends. ¶ There might many other causes be added why we are displeased with our outward conditions, as *infidelity, covetousness, exceedingness in affection, corrupt ends* which we set up, unto which our conditions are not sufficiently and strangely enlarged; *ingratitude of Spirit, remisseness in seeking* and obtaining spiritual graces, which only can heal and tune the spirit.

But I shall not enlarge on them, but proceed to the third General, which is,

The danger of Displeasedness with our condi-
on. The dangers of displeasedness with our conditions. I will reduce them unto two heads:

1. It *Shortens* many excellent things.
2. It *Greatens* many fore evils.

It shortens
Our Graces

1. It *Shortens*,

1. Our *Graces*: (if we have any.) Displeasedness with our conditions, it is either a lock to bar out Grace, or else a drop to quench and diminish it. That man is an enemy to himself in Spirituals, who is a friend to his dislikes in Temporals. It hinders Grace, 1. In the *Acts* of it. The shaking hand is not fit to write, and the wounded foot is not able to go, and the turbulent soul is not so disposed to believe, or repent, or converse with God. 2. In the *Degrees* of it: An unquiet patient makes but a slow recovery, and turbulent stormes a long voyage. A mind habitually posselt with distaste of its outward condition is usually least fruitful; for every new dislike is a new wound, or a relapse which sets us back in Grace.

Our Duties

2. Our *Duties*: We never fall out with Mercies, but we must fall out with Duties; a displeased heart is either a destruction or a distraction. O how many prayers are either omitted,

ted, or scattered? We can neither counsel nor comfort others, we can neither serve God nor men. Rented thoughts, and displeased hearts, are neither fit to hear God nor to seek God; they are like a phrensie, wherein the mad man is incapable both to command and obey. The Word can do us no good, because not received with Meekness, and our Prayers are lost, because not performed in Charity. If we are not in charity with our estates, we are not in charity with God; and can God be pleased with that service which comes from an heart displeased with his goodness?

3. Our *Comforts*: As God said of a rebellious person, *Write* Our Comforts *that man childless*, the same may be said of a discontented person, *Write* that man comfortless. His very mercies are a burden, and all about him is but as a bed of sickness. Good is upon him, but he sees it not; and blessing, but he knows it not. In the midst of Sufficiencies he feeds only on the bread of Affliction; and though his Cup doth overflow, yet he drinks only the Wine of Aspes, and the gall of Wormwood. Displeasedness with our conditions is like the *Leeches*, which do suck only the worst and melancholick blood; or like the *Eele*, which lives in the filthiest mud; or like the *Fly*, which mars the goodly ointment; or like the *Gangrene*, which makes sore the strongest joynt. It Fly-blowes all our comforts, and darkens our Sun at noon-day; makes us Jailors only, whereas we might be Freeholders of our estates. It leuens and soures the whole life with imaginations of evil, with dislikes of good, with complaints against what we have, and restless pursuits after what we want.

4. Our *Mercies*: There are two sorts of Spirits in men, there is the Unbelieving Spirit, and there is the Displeased Spirit: The Unbelieving Spirit is a tempestuous mind, which nips and keeps off mercies. The Displeased or discontented Spirit is a whirl-wind which pulls off mercies: the one is a Caveat against the receiving of good, the other is an Arrest to deprive us of good. *Moses* he was (I fear) too much troubled with the burden of Government, and God presently eased him of his Spirit, and put it upon others. *Mosis* was eased of the Spirit by complaining, and we shall be eased of our mercies by grumbling and quarrelling. The meat will not stay in the Stomach which

which likes it not; the Bee cannot dwell upon a thorn, nor mercy with a man who falls out with mercy. That God who is pleased to heap up mercies on the thankful heart, doth often recall and draw them off from the unquiet heart. The winter quarter hath the shortest daies and longest nights: I beseech thee be more quietly thankful and contented, least thou be stript of all mercy who canst not be quiet with any. Ere long, when God hath taken away thine husband, or thy child by death, then wilt thou better learn to know the worth of a mercy with a quieted mind, when thou hast learned the want of such a mercy with a grieved and embittered Spirit.

Our Life.

5. Yea, our *Life*, which is a kind of glass that holds all our Wine, or a thred on which hangs all our outward comfort. I confess it is in it self but a short span, a short tale, a short vapour, a short flower; but by a discontented, displeased disliking with our conditions, it now wastes and spends the sooner; like a candle, which consumes the faster by the fire: Discontents shorten our life, *In a Natural way*; for it is the rottenness of our bones, the burden of our spirits; it often stretcheth the golden cord, and suddenly cracks the pitcher at the well. *In a Judiciall way*, while the meat was in the mouths of the murmuring and unquiet Israelites, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel, Psal. 78. 30, 31. We read of strange judgments, and of sudden judgments, and both of them deadly, befalling murmuring, unquiet, discontented, displeased persons. *Corah, Dathan, and Abiram* murmuring and displeased, and the *Earth* clave asunder and swallowed them up; a Just God swallowed up their persons who swallowed up his mercies. He crushed them with a weight of earth, who swallowed up themselves and his mercies with their unthankful and murmuring tongues. And after this, many of the Israelites murmured, and the Plague suddenly brake in and destroyed them; as if they were not fit to live who were not willing to blesse.

It Greatens our Burdens.

Secondly, It greatens not onely our sinnes but our *Burdens*.

Burdens in our Mindes.

1. *Burdens in our Minds*: which is now nothing else but a shop of Vexations, as well as a forge of Vanity: The displeased man exquisitely proves his own tormentor. He needs no more bur-

burthen but his own displeasednesse, which sparkles and kindles a World of vexing thoughts, and an Hell of deadly cares.

2. *Burdens in our Conscience*: It cannot be but that a galled conscience should accompany a disquieted heart, the burden of discontent ever proves the burden of conscience. For as it is a great sin in it self (and therefore is the wound to conscience) so it prevails unto more sins, and therefore must needs prove burdensome to conscience.

Now what a miserable kind of living is this, that either I am under the burden of discontent, or else under the burden of conscience; either my condition troubles me, or else my conscience, for being troubled with my condition; that my daies journey is but from one Prison to another Gaole. One while quarrelling with my mercies, and by and by quarrelled with by my conscience for that quarrel, now accusing and condemning my condition, anon accused and condemned of my self for that unjust and sinful accusation, &c. Ah brethren! think on it; your displeasedness and dislikes with your condition, will at length make your consciences to smart, as now they make your heads to ache; that ever the mercies and kindnesses of God should be thus answered and abused.

3. *Burdens in our affections*. Why! what do ye by all your dislikes but lade your hearts with more griefs, and represent to your hearts grounds of more fears; you shall but rise up with anger, and lie down with sorrow: your life is nothing else but a flame of anger, or a lump of sadness, or a deluge of tears, or a torrent of vexations.

4. Lastly, You burden your selves with more *Temptations*. There are five sorts of persons which are most annoyed with temptations, The tender and unbelieving Christian, The dull and melancholick man, the idle and the slothful man, the lofty and proud man, the displeased and discontented heart. And not with mean and vulgar kinds of temptations, but with those which are of highest and extremest consequence. Thoughts of Atheism, Blasphemies of God, Cursings of God, and Self-destruction, all which might be plainly instanced in, but that I must hasten to the last thing, which contains,

Fourthly, The *Remedies* of displeasedness with our conditions.

Get Sanctified
hearts.

1. In the general this is the main ; *Get hearts to be Sanctified*, and then you will have hearts well-pleased with your conditions ; it is not the variation of our estates, but the alteration of our natures which will produce a well-pleasednesse. If thou hadst all the honour that ambition could mount unto, and all the dainties that fancy could devise, and all the wealth that covetousnesse could graspe, and all the kindnesse that affection could long after, these alone would not make thy heart pleased, it must be something higher then the Creature, and better then the Creature, which must make us well-pleased with the Creature. Holinesse is that which causeth well-pleasednesse, or if you will take it in the Apostles expression, It is *Godlines* that must bring content : And therefore the Apostle having expressed his admirable complying with every condition, reports unto us, that the strength which did thus enable him was *the strength of Christ*. According as Grace is, so is our well-pleasednesse : much Grace, and much complying with our mercies ; little Grace, and weak complying with them ; no Grace, and no complying. For it is Grace which clarifies the mind, rectifies the judgment, subjects the will, composeth the affections, without which there is no agreement 'twixt a man and his estate.

Especially get
the Grace of

But in particular these Graces are distinctly available to make us quietly and comfortably to be satisfied and well-pleased with our estates.

Faith.

1. *Faith* : There are two quiet effects that Faith will produce. For the *Future*, that we shall not want ; See *Heb. 13. 5*. For the *Present*, that we are well : Look what the pillars are to an house, or the root unto the tree, or the anchor to the ship, that is Faith to the Soul ; setting, establishing, and composing it. When *David* speaks the language of Faith, then it is, *I have a goodly heritage*, *Psal. 16*. And *Paul*, when he speaks as a believer, then, *I have all things and abound* ; for Faith seeth God in the condition, the Love of God in it, the Wisdom of God in it, the Faithfulnesse of God in it and his Goodnesse every way ; and therefore sees all the reason that may be, that we should be comfortably well-pleased. The Lord is well-pleased with my person, and why should not I be well-pleased with my condition ? Faith captivates our wills to Gods ; why should

should not I be well-pleased with the condition that my good God, my loving God, my wife God, my faithful God is pleased to allot unto me.

2. *Humility*: Give a kinsman sometimes a pound, and he flights it; give a poor man a penny, and he is pleased and thanks you. *To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*, said Solomon; 'tis true of the humble soul, to it every estate is good. Have I much? O the greatness of mercy! Have I little? O the goodness of mercy! Have I any thing? O the freeness of mercy! Have I nothing? yet it is mercy. Mercy that I live, mercy that I breath, mercy that I am not in misery, mercy that I am not in hell. Come brethren, we quarrel with this mercy, and fall out with that; if such a one were more loving, we would be more pleased; and if such a cross were removed, we would be more quiet. Do not deceive your souls; see the spring of bitterness, and the overflowing of thine own gall. Thou hast in truth a proud heart, and expects that every person and every action should veil to thy fullen humors; repent of it and beseech the Lord to pardon what is past, and never leave till thou hast attained a more humble and meek spirit, and then thou being well, all would be well about thee.

3. *Heavenly wisdom* would help to a large degree of comfortable well-pleasedness with your conditions. Heavenly Wisdom.

wisdom,

1. To acknowledg Imperfections in the Creature.
2. To pass by those Imperfections.
3. To repress speedily all motions of ill-pleasedness, to cast water upon the thoughts which are the kindling of the fire.
4. To espy the peculiar usefulness of our mercies and exigences in case we were deprived of them.

4. *Frequent comparison of our estates with others below us every way*: Art thou better then the poor creature that is ready to starve for bread? what hast thou in nature to distinguish thee, or what in Grace? Well, look over one family, and then listen at an other. The children cry, and the parents weep, there's scarce bread for any, and not a penny to buy at all. Listen again and thou shalt hear one man cursing God, another cursing of his wife, another cursing of his children. How

Frequent comparison of our estates with others below us.

likes thou this? O its ill! why then go home and learn to bless God for thy condition. Thou hast meat, so hath not every one; thou hast raiment and house, so hath not every one; thou hast a wife that loves thee, servants that honor thee, and are faithful to thee, so have not thousands: Provoke thy heart from this; is not all this mercy? and is not mercy to be liked?

Be convinced
of the foulness
of the sin.

5. *Be convinced of the foulness of the sin;* to be ill-pleased with the condition which God gives unto thee. Aggravate it often upon thy soul, till shame and sorrow arise, and vehement prayer attend it, that God would reform and compose thy heart with thy estate. Should I be well-pleased with God when he is just, and not when he is merciful? with the effects of his anger, and not of his love? Should I kiss his rod, and not bless his bounty? fall down when he strikes, and not rise up when he embraceth? Would I like my child to kick and spurn at me when I smooth and dandle him? would any like the wife which frowns, when the husband smiles on her in love? O the sin is most evil which hath a quarrel against a good God! But being displeased with Gods mercies, I do not only judge him, but my own prayers, and mock God as it were; for what are all those mercies but the fruits of his goodness, and my own prayers? Nor are they ordinary but peculiar mercies, such as when I am my self I see I cannot want. Ah vile heart, which prayest for the mercy, and yet quarrellest; which sayest it is mercy, and yet repinest, &c. Judg thy self for this unkindness of requital, and make it a daily and distinct request at the Throne of Grace, till God hath fashioned thy heart and made it thankful and quiet, and delighting it self in his goodness shewed unto thee.

Prize, and seek
more earnestly
for heavenly
things.

6. *Prize, and seek more earnestly for heavenly things* which respect thy soul.

Use 2:

Content not
your selves
with earthly
things.

{ Be not so much puffed up because of these outward things, and the increase of them.

{ 1. You are not the better by them; 2. No argument of any special love from God. 3. Yet you want your Excellencies. But strive for other things too.

Motives not to content our selves with earthly things,

First, *They are but Minima Bona*; lesse then many things which are far lesse then graces. There are *Bona Maxima*, as *Minima Bona*. Graces; and *Bona Media*, as the Moral Virtues; and *Bona Mixima*, as Riches, Honors, &c. Pibbles, not Pearls; plain work, not carved work, &c. Their goodnesse is not absolute in rebus ipsis, but onely instrumental quoad usum. The Israelites had *panem pauperum* and *panem Angelorum*. The poors bread, as the dough which they took in haste out of Egypt, Deut. 16. 3. The Angels bread Ps. 78. 25. Outward things are but *panis pauperum*, the poorest man, yea the worst of men may have them.

Secondly, *Spiritual mercies are, Bona maxima & optima*; Spiritual mer- like David and his three Worthies, they excell all the rest *velut* cics are *Bona inter ignes luna minores*; or Solomon's daughter. 1. Com- *Maxima*. pare their natures with all other qualities and created things; no creature so excellent as holinesse. 2. Conversant about the chiefest good: all our Graces are busied about God, Faith, Love, Fear, Zeal, Delight, &c. 3. Forming of us unto his image, the most excellent of Beings, making us partakers of him and like unto him. 4. Leading of us to beatitude in him, and with him, which is true and perfect felicity.

Thirdly, *Bona necessaria, ex suppositione finis*: The soul They are *Bona* cannot be saved without them. We come into the world naked, *Necessaria*. and shall go out of it so, stript of earthly things; they are in themselves nothing to our eternal welfare, but Graces are necessary; without faith, without holinesse, &c. one thing is necessary.

Fourthly, *You are but half provided for, if you have but tem-* You are but poral mercies: if you had but bodies onely, then earthly mer- half provided cies might suffice; or if there were no other life but this: for if you have earthly things are improper for the soul, and vain for an eter- but temporal nals condition. Man is a compounded *suppositum* of divers mercies. principles and therefore there must be divers objects to respect both.

Fifthly, *And onely the worst half is provided for*: the soul is more And onely the precious then the body; this is but the case, the sheath, the worst half is servant, the hand-maid, and the concernments of the soul is provided for. far greater.

Sixthly,

Nothing is
provided for, if
the soul be not
provided for.

Sixthly, Nay in the event you have provided for nothing, if you have not provided for your souls, for a man is as his soul is, and the estate of the man is as the estate of the soul is: if the soul hath not gracious qualities, it is an empty and miserable soul.

God is ready to
give Spiritual,
as well as cor-
poral.

Seventhly, The Lord is ready to give the Spiritual mercies as well as the corporal; and the obligations are stronger.



P S A L. XXIII.

Ver. 3. *He restoreth my soul, He leadeth me in the Paths of Righteousnesse, for His names sake.*

THE Psalmist in the precedent verse declares the providence of God towards him in respect of his body, and in this verse he proceeds to describe Gods singular goodness towards him in respect of his soul. The soul needs a Shepherd as well as the body, and that God who takes faithful care for the one, will express tender care over the other. The soul is not onely as indigent a subject, but also a more excellent subject then the body: Towards which David (in this verse) humbly and thankfully acknowledgeth Gods gracious respects, and the cause or ground thereof.

First

First, The gracious *respects* which God had of his soul were two,

1. One was *Restoration* [*He restoreth my soul,*]

2. The other was *Conduktion* [*He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.*]

Secondly, The impulsive *Cause* or *Ground* of this [*for his names sake.*]

There might be some implied Propositions observed partly from the connexion of these words with the former, and partly from themselves, *v. g.*

Proposit. 1. *That temporal mercies are not the Summa Totalis of all that God bestows on his servants, but he confers on them also heavenly and spiritual mercies.* Not onely Green Pastures and Still Waters, but gracious Restoration, and Guidance. *Godliness* (saith the Apostle) *hath the promises not onely of the things of this life, but of the life which is to come,* 1 Tim. 4. 8. And David when he reports that the upright man shall not want any good thing, tells us also that God will give unto him, *Grace and Glory.*

Temporal mercies are not the Summa Totalis of all that God bestowes on his servants.

The servants of God must have two things :

1. Such as will make them *good and holy*, Temporal mercies cannot effect this. True Grace is an effect above the vigour of any earthly generation, and therefore S. Austin speaking of all outward things, saith well, that they are *Bona quæ faciunt Bonum.*

2. Such as will make them *happy* : So they are a people ordained to glory, and therefore are called *vessels of glory* : now the very Heathens saw thus much, that happinesse did not consist in riches, or honors, or pleasures : and the Christian seeth far beyond them, that holinesse is the step to happinesse.

Which by the way briefly may advise us, not to account our conditions complete, nor our selves presently blessed, if we find abundance of wealth, encrease of favours from men, *success* in our temporal undertakings : *Vides divitias* (saith S. Austin in Psal 83. with him, but 84. with us. p. 636.) *apud Latrones, apud Impios, apud Sceleratos, apud Turpes, apud Flagitiosos, & Facinorosos vides divitias* : (*i. e.*) you may find wealth among Thieves, among all sorts of wicked men. Never boast your selves of that, nor rest in that which if thou halt, is nothing

Use
Advice, not to account our conditions complete in Temporal enjoyments.

more

more then the worst man may have.

S. *Anstin* in many places, and so *Tertullian* speaks of *Margaritas* to comfort the Christian that he hath precious things, such as *eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard*, saith the Apostle. Thou hast excessive fulnesse at thy Table, so had *Belsazzar* who quaffed in bowles of wine: Thou hast a masse of wealth so had *Dives*, so had most of the *Canaanites* whom God destroyed: Thou hast dignities and honors with men, so had *Haman*, so had *Herod* whom God chastised: *Offende fidem, ostende innscentiam, ostende lachrymas*; thou canst shew nothing that makes the Christian, or the happy man, unlesse thou canst shew faith, unlesse thou canst shew holinesse, unlesse thou canst shew repentance, &c. I will say no more but this, thou hast no special thing from God, thou hast no singular thing for thy journey, no proper thing for thy soul, no saving thing, unlesse (besides these outward blessings) thou hast also spiritual graces and mercies.

God onely is
the Author of
all our blessings.

Proposit. 2. Again another Proposition might be observed; viz. *That God onely is the author of all our blessings, Temporal or Spiritual.* In the former verse *David* acknowledgeth all his Temporals from him, and in this verse all his Spirituals. S. *James* stiles him the *father of lights*, and of every good gift; in c. i. 17. *Temporal mercies* they are the opening of his hand to every living creature and his Sun shining on the good and bad. *Spiritual mercies* they are the blessings of his right hand, *Gratia gratis data*, say the School-men, if they did expound the speech as well as they sound, and delivered it: *What hast thou that thou hast not received*, saith the Apostle, all the good we have is but a receipt, and therefore but a gift. And we are debtors to God for every mercy, and therefore God is the sole giver of all mercy. As every creature, so every mercy calls God Father, it is a stream out of his Ocean, a particular good from him who is the most universal good. Children are not onely his heritage, but also his gift; *These are the children which the Lord hath graciously given unto thy servant*, said *Jacob*: A wife, *Solomon* calls her the gift of God: *Corn and wine and oyl*, he challengeth them as his. *Hos. 2.* And riches and honours are from him, as you may see in the *Proverbs*. And for spiritual blessings, of Election, Vocation, Sanctity, justification-

fication and Glory, these are the most distinguishing mercies, *Quæcunque* but then saith the Apostle, *Who hath made thee to differ?* Thou *sunt bona opera mea abs te mihi* didst not elect him, but being miserably fallen was graciously *sunt et ideo tua magis quam mea sunt.* elected of him *Eph. 1. Rom. 9.* Thou didst not call him, but wandering and flying was called home of him When thou wast lost, it was his pity that sought thee; when thou wast dead in *Pl. 137.* it was his Grace that quickened thee; when thou wast extremely indebted, it was his mercy that satisfied for thee, and ransomed thee.

This confutes the *proud error of the Pelagians*, who vaunt *Use 1.* much in the power and strength of nature unto supernaturals *This confutes the proud error of the Pelagians.* and spirituals; whom that impudent *Grevenchovins* of late seems much to imitate who roundly answers the Apostles question, *Who hath made thee to differ? Ego me ipsum.* I have made my self to differ; and indeed so he did from most of men in excess of arrogancy and pride. I know that they of old and those of late, Papists and others, have their Glosses and distinctions ready; as if we were but half dead, and the power were from God, and the closing were from us. But in vain are these shufflings, for it is God who *onely quickens us,* *Eph 2. And worketh in us to will and to do.*

Non est devotionis dedisse propè Totum, sed fraudis retinuisse *C. ult.* *vel Minimum*, said *Prosper* rightly against the Collator. It is not an humble devotion to acknowledge almost all from God but a dissembling fraud to ascribe though but a very little to our selves. And therefore *Benaventure* shuts up well, *Vere humiles totum reddunt Deo, à quo totum habent, quia furci reus est qui sibi aliquid retinet, cum Deus dicat, Gloriam meam alteri non dabo.* *De Perfect. Relig.* You are but thieves, stealing from Gods glory, if you do not humbly acknowledge all to come from his bounty.

2. For our parts this: Since all our good (whether for soul or body) comes from God, *Take we just care that all the fruit of it return back unto his glory*; of him are all things, and therefore to him must all things pay tribute. O how we should fall down and bless that God who accounts no blessing in heaven or earth too good for us, who gives us the fat of the earth and the dew of heaven, all temporal mercies, all spiritual mercies, will be the Author of all good unto us: Can we do

lesse then blesse him, love him, serve him, honor him. But I will not insist on these Propositions though proper to the Text and not improper for us.

I now proceed to the Graces here conferred; which are two, *Restoration and Guidance*:

He restoreth my soul.

There are several readings of these words among Interpreters, *animam meam convertit*, so S. Austin on the place renders it, he doth convert my soul. *Animam meam quietam efficit*, so Junius and Tremellins render it, He doth quiet, or ease my soul. *Animam meam reducit*, so Rivetus reads it, He doth reduce or bring back my soul. *Animam meam recreat*, so Fabricius He doth refresh my soul. The Original word will bear almost every one of these readings נפש ישוב Naphschi Jesboueh, the verb שׁוּב in Hiphil signifies to convert and to give rest, to revive as is were and to make one to return to himself, to refresh, to breath new spirits, comfortably to compose. More plainly thus, there is a twofold *Restoration*:

1. One is *animæ errantis*, Of a soul that hath been wandering from God, and this is nothing but *Conversion*.

2. Another is *animæ languentis*, Of a soul that hath been languishing under temptations, or oppressed with griefs that it is well nigh spent and fainting; and this is nothing but *Spiritual Consolation* or *Vivification*.

In this sense the word is used in other places, as *Ruth 4 15*. He shall be unto thee a Restorer of thy life לַמְּשִׁיב נֶפֶשׁ *Lameshech Nepheesh* i. e. a Cheerer up, a Reviver, a Nourisher, so in *Lam. 1. 16*. and so in the Greek *Mat. 11. 28*. *καὶ ἔρχεσθε πρός με πάντες οἱ ἐκνεκροῦνται* Come unto me all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest: and this I conjecture to be the proper sense of the word in this place, and therefore they have not dived seriously into it who here have insisted on converting Grace as if that were meant. For as much as restoring of the soul, though possibly it may comprehend in some other place, Regeneration or Conversion, yet punctually in this place it imports the refreshing, comforting, lifting, cheering up of a dejected, or oppressed, or languishing spirit which hath suffered a Lipothymie or swooning fit. The Proposition is this:

Distr.

That God doth comfortably revive, raise up, refresh, or che-
rise

risth the languishing and oppressed souls of his servants.

There are divers sorts, or rather orders of graces; there is *Gratia preveniens*, which finds us stark naught, and makes us really holy: *Gratia subsequens*, which is sometimes called Assisting Grace, sometimes Exciting Grace, sometimes confirming Grace, sometimes refreshing and comforting Grace. As it is with the body of man, though it be truly informed and actuated by the soul, yet the soul in some diseases and fits is as it were expiring and panting, the spirits need to be fetched again, and the soul to be relieved: so it is with the soul of a Christian, though God doth give him renewing or preventing Grace, which makes him holy and living, yet he may be so overcharged with temptations, so oppressed with griefs, with fears, with desertions, with afflictions, that his soul is almost gone, it is even spent and faints. Now when the Lord doth distill some spiritual vertue and vigour which fetcheth up the soul, He doth then restore it, or comfortably relieve it.

For the better opening of this assertion, let us consider these particulars:

First, The several methods or wayes wherein the soul of a converted Christian may be oppressed, surcharged, droop or languish.

Secondly, The special methods of Gods restoring, or refreshing such a soul with comfort.

Thirdly, The reasons or causes why the Lord is, as it were, the restorer of life and comfort unto the souls of his servants.

Fourthly, Then the useful application of all this to our selves.

Quest. 1. What are the several methods or wayes wherein the soul of a converted Christian may be oppressed and made to droop or languish?

Sol. The chief of them I conjecture are these, viz.

First, *Conscientious apprehensions of sinful guilt*; when the guilt of sin and a working conscience meet together, this *Solomon* saith, is a wound that is insupportable, Prov. 18. 14. and *David* professeth it to be a burden that he is not able to bear, Psal. 38. 4. It did trouble him and bow him down greatly, v. 6. yea, by reason of it he was feeble and sore broken. O Bre-

God doth comfortably revive and cherish the languishing and oppressed soules of his servants.

The several wayes wherein the soul may be oppressed and made to droop.

Conscientious apprehension of sinful guilt.

thren ! The wrath of God apprehended for sin, is mighty in operation. *Christ sweat drops of blood under it*, it is an arrow that sticks fast, and an hand which presseth fore, *it drinks up our spirit, and turns our moisture into the drought of Summer.* When the Lord contends in this kind, the *Spirit doth fail before him, and the soul which he hath made.* It must needs make our souls to shrivel and faint, when God (who is the onely life and comfort of it) shall write bitter things against it, and shall set himself in order, and speak anger and displeasure unto it.

Insolent operation of sinful principles.

2. *Insolent operation of sinful principles* : When a Christian knowes that the motions of his nature are evil, contrary to the law of God and glory of God, and he shall conflict with them, but not prevail over them, pray against them, and yet be molested with them, mourn for them, and yet be pestered with them. This did exceedingly tire out *S. Paul* and made him cry out *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ? ταλαίπωρος i. e. Erumnosus homo perpetuis in ista luctu angoribus direxatus, as Beza well expounds it.*

Incessant assaults of temptations.

ὅρα μὲ χολαφίζῃ.

σκολοφ

3. *Incessant assaults of temptation* : These are apt to damp and sink the spirit : They are an extreme burden, still to be hurried, vexed, tossed, with abominable suggestions of Atheisme or blasphemy, or other soul oppressing and distracting solicitations. *S. Paul* professeth that *he was buffeted by them* 2. Cor. 12. 7. beaten as it were black and blue ; and in the same verse he calleth them a *Thorn* which some translate a sharp Goad, others a sharp dart, others the sharp wood running into the foot ; it is a Metaphorical word by which is meant most heavy punctions or distresses of mind. Judge a little whether it be not a soaking and trembling thing to feel thoughts suggesting me to curse that God whom I love above all, to blaspheme that God whom I honour above all, to slight that God whom I regard above all : One while to have all my graces called into question, as if they were but a counterfeit hypocrisie ; another while to have all my comforts called into question as if they were but ungrounded delusions. To question all hope for the future and to suspect all experience for the time past : these are deadly and grievous oppressions to the soul of such as feel them.

4. *Ample and more permanent desertions*: When that the Sun is set and riseth not in many daies, and God draws off the beams of his favour, which were the life to our souls, and the joy of our salvation, as *David* styles it; *David* mourns and goes heavily because of this, and in some places is ready to faint: *Ethan* was as a dead man by reason of it; and *A'aph* now can find comfort in nothing. Surely if we have not contracted upon our selves (by our voluptuousness of living, and much neglect of living Ordinances and lively Christians) a brawny sea-rednesse and stupidity, it will make our souls to stoop; That the time was we did enjoy and see the Lord in the beauty of mercy, in the goodnesse of his favour and loving kindnesse, graciously reconciled, graciously accepting of us, graciously meeting of us in his Ordinances, graciously inclining himself unto us in the performance of our duties. But now it is otherwise.

5. *Near and strong afflictions*: When a sly slanderer shall secretly martyr and murder our names with reproach; this had almost broken *David's* heart. And so for special losses of special comforts, they are like the opening of so many veins which loose blood and spirits, they make us go heavily to our Graves. Sicknesse, persecutions, injuries, poverty or any other kind of calamity, to which we are exposed in this life, are oppressures, and such sometimes as do grind, and much abate, or take down, and crush the soul.

Under or against all which God is pleased to restore (i. e.) to bear up, revive, refresh, stay the soul with comfort.

Quest. 2. How doth God refresh and bear up comfortably the soul that languisheth under any of those kinds of oppressures? How God doth refresh the languishing soul.

Sol. I answer, He restores the languishing soul,

1. *By his Word*: This was that which quickned *David* in his afflictions, and kept him from fainting, in *Psal.* 19. 7. this restoring Virtue is ascribed to the Word. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; and the Apostle, *Rom.* 15. 4. attributes to the Scriptures τὴν παρακλησιν, consolation or comfort. The Prophet calls them the wells of salvation, *Isa.* 12. 3. and the breasts of consolation, *Isa.* 66. 11. Thy Word is to me.

as the honey and the honey comb. To that purpose David in Psal. 119. You know that when Jonathan tasted of the honey comb, his eyes were enlightened, it did refresh his fainting spirits. Why! the Word of the Lord is of the same sweetly refreshing virtue to the soul; it can deliver out that message from God, and that strength, and that peace, which shall make us alive, and set us on our feet again: When the Lord doth open himself in any promise, whether of mercy, or grace, or strength, I assure you that the lame will now leap, and the chains now fall off, and darkness flie away, and as it were, an other soul, a new kind of spirit comes in to us; we can now walk and converse, and live and serve the Lord with a more free spirit, a more raised and enlarged spirit; whereas before we did hang the wing and went on droopingly and heavily.

By his Spirit
Joh. 16. 16.
& 16. 7.

Liberando.

Inhibendo.

Instillando.

Instruendo.

Benedicendo.

Sigillando.

By Faith.

Psal. 27.

2. By his *Spirit*: Who is therefore stiled the *Comforter*, because he doth restore joy and chearfulness; and our comforts are called *his comforts*; viz. the comforts of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God doth restore a soul many wayes. 1. *Liberando*; by removing the oppressures, the griefs, and maladies, the powers and guilt of sin. 2. *Inhibendo*; so he restrains Satan. 3. *Instillando*; by adding more grace and strength, and repairing of our weakness; shewing his power in our weakness: 4. *Instruendo*; by teaching us the good of afflictions, and what spiritual use to make of conflicts, trials, and desertions. 5. *Benedicendo*; by making the ordinances Virtual, and Extensive in their effects, that they shall be the very Cordials of our souls; he creates the lips of them to speak peace. 6. *Sigillando*; by discovery and reflexive representation, working in us a proper evidence of the reality of our gracious condition; as also of that happy relation 'twixt us and God reconciled unto us in Christ. All which are Restoratives.

3. By *Faith*: This is the great restorer of life to any oppressed Christian. For whether desertions be the oppressure which make us languish, or afflictions, or temptations, or corrections, or conscience, if ever you will find refreshing and raising it must be by believing; *I had fainted unless I had believed.* Nothing takes off burdens but Faith: nothing handles Cordials but Faith. When we are able confidently to rest on Gods goodness, and free Grace, and faithful Truth, or on the preci-

precious blood of Christ, &c. Now the burden is off and rest is found. Now our souls are as it were created anew, filled with life and spirits, and therefore it is that Joy and Peace are so frequently conjoined with Faith in Scripture, because, Believing is the mother of Peace, and Joy is the daughter of Faith. You have no shoulders but your own to bear, and no Mediator but your selves to make peace, and no help but your own broken and conflicted spirits, till you be enabled by Faith to believe. And then you can find merit enough, satisfaction enough, mercy enough, strength enough, God good enough, faithful enough, &c. and now all is made up in the soul.

Quest. 2. *Why doth the Lord restore life, as it were, and comfort unto the souls of his people?*

Sol. 1. *Necessity on their part*: Sense of sin is an heavy thing, and the Christian warfare is a sharp thing; Even Christ himself after his temptations had the Angels coming and ministering unto him; *the spirit would fail, &c.*

2. *Goodness of compassion on Gods part*: Who, as he will not himself lay upon man more than is right, or meet, *Jeb 34. 23.* So he will not suffer us by others to be tempted above what we are able, *1 Cor. 10. 13.* He doth pity the work of his own hands.

3. *Fidelity and truth in God*: It is his word of Invitation, *Come ye that are heavy laden;* and, *Ho! every one that thirsts.* And it is his word of Obligation that he will refresh and ease the one, and quench and satisfy the thirst of the other.

4. *His affections are much towards oppressed, and distressed, and languishing souls.* There are two hearts that Gods eye is much on; The *Humble heart*: God respects the heart which respects not it self. The *Humbled heart*: Gods affections are much towards it. For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is Holy, *I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of an humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble; and to revive the heart of the contrite ones, Isa 57. 15.* So when Ephraim was broken in heart; *Is Ephraim my dear son, saith the Lord? I remember him still.*

Why doth the Lord restore comfort to his people.

Their is necessity on their part.

Goodness of compassion on Gods part.

Fidelity and Truth in God.

His affections are much towards oppressed souls.

How useless
are their souls
without this
Reviving.

5. *How useless are their souls without this reviving?* Unfit, and perhaps afraid for any duty; the pulse hardly beats at all in fainting fits. *I am afraid to look up*, said David; *I am afflicted and ready to die*, said Heman, Psal 88.15. *Like a Crane or a Swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a Dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me;* So Hezekiah in Isa. 38.14.

Use 1:

We may be informed that the condition of holiness doth far exceed the course of wickedness.

Doth the Lord himself restore (.i.e) revive, ease, refresh, and raise up, and comfort the souls of his servants? then we may be informed, *That the condition of holiness doth far exceed the course of wickedness*: Every good man is a Barnabas, or son of consolation. Though evil men do boast, and vaunt, and triumph a while, yet they are of all men the most miserable, they are the only sons of fear, and heirs of wrath. You know not how soon oppressures may overtake you; not only extremity of outward afflictions, but likewise the depths of inward perplexities. Troubles of soul, and wounds of conscience, there are no heart-breakings, no languishings like to these for sensibleness, for bitterness, for agony. Soul burdens are the most grievous burdens, and such as will quickly make the spirits to crack, and your hearts to roar. And here is now a greater depth of the misery, that you can neither bear your burdens, nor deliver yourselves; there are no reliefs, no refreshings for you; your worldly vanities cannot succour or repair your tormented souls. Your consciences cannot at all excuse, but condemn you. The Word speaks nothing but Wrath and Judgment against you, and Faith you have none, to draw any comfort or support from God or Christ. But with godly and holy people it is otherwise, either they are chearfully serving God, being freed from oppressures and droopings; or if at any time their souls do faint, the Lord himself is ready to raise up and chear their fainting souls. I beseech you give me leave a little to enlarge this point, that you may the better understand the privileges and advantages of being truly holy, and the servants of God.

The advantages of being truly Holy.

God hath most peculiar and proper Restoratives for their souls.

1. Whatsoever the depressions and grievances are which make the souls of good persons to languish, yet the Lord hath most peculiar, and proper, and respective restoratives for their souls; he hath the right plaister for every sore. Are they troubled

bled in their consciences? *He can create the fruit of the lips, even peace unto them.* Are they troubled about the sins which they have committed? he can give special commission to his Prophets to comfort them, and to say, *That their iniquity is pardoned,* Isa. 40. Are they troubled with the powers of sinful corruptions? he can refresh their souls by *subduing of their iniquities,* Mic. 7. Are they troubled with grievous temptations? he can again revive their souls, by making *his Grace to be sufficient for them,* and by *shewing his power in their weakness,* 2 Cor. 12. 9. Are they broken with long and great afflictions? why, yet he who hath *shewed them great and sore troubles,* shall quicken them again, and bring them up again from the depths of the earth Psal. 71. 20. Are they cast down by reason of Gods withdrawments and displeasures? why, though he hath forsaken them for a little momeⁿt, yet he will gather them with great mercies. Though in a little wrath he hides his face from you, for a moment, yet with everlasting kindnesse will he have mercy upon you, Isa. 54. 7, 8.

2. As they shall have peculiar and proper revivings, so they shall have seasonable and expedient refreshings: When David was ready to faint, then his faith was excited to see the goodness of the Lord, Psal. 27. 13. When Peter was sinking, then did Christ put forth his hand and save him. When Paul was almost despairing, then was he delivered from a great death, 2 Cor. 1. 8, 10. When Davids foot was ready to slide, then did the hand of God hold him up. When Jehoshaphat knew not what to do, then the Lord undertook his safety. *I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee,* 2 Cor. 6. 2.

3. And they shall have powerful and effectual cordials, such as shall exceed, and be able to remove their faintings, and raise up their spirits. When the King gives his pardon and discharge, who is he that dares to gain-say his command and pleasure? We may say of Gods comfortable restoring, what Isaac said of Jacobs blessing, *I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed.* So if the Lord will comfortably restore the soul, it shall be comfortably restored. Hence those irresistible expressions, Psal. 41. 8. *The Lord will command his loving kindnesse;* (i. e.) as it were give it a special charge to shew it self to the souls of his servants,

Isa. 57. 19 I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace to him that is a far off. Creation it is an Omnipotent act, utterly uncontrollable: There may be sometimes a depth of troubles on the soul, wave may be upon wave, and thick darknesse over our Horizon; our souls may be bowed down and greatly afflicted: we may say with *David*, that *we are in a great strait*, and with *Jehoshaphat*, *We know not what to do, and we have no might*; our spirits may be even ground to powder and overwhelmed within us; yet even then can and will the Lord restore the souls of his servants. *The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down*, *Psal. 116. 8.* and *raiseth the poor out of the dust*, *Psal. 113. 7.* and *Job* from off the dung-hill, and *David* often from the gates of death; yea, in the multitude of his thoughts did Gods comforts delight his soul: And though I walk in the midst of trouble thou wilt revive me, *Psal. 138. 7.* And when my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path, *Psal. 142. 3.* He heard our voice out of the low dungeon, and our breathing, *Lam. 3. 55, 56.*

And they are
infallible and
certain.

4. And they are infallible and certain: The Lord will not cast off for ever, but though he cause grief yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies, *Lam. 3. 31, 32.* I will surely have mercy on him, *Jer. 31. 20.* and I will restore comforts unto him, *Isa. 57. 18.*

Use 2

If you would
have your souls
restored, go un-
to the Lord.

Then if you, any of you would have your souls restored, Go unto the Lord. Come brethren, I verily believe that there is scarce any one of you (who are the people of God) but you have some oppressures or other upon your spirits. One of you perhaps has a soul eventired out with special temptations; another hath a soul wearied out with violent corruptions, and a third ready to faint under afflictions, and a fourth, that his affections are not so exactly tempered, and fully inflamed as formerly. And a fifth, that he is not so in duties, and the Lord looks not so on him in his Ordinances as he was wont. Now I beseech you, hearken unto me, Go unto the Lord every one of you with your oppressed spirits: He is the restorer of souls. To whom shall we go? said Peter to Christ, thou hast the words of eternal life. Consider with me a few particulars.

Soul oppressi-
ons are very
painful.

1. Soul oppressions are very painful: The Soul is the seat of sweetest comfort or deepest sadnesse. A little thing in the eye
will

will trouble, and a small thing on the brain is weighty, and any burden on the soul is very heavy. Read but the history of *Job* and of *David* in some particulars, and our own experience, and you will confesse this to be true. Now what wise man would dwell with everlasting burnings? Who would bear or lie under such burdens, as will make a soul to crack, that might be eased and refreshed?

2. *Soul sinkings are very prejudicial*: I need not say no-
 thing how it makes a person break quite up in particular rela-
 tions, unfitting him for all converse, but which is yet worse, it
 damnifies him in the general calling, working off the heart
 from all Ordinances, all Communion; and giving occasion for
 Satan to fasten extreme and sore suggestions. Ah Christian!
 Thou considerest not how much thou wrongest thy Graces, thy
 duties, thy God, thy happinesse, thy peace, by giving way,
 or living in a disconsolate, heartlesse, languishing condi-
 tion.

3. *The Lord only hath power over the Soul, and the burdens of it*: We can mar, and we can trouble our own souls and cast them down, but it is no power and art but that of a God which can raise up, revive and settle the soul again. The air may be good to refresh some bodies, and merry company to hearten a melancholick body; for sinking bodies, phylick, diet, recreation, &c. may be good restoratives; but for souls that are sinking, or sunk, no helps can restore them but such as are like themselves. Spiritual souls, spiritual maladies, are to be raised up with spiritual restoratives only. Now God, he is the *father of Spirits*, he gives unto us our spirits, and he it is who can refine our spirits, and he it is who must refresh and repair our spirits, and revive them. As he is the God of all Grace, so he is the father of all comfort; The father of our spirits, and the father of our comfort.

The Lord only
 hath power o-
 ver the soul,
 and the bur-
 dens of it.

4. *He is your God*: Look over all the Covenant how he ex-
 presseth himself to be yours. Yours, what? for renewing grace
 only, nay, but for reviving grace also. Assuredly, that your
 souls are so fainting and languished, you your selves are the prin-
 cipal cause of it.

He is our God.

Object. We the causes of it, will some say, Not so! for we
 do dislike our fears, our doubts, our sinkings, we complain of
 them,

them, we pray to the Lord, but no restorative can we find in our souls.

Sol Nay, nay, but you your selves are the causes why your fainting, and tired, and oppressed, and languishing spirits are not restored and made up. If the patient will send for the Physician and open the weaknesse of his body unto him, and desire counsel, and when all is done he will not follow the medicinal prescriptions, but will feed on what he likes; and drink what he pleaseth, and go abroad when he listeth; doth not he cause weaknesse upon himself? Is it not he himself who keeps himself low? Why brethren, though we do complain and seek unto the Lord to restore us, yet if two things be practised by us, it cannot be that ever our languishing souls should be raised.

Two things
binder the raising
of our languishing
souls.
If we reject the
things that will
restore a soul.

1. *If that we reject or oppose the things which will restore a soul;* but thus is it with us; we will not take our Cordials, we put them aside; O no! the blood of Christ belongs not unto us, the loving kindnesse of God is not for us, the promises respect not us. Can thy soul ever be restored whiles thou thus refuseth the restoratives? Tell me, what is it doth oppresse and trouble thee? and what is that which will raise and revive thee? The guilt of sin, that is it which doth oppresse thee; can any thing in this case be thy restorative, but the free mercy of God in the blood of Christ? this God doth represent unto thee, this doth he offer unto thee; but this cannot he fasten upon thee. Thou prayes for help, he is present to help, but thou refuseth the help. Talke and delude thy self as much as thou pleasest, that thou seest more in thy self then another imagins; it is unquestionable with me that thou dost so. But no cause canst thou see to refuse Gods grace offered unto thee; and offered unto thee to restore thy soul.

If we keep up
our sinking and
depressing
principles.

2. *If that we keep up our sinking and depressing principles;*
v. g. Erroneous conceits and mistakes about the Vitals of grace, invented evidences of Salvation, and not such as the Word authorizeth; crediting of Satans suggestions and our own definitives, when we are incompetent to give sentence. Sometimes overturning all upon a meer infirmity, yea, oft-times questioning our graces because they are so constant in conflict with our sinful natures. If we find the least Vanity, we usually fall upon
the

the verity of our estates. If we be not as high as others, or alwayes like our selves or some unusual temptation befall us, or affliction, presently we are pining and sinking. The first thing that we fall upon is the truth of our conditions, and we will not easily hearken to any evidences but such as may make against us. This is the ordinary method amongst Case-Christians (I mean those that put Cases of Consciences) they invent and insit on any thing which may imaginably keep down their souls, and they eagerly, and with much subtilty dispute against whatsoever may restore and repair their souls. To what purpose, Man, doest thou pray to be restored? when presently thou strengthens and sides with those base principles of thy heart which do keep thy soul from being restored: Doest thou think that a person rightly prayes against drunkenness or uncleanness who presently nourisheth in himself those special principles and motions which do uphold those sinnes, so &c.

Ob. But what would you have us to do?

What should such do.

Sol. Not to omit Prayer, not to omit any other spiritual means of restoration, whether Word or Sacrament, or Consecration, but above all to improve your faith if ever you would get your souls to be restored. You will go with drooping hearts to your graves, unlesse you can skill the life and use of Faith better. Though the Word be apt to restore the soul, though the Sacrament be apt to restore the soul, yea though God himself be able to restore the soul; yet neither the Word, nor the Sacrament; nor God do restore the soul without faith. Wouldst thou then have thy languishing soul restored, strive earnestly to believe, set before thine eyes the loving kindnesse of the Lord, look into the wells of salvation, display the promises of God, turn not away thine eyes from them, but seriously read and peruse them. Thou shalt see in them all the proper grace, mercy, strength, comfort, refreshing that thy distressed and oppressed soul can desire: then consider this is every jot of it, the word of God, a faithful God who keeps Covenant for ever, and performs his truth to a thousand generations: I will live and die upon his good and faithful word, Lord I believe, help my unbelief. Thou sayest thus and thus; and I do trust on thee to be thus for my soul, to do thus for my soul, thou wilt pardon my sins, thou wilt subdue them, thou wilt bruise Satan for me, thou

Omit not duties and ordinances. Especially improve your faith.

Study the Promises.

thou wilt do me good by all my afflictions, thou wilt shew me thy salvation, I will still pray unto thee, still wait upon thee, at length I know that my weaknesse shall recover strength, and my conflicts shall find victory, and my faithful God will answer, will help, will quicken, will comfort me on every side.

P S A L M 23. 3.

—He leadeth me in the Paths of righteousness for his Names sake.

THis is the second special mercy which God confers on Davids soul, wherein you have,

1. The Agent and his Act [*He leadeth*]
2. The Person or Patient who is led [*me*].
3. The course or wayes wherein he is led [*in the paths of righteousness.*]

The word here used, is Metaphorical, sometimes respecting the blind, who cannot walk without a guide, sometimes little or weak children who cannot go without a leader, and here the weak and aptly wandring sheep which stand in need of the shepherd to go in and out before them.

Though something might be observed from the conjunction of these two mercies, that God is a Leader as well as a Restorer of the soul: he remove burdens that we might follow duties; cures and comforts a soul, that the soul might now walk the better. Yet I will not insist on it, Onely two Propositions I shall more fully open, viz.

1. That even converted and restored persons, need a God to lead them.
2. That God leadeth his people in righteous paths, or in the wayes of righteousness.

I begin with the first,

That even converted persons need a God to lead them. [He *Doctr. I.* —
leadeth me] saith David, a choice sheep and of good *Even converted*
growth.] *and restored*

O Lord, saith the Prophet *Jeremiah 10.23.* I know that the *persons need*
way of man is not in himself: It is not in man that walketh to *a God to lead*
direct his steps. And therefore David prays *Psalm 143. 10.*
Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God, thy spirit is good,
lead me into the land of uprightness; he compares himself to
a weak scholar who needs teaching, and to a weak man who
needs leading. And the Lord promiseth to make his people to
know his wayes and to walk in his statutes, *Ezek 31. and Ez. 36.*
of which promise there had been no need, had not the people
of God need of his guidance and assistance, but for the better
understanding of this assertion, I will discover these particu-
lars:

1. The matter or nature of Gods leading his people.
2. The manner how he leads his people.
3. The reasons why his people need his leading.
4. Then the useful application.

Quest. 1. What the leading of God is which is here meant: *What the*
Sol. To resolve that, premise these particulars; *leading of God*
is.

1. There is a double leading;

One is *general in a way of common providence*, wherein all
the faculties and operations of the creatures are assisted, exci-
ted, and directed by God for the service of his glory. This is *A double lead-*
that general virtue or influence from God, by which all things *ing.*
are moved and guided. *General in way*
of common
providence.

Another is *special and proper to the estate and acts, and ways* *Special and*
of Grace and Salvation, whereto a more singular aid and in- *proper to the*
fluence is necessary. This is it whereof the Psalmist here *estate, acts, and*
speaketh. *ways of Grace.*

2. This leading is again twofold, either

Representative, which consists in the declaration of the *This leading*
wayes we are to take and walk in, as also of the false and by- *Representative.*
wayes of which we are to take heed. In this respect God
guides his people by his word written, which is therefore called
a *Lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths*, *Psalm 119. 105.*
and to it is also ascribed a *directing* virtue and ordering *v. 133.*
and.

and a *counselling* virtue v. 24. and an *upholding* virtue, v. 116. every one of which is a part of leading: and so likewise it is called a Rule which leads and guides an Artificer in his working for depth and breadth, and height, and compasse; so the word directs and chaunks out our way in all matters requisite to salvation, what we are to believe and what we are to do. It is such a guide to us now in our spiritual motions as the *pillar of fire* and *the cloud* was heretofore in their natural motions, measuring out their going and resting at all times.

Effective.

Effective which consists in infusion and communication of such acts and qualities whereby the souls of his people move on in the paths of life. God doth not onely lead his people as a Counsellor leads his Client, *directivè*; but as the head leads the members *effectivè*, by communicating spirits and motion. This efficacious guidance or leading consists of these particulars.

This efficacious leading is by way of

Discovering.

1. Of a *cleerer illumination*. They have eyes given them to see their Leader, and ears given them to know their Leader and his voice, *this is the way walk in it* Es. 30. 21. *Show me thy wayes O Lord, teach me thy paths*, Psal. 25. 4. 'Tis true that the leading by the Word, is common to good and bad, but the one hath not those eyes to read, those ears to hear, that understanding to perceive as the other hath: *flesh and blond hath not revealed this unto thee, but my father, saith Christ to Peter, Vobis datum est nosse. The natural man perceiveth not the things of God*, saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. 2. 14. *but God hath revealed them unto us* v. 10. So that this is one part of efficacious leading when the Lord by his Spirit doth teach us the paths of righteousness, when he makes us to know the path of life, what is that good and acceptable will of his, which he would have us to believe and do.

Embracing.

2. Of a *peculiar inclination* of the will or heart to obey and follow the direction of God, which some do call *exciting Grace*, because the Lord either by his word or by the motions of his Spirit, or both, doth stir up the heart, enclining it to hearken and to obey, to embrace his directions, subjecting their will to his will; *Lead me in thy truth and teach me*, Psal. 25. 5: *Christ calls this a drawing of the Father* Joh 6. and *David the seating of the law within his heart*, Psal. 40. 8. and some call it a

per-

persuasion, which is such an effectual motion as winnes and gains the heart to follow or to obey, *prevaleat ad consensum*. True, it is not such a motion as is violent and compells our will (this were not to lead it, but to annihilate and destroy it) yet it is such a motion as is prevalent, and as *S. Austin* speaks, of unwilling, makes us willing.

3. Of a *special cooperation*, wherein Divine assistance concurs with the will renewed and excited, enabling it both to will and to do those things which are pleasing unto God, for it is *God that worketh in us both to will and to do*. Though in our conversion we are Gods workmanship, yet being converted we are now Co-workers with God. *Ut velimus sine nobis operatur; cum autem volumus & sic volumus ut faciamus, nobiscum operatur; tamen sine illo operante ut velimus, vel cooperante cum volumus, ad bona pietatis opera nihil valemus*, *S. August.* lib. *de gratia*, & lib. *arbitrio* c. 17. Though there be in us a principle enclining unto good, yet by reason of natural corruption reliding in us, *we cannot do that good which we would*, and therefore as we need operating or preventing Grace to make us good, so we need subsequent and cooperating Grace to enable us to do good; his Spirit must cause us to walk in his Statutes and do them.

4. Lastly, of a *singular confirmation*, which some call sustaining Grace, or upholding Grace, which is such an effectual influence from God, whereby the hearts of his people are led on and established and preserved in their course of holy walking; therefore you read in Scripture, *that God preserveth the feet of his Saints, and that he establisheth the path of the just*.

Quest. 2. This for the nature of this guidance, now for the manner of it: *Qualis ductus*, what a kind of leading that is this guidance of God to his people?

Sol. This may be briefly satisfied,

1. His leading or guidance, is *ductus sublimis*, It is not earthly, vain, impure, carnal; far be it to fasten any graceless motions and workings on God. He is holy, and leads us onely by an holy word, and by an holy Spirit, and to holy works, and to holy ends; he is no Fountain, no Patron of such as are impure and carnal.

2. His leading is *ductus canonicus* or *regularis*. God never

S

Ductus regula
leads

Irregular ex
parte, 1 Materia

2 Persona

leads his to acts which are not subordinate to his own glory and coordinate with his own word; if they be such attempts which the word condemnes, that they exceed the compasse of our general or particular calling, we move not now by an heavenly star, but by a distempered fancy; either by a corrupt mind, or by vile affections, or by Satans delusions. According to this rule as many as walk, peace be on them, Gal. 6. Our walking must be by rule, and therefore our guiding is alwayes regular.

Ductus fortis.

3. His leading is *ductus fortis*, it is such as bowes and bends the will and gives sufficient grace. It is not suasive onely, as if a Nurses tongue were enough to strengthen a little weak child to go; but it is *persuasio*, the strength of a God goes with the voice of a God; a leading by arguments, by propositions of rewards and punishments: even *Pelagius* himself will acknowledge, *velle operatur Deus suadendo, & premia pollicendo*, as is related in *S Hierom*, and also by *S. Austin* in his book *De Gratia Christi*, cap. 10. No! the Lord doth lead his people also by influence and *motu forti*; as he converts them *voce alta* so he leads them *motu efficienti*; powerfully prevailing upon their wills against all the resistances of corrupt nature, and all disputes of Satan, and all temptations from the world to hearken, and obey and follow.

*Ductus levis &
blandus.*

*Fides non est
cogenda.*

4. His leading is *ductus levis & blandus*: He gently leadeth those that are with young, Is. 40. 11. He leads not like the Pope with fire and sword, and prisons, as if men were to be burnt, and wounded, & knockt into a faith, thus the Butcher leadeth the Ox to the slaughter. But he leads as a mother doth her tender child, now with one hand, then with both, bearing up the body so that the going can scarcely be distinguished from the carrying, so the Lord bids his people follow him and obey him, and gives also what he commands, a power to follow and to obey, layes an yoke on them, and as it were puts under a shoulder to bear; gives them his hand as well as his command, and never urgeth more obedience then he is willing to afford assistance to act it. Efficacy goes with the authority, and help with the precept: *Jubet sed juvat, sed adjuvat*. Doth he require much he will help much; doth he command never so much, he never commands more then duty, nor then his own sufficiency shall appear in.

5. His leading is *ductus suavis & levis*. It is delightful as *Ductus suavis*. well as gentle : delightful two wayes;

Partly because *he worketh in us a delight to be led by him*; I do delight to do thy will saith David Psal. 40. 8. and therefore his people are called a *willing people* Psal. 110. and such as *serve the Lord with gladnesse*, Psal. 110. 2. Evil men cry out the *burden of the Lord*; and Mal. 3. *What a wearinesse is it?*

Partly because being led by him, *there ariseth singular tranquillity, joy and comfort*. The work of righteousnesse shall be peace, and the effect of righteousnesse, quietness and assurance for ever, Is. 32. 17. Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace, Is. 55. 12. The paths wherein God leads us, they are a way set on one side with trees of delight, and on the other side with rivers of pleasures.

6. His leading is *ductus salutaris*. It is a safe leading, so *Ductus salutaris*. that the *Sun shall not burn us by day, nor the Moon by night*. vii. Though Pharaoh follows behind and a red sea swells before us, yet he safely led his people from Egypt to Canaan. Though there are many calamities, many errors, many temptations, many rebellions, accompanying us, yet God will lead us victoriously with an high hand from sin, the world and Devil, till he brings us to heaven, Psal. 73. 4. *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me into glory*.

7. Lastly his leading is *ductus fidelis*. It is a faithful leading, *Ductus fidelis*. whats that?

Such a leading as will not mislead us. *Seducunt multa, ducunt pauca*: Ishmael misguided the men of Shechem and killed them, Jer. 41. 6. 7. The pillar of fire and cloud led the Israelites the right and best way. The Star led the wise men directly to Christ. Because God is essentially Truth and Omniscience, therefore he is capable of error no way, neither in *Essendo*, nor in *Dirigendo*, neither in nature, nor counsel, but knowes all the wayes to heaven, and guides and directs us onely in them, Prov. 4. 11. *I have led thee in right paths*.

Such a leading as will not fail us: What he speaks to Joshua, is true concerning the leading of all his people. *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*. All of them may say as David, in Psal. 48. 14. *This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our*

guide unto death. *Moses* leads the people to the borders of *Canaan*, and then he dies : The *Devil* leads us on to sin as the high Priests did *Judas* to betray his Master, and then he leaves us.

But the Lord will still be our Guide, he will still shew us the way, keep us to the way, draw us on in the way till we come to our journey's end.

Why should converted persons need the leading of God? They have great need.

Quest. 3. But why should converted persons need the leading of God? Other persons may, but for them, who have received Grace already and strength, &c.

Sol. I answer, There is great need of Gods leading them by efficacious Grace in directing, exciting, assisting, co-operating, &c.

In respect of the Imbecillity in their Graces

1. In respect of the *Imbecillity* that is in their Graces. Grace (considered in this life) though it be a sweet plant, yet it is but a plant very tender; and though it be a pleasant child, yet but a child very weak. Though God doth put forth or shew his arm in the implanting of it, yet being transplanted and left to it self, it is no sufficient foundation, no complete Guide or Leader. You know the insufficiency of created Grace in *Adam*, wanting a special assistance. And we read of the best Saints that they have been grievously and quickly foiled, when left to themselves, they have been instantly misled by fears and inordinate affections, as you read in *Abraham*, *David*, *Hezekiah*, *Peter*. A very weak Christian gets ground when God leads him, and a very strong Christian looseth his way if God leaves him.

In respect of the Difficulties which are in the way.

2. In respect of the *difficulties* which are in the way: Though righteous paths be heavenly and holy, yet many times are they made stormy and uneasy. The *Israelites* journey was to *Canaan*, but they must passe through a red sea, and a wilderness. First, The Christians journey is to heaven, but there is a Red Sea of many afflictions and persecutions with which he must be Baptised, and there are many Desarts of most discouraging temptations; sometimes it may go hard with the body, and with the estate, and for the world, a mans enemies shall be those of his own household, and Satan hath many a fiery dart, not only in violent suggestions, but likewise in erroneous seductions; *flight of men*, and *cunning craftiness*, lying in wait to deceive,

deceive, Eph. 4. 14. To passe through all which courageously and evenly, we have singular need of God himself to be our Guide or Leader, to hearten us in the way, to keep us in the way that we fall neither to the left hand, nor to the right; that we faint not, nor be turned out of the way, that we fall not from him, &c.

3. In respect of *that erroneous aptness in us*, even the best of us; error is manifold, and truth simple; many wayes to misse the mark, one only to hit it, said *Aristotle* in his *Ethicks*. We are very apt to err: *In our Judgments*, and therefore the Apostle compares us to *the chaff*, which every wind severally and easily tosseth, Eph. 4. 14. with *Psal.* 1. 4. and to *little children*, who are led every way with every toy. Do but observe in this City the perpetual experience of this, for there is not any error revived and dressed up in a little new fashioning, but presently many are reeling and staggering; they are apt (like to children) to change an old piece of gold, for a new fine counter, so these, to let go old Truths for refined errors. In our *Practises*: *David* professeth as much in *Psal.* 119 176. *I have gone astray like a lost sheep*. Our foot-steps are still ready to slide, generally the examples of men prevail more with us, and their opinions more than the Rule of Gods Word: *Vivimus exemplis non legibus*. In our *Affections*, and therefore for persons sakes we suddenly swallow down many errors.

4. *Christians must make progresse in Grace*, as well as find an entrance of Grace; their path must be as *the shining of the Sun*, must make *more and more to the perfect day*. They are to work out their Salvation, and to add to their Faith Virtue, &c. and to abound more and more. But this cannot be without Gods leading of them; you may expect that a child should increase without any nursing, as well as that a Christian should abound in Grace without Gods leading. As there is no birth, so no growth without his influence.

5. Lastly, *In respect of that backwardness that is in our Spirits*: *The flesh is weak*, saith Christ. The journey to Heaven is up the Hill, we sail against Wind and Tide. The *Israelites* in their passages were ever and anon weary and sitting down, and thinking of returning into *Egypt*. *David* himself thinks, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul*. Ah! we find ill hearts,

hearts of our own after all knowledg, essayes, experiences, yet willing to stand still, all that we can do sometimes can do nothing with them; we cannot bring them on in that cheerfulness of service to God. They are apt to close with temptations, and with carnal excuses, and with impediments or discouragements, and therefore we need the Lord to guide us, to quicken and excite us, to worke in us, and with us, and for us.

Use

To inform us of the great love of God towards his people in leading of them.

The first Use, shall be to *inform us of the great love of God towards his people*, whom he is pleased not to leave, but to *guide and lead, to make and keep, to raise up and lead*. This is a mercy to be admired of us, and to be celebrated with all affectionate praises; if the Lord should leave us to our selves, to our own strength, *how quickly would our graces stop?* we can do no good without him; our ship, though well built, would be in a calm without the gale of his spirit; our fire would hardly burn, nor our candle shine: It would be with us as with the wheels in a Watch, if you take of the spring they all lie still and move not; if the Lord doth not exert his actual influence, we can act nothing in any grace, at least Victoriously we cannot. *How quickly should we miscarry?* Like children, stumble at every stone, or like the blinde, fall into every ditch. Temptations and corruptions though for a while they might meet with a little faint resistance, yet would they quickly conquer us; we are but a glasse safe only in his hand; and a ship, broken without his Pilot-ship. How foul was the *fall of David*, the *pride of Hezekiah*, the *denial of Peter*; The best men will appear to be men if God be not their guide. A Ship without a Pilot, an Army without a General, a Sheep without a Shepherd, a Child without a Nurse, a Christian without a God leading and guiding, are all of them in a dangerous condition. Why? then it must be a merciful Love which God shews to us to leade us, so that Graces are kept, and Graces stand, and Graces work, and we are hitherto preserved from many a sin.

We have no cause to glory in our own strength.

2. It may likewise inform us, *That we have no cause to glory in our own strength*. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he knoweth me, &c. Jer. 9. 13, 14. The same I say unto every

every one of us, Let us not glory in our own arm, in our own wisdom, in our own abilities, but in God Art thou converted and renewed? whose Grace was it which made that differential change? Art thou escaped from the strength of such a temptation, or of such a corruption? hast thou strength to desire good, and a will to delight in good, and actual power to do good? Blessèd not thy self, but thy God; magnifie not thy self, but thy Leader. *Certum est nos velle cum volumus sed ille facit ut velimus bonum: Certum est nos facere cum facimus sed ille facit, ut faciamus præbendo vires efficacissimas voluntate,* said S. Austin, lib. de Grat. & lib. arb. c. 16. It was thy God who led thee out of thy temptation, and strengthened thee against thy corruption, and wrought in thee to will and to do, who directed thy foot-steps, and established thy goings, and preserved thy ways.

3. Do even Converted persons need God for their Leader? Follow God Then let them be so humbly wise and careful, as having him for thy Leader. their Leader, *to follow him*; Divine guidance is a merciful star, which though other men regard not, yet the wise men will look after and follow. To inforce this upon you, consider a few particulars.

First, That as there is no God like to him, *so there is no* There is no Guide like unto him; other guides are utterly false or extremely guide like God. imperfect. No:

Carnal reason, is a better wrangler then conductor, and more Carnal Reason apt to dispute against the true Guide, then to leade us unto him, or after him; and therefore the Apostle affirms that the *secular wisdom of men, is but foolishnesse with God.*

The judgments of men, though in some things they are cre- The Judge- ditable, and may lead in their order, and degree, and limitation- ments of men. on, as a Serjeant sometimes leads a company, yet are they not infallible and simply incapable of Error.

The Pope, (whom the Papists cry up for a God, and to whose The Pope. chair they ascribe such unerring power) yet even He cannot justly challenge more infallibility then his supposed Predecessor S. Peter, who gave some connivance to a dangerous mistake in Doctrinals, as appears by S. Pauls reprehension of him, Gal 2. And also erred in practicals, as appears in the denial of his Master.

That.

Lib. de Rom.

Pont. c. 8.

Cap. 29. p. 125.

That the *Pope* may err in Life, it is granted by all understanding writers; *Bellarmin* is not against *Error in Conversation*. And *Hofius* the Cardinal (if it be he who drew up the Synod of *Petrikovia*) speaks freely, *Non omnes eos habent vitæ Sanctitatem, habent tamen unctionis sanctitatem*, though they have the Sanctity of office and calling, yet all of them have not the sanctity of life or conversation. *Si Judas est, quandoquidem Apostolus est, nihil emoveat, quod sur est*, well spoken. Nay, moreover as he may and doth err in Conversation (some of the Popes have been Conjurers, Sodomites, forcerers, &c.) so he may err in Doctrine or Predication. Why else those provisions by the Canonists, *de deponendo Papa in casu Hæreseos*, which *Cajetan* relates in his book *de potestate Papæ & Concilii*, c. 17.

Lib. 4. de Rom.

Pont. c. 7. Papa

ex natura sua

potest incidere

in Hæresin.

Yea, *Bellarmin* himself (one of the strongest Champions that ever the Pope had) confesseth, That the Pope, of himself, may fall into heresie. And then that is but a ridiculous evasion of his, That though the Pope be an heretick, yet he cannot define heretically; for he who is an heretick is of all other the most apt to vent and maintain his heresie, because perverseness, and obstinacy, and pride are natural to an heretick. Nay, and *Cajetan* (*loc. cit.*) lets fall words, which if they do not intimate heresie, yet, at least, something worse then it, That the sentence of *Clement* the Pope prevailed before the opinion of *John* the Evangelist, in *Doctrina Fidei*, in a businesse of Faith. And all the world knew that *John* the 22 and *Nicholas* the 3 did decree (even in matters of Faith) contrary one to another. And as among the judgments of men, the Pope is not a safe Guide, so neither the judgments of Councils, whether general or particular, are fit to be absolute Guides or Leaders, much lesse such Councils as were neither general nor Orthodox. Though next to the Scripture, lawful, Orthodox, general Councils are of highest Authority and not to be slighted, yet simply and absolutely they are not infallible, nor of the same authority with the unerring Scriptures. What is naturally incident to every one, by a meer concurrence or meeting of many, doth not privilege any one, said *Ockham* in Dialog. c. 59. *Non mutatur à loco quod datur à natura*, said *Wickliff*. And *S. Austin* tells the *Donatists*, that the former plenaria concilia were

Councils.

were

were mended by the latter; if mended, then not unerring. Nay, to deal plainly, there was a *Council* (surely it was that of *Constance*, was it not in the time of *John Hus* and *Hierom* of *Prague*?) which, *non obstante Christi institutione*, notwithstanding the Institution of Christ, took away the Cup in the Sacrament, &c. And we plainly read an expresse variance with that ancient Council of *Constantinople* in the time of *Constantin* against Images; and the Council of *Rome*, under Pope *Stephen*, the one concluding for them, as the former did against them. Surely dissent from Gods word, and dissent among themselves, must necessarily imply fallibility and error.

Come we down from these to the judgments of the *Fathers*: Fathers.

We may say of them as *Quintillian* doth of the Orator, That he is *Homo optimus*, *homo tamen*, the choicest of men, yet a man; or as we say of the Stars, Heavenly and high creatures, yet twinkling; and of candles, they give a light but with a snuff: So are the *Fathers*, learned men, worthy instruments of good to the Church, and yet not unerring Guides. And therefore *Vincentius Lirinensis* saith, That the ancient opinion of the *Fathers* is not to be received in all Questions, but only in C. 39. de Novis.
Hæres. such things which principally refer to the rule of Faith. And here also (if *Stapleton* the Jesuite err not) they sometimes Controv. 3. de
Mediis l. 7. c. 16 did forget themselves, the Eagernesse of dispute, the Turbulency of passion, the Limitation of judgment hindring sometimes a full sight of what was Truth. Hence is it that *S. Austin* (one of the famous of all the *Fathers*) in his retractations, In Proh. retract. unsaies and mends many things which he had spoken and delivered before. And who knows not *S. Jerom* mistaken about second marriages; and *Tertullians* tincture of *Montanism*; and *Origen* was not clear neither in all his practises (for he threw incense into the fire) nor in many of his Doctrines. I speak not these things to cast dirt into their faces, nor out of an intent to uncover the *Fathers* nakednesse, but only to let you know that there is no Guide like God. Though those persons were excellent and useful in their own times, and ours now. And we do still make use of them as notable Witnesses at the Bar, yet we dare not, we may not set them up as Judges on the Bench, as infallible Guides, since we find them, every one of them in some thing or other out of the way, wandring and mistaking.

Any humane
Judgment.

That which I speak of Councils and Fathers, is affirmable of any humane judgment whatsoever and wheresoever. It is not simply infallible, nor must it be made a peremptory leader; this is to make the Bell-weather, and not the Shepherd to be the Guide: when we suck in opinions, and put our seales to them, and therefore retain and maintain them as good, only because such and such persons think and hold so; as if any imperfect holiness in heart, or knowledge in judgment, were a privilege to any from error. Why? the best Christians are renewed but in part, and see but in part, may, and do err and fail in many things, and therefore are not infallible and absolute Guides.

Examples.

The like may be said of *Examples*, though of the best men too: I confesse they are goodly draughts, but no perfect copies, they may do much, but not all. They are like a skain of silk, which winds quick and smooth, but ever and anon it is snarled and intangled: Or like a finger in a clock which points out one hour right, but then for many others it runs too fast or comes on too slow. Examples of men are, in many things, absolutely erroneous, in most things dangerous, and in all things to be followed with caution; for they act by opposite principles in them, and therefore S. Paul himself would have the *Corinthians be followers of him no farther then he was of Christ*, 1 Cor. 11. 1.

Now if neither the choicest of humane Judgments, nor the best of Christian Examples be infallible Guides, much lesse are the known corrupted Judgments of Papists, and others, and our own corrupt minds, vile affections, or broken abilities to lead us. Only God is the most absolute and infallible guide, therefore follow him.

God offers his
Guidance.

Secondly, As he is the most infallible Guide, and therefore fit to be followed, so he offers his Guidance, he puts forth his hand unto us several wayes to lead us.

In his Promises

1. In his Promises, Psal. 32. 8. *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go, I will guide thee with mine eye.*

In his Counsels

2. In his Counsels; publick, of his Word; private, of Friends: Isa. 30. 21. *Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand,*
and

and when ye turn to the left.

3. In the manifold *Operations and motions of his Spirit*, In the motions of his Spirit Which do not only irradiate the mind with the knowledg of Gods way, but likewise do knock at, stir up, and call, and cry unto our hearts, as he to the *Benjamites*, *Do not so wickedly*, or as *Jeremiab*, to the King, *I pray thee let my counsel be accepted with thee*.

4. In every *Affliction*, which is either a whistle to call us off In every Affliction from false wayes, or a voice to put us on forward in good paths.

5. In every *Mercy*, which is nothing else but a kindnesse of In every Mercy God to lead us unto Repentance; it is a gracious woeing of us to follow him in his directions.

Thirdly, It is an *Honourable thing* to follow this Leader. Other Leaders though they have some dexterity to lead in some particular wayes, yet their personal Vitiousnesse doth make much of their service and obedience under them to be infamous. But there is that most perfect, unspotted purity in God (both for being and operation) that the excellency of his nature doth therefore singularly advance the dignity of his service. There is no service (we say) to the service of a King. To follow our own lusts, is to follow that which is baser then Hell; no man becomes famous by being wicked; sin is our only blur. To follow the world, is to follow that which is a thousand times more base then our selves: It is as if the master should follow the commands of his servant. To follow the suggestion of the diel, this is every way contemptible. It is but to be a slave to the great enemy of God and of our own salvation. You can follow none but God without shame and trouble, but to close with his Guidance, is his pleasure, and your honour. Aslong as the *Israelites*, or any of the Kings followed him, they trode the Paths of Blessing, and wore the Crowns of Glory. It is an Honourable thing to follow God.

Fourthly, It is *our only safety* to follow his Leading. 'Tis It is our only not Guidance simply presented which doth secure the Traveller; safety to follow God. If I direct him the right way, and he will go and walk in the false way, or by-way, he may meet with thieves, and robbers, and many dangers. The Jewes did boast much of the Temple of the Lord; there were the Oracles of God to speak and direct, but their pathing in evil wayes, in the end, brought them

to ruine and desolation. What avails it to have a God to lead us, yet we follow our filthy and worldly lusts? We may profess God to be our Guide and Leader, but if yet we follow our own lusts, we shall of the flesh reap corruption, and the issue will be losse and death.

It will prove
our best Com-
fort.

Fifthly, It will prove *our best Comfort*, having such a Leader to follow him : *As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them*, saith the Apostle, Gal. 6. 12. A Following of God as a Leader :

1. Is the *most distinguishing mark of our condition and disposition*. See Gal. 5. 17, 18, &c. The effectual leadings, whether by the Spirit or by the Flesh, did distinguish the person for life or death, for heaven or hell.

2. Is the *goodliest ground for conscience to raise its excusing, consoling impressions*. This is the way to find rest to our souls.

3. Is in a sort the *foundation of our hopes* for an heavenly possession ; if we follow an holy God, we shall come at length to a saving and glorious God.

For the finishing of this General point, I will propound only two things more ; viz.

What we must
do if we would
follow God.

Quest. 1. *What we must do if we would follow God as our Guide and Leader ?*

Sol. To this I answer thus,

Take pains to
know his Voice

1. You must *take pains to know his Voice* and his Way ; *Prove* (saith the Apostle, Rom. 12. 2.) *what is that good ; that acceptable and perfect will of God*. Search the Scriptures, said Christ, Joh. 5. 39. And, *Thy testimonies are my Counsellors*, said David, Psal 119. 24. The people of Israel were to consult with the *Urim* and *Thummim* for their directions. If ever we would follow God, we must diligently consult his Word, which contains all his Guidances, and all our duties of following. *They err, not knowing the Scriptures* : Ignorance is the cause of Error and of erring, Heb. 3. 10. *They alwayes err in their hearts, and they have not known my Wayes*.

Strive to con-
form in all
things to the
will of God.

2. We must *strive to conform our minds and consciences, our wills and affections in all things unto that will of God*. We must not read the word and despise it, or hear the word and cast the counsels and commands of it behind our backs : but as
when

when a copy is set, we must strive to write after it ; or when the Compass is set, we must strive to sail by it ; so when God as our Leader gives us his directions in his word, we must encline our hearts to his testimonies ; or when he suggests and moves our hearts by his Spirit, secretly convincing us of his way, and putting us on to go in that way, we must not heedlessly passe over, or gracelessly quench those motions, by hearkening unto our sinful lusts ; but must blesse God for them, and cherish them, endeavouring to act and to obey what God makes known unto us, without any delay or any opposition.

3. We must *deny our selves*, our own proud imaginations, and the counsels of our own hearts, and corrupt reasonings, and foolish wits. ^{Deny our selves.} If we will make our own hearts the rules of our practice, do onely what seems good to us and what we can like, we may easily go on in a sinful way, but hereby shall we be for ever kept off from following of God in his ways. Two things will befall us by exalting our own carnal wisdom ; One is, that the foolishnesse of it will delude and deceive us : Another that God will not guide nor direct us. Therefore *Salomon* excellently to our purpose adviseth us, *Prov. 3. 6. In all our wayes to acknowledge him*, and assures us that if we do so *he will then direct our paths*, but neither of these will be if we be wise in our own eyes, if we conceive that we are able of our selves to counsel and direct our selves, therefore he also adds this advice in the next verse 7. *Be not wise in thine own eyes, fear the Lord and depart from evil.* Hence it is that *David* describing this guidance or leading of God in *Psal. 25. 4, 5.* doth likewise describe the quality of those persons whom God will teach and lead, *v. 9. The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way* : if persons be proud and perverse, self-willed and confident, God will leave such to their own lusts, and to the counsel of their own hearts : onely such partake of his guidance who deny their own wisdom and strength, and give up their wil's to his will. *Psal. 81. 11. But my people would not hearken.* *V. 12 So I gave them up to their own hearts lusts, and they walked in their own counsels.*

4. Above all you must *beg for the Spirit of God* both in his ^{beg for the} direction and in his assistance, *Psal. 143. 10. Teach me to do thy Spirit of God.*

Will

will for thou art my God, By thy good Spirit lead me into the land of uprightnesse. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of counsel and understanding, for the ability of guidance; and he is called the *unction* or ointment (1 Job. 2. 7.) for the efficacy of guidance. Oyntments do free and strengthen, and enable the joynts for motion and service, so &c. Your directions may at any time be read in the word of God, but the following of them, that strength comes from the Spirit of God, which can open an heart as well as an ear, and therefore this Spirit is promised to be given for this end, not onely to enlighten and renew us, but also to direct and enable us, Ezek. 36. 27. *I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

How must we follow God?

Q^{uest}. 2. But how for the manner must we follow our Leader?

Sol. I conjecture thus;

Willingly.

1. *Volenter, willingly*: Draw me, saith the Church, Cant. 1. 4. and I will run after thee. Its true there was no moving on before a drawing, (*moti movemur, & aeli agimus*) but being drawn, now she runs. The people of God do not follow their Leader as a Bear moves to the stake, but as a child doth follow his nurse cheerfully. *O that my wayes were so directed that I might keep thy testimonies*, Psal. 119. 5. They are never better pleased then when they can follow Divine directions, and therefore David in the same Psalm ver. 24. saith, *Thy testimonies are my delight, and my counsellors*: they are counsellors to many, but delights to few, to a David they are both my delight and my counsellors.

Before and above all.

2. *Eminenter*: before all and above all, yea against all which would lead us contrary to Gods leading. *I hate every false way* said David Psal. 119. 104. He was so far from following a false way that he abhorres it. We all professe (according to truth) that the Scriptures are of Divine Authority (2 Tim. 3. 16. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*) if so, then they are of highest and most supreme authority. For who may be equal with God? or what authority dares pretend so high as his? therefore he is to be followed before and above all. All commands or leadings besides Gods, are either the commands of enemies, which we ought to resist, or of servants, which

which therefore must veil and give way to the commands of the great God their Master. Sometimes others leadings are contradistinct to Gods or subordinate, and move us *virtute impressa*, not so much *propria & innata*. If I find man leading me in his command to what is lawful, I follow him because God in his word leads me so to do. If I find man leading me in his command to what is sinful, I leave him and look up to my supreme leader who commands me to be led onely in that which he commands and warrants me to do.

3. *Totaliter. Master*, said a certain *Scribe to Christ*, Mat. 8. 19. *I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest*. He spake it (I doubt) out of a rash ostentation, but we must say the same out of a deliberate resolution, wheresoever our guide leads us there must we have an heart to follow: where God hath not a voice to speak, there I confesse it is not a sin if we have not an ear to hear, but wheresoever he sets up his light of precept to injoyn us, there must our hearts find some measure of wills and affections endeavouring to follow him. Whatsoever duty it be, or whatsoever condition it be, though much against our corrupt likings, ease, delights, as we must follow God before others, so him against our selves. And indeed there is the same reason for our following in every precept as in any one. The reason of our obedience being not disjunctive of either this or that, but copulative, for every thing which God is pleased to injoyn, whether in Actives or Passives.

4. *Fortiter or Viriliter, courageously and undauntedly*. It is confessed that in following God as our Leader we shall meet with (as God willing you may see hereafter) many inward reluctancies and withdrawals of Spirit, as also with many outward difficulties and discouragements from the world. If we will not have the world and sin to be our leaders, we shall be sure to have them to be our troublers: if they cannot seduce us to an ill way, they will oppose us in a good way. But yet if we see God before us as a guide, we must, like the ship, rise above all waves, and through all weathers be led by him; either he will remove difficulties, or sustain us against them. What duty is it which God commands for which he will not give strength to perform, and upon the performance, comfort? Three things we are sure of, by following of him, his 1. *Affiance,*

stance, 2. Protection, 3. Comfort. As long as we are under his guidance we are ascertained of his protection as well as of his assistance. Luther would do his work though there were as many devils as tiles upon the houses of *VVormes*; and *S. Paul* would rather be led to death than to be mis-led or hindered from duty. No mans heart needs to fail or fear, while he is following of a guide who is in himself unconquerable and will permit none of his followers to be lost.

Perseveringly.

5. *Perseveranter*. We must follow him in duty as he follows us in mercy, viz. *all the dayes of our lives*. *This God is our God and will be our guide even unto death*, so *David* Psal. 48. 14. To follow God in our youth, and then to be led by the world in our age; to follow his precepts in adversity, and our own lusts in prosperity; to be forward after him when times favour the wayes of his precepts, and to shrink back from him when the service of him may prove dangerous, this shews the distinct hypocrisie of our hearts, that we never followed him out of intire love (as the wife follows the husband) but upon mercenary respects, as *they followed Christ for the loaves*. It is an extreme folly (besides iniquity) that men follow Gods leading but a while: They do not consider that he leads us to *Glory* as well as to *Duty*, and that the farther we are led on by him the neerer we are to that glorious happinesse which is the scope of all his leading. But vain man for vain things leaving a good God and guide, at once discovers much rottennesse of heart, and also incurreth the judgment of Apostates, which is for ever to be left of God whom they have left and forsaken. Thus have you the general nature and use of Gods leading, now I come more intimately to the wayes wherein he leads, termed in this verse, *The paths of righteousness*; and so I come to the second Proposition, which is this;

Doctr. 2. That God leadeth his people in the paths of righteousness:
 God leads his people in the paths of righteousness.

For the explication of which Assertion these particulars are inquirable:

1. What the paths of righteousness are:
2. What it is to be led in those paths:
3. Why God leadeth his people in righteous paths:
4. What useful application of this to our selves:

Quest.

Quest. 2. What the paths of righteousness are ?

Sol. A path (in the general) is nothing else but an open, and beaten way or tract to walk in : now advance the term from a Corporal to a Spiritual consideration, There are two sorts of paths wherein men may be said to walk :

What the paths of righteousness are.

Two sorts of paths.

Erroneous and false paths.

Some are called *erroneous and false wayes* ; the Scriptures sometimes call these *crooked paths*, because they do not lead us directly to heaven, but wind off. Sometimes our *own paths*, because they are not wayes of Gods institution, but of our own invention. Sometimes *paths not cast up*, Jer. 18. 15. in opposition to ancient and established and perused wayes prescribed by God, and insisted in by the old faithful servants of God. These paths are those of infidelity, and impenitency, and impiety.

Others are called *right, or righteous paths*, and the Scriptures stile them sometimes the *ancient paths*, Jer. 18. 15. because of a precedent antiquity to sinful paths ; sometimes *good paths*, because of the benefit which doth result upon walking in them ; sometimes the *paths of the Lord*, because God appoints and approves of them ; sometimes *paths of life* because onely the living, such as are enlivened from the dead walk in them and eventually also they tend and bring us to eternity of life.

Right or righteous paths.

In this place they are called *paths of righteousness*, which again are two-fold, either,

Which are ;

1. *Doctrinal* ; in which respect the precepts of God are called, The Paths of righteousness, if I mistake not, very frequently in *Psal.* 119. and not without reason, because as a Path is a rule to a man in his journey, and that, if which he will still follow, will assuredly bring him to his journey's end ; so the precepts of God are the rules of our lives, according to which if we do square them, everlasting life would be the end of that journey.

Doctrinal.

2. Or *practical* : and this path of the righteous is that which the Scripture calls the *path of the just*, or *the way of good men*, *Isa.* 26. 7. and the *paths of uprightness*, *Prov.* 2. 13. It is *bene vivendi studium*, or *juste vivendi institutum*, an order of our life and wayes according to the righteous will of God. Hence that of *David* *Psal.* 119. 105. *Thy word is a light unto my path*, and 133. *Order my steps in thy word*. And they are called

Practical.

called paths in the plural number, not for diversity, but for number, and some of them respect 1. God, 2. Man. These are the paths of righteousness spoken of in the Text, Namely, *righteous wayes*. The ordering of our hearts and lives according to the right line or rule which is Gods word; a course, not an act.

What it is to be lead in paths of righteousness? *Quest. 2.* What is it to be led in the paths of righteousness?

of righteousness.

A two-fold

reading:

Representative.

Causative.

Which is,

Initial.

Sol. There is a two-fold leading;

1. *Representative*, which is the direction or prescribing unto us the particular wayes of an holy life.

2. *Causative*, which administers strength for the treading of these paths, and this is again two-fold, either

1. *Initial*, which is a leading into the paths of righteousness, the setting of a man into wayes righteous and pleasing unto God.

Progressive.

2. *Progressive*, which is a leading in the paths, &c. (i.e.) a causing to walk and move on in those paths in which we are entred, so that the summe of the Proposition is this, That God doth cause his people to come into, and to walk in righteous wayes. *Hos. 14. 9. The wayes of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them.*

And they are called *righteous paths*; or wayes, partly,

Because the *righteous God prescribes them*.

Because the *righteous person onely walks in them*. Good wayes are strange wayes to bad men, perhaps upon occasions they may be driven into them, but onely righteous persons are led in them and walk in them.

Because they are the *wayes which are the right and onely ways* to lead us to our journeys end.

Why doth God lead in righteous paths?

Quest. 3. But why doth the Lord propound righteous paths to his servants, and cause them to walk in them?

Sol. Reasons hereof are these; *God leads his people in paths of, &c.*

Because suitable to his own nature.

First, Because they are paths and wayes *suitable to his own nature*. Every Leader hath wayes suitable to his own nature: the devil leads in wayes like himself, sinful, vile, unclean, &c. And God leads in wayes suitable to him; he is an holy God and therefore leads in holy wayes; a righteous God, and there

force

fore leads his people in righteous paths.

Secondly, Righteous paths are the best paths, therefore They are the God leads his people in righteous paths. God is the best best paths. God, his people are the best people, and righteous paths are the In many respects. best paths. Best in many respects:

1. No paths so *holy* and *clean*. Sinful paths are always dirty and unclean; there is no excellency in them because they are made up of nothing but sins. What a base life is that wherein every step is but a dishonor to God, and an acting of the devils command? and defilements, pollutions, &c. But righteous paths are holy, so *Isa. 35. 8. the high-way shall be called a way of holiness*; and because holy, therefore best; for holiness is the best of excellencies. No paths so holy.

2. Nor so *safe*. *The way of the wicked seduceth them*, Prov. So safe. 12.26. Nothing exposeth us to more hazard then a sinful way; false ways are always unsure, many snares and dangers. The Israelites were like to have lost all their lives by stepping into a sinful way, *Exod. 32.25.* but righteous ways though they may be more difficult to walk in, yet they are most strongly guarded; another way may be quick, but the Kings way is safe. It is safe to be in the Kings work and in the Kings way. *Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way*, Prov. 13.6. No man walks in a righteous path but is sure of defence; whiles we follow Gods guidance, his great providence follows us.

3. Nor so *pleasant*. All good paths are paths of pleasant- So pleasant. ness, in evil paths a man must drudge long for a little delight, and that goes fast enough off with much horror of conscience, and secret bitterneffe: but every righteous step (like a Rose) sprouts up with fresher sweetneffe; in a good way, a man hath the company of a good God, and the peace of a good conscience.

4. Nor so *honorable*: Wicked ways are ever most shameful, and therefore when evil men boast of their sins, they are said to *glory in their shame*. He who dares to crack his conscience, takes the quick way to crack his credit. The seed of evil doers shall never be renowned; but righteous ways are creditable: a good report (like the Phoenix) riseth out of a good life. No honor like that which is gotten by a graci-

ous heart and a righteous walking.

Righteous
wayes are the
right way to
heaven.

Thirdly, Righteous wayes are the *right way to heaven*. God will lead his people in such wayes wherein,

1. He may receive glory from them;
2. They may receive glory from him. But a walking in righteous paths are;

1. The onely paths to *bring him glory*. An evil life is nothing else but Gods dishonor and our ruine. God hath active glory by walking up unto his word, forasmuch as what is contrary to his word, is contrary to his honor.

2. The only paths which *bring us to his glory*; wickednesse overthrowes the sinners, Prov. 13. 6. It is said of wicked wayes, that *calamity and destruction are in them*, Rom. 3. 16. and damnation too, 2 Pet. 2. 2. but wayes of holinesse are paths of happinesse, Prov. 12. 28. *in the way of righteousness is life* (and it tends to life, Prov. 11. 19,) and *in the path way thereof there is no death*. All other wayes meet with death either natural or spiritual, or eternal, but a righteous path knows no death, and ends in life, it shall bring us to an end, but that is life eternal.

The people of
God are known
by walking in
righteous
paths.

4^{thly}. How should the people of God be known to be his people if he did not lead them in righteous paths: a child is known by his doing, saith Solomon, and the tree by his fruit, said Christ, and every man by his walking. These are the peculiar and distinguishing paths. Other wayes are common, the worst of men walk in them, being unconverted, *walking after their own imaginations, and serving divers lusts*; and besides *They must not walk as others walk*, Ephes. 4. 17. But where God changeth the nature, there he makes the person change his path or course of his life, as you see in *Paul*, and in all others who are converted, they go a quite contrary course, leaving the wayes of sin and now walking in paths of righteousness, and hereby cognisanced and known to be the people of that holy God.

Their graces
could not be
exercised, nor
sins subdued
were not the
paths righteous.

5 *Lastly*, Their graces would never be exercised, nor sins subdued, were not the paths righteous, &c.

For what is the exercise of grace, but a motion in a righteous path, graces breaking out, working, walking? if grace were only bestowed for our conversion and not for our conversation, 'tis granted, then paths of righteousness were needless, but &c.

Again

Again, Righteous paths are they which meet with the wayes of our sinful lusts, and oppose and expel them ; as I shall shew you presently. Therefore God will lead us in righteous paths to subdue thereby our unrighteous wayes.

Now let's come to the Application of all this to our selves. *Use*
 Doth God lead his people in paths or wayes of Righteousnesse ? *Examine what then let us reflect upon our selves, and examin what the paths and wayes are wherein we walk ; are they Gods paths, righteous paths, yea, or no ? — Consider,* *are the paths wherein we walk.*

1. *There are divers paths and wayes that men may walk in, besides the paths of righteousness :* The Scripture reckons a variety of paths and wayes ; as *wayes of our own hearts ; Solomons Yonker will walk in them, Eccles. 11. 9. And wayes of darkness, Solomons evil man will walk in them, Prov. 2. 12, 13. And of our own devices, Jer. 18. 12. the superstitious man will walk in them. There is not a sinner but hath a path of his own, a way wherein he walks, but none of them are righteous, though they may seem right in his eyes.* *There are divers paths that men walk in, besides the Paths of Righteousness.*

2. *Though every man hath a Path to walk in, yet naturally the way of righteousness we do not know : They are all gone out of the way, Rom 3. 12. As soon as we found the way of sin, we lost the path of righteousness ; and like blind men, though we grope, yet we cannot hit on the right way ; we go astray from the very womb : Of all paths, we are most apt to take the wrong.* *Naturally the way of Righteousness we do not know.*

3. *Of all Paths to walk in, our hearts are most averse to these :* What infinite disputes against them ; objections, and un-subjections of spirit ? Though we see hell at the end of other wayes, and heaven at the end of these Paths ; we can hardly perswade men either to approve them, or to step into them. Nay, though other wayes have been hedged with thorns, though they have stuck many an arrow in our sides, yea, and in our consciences, yet we refuse to walk in the wayes of righteousness. Nay, though upon the very entrance in these wayes we have experimentally met with better peace, and more blessing, yet, &c. *And are most averse to them.*

4. *What avails it though Pathes of Righteousnesse be propounded unto you, and that you do know them, if all this while you are not led in those paths of Righteousnesse, but walk in paths of iniquity ?* *To know them will not profit us if we dare not walk in them.*

iniquity? God is pleased by his *Pioniers* to lay open the right Paths and Wayes unto you; and we call upon you, and beseech you to walk in the paths of life. How will you answer the Lord, if yet against all light you choose unto your selves the paths of sin, and death, and hell?

Obj. But will some reply, Surely the Paths that we are led in are those of Righteousnesse, for we do know God, serve him as well as the best of them all, and God forbid that we should take any ill course.

That you may, *Sol.* But that you may not be deceived, let's a little examine, not be deceived amine, consider,

1. The Properties of the Paths of Righteousnesse.
2. The Properties of such persons who are qualified to walk in them. And so may it appear whether we be led in them indeed.

The Properties
of Righteous
Paths. They are Su-
pernatural.

1. *The Properties of righteous Paths are these;*

1. *They are Supernatural;* not only for *invention*, q. a meer natural man could never find out such a pious course of obedience, but likewise for *inclination*. It exceeds all the strength of meer nature, to enable any person to walk in righteous paths. To steer the course of our life by a Divine rule, and for Divine Glory; nature may oppose this, but unable to this it cannot: It cannot so much as see this way, much lesse cause us to walk in it.

They are Diffi-
cult.

2. *They are Difficult:* It is more difficult to creep in a righteous Path, then to run in a wicked Way; for the motion in the one hath all the strength and concurrence of nature; like a bowl, whose own weight and figure hurries it down the hill; but the motion of the other is through strong Tides and Storms of rebellion and opposition. We must wrestle out our way in the other, as the Israelites fought the way to *Canaan*. It's like the way which a Souldier must make through the body of an Army. Many temptations, persecutions, sufferings, hinderances from our selves, our own corrupt flesh opposeth us in this way, by many corrupt reasonings, unbelievings, fears, and Satan, both in himself and the world, doth way-lay us and withstand our passage. It is to me alwayes suspicious when a man is quickly good, and can easily do good; when he makes nothing of going in the way to heaven, which though every real, good

good man accounts the best course, yet he finds it the hardest. Easy paces and walks usually are deceitful and false.

3. *They are Holy*: Contrary unto, and conflicting with, and expunging out all false and sinful wayes. The Astronomers *They are Holy* have a meer fiction of the Celestial Orbs, that they move at the same time with contrary motions, v.g. from West to East, and from East to West. One is proper, and the other is adventitious from the motion of the *Primum mobile*. There is an absolute impossibility for the same celestial body *in totum*, thus to move. I say the like of our Walking, righteous walking is quite contrary to unholy walking; it is so far from a compatibility, that it stands at much repugnancy with it, Eph.4.17. *Walk not as other Gentiles, in the vanity of their mind*; Ver.18. *Alienated from the life of God*. Ver.19. *Who being past feeling*. Ver.20. *But ye have not so learned Christ*. Ver.21. *If ye have been taught as the truth is in Jesus*. Ver.22. *And have put off, &c.*

4. *They are strait, and not winding and crooked*: And *They are strait* therefore righteous paths are many times in Scripture called, *right*, or *strait paths* which lie twixt two extremes, or if you will, which directly lead you to the view of heaven; so that here is at once a double evidence of our wayes and paths, whether they be righteous or not.

One is a *rectitude of conformity*, so far as they keep proportion with the rule; in the defect, not omitting any proper duty; and in the excess, not going in any sinful commission, so far are they righteous. Righteous paths lie level with the rule and with the end; a man may see salvation and heaven at the end of them.

Another is, a *rectitude of Tendancy*; when they keep a proportion, a regular proportion to the chief end, as all right means do. Are our paths of walking such? (I do not speak now of particular facts, but of habitual courses) are they such as hold any proportion with the Rule? are they strait to it, and even? or do they not altogether swerve and are crooked? do drunkenness, swearing, whoring, lie level with the Rule? And whether tend the courses of our conversation? Do they tend to divine glory and our own salvation? Do you think that a course of drunkenness, profanation of the Sabbath, world.

worldlinesse, idleuesse, filthinesse, omission of good duties, are the right lines which will bring you to eternal life? or that God is glorified by them? All vagaries, either on the right hand by superstition, or on the left hand by profanenesse are certainly irregular, and because so, therefore not righteous.

They are Nar-
row.

5. They are *narrow*, and not *broad*: There is not room enough in them for godlinesse and wickednesse to walk together; for secret love of sin, and sincerity to pace it; for the love of God, and the love of the world: Other pathes are so broad that they can afford space enough for a thousand lusts. A man may be a Hearer, and a Swearer, and Professor, and a Liar. *Herods* path will hold a *John Baptist* and an *Herodias* too; and the *Capernaits* path will hold *Christ*, and the *loaves* too. My meaning is this, That Unrighteous paths will admit of Outward profession; some duties, and much sinfulness. But as the heavens will hold but one Sun, so righteous paths will admit but of one kind of Walk; Only of Love of God, of Fear of God; only of Trust on God, only of respect to Gods commandments; No Rule, but his Word; No End, but his Glory.

They are Strict

6. They are *strict*, and not so pleasant to flesh and blood: You know our Saviour, *Mat. 7. 14.* *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it.* The righteous paths are strict in a double respect.

In respect of *Rules*, which will not allow, no not secret transgressions; nay, not secret affections of evil; nay, not secret intentions or approbation of thoughts. The inward man is bowed as well as the outward, and the conscience as well as the conversation.

In respect of the *Practises*: Righteous walking is not living at a mans pleasure, nor is it all in familiar services; Christ tells us of *Self-denial*, and *taking up the Cross*, of *pulling out the right eye*, and *cutting off the right hand*. And the Apostle speaks of *Self-Mortification*, and of *crucifying the lusts and affections of the flesh*. He that wals in Righteous paths, must be willing to obey against his profit, and against his pleasure too. He must lay the ax at the root of the Tree, and hack at the dearest Lust that

that ever his soul bred, and never leave till he hath rented it out of his heart. And he must get his heart broken for his sin, and mourn day and night before God; and against hope believe in hope. All which are strict and sharp works, and the principal reasons why many a base heart will not enter into these paths of Righteousnesse.

7. They are *Solitary*; I mean not absolutely but comparatively: Not that they are paths which no men tread, but only ^{They are Solitary.} Few, which are as None in comparison of the multitudes and herds which walk in broad and crooked paths. They are *the way of good men, and the paths of the righteous*, Prov. 2. 20. And Christ saith, *There be but few who find this path*, Mat. 7. 14. The Prophet compares them to the *gleanings in the field*, and to the *few berries left on the Trees after a shaking*. But generally it is with men, they will go in that fashion as the most are in; and will speak, as the most speak; and will walk and live, as the most live and walk. They will not be singular, nor they, with a small company of poor people (of no note) who yet are they, in Christs judgment, that receive the Gospel, nor walk or be in the company of such contemned Worms.

8. Which leads me to the last property of these righteous paths; viz. They are such as are *generally contradicted and opposed*: As the Jewes said to Paul concerning Christianity, ^{They are generally contradicted and opposed.} Act. 28. 22. *As for this Sect we know that every where it is spoken against*. So is it with righteous walking, this is the only object of mens blasphemies, scorns, derisions and envies. The good wayes of God have ever been struck at by the wicked hearts, and foul mouths of gracelesse men: It is needlesse to speak of this practice in all ages, from Cain to this day. Cain hated his righteous brother Abel, and Ishmael scoffs at Isaac, Saul persecutes righteous David, and Ahab accounts of Eliak, as an enemy, and hates Micaiah; so did the Jewes hate the light. Paul complains of such as *spake evil of the good wayes of Christ, &c.* *Cajus Sejus vir bonus, malus tantum quia Christianus.* Our wayes, what are they? are they such as all men can approve and speak well of? It is a most suspicious thing that a mans course is not right, when those who are known enemies to all Goodnesse shall extol and applaud his course.

The Qualification of those persons who do walk in paths of Righteousness.

Election.

Electio enim optimorum.

Secondly, *The Qualifications of those persons who do or can walk in paths of righteousness.*

1. *They see an excellency in those things above all others.* Hence that phrase of David, *I have chosen the way of thy truth, thy judgments have I laid before me*, Psal. 119. 30. When other wayes are propounded and compared out of a discerning judgment they refuse the paths of sin, and do choose the paths of righteousness. As the *righteous person is more excellent then his neighbour*, so righteous paths are the most excellent to walk in to a righteous person. Put the Sheep unto it, they love and choose the cleaneft way, though Swine make choice of the dirt and mire. There is a walking either through The strength of *Custom*, because all the Country and Kingdom pretend to such away; or the goodnesse of *Election*: When a person hath judiciously and seriously pondred all paths, and finds the paths of righteousness to be best, and therefore walks in them. Thus do the people of God walk in paths of righteousness, viz. Out of a deliberate Estimation and Election.

Affection.

Both of

Desire.

2. As there is Election, so there is *Affection* to these paths in them who rightly walk in them. An affection of

Desire: O that my wayes were so directed to keep thy statutes, Psal. 119. 5. *Order my steps in thy Word*, v. 33. *Teach me to do thy will, lead me into the land of uprightness*, Psal. 143.

10.

And Delight.

Delight: Psal. 119. 47. I will delight my self in thy commandments which I have loved. In evil men there is no such matter, they have not enlarged desires for these paths. Like sick men, who have soon enough of walking: A little walking in holy wayes is enough, and much is too much. The paths for walking are a very burden, and alwayes grievous. And besides, Righteous walking to them is no delight, they are soon weary; *a fool hath no delight in understanding*, saith Solomon, Prov. 18. 2. 'Tis true, they may be in the paths sometimes, but they have no delight or pleasure: They come to Sermon, kneel down with the rest in prayer, read, hear, but they have no delight, no affection in these things; they are weary, and think every hour a day, and every day a year till all be done.

3. As Affection is a property of these righteous walkers, fo
like.

likewise is *Subjection*. There is an exceeding difference 'twixt *Subjection*, actions and duties, as much as is 'twixt being in the paths of righteousness, and walking in them. All the pathings or movings of good men in paths of righteousness, are duties and acts of *Subjection*; They are services in obedience to the righteous rule, and such as spring from an obeying Spirit. So is it not with other men; Their actions which seem righteous are but like other natural actions which come from them: They do things, but do them not upon divine respects, or with an obediential spirit.

Circumspection is an other property: They who do indeed walk righteously, they do in some measure fulfil the Apostles injunction; *They do walk circumspectly*, Eph. 5. and *Solomons* counsel, *They do ponder their paths*, Prov. 4. 26. they consider of Gods precepts and of their own ways. The path of Righteousness (I told you) was a narrow path, and therefore we must take heed how we take our steps. A good man is a wonder. There are many Eyes upon a Righteous walker: The eyes of an holy God, the eyes of a tender conscience, the eyes of holy persons, and the eyes of wicked and malicious persons, who watch for occasion of reproach. Therefore they do *weigh their steps*, (i.) As I conceive, they consider whether that such intentions or such actions will be allowed in the balance of the Sanctuary. They walk with advice and counsel, and their eyes direct their feet; first, *May I do it?* and then, *How may we do it* for the best advantage of divine glory?

5. *Perfection*: My meaning is in respect of intention and endeavour. It is a Going on. So Prov. 4. 18. *The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* There is a difference 'twixt the burning of a candle, and the rising of the Sun; the more the candle burns, the shorter it is; the more the Sun shines, the higher it is: Or rather, It is one thing for a man to be a Traveller in a Journey, an other thing to be a Walker in a Garden; there a man goes up and down awhile, and comes in again; but in the other, a man goes on many a weary step, he never leaves walking till he comes to the place of his Rest. An evil man may fetch a turn or two in good duties, or in paths of righteousness awhile, as a man walks in his Garden for his pleasure. But the righteous man indeed,

walks on, proceeds from grace to grace, from one action to another, from one measure of righteousness to another, till he comes to the place of his rest, till he hath attained his journey's end, *the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul.*

Gratulation.

If prevented from erring.

If called again to righteous paths.

6. Gratulation, and that for two things;

One is, *if prevented from erring*, or slipping into unrighteous paths. *Blessed be thou, and blessed be thy counsel, said David to Abigail, that thou hast this day withheld me from blood.*

Another is, *if called upon to come again into the righteous paths.* As a traveller if he mistakes his way (and doth not willingly erre from the way as a thief doth) and any call him, Sir, you go wrong you must come up yonder into the right way, he is thankful for such a recovering direction. So is it with those who indeed walk in the paths of righteousness, (like men that would journey it to heaven) if they be overtaken, if they wander like a lost sheep, if they mistake the path, and are called upon and pointed the right way again, either by afflictions or counsel, or conscience, or by the word, They blesse the Lord exceedingly for seeking of them, thus going astray; for reducing them into the paths of righteousness: It is not so with a wicked heart, you do him wrong, he cannot abide you for telling him of his wandring estate and courses, *Have you nothing else to speak on, or to do? every vessel shall stand upon its own bottom, and why are you so busie?*

Use 2.

Exhortation to turn our feet from crooked paths.

It will be no disgrace unto you.

No hurt unto you.

An unrighteous course will be your ruine.

If we find that we do not walk in paths of righteousness, let us then henceforth be exhorted and perswaded to *turn away our feet from all crooked paths*, and to come into and walk in *David's paths*, nay in *God's paths*.

1. *It will be no disgrace unto you*, For as much as the greatest and the best who ever lived on the earth, have walked in these paths: not only Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles, and Kings, but even Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Heir of all things, the Prince of peace, the Lord of glory, our Saviour.

2. *No hurt unto you. Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of what is good?* 1 Pet 3. 13. All the event is this, you are going to heaven, you are running a race to save your souls, and need you to fear this? to start at this?

3. *Assuredly an unrighteous course will be your everlasting ruine: follow the tract (if you please) of licentious and ungodly*

godly men, every one of them treads the paths of death, noe one of them knows the wayes of peace or life.

4. *It is not an arbitrary course*; in which if you will walk you may, and if you will not you may chuse, and there's an end, It is not an arbitrary course.
 No! but paths of righteousness are commanded paths, and as you tender your everlasting salvation you must walk in them.

Now there are two things which I will insist on:

1. What a man must do, so that he may come to walk in paths of righteousness?

2. How for the manner he is to order his steps and course in these paths?

Quest. 1. For the first question, what a person must do that he may be brought to walk in paths of righteousness? What a man must do to walk in paths of righteousness.

Sol. He must get such a *light of understanding* which must clear his mind of 1. *extreme vanity*, and 2. *of unjust prejudices*: for till we see these paths aright in their native form of beauty, we shall never submit our hearts to enter or walk in them; therefore, Get such a light of understanding as to clear the mind. Of extreme vanity.

First, We must studiously clear the mind of some *special vanities and lewd conceits*, v. g. as that it matters not how any man lives, he may be of what religion he likes, when he dies there's an end, there's no necessity of such righteous paths, or strict walking in them. These are Atheistical principles and do not onely strike at paths of righteousness but also at the God of righteousness.

2. We must clear our minds of *ungrounded prejudices*: as long as righteous paths, (through ignorance) seem *contemptible ways*, fit onely for base, mean, poor fellows or else *dangerous wayes*, such as will ruine us in our estates and safeties; or *impossible ways*, such as no man living can ever keep his feet in them, no marvel if men stand off, keep a distance from these paths. Of ungrounded prejudices.

The first direction therefore, which I therefore give is this, Get the eyes of your mind to be enlightened.
 to get *the eyes of your mind to be enlightened* by the Spirit of God in a diligent study of his word (which doth distinctly, and infallibly discover the paths to heaven) to see the nature, and the excellency, and the necessity, and the utility of these paths of righteousness, when once you come to see they are paths of Gods making, that he appoints and commands them, that none are like unto them; goodness, peace, life, and salva-

tion is in them; now, may you get hearts to walk in them.

Get hearts to
love these ways

2. You must get hearts to love them, as well as eyes to see them; though the brain be the spring of sensitive motion, yet the heart is the original of vital motion. In morals we move rather by the goodnesse of the will, then by the strength of the understanding; if you see good wayes and loath them, righteous paths and care not for them, why! you can never be led in them, but once get hearts to like, and you will quickly get feet to walk in them.

There must be
a solid mortifi-
cation of the
heart.

3. There must be *solid mortification of the heart*, or else you can never come to walk in these paths; you may as soon expect that a man lame with the extremity of the gout (who cannot endure to put his foot to the ground) that this man should run, as that a heart laden and captivated with lusts, with sinful diseases and fetters, should walk in a righteous path. For he hath no principle of righteous motions in him; nay his principles strongly and prevalently incline him to crooked paths.

Mortifie

Two things in particular must be mortified in your hearts;

The dominion
of fleshly lusts,
and of world-
ly lusts.

The dominion of fleshly lusts.

The dominion of worldly lusts.

If that any *sin* doth rule, 'tis like a Bias that will instantly draw you aside; if the *world* doth rule in you, its like a broad ditch that hinders from coming into the right path; of a truth this you shall find, that these two in their dominion will either
1. *Keep us off from these paths*; 2. *Make us halt in these paths*.
3. *Revolt from these paths*: Never care what men say, but what God commands; and care more for thy duty, then for their doings.

There must be
resolution and
courage.

4. There must be *Resolution and Courage*. We must not listen to *Peters* counsel, *Master spare thy self*: Hereafter I will enter into these paths, when things are more quiet, and when I can get my heart to a better frame, and in a better mood. He that would swim must not put one foot half in the water and pluck it out and shiver, but cold, or not cold he leaps in; so should we do, not gratifie our filthy, lazy hearts, nor hinder our selves with future conceits and projects. But having seen these paths (by the word of God) to be righteous paths, consult no longer but act, set upon the duty of self-examina-

mination, solid repentance, uniformity and sincerity of obedience faith in Jesus Christ, &c. We must not expect (foolishly) that our hearts will fall into a frame of obedience. Set upon the work with thy heart, and that is the best way to bring thy heart to the work. There are two things which a person must do who would come to walk in righteous paths.

1. *He must slight all corrupt reasonings against them:*

2. *He must force his lazy and unwilling spirit to come into them;* we shall best know the excellencies, and taste the goodness and comforts of these paths by practise; not by talking of them, but by walking in them.

3. *Strive for an ordinate desire of salvation and happiness.* It were no ill work, if men would study heaven and hell more. *Strive for an ordinate desire* What a deplorable condition it is to be in hell, for ever to be excluded from God, and to feel the pure wrath of God, and of flames of everlasting torment? If men were not Atheists a deep meditation of Hell might be an occasion to startle their hearts, and to work them off from unrighteous paths. So on the contrary, if men had Heaven more in their thoughts, how for ever blessed and glorious the soul is there, how totally freed from all sin and misery, how perfectly holy for its capacity, how unspeakably happy in the vision and fruition of God; And would often work these things on their soul by a right meditation. O my soul! wouldst thou be damned? or wouldst thou be saved? hadst thou not rather go to heaven and enjoy God, then to hell, and for ever to be separated from him? Surely glory is better than misery; and salvation than damnation; Now then, O my soul! what dost thou think? are there not wayes which must be used to come to any end? and what paths will leade to that hell which thou so tremblest at? or to that heaven which thou so much desirest? Thinkest thou that sinful ways bring to a glorious estate? Oh no! all sinnings are but steppings from God, and therefore are but wandrings from God, and wandrings from happiness. Only paths of righteousness leade unto the place of happiness, and that thou knowest right well. Why then! as ever thou desirest to come to thy journeys end, arise, set out, be walking; if ever thou desirest to see the face of God, get thee with speed into paths.

the paths of God; let devils oppose, let flesh oppose, let all the world oppose, everlasting happinesse I will have, and that can never be had without righteous walking; therefore away from me, I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep Gods righteous statutes, I will walk henceforth in paths of righteousness.

Fervent prayer
for divine
strength.

6. But amidst all, there must be *fervent prayer for divine strength* to cause and enable us to walk in these paths. We must fetch the feet from heaven, which must carry us to heaven. *In him we live and move*, said the Apostle, for naturals, much more holds it in spirituals. The cause of our heavenly life and righteous walking, is from a gracious and Almighty God, who hath promised to *give unto us his Spirit, to cause us to walk in his statutes and do them*, Ezek. 36.

How we should
order our steps
in the paths of
righteousnesse.

Quest. 2. Now for the second Quære, *how we are to order our steps in paths of righteousness.*

Sol. I shall not need to say much, onely a few advi-
soes;

Walk in these
paths diligent-
ly.

1. *Walk in these paths diligently*: a traveller must mind his way, a Physitian must mind his patient, and a shepherd must mind his flock. Consider every step, how regular and how conducing to divine glory, and our own salvation. Josh. 22. 5. *Take diligent heed to do the Commandment and the Law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his wayes, to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul*: you have need to keep an eye upon your steps; and upon the inward fountains of your motions, I mean your judgments, that they be not seduced by error, and your affections, least they be tainted with lusts, and also least your hearts grow remisse and carelesse, and therefore often take pains with your hearts to look them over, and to look over your ways; surely you shall find in every search of your souls, as you do in every review of your house, many a thing out of order.

Uniformly.

2. *Uniformly.* Haltings and excursions, tripping in the way, or starting out of the way, are both opposite to a righteous walking. For a Christian in one company to be as zealous as *S. Paul*, and in another to be as treacherous as *Judas*;
in

in one place to commend a holy course with some gravity, and in another to jeer against it with much levity; in some things to be as strict as a Pharisee, and in another as loose as an Atheist: These motions are but making indentures, a running forward and backward, in and out, and generally argue unsoundnesse, hypocrisie, and folly of spirit. A good man indeed should onely do what is good; though he cannot alwayes write a fair hand, yet he should never write with two hands. As he should go with a right spirit, so also walk with the right foot; that if all his actions were summed up, there might be found an harmony and consent, and no other irregularity but which is common to infirmity.

3 *Answerably.* Not onely to his *profession*, that his conversion be copied out of it, but also to his *means*, and long standing: God is pleased to give unto some people, far greater means, directions, assistances, abilities then others; their way in some respects is more easie and plain: Now for these to creep, to go softly, to think that every course of righteousness will serve and is enough, they are much mistaken. Those people who live under precious occasions and directions, the Lord expects that they run in the way of his Commandments, that their cup should overflow, that they should multiply the fruits of righteousness and far exceed others in heavenly-mindednesse, activity of affections, integrity of conversations, fertility of doing good, &c.

4. *Progressively.* His walking in righteous paths should be like a walking in a journey which is a motion continued to the end, and if the person chance to mistake his way he thereupon mend his pace when he gets into the right way. The Apostle S. Paul presseth forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, Phil. 3. 14. therefore the path of the just is compared to the motion of the Sun, which advanceth more and more to the perfect day, Prov. 4. 18. The Christian must have an especial care of two things;

One is *steadfastnesse*, that he doth not fall back; *motus retrogradus* is but a feigned motion in the heavens. It had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, then after we have known it to turn from the holy commandment, 2 Pet. 2. 21.

Another is *forwardnesse*: he must neither go back, nor aside, nor make an halt. Every day he must get some ground upon some corruption or other, and make (at least) a little further step in the knowledge, love and obedience of Jesus Christ, get a little neerer to heaven, to his journeys end. Therefore *be not weary of well-doing*, nor faint, nor be satisfied, thou hast gon many a year in a righteous path, do not now lose all by sitting still, never give over, put yet on, perhaps it will not be many years or dayes, but thy race shall be run.

Undauntedly.

5. *Undauntedly*. Thus did *Joshua*, *I and my house will serve the Lord*; and thus the people of God in *Isa. 2. 3. We will walk in his paths*, and *David*, *I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep*, &c. *Psal. 119.* 'Tis true, you may meet with many oppositions, persecutions, crosses, losses. The Apostle hath told of these long ago, *That all who will live godly in Christ, must suffer persecution*. The Traveller knowes that many changes of weather may befall him, but yet he keeps on his journey. And the Christian knows that the best paths are most opposed: remember still that Christ was on the Crosse, and by *sufferings entred into glory*. Remember there is a crown at the end of the race, lose it not, let no man take it from thee. It is to heaven that thou art walking, to thy God, to thy Christ, to thy happinesse; keep thy path still, God is thy shield now, who also will be thy reward hereafter.

Cheerfully.

6. *Cheerfully*. If a loving wife be in her journey to a loving husband, every step is pleasant: he that walks in paths of righteousness, every step he takes is a part of his journey to his Lord, Husband and Saviour, Christ Jesus. It is enough for them that are in wicked paths to be sad: Come, come, let us never repent, nor repine for a few troubles incident to us in the paths of righteousness, Heaven, and Eternity, and a good God will make amends for all.

Use 3.

Comfort to such as are in paths of righteousness.

One Use more and then an end of this point. It shall be of *comfort and encouragement* to such as are led in paths of righteousness.

You are the wisest of all people,

For your souls the proper and infallible wayes of salvation; if there be any path

1. You are the wisest of all people that walk upon the face of the earth. Wisest, for your souls (and if a man be not wise for his soul he is of all men the most foolish) you hit on the proper and infallible wayes of salvation; if there be any path

path to Heaven, that of righteousness is it : *For your bodies*, For your bodies in common calamities and inundations, if any man hath the privilege, the Sanctuary, the *Ark*, it is a righteous *Noah*. There is a certainty of deliverance from troubles, or of support under them if our paths be those of righteousness.

2. You are the *choicest of all people* in the earth. What is he for a Christian, who lives like a Devil, and dies like a Beast? wallowing in drunkenness, and filthiness, as the swine; belching out oaths, cursing of God, &c. these are vile persons the scum of men, but *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*. You are the choicest of all people.

3. You are the *dearest people to God* of any: dearest to his You are the dearest people
 1. *Affections*. You are the people of his delight. 2. *Intentions*. You are the people to whom he intends the Crown of unto God.
 Glory. 3. *Providence*: His special eye and care is over you, and who so toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.

For his Names sake] i. e. For his goodness, for his mercies sake; whence you see that all the good in any kind conferred by God on his people, is not for any worthiness in them, but onely for the goodness that is in himself.



P S A L. XXIII.

Verſ. 4. *Yea though I walk through the Valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy Rod and thy ſtaff, they comfort me.*

TH E S E words contain in them, one Paſtoral care more of God over his flock, viz. That as God takes care for all good Spiritual and Temporal for his people, ſo likewise he takes care againſt all evil which may befall them.

In the words there are theſe three parts :

1. *The condition unto which the people of God are expoſeable. Though they be ſuch as are led in paths of righteouſneſſe, yet they are ſuch too, as may walk through the Valley of the ſhadow of death.*

2. *The diſpoſition of them in ſuch a condition, [I will fear no evil.]*

3. *The ground of this courageous diſpoſition which is expreſſed two wayes,*

- { 1 *Generally [for thou art with me]*
 { 2 *Particularly [Thy Word and thy ſtaff they comfort me.]*

Con.

Concerning the first of these. The terms are somewhat obscure and need explication :

The shadow of death] It is taken two ways, either

1. *Properly* for the beginnings or appearance of death, when the image of death presents it self in darknesse and horrors, and fears, unto a dying man.

2. *Metaphorically*, for a perfect representation of a thing and a neernesse unto it ; as the shadow of a tree, or house, represents their bodies, and when one comes into the shadow of them, he is very neer them.

In this place *the shadow of death* is taken Metaphorically, and it imports *summa pericula*, exceeding dangers as neer as the shadow is to the body (*but a step betwixt him and death*) and as terrible as the image or appearance of death, which of all terribles is the terriblest, and therefore death is called the *King of Terrors*, the chief of them, unto which the dangers incident to *David* are here compared. *The Valley of the shadow of death*] Some read it in the midst of the shadow of death. So the Vulgar Translation *In medio*: the Valley is in the midst 'twixt the Hills, as if *David* did lie 'twixt Mountains of danger on every side. Others rather conceive that word *Valley* to be enegetical and onely to augment the former phrase, *The Valley of the shadow of death* (.i.) *in ipsissima, in summa, in profunda mortis umbra*. In the very danger of dangers, in exceedingly exceeding dangers ; so that phrase, *The Valley of Tears*, Psal. 84. 7. (.i.) sad Tears, very mournful mourning.

I walk in, &c.] Though I walk (.i.) though in my journey to heaven, in my course of life, I meet with dangers as terrible as death, and that beset me as the Mountains do the Valley, or as thorns and streights do the Traveller, yet I will fear no evil.

The words thus opened afford unto us many excellent Propositions ;

1. That great calamities and terrible dangers may beset the people of God.
2. That they are not sinfully Fearful, notwithstanding them.
3. Whatsoever their dangers are, God is present with them,

4. Assurance thereof is their stay and courage.

5. That Rod and Staff, all afford comfort to the people of God.

Doff. 1

Great calamities and terrible dangers may befall the people of God.
Several Shadows of death.
Natural.

That great calamities, and terrible dangers, even the shadows of death may befall the people of God. For the understanding of this Assertion, premise these particulars; viz.

1. That there are several shadows of death, or terrible dangers; some are,

1. *Natural*: As grievous diseases and sicknesses which do even close up the day of life. The people of God are subject to these. *Hezekiah* had the sentence of death read unto him; and so had *Epaphroditus*, he was near unto death; the shadows of death arose upon both of them.

2. *Malicious*: Which arise from Satan, and from evil men his instruments; and they respect either,

Their *Estates* and *Possessions*; and thus either by false accusation, or by invasion, or by persecution, all that they possess may be endangered.

Their *Safeties* and *Lives*, which likewise through the malice, and power, and devices of wicked adversaries may be strongly beset. *David* was hemmed about by *Saul* on the mountains, but a step twixt him and death, and he all that while walks in the valley of the shadow of death. *Daniel* in the *Lions den*, and the three children in the fiery furnace: *Hezekiah* and *Jehoshaphat* knew not what to do. *Pharaoh* contrives the ruine of all the *Israelites*, and *Haman* got the Kings ring to seal the destruction of all the Jews; and *Peter* is clapt up, and intended the next day for execution; *Paul* was in the very mouth of the *Lion*; the whole Church was as a bird in the snare, *Psalm* 124. 7. The people of God though they be as gold, yet it is that gold which is in the furnace; and though they be as an house on a rock, yet winds and waves beat against it. Though with *Noah*, they only be in the Ark, yet that Ark moves upon a very tumultuous and dangerous deluge.

Spiritual.

3. *Spiritual*: These dangers of all other are the most fore; and they are either,

Out of the conscience, as terrors, and amazements, and bitter apprehensions of sin and wrath, which are as terrible to the soul as pangs of death are to the body.

About

About the conscience, as all artificial heresies which tend to the subversion of Faith: These are Snares and Gins cunningly laid to catch the soul. Or else all artificial practises, which every way prove a danger. If men do observe them, they endanger their souls; if they do not observe them, they endanger their bodies.

2. The Incidency of these dangers for time may be three-fold; The Incidency of these dangers.

1. Indefinite. Though their mountains be strong, and nest be raised on high, yet they may be hazarded to the very dust, and be bowed down to the condition of the meanest. Presently after great prosperities, Eclipses; shadows of death after their *Lucida intervalla*. Job in the flote of his riches and goodnesse, abounding with thousands, was brought to the dung-hill. Hezekiah after his Victory and deliverance, was laid on a dying bed. David after his establishment in the throne, was forced to flie for his life from his son Absalom. Indefinite.

2. Sudden. As the storm may suddenly arise which may endanger the Ship: So calamities and dangers may break forth like the lightning. Satan and his instruments may on a sudden (like those in an ambush) rise up and straiten, and distresse, and distract them, as is most evident in Job, in David, &c. Sudden.

3. Long. The children of Israel were in the iron furnace 400. Long years; the Jewes in the Babylonian Captivity seventy years; the grand persecutions of the Christians lasted three hundred years, till Constantine's time. 'Tis true, that miseries, afflictions, dangers are but light and short in respect of our desert, and in respect of the eternity of glory which follows them, and in respect of Faith; yet they may be strong and long in respect of our sense and feeling, and in respect of the times which we are to live.

Quest. But why are the people of God exposible to such great dangers, as unto the shadows of death? Why are the people of God exposible to such dangers.

Sol. It is not that their sins are greater then other mens, for no people have sin so subdued as they; nor is it that God is more displeased with them then others, for they are the people of his Love and Grace; Nor is it that he minds not what evil men complot and contrive against them, for his eyes run too and

and fro through the world, to behold the evil and the good. Nor is it that he cares not what befalls them in this world, for he never leaves them nor forsakes them. But,

Their danger
makes way for
his Glory.

1. *The greatnesse of their dangers, doth make way for the greatnesse of his Glory.* Excellency of art appears not in ordinary experiments and occurrences; when troubles exceed not a humane arme (a divine finger is now obscured and eclipsed) but exceeding dangers do illustrate a more exceeding God. To raise *Lazarus* when he *had been dead four daies*, to fetch out the *Israelites* when they had lain in hard bondage 400. years, to break a snare when the bird is in it, to infatuate a plot of ruine, and to turn it to the ruine of the plotter even when it is acting. To break open bars of iron, and gates of brasse, and in a moment to delude the Expectation of all the malicious Jewes, as in *Peters* case. His power is made manifest in our Weaknesse, in our enemies power and strength. That a little vessel should bear up in the midst of the Sea, a little sheep live among Wolves, the bush not be consumed in the fire, &c. These extremities do declare the surpassing power, and greatnesse, and supremacy of God; That all the creatures are but creatures under his feet, at his restraint, and that he alone is God, and can have all the malice, and attempts, and contempts too of foolish, envious, adversaries in derision. There is not a more convincing argument of Gods Sovereignty, and of his watchful, real, and perpetual power of providence, then the permission of great dangers to fall upon, or environ his people, from which yet he can so easily, so suddenly rescue his; as *Christ* by a word *stilled the waves of the sea*, which were like to have sunk the ship, so, &c.

They cause
them to shake
off great Secu-
rity.

2. These shadows of death, or great and neer dangers, *do cause them to shake off their great security*: When a storm ariseth it is time for the Mariner to awake and look to his tackling, and when the City is beleagured, it will make every man to stand to his arms. Standing waters gather mud, and disused weapons rust: Even good people are apt to contract much remissenesse of spirit, and pride, and self-confidence; they are apt not so to prize God or watch themselves, or to advance in duties with that reverence, fervency and intention in the times of peace and prosperity, but to grow worldly, and vain, &c. as
Soul-

Souldiers neglect their weapons when the enemy is afar off. And therefore great and neer dangers, like an enemy break in on a sudden, to make them look to their weapons, to drive them unto more strictnesse, and exactnesse, and watchfulnesse, and heedfulnesse of holy walking. The *Thief invocated Christ on the Cross*, and thought of his kingdom, on neither of which he thought in the times of security. You shall find it that the hardest times, have ever bred the most excellent and diligent Christians; they have been more watchful of themselves, more regardful of Gods glory and will, more circumspect of their conversations, more stout against heresies, more inflamed with the zeal of Christ in dangerous then in peaceable times. Coldest Climates breed strongest and healthiest bodies: As heat in winter increaseth by an Antiperistasis of cold.

3. They do demonstrate the solidity and validity of true grace: Whiles times are prosperous, and a common serenity overspreads the Horizon of Christian profession, there cannot be made (*quantum ad nos*) such a distinguishment of sincere Christians from hypocritical professors. Every Souldier will be a Christian when *Constantius* pretends that way, but let him threaten exile unto Christianity (though he did it but in policy) new Troops fly off again. When the storm comes, then the rotten fruit drop down; and when cold weather comes, then the diseased bones will ake. It is not every gilded piece that will stand before the Touch-stone, nor all mettall that will abide the fire. Only true Grace will abide dangers and calamities; that *third sort of ground* (which was not rightly rooted) could not bear when *persecutions arose*. The leaves are blown off, but the tree stands; empty professors are blown off by dangers, but solid Christians and well rooted, &c. Solid Grace is like to *Solomons love*, which many waters could not quench, and like *Noahs Ark*, which no wave could sink or split. It will make us cleave to God against all perils, as *Paul* professeth of his Love, Rom. 8. and to trust on God though he kill us, as *Job* professeth of his Faith, chap. 13.

4. They increase the Spirit of Prayer more: The Bird naturally flies up in the snare, and though good men be alwayes apt to pray, yet dangers and extremities do fill the sails more: When the *Task-masters doubled the tale of brick*, and most distressed

They demonstrate the solidity and validity of true Grace.

Constantius the Father of *Constantin* did thus in policy. See. l. 1. c. 6, Eccles. Hist.

They increase the Spirit of Prayer more

stressed the Israelites, then they groan and cry unto heaven : When *Paul* was buffeted indeed by Satan, then he can pray again, and again, and will not off without an answer. *Cithara non nisi percussa sonum edit* *Attritio ignem ex silicibus cecit.*

Jonas could sleep in the Ship, but he doth nothing else but Pray when he is in the Whales belly. The Mariners would give a world to put in at an Harbor when tempestuous winds begin. The Christian is never more in heaven, seeking of God, trusting on him, grasping of his promises, then when the foundations of the earth are shaken, when dangers increase here below. *Isa. 26. 16. In trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastning was upon them. Hos. 5. 15. In their affliction they will seek me early.*

They loosen the affections more from the world.

5. They do dissolve and loosen the affections more from the world. Shadows of death make us better to discern the shadows of Life, the poor empty vanities of the world, and set the heart more on heavenly purchases. When the Teats grow bitter, the child cares little for sucking, it is a fine way to wean him from the breasts; the waves lifted up the Ark more towards heaven : when the world proves such a Chaos and such a deluge, that there is nothing but sorrow upon sorrow, and peril upon peril, it will quickly alter our judgment, and make us look for a heaven elsewhere.

They occasion a more tender bond of charity amongst Christians.

6. They do occasion a more tender bond of just charity amongst Christians. It is with Christians as it is with pieces of gold, throw them in carelessly, one piece perhaps doth touch another, but jumble them together, and now they lie flat and close. Or as with sheep, whiles the wolf is far off, they graze dividedly, one here, another there, but if the Wolf approach, they all run into one another, as it were, and close together. In prosperous times Christians take space to envy, and mis-judge, and censure, and bite one another; they stand more upon their points, and distances, and I know not what fond opinions and conceits; But dangerous times crack asunder all odd conjectures, they make them to mind the main, and to fall in with singular affections of love and pity and help one to another.

This makes a conformity between the Head and Members.

7. There must be a conformity twixt the Head and the Members; Passive as well as Active. *If Christs soul be heavy unto*

the death, no marvel if their souls (who are Christs) sometimes come near the shadows of death. We must have fellowship with Christ not only in his life, but also in his death; and must be content to wear the crown of Thorns, as well as the crown of Glory.

8. Great dangers are great improvements to the Graces of Gods They are improvements to the graces of God. I cannot stand to shew how they do both prove the truth, and improve the degrees of our Faith, and Hope, and Patience. As Paul said, That his bonds fell out for the furtherance of the Gospel; so do great dangers and calamities fall on us for the furtherance of our Graces. Not indeed *ex intentione Agentis*, the devil means no such thing, nor his instruments, but *ex benedictione omnipotentis*, God directs and over-rules it so. As every further degree of water raised Noah's Ark nearer heaven; and every new prison and trouble to Joseph was a secret step to his advancement in Pharaohs Court; So every calamitous exigent to our persons is (eventually) a graceful Elevation, and strengthening, and raising of our graces. The most wine comes out of the Grape that is most trodden; it is S. Austins allusion, so, &c.

9. Great dangers do likewise discover the cordial temper, the real pulse of evil men; O they pretend this and that thing, how much charity, what respects to divine glory, what love should be among brethren; but *ex ungue Leonem*, we may by the great dangers which they plot against good men, say of them as Jacob did of Laban, Except the God of my fathers, the fear of Isaac had been with me, thou hadst now surely sent me away empty, Gen. 31.42. So unless the Lord God did arise to restrain that gall of wrath, and implacability of malice in wicked men, surely they would raze down Religion, and holiness, and holy persons to the ground; they would swallow them up quick, as David speaks, their mouth is so despightfully set against them.

10. There might be also another cause; viz. Because the day of their perfect and happy redemption is not yet come, when they shall be delivered from all evil, and all tears and fears shall be wiped away. The day of their Redemption is not yet come.

But the Assertion is sufficiently evidenced. I now proceed to make some brief Application of it to our selves.

Are great dangers (shadows of death) incident even to them who

Let none take scandal and offence at these dangers, so as to keep off or to fall off from paths of Righteousness.

who walks in *paths of righteousness*? Then let none take scandal and offence, so as to keep off, or fall off from paths of righteousness, by reason of the dangers and distresses incident to righteous persons or paths.

There are two things which are scandalous and are apt to make men, *Impingere*, to stumble and demur concerning paths of righteousness:

One is, *The particular Obliquities and falls of such as pretend to these paths.*

Another is, *The special Calamities which may and do befall persons entred into these paths.*

Obj. Nay, if Religion be so hot, if a course of Godliness be like *Jonah* in the ship to raise up such boisterous and dangerous storms; If a man cannot enter into paths of life, but he may sit under the shadows of death, be persecuted, distressed, &c. we will be wise for one, and take order for our own safety and welfare.

Sol. Well, and then because of dangers and troubles thou wilt not enter into paths of righteousness. In what paths wilt thou walk? there are but two paths, one of Sin, the other of righteousness; and there are but two ends, one of Glory, the other of Misery. Thou vain person, is it not better to go to Heaven maimed, then sound to Hell? Is it not better that thy Ship come in safe by a Storm, then lie out and sink in a Calm? Who (that hath but common sense) had not rather with some extremity attain Salvation, then with the quietest security slide into his everlasting Perdition? Though the dangers be great which attend paths of righteousness, yet *the dangers are far greater which accompany the paths of sin.* The losse of riches is nothing to the losse of Heaven: The losse of thy name is nothing to the losse of thy soul: The losse of thy earthly tranquility, what is it to the losse of a blessed God and Happiness? If dangers are so prevalent with thee, then rather come into the paths of righteousness then decline them.

The dangers are greater which accompany the paths of sin.

The dangers in paths of righteousness differ from the other.

2. *The dangers incident to paths of righteousness they infinitely differ from the dangers incident to paths of wickedness.* They differ in the *Causes*; Guilt in the one, Innocency in the other. They differ in the *Object*; the Soul is endangered in the one, the

the Body only in the other. 1. The trueſt religion hath ever been moſt expoſed. 2. The moſt righteous and excellent profeſſors of it have ever been moſt expoſed. *Abel, David, Chriſt, the Apoſtles, Martyrs*: ſheep among wolves. 3. It muſt needs be good which *Nero* perſecutes; conſider what the men are who create dangers to righteous perſons, either Atheiſts, or Papiſts, or Apoſtates, &c. They differ in the kind, one is inward, the other is outward. They differ in the operation, one is a renting ſtorm, the other onely a fanning and driving wind. They differ in the duration, one is immortal, the other is onely temporary. They differ in their ſupport: One is born with a galled and hell-diſtracting conſcience, the other is ſuſtained by a Divine ſtrength, and much ſoul-reviving comfort.

3. Though *there be dangers, yet they are not dangerous*. There are two things which afford ſpirits concerning perils; One, when they are deviſed but by the vileſt creatures; Another, when they are invented againſt us onely for the beſt cauſe. It was a right obſervation of *S. Auſtin*, *Tantum intereſt non qualia, ſed qualis quiſque patiat*; To ſuffer as an evil-doer, this is evil; but paths of righteouſneſſe though we may receive trouble for them, yet no hurt. Arrowes ſticking in the Target do not hurt, thoſe hurt which enter into the body. *Sozomen* in the life of *Conſtantine* related of two ſouldiers, one who carried the Colours wherein the Croſſe was, and when the enemy brake in, he delivered up the Colours, and ſlips out of the battle, but on a ſudden he was wounded to death, when he thought himſelf, *extratellorum caſſa*; but the other who held the Croſſe though many darts were ſlang at him, he eſcaped them all, *Nam tela ab hoſtibus conjeſta, mirandum in modum divina virtute direct*a in ipſo ſigno inſiguntur, for all of them ſtuck in the Croſs, no ſouldier that carried the Croſſe was wounded. I know not the credit of the Story, but this is certain, the croſſes which befall us for cleaving faſt to the Croſs of Chriſt, they may be terrible, but are never deadly.

4. Though *the dangers be great, yet are they not ignominious*. To confront difficulties in war we account it moſt noble, and to meet dangers for righteouſneſſe ſake, is both honorable and bleſſed.

These dangers
are not dangerous.

Lib. de Civit.
Dei. c. 8.

Hiſt. Eccleſ.
l. 1. c. 4.

These dangers.
though great,
yet are not ignominious.

bleſſed. As ſteps in righteousneſs are noble, ſo ſtripes for righteousneſs are glorious *στυματα χριſτα*. A pious martyr hath ever been of more renown then the greateſt perſecutor, *cauſa non pœna*, &c. The honor of ſuffering depends not on the things which we ſuffer, but on the cauſe. When a man ſuffers righteouſly, his precedent ſinnings blur the honor of his ſufferings; but when a man ſuffers for righteousneſs, his righteousneſs will bear out his conſcience before God, and his name among men. Therefore when good men ſuffer from evil men, it is the art of evil men to invent and forge and ſoyſt in falſe cauſes, as if they themſelves were conſcious to this truth, that righteousneſs is a breſt-plate to the doer, and a crown to the ſufferer.

Their dangers
end in rewards. 5. Though righteous paths may meet with dangers, yet they ſhall certainly end in rewards: *Many are the troubles of the righteous*, ſaid David, *but great is their reward in heaven*, ſaid Chriſt: They increaſe Grace, and advance glory. Our dangers are like them who preſent them, mortal and muſt have an end, but our reward is like him who gives it, immortal and bleſſed. *Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. 5. 17.

God looked
after us and af-
ter our dangers. 6. Be dangers from men never ſo great yet God looks after us, and after them too. When Pharaoh purſues Iſrael, God looks on him and his hoſt through the cloud. Evil men have implacable hearts, yet not omnipotent hands: their will exceeds their power, but both their perſons, and intentions, and executions are all of them under a God who can chain them, and daſh them as he pleaſeth. Moreover the God of ſafety is with his in the times of danger, ſo David expreſſeth in the ſubſequent words of the Text. *Paul found it ſo in his trials, that God ſtood by him*. There are two that ſtick cloſe to a righteous perſon in his ſufferings, a good God, and a good Conſcience. Dangers, and troubles, and miſeries are nothing, they loſe their terror and their force when theſe two ſet in with the ſufferer. *Paul made nothing of Bonds*, and the *Apoſtles rejoice at ſcourging and ſing in priſons*. The inward peace and tranquility which a righteous perſon feels, ſuffering for righteousneſſe ſake, doth unſpeakably tranſcend all the delights and

contentments that the world can afford to another man. It overcomes pleasant and bitter temptations. There are four things which neither Devils nor wicked men can bereave a righteous person of; not of communion with God, not of consolation in conscience, not of help from God, not of fruition of happinesse.

Are dangers, very great dangers, incident unto righteous persons? then let me *advise all* who think upon or intend a *righteous course to preconsider aforehand what the paths of righteousness may cost them*, not rashly to become professors, but deliberately to weigh and to digest the worst that may befall them. Not onely the sweet and natural effects of religion, but also the evil intents and practises of evil men; we must suffer as well as believe.

Use 2.

Advice to him that intends a righteous course to preconsider what it will cost him.

Reasons why I give this advice are these;

1. Be confident *that if you be thoroughly righteous, some kinds of dangers some time or other will befall you.* Paul knew that bonds did abide him. *All that will live godly must expect to suffer,* 2 Tim. 3. 12. Indeed if a man has an heart or a conscience that can laviere or tack about to any point, and as some Physicians have a *Cathelicon* for any disease, so if any have a conscience temperable for all times and actions, these Politicians may perhaps cunningly lose a soul to save a body. You may as soon think to carry a Ship to the *Indies* without billows or waves, as to carry a soul to Heaven without trouble. But if a man does embrace godlinesse in the power of it, and doth conscientiously order his soul and life according to the rules of righteousness, troubles and exigences some way or other, sometime or other, are incident to him: Christ inculcates it much and often on his Disciples.

Ob. We may talk that men want discretion, and therefore expose themselves to trouble: possibly in some particulars they may (and I would gladly see the man this day living who doth not.)

Sol. But were a man as wise as *Solomon*, yet if he were withall as righteous as *David*, the discretion of the one, would never quit him from the rage and malice of wicked men against the other. There is such a natural antipathy in evil men to righteous paths, that it is not the direction of prudence, no nor

yet.

yet the obligations of nature, that can restrain them. *Cain killed his own brother because he was righteous.* Prudent respects are not of more vigour then natural. God hath set such an irreconcilable enmity 'twixt good men and wicked men, 'twixt *the seed of the woman*, and *the seed of the serpent*, that no true discretion can ever compose it; until you can pervert a good man to be evil, or convert an evil man to be good, you can never alter the hatred of sin in the one, nor the maliciousnesse against Goodnesse in the other. *You shall be hated of all men for my names sake*, Mat. 10. 22. Therefore look for them, though now in peace, now in prosperity, *Psal. 30.*

If you enter upon a righteous profession without this expectation, you are in danger to be Apostates.

2. If you enter upon a *righteous profession without expectation of the crosse or dangers*, its a thousand to one *but you will prove Apostates*, you will fall away in times of persecution, you will fall down with that house which was built on the sands, when the winds arose, and the waves beat on it, and great was the fall of that house. There are two presages of a heart that will never hold out stedfast in religion; One, *no solid humiliation for sin*; another *no expectation of trouble*: When a man hath nothing in his brain, but a fools Paradise, he never minds the power of godlinesse, nor the troubles for righteousness. Therefore Christ puts the Crosse as the first letter for us to spell. *He that will be my Disciple, let him take up his crosse and follow me.* If the Crosse will not down with us, assuredly Christianity will not down with us. Some Jades if any thing crosse the way, or proves clamorous, they presently throw off their burthen and run away: our Profession will quickly off, if Crosses and dangers be the onely Hells unto us.

If we forecast dangers they will not so much deject us when they come.

3. If *before hand you premeditate the dangers*, they will not *so deject and disquiet you when they come*: *Tela prevista minus feriant.* The heart can more earnestly seek unto God for strength to bear, and for resolution to persevere in righteous paths. Even fiery trials will not seem strange nor be so prevalent a disturbance, as to drive us to irregular carriages, whereas if we look for no troubles when they do besal us, they will at least amaze us, and unsettle our thoughts.

Use 3.
Direction.

But in the third place, since great dangers may besal us walking in righteous paths, be pleased to admit of two sorts of directions;

I. What

1. What to be furnished withal against they come :
2. What to do when they do befall us.

1. *What to be furnished withal before and against they come.* What to be furnished withal before dangers come. Solid repentance.

I conjecture these qualities are excellent pieces of armor to put on before the battell.

1. *Solid repentance.* Brethren it is of all times the bitterest, when a black night, and a foul conscience meet together ; when the winds bustle without and conscience quakes within : when the malice of men is like the shadow of death, and the accusations of conscience are worse then death-it self. It was a wonderful rejoycing that *S. Paul* had in all dangers, *viz. the testimony of a good conscience*, yea, when he pleaded at the Barre for his life, yet this gave boldnesse, that *he had exercised himself to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and men* : Some think that such a friend if dangers should come, or such a piece of money perhaps will help, but, &c. You know not the vigor of this, when a person doth solidly humble, and seriously reform his heart and wayes, purgeth out the love of sin, walks uprightly with God, believe me such a person hath made God his friend, and Conscience his friend, and shall be able not onely to look the shadow of death, but even death it self in the face. If troubles prevent repentance they are exceeding burthens ; if Repentance prevents them, they are but a light yoke : as the *Basiliſk* if it sees the man first, he is dead ; if the man sees it first he is safe. Sound repentance begets sound shoulders to bear, and stout feet to stand under and against all dangers, therefore get it.

2. *Sincere Love.* Love the paths of righteousness for them- Sincere love.
selves, *supra omnia, contra omnia*. The Devil hath a passage concerning *Job*, Chap. 1. 9. *Doth Job fear God for nought ?* importing that there are different grounds moving men to fear, or serve God. Some are *mercenary and meerly servile*, because God may hedge about them and their house, and all that they have, and bless their works, and increase their substance, *v. 10.* so that the onely inducement unto them to profess righteousness is nothing else but prosperity, outward blessings, &c. Others are *ingenuous and purely filial* ; even the natural excellency in God and the excellency of the paths of righteousness, though

abstracted from all secular and terrestrial motives; even passives are made easie by love, as *Jacob for Rachel*. Matth. 13. 21. *When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.* A wicked man takes it ill that a man must be so put to it, as to leave paths of righteousness, or riches, friends, pleasures, &c. Now if you would bear up under dangers, and calamities, you must then get *a love of God, and of righteousness for it self*, and then though all those hedges be taken away, you will yet cleave fast unto God and his wayes: yea though many waters, many tryals, many dangers should present themselves, yet would you abide, and hold on still in the paths of righteousness. A slave that serves for a little money, he will steal away from his Master if the enemies break in; but the loving wife she will take part with him in death, rather then she will desert him. The Apostle in *2 Tim. 3. 8.* speaks of *men who were of corrupt minds and reprobate concerning the faith*, (.i.) they quickly shrank, they made shipwrack of faith, and a good conscience, they gave off the paths of righteousness. Why, what might be the cause of it? reflect on v. 2. and 4. *They were lovers of themselves and lovers of their pleasures, more then lovers of God.* But they in *Revel. 12. 11.* *Loved the Lamb more then themselves, and therefore loved not their lives to the death.*

Self denial.

3. *Self-denial.* Dangers and Troubles do usually foyl them most, who fear them and themselves least. The trembling Christian alwayes proves the stoutest champion: He who is so forward to vaunt of his own strength, may on the next encounter, mournfully bewail his own weakness.

Christ tells his Disciples of an exceeding danger presently to ensue, *that the Shepherd should be smitten, and all the flock would be scattered*, Mat. 26. Peter presently undertakes more then all, *Though all should forsake thee, yet would not I*: He who was the greatest in presuming, was the first and highest in forsaking. For my part I like that Christian most, who in *actives is constant, but wisely silent; and who in passives is resolved, but not too confident.* This man knowes the weight of a burthen, and will assuredly hit the way to Heaven for strength to bear it.

Faith.

4. *Faith.* There is not such a Grace against dangers, as this.

Nor

Nor to root and establish us in righteous paths as this. It finds such superlative excellency and contentment in God, Christ, Righteous paths alone: it enables a man to contemn the fairest beauties of the world, and to sail on against the foulest storms: It seeth a God, and our God engaged with all his mercies to comfort us, with all his power to support us, with all his justice to plead for us, with all his faithfulness never to leave nor to forsake us. Wouldst thou be able to stand against dangers, to hold on in paths of righteousness against the shadows of death, then get Faith. A faith to covenant thee with God, a Faith to unite thee to Christ, a Faith that can admire the excellencies of God and his wayes, a Faith that can prefer the favour of God, the expectation of Heaven, the truths of Christ, the wayes of righteousness before a thousand worlds; a faith that can find Heaven enough in God alone.

5. *Pious prudence.* Which is such a circumspect disposal of our words and actions, that we do not give advantage to the adversary, nor put our selves ungroundedly, or unwarrantably, into danger. For though a man may be very good, yet his suffering is not alwayes for what is good. *To suffer as a busie body, or as an evil-doer,* the Apostle approves not.

6. *Get a large stock of all graces by prayer;* and now if dangers and neer troubles come, you will find you have not a grain of Faith too much, a degree of patience to spare, all will be little enough to keep the heart up: you see what a do there is with us to keep up in ordinary crosses and losses; our Passions do exceed our Graces, and we will hear nothing speak but *sense and corruption.* What then will be done in greater dangers? you shall find it a more difficult thing to bear up in Passives, then to go on in Actives.

Secondly, *What to do under dangers and troubles:*

1. *Look up to God, and if ever, now set faith to work.* Commit soul to him, body to him, life to him, safety to him, all to him; let him do what seems good in his own eyes. If ever God will shew himself, it is in times of danger, *We know not what to do, but yet our eyes are upon thee,* said *Jehoshaphat.* Though we know not what to do, yet God knowes what to do. O rest on his mercy, his power, his truth, never, never more then now.

What to do
under dangers.
Look up to God
and set faith
on work.

Lift up eyes
to God.

2. *Lift up cries to God.* Besiege Heaven when dangers besiege you, in the shadowes of death, pray much to the God of life; all your support is from him, all your strength, all your comfort, all your deliverance. Never insist on depths and heights of dangers be they never so great, so fearful, its nothing with God to deliver thee from them or to preserve thee under them. There will be no endurance without prayer, no benefit without prayer.

Exert Patience

3. *Exert patience.* Do not fall out with God nor with your own souls, nor fall a railing at men; let them curse, but do you bless; let them persecute, but do you quietly suffer the will of God; your times are in Gods hand and your persons in his protection.

Consider him
that endured
such contradiction
of sinners.

4. *Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds,* Heb. 12.3. If Christ endured so much for me, should it seem much that I endure a little for Christ? These are two great cordials in our sufferings, viz. 1. For Christ. 2. With Christ

Courage

5. *Get Courage:* Let not your hearts fail you nor faint. Dangers may separate friends and estates, but not God; his word will not fail you, his promises will not fail you; *He is not a God afar off: He knows our souls in adversities.* Who was it that shut up *Noah* in the deluge? in the hardest times you shall be sure of the kindest God; and if a righteous cause bring you into dangers, a righteous God will bring you out.

Now I proceed to the Resolution of *David*: Though he did walk through the Valley of the shadow of death, yet he would fear no evil. Whence observe,

Dost. 2

Righteous persons are fearless under the greatest dangers

That Righteous persons are fearless even under the shadows of death; (.i.) In the greatest dangers. Here this caution must necessarily be premised, (viz.) That this fearlessness is in the righteous, when they being assured of their interest in God and are under the power of faith. This must be remembered all along.

This assertion is evident. In Precept.

This assertion is evident; 1. In Precept: To *Abraham*, Fear not, saith God, *Gen. 15.1. I am thy shield.* So to *Isaac*, *Gen. 26.24. Fear not for I am with thee;* So *Christ* to his Disciples, *Luke 12.32. Fear not little flock, it is your fathers pleasure, &c.*

So

So the Prophet to the Church, Isa 8. 12. *Say you not a confederacy, neither fear nor be ye afraid.* 41. 10. *Fear them not, for I am with thee.* 13. *Fear not I will help thee.*

2. In Practice: David is persecuted by Absalom, and forced to flee, but not caused to fear: Look on his mettall in that extremity of danger, he is full of prayer and full of confidence, *Psal. 3. 5. I laid me down and slept.* Some cannot lie down, but run up and down in danger; and though they can lie down, yet they cannot sleep; but David doth both, for he had a good God about him, *the Lord sustained him.* Ver. 6. *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.* One man against ten thousand, Set against him with malice, Round about him with power, yet he is not afraid. The like you read of him, *Psal. 27. 3. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear, &c.* And of Daniel, he feared not a den of Lions; nor the three children a furnace of fire; Nor the Apostles all the threats, prisons, scourgings, deaths, that evil men could invent or execute.

But this Assertion requires a little Explication, for it may be thought a very culpable disposition to be fearlesse, when as God commends fear as *Caput Sapientie, the beginning of Wisdom,* *Psal. 111. 10.* and commands fear, *Psal. 2. 11. Serve the Lord with fear;* and encourageth to fear, *Prov. 28. 14 Blessed is the man that feareth alwayes.* And it seemeth by S. Pauls description that the fearlesse man is the gracelesse man, *Rom. 3. 18. There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

For the discovery therefore of the sense of the Proposition, The sense of the proposition cleared in the distinctions of fear.

There is a Reverential Fear of God, a Penitential Fear to sin, a Diffident Fear, a Fear that breeds diffidence and dejection.

1. Fear may be taken two wayes; viz. Either,

Metonimically, for the cause of Fear.

Properly, for the quality of Fear.

Fear may be taken,
Metonimically,
Properly.

When we say, That in the midst of dangers righteous persons are fearlesse, it is not so Stoically to be construed, as if there were no natural quality of Fear in them, but that there is no just cause of Fear.

2. But then you must distinguish of the motion of Fear; it

The motion of is either *Natural*, and *Regular*; *Preternatural*, and *Turbulent*. Dangers may *afficere* stir up Natural and Regular fears in them, but there is no cause why they should excite Preternatural and Turbulent fears; namely, such as do untwist and beat off our confidence in God. So then it is not an absolute fearlessness, for this were stupidity, but only a comparative fearlessness: Their fear is like a River wherein a man may safely swim, but not like *Noah's* deluge, which overtops all hills; it doth not *obruere*, drown their confidences and hopes.

Fear may be considered,

Objectively

3. Fear may be considered *Objectively*, and *Subjectively*:

Objectively; As it respects God, or the enemies of God. Now when we affirm that righteous persons are fearless in dangers, we mean not that they fear not God. *Christ* adviseth his Disciples, still to *fear him, who can cast soul and body into hell*. And so the Prophet adviseth the Church in her dangers, to *Sanctifie the Lord of Hosts, and to let him to be her dread and fear*, Isa. 8. 13. Only this is intended that their *apōbia*, or want of fear, is in respect of Gods enemies. So that it is not *timor privativus*, no fear that is due, but *timor negativus*, a not fearing where no fear is proper. Yet the enemies of God may be considered two wayes, either in respect of their *Authority*, so they are subordinately to be feared. Of their *Cruelty*, so not inordinately to be feared.

Subjectively.

Subjectively; And here comes in that distinction of *Pœnal* and *Penitential* fear; the former is commonly called *Servile* or slavish fear, arising from *malum pœna*; the latter is called *Filial* and Evangelical, which looks at *Malum culpa*. This latter is most proper to the people of God, in whose hearts God doth put this fear; but the former, which is called sometimes *πνεῦμα δουλείας*, the spirit of bondage, Rom. 8. and sometimes *πνεῦμα δειλείας*, the spirit of fearfulness is in singular degrees subdued in righteous persons, though not altogether; and because denominations arise from dominions, they are therefore said (in respect of this) to be fearless.

Arguments to prove the *Quod fit*.

In their greatest straits they can go to their proper helps.

Eight Arguments to demonstrate the *Quod fit*:

I. In their greatest straits they can go to their proper helps. We know not what to do, yet our eyes are towards thee, 2 Chro. 20. 12.

2. In

2. *In greatest dangers they are themselves.* His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, Psal. 12.7. And they can make use of proper abilities, of their Graces, as *Moses*, Exod. 14.13. *Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.* Psal. 42.11. *Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the help of my countenance and my God.*

3. *They are then most exquisite in prayer;* most in pleading the promises, most in wrestling, as *Jacob*, Gen. 32. So Isa. 64.8. *But now, O Lord, thou art our father, &c.* V.9. *Be not wroth very sore, neither remember iniquity for ever, behold, &c.* Thus they spread their condition, hold their relation, implead the promises, &c.

4. *Even then they can make use of their former experiences,* what God hath done to others and to themselves.

5. *Their hearts have been very high when their conditions have been very low,* Hab. 3. 17, 18. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, &c. yet I will rejoice in the Lord, &c.*

6. *They have been carelesse of men in the very presence of extreme dangers;* the *Apostles sing in prison;* reprove them, &c. *The three children, Be it known unto thee, We will not &c.*

7. *They will not swerve from Gods will,* or leave God whatsoever dangers happen to them, Psal. 44.17, 18. *All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, &c. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way.*

8. *They would not use any unlawful means though at hand to free themselves from dangers;* *David would not touch the Lords anointed.*

This ἀφοβία, or fearlesse-ness, may be considered two wayes, either *Quantum ad affectum voluntatis*, according to the disposition of the will, or *Quoad effectum passionis*, according to the excursion of the affection. It cannot be denied that even a righteous person hath feared dangers, transiently, in a passion, precipitantly, as *David*, who said, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul*, and thereupon flies to the King of Gath; but judge of them by the desire, temper, endeavour of the will, thus they fear not, their heart is fixed, they know whom they have trusted.

Take them in *statu*, in the course, not in *Motu*, in every individual motion; take them in *affectu*, in the desire, not in *effectu*, in every expression; take them in the renewed part, and as themselves, thus they fear not any evil that man can do unto them.

Reasons of this
Fearfulness.

And the *reasons or causes of this fearlessness* of man, or dangers by man, are these,

God hath
wrought in
them a true fear
of himself:

1. *God hath wrought in them a true fear of himself*; he hath put his fear into their hearts, Jer. 32. 40. Now the true fear of God purgeth or casteth out all vain fear of men: As when worldly sorrow prevails upon the heart, one singular remedy is to spring another sorrow, *Godly sorrow*, and this would drown the other; So is it with the true fear of God, it is that which will cast out fear of man. Christ bids his Disciples (though they were as Lambs among Wolves, and though they were cast into prison, yet) *not to fear men*; but how should they help it? why, saith he, *fear him who can cast soul and body, &c.* So the Prophet, *say not a confederacy, &c.* Isa. 8. 12. *neither fear*. How! a confederacy, a combination of powers against them and not be afraid. It cannot be, Nay saith the Prophet, I will shew you how it may be, *Sanctifie the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear and dread*, v. 13. David hath the like passage in *Psal.* 112. 1. *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord*, v. 7. *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord*.

They know
that the origi-
nals of fear are
not in the crea-
tures.

2. *They know that the originals of fear are not in the creatures*. Men are afraid of men because they take them to be more than men. They do not understand how weak and depending a thing every creature is, both for being, and operation; *Who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die? and of the son of man who shall be made as grass?* Isai. 51. 12. q. d. there is no such cause for to fear man, for he is but a weak piece of clay, a very breath, a fading leaf, he must die and there's an end of him. He can do nothing of himself, as *Christ to Pilat*: what can the stoutest arm (alone) do? Man hath not power to stretch forth his hand, nor to speak a word but by permission. *Laban dares not speak ill to Jacob*, and *Haman could not for his life root up the Jews*, nor could *Balaam* (though he would have done any thing for gold) curse *Israel* when

Not an hair of
our head, &c.

when God restrained him. As the Creatures cannot invest us with good, no more can they of themselves infest us with evil; they are like Scare-Crows in the fields, if the Birds knew them, they need not fear them; or like Ugly Vizards, which look terrible, but that's all. The Original Power for evil or for good, and the controlling power of all actions is in God alone; *Ergo*.

3. *They are in covenant with God, and God with them*, therefore they fear no evil. God delivers this as a Cordial to *Abraham* against all fear; *Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield*, *Gen. 15. 1.* Though a thousand arrows be darted, yet if one hath a shield to defend, or to take them off, he needs not to be afraid; for a shield that takes off the danger, is as safe as an house where no danger appears. Now the Lord is the shield of his people; (*i. e.*) What a shield is to our bodies, that is God to our persons, to cover, to shelter, protect, take off all dangers, &c. *Isa. 43. 1.* *Fear not, ver. 3. For I am the Lord thy God.* David upon this very ground is courageous and confident, in *Psal. 27. 1.* *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?* his life did depend on God, not on man. If God be our God (as assuredly he is if we be righteous persons) what can man do against us? wherein can wicked instruments be too hard for him? is any thing too hard for God to do? or can any be too hard for God to hinder him?

In *Power* they cannot for his power is over all; it is infinite, he is great in strength, rules the Nations, breaks the arms of the wicked, and accounts of them but as the dust of the balance, or as the drop of the bucket. He can do whatsoever he will, and evil men can but do what he pleaseth.

In *Wisdom* they cannot, for he excels in wisdom, knows (in respect of extension, and in respect of distinction) far beyond man, every thing, and in the exactest manner; sees all the projects, snares, traps, devices, and takes the crafty in their own craftinesse, and catcheth them in their own snares. Now God hath engaged Himself, and all his Glory, and all his Attributes to his people. Should we fear the mighty man, when yet we have the Almighty God? weak man, having a Strong God? mortal man, having an Immortal God? foolish man, having the Wise God, &c.

They have
much clearness
in conscience.

4. *They have much clearnesse in conscience*; and integrity in conscience breeds audacity in conscience. Wicked men fear where no fear is, many times the shaking leaf doth shake them, and a sound of dreadful terror is in their eares; their own shadows, the shadow of shadows, their inward fancies are sufficient to distresse and amaze them. Guilt is on their consciences, and much guilt breeds much fear. *Cain* can rest no where, and *Judas* is altogether unquiet; a wicked man is afraid of every man, and of every place. And let dangers, real dangers present themselves to any wicked man (as death, frowns of great persons, arraignments) Why! he is presently at death's door. Danger no sooner falls on him without, but many sins rise up and wound him within, so that he hath no hope and confidence in God, or man, or himself. But Integrity begets confidence: *The wicked fleeth when no man persweth him, but the righteous are as bold as a Lion*, said *Solomon*. The fearful Hare quatcheth at every noise, but the stout Lion lies unmoved at the greatest clamors.

Conscience maintained by uprightnesse, will be as *Noah's* Ark against waves. *Hezekiah* found it so when the sentence of death was brought unto him, and *David* in the case of *Saul*, and *Paul* under his *Trials*. We have little cause to fear dangers when we have an excusing conscience, and a never forsaking God,

They have
Faith in God,
and can live
the life of Faith

5. *They have Faith in them, and can live by Faith*: *The just shall live by his Faith*, said the Prophet, *Hab* 2.3. He speaks of the *Babylonish* Captivity, and the dangers by it; at which time the Just or righteous should live, but how? by Faith, by trusting on God. Now Faith, especially (the living by Faith) sets us out of all dangers, and composeth all fears. The weak Goney in the Rock, and Bird in the Nest, and Christian in his God, are safe. *Thou holdest me by the hand*, said *David*: Let the dangers be like the waves, yet Faith sets us on a rock that's higher then they; Let them break in on us like a storm of hail, yet Faith can find a Sanctuary and a Shelter; *The Name of the Lord is a strong Tower, the righteous run therto and are safe*. Let the dangers be never so many, yet Faith opens our eyes (as the Prophets servants were opened) to see more with us then against us, God, and Christ, and Angels, &c. If we could

could see God, the Almighty God; 1. Engaging himself, 2. Himself working for us, we would not fear; but Faith seeth him as Ours, and likewise confidently rests upon his active providence, ordering, restraining, preserving, disposing of all for our best safety. As when *Jishua* knew that he who stood by him with his sword drawn was a Captain of the Lord of Hosts, ch. 5. 14. this did hearten him.

6. Lastly, They may be fearless notwithstanding all dangers, for Their dangers as much as *those dangers shall never do them hurt but good: And shall never do who is he that will harme you if ye be followers of that which is them hurt but good?* 1 Pet. 3. 13. All things, said the Apostle (who particularly had spoken of dangers before) *shall work together for good unto them that love God*, Rom. 8. 28. The storms do turn over and sink other ships, yet the ship of the Church is only carried more steddily and more speedily by them: Their Graces, their Prayers, their Conversations, their Strength, their Comforts never abound more then under dangers. Let the dangers come never so close, yet they are sure to get by them. Wicked men tear their bodies, but God will preserve their souls; wicked men confiscate their goods, but God supplies their comforts; wicked men banish them this life, but God will give them a better. What man needs to be afraid of any thing, which will make him better, or make him happier?

Now for some Application of this to our selves. Are righteous persons fearlesse in times of danger, (i. e.) Not overwhelmed with dejections, not loosing confidence and hopes? *Then, as If you would ever you desire to find courage and confidence in times of danger, find confidence strive to be righteous in times of prosperity.* It is an ill thing in times of when deluges are flying in, that either we must have no Ark, or danger, strive to be righteous in times of an Ark yet to make. If great losses should befall you in your relations, or in your conditions, miseries should break in, or prosperity. (which cannot be avoided) death should present it self, I assure you that an unrighteous person would find a sharp work and time of these. He may swagger, and swear, and vaunt now as Gaal did over *Abimilech*, being absent, Judg. 9. but when *Abimilech* presented himself with an army, then as *Zebul* to *Gaal*, *Where is now thy mouth wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimilech that we should serve him?* Is not this the people whom thou hast despised? That you shall find in unrighteous men in their pro-

prosperity, nothing but insolency and derisions of dangers, in times of danger, nothing but quakings of conscience, and like *Nabal*, their hearts sink like a stone within them: *The sinners shall not stand in judgment*: They are driven as the stubble before the wind, and as drosse are they consumed. When dangers and troubles befall them, their consciences also rise against them, and God also beholds them afar off. But righteousness takes off guilt, quiets conscience, yields confidence towards God, finds all the cities of Refuge set open in the times of trouble. It is our Brest-plate in Prosperity, and our Target in Adversity. In a good day it is our Sun, in an evil day it is our Shield; it is the Daughter of Grace, the Mother of Peace, anchors Hope, quickens Faith, injoyes God, and fears no evil.

Being Righteous, be industrious to keep out inordinate fears: 2. Being righteous, then be industrious to keep out inordinate fears, diffident, perplexing fears, though dangers do indeed befall you. It is a most culpable error in any who profess goodnesse to be guilty of Levity, either in matter of doctrine (that every wind thereof turnes them) or in appearance of danger, that every cloud which ariseth (though it be but a fancy, but admit it were real) doth amaze, and hurry, and rout them. Assuredly, either they did not look for dangers when they began to profess Piety, or if they did, yet when dangers approach they do not look to God. They forget that he is a God as well in the Vallies of Danger, as in the Mountains of Prosperity. Their eyes are on men, fears of men, talk of men, how great, how cunning, how malicious, how implacable, and I fear their own contrivances, if rightly searched into, more how to avoid then stand under dangers. Let me speak freely to you, As Strididit is too dull a sin for a wise and sensible Christian, so Timidity is too rash and light a sin for a judicious and believing Christian. There is more danger and hurt in it then you are giving way to aware, to give way to exorbitant fears in times of danger.

The sin in it:
Self is high.

1. The sin in it self is high: You will hardly believe the greatness of it; how much Idolatry is in it, how much Infidelity is in it, how much Disobedience to God there is in it. God commands me not to fear man, but I do over fear him; this is expresse Disobedience. Again, I should fear the Lord, this I do not when I over fear man; here's Infidelity. I must not.

not make the creature a God, but this I do when I exalt it so high as to over-fear it. If I trust on the power of the creature as original for my good, this is *Idolatry*; and so if I over-fear his power for my evil, is not this *Idolatry* too?

2. *It is causeless, and therefore the worse.* A wicked man ^{It is causeless} he onely hath cause to fear, but the righteous man who hath a God, a Christ, an holy Spirit, all Heaven and Earth, engagements of Allmightinesse it self, special love from God, Graces, Covenant, &c. and onely a few condemned creatures whom God abhorres, and hath threatned to break them in pieces with a rod of iron and to despise their image, &c. *ut quid time-rent!*

3. *And the cause of many a sin, many an irregular act:* In-^{It is the cause} ordinate fear, (look on it in no mean persons for righteousness) of many a sin. you shall see it hath engendred many ill effects, the fear of man is a snare unto him. *Abraham was afraid of men*, and twice it made him lie, and *expose the chastity of his wife*. The like effect in *Isaac*: *David* he is overcome with fears, and surely he shall one day perish. What sins ran out of this fear besides giving Gods promise the lie (which he excused by saying *it was in his haste*, Psal. 116.) He first tells a plain untruth to *Ahimelech the Priest* 1 Sam 21.2. *The King hath commanded me a business*, &c. and by being relieved by *Ahimelech* occasionally it cost him the death of 85. persons v. 18. which *David* chargeth upon his own account, v. 22. and here it rests not but he runnes to *Achish king of Gath*, and there with much hypocrisy and dissimulation carries the matter too, as you may see 1 Sam. 27. 3. 10, &c. What shall I say more, we find it puts us on inordinate courses. You know whither *Peters* inordinate fear of man carried him, even to a *treble denial* of his blessed Master: I know him not, swears he knows him not, begins to curse, to use imprecations if he knew him.

4. *And very disconsolative.* When the fear of man prevails ^{It is very dis-} on us, you would not think what a chain it is over our spirits, ^{consolative.} and abridgment to our lawful delights, or to the comfortable fruition of our selves; it hinders faith, distracts duty, quencherh joy; we cannot serve God with a quarter of that freedom and cheerfulness, but think, what if I should lose my liberty? what, if my children? what, if my state? &c. The Prophet com-
pares

prepares him that fears continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, to a *captive Exile, a banished man* in an unknown Countrey, who walks (I warrant you) very sadly; *Captivated man*, one taken prisoner and laid in Gaol with bonds and in the dungeon, &c. It is a miserable life which is nothing else but a meditation of trouble, a ship under every wind; it makes our lives, our duties and walking sad and heavy.

What may we do to prevent this?

An exaltation of God in all the attributes of his special providence.

Ob. But what may we do to prevent overwhelming and disturbing fears in times of danger?

Sol. I conjecture that these directions may be proper, viz.

1. *An exaltation of God in all the attributes of his special providence.* If the ship hath no anchor, or if that anchor cannot feel the ground and fasten to it, no marvel if it floats up and down, and be strangely tossed with every wave. So if the soul have no faith, or if that faith do not fix on a God in time of trouble, it will then reel and stagger and be driven with all winds and waves of fear. If we look onely on men, what they are, and not on God what he is; onely on men what they can do, and not on God what he can do; our minds cannot but be unsettled and tossed with fears, for fear will prevail, unless the mind can discover a greater strength to remove it, or to bear the evils feared. *The Lord is on my side I will not fear* (saith David, Psal. 118.6) *what man can do unto me*; and again, v.7. *The Lord taketh my part with them that help me, therefore I shall see my desire upon them that hate me.* Here was faith in David and such a faith as exalted God above man; that though men did hate him and men did work and stir against him, yet faith he *I will not fear*, and why? because first, *The Lord is on my side*; and secondly, *The Lord taketh my part.* The Christian must lay down these particulars as infallible principles; viz.

These principles must be acknowledged.

That God is the All-sufficient God.

1. *That God is the All-sufficient God* and Supreme Lord, God of Gods, and Lord of Lords, he reigneth over all, and none is to be compared to him, or can do as he can do.

That his government of the world is watchful.

2. *That his government of the world is no idle and loose inspection of things, but a distinct, watchful, active providence looking on, and ordering, and disposing of all creatures in their conditions, intentions, operations and purposes.*

3. *That*

3. That as his love is more special to his people than others, His love is more especial to his people and his care of them singular. so his care over them is more singular then towards others. He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep, Psal. 121. 4. His eyes are ever open towards the righteous, as to the Temple of Solomon, and run too and fro through the earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of the upright, 2 Chron. 16. 9. So that God having assumed into a neer relation unto himself, He is neer to such three wayes, 1. In the tenderesse of his providence, (he keepeth them as the apple of his eye; and he bears them up as upon Eagles wings, Deut 32. 10. and underneath are the everlasting arms) and 2. in the greatnesse of his providence. He rides upon the Heaven in their help and in his excellency on the skies. The eternal God is their refuge; he is the shield of their help, and the sword of their excellency, and therefore all their enemies shall be found liars unto them, they shall tread upon their high-places v. 26. and 29. And 3. in the perpetuity of his providence; he will never leave them nor forsake them, but will be their God and guide to death. If any Christian did know all this and believe it, it would assuredly conquer inordinate fears of men, or dangers by them.

2. As God must be exalted by faith, so peace must be made with God: for it is not the naked apprehension of the superiority and greatnesse, and wisdom, and fidelity of God which removes fear (nay these may afflict us with more fear and flight, if all these should be as so many Canons mounted on the batteries against us) but there must be an amicable apprehension of these (.i.) an apprehension of that God who is so exalted above all in power, to be our God, this God is our God our reconciled God. If we be in an estate of enmity with him, we can have no confidence nor assurance against fears; but if we be in an estate of amity, that our sins are pardoned, enmity is slain, all stands right 'twixt us and God, then we need not fear though the whole world be shaken, and the mountains be cast into the depths of the sea; see how the Scriptures cleer this, Job 11. 14. If iniquity (this is the make-bate, the breach of the peace 'twixt us and God) be in thine hand (saied Zophar) put it far away and let not wickednesse dwell in thy Tabernacles. Suppose this be done, if we remove sin, will this remove fear? v. 15, Then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot, yea, thou shalt

shalt be stedfast and shalt not fear. Whereas another person having peace yet to make with God, dares not to lift up his face to God, and if dangers come, he is unstedfast (i.) unsettled, knows not what to do, what to think. where to fix, thou shalt then confidently look on God, go to him, be accepted, protected, and thou shalt be stedfast, thy heart shall be fixed and preserved, and thou shalt not fear, (i.) thou shalt not be distracted nor dejected with fears of any evils. The like expression doth *Eliphaz the Temanite* deliver, *Job 22.21. Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee: What good?* v. 23. *Thou shalt be built up* (I, but evil men may quickly pull me down, they will attempt me perhaps to, but) v. 25. *The Almighty himself shall be thy defence.* v. 29. *And when men are cast down, then shalt thou say, There is a lifting up.* v. 30. *He shall deliver the Island of the innocent.* Therefore if you would maintain your hearts against prevailing fears, away with sin, put iniquity far from your Tabernacles. *Upon all the glory shall be a defence,* said the Prophet *Is. 4. 5.* Wickedness is a shame, and reproach, and dishonor; Get innocency, uprightness, be in covenant with God, make peace with him, then may you confidently apply your selves unto him, and commit your selves unto him, and rest quiet from fear of evil: *His truth then will be your shield and buckler,* *Psal. 91. 4.*

A solid and experimental persuasion of the goodness of the cause.

3. *A solid and experimental persuasion of the goodness of the cause.* This imboldens the heart much, and subdues fears of men: a man may suffer sometimes *Impertinently*, through a forward indiscretion, meddling where he needs not: for matters which neither his general nor particular calling will warrant, as *a busie-body in other mens matters*, *1 Pet. 4. 15.* there is no comfort in this: *Justly*, for some vile and base transgression. The hand of justice may be stretched out against a man for sins against God or man, or both; and now he suffers as an evil-doer, and hath just cause of repentance, and sorrow, and shame: For *righteousnesse sake*; For Christs sake, for his truths sake; and if a man hath not onely the profession of this, but the experience of this, he hath before hand given up his heart, as well as his name to Christ; yea he hath experience of the excellency of these truths, of the goodnesse of this righteousness;

con-

conscience is perswaded of them, first by the *testimony of the word* that they are no other then the very truths of God; and secondly by the *influence of them on the heart*, reforming the heart more and more according to the word, and comforting and establishing the heart. I assure you such a cause of goodness known, not upon humane tradition, but believed upon for divine authority, and sealed in the conscience with the power and comfort of it, will put life and courage in a Christians heart, it being for the name of *Christ*, for his truth, for his cause; *Paul is ready not onely to be bound, but also to die at Hierusalem.* And therefore they that suffer as Christians, the Apostle (1 Pet. 4. 16.) bids them *glorify God*; it is not a thing that they need to be ashamed of and fear, but to glory and rejoyce in: and wills them also in v. 19. to *commit the keeping of their souls to God in well doing as unto a faithful creator.* They may put all they have into Gods hands, and he will safely keep them and all of them; they need not to trouble themselves.

4. *A right conception of man* would be of good use to abate our inordinate fears of dangers contrived against us by man. Three things seriously considered would do it.

A right conception of man.

1. His *vanity*. He is but a vain thing, like a bladder that swells, but it is filled onely with wind, or like a dream builded up with strange fancies, but one jogg awakens a man and all was but a fancy. True, as that weak creature and foolish, did once put on the Lions skin, at the first the beasts were affraid, but when they espied his ears, they were nothing dismaied. So evil men may assume a kind of divinity, *Pilat* conceives he hath power to bind *Christ*; and *Haman* to destroy the *Jews*, and *Pharaoh* to imbondage *Israel*; and sometimes they set their mouths against the Heavens, and say, who is Lord over us? and we will do what seems good in our eyes. Neverthelesse study man throughly, look not on his proud boastings, but on his intrinsecal and real constitution, he is a very weak, empty, unable thing. *Sennacherib* he will not leave a man in *Jerusalem*, and the Angel of God goes out, and in one night kills 180 thousand of his army, and he is forced to remove his siege. The King stretched out his arm against the Prophet who cried out against the idolatrous Altar, but he could do nothing, his arm

Of his vanity.

withered, he could not pluck it in again. Man is but a very Cypher of himself, *He would be wise but is as the wild Asses Colt,* and would be great and yet *his habitation is in the dust*: a wicked soul he hath, and therefore weak; a body of clay, a frail matter, *what is man and wherein is he to be accounted of?* for the Scriptures do shew him to be a very vain thing.

Dependency.

2. *Subordination*: He is not of God but the workmanship of God, and is in his hand as clay in the hand of the Potter. Though he be full of wrath (which is as fire) yet God can restrain that wrath, as he did restrain that fire from burning the three Children. Though might be sometimes in his hand, yet it is but as in an hand: if the head conferres not influence, the hand loseth its might. You see many wheels in a Clock, not one of them stirres if the great wheel moves them not, all the power of man is under the great power of God. There is such natural and necessary subjection of man to God, that as he can do no good without Gods assistance, so he can do no evil without Gods permission. As Bernard of the Devil, *Nihil potest, nisi missus vel permissus*. There are many devices in the heart of man, but the counsel of the Lord it shall stand. All the confoundings, and intanglings, and disappointments, and stops, and over-rulings of the plots and practises of wicked men in Scripture, shew that they are under another, they are dragons in chains.

Mutability.

3. *Mutability*: Man is a very Meteor, a Vapour, but a Breath: he may devise many things, but in a moment he dies, is taken off; and all his thoughts perish; there is an end of him, and of all his projects. A wicked man is more mutable then another man; though every man be under a natural mutability and change yet the wicked are under a judicial mutability too. Not onely their nature but their wickedness exposes them to a shortness, therefore God many times cuts them off in the midst of their days: (*Ungodly men live not out half their days.*) &c takes them off with some sudden curse and judgment, as you may read of Pharaoh, and Haman, and Herod, and Julian, &c. Isa. 2. 22. *Cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* A good Argument and Motive not to settle our hope on one who is but a breath. And the same Prophet useth the same argument not to fear him, *Is. 51. 12. Who*

art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?
and of the son of man who shall be made as grasse.

5. *An intimate disjudication of dangers themselves.* We use An intimate
disjudication of
dangers. to constrain fearful horses to come to the places or bushes which make them fear and start, and many times this helps that ill quality in them. If Christians would habituate and accustom their thoughts to look upon and peruse those things which we call evils and dangers, they would lesse fear them. When we mis-apprehend things we are apt to over-apprehend them, and ignorance is not one of the least causes of fear. Now in prosperity and liberty consider, why! what is it for an evil if I should lose an house? an estate? a life for Christ? What if men should frown on me? despise me? revile me? afflict me? Are any outward things the chief of things? Can their presence make me happy? how then can their absence make me miserable? With all these I must of necessity part one day. Is it not more honorable to part with them upon good termes, then on compulsive. Christ did forgo more for me then I can for him; and what is it wherein man can hurt me? This body he may, my estate he may, my liberty he may, my soul he cannot touch (that's above all his malice) nay and what can I suffer in my body, which God cannot now make up with strength, and comfort? or will not hereafter reward with a glorious immortality? What though man curseth, as long as God blesteth? though he wounds, as long as God comforts? though he despoils, whiles God supplies me? he forsakes me: Though he frowns on me, whiles God sticks to me? while God smiles on me? though he thrusts me out of earth, when Christ hath prepared a mansion for me in Heaven.

6. *Fear of sin* is another good help against inordinate fear Fear of sin. of danger; you know the old distinction of *malum culpa* and *malum poena*, sinful evil, and sorrowful evil. Sin is the first evil and the greatest evil, and indeed sin is the onely evil. Nothing makes us evil and miserable but sin, miseries do not. Now if we did look and judge of sin as the *maximum formidabile*, as that which hath in it the most proper cause of fear and flight, external miseries and dangers would not make so deep an impression. Outward dangers and miseries, they do not,

Deprimere statum: your condition is never the worse:

the gold is as good and pure when it is in the fire as when it is in the coffer.

Diminuere titulum: you stand in as neer and firm relation and as dear unto God, and he owns you with as paternal affections as if your conditions were exempted.

Avocare auxilium: for though our friends dare not, or will not accompany us in dangers, but as *S. Paul* complained *all forsook me*, yet *God stood by me*, said he, he will own our persons and safeties when we own his cause and truths.

Suffocare Solamen, stifle any necessary and proper influence of Comfort. Though we have not the light of the Sun yet we shall have the light of Gods countenance: though we hear not the lips of peace by man, yet we shall hear the voice of peace in our consciences.

Annihilare Premium: The Reward is not the less, nor the less certain for our persons, because of dangers incident to our bodies. It may be mans pleasure to give us trouble, but it is Gods pleasure to give us a Kingdom. *If we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him*, said the Apostle, *2 Tim. 2. 12*:

Thus far of *David's* couragious resolution (*I will fear no evil*;) Now I proceed to the ground of it (*For thou art with me*;) Whence a third Proposition doth result, *viz. That God is present with his people in all their dangers and troubles, and that presence of his, is the ground of their confidence.*

Doctr. 3.
God is present with his people in all their dangers, and this is the ground of their confidence.

Thou] A God, my God: *Art*] not onely hast or wilt, but art: *With me*] not onely with others but with me.

You will perceive that there are two Branches of this Assertion;

Two Branches.

God is present with his in all dangers.

1. That God is present with his in all their dangers.
2. Divine presence is the ground of Christian confidence.

1. For the first of these, The Scripture is so copious and To Abraham, apt, as scarce in any Article the like, *Deut. 31. 6. The Lord thy Isaac, &c. Jacob God he it is that doth go with thee. Is. 43. 2. When thou passest in his troubles through the waters, I will be with thee, &c. Is. 41. 10. Fear not Naah, David. for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God.*

The

The Assertion requires some explication.

Quest. 1. What this presence of God with his people in their dangers and troubles is

Sol. Some distinguish thus; there is a fourfold presence of God: What this presence of God with his people in their dangers is.

1. One is *Natural*: And thus is he present with all Creatures: *Whither shall I flee from thy presence?* Psal. 139 7. That A fourfold presence of God.

Philosopher said well, *That God was a Sphere whose Center was every where, and his Circumference no where:* And to the same purpose likewise *S. Chrysostom*, in Colos. 2. *Nusquam est Deus & ubique est.* Included in no place, and excluded from no place, faith another. Natural.

Not that the Divine Essence is multiplied as creatures multiply, for Infiniteness cannot multiply, nor can Perfection multiply; nor that the Divine Essence is mingled with other things, for absolute purity is not capable of any mixture: Nor that it is an Accident in the Subject, as whiteness is present to the wool, but as an universal principal and cause is present with its effects for Production and Conservation, so is God present with all the Creatures. Present with them, Hom. 5.

1. *Via productionis*, by raising them up. 2. *Via sustentationis*, by staying of them up. 3. *Via inclinationis*, by giving unto them power of motion. 4. *Via observationis*, by taking notice of them. 5. *Via ordinationis*, by governing and ruling of them and their acts to the service of his glory.

2. A second is *Majestical*: And thus is he said to be present in heaven; and we pray to him as *our Father which is in heaven*; Majestical. not that heaven is *circulus concludens*, a place wherein God is shut up, but *Palatium resplendens*, the Court (as it were) where his Majesty in acts of Wisdom, and Power, and Mercy, and conjunction of Grace and Glory, doth most of all appear. As the Soul of man though it be in every part of man, yet it doth principally appear and manifest it self in the heart and brain; So, &c.

3. A third is his *Judicial* presence: And thus is he present with ungodly men, by a particular observation of their persons and wayes, and by a special detestation of them; and by his severe comination of them, and also by a certain destruction of them if they repent not. Judicial.

4. A fourth is his *Gracious* or *Favourable* presence: And thus

thus God is present with his people at all times, *inseparabiliter*; and in dangerous times *eminenter*, after a more singular manner; as the parents are with the children (alwayes) by a loving care; but in their sicknesse, then with a most tender compassion. Therefore righteous persons are said to be the *Temples* in which the Lord doth dwell, and the *Golden Candlesticks* amongst which he doth walk; and the *House of the Living God*. Now this gracious presence is it of which we are to speak, and it is nothing else but (as it were) the Exerting the Divine Nature in all the Attributes for the good of righteous persons. When all those glorious Attributes of God do (as it were) pitch their tents round about us, and expresse their virtues in a gracious manner for our best weal. His Wisdom to direct, his Power to protect, Mercy to comfort them, Goodnesse to supply them.

Gods gracious
presence is,
Internal.

The which gracious presence, is either,
Internal, Respecting the soul and conscience in our spiritual condition.

External.

External, Respecting the body and estate in our temporal condition. Though it be true that God is present to the souls of his people in all their exigences, yet the assertion is only intended of that gracious presence which is conversant about their bodies in external dangers. This external presence may be divided into, 1. *Real*, or 2. *Sensible* presence; in the one God is present with us, but we may say as *Jacob*, *The Lord is in this place and I knew it not*. In the other he is with us and we behold his Arm, as *Joshua* the Angel of the Lord to be on his side against the enemies of him and Israel. It is granted that many times God doth not seem (especially if sense be judge, which cannot see any presence of God but in a fair day; weak eyes cannot see so well in the dusk) to be present with his people; *If the Lord be with us, why hath all this evil befallen us?* said *Gideon*, *Judg. 7*. Yet really in the effects of his providence (though not alwaies sensibly to their opinion) he is present with them in their greatest dangers and exremities.

God present
with his 6
waies,
Dispondo.

1. *Dispondo*; By disposing of all miserable evils, so that not one hair of their heads shall fall to the ground without his providence, *Mat. 10. 29*. As every Mercy is a Drop from the hand of his goodnesse, so every Calamity is a Dram weighed out by the skill of his providence.

2. *Com-*

2. *Componendo*; By composing of their Spirits, fitting them *Componendo*. with hearts to bear the Crosse, passive and patient abilities; for as God gives unto his people active hearts to believe and do his will, so also he gives them passive hearts to suffer his will, *Phil. 1. 29.*

3. *Corroborando*; By strengthening their weaknesse, for of *Corroborando*. all duties we are most insufficient to those which are passive; we are weak in all, but most weak (of our selves) in these. *Isa. 41. 10. Fear not, for I am with thee, I am thy God, I will strengthen thee. Ver. 14. Fear not thou worm Jacob.* He encourageth Paul, *Act. 23. 11. The Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer Paul, &c.* And therefore the Lord will most of all shew his power (at these times) in our weaknesse; and hence it is (I think) that our Graces become more strong to work, and our hearts are filled with most inward comforts in the times of suffering, because God knowing our weaknesse, is pleased to add his own strength and comfort to uphold us.

4. *Limitando*; By restraining dangerous evils menaced by *Limitando*. evil men, bridling and checking the fury and insolency of them. *The remainder of wrath shall he restrain*, as he did in *Antiochus Epiphanes* against the Jews, by *Mattathias* and his sons; and in *Licinius*, and *Maxentius*, and *Maximinus* (if I forget not) by *Constantin*, and by his Angel against *Senacherib*.

5. *Liberando*; By giving a good issue out of all troubles. *Liberando*. *Two Wings* were given to the Church; and as in *1 Cor. 10. 13.* which alludes unto *David* being delivered from *Saul*. Though *Saul* hemmed him round about; and so by delivering *Peter* out of prison and from death, against the cruel expectations of *Herod* and the Jews. And *Christ* before that, from *Herods* plot to kill him; as he did the Jews (also before that) from *Hamans* wicked device for all their ruine. Instances abound in this kind of Gods presence with his people in times of dangers. *Noah's* Ark for him against the common deluge, *Moses's* Ark of bulrushes taken up by *Pharaohs* daughter, *David* at several times in the case of *Saul* and *Absalom*, *Jonas* in the Whales bellie, and in the depths, yet set on dry land; our own preservation of this Kingdom in 88. and the 5th of November. *Exod. 6. 1. Now shalt thou see what I will do, &c.*

6. *Benedicendo*; Performing all the good which he hath *Benedicendo*.

promised, notwithstanding all dangers and oppositions, turning all to good, as that of *Josephs* brethren, &c.

Why is the
Lord thus sin-
gularly present.
His Covenant
is to be with
them for ever.

Quest. 2. But why is the Lord thus singularly present with his people in their greatest dangers?

Sol. 1. *His Covenant is so, To be with them for ever. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,* Heb. 13. 5. that's a branch of the Covenant. And though his people be in the waters and in the fires, yet his promise is to be with them. As when God said, *He will be our exceeding great reward*, this is a branch of the Covenant for our good for ever: So when he said, *That he will be our shield*, this is another branch of the Covenant against any evil incident to us for ever.

His people need
his presence
most in times
of danger.

2. *His people need his presence most in times of danger.* When doth a man need a brother or a friend, but in the day of adversity? When wants, troubles, distresses, sicknesses come, then is the time that we need the counsel, the help, the comfort of a friend. When calamities and dangers break in, and all are set against them, then is the Time, the time for God to work and help, and the time when the people of God most need his succour and help; This is the day of Salvation, &c.

God is a Faith-
ful Friend.

3. As God is a *Kind friend*, so he is a *Faithful friend*; a *friend loves at all times*, said Solomon: God is such a friend who loves not by fits and starts, but sincerely and stedfastly; and therefore though *David's friends* fall off, and *parents forsook him*, yet God did not, *he took him up*, Psal. 27. 10. And though when *Paul* was brought before *Nero*, *all men forsook him*, yet the *Lord stood with him and strengthened him*, 2 Tim. 4. 16, 17: There be these three Qualities of a right Friend, 1. *Affection*, 2. *Bounty*, 3. *Constancy*, as in *Jonathan* to *David*. Carnal friends (commonly) are like the *Doves*, which nest only in fair buildings; or like *Jobs brooks*, which *fail in time of drough*; we have them most when we need them least. Troubles and dangers are like *Solomons whisperers*, they *separate very friends*. But the Apostle *Paul* is confident that *neither famine, nor nakednesse, nor peril, nor sword, nor life, nor death shall ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ*, Rom. 8.

Now his peo-
ple seek him
most and rely
on him.

4. Now his people, 1. Seek him most, and 2. Rely on him most.

5. This is a time wherein if God works all, tis his own;

so it is acknowledged, *Stand still and behold the Salvation of The second*
the Lord. branch that this

The first Use shall be for Comfort unto Righteous persons, is the Ground
 whatever their troubles or dangers are, here is encouragement of their fearle-
 enough unto them, *yet God is with them.* In *Mat. 1.21,23.* ye in the Use.
 find two names given unto Christ, one is *Iesus*, another is *Em- Use 1*
manuel. and indeed conjoyn these two and there is comfort e-
 nough, a Saviour, and God with us. For Comfort
 to Righteous
 persons whatso-
 ever their dan-

But the comforts from Gods presence are these,

1. If God be with righteous persons, *then nothing is against*
them but weaknesse; weak children besieging a wall of Brasse: Five Comforts
 We imagin such extreme powers to be set up against the people If God be with
 of God, but there is no such thing, for no people in the world them, then no-
 have such power on their side as good people. for God is with thing is against
 them; more with them then against them, if the eyes of Faith them but weak-
 were opened: only a few, weak, gasping creatures for life, who nesse.
 may be instantly crushed into nothing, none but these are against
 them.

2. *None can be against them but they must be against God him-* None can be a-
self: For God is with them; with them as a father with his gainst them,
 children, and as an husband with his wife, and as a confederate but they must
 with his alliance; offensively with them, and defensively with be against God
 them, and therefore evil men who vex and wrong them, are himself.
 said in this to *fight against God, Act. 5. 39.* and to *kick against*
the pricks, Act. 9. Dangers are near, so is God; Great, the
 Greater God is near; Storms, but an House; Arrows, but a
 Shield; Waves, but a Rock.

3. *There can be nothing done against them: If God be with* There can be
us, who can be against us, saith the Apostle, *Rom. 8. 31* ? Why ? nothing done
 will you say, that will all the Devils in hell, and that will all against them.
 wicked men, but *Ridendus est furor inanis*, they are as no-
 thing, and can do nothing against us; therefore *Aquinas* well
 expounds that *Quis contra nos?* (i. i.) *Quis efficaciter?* and o-
 thers, *Quis læsive & prevalenter?* who can can be against us
 so as to hurt us? If it be of God ye cannot overthrow it, said *Ga-*
maliel, Act. 5. 39. What if all the world should strive to hin-
 der the Sun from rising or shining? Or like those Pigme's,
 which went with their arrows and bowes to repress the flowing
 of the Sea: Ludibrious acts, and meer follies.

All that is
plotted against
them shall pe-
rish.

4. *All that is plotted and done against the righteous shall perish.* The counsel shall come to nought that is taken, and the word that is spoken shall not stand, for God is with us, Isa. 8. 10. The weapon may be formed, but it shall not prosper against them, Isa. 54. 17. Their enemies shall be found liars, Deut. 33. 25. He maketh the devices of the people of none effect, Psal. 33. 10 For all these attempts be but the works of men, of evil men, and therefore shall come to nought, Act. 5. 38.

Consider the
Qualities of
his presence
with us.

5. Consider the qualities of his presence with you, and it may yield you singular comfort and support. It is not *malitiosa presentia*, as Sauls with David; nor *otiosa*, like the Egyptian to the Israelites; but;

Gracious.

1. It is *Gratiosa*, the presence of a Loving God.

Glorious.

2. It is *Gloriosa*, the presence of an Almighty God.

Fruitful.

3. It is *Fruetiosa*, the presence of an Active God, who will be a Defence to you, a Shield to you, a Sun to you, a Salvation to you. None can withstand him, much lesse prevail over him. All the world cannot alter, nor hinder, nor conquer his love, and care, and intentions towards you. Be your condition what it will, you may chear up that yet your God is with you. Can you want comfort when the God of all Consolation is with you? Can you want Mercies, when as the Father of Mercies is with you? Can you want Grace, when as the God of all Grace is with you? Can you want Strength, when as the God of all power is with you? Can you want Counsel, when the God of Wisdom is with you? Can you want Friends, when as the God of all Love and Kindnesse is with you? Can you want safety, when as the God of all the World, and whom all must serve is with you? Can you want any thing, when as the God of All-sufficiency is with you? If a friend comes to thee, this will chear thee up a little in thy distresses, how much more should this, that God is with thee? The little child is quiet, though upon the Seas, when the mother holds it in the arms; and why is the Christian no more settled, who hath God with him, still holding of him up by the right hand of his power?

Let this suffice for all, you are never left alone, the best pre-
sence

sence is still yours, the greatest presence is still yours, the happiest presence is still yours, the presence of him who makes your heaven and happiness up hereafter, is yours; yours now, and therefore, now, let it make comfort and confidence on earth.

In the second place, see two things in the wicked enemies of the people of God,

1. *Their Madnesse*: They devise and practice against the Generation of Gods favour and care, as if a Rebel could medle with none but the children of a King. Their wits, and mouths, and hands are lifted up only against them with whom God is in a special manner present in his affection and protection. *They imagin a vain thing*; Why, will they not consider, that *Balam* prophesied of old, *How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?* and how shall I despise, whom the Lord hath not despised? Their rage against God and his people is endless, but because it is against God, it shall be fruitless.

Use 2

See in the wicked enemies of the people of God, Their Madnes

2. *Their just occasion of Sadnesse*: The Lord is with his people, what's that? that is for his people: he is not then with the wicked; if not with them, then woe unto them; then he is against them, and then their defence is departed from them; if they have no God with them, they can have no Shield with them, they cannot prosper, they shall come to ruine. He is with his people in their Worst times, and not with his enemies at their Best times, but is still against them. Mercy against them, Power against them, Justice against them. God is against them and that in fierce wrath, and all the Creatures be against them, and all their own consciences are against them. If the Lord once awaken to the Judgment, and to recompence vengeance to his adversaries, he will bathe his sword in blood, and drive them as the smaller dust before the tempest.

Their just occasion of sadness.

In the third place, since the Lord is present with his people in their greatest dangers and distresses, we may hereupon be instructed to several duties,

Use 3

Instruction in several duties.

1. *To order our selves so, as that we may find Gods gracious presence with us in the times of our distresses*, or shadows of death. Two things here take into your consideration,

Order our selves so as that we may find Gods gracious presence with us.

1. *Motives* to affect you to this duty,

2. *Means* or manner how to be so.

Motives to it.
We know not
how soon di-
stresses may
befal us.

The *Motives* are these :

1. *We do not know how suddenly distresses and dangers may befall us : I said in my prosperity, said David, Psal 30 6. I shall not be moved. Ver 7. Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong, thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled. See how quickly dayes of Distresse did follow the times of Excesse, as close as the shadow doth the body, as fast as one word can follow another, as soon as he mentions his prosperous estate, presently he complains of a distressed and troublous estate : Invicem cedunt dolor & voluptas. Thus was it with Hezekiah, he is no sooner freed from a malicious death, that ruine which Sennacherib threatned, but he is arrested with a natural death, he is summoned by God to set his house in order, for he must not live but die. Our outward mercies may in some sort be compared to Pharaohs host, we may see them all complete this hour and alive, but the next hour all drowned and covered with waters. The husband may presently die or fall sick, and the child be ready for the grave, and wealth take the wings of the morning, and friends fall off, and desertions, losses, sicknesses, deaths, all sorts of calamities befall us, all help failed, all props removed. Therefore order it so that you may have God present with you.*

We know not
how great the
distresses may
be.

2. *Nor do we know how great and tedious the dimnesse and the distresses may be : Perhaps the evils which we fear may befall us, and the knot which is tied with the strongest affections may be cut asunder ; that only which thine eyes look upon more then all the creatures besides, shall be rent from thee, and thou shalt not be able with all thy affections, with all thy helps, with all thy tears to withhold it from God. Perhaps such evils may befall us, as if God be not with us, none will be with us. Nay, perhaps the evils may seize immediately upon thine own person, thou maist be the man whom extreme sickness or irreversibile death may summon to appear before God.*

At such times
we shall cer-
tainly need the
presence of God

3. *At such times you will certainly need the presence of God, the presence of his strength, and the presence of his favour. We are not, 1. more able, 2. but less able for passives then actives ; for at such times,*

Our Affections are apt to be most impatient; was it not so with Job ?

Our Fears are apt to be most violent; was it no so with Peter ?

Our unbeliefs are apt to be most turbulent, was it not so with David? I shall one day perish, &c.

Our consciences are apt to be most unquiet. Troubles are many times like Physick which stirs the humours, and fetch up closer and perhaps forgotten transgressions; was it not so with Joseph's brethren?

And Satan is most ready to fish in troubled waters: as the sons of Jacob fell upon the Shechemites when they were sore, so Satan falls heaviest when either our consciences are troubled or our distresses are multiplied.

Now if all this befall us and the Lord be not with us, what strange work shall we make of it? what was Samson when the Lord left him? what is the ship left alone? we can neither bear our distresses, nor free our selves from them, neither submit nor escape. When comforts are gone and miseries break in we shall need a God to be our comfort, and a God to be our strength.

4. For the times of distresse there is no presence like the presence of a God: consider a few particulars for this:

First, *Miseries will not be miseries if God shew himself present with us.* It is never night as long as the Sun shines, and who can complain of neglects, whom the King himself doth embrace and honor? Thou shalt go away with miseries, as Samson did with the gates, and rejoice in trouble as the Apostles: where Gods gracious presence is not, there onely is misery, that's a very Hell; but where his gracious presence is, there is Heaven; it alone is a blessed Heaven, and therefore no misery is where it is.

Secondly, *his presence will answer the presence of all other comforts.* Some dream of Manna that it had all sorts of tastes, as if all sorts of meat were in it; and we read in the Revelations of a tree that bare twelve manner of fruits Rev. 22. 2. The Lord if he be present with thee in thy distresses and manifests himself gracious unto thee, whatsoever thy distresses are, he can make all up in several comforts. He can be that to thee that a friend was, that an husband was, that a child was, that liberty was, that plenty was: the light of Gods countenance was to David as much as all corn and wine, Psal. 4.

3. *His presence will be better then the presence of all outward*

com-

His presence
will be better
than the presence
of all outward
comforts.

comforts which fall off from us in our distresses and dangers, Psal. 63. *Better then life*, as *Elkanah* said to his wife 1 Sam. 1. *grieving for the want of children, Am not I better to thee then ten sons?* So is the presence of the Lord, it is better by far then all other things. One Sun is more glorious and comfortable then ten thousand stars. What is the presence of any thing if God be not present with it and thee? The creatures can be of no more comfort and help and strength unto thee, then God is pleased to put into them. As the *Lanthorn* shines by the light of the candle put into it, or as the *Moon* shines out by the light which the *Sun* communicates unto it, so the creatures guide and comfort according to the influence which God imprints into them; now God who is the cause of all their comfortableness must therefore be a much more comfortable good, his love is much better then the love of a friend, his counsel much wiser, his power more strengthening, his presence much more reviving and cherishing.

His gracious
presence enters
into the very
soul and con-
science.

4. *His gracious presence it enters into the very soul and conscience:* All distresses are as the soul and conscience are; If they be destitute and forsaken, then a man is forsaken indeed, he is a forlorn thing; if troubles come, and conscience be troubled too; if dangers increase, and the soul be endangered too, this is sad. But if the soul and conscience be hail, if all be well set and kept within, now distresses are but as waves that beat against a rock. If the Lord saith to the conscience, thy sins are pardoned, and I am thy God, thou art precious in mine eyes, I have accepted of thee in my Son, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. This sustains the spirit of man, and then the spirit of man will sustain all infirmities. *Paul* now is encouraged and rejoiceth.

The Means
how to order
our selves so,
that we may
find God pre-
sent.

2. *The Means* or wayes how to order our selves so that we may find God present with us in our distresses are two-fold.

Privative.

We must re-
move high
transgressions.

1. *Privative.* We must remove those things far from us which will else remove Gods presence from us, v. g.

1. We must remove high transgressions from us. Great transgressions do eclipse Gods honour and also eclipse Gods favour: when there is a rebellious presence of sin, we shall not find the gracious presence of God: in great transgressions we turn the back

back unto him, and God turns away his face from us : sins may be high and great, either in respect of the *matter of them*, when they are grosse and foul ; or else in respect of *the manner of them*, when though the sins be little in themselves, yet they are committed with an high hand, with more delight and deliberation, and obstinacy of spirit. Either of them are enough to put off God from us (in respect of a gracious presence.) *David* (you know) committed two grosse sins for the matter Psal. 51. of them, and what was the issue ? why Gods presence departed from him, both in respect of vigour and strength, as also in respect of peace and comfort. And so the *Israelites* fell into grosse Idolatry, *Exod.* 32.8. They made them a *golden Calf*, and what followed this ? *I will not go up in the midst of thee*, (said God) *ch.* 33.3. *For thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way*. The Lord would not be with them unless in a judicial and revenging way.

2. We must take heed of *impenitency* when we have committed sins, or else the Lord will not be with us. It is possible Take heed of impenitency. for a person or a nation to commit some great sin, yet if they instantly make up the breach, take up the controversy, humble and confess and reform themselves, the Lord may be intreated again to be present with him: as you know *Moses* immediately begins and prosecutes the suit with God to pardon the *Israelites* great sin, and never left pressing of the Lord untill he granted his presence again. But if men will commit sin and lie in it, not search it out, nor humble themselves, nor reform, then the Lord will not be with them. This is evident in another case, in that of *Achan* *Josh.* 7. and the *Israelites* they came to fight with the men of *Ai*, and fled before them, for the Lord was not with them ; why, what was the cause of absenting himself ? see *v.* 11. *Israel hath sinned*, and *v.* 12. *Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs* because they were accursed; neither will I be with you any more except ye destroy the accursed from among you. If we will have the presence of our lusts, we cannot expect the presence of our God. Therefore look to it, God is not with thee, thou findest it so in many particulars, the reason is, because sin is with thee in thy affections and continued practice. Thou art impenitent, &c.

And of Infidelity.

3. And of *Infidelity*. We read this in the *Israelites* again; the Lord had promised the land of *Canaan* (in that manner that all temporal promises are made *viz.* conditionally) but still *they murmured and complained and believed not his word, they spake against the good land: what befell them? the Lord consumed every one of them, their carcases fell in the wilderness.* *Numb. 14.* and at the same time when the Lord forbade them to fight, *Go not up* (said *Moses v. 42.*) *for the Lord is not among you, that ye be not smitten before your enemies;* they did not believe the threatening, but would presume to go and fight, and *were discomfited unto Hormah, for the Ark of the Covenant staid in the camp, and the Lord was not with them,* *v. 43. 44.* We deny our presence unto those who dare not trust us, and God denies his presence unto such as believe him not. Unbelief brings us into distrust, and keeps out God from our succour.

Neglect of Gods worship and ordinances,

4. *Neglect of Gods worship and Ordinances*. Two qualities remove an understanding person from another mans house: First, *Opprobrious entertainment*, or Secondly *Careless*. Where a man is either reviled or neglected, what should he do abroad? Not onely grievous commissions, but also incongruous omissions cause God to remove his presence. When persons care not to be with him in his ordinances and duties, God will not easily be found to be with them in their distresses. God doth usually proportion out an answerable dealing to our dealing. If we commit great sins, he will strike with great wrath; if we in our prosperity slight him, he in our adversity will hold off from us. Two things God doth to his own people for their carelessness in his worship; 1. *He strikes them*: 2. *He deserts them* (for a time and in measure). See it in *Cant. 4.* They shall not so quickly find God in point of help, who do so quickly lose him in point of worship.

Carnal confidence,

5. There might be other qualities here also adjoined which remove Gods presence from us, *v. g.* *Carnal confidence*. When we rest on the arm of flesh, and trust to it for strength, comfort, deliverance in or against all dangers. *This man is cursed and the Lord will forsake him, he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not know when good cometh,* *Jer. 17. 5, 6.* As

Irregular Acts.

also *irregular and extravagant acts*, unwarrantable by your

your general or particular Calling, &c.

Secondly, *Positive means* or wayes how to order our selves *Positive means.* that the Lord may be present with us in our distresses.

First, Let it be your prime care to be in covenant with him. Let your prime care be, to be in covenant with God. If you now chuse him to be your God, you shall then assuredly find him to be your God: if he be the God of our love and fear; he will be the God of our safety and comfort. Wicked men who serve other gods, who like *Pharaoh*, know not the Lord; or as they in *Job*, who said to the Almighty, *Depart from us*; or as those in *Psal. 2.* *Break his cords*; or as those in *Jeremiah*, *will not obey his word*; or as those in the Gospel, *They will not have him to reign over them*: When distresses and dangers surprize them, what can they do? to whom will they look? to God they cannot look, nay they dare not look. Go to the gods whom you served, and let them save you. *Is. 8. 22.* What confidence can they have in him, or expectation from him, whom they would not know nor own? but as *Isaiah 8. 22.* *They shall look unto the earth, and behold trouble and darkness, dimnesse of anguish and they shall be driven to darkness.* But if ye have chosen the Lord to be your God, that he is your God and you are his people, then in distresses the Cities of Refuge are open unto you, he will stick to you, never leave you, &c. you have a Father to go to, a God to flee unto, a God that will take care of you. *Come my people* (saith he *Is. 26. 20.*) *See also Mst. 4. 2.* *enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee, hide thy self as it were for a little space untill the indignation be overpast.* Here are chambers (withdrawing rooms provided) not open chambers, but with doors, and doors shut round about; intimating that guard of protection which the people of God shall find from him, even in a common inundation.

Secondly, *You must be in a prime manner now with him*, if you would find him in a gracious manner to be present with you in your distresses. In 3. respects especially be with him now, *a prime manner now with God.*

1. By *Prime Meditations*: *I thought on thee in the night*, By prime Meditations. said David, and when I awake, I am still with thee, *Psal 139. 18.* So *Alaph*, *I am continually with thee*, *Psal. 73. 23.* Meditate much what is his will, and how to do his will.

2. By *prime affections*: Let your hearts be with him. Take By prime Affections. delight to know him, and obey him. Fear his name, let the Lord have thy love, thy fear, thy desires, thy joy, &c.

By prime supplications.

3. *By prime supplications*: So much as you pray, so often are you with God, and in a seasonable day shall you find the virtue and successe of those prayers in the gracious and peculiar manner of Gods presence for your good. The prayers now, shall open a singular presence of God with thee hereafter, perhaps many years hence.

Get the dispositions of such to whom God hath promised his gracious presence.

3^{ly}. You must get the dispositions of such to whom God hath promised his special and gracious presence. There are these temperers of heart which shall find God present with them. 1. Broken. 2. Reforming. 3. Upright. 4. Believing. 5. Praying hearts.

A broken heart

1. *The humble and broken heart*. For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of an humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones, *Is. 57. 15*. The Israelites mourned, and God sent help: the highest heavens and the lowliest hearts are the habitations of Gods gracious presence.

A reforming heart.

2. *The reforming heart*: That puts off the provocations of God, and makes way for all his supporting and reviving attributes to be present with us, and for his love to uphold us in Christ, and for all the promises to drop peace and strength to us. *Ad candida testis Columbae*. The Israelites put away their Idols, then &c. *2 Chron. 15. 2*. *The Lord is with you, while you be with him*. *Psal. 50*. He shewes his salvation to him that ordereth his conversation aright.

An upright heart.

3. *The upright heart*. For the eyes of the Lord run too and fro through the whole earth to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him, *2 Chron. 16. 9*. So the Prophet to King *Asha*. *To the upright, God is a Sun and a Shield*, *Psal. 84. 11*. So again *Psal. 11. 2*. *His countenance doth behold the upright*, and *Psal. 5. 12*. *With favour wilt thou compass him, as with a shield*, and *Psal. 112. 4*. *To the upright there ariseth light in darknesse*, the Lord loveth the upright. His love is present, &c.

A praying heart.

4. The like may be said for a praying heart, unto which God is always neer, it finds the presence of God. (*Psal. 145. 18*. Present with *David*, *Peter*, *Jonah* upon prayers, and the *Israelites cries*.) And so doth Faith, you read it often that

Faith.

in

in the Kings and others, when they relied upon the Lord in their exigences, they found his admirable presence with them for deliverance, and victory and comfort; *Asa, Jthosaphat, David, &c.* Faith finds out a God, and a God with us.

Secondly, A second duty is for those in any distresse or dangers *patiently to bear all their evils from men*, forasmuch as the Lord is with them. Not to be impatient, or vexing, or fretting, or grudging, for why the Lord is with them still in his gracious presence. Patiently bear all in our distresses.

Thirdly, A third duty, then to *go on in duty freely* without cares and distractions, for who can hurt you, as long as the Lord is with you? Go on in duty freely.

Fourthly, And lastly to *hold up the worship of God cheerfully*. Hold up the You have a good work and a good God: there may be storms but you have a good Pilot; and there may be skirmishes, but you have good armor; there may be dangers, but still you have a good God present with you; you have darkness, but light in darkness; you are in the shadowes of death, but the Lord of life is in the valleys of death, to guide you, uphold you, secure you, preserve you, deliver, save and defend you. worship of God cheerfully.

Ob. But we are full of fears, though you say that the Lord be present with us.

Sol. There must be a believing apprehension of Gods presence to remove our fears, a reall presence is not sufficient.

Ob. But if the Lord be present with us, why is all this evil befallen us?

Sol. Gods presence is not to banish evils from us, but to comfort and support us under evils, and to moderate and order them: as a Father is present with a sick Child. All the presence of God is not in deliverance, but he is present also in his assistance, and in his comforts, though you be not delivered from your evils, yet you are enabled to bear them, and you are comforted under them, and this is a gracious presence of God with you.

P S A L. 23. 4.

—*Thy rod and thy staffe they comfort me :*

THESE words contain the distinct and particular reasons of *Davids* courage and fearlesness under all distresses and dangers, so saith he, *Thy rod and thy staffe do comfort me.*

Some do conjecture that *David* intends this of *the word of God* which is called a *rod* for its authority in directing, and likewise a *staffe* for its ability in sustaining the soul.

Others do conjecture, that onely a *modal difference of afflictions* is imported by the *rod* and the *staffe* , onely a lesser and a greater correction, as the *staffe* differs from the *rod* onely in the quantity or extension; and then they make *Davids* meaning to be this, whether the distresse and afflictions befalling me be greater or lesser, more gentle or sharp, both of them are of a comfortable influence and use unto me.

A third conjecture is, That the *rod* here spoken of hath reference to the *sheep* , and the *staff* hath principal reference to the *wolves* . The shepherds rod is Gods castigation of his own people; the shepherds staff, is Gods protection and defence against the enemies of his people, and both of them are a comfort to *David* .

I begin with the first of these [*Thy rod doth comfort me*] There is you know,

1. *Virga dura* : The rod of the wicked, which *David* saith, shall not alwayes lie upon the back of the righteous, Psal. 125. 3.

2. *Virga dura* : *David* calls it a rod of iron, Psal. 2. 9. to break in pieces the rebellious among the sons of men.

3. *Virga regalis* : The authority and power of Kings and Rulers, an Ensign of their dignity and government. Of it *David* also speaks Psal. 110. 2. and Rev 12. 5.

4. *Virga disciplinaris* : *Solomon* speaks much of it for the child; and *Paul* (I think) aims at Ecclesiastical discipline when

when he said, 1 Cor. 4. 21. *Shall I come to you with a Rod?*

5. *Virga Pastoralis*, the Shepherds Rod, of which there are three Uses,

1. *Numerare Oves*, To reckon up or count the sheep; and in this sense they are said to *passee under the Rod*, Lev. 27. 32. tells them one by one; and even so are the people of God called the *Rod of his inheritance*, Jer. 10. 16. such as he takes special notice or account of.

And take the words in this sense, *Thy Rod doth comfort me*, it holds well; *q. d.* Though I am in such eminent dangers by reason of evil men, yet this is my comfort, I am not neglected of thee, thou dost not suffer me to perish, thou takest notice of me, thou dost take and make an account of me, thy special care looks after me.

2. *Provocare Oves*, When the sheep are negligent and remiss in following or driving, the Shepherd doth with his Rod put them on, quicken their pace. And in this sense also *David* saith well, *Thy Rod doth comfort me*; for it is a work which breeds much joy and comfort in the hearts of Gods people, when God doth put them out of a lazy, cold, formal walking, and doth (some way or other) cause them to mend their pace, to grow more active and fervent in his service and worship.

3. *Revocare Oves*; The sheep sometimes are *petulanter divagantes*, idly and inconsiderately straying from the flock, grazing alone, and wandring after other pastures, not considering the dangers which attend them by such a separation and wandring. And therefore the shepherd doth with his Rod strike and fetch them in again, and so preserve them.

In this sense also *David* might well say, *Thy Rod doth comfort me*, for it is a great comfort that the Lord will not leave his sheep to the wayes of discomfort, but brings them off from sinful errings and wandrings, which alwayes do expose them to their greatest dangers and troubles.

So that the words do intimate a singular part of Gods gubernation or careful providence of his flock. The only difficulty is, whether this be administred by the Rod of direction, which especially appears in the Word, or by the Rod of correction, which eminently appears in our afflictions.

Some Interpreters incline to the former, others rather adhere

to the latter; I will touch on both, because I perceive both are touched at by learned Interpreters.

If you take the Rod here for *Virga Doctrina*, for the Rod of Doctrine, then this is observable,

1. *That the Word of God is a singular comfort to the people of God, even in the shadows of death.*

If you take the Rod here *pro Virga Discipline*, for the Rod of Correction, then this proposition is observable,

2. *That even Gods afflictions afford cause of much comfort to Gods servants.*

I begin with the first of these, viz.

Doct. 1.
The Word of
God is of sin-
gular comfort
to his people in
their greatest
distresses.

That the Word of God is of singular comfort to the people of God in their greatest distresses. What comfort the Rod and Staff are to the sheep, that is the Word to Christians. The Word a Rod for, 1. Direction, 2. Prevention, 3. Excitation, 4. Revocation. How express is David for this, in Psal. 119. 92. *Unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in my afflictions.* Psal. 119 50. *This is my comfort in my afflictions, for thy Word hath quickened me.* V. 93. *I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickned me.* He had sunk, he had been drowned, had he not catched hold on this twig, this rod held him up, nay, and put life into him also.

The Word is compared therefore 1. to a *Rock* for safety; 2. *Honey* for sweetnesse, 3. *Breasts* for quickning. So the Prophet, *Isa. 12. 3 With joy shall ye draw waters out of the Wells of Salvation.* The Word of God (especially) in the promises of it are Wells, they are Springs out of which a man may draw Joy and Salvation, even when inundations of calamities are risen upon him, and likely to overwhelm him.

The Word of
God may be
considered ei-
ther,
Formally.

The Word of God may be considered two wayes, either,

Formally, in respect of it self; so is it a Seminary of comfort: Comfort is in it as life in the root, or as beams in the Sun, or as any effect in a cause. It is compounded of singular goodnesse, and sealed with such infallible truth, that it is therefore able to comfort, and stay, and refresh the soul in any distresse.

Or effectually. Or, *Effectually*, as reaching forth actual comfort unto us: And thus, as honey which is sweet in it self must be tasted if we will

will apprehend its sweetnesse; and as light which is beautiful in it self, must yet have an eye opened if we will discern its beauty; so the Christian, though the Word be a comfortable good and truth in it self, yet he must have a believing eye, a believing heart to behold and apply this, if he will find it a comforting Word unto him. What the Apostle spake for the profitable efficacy of the Word, that the Hebrews missed of it, Heb. 4. *Because they did not mingle it with Faith*, the same is as true of the comfortable efficacy thereof, which if we want Faith, we must necessarily want.

2. Again, there is a *double comfort*,

1. One is *Improper* and only *Negative*, which is nothing else but an insensibleness of our miserable evils. As it is with some people who feel (in extreme dangers of life) no pain, not that they apprehend any good ground of hope, but because their senses are stupified and they apprehend no disease or ache. In this sense it is confessed that the Word doth not comfort; the Word doth not scarifie the conscience, nor is it of any comfort to a conscience that is scarified.

There is a double Comfort.
Improper, and only Negative.

2. Another is *Proper* and *Positive*, which is a gracious and sweet refreshment, not only under the presence, but also under the sense of outward evils, wherein a man doth apprehend the dangers, but withal the defences; feels the waves, but withal sits fast on the rocks; hears what man saith in his threatnings, and also what God saith in his Promises; the apprehension of whose favour, and goodnesse and strength, and fidelity through them, doth yet in the midst of all, fill him with much confidence, singular peace, unexpressible contentment, and superlative rejoycings.

Proper and Positive.

There be two virtues of the Word, 1. *It is an Antidote*; 2. *It is a Cordial*: When evils are future, it is an Antidote, and arms the heart to meet and encounter them; when evils are present it is a Cordial, and enables the heart not only with support, but also with victory; makes the Christian not only a Patient sufferer, but likewise a Triumphant conquerer; yea, *S. Paul* went above both these, *In all his troubles* (and they were as great and sharp as ordinarily befall people) *he was more than a Conqueror*, Rom. 8. He overcame them not only by a meer Suffering, but triumphed also over them by an exceeding Rejoicing,

3. Again

The Word in
all the parts of
it Comforts.

The Word
Comforts,
Dispositive.

3. Again, take the *Word in all the parts of it*, They are either a formal or a redundant comfort: The promises and precepts are more formal for comfort, the threatnings redundantly for comfort to those who are delivered from them.

4. Once more. The *Word doth comfort* persons under distresses.

1. *Dispositive*; By forming and framing the heart for comfort: For as you do not pour in the sweetest waters, until first you have cleansed and fitted the vessel; so God doth not distil the precious comforts of his Word, until he hath first prepared our hearts. The promises of the Word are (I know well) like those fingers in the Canticles which drop Myrrh and Frankincense, but then the heart must be mournful, which must be comforted; broken, which must be bound up; grieved, which must be anointed, &c. the which dispositions are by the Word wrought in persons as so many precedent receptivities for the comforts of the Word. The Word therefore opens the eyes, humbles the heart, &c.

Impressive.

2. *Impressive*; By letting in the drops of Salvation; by making divine mercy our mercy, divine strength our strength, a goodnesse for us, a shield for us, a rock unto us, so that misery and mercy do meet. The Ivie clings about the Oake, and the believing Christian, through the impression of the Word, fastens and clasps his God, and God doth imbrace and uphold him.

Exclusive

3. *Exclusive*; When nothing else can comfort a man in his distresses, then the Word can. The Bird from her nest being hunted, skips from this bough to the other tree, and then flees from that tree to another bush, and then whips away and lights on the bare earth, but being still pursued she finds no rest till she mounts up and away to her Nest: So it is with us in our distresses, we may flee to the power and pity of our friends, and we may find what *Job* did of them, that *they are miserable Comforters*; then we may wing it to the bags of gold and silver, but we shall find it that riches do not deliver from wrath; and then to our own working heads for plots and devices, but we may be held fast with the cords of our own making. Till we do mount up, till we do rest in the Word of God, and nest our selves under the shadow of his wings, we shall find no sufficient stay nor comfort.

Object.

Obj. But how may all this appear, that the Word is of that singular comfort to a person in distresse?

Sol. Thus; 1. *It hath in it whatever may administer comfort to one in distresses.*

If thy *distresses be inward*, (though the text intends not them) what will be comfort to a troubled conscience, but the *free mercy of a God*, and the *precious blood of a Saviour*? and where runs that precious and soul-quieting blood, but in the Veins of the Word. *Stay me with flagons*, Cant. 2. 5.

If thy *distresses be outward*, and arising either,

1. From *particular wants and fears* for thy sustenance, the Word staies thee up with promises, that *thou shalt verily be fed*, Psal. 37. and that *God will never leave nor forsake thee*, Heb. 13. and it will give thee Catalogues of particular instances for this truth.

2. From *special assaults* and enterprizes of evil men, whose policy and subtilty, and whose power and ability, and whose malice and malignity perhaps thou maist be too apt to fear, but the Word can answer all these with the intentions of God for thy good, with his Love, with his Care, with his Wisdom, with his Power. It is the very Armory of thy strength, thy shield and buckler.

2. *The Word is of power to actuate Faith*, and Faith being actuated can find comfort and stay in any distresse. The Word can actuate Faith, for as it is the *Mother of Faith*, (*Faith comes by hearing*) so it is the *Nurse of Faith*, it breeds Faith up. The promises of the Word are therefore called the *Breasts of Consolation* on which Faith doth depend for nourishment: When a mans heart is sometimes ready to faint within him, and is almost overwhelmed, then the Word stirs up Faith and quickens it. It discovers such unspeakable succors and goodnesse, that Faith now is stirred up and actuated, and set to work to trust on this God for Salvation. And then when Faith is able to work, comfort and stay come into the soul: an acting Faith is not only able to sustain a soul, but to refresh and revive it. When *David* is able to believe, he is not only then above himself, but likewise above all men and dangers; *though the mountains be moved* he stands still as the hills round about *Jerusalem*; and *though an host of men incamp against him*, yet he will not fear

what men can do unto him, but encourageth himself in the Lord his God. It cannot be otherwise, for Faith knowing what God is, and applying all that to me, This God is my God, and this Mercy is my Mercy, and this Power, and this Fidelity are mine; why, nothing can revive and comfort the soul more than this.

The Word keeps open all wayes of Communion betwixt God and us.

3. *The Word keeps open and up all the wayes of Communion betwixt us and God*, and therefore it must be of singular comfort unto us in all our distresses. It inclineth prayer, and prayer inclineth comfort given, &c. By it our graces are exceedingly enlarged, and duties go on in a more lively manner; yea, the powers of prayer are kept up by it, Gods voice ever is a means to enlarge our voice: Now every Grace, as I have often told you, is like a *Rose* which buds with sweetnesse; and every Prayer is like a *Bee* which comes back with honey: that which keeps up the Spirit of Grace and the Spirit of Supplication, doth ever keep the Spirit of Strength and of Consolation.

God doth especially appear unto his servants by his Word.

4. *The Lord doth especially appear unto his servants by his Word*, there he speaks unto them, and through it; he shews himself unto them, whether by direction and counsel, or by stay and comfort: there you may still see God your God, though afflicted. Now that which gives us a sight of God, of the God of all comfort, must necessarily be a singular means to breed comfort to our souls in the dayes of our distresse. Nothing can uphold and enliven the soul in any condition so as the presence of a gracious God and Father. *Cant. 2. 4. His banner over me was Love.*

Use

Now to make some brief Application of this unto our selves, Is the Word of God that which comforts the soul in distresses?

They are enemies to their comfort who are strangers to the Word.

1. Then first, *What enemies are they to their own comforts, who are Strangers to the study and knowledge of the Word?* There are some persons (they are not worthy of confutation but disdain) who are enemies to the Word; to the Preaching of it, and to the Study of it. What else means that of the *Papists*, who deny the Lecture of it to the Laicks. The Lord God thinks it fit and able to give instruction to the simple, and to convert them, but they suspect nothing but danger, &c. but I relinquish them; we our selves, I fear, are extremely guilty, and

and indeed are more cruel to our selves in our practises, then the Papists are in their doctrine unto us in this particular. The Word of God ! who studies it ? who looks on it ? who regards it ? the matter of it, do not we judg it as too precise ? the phrase of it, do we not slight it as too thread-bare and course ? One man can spend a day and weeks in *handling a pair of Cards* ; another can sit up a whole night *to read a Comedy* or peruse a Tragedy, or to run over some History ; *But who makes the Word of God his meditation day or night ?* If we be to read it, then we want time ; if we be to hear it, then all time is too long ; an hour seems a week unto us. Besides, the greatness of the sin, that hereby we injuriously slight the *Magnalia Dei* ; how foolishly improvident are we also for our own comforts ? the Scriptures are written both for our *Consultation* and for our *Consolation* ; from them we must look for all our strength, and all our stay, and all our peace, and all our refreshings in the dayes of our distresses. Conscience cannot hold up without them, nor our soul, and yet we mind them not, we read them not, we regard them not.

2. *Then if ever you would have the Word to be a stay and comfort to you in your distresses, be more intimately acquainted with it.* If ever you would have the Word to be your support, be more intimately acquainted with it.

I know not almost how to perswade you to this, yet consider,

1. *If distresses do befall you (as what man living can assure himself against these) you will be glad to find something that may stay and comfort you.* If distresses come you will be glad of something to comfort you You know that the deluge in the dayes of *Noah* drowned not only the houses but the mountains, all was under water ; so may it befall us, all our earthly supplies, and anchors, and trust-to's may be under water ; distresses may shake and split all our inferior confidences. At which times we seek for comforters, Oh that some comfort might be said to stay us up ; we are ready to give up the Ghost, our own weight is ready to crush and sink us, we are at our wits end, our hearts will sink like *Nabals*, or flie out like *Judas's*.

2. *If the Word be not comfort, nothing can be true comfort and stay unto thee.* If the Word do not comfort, nothing can. If the Word be not comfort, God is not comfort (for God will never comfort any contrary to his Word) and conscience is not comfort (for conscience is but the *Echo* of

the Word for comfort) nay, and no creature can be comfort, for they are all in service to God; they are either his armies of wrath, or his clouds of refreshings. Now what a miserable estate is this, that a man is in an heavy distresse, and yet hath neither God, nor Conscience, nor Word, nor Creature to be a stay and comfort unto him?

The Word can do it in greatest distresses

3. *Let thy distresses be never so many, & never so deep, yet the Word can be a comfort and a stay unto thee.* The Sun wil shine and the comforts of the Word cannot be lockt out. Thou mayest have a God to look on when thou hast not a friend to look on, and a God to rest on, and a God to speak unto thee; for who can way-lay that intrinsical Comunion 'twixt God and the soul. *In the multitude of my thoughts, said David, thy comforts delight my soul.* Who can hinder the Sun from shining on the earth? or the Word from comforting the soul and conscience.

What is to be done that the Word may comfort.

Object. But what is to be done that we may find the Word our comfort and stay in the times of our distresses?

Sol. I will briefly give you some directions, and so conclude. If you would find the Word of God to comfort you in your distresses, then,

Seriously search and study it.

1. *Seriously search and study it:* Unknown things are of no use to us, nor yet of any comfort. What comfort is it to the poor man though there be a vein of silver or a vein of gold in his grounds, as long as he knows not this. The promises of God are a rich treasury (and therefore they are called *precious*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4) indeed they contain in them the mines of mercy and comfort, but what are these to an ignorant mind? It is granted that knowledg may be divided from comfort, but yet it is as true, that comfort cannot arise without knowledg, the heat of the Sun follows the light of it. Therefore take pains about the Word; as the Word doth unbowel our hearts, so should our hearts unbowel the Word: we should heartily, and reverently, and earnestly peruse it; though in some places we may kiss the book and adore the mysteries, yet in most places we may kneel down and blesse God for revealing such treasures.

Peremptorily believe it.

2. *Peremptorily believe it:* If it be not a Word of Faith it can never be a Word of Comfort. You read in it what the Lord is in himself, and what to his people, what a Covenant he hath made with them in the general, and how he hath branch-

ed out his goodness (answerable to all their conditions) in several promises. If you believe not these, if you do not exalt these truths, if you do not apply their goodness unto your selves in your particular exigences, comfort will not come, *Pf. 13. 5. I have trusted in thy mercies, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.* Draw the breasts, suck at them, and then milk comes; taste the Manna, and then you shall find it sweet; take hold on the word, trust to it, rely on it, Lord (say) this is thy own word of truth, and it is a good word, thou hast put it out as a plank for my soul to rest on. It is a word proper to my condition, I know that thou art true in all thy sayings (*faithful art thou who hast promised*) O let thy salvation now come unto thy servant according to thy word. I do trust upon it, *O remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*

3. *Carefully obey it*: If Divine truths do guide you, Divine comforts will find you. How can you ever expect that the word will be *your stay*, which you make to be *your scorn*; that it should be *a rock to drop honey*, when you make it a *rock of offence* unto you. *Joshua and Caleb fully followed the word* and it brought them into the land of *Canaan*. Truths known and disobeyed, prove sharpest swords in our distresses: Truths believed and obeyed afford the sweetest comforts. If the Word be *a lamp to thy feet*, they will prove *a light to thy darkness*. They who treasure up food in times of plenty, live on it in times of scarcity; the laborious Bee hath all the Winter long an hive of honey; and the obedient Christian shall find the word in his worst times an horn of salvation and joy.

Now I proceed to the second interpretation of the Text: *Thy rod doth comfort me* (.i.) Thy Fatherly Afflictions or Corrections. *Job 1. 21. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* The people of God have cause to bless God, for losses and afflictions as well as for enjoyments: and indeed afflictions are well compared to a *rod*, partly for the *sharpness*, partly for the *usefulness*, partly for the *intention* or *scope* why it is used; Corrections are Instructions, but more of this anon. The Proposition observable hence is this;

Doct. 2. That even Gods afflictions afford cause of much comfort to Gods people.

Gods afflictions afford cause of comfort to Gods people. A thing may be said to be our comfort two wayes, either, Objectively, Because its the thing which doth delight and refresh the soul, it is the flower at which the Bee doth suck; thus God in his excellencies of grace and mercy (in and through Christ) are our comforts.

Objectively, Operatively, Because it may work out and produce such things as may occasion singular comfort to us. As physick doth produce (by severall operations) a right temper and health, in this respect afflictions are a cause of much comfort.

Afflictions may be considered many wayes;

Afflictions may be considered Absolutely. 1. *Absolutely*, in their proper sphere and nature; so they are not comforts, but discomforts; they are the Tomb-stones covering our delights; the Winter which shrivels up all our flowers, like the Bands of the *Sabeans* which came in, and took away the cattel and the servants of *Job*, a land-floud which drowns all the Meadows and Gardens.

Sensibly. 2. *Sensibly*, as received by our natural apprehensions and affections: so they are a sharp rod. *Chastnings for the present seem grievous*, said the Apostle, *Heb. 12. 11. And thy hand was heavy upon me*, said *David Psal. 32. 4. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins, he hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunk with wormwood*, said the Church, *Lam. 3. 13. 15.*

Concomitantly. 3. *Concomitantly*, as accompanied with a special and gracious providence of God, sending, directing, measuring, working in them and by them. And thus they prove comforts to the people of God. *David* acknowledgeth it to be a blessed thing to be corrected and taught, *Psal. 94. 12.* and professeth out of experience, *That it was good for him that he had been afflicted*, *Psal. 119. 71. My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations*, saith the Apostle *James 1. 2. and we rejoice in tribulation*, said *S. Paul Ro. 5. 3.*

In what respects they take comfort in afflictions. In many respects may the people of God take comfort in their afflictions.

If they look to the efficient cause; 1. *If they look to the cause* *πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς*, the eternally moving cause. It is the love of a Father, the physick which a Father tempers; So many as I love I rebuke and chasten, *Rev.*

Rev 3.19. Here are *verba* [*I rebuke*] and *verbera* [*I chasten*] both may well be taken, for both come from love. So the Apostle *Heb. 12. 6. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* The Crosse is a letter for every scholar, and affliction a rod for every child; it argues no love to leave the child to himself, let him alone, I will look no more after him, let him take his course. It is an argument of great indignation when the Lord lets a man go on in his sins and prosper, but it is mercy when God will rather physick a child then lose him; lay us in a sick bed, then a forlorn grave, &c. *Love thinks no evil and minds no evil*, said S. Paul *1 Cor. 13. 5.* there is nothing comes from Divine love but either it is a Cordial, or an Antidote, either it prevents or recovers.

2. Secondly, *If they look to the disposing cause* (if I may so speak). Afflictions rise not out of the dust, they come not by chance, as fury and rage are removed from them because they come out of love, so rashness and danger are removed because they are distributed by divine wisdom.

The wisdom of God about our afflictions which makes for our comfort appears thus,

The wisdom of God appears in afflictions.
For the time.

1. *For the time*: You shall never have any one affliction but when there is need. *If need be* (saith the Apostle *1 Pet. 1. 6.*) *ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.* God corrects us not for his pleasure, but for our good. Physick sometimes may be as needful for our preservation, as food: God doth not delight to grieve the children of men. We do not always plow the earth, nor doth God alwayes chide and afflict; *when the lesson is learned, the rod is burned*; therefore the Apostle adds in the same verse *though it be need yet it is but for a season.*

2. *For Measure*: He debates in measure *Isa. 27. 8.* and corrects in judgment *Jer. 10. 24.* Not according to our deserts, but according to our strength; It shall not be *as much as God can do*, but *onely so much as may do you good*, you cannot want one drachme or ingredient. He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. *1 Cor. 10. 13.* *For he will not lay upon man more then is meet.* So *Elihu Job 34. 23.* He considers wherof we are made, and therefore with a wise compassion

For measure.

proportions the afflictions with the abilities.

For matter.

3. For *Matter*: He sends onely that particular affliction which shall do us good. Some evils perhaps would not stir us: there are peculiar diseases and peculiar remedies for them. All our afflictions are proper physick which shall surely hit the malady, carry away the disease and heal the soul.

For the final cause,

3. If they look to the *final cause*. Every prudent Agent hath his end unto which all his actions are derived. If the *Goldsmith* cast the metal into the fire it is to refine it: If the *Fuller* dips and rubs and beats the cloth, it is to cleanse and whiten it: If the *Vine-dresser* presseth the grapes, it is to fetch out the liquor. If God comes with his right hand of blessings or with his left hand of afflictions, if with any crosses, if with more crosses, all shall work for good: Two ends God hath in every particular dealing with his people, viz. *His own glory, and their advantage*; all things cooperate for good to them that love him, Rom 8. Divines do distinguish 'twixt *pœna judicialis* and *pœna medicinalis*; thats a devouring fire which consumes the adversary, or like a whirlwinde which carries away; The other is like a Refiners fire which melts and purgeth, or like the gentle winde which onely fannes the corn. Not like a thief who strips us of all, but like a Father, who takes away the old clothes, and leaves us better; or like a tyde which carries out some ships, and brings in more; what a comfort is this? that that which takes off the comfort, doth prove a greater comfort? that every affliction is so far from robbing me of good, that it is a safe tyde to bring in more mercy and blessing.

If they look to the effects. They give more instruction.

4. If they look to the effects produced by afflictions, here also is matter of comfort, for they give more instruction and understanding; first, What we are, and secondly, What our wayes are, and thirdly, What our outward comforts are, and fourthly, What God and Heavenly things are.

What we are.

That we are poor things. Full of desires, full of wants, craving for every thing sure of nothing, masters of nothing, reaching for much, delighting too much, and quickly spoiled of all.

What our wayes are.

That we are sinful things: Every lash may assure us that we have been wandring and lazy; man suffers for his sin, Lam. 3. 39. Thou dost wish rebukes correct man for his iniquities, Psal.

39. 11. Fools that we are, because of *our transgressions and iniquities we are afflicted*, Pl. 107. 17.

That our comforts are but mean and mutable things; but a flower, though sweet yet short, though as a Sun very glorious in our eyes, and we dream of an everlasting day, yet it quickly sets in a dark night, a tyde flowing and ebbing; this day handled with smiles, the next day looked on with tears. one hour rejoycing because we possess them, the next grieving because we have lost them, such a shadow are all our earthly comforts.

Lastly, That *God and Heaven* should have our hearts and they are the onely things; these are good indeed, the chiefest good, fullest good, immutable good, of all things those are best and most certain which make us happy, you can never love God too much, nor to your losse. *The Lord is God*, said they, when the fire fell down on the sacrifices, so &c. none like to God now.

2. They give more *humiliity*: Prosperity doth hazard us unto two great losses, One of *God*; *Who is the Lord* said that proud Pharaoh. So *Nebuchadnezzar* boasts and vaunts ere he was driven out. Another, of *our own souls*. *I spake unto thee in thy prosperity but thou wouldst not hear*, Jer. 22. 21. Men are apt to slight God, in communion, in his Ordinances, in his servants, in duties, in counsels; they are puffed up and slight others, fanse vain things, and are unsensible of the miseries of others; but afflictions breathe out that ill spirit, abase the spirit of man, make him to know himself better, a God better, a Church better, duties better, his servants better, communion with him better.

3. And more *humiliation*: The business of Repentance seldom goes on with that success as in the times of affliction; then we search and try our hearts, and then we will bow ourselves before the mighty God, and then we will pray (as the Mariners in *Jonah* fell to their prayers in the storm) and then we can pour out water before the Lord (as the Israelites in the thunder) and then our hearts come to be tender indeed and can judge our sins and accuse and condemn our sins and hate all the methods of sin.

4. I might adde what an encrease they bring to all our graces.

ces. To our *Faith* which now flies unto and pleads out the promises; unto *Patience*, which is now taught quietly to submit; unto *Zeal*, which is now more flaming; unto *heavenly mindedness*, *contentment*, *thankfulness*, and all the peaceable fruits of holiness. The Gold is brightest in the Furnace, the Rose in the Still, the Grapes in the Presse; but this were to enlarge the Theme to the utmost. It is enough for the demonstration of the Point, to shew that if afflictions make us better to know God, our selves, the creatures; if they make us better in our hearts and lives, by mortifying of our sins, by addition to all our Graces, by exciting and forwarding all duties, &c. that then they are such things upon which the people of God may take comfort.

Use

Now for the application of this point: If afflictions be the rod which the people of God may (in the respects before named) take comfort in,

Then First, *How extremely are they out, who judge themselves forsaken of God, hated of God, and utterly forgotten because of their present afflictions?* Many are apt to make their afflictions the peculiar argument for their rebellious unbelief to work on; O if the Lord did love me, would he have dealt thus with me? would he have withdrawn such a comfort? or such a consort so near unto me, so dear unto me? Yes that he would: the withdrawment of thy neereſt comforts is no argument that the Lord doth not love thee; that which thou calleſt thy neereſt comfort, might have proved thy greateſt miſchief. Thou diſt ſet it neerer to thy heart then God himſelf, thy thoughts were more on it, and thy affections ſtrongly bound to it, and thou durſt not truſt God with it. Why, the Lord in love to thy ſoul (intending thee ſingular good) hath afflicted thee in that kind; better loſe a poſſe, then an inheritance; an earthly comfort, then an heavenly God. Now that love is ſet more fully and to purpoſe on God, now affections hang more looſe to the creature, now thou haſt more full communion and ſociety with God, and takeſt more delight then ever, *Dulcius ex ipſa fonte bibimur aqua*; and what hath God now done unto thee, which argues want of love unto thee?

They are to be blamed who are impatient under afflictions.

Secondly, They are as much to be ſhent and blamed who in their afflictions flee out with *vehement impatience*, *diſcontent*, *deſpaires*.

despairs, murmurings and expostulations with the Almighty God. Why hast thou dealt thus with us? and what is my sin? and who would serve such a God? *All this evil is of the Lord, why should I serve him any longer?* Brethren, these are fearful expressions, and such as do prognosticate some sudden judgments if not soundly and timely repeated of. Ah wretch! dost thou yet dispute with God? doth thy affliction seem so peculiar? which yet, many besides thee continually taste of? or so intollerable when others burdens have been far more heavy to bear than thine? thou hast an ignorant and proud spirit. Didst thou see thy sins aright, thou wouldst find little reason to murmur at thy afflictions; thou wouldst rather wonder at the mercy which hath spared thee all this while, then at the greatness of the affliction which is no way answerable to thy desert.

3. Then let us *examine* our hearts whether our afflictions have proved comforts unto us or no. That the Lord hath afflicted most of us we know well, one hath lost an husband, another a wife, another a child, another a parent, another an estate; one hath been sick of a seaver, another of the pox, and another of the plague, many of us have been at deaths door, entring into the chambers of death. But as *Anasurim* to the Princes, *What hath been done to Mordecai for this?* so I now, and what have afflictions wrought in us? I beseech you consider three things;

Consider

1. That the Lord will be accounted with for his afflictions, as well as for his mercies. The Physitian expects not onely what success his *Cordials* have had, but also what efficacy his bitter *Pills* have had. Every sickness, and every losse, and every stroke of God on thee, will assuredly come into the account. It is a messenger dispatched from God, and he looks for an answer, What said he? What did he when I struck him? Did he humble his heart? Or did he harden himself? Did he hearken unto thee? Or did he despise thee?

The Lord will be accounted with for his afflictions as well as for his mercies.

2. That the Lord hath not done with us, if afflictions have done no good upon us. Thou hast many a comfort yet left behind that God may pull away, he may pull the husband, or the wife out of thy bosom, he may blast thy name, or thy estate (*mihi nocendi artes*, as he said) God hath yet more afflictions (as

God hath not done with us if afflictions do us no good.

arrows in his quiver) and believe it, if lesser afflictions will not awaken us, God will rise in higher strokes and set them on, if we belong to him.

There is something to be done when afflictions are upon us.

3. *There is something to be done when afflictions are upon us,* nay more to be done then ordinary if ever we expect that they should prove comforts to us. For a man to think that he may lie and sleep, or rise and eat, and walk abroad as at other times, when he takes physick, this were a dangerous folly. So to imagine that good and comfort will come to us by our afflictions: when yet perhaps we hardly mind God at all; or onely look up in a cold, grave, poor formality and custome, hunting presently after earthly delights, sports, vanities, or which is worse, on sins, &c.

Ob. But how may we know whether the rod will prove a comfort to us, or no?

How may we know whether the rod will prove a comfort

Sol. I will briefly declare that unto you, If it make thee

1. *Sensible.* 2. *Mournful.* 3. *Penitential.* 4. *Fruitful.*

If it make us sensible.

1. If it make thee *sensible*: if thy afflictions be full of sharpness, and thy heart still remains full of hardness, thou canst not so much *comfort thy self, because thou art afflicted*, as thou mayest *suspect and judge thy self because thou art hardened*. We should warily look to our selves in this (and pity it also in others) that the Lord should strike us and we feel it not, that an affliction makes no impression or enterance. It doth not make us look above us (*to God*) nor within us (*to our conscience*) nor without us (*to our conversations.*) That like *Pharaoh* after all we do not set the word of God, nor the rod of God to our hearts, but plainly despise his dealings, and go on as if nothing had befallen us, nor *regard the operation of his hands*, as if we had no sins which deserved the affliction, or God intended nothing at all when he struck us with the affliction. But if in an evil day we consider and try our wayes; if thy heart becomes tender, thou feelest, and fearest, and sayest (*I have sinned*) this is a good hope that the rod may prove a comfort unto thee.

Mournful.

2. If it makes thee *mournful*: I mean not after a wordly manner; wherein we are apt naturally to exceed (for as we are inordinate in our love to the Creature, so we are passionate in our grief for it)

it) but after a *godly sort*, when upon the sense of our sins (thus provoking our father to afflict and correct us with his rod) there ariseth a filial displeasure with our selves, and grief for offending him. If a father should rebuke, and threaten, and strike, and beat the child and he laugh at it, &c. Do we in the dayes of our affliction thus humble our selves in the sight of God our father? falling down upon our knees, confessing wherein we have transgressed and wandred, lamenting and bewailing our particular strayings from his will, begging earnestly for reconciliation and Grace. *Aarons rod* which smote the rock fetched out water, much water; ah, when did our hearts melt for our sins, relent, mourn, grieve (indeed) under our afflictions? This is a sad condition, *Pharaoh* can confesse, *Ahab* humble himself, yea, Divels can tremble, yet Christians do not. If afflictions do not make our sins to be our sorrows, they will never prove in the issue to be our comforts.

3. If it makes thee to be *Penitential*: I take the word strict. Penitential. ly, as conversant only about the proper effects of repentance, which are, *foraking of old sins, and a course of new obedience*. If afflictions find thee in a wicked way, and leave thee so; if they find thee proud, and leave thee not humble; unclean, and leave thee not chaste; earthly, and leave thee not heavenly; negligent of God, and leave thee not diligent and careful for his worship and service, what comfort canst thou take by any afflictions? *The Founder hath cast thee in vain, and reprobate silver mayest thou be called*. That which the Lord spake by the Prophet to *Jerusalem*, may be justly applied unto thee, *Ezek. 24. 12. Her great scum went not forth out of her, her scum shall be in the fire. V. 13. In thy filthinesse is lewdnesse, because I have purged thee and thou wast not purged; Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthinesse any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee*. But contrariwise, if it be thus with you, that the rod hath opened your eyes to see your sins, melted your hearts for them, wrought also in you a hatred and forsaking, that iniquity is purged, and it is as the fire to the gold, refining and scouring of your dross; your pride is gone, your negligence, carelesnesse, unprofitablenesse, &c. are gone. And likewise that the rod causeth you now with *David*, to *learn Gods statutes, Psal. 119. 71. and to keep his Word, v. 67*. Or if that

that be verified on us which God promiseth, in *Ezek. 20. 37. I will cause you to pass under the rod, & I will bring you into the bond of the Covenant.* Happy is the time that ever God afflicted us, and hath thereby thus taught us to make him to be our God, and his wayes to be our wayes; nay, though it be but to bring our straying feet into his righteous paths again.

More Fruitful.

4. If it makes thee more *Fruitful*: Our afflictions (which are compared to a rod) should in this be like *Aarons rod*; though the other rods did not, yet *Aarons rod* did blossom, *Num. 17. 8. Behold the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded Almonds.* Afflictions befalling evil hearts (as water on a rock) are alwayes barren, but when they come in mercy, and end in comfort (as water on a Garden) they alwayes make the soul to bud, and blossom, and yield fruit. Not only to bud, with a solemn profession, that if ever God recover me, &c. nor only to blossom a while in some slighter acts of betterment, but to yield *Almonds*, (i. e.) to bring forth fruit indeed. The soul falls into more close and intimate communion with God, the conscience grows more exact in walking with God, and more tender over sin, the heart is more jealous of it self, the thoughts are more on heaven, more fervent in prayer, more mortified to the world, and the affections of love, desire, joy, delight, much more raised to God and Christ. Go through all the duties of your general and particular callings, all are bettered by the rod; the person is become a better husband, or wife, or master, or parent, or child, or friend and acquaintance, &c.

Doth the rod thus feed you? *Mic. 7. 14.* It is not sufficient that it scourgeth you back into right pastures, but it must put you on in a more forward pace. If Physick be blest to a man, how exceedingly doth it hasten health? and that health, what a colour it puts into the face? and also an aptitude for service and actions. So is it with afflictions if sanctified, though it be some comfort that they make us good, yet they prove most comfortable when they make us more fruitful. Oh how thou mayest then kiss the rod which taught thee the way of life, and blesse the rod which caused thee to mend thy heart and thy pace too.

Bur

But to shut up all, let no Christian at any time, feeling this rod of God upon him, *faint or be discouraged*; do not question Gods love or care. By this thou maiest know that he loves thee, that his rod is (thus) on thee, and that he hath yet a regard of thee, that his hand is upon thee for good. He *that spareth the rod hateth his child*, Prov. 13. 24. *but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes*. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth, Lam. 3. 27. I will say no more to thee at this time, but this only, Thy soul needs Physick as well as thy body. Search thy heart and wayes a little better, and thou wilt say, *It was high time that I should be afflicted*. Yea, and call to mind the former times of afflictions, not one of them was needlesse to thee, nor any one of them proved fruitlesse to thee. Only seek much and seriously unto God, for we can take forth no Lesson either by mercies or afflictions without his special teaching. Nor be discouraged though former afflictions have been fruitlesse; for as in the Preaching the Word, though many Sermons have been in vain, yet at length one comes which converts the soul; so in afflictions, though many have been slighted, yet some one may be blessed to thine everlasting good.

Use 4

Let us not
faint and be
discouraged.

P S A L. 23. 4.

— *And thy staffe they comfort me.*

YOU have seen what comfort *David* took by the *rod*, now you are to see some more comfort which he takes by the *staff* of his Shepherd.

A *Staff*] That word is taken two wayes, either,

1. *Properly*, For a special part of material wood, used by us Gen. 31. 10. to walk with; or for the shepherds, for the benefit and safety of their flocks.

2. *Metaphorically*, For some thing answerable in use and
virtue

virtue to a staff; and thus in Scripture there is a fourfold accep-
tion of that word: for either,

1. It may denote *any common preservation of life*, in which
Ezek. 4. 16. respect bread is called a *staff*, because our life depends on it, and is
upheld by it, as a weak man is upheld by his staff.

2. It may import *any person* who is of special aid and use to
Isa. 3. 1, 2. the Commonwealth wherein he lives. In which respect the
Judge and the Prophet are called the *stay* and *staff* for their abi-
lity in directing, counselling, managing and sustaining the affairs
of State for good.

3. It doth sometimes signifie *carnal and fruitless confidence*,
in which respect the *King of Egypt* (on whom the *Israelites* did
rely and lean) is stiled a *staff*, but withal, a *bruised reed*, not
strong enough for a body to rest on.

4. Lastly, It doth sometimes also signifie that *special care and
defence* which God hath over his people against their enemies.
So is it taken in this place in allusion to the *shepherds staff*: of
which *pedum Pastorale* there is a double Use;

1. One is *Protectio Ovium*, to secure and defend the
sheep.

2. Another is *Correctio Luporum*, to repress and offend the
Wolves. Answerable unto which there is in God, *first*, a
wrathful *protection* over his flock and people; and *secondly*, a
watchful *correction* and punishing of the adversaries who (like
Wolves) seek to break in, disturb, hunt and kill the sheep. Ei-
ther of these doth afford unto the Church matter of comfort;
the which I will draw forth in two propositions which I intend
to discusse:

1. That Gods watchful protection over his people is a ground
of singular comfort to them.

2. That Gods wrathful correction of the adversaries of his peo-
ple is also an occasion of comfort.

Doct. 1. I begin with the first of these; viz. That Gods watchful
Gods watch(nl) protection over his people is a ground of singular comfort to them.
protection over Look what comfort a *shadow* is in the time of heat, or a place
his people, is a of refuge is to a person hardly and straitly followed; or a *cover*
ground of sin- from a violent storm is to a Traveller, that is the protection of
gular comfort God to his servants and people, for by all them is it set forth in
to them. Isa. 4. 6. And if you will peruse the same Prophet, Isa. 41. v. 10.

13, 14. you shall plainly see this divine protection to be set out as their singular staff, and support, and comfort; *Fear not I will help thee, &c.*

Two things only will I touch on,

1. What this Divine protection is?

2. How it may yield comfort to the people of God?

Quest. 1. *What divine protection is?*

What divine

Sol. I conceive of it thus, *That it is a special part of divine Providence manifesting it self in an active care for the preservation or safe keeping of his people.* It is all summed up in that passage of the Prophet, Isa. 31. 15. *The Lord of Hosts will defend Jerusalem, defending also he will deliver it, and passing over he will preserve it.* Divine providence (as conversant about the Church) respects either,

Protection is.

1. The good which God intends to communicate unto it, and it may be called *Benediction*.

Divine Providence as conversant about the Church, imports,

2. The evils which he intends to avert from it; of which there are several branches; viz. 1. *Restriction of evils*, though intended, yet from being executed. 2. *Correction of evil men*, which is the taking of them away, as *Pharaoh*, and *Haman*, and *Herod*, &c. 3. *Detection*, which is a discovering of their vile plots and thoughts. 4. *Direction*, which is an advise to his people, what lawful way to shun the evils intended: Or else it is *protection*, which is nothing else but the upholding or securing act of divine providence in the midst, and in despite of all malice and evil opposition; though the Waves be never so unquiet, yet the ship shall bear up and ride it out; though the fire seems to be a very flame, yet the bush shall not be burnt; though the winds are very boistrous, yet the stars shall shine: Though the Wolves do howle and Lyons roar, yet the poor sheep and lambs shall be in safety: There is a staffe twixt the one and the other, as there was a valley twixt the camp of *Israel*, and the *Philistines*, or rather as there was a cloud and a pillar twixt the host of the *Egyptians*, and the host of the *Israelites*.

The good God

intends to communicate to it,

Or the evil he

intends to avert

from it, either

by,

Restriction of

evils, or,

Correction of

evil men; or,

Detection of

their plots; or,

Direction what

to do; or,

Protection

from them.

This Protection for the kinds and manner of it is two-fold.

This Protection

for the kinds

and manner of

it is;

Immediate and

and Secret.

1. *Immediate and secret*: Wherein the hand of God alone consists, and wherein his great presence doth environ them,

H h

and compass them as their shield and buckler : (Which is as a Bulwark that holds off the enemy.)

Mediate and
visible.

2. *Mediate and visible* : Which appears in the fingers of that hand, I mean the instruments which God doth raise up for the welfare, and safety, and defence of his people, (which are as the souldiers in that bulwark) as *Cyrus* and *Darius* of old, when his people were in captivity and that pious and famous *Constantine*, the great patron of Christianity against *Maximinus*, *Licinius* and other persecutors, and many Christian Kings since that time, all which is implied in, Rev. 12. 16. *The earth helped the woman* (i.) though there were floods of evil intended against the Church, and did break forth against her, yet God did protect her by men on earth, by humane aid and assistance.

This Protection is either,
Ordinary.

Again it is either a *protection*, which is

1. *Ordinary* : Which is seen in the common administration of divine providence by effects and acts in second causes made serviceable by a divine hand, for the safety of the Church against the malice and breathings of evil men.

Extraordinary.

2. *Extraordinary* ; Which is declared in some wonderful and exceeding effects, that even nature steps aside as it were to become serviceable to their safety, as in those wonders of *Egypt*, and division of the *red Sea*, &c.

Protection against evils, is,
Privative.

Again, *Divine protection against evils* is two fold.

1. *Privative* : In preventing and defeating of evils, maliciously intended, in putting by the thrust. *Take counsel and it shall come to nought.* Esa. 8. 10. *Speak the word and it shall not stand*; this is evident in the defeat of *Pharaohs* intentions for killing of the male-children, and in the frustrating of *Hamans* plots against the Jews, and *Herods* project in killing of *Christ*, Mat. 2. and likewise for killing of *Peter*, Acts 12.

Positive in supplying of
Strength.
Of endurance.

2. *Positive* in supplying of strength and aid, either of *Endurance*, notwithstanding all evil combinations, as the *Ark* was kept upon the waves, and the *Israelites* in *Egypt*, and other Captivities, and the Church preserved in all the times of per-

Or aid of
Deliverance.

secution Of *Deliverance*, which comes partly by a dread that God infuseth into the hearts of the enemies; partly by the countenance and assistance, which he affords his Church by eminent and peculiar instruments, making edicts in the behalf of the Christians; partly by over-ruling evil enemies, for secular ends.

ends in respect of themselves, but for better ends in respect of God, to side with or to permit the Church quietly to go on in the worship of God.

Qu. 2. How this divine protection against evils of evil men affords comfort to the people of God?

Sol. It may afford comfort in many respects, whether

1. You consider the *comfortable properties* of this protection, for it is

How this Protection affords Comfort.

If you consider the Comfortable Properties of this Protection.

1. *A Supreme protection*: It is one thing for a private friend to undertake the protection of a person, and another for the King and the Laws to protect a person. The former protection is corrective and weak and insufficient, it is alterable by a supreme Power, but the latter is supreme and not to be questioned or touched: now the protection of the Saints it is *Supreme*, they have the greatest King and the fundamental Laws on their side, the Word of God himself are for them: *They are mine* (saith Christ of his Disciples, and the rest whom the Father gives unto him) *and none shall take them out of mine hand*, he speaks of the *Sheep*, Jo. 10. 28. And he gives the reason of it, *verse 29. My Father which gave them me is greater then all*; he doth not say is inferiour or equal, but he is *greater*; not then some or most of them, but then *all*; and *no man is able to pluck them out of my Fathers hand*, he doth not say, They would not pluck, &c. for they are still tugging and plucking, but do what they can they shall not be able to pluck them out of my Fathers hand: If their safeties were in the hands of men, men might then pluck them away, but no hand can be strong enough for Gods hand; the hand of God is greater then all, (*i. e.*) Too high and too strong.

2. *A Sufficient Protection*: Lower protections and defences are often multiplyed or else they cannot be a safety; for dangers sometimes cannot be prevented without number: The greater number containing in it the greater strength; but the protection of the Church is single, and consists in Unity. Ever one God, and he alone is sufficient for the safety of his people. This God delivers as a Cordial to *Abraham* against all dangers and all fears, *Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield*; q. d. Thy eyes may be cast upon the world, and thou maist meditate many dangers by reason of the many evil persons among whom thou dwellest; But be not discouraged, thou hast One to protect

A Sufficient Protection.

thee, *I am thy shield*, and that is enough, *for I am the Almighty or All-sufficient God.* David hath a good passage in *Psal. 121.*

2. *My help cometh from the Lord*; and what a Lord is he? *who* (saith he) *made heaven and earth*, this is enough. He who alone by his word only, was able to make the whole world, is not he (though alone) sufficient for the safety and protection of his people? As you need no more then God to make you, and none else but Christ to redeem you, so you need none else but God to protect and keep you.

A Tender Protection.

3. *A Tender Protection*: No protection like that where the arms of defence seem to grow out of the affections of the defendant. If my child were in the arms of a Gyant, I should not conceive his safety so absolute, as if he were in the arms of his mother; for as much as affections are a more intensitive and watchful guard, though the other be more able and strong. But where infinite strength and unspeakeable affections both concur in a Guardianship, here is safety unquestionable. Now the Lord doth not only spread his arms of power over his people, but holds them also fast in most tender affections; he loves them above all the people in the world, and is more to them then the mother to the child, and therefore his eye still watcheth over them, and he that toucheth them, *toucheth the apple of his Eye.*

A Faithful Protection.

4. *A Faithful Protection*: Both for presence and continuance. If a Protector were never so high for authority, great for power, sufficient for aid, tender for affection, yet if he were negligent, if sometimes he did come with a strong guard, and at another time leave me naked; the times of his presence would not afford me so much comfort, as the times of his absence would occasion in me fear and discomfort. But it is not so with the Lord, who as he is a most *sufficient and tender* protection, so is he a most *faithful and attending* protection. There is not any one article of time wherein his eyes are not open to keep his people, *Psal. 121. 4. Behold, he who keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep* (every other keeper may sleep, nature requires it to keep himself by sleep, that he may keep us by waking; yet here's time of danger, for our safety sleeps when our keeper sleeps) but the Lord never sleeps, (i. e.) He is ever awake and watching, and therefore he adds, *v. 8. The Lord shall preserve.*

serve thy going out and coming in from this time forth and even for evermore. There is not any one danger or evil, be it never so little and inobservable by us, and be it never so great and terrible unto us, but he is alwayes present with us to guard and secure us; whether the dangers be so great as they do respect *the hazarding of our lives*, or so little as they do respect *the falling of the hair of our head*, yet concerning both, or any other, there is a perpetual providence to protect and look after us, and your shield is still about you thus, although new dangers should arise, or the old should yet continue, yet as the *mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever*, Ps. 125. 2.

2. Secondly, It must needs be a comfort to have the staff of Gods protection thus to preserve and keep us. If you also consider the effects and operations of it, v. g. 1. Either the *crushing of evil in the womb*, making of it abortive in the conception. 2. Or the *frustrating of the evil* from fastning upon us: that the sword which is whet shall not enter, and the snare that is laid shall not catch. 3. Or the *retorting of evil upon the contrivers of evil*: that they shall catch themselves and intangle themselves with their own devices and trapps. 4. Or the *converting of all those evils to the good of the Church*; that the malice of evil men shall onely drive the snip and not sink it, scour the mettall and not consume it; drive the sheep together but not lose them, make the Church better and prepare them for greater mercies; all these afford much and singular comfort, &c.

3. Thirdly, It must needs be a comfort to have God to be a comfort, to have God to be our Staff of protection, whether you consider,

1. *The malice of evil men*, which is deep and implacable: there are none in the world, whom evil men do hate with that mortal hatred as they do the godly: Witnesse *Cain's* murdering of *Abel*, and *Sauls* seeking the life of *David*, &c. as the Shepherds were an abomination to the *Egyptians*, so the sheep of Christ are an abomination to wicked persons; *He that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked*, Prov. 29. 27.

2. *The power of evil men*: Generally they have the stronger arms

Consider the effects and operations of his protection.

Crushing evil in the womb. Frustrating the evil intended. Retorting of evil upon the contrivers.

Converting of all to good.

Gods protection is comfortable.

Whether we consider The malice of evil men.

The power of evil men.

arms of flesh to draw out their sword of malice and hatred. The *Beast* in the *Revelation* had the *horns and the crowns*, most of earthly powers and authorities; *ten horns and ten crowns*, Rev. 13. 1.

The number of
evil men.

3. *The number of evil men*: They are as the *Philistims* to the *Israelites* army; as the sand of the sea shore to a little herd or flock of sheep. Take away all the Infidels, the professed Atheists and enemies of God and Christ, and also the secret enemies, false Prophets, hereticks, &c. *Elijah* cries out *I am left alone*, and there was but seven thousand of the hundred thousand which clave unto the Lord.

The Practice
of evil men.

4. The *practice* of evil men which is onely to devise mischief and to shoot against the righteous. *Let us smite Jeremiah with the tongue; let us take the houses of God in possession*. Either lying disgraces, or foul obloquies, or troublefom snares, or some act of cruelty or other is hammering and contriving.

All which is a
delight unto
them.

5. *All which is a delight to them*. It is ἡδονὴ ἑργον they are doing that which their souls delight in, *Aha, so would we have it*, that which they prefer above all, when they are injuriously contriving against and handling of the people of God. Now must it not be a comfort to have a Protector and a staff to uphold us, to help us against such a violent and unappeasable malice, which intends nothing but mischiefs, and that in the worst and greatest kind, (namely, not only to take away our lives, but also the truths and word of God which are the staff of our souls and comforts, &c.) especially if we consider also our own impotency who are of our selves a weak, little company, &c.

Use

But to make a little application of this to our selves. Is the Lord the *staff* of his people in the days of evil, is he their defence, their Protection?

Then the con-
dition of the
Church is ne-
ver desperate.

1. Then first, *The condition of the Church is never desperate* nor forlorn: We usually fix our eyes on the calamities of the Church and on the enemies of the Church, and on the weakness of the Church, but if we look not on the protection of the Church, on the safeties of the Church, on the Shepherds staffe, but onely on the wolves fierceness and clamour; on the floods, but not on the Eagles wings which were given unto her to mount up and fly, Rev. 12.

we

we must needs be discouraged. Either we do not consider that the Church hath a God to be her Guardian, or else we do not know what it is for one to have God himself to be his staff and protection. The *Disciples* were *safe* enough when *Christ* was in the *Ship*; and people are secure enough who have the Lord to be their Keeper and Protector.

2. Nay secondly, *The condition of the people of God is more safe and secure then of any people.* Take all the wicked on the earth in all their state and power and number, they cannot all of them shew such a shield for their safety as the poorest godly person can. They can shew swords and targets, and bowes, and Devils, and malice, and powers, but none of them can shew a God to be their Protector. If powers be a better guard then weakness; if wisdom be a better guard, then folly; if infiniteness, then restrainedness; if immutability then mortality; if God, then the creature; the condition then of the Church (which hath the Lord God to be her Staff of protection) is most sure and safe.

3. Then let the *people of God restrain fear.* If a man were in the midst of the sea, amongst the naked waves, he might have just cause to fear; but being in the midst of them, and in the midst of a strong Ark he needs not to fear; though there be many enemies yet if the Castle be strong and firm, &c. *Isa. 51. 12, 13. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker that hath stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?* Two Arguments he here presents why we are afraid of men, and the evils that they can do:

One is that we do not consider the weakness of man, that he is but *grasse* and *must die* v. 12.

Another is, that we do forget the greatness of God, we do forget him in his great power (who did stretch out the heavens, &c.) and in his neer relation to us, that he is our maker, q. d. if you did rightly know and believe the greatness of your God you would not fear man. If you knew what a power he shewed in the making of you, and of the heaven and earth, you should consider the Lord more and take heart, it is an infallible truth that the best people alwayes live under the best protection.

Live by Faith.

4. *Live by Faith*: Upon this that God is your Staff, and that he is your Protector: let it not be a meer notion but make it an unquestionable truth, put your seal of faith unto it, and in your distresses or troubles fly unto the Lord for his protection. So did *Jehesaphat* when the great multitude of the children of *Ammon* and *Moab*, and *Mount Seir* came against him, *O our God* (saith he) *wilt thou not judge them, for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us? neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee.* Here was a time of great danger and now his faith did exert it self, partly by renouncing all humane confidence and defence. *We have no might* (i.) of our selves alone; partly by settling on divine assistance but *our eyes are upon thee*, resting on God, and expecting aid from him. Thus did *David* often when his enemies consulted and imagined against him. *Psal. 62. 3.* then he charged his soul to look up and to wait onely on God *v. 5.* and he gives the reasons of it in *v. 6. & 7.* *He onely is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence, I shall not be moved, in God is my salvation and glory; the rock of my strength and my refuge is in God.* And hereupon he exhorts all people in dangers *v. 8.* *Trust in him at all times ye people, pour out your hearts before him. God is a refuge for us. Selah.*

See him also in

Psal. 61. 2, 3, 4.

Psal. 64. 1. 2. &

Psal. 57. 1, 2, 3.

Motives.

It is all one, to have no protection, and not to use it.

Consider a few *Motives* for this and then I shall quit the point.

1. *It is all one to have no protection, as not to use it*: What is the strong rock if the conies run not into them being hunted? or what is the strongest Castle if not used when the enemies come? or what is all the arm of Gods strength, if we want an hand of Faith, or put not our hand of Faith on Gods arm of power in time of our distresse? Gods powerful protection is in Scripture compared sometimes to a *Shield*, sometimes to a *Rock*, sometimes to a *Castle*, sometimes to a *strong Tower*: what are any of these for actual defence if not made use on? *The name of the Lord is a strong Tower* (but then *Solomon* adds) *the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.* It is a strength in it self, but not a safety, unless we run into it: yea, though the person be righteous (and he it is to whom safety is promised) yet must he by faith run into this Tower if that he would have safety granted unto him.

2. *A believing on this Staff, a leaning on it by faith shall be* He that leans sure to find it stretched out for good. Our protection it is a staff, upon this staff not in mans hand but Gods, and when Faith leans on it, it will shall find it then walk and work for the believer, Psal. 33. 20. *He is our help* stretched out and our shield. V. 21. *Our hearts shall rejoyce in him, and we* for good. *have trusted upon his holy name. Our Fathers trusted in thee* (here was Faith) *and thou didst deliver them.* Psal. 22. 4. & v. 5. *They cried unto thee and were delivered, they trusted in thee and were not confounded; David found it thus often for his own part: Did not Jacob find it so when his brother met him with four hundred men? Did not Jehoshaphat find it so, upon praying and trusting, that the valley of Bacha was turned into the valley of Berachah? Be confident that Faith will either keep the fire from you, or keep you in the fire, as the three children in Daniel. It will either find a hand to hold off evil or to uphold you in the times of evil.*

2 Chron. 20.
12. 20. 16.

3. If you could trust on the Lord for his protection in times of dangers *not onely safety would befall you, but much other* Not only safety but much other good will befall us by trusting. *good,* v. g.

First, It would be an excellent means to keep up your sincerity: Whats the reason that many in times of dangers, fly out so strangely, either omit some duty, or commit some sin or other? Is it not because they are distrustful on God? they exalt not his power of protection, they lean not on his staff, they do not believe that God will protect them, they do not oppose it against all the plots and attempts of evil men. But if we were satisfied of Gods protection alone, and did trust to it, we would keep on our path, neither bend to the right hand nor to the left, but would keep on in the good and safe way. The way is Gods way, and being in his way I am confident of his protection, &c.

Secondly, It would be an excellent means to keep up tranquillity: All the turbulent division that is in our affections, doth principally arise from the division which is in our minds, *We have double minds, and therefore have doubtful thoughts and fearful affections.* A man is under the power of every mans power and of his threats, and of his evils, whiles not fixing his heart on Gods protection; just like a ship in the midst of the sea without an anchor, tossed with every wave and every wind; but

a believing, settling on, or leaning on the staff of Gods protection breeds a sweet harmony and peace. *David* thought so in *Psal. 112. 7.* *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord,* v. 8. his heart is established he shall not be afraid. When a man by Faith seeth him who is invisible, and finds him who is omnipotent encompassing him round about with his promises, with his gracious providence, there can be no sufficient cause of perturbation unto him. In two cases we may in quietness and patience possess our souls; One is when *no evil is neer us*: Another is, when a greater power and defence is neerer to us than the neereſt evil can be. *David* was on a sudden pursued by *Absalom* his son, and in very great danger, what doth he at this time? he prayes *Psal. 3. 4.* *I cried unto the Lord;* and he believes, v. 3. *Thou O Lord art a Shield for me,* and hereupon comes tranquility into his soul, v. 5. *I laid me down and slept, I awaked for the Lord sustained me.*

It would keep
up constancy.

Thirdly, It would be a good means to keep up constancy: Our perseverance in the acts of piety doth singularly depend on our dependance on Gods fidelity and power, on the sufficiency of his strength and assistance. If I have him sure to my soul and to my body, why should I be daunted, or stagger, or fall away. That souldier may well abide the field who fights under an invincible shield, and is ever armed with an unconquerable protection.

If you will
find this staff
of protection.
Keep in Gods
ways.

Fifthly, But a word of *Cautiō* to all this, and then an end. If you will find this staff of protection against dangers and evils, be advised, *To keep in Gods wayes*: Shields of Salvation hang not in the paths of Transgression: there you may find Gods sword against you, but never shall you find his staff for you. As Sanctuaries reach not to all places but are confined to such a circuit of ground, so Gods defence and protection extends not to us if we go beyond holy ground, I mean, if our feet carry us to paths that are not holy.

P. S A L. 23. 4.

— And thy staffe doth comfort me.

YOU have seen the first Use of the Shepherds staff which is for protection and defence in respect of the sheep, now I proceed to the second Use thereof which is for *offence* and *correction* in respect of the *wolves* which are adversaries to the sheep, from which also *David* gathers comfort: whence it may be observed.

That Gods corrective staff of the adversaries of his people affords cause of comfort unto them.

2 Doct.

Gods corrective staff of the

Here two things are to be supposed, viz.

1. That the people of God have adversaries, therefore are they compared to the sheep amongst the wolves, and the lillie among the thorns, and to the rock amidst the waves; peruse the histories Sacred and Ecclesiastical and you shall find it so, even from *Abel* to this very day, secret adversaries, or open adversaries, or both. The Serpent and Foxes; the Dragon and the Wolves.

adversaries of his people is cause of comfort to them. Two things to be supposed. Evil men are against the people of God.

2. That as their hearts and powers are stretched out against the people of God, so the staff of Gods powerful providence is stretched out against the adversaries of his people; and that especially three ways.

And God is against them.

1. *Expressive*: By way of expression; thus you may see this staff walking in every threatening which God hath spoken. His threatening is a holding up of his staff: that it shall not be well with the wicked, and that he will bathe his sword in blood, and make it drunk with the blood of his adversaries, to whom he will repay vengeance and recompence them to their faces and that he will bruise them in pieces with a rod of iron.

By threatening of them.

2. *Repressive*: Which is an holding of the adversaries of his people (as we say) at the staffs end, by stopping of their fury and injecting or raising such arguments or accidents which do repress and hold off the adversary from insulting, &c. Isa. 59.

By casting impediments in their way.

19. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the

Lord shall lift up a standard against him. Thus was it when Sennacherib threatned Judas and Hezekiah, he was pluckt back, and when David was hunted by Saul, Saul was called home. So by Constantines means were the persecutions stopped.

By Punishment
of them,

3. *Depressive*, which is the laying of it on; when the Lord doth by judgments and punishments chastise the pride and malice of the adversaries of his people. Not only conserve his own people, not only frustrates the plots of wretched men, but also confounds and destroys them. Thus did he to Pharaoh and his host, pursuing his flock and people of Israel, his staff was on him, his judgment, *he overwhelmed him and his host in the red Sea*. So likewise to Sisera and Jabin, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, to Haman the adversary of the Jews, to the adversaries of Daniel, to Herod the adversary of the Church, who was eaten up of Worms, to Pilate the adversary of Christ, who destroyed himself, to Arius the enemy of the divinity of Christ, whose bowels fell from him, so to Julian through whose heart an arrow struck from heaven; scarce any one of the persecuted Emperours, who went off from the Stage of the world, without some strange disease or end.

Three circumstances observable of Gods punishments observable in Gods punishing adversaries.

1. That though every individual adversary be not struck, yet usually the most eminent are attained. *Pœna ad unum, Terror ad omnes*; This is his mercy to warn the rest by the punishment of some.

2. That Gods judgment doth not alwayes at present fall upon them, yet in the event it shall; it is not speedily executed; he doth not alwayes presently strike, where yet he intends assuredly to wound. This is his patience.

3. That his judgments on them when they do light are usually very fearful and terrible; such as fill the world and cause dread and terrour: They do not go off in the ordinary way of punishment, but are stigmatized with a scar of wrath, which shall make their names odious to all posterity, *Isa 27. 7. Hath he smitten him as he smote those that smote him, Psal. 58. 10. He shall take them away with a whirlwind, and in his wrath.*

3. That

3. That this executing of judgment on the adversaries affords comfort to Gods people: So the Scriptures abundantly declare, *Psal. 58. 10. The righteous shall rejoyce when he seeth the vengeance, he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, Rev. 18. 20. Speaking of the destruction of Babylon, saith the Spirit; rejoyce over her thou heaven, and ye holy Apostles and Prophets, for God hath avenged you on her. Psal. 119. 52. I remembered thy judgments of old, and have comforted my self.* And we read of special rejoycings by the Church of God upon the destruction of their enemies. *Moses Song* was penned upon the occasion of *Pharaohs* drowning, and *Deborahs Song* upon the destruction of *Sisera*, and the *Jewes festival* upon the destruction of *Haman*, and *Davids 18th Psalm*, upon his deliverance from the hand of all his enemies.

But how far forth, and in what respects Gods punishments and judgments on the adversaries of his people may afford unto them matter of comfort, this is very disputable.

Sol. I think it may in some measure be thus resolved,

1. The Judgments of God on them may be considered two ways, either

As meer and extreme miseries: Thus we are not to take comfort by reason of them on any man *καυχῆσθαι*, a rejoycing in the evil of another, is a very evil rejoycing. The common nature wherein all men are bound together, commands pity, and forbids delight in misery. Religion bids us to do no evil, and nature forbids us to rejoyce in evil.

As expressions of Divine justice. Though I would not rejoyce to see a person executed, yet I may rejoyce to see the Law executed. So far forth as judgments on evil men are the arrests of the justice of God, declarations of his truth and righteousness, as they are the vengeance which he executes, it is lawful to take comfort.

2. The Judgments of God on them may be considered either as,

A dissolution of their persons, or,

A dissolution of their wickedness, by which God hath been so much dishonoured, and probably had been more dishonoured upon a survival. So far as it is a common calamity incident to nature to be sick and die, I am to expresse no rejoycing, but so far as the dissolution of the natural Union, infers with it

This executing of judgment affords comfort to Gods people.

How far may we make the judgments on adversaries matter of comfort to us.

Judgments on adversaries may be considered.

As meer and extreme miseries.

Or, as expressions of divine justice.

Or they may be considered, As a dissolution of their persons Or of their wickedness.

the.

the extinction of preternatural wickednesse, and an expiration of dishonour against God, I may be glad and take much comfort. Comfort, not that the man is come to his end; but comfort, that the *wickednesse of the wicked is come to an end.*

Or they may be considered as,
A Personal Ruine; or,
A Doctrinal Warning.

3. *Thirdly*, The Judgments of God on them may be considered either as,

1. *A Personal Ruine.*

2. *A Doctrinal Warning.*

So far as it is but ruin and destruction, I must sit still and leave the persons to God; but so far as divine strokes on some wicked men may prove exemplary instructions to other wicked men, that they shall *hear, and fear, and not go on any more against the godly*, but seeing the judgments on others, turn from the same sins which might pull down the same judgments; So far may I take comfort and rejoyce, that the wounding of some is the healing of many; though not immediately in the eversion of some, yet occasionally, as this proves a means for the conversion of others.

Or they may be taken
Formally; or;
Redundantly.

4. *Fourthly*, The Judgments of God on the adversaries of his people, either are to be taken,

Formally, As it is a grievous punishment and removal of mercies to many.

Redundantly, As some excellent mercy may result or arise thereupon to the sheep or Church of Christ.

Though I dare not take delight to see any mans conscience racking and pulling him like hell, or the vengeance of God wounding of him in terror, and like a whirlwind, carrying him, &c. Yet as upon this destruction there doth arise mercy and good to the Church, that it now (upon the removing of the *Impedit*) obtains more freedom, countenance, protection, peace and encouragement, in, and to the true worship of God; I may both be comforted and rejoyce. When, *Act. 12. 23. Herod was eaten up of worms, v. 24. the Word of God grew and multiplied; The Church had rest: It was edified in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and walked in the fear of the Lord, Act 9. 31.* Now it is a just and lawful occasion of rejoycing and comfort, if God himself be pleased (though it be in a way of judgment to others) to make way for a more calm, and safe, and free opportunity

tunity of his own service unto his own people.

5 *Fifthly*, The judgments on wicked men may be considered *Or they may* either, *Absolutely*, in themselves for they are *mala tristitia*. *I* be considered, *interpretatively*, as they are testimonies of Gods special providence and care over his Church; that he is sensible of their injuries, and burdens, and pities their dntresses, and will not suffer the rod of the wicked alwayes to be on the back of his servants, but in their deliverance declares and manifests his Covenant of mercy, and truth, and power. Thus as the *Israelites* when God remembred their bondage and sent *Moses* to deliver them, *they bowed the head and worshipped*: so may any of the people of God blesse the Lord and rejoyce that he remembers his Covenant, and them in their low estate. Though not for the meer afflictions of others absolutely considered, yet for the conviction of others hereby, that God doth not forsake his people, but knows their souls in adversity, and will be neer and faithful, and shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose hearts are upright before him. Hence that of the Psalmist, *Pf. 9. 16 The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth*: Wicked men do swell, and rage, and exalt themselves, and go on as if there were no God but themselves, or as if there were not a God who respected and lookt after them that fear him; but when this God shall arise to judg the nations, and once becomes terrible to the people, and lifts up the poor from the dung-hill, and magnifies himself in the protection of his people, and confusion of their adversaries; now he is known in his power to be above all, and in his justice to recompence evil to the wicked, and in his truth in keeping covenant for ever with his own people. See *Psal. 59. 13. Consume them in wrath, consume them that they may not be, and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.*

6. Lastly, This staff of judgment laid on wicked men, may be looked on either as *an inchoation of misery to wicked men*, which we may look on with pitiful eyes. *Or an inchoation of Redemption to good men*, on which we may look with joyful hearts: for every judgment of God on the wicked adversaries, is an assured testimony of a more severe wrath to follow, and it is an infallible pledge to the godly, of their final and complete redemption, from

Absolutely, or Interpretatively.

Or it may be considered, As an Inchoation of misery to wicked men; or, An Inchoation of Redemption to good men.

from all opposite malice and powers seated either in men or Devils.

And thus have you heard what this staff of Correction and Judgment is, and on whom it falls, and in what respects the strokes thereof affords matter and occasion of comfort to the people of God. It now remains that I make some Application of this, and so conclude.

Use I

This may strike terror in-
to the adver-
saries of Gods
people.

In the first place, *It may serve for wonderful amazement and terror to the adversaries of Gods people* on whom they lay load in all expressions of malice. Their hearts are against them, and their counsels are still projecting against them, and their tongues (like sharp rasors and swords) are whet against them in all scandalous, ignominious, virulent, disgraceful reproaches; and their hands are against them in all the strength and wayes that can be imagined for their utmost subversion and ruine. But stay! hear what the Lord saith, *Isa. 3. 14, 15. What mean you that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? The Lord will enter into judgment with you. The Lord is wise in heart and mighty in strength, who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered?* said *Jeb*, ch 9. 4. The same in some sort is true of the people of God, who ever hardened his heart against them and prospered? *For their redeemer is mighty, and he shall plead their cause with thee*, Prov. 23. 11. 'Tis true, there may be no man to plead their cause, but yet there is a God that will do it, who is greater in power and more terrible in judgment. Consider,

God will cer-
tainly plead the
cause of his
people.

1. *He will certainly plead their cause.* He hath not only said it, but Covenanted it; and not only bound his word with truth, but with an Oath, that he will judge in the behalf of his servants. If the adversaries of Gods people repent not, they are as sure to be struck with judgment in this life, or else to be damned hereafter, as sure as God is God.

God will plead
with their ene-
mies in wrath
and fury.

2. *The Lord will plead with them in wrath and fury.* I think of all the sinners in the world, there are none so extremely abominable to God as the adversaries of his people; for indeed they are the most daring wretches and desperate, that dare through the people of God, even to fight against God himself. And however punishment may either be omitted or remitted to others, yet with these the Lord will deal in fire and burning, in the

the zeal of his wrath, and with devouring tempests. *They shall drink of the very dregs of his fury, and he will dash them in pieces like a potters vessel.* Histories do record some *vestigia* and pre-sages of this on wicked adversaries even in this life; what peculiar and mysterious diseases, flaming and racking their spirits and joynts, or rotting their bowels? Or else what surpassing vengeance hath lighted on the consciences of them, to the ease whereof they have endeavoured to rent out their own souls? O then! what is that blackness of darkness, that river of brimston kindled by the breath of the Lord; that everlasting blacknesse, those flames of fire, that unconceivable judgment which is reserved for them in the lowest regions of Hell hereafter!

3. *And how suddenly the Lord may awake to the judgment,* How suddenly.
may the Lord
awake unto
judgment. what one wicked adversary can tell? That the enemies of the Lord shall perish, it is unquestionable; and in the usual dispensation of divine justice on earth, this we may observe, That the Execution thereof (when it presents it self) is both great and speedy. Even when the adversaries are triumphing and crying *Peace, peace, then cometh sudden destruction.* Rev. 18. 8. *Her plagues shall come in one day, nay, in one hour.* Ver. 10. *Death, and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burnt with fire, for strong is the Lord who judgeth her.*

Therefore let us fear and take heed least any way, either secretly or professedly, by word or deed we play the Wolves against the sheep of Gods pasture. Their Shepherd hath a staff of iron: it is in his own hand, and it will be stretched out against you. If you will be adversaries to Gods people, assuredly the Lord will be an adversary to you, you shall never go off unpunished, but the Lord will certainly judge you, and that with forest vengeance. If he should strike thee whiles thou art plotting against the just, or acting against his people, what a dismal account hast thou to make before him? Well! repent and take the counsel of *Pilates wife*, *Have thou nothing to do with that just man*; or else *Gamaliels* counsel, *Fight not against God.*

Secondly, Here is yet *comfort to the people of God*, that he hath a staff, not only to keep off, but to chastize their adversaries, Use 2
Comfort to the
people of God. be they never so great, and never so many, and never so subtil. It falls out oft times that they have none on earth to right them,

to stand for them, to judg for them. In the Primitive persecutions, how at once did their adversaries accuse and condemn them? and they had none for many years amongst the sons of men to hear their cries, or to respect their apologies. But yet here is a staff of comfort, that there is a God that regards them, will hear them, will judge for them, and will overthrow all the adversaries of Truth and righteousness: he will be known by the executing of judgment, and every man shall say, *Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth*, Psal 58. 11.

Aie, but the
time is long.

Object. Yea, but men are apt to say, *The time is long. O God, how long shall the adversaries reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy Name for ever? Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom*, Psal. 74. 10, 11. And so those, in Rev. 6. 10. *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

Sol. To this I answer,

Their times of
judgment are
in Gods hand.
God brings
forth his judg-
ments in season
The time is
not far off.
It shall be,
When their sins
are high.

1. As our times of mercy, so *their times of judgment are in Gods hand.*

2. God doth not only bring forth his mercies but also *his judgments in season.*

3. But the term of Gods judgments on evil men is not farre.

1. *When their sins grow high:* When you see the Corn grow ripe, then the Sickle is prepared; *When the iniquity of the Amorites was full*, then they were destroyed. The godly are gathered like a Sheaf, and the wicked are consumed as the Stubble. God usually judgeth evil men when their sinnings grow so notorious that all the world shall acquit God as most just in punishing them.

When their
practises grow
insolent.

2. *When their practises grow insolent*, that they are controlling of, and justling of God himself; not only bear down his people but his authority, Psal. 119. 126 *It is time for thee, O Lord, to work, for they have made void thy Law.*

When their
malice is at the
highest.

3. *When their malice is at the highest*, that they are contriving or acting some radical ruine to the whole profession of holiness. As *Pharaoh*, when did God begin to judg him? surely when he had plotted the extinction of all the *Israelites* in their first.

first-born. And *Haman*, when did God take him off? but even then when he had conspired the death and utter ruine of all the Jewes.

4. *When the people of God have none to pity or help; at the lowest, when they are shut up and there is no going out, no coming in. They have no power in themselves, no help from man, Psal. 12. 5. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord, I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. Now the Lord appears when he appears alone.* When the people of God have none to pity and help

5. *When the people of God are diligent in Reformation, doing their best, vehement in supplication, purging their hearts, and lifting up their hands and cries unto the Lord for help and judgment. The yoke of the Babylonish Captivity was broken off, when God poured the Spirit of Grace and supplication upon the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. Zach. 12. 9, 10. It shall come to passe in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the Nations that come against Jerusalem, ver. 10. And I will pour upon, &c.* When the people of God are diligent in Reformation.



P S A L. XXIII.

Verf. 5. *Thou preparest a Table before me, in the presence of mine enemies : Thou anointest my head with oile, my Cup runneth over.*

DAVID having insinuated the singular and ample providence of God over him in the Parable of a *Shepherd*, he doth in this verse continue an amplification of the same goodnesse in another Parable of a *Magnificent Host*, entertaining his Guests with all variety of Dainties and goodly usage.

The sense of
the words.

Concerning the Sense of the Words, there are three Opinions :

1. One somewhat *ridiculous*, which *Genebrardus*, *Arias Montanus* and others of the Pontefician Interpreters force and extort ; Who by the *Table* have understood the *Altar* for the *Masse* ; and by the *Cup*, the *Eucharistical Cup* in the *Sacrament* ; and by the *Oil*, that *Chrisma Confirmativum* used by themselves. An Interpretation so fond, that the very recitation of it is (I believe) confutation enough.

2. A second is more *Pious* ; which is this, That God in Christ, by his Word and Spirit doth confer on his people abundance of graces (like varieties on a Table) and much admirable
peace,

peace, and joyful tranquility in conscience (which is as oil for gladnesse) and besides all these, an *exceedingly exceeding weight of glory*, or future happiness, which is as a cup that runneth over.

I confesse such spiritual meditations may be well raised by reason of some Analogy 'twixt the one and the other. Yet,

3. The third opinion is *most congruous*, which refers all the expressions in the Text to Gods abundant goodness and kindness to *David* in the things of this life, viz. in a way of *Nobleness, as it were, and State*. Not for meer necessity, but for variety. A fulness (*thou preparest a Table for me:*) A delightfulness, (*thou anointest my head with oil.*) A plentifulness, (*my Cup runneth over.*)

Before I draw forth the Propositions on which I intend to insist, it will be meet in a brief Paraphrase to give the sense and meaning of the words in the Text.

Thou] (*i.*) Who art my God, my Lord, my Shepherd.

Preparest a Table, &c.] (*i.*) Providest all things necessary for my life, and sets them before me as so many dishes on the Table: Thou bringest many mercies to my hand, to my mouth, and dost with the variety of them, after a sort, feast me.

In the presence of mine enemies] (*i.*) *Hostibus meis videntibus*; nay, *invidentibus*. Though mine enemies with my ruine, and malevolently repine, grudge and envy at every mercy that befalls me, and would (if they could) prevent, hinder, frustrate any good and comfort; yet against all their desires, malice, envies, repinings and endeavours, thou preparest a Table for me. Yea, and

Thou anointest my head with Oil] There was *Oleum Regale*, with which Kings were anointed; and *Oleum Sacerdotale*, with which the high Priests were anointed; and *Oleum Convivale*, such as was poured on friends or guests at their entertainments; and it was usually *Oleum Aromaticum*, Oil mixt with some other spices, and sweet ingredients; and it was used not so much for Necessity as for Elegancy and delight. By which *David* here intimates, that God beside necessities, had also entertained him with many accessories, with the *Oil of dignity*, and the *Oil of gladness and delight*.

My Cup runneth over] The *Septuagint* (whom *S. Austin* and *Euthymius* erroneously follow therein) read τὸ ποτήριόν σου, *calix tuus*, thy Cup. *S. Jerom* takes this off by imputing an error to the Edition. The *Vulgar Translation* read it *Calix meus inebrians*, my cup is drunk. In the *Hebrew* it is כוסִי רוּיָה *cofi revajah*, from רוּיָה *ravah*, which signifies *rigare* & *rigari*. The summe is, That his Cup (.i.) His outward portion and allowance in externals was not scant and sparing, but (did run over, .i.) it was very plentiful and large, he had enough and to spare. *Psal.* 103. 1, 2. *Blesse the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me blesse his holy Name: Blesse the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*

Out of all this, there are three things very remarkable;

1. *David's* grateful and distinct acknowledgment of mercies and blessings.

2. Gods liberal and bountiful provision for *David*.

3. The effectual Collation of much good and kindnesse on him, notwithstanding all the malevolence and resistance of his adversaries.

From the first of these, this Proposition is observable,

Doct. That it is a fit duty with a fervent gratefulnesse to acknowledge all the mercies and blessings which God hath conferred upon us.

It is a fit duty with frequent gratefulnesse to acknowledge all the mercies of God. Grateful acknowledgment of mercies is very meet.

Here are two Branches in this one assertion,

1. One, That a grateful acknowledgment of mercies is very meet; this is evident here in *David's* practice, who is as absolute a pattern for thankfulnesse in this verse as ever you read; for,

1. He doth not forget the blessings conferred on him by God, but minds and meditates on them.

2. As he doth not bury them in Oblivion, so neither in silence (as he did the talent in a napkin) but speaks of mercies received, as well as thinks of them. Though it be Wisdom to conceal our own abilities, yet it is but Justice to publish Gods goodnes.

3. And in speaking of them, it is not after a grumbling murmuring, discontented and repining manner, (*This Man-*
na,

na, said the *Israelites*, and can he give bread also) but the mercies are opened both with cheerful and exact declarations.

There are four Circumstances which concur to an exact acknowledgment of blessings or mercies.

Four circumstances concur to the exact acknowledgment of mercies, When the number is exact.

1. *When the number is exact*: I mean when every mercy is gathered up into the thankful account, no one fragment of them is lost but summed up. When men express their mercies as they do confess their sins by halves, and they are not so many but few: This is a wrong and injury unto God and his goodness. But *David's* Arithmetick is full, he drowns no mercy, conceales none of the Lands, but his speech implies even all the mercies which he had received.

2. *When the value is exact*: Though a man gives in the full account, yet if he doth belie the dignity and worth (as *Ananias and Saphira* did about the selling of their Lands) he is unjust; mercies must be acknowledged to their full value, as *Abraham* paid his money to the full value, currant money with the Merchant; so doth *David* here, give every mercy its full allowance and weight. He doth not speak of them diminutively, God hath done a little for me, it is not much God knows, almost as much as will serve the turn, &c. No! but gives an Emphasis to all the mercies. *Its a Table, and sweet ointment, and an abounding cup.*

When the value is exact.

3. *When the application is exact*: We are generally good accomptants for other mens sins and mercies, we can set them out to the full, *fertilior seges alieno, &c. Vicinunque pecus, grandius uber habet*; we can rate them at the highest, this is but envy; but thankfulness, is to give in the value of our own mercies, to speak well of the goodness which God sheweth to us. *I will tell you what he hath done for my soul.* So doth *David* here, he acknowledgeth the table for him, and the oyl for him, and that his own cup did overflow.

When the application is exact.

4. *When the cause is exactly acknowledged*: Thus *David* here, when he hath cast up all the mercies, and given unto them their value, and confessed his interest, he doth not now bow the knee and adore himself, sacrifice to his own net, bless and magnifie his own abilities, Merits, Wisdome, Industry, &c. but humbly falls down and presents all at the feet of God, confessing

When the cause is exactly acknowledged.

blessing him in his free mercy to be the author of all these blessings. *Thou preparest, &c. thou anointest my head, &c.* Jacob was on the same key of thankfulness, *Gen. 32. 10. I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands; Loe, a sweet acknowledgment not of one, or of a few mercies, but of all, and a distinct acknowledgment, how he had thriven from one man into two bands, and all ascribed unto the goodness of his God, Psal. 147. 1. Praise is comely, Psal. 33. 1. Praise is comely for the upright.* It is a comely thing to see the trees breaking and budding and flowering in the spring, and it is a comely thing to see a man blessing of God, acknowledging his goodness under the presence and sense of mercies: grateful acknowledgment of mercies is meet for the people of God.

Reasons of it.

Mercies to them are Gods affectionate expressions.

1. *Because to the faithful (such as David) they are Gods kind expressions, affectionate expressions.* Every mercy to a good man in any kind is a token of love, its a drop from a gracious affection, ergo it is βασιλικον δοεον. Though little, yet its out of love. &c.

They are free and undeserved Benedictions.

2. *Because they are free and undeserved benedictions:* Though we do murmur even in fulness, yet we are not worthy of the crumbs under the table: *It is of his mercy that we are not consumed,* said the Church, how much more then is it of his mercy that we are blessed; that he gives us health and wealth, and peace, and liberty. In all our miseries we have reason to be silent, for our sins deserve greater evils then ever we have felt. In all our mercies we have reason to be thankful, for our sins are such that we do not deserve the least mercy which ever we enjoyed.

Mercies are lost if not acknowledged.

3. *Mercies are lost if not acknowledged:* The sweetness of them is lost where the heart is unthankful; the course of them is stoppt, if not acknowledged: the child must suck the breasts or else the milk will dry up, and mercies will not stay or increase where the heart is unsensible, or the tongue is silent. The unpraying Person gets no mercy, and the unthankful man shall quickly be rid of them.

It is justice to pay in our rent for mercies.

4. *Is it any more then justice to pay in our Rent for so good a lease as that of mercies?* If a man hath a hard bargain he

he must pay his rent, but if a good lease and a small rent &c. Its true we can pay in unto God no quit-rent, yet a pepper corn, a flower he doth expect, that we should affectionately acknowledg: This is a mercy from God, and this I have of his goodness; a small and just return under all goodness, to confess all these are the mercies which the Lord hath graciously given unto his servant.

2. The second branch of the assertion is, *that a frequent acknowledgment of Gods mercies is a meet duty*, David is at it of Gods mercies is a meet duty. in the beginning of this Psalm, and the tune pleaseth him so well that he goes it over again in this verse. Read Psalm 103. 1. 2.

How he doth inforce it on himself: *Blesse the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, Blesse his holy name: Blesse the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.* There are three things wherein I find David very frequent. One is an humble confession of sin. Another is a great desire to trust on Gods truth, A third is a grateful acknowledgment of Gods mercies.

There are two things which we should never forget. One is *our sins* by which we have dishonoured God; Another, *Gods mercies* wherewith he doth bless us. We should take occasion and repeat the mercies of God, thus he delivered me, thus he succoured me, thus he restored me, thus he favoured me.

Reasons of this assertion, many;

1. *Thankfulness is as imperfect a Grace in us as any*: and Thankfulness is as imperfect we are as in all other Graces so in *this to strive after more perfection*, now frequent thanking makes us more thankful. If a man cannot pay all at once, yet often payments still addes and makes the payment more full; often believing is a further strength to Faith, and often acknowledging of mercies makes our hearts yet more strong in thanksgiving.

2. *We can never overthank the Lord*: As sins can never be overpunished, so mercies can never be overacknowledged. When we have done about our blessing of God as David and they did in weeping, *weep till they could weep no more*; so we bless till our tongues can speak no more, yet such is the desert of mercy that more acknowledgment is yet behind, we cannot pay in our thanks for the least mercy all our days.

3. *We are apt to forget our mercies*: you see how it is with us as with the *Israelites*, Every next straight did drown all their mercies.

former mercies though they had a miraculous preservation out of *Egypt*, and saw their enemies drowned, and were filled with praises hereupon, yet presently as soon as they came to *Marah* that the waters were bitter, they fell on murmuring; even so is it with us, our hearts upon every crosse, and streight, are apt to overlook all mercies, and to be more sensible of one present distresse then of a thousand blessings: therefore we had need to wind up our strings again which are so quickly apt to fall and jarr.

4. *It is a singular means to add to many Graces within us.* I will touch at a few:

It is a singular means to add to many Graces.

To our love to God.

1. To our love unto God; mark it in experience, if once you lose the sight of mercies you will quickly lose the heat of love. It is a grateful meditation of Gods goodness to us, which fetcheth up and quickens our affections to him; the greatest thankfulness everbreeds the strongest affections unto God, for we cannot express thankfulness, but our eyes must look on the love and kindness of God, and these two are the prime motives of love, *viz.* Divine Love, and Divine kindness, Love and Kindness or Bounty, cause our Love.

To our contentment of Spirit.

2. To our quietness and contentment of Spirit; what's the reason of our boylings, frettings, murmurings, and discontents; surely this, our fingers are still on the loze; our eyes are still on our wants, and not on our receipts: but if we would take a Catalogue of our Mercies, and be expert in them, lo! what a summe of mercies is man, life, a mercy; health, a mercy; understanding, a mercy; house, a mercy; sleep, a mercy; friends, a mercy; &c. his heart would grow quiet and contented, he would say, *the Lord hath not been as a dry and barren wilderness, the Lord hath done great things for me, great have his mercies been to my soul, to my body, &c.*

To our future dependance.

3. To our future dependance on God: when streights and exigences do besal us, yet grateful acknowledgment of Gods goodness, revives the dayes of old, and brings forth the ancient treasures. Look O my soul, here is a mercy, God gave at such a time, and here is a mercy which beyond all desert or expectation he let fall at another time. The Lord hath been the God of thy mercies; trust still on him for his mercies endure for ever. The same motives inclining him to mercy still abide with him,

him, and the same spring of goodness still lives in him : therefore I will trust on him for ever.

4. To obedience ; much thankfulness is alwayes a means of much fruitfulness ; it makes the Christian more cheerful and more fruitful to peruse the obligations of better duty.

5. Lastly, *Wherefore doth the Lord every day renew mercy, but because we should frequently acknowledge his goodness :* Wherefore doth the Lord renew mercy, but that we may frequently acknowledge his goodness. There comes not a day over our heads, no not one hour in that day, but either is filled with positive or privative mercies : now as in shooting we let fly a second arrow to find the first, so the Lord lets fall a second blessing to put us in mind of former blessings ; mercies come in apace, that acknowledgments should rise a pace. Gods hand is still open in blessing of us, that our hearts and tongues should still be opened to bless and praise him.

Is David full of a grateful acknowledgment of Gods mercies unto him, descanting so sweetly upon every strain of blessing ? then we may in his virtuous expression *read and condemn our own harsh unkindness and oblivion of Gods mercies* conferred upon our selves. There is not a man of us who hath not tasted of Gods mercies, yea, of many mercies ; our lives, our health our present peace, our liberty, our sleep, integrity of senses and limbs, &c. are all of them mercies : 'Tis true they are not of the higher rank of mercies, the upper springs, the choicest of mercies, yet mercies they are, and every one of them,

1. *Such as we never did deserve.*

2. *Such as without which we could not well continue and serve God.* If God should let sickness take off our healths, or ache take off our ease, or bondage take off our liberty, or war take off our peace, or poverty take off our plenty, &c. we would then confess health and ease, and liberty and plenty, to be necessary mercies. But why is it that these pearls are trodden under our feet ? *Were there not ten made clean, but where are the nine ? there is not that returns to give God thanks but this stranger only ;* said Christ. Two things grow very rare amongst us, One is *Fidelity to man*, The other is *Thankfulness unto God*. Consider though,

1. How unequal it is to be much in prayer, and then to be cold in praises ; to open the windowes to let the light in, and then to shut

Consider

How unequal it is to be much in prayer, and

shut

shut out the Sun ; Or rather to turn the cock to let in the water and the cistern being full to turn the cock against the spring. My meaning is, in our necessities to be vehement in our craving, and in our enjoying to be extremely forgetful and silent. *To know a God when we want, and yet not to acknowledge a God when we possess* ; as if his kindness were not as proper a ground for our praises, as his goodness is for our prayers ; or that we were less obliged to God after his bounties. When I give a servant money, it is many times a discharge of his duty, he hath his wages and departs ; but when I give a child encouragements, this doth the more in dear his affections, and raise them ; it is a suspicious argument that we are not good, when mercies make us not more sensible of Divine goodness.

How unprofitable do mercies prove, when swallowed up with unthankfulness.

In sapient.

2. How unprofitable do the mercies prove, which are swallowed up with unthankfulness ? Never expect that any mercy should attain its end, if we forget that mercy. If it seems nothing in our eyes, it will work nothing in our hearts ; it will never be a breath to inflame our love to God, nor a gale to set on our careful obedience unto him. But as the Corn in the Granary lies still, or in some earth lies and rots ; or like the unseasonable Manna, it was distastful ; so slighted mercies ordinarily prove sharpest judgments, for God cannot abide to see his holiness mocked, nor his kindness slighted. *Holcath* (an English Writer) tells a story of a woman named *Nephestes*, who being with child, went into the Temple of the gods to ask what it might be that she went withall ? Unto which desire of hers one of the gods answered, *Fœtus tuus Filius est & dabo pulchritudinem*. Another answered, *Filius est, & dabo fortitudinem* ; and another, *Filius est, & dabo divitias* ; Three great gifts, Beauty, Strength, and Riches ; but she made a tush of all these, because she hankered after some other thing, as the favour of great personages, and long life, &c. which unthankful tush the gods espying, presently turned all their gifts into punishments : The first, instead of Beauty, gave the Child an Apes head ; The second instead of Strength, gave it Goose feet ; The third, instead of Riches caused it to be born without any skin at all. The story is but a Fable, yet the hint of it is moral, viz. How available Unthankfulness is to curse our very blessings, and to turn our table into a snare, our peace into war, plen-

plenty into scarcity, &c. Two things for ever remember from me, A man is either not 1. A *long* possessour. 2. A *quiet* possessour of mercies who is not a grateful acknowledger of them.

3. *The very Heathens will rise in judgement against us*, The very Heathens will rise who for courtesies received from man, have expressed large acknowledgments, and yet Christians for the many mercies received from God, are silent and slighting. A good historian reports of some *Grecians* in the life of *Flaminius*, that *Philip* being overcome and liberty proclaimed unto him by *Flaminius*, they in a thankful acclamation made such an exclamation with *σάτης σάτης*, that the very fowles of the air fell down dead. Thus they for one mans life, and yet we cry out nothing but murmurings and dislikes against a God of constant and great mercies unto us all. Heathens wonderfully thankful, yet Christians monstrously forgetful, who receive more and better mercies from the hand of a God.

Ob. But perhaps you will say, we do take notice of Gods mercies, and do not forget or slight them.

Sol. I cannot insilt on all particulars, onely be pleased to resolve me of these scruples; Is this Thankfulness?

First, Whether he who is *sensible of nothing but misery* is to be judged as a thankful man for mercy, that hath nothing in his thoughts (*habitually*) and his language, but wants and losses. *Suppression of mercies and sensibleness of miseries.* grievances and crosses, is still groaning and complaining; what hath God done? what profit that we have served him?

Secondly, Whether this be thankfulness, *Rhetorically to amplify our particular evils* and still to *diminish and undervalue our particular mercies*; For *miseries* no man ever had so many, so thick, so great, so unavoidable as we, our Crosses are greatest. *Diminution of mercies and amplifying of evils.* For *mercies*, none such thinne, such poor, such unuseful as ours. Our husbands, our wives, our children, our servants, our trading In every mercy we are short of others, and in every misery far above others; and call we this a *Grateful acknowledgment*? *Murmuring and discontent.*

And *Thirdly*, if I should yet propound a demand more, *What alacrity of spirit we find in our particular conditions?* of spirit do we find in our particular conditions? What sublimity of estimation of that God who is so merciful unto us? what ardency of affection unto him for his great good.

goodness, what solemn celebration of any one mercy? what stronger resolution to serve a good God better? or what effectual execution thereof? I fear that as he said, *either this is not Scripture, or we are not Christians*. So I may say, either these things are not the cognisances of true Gratitude, or else we are foully ungrateful. But I will say no more to this, but let us remember our forgetfulness of Gods mercies this day, and humble our hearts for it; as we do expect the comfort of present mercies, and the supply of future, as we respect the honor of the Giver, and the benefit of the receiver, let us take time and consider of the loving kindnesse of the Lord, of every mercy, and often thereof, and beg for thankful hearts and lips, so shall God have the glory of a merciful God, and we shall continue still to be the people of his favour and blessings.

Thus far of *David's* grateful acknowledgment, now I proceed to the particular mercies themselves which he doth acknowledge, *viz. A Table prepared or furnished, an Head anointed with oyl and a Cup running over*; all which tend to one and the same thing, namely to suggest the liberal hand of God towards him in the things of this life: whence this Proposition is observable.

Doct. 2. That God doth confer on some of his people sometimes a large portion and variety of outward blessings; he doth feast them, he provides not onely bread but a table well furnished, and not onely variety, but delicacy, oil to anoint them; and not onely for necessity but for redundancy, *Their cup runs over*; Here observe,

1. That I do not affirm this *universally for all persons*; many who serve God may be fed in a more restrained way, partly their *private* condition of life requires no abundance; partly their *special* condition of Christianity, they being to act some eminently passive obedience to the crosse, likewise strips them of their varieties; partly their *impotent* disposition and ability to manage or serve God under great mercies. For as *David* could not fight well in *Saul's* armor, nor all stomachs digest varieties, so cannot every Christian walk well in that strictness of duty under a plentiful presence of outward prosperity.

2. Nor do I affirm it *universally for all times*; as if those good men who were richly blest by God had a lease for life,

as if there were an infallibility of presence, as well as a variety of presence ; No even our highest Sun may decline and our fairest day may be clouded ; no good man is sure of more then will make him good or happy.

But the assertion is onely of some good men, and for sometimes, the which particularity both for persons and times, depends not on any more special worthiness in one then in another (for *every mercy to every man is a free drop and a meere almes*) or upon a different affection in God unto them, but onely on the *authority* of God who as he gives to whom, so likewise so much as he himself pleaseth ; and likewise on the *wisdom* of God, who hath peculiar ends and intentions in the particular and different distributions of his mercies to the children of men ; but that God doth sometimes to some of his people give a larger stock, a fuller portion, a variety, nay a delightful variety, it is most evident by many instances and experiences.

Abraham was very good, and very rich and great, and had Instances. not onely to eat but to feast. *Joseph* was advanced to be the Lord in *Egypt*, and the next person to the King, and had the honorable robe, golden chain and key of the Storehouses. So was *Mordecai*, so was *Daniel*, so were *Shadrach, Meshack,* and *Abednego*. What think you of *Solomon*, *Constantin* and many Christian Emperors and Kings? Nay of many good Christians in our own knowledge, who yet are not onely eminent in Grace but also in Birth, Place, Authority, Power, Wealth, Dignities, Friends, and whatsoever else makes an outward portion plentiful or comfortable.

Reasons hereof may be these ;

1. To convince the world, that godliness is no impediment to any earthly greatnesse or comfort. It is neither contrary unto, nor incapable of any outward and convenient mercy. The Gold doth not hinder the diamond : a good man may have goodness and goods too, he may have a rich faith and a precious Saviour, and an ample outward portion too. The inheritance of glory hereafter, a crown in heaven and many worldly demises, pearles, rubies and treasures on earth. Godliness (saith the Apostle) hath the promises of this life and of that which is to come. It doth abridge our lusts, but not our mercies

Reason.

To convince the world that godliness is no impediment to earthly greatnes.

1 Tim. 4. 8.

cies, and guide us in the use, but hinders us not from the possession of outward comfort. *Length of dayes is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour,* Prov. 3. 16.

To declare the
treasures of
Gods goodness.

2. *To declare the treasures of his own goodnesse*: That he is not a God rich onely in words and promises, but also in nature and efficacy, *Jam. 1. 5. He giveth to all men liberally.* Perhaps some may retort, this you say, but what one good man finds, it so? *1 Tim. 6. 17. He giveth us richly all things to enjoy*: We find it so, (saith Paul in the behalf of many Saints) for he giveth not onely to others, but to *us*; not a few things but *all things*; not scantily but *richly*; not to look on, but to enjoy.

To enable them
to do more
good.

3. *To enable them to do more good*: Evil men make themselves but the gaolers of their possessions, and good men are the stewards. The *rich fool* cries, *Soul take thy ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years, &c.* laid up, not laid out, &c. Good men they receive, not to have and to hold, but to communicate and disperse; mercies are in their hands, as blood in the Veines, or as waters in a Conduit for publick use, they are Gods hands here below, his Almoners, and the poor Saints are Christs bowels, which are refreshed by them. An evil man advanced and prospering usually turns a *common plague*, but a good man blessed with goods becomes a *common Sun*, to comfort, warm, help others. That noble woman makes provision for *Eliab*, and *Daniel* being advanced raiseth up the *three Children*, and *Joseph* preserves his father and brethren alive, and *Obadiab* the Courtier preserves the lives of the Prophets.

For their own
good.

4. *For their own good*: Of private comfort and cheerfulness, that they might serve so liberal a God without distractions and cares; nay, with much alacrity and cheerfulness, according to the great goodness which he shews unto them. That not only their bodies may be like a *field which the Lord hath blessed*, but that their souls also might be as a *watered garden*.

Use.

Thus briefly for the explication and confirmation of the assertion; the main work rests in the application of this unto our selves. Is the Lord liberal and bountiful to some of his servants in outward mercies and blessings; and do any of you find

And that his hand of goodness hath been enlarged towards you, that you have the dewes of heaven and the fatness of the earth, that your corn and wine are increased, that with Jacob you are become two bands, that the Lord hath blessed thee like Isaac, of whom it is said, *Gen. 26. 13. The man waxed great and went forward, and grew until he became very great. I have two things to say unto thee in such a condition. 1. Rightly use this bounty. 2. By no means abuse thy self, or thy God, or his bounty to thee.*

1. *Rightly use all this bounty, and liberality of Gods goodness:* 'Tis true they are talents and more then God concredits to every servant, but then every talent is given for use and right imployment; what thinkest thou that these blessings come unto thee without the Lord? Is not he the giver of all thy good, and doth he give them unto thee, to do what thou pleasest. We are *Stewards* (saith the Apostle) *of the manifold gifts of God*; and Stewards are not Lords, they are not to reserve but to disburse the goods credited unto them. There is a threefold use, that you must put the bountiful expressions of Gods goodness unto.

1. One respects *God himself.* Honour the Lord (saith Solomon, *Prov. 3. 9*) *With thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase.* Though the Lord might justly challenge all that we possess, yet he is pleased onely to call for a part, and that he doth call for. Children are a blessing, and he did call for the first born; Vintage a blessing, and he did call for the first ripe grapes. Harvest a blessing, and he did call for the first sheaves. The wife, though she hath a right to the goods, yet she must use them. 1. According to her husbands Will. 2. For his honour. 3. For her own.

Object. But what is it to honour the Lord with his blessings bestowed on us.

Sol. I answer, it is

To acknowledge the freeness of his goodnesse: As the onely cause of all the rich mercies which we possess: *All this store cometh of thine own hand, and all is thine own*, said David, 1 Chr. 29. 16. *I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant*, said Jacob, *Gen. 32. 10.* If we ascribe our greatness to our own

Rightly use
this Bounty.

A Three fold
use of the
bountiful
expressions of
Gods goodness.
In respect of
God himself.
We must ho-
nour God with
them.

By acknow-
ledging the
freeness of his
Goodness..

merits, or to our own contrivances, or to the favours of men, as the principal causes; God is now dishonoured, he loseth the glory of being an Universal good; and the cause of all good; but saith David, *Who so offereth praise glorifieth me*, Psal. 50. 23. How so! because our praises of him do declare all our goodness to be from his goodnesse, all our mercies to arise from his mercifulnes.

By improving his blessings as for the bettering of our affections unto him, that all his mercies are cords of love to bind and bend our affections; wind up the string higher and it gives the clearer sound, the highest Sun produceth the fairest Day, and the sober Rain the sweetest Flowers: So should the more ample blessings from God, beget and fire the largest affections unto God, especially,

Our Love.

Our love unto him: This the Lord requires of the Israelites after his exceeding goodnesse unto them, *Dent. 10. 12. All that I require is that thou love me*; and David expresseth it in *Psal. 116. 1. Plentiful mercies should cause our hearts to cleave more unto the Lord, and to delight more in the Lord; they should make the Lord more amiable to us; like beams leading us to the Sun, or as streams to the Fountain: They should raise our hearts to the exceeding Fountain of all goodness and mercie.*

Our Fear.

And our fear of him: We should fear the Lord and his goodnesse, as the Prophet speaks, *Hos. 3. 5* We should make the greater mercies as the greater reasons not to offend and sin against the Lord; as *Ezra, Seeing thou hast given us such deliverance as this, should we again break thy Commandments?* Ezra 9. 13, 14.

Improving them as enlargements to our obedience.

Thirdly, *And as enlargements to our obedience*: Not only to continue faithful to our good master, but also fruitful to our bountiful benefactor. All mercies should be like showers on the Vallies, or like so many Rivers falling into a common Stream: height of blessings should increase a depth in our Obedience. No mercy is like a baby to be lookt on and played with, but is like a book wherein a Lesson is to be taken forth: all the meat and drink which we take are lost if they fall not in to the nourishment of our bodies; all the mercies are lost, if they prove not saile to our affections, and additions to our services.

vices. Mercy should be like a grain of corn in the earth, which shoots up with a full eare: when great mercies shew themselves in great duties, that we grow more exact, more conscionable, more chearful, more vigorous, and fruitful in them, this would prove our comfort and Gods honour.

Fourthly, God is honoured by us *in the right use of his blessings, when we manage them as furtherances and encouragements of his worship and service.* Thus David honoured God (and so did his people) when they so willingly and bountifully offered to the house for Gods holy Name, 1 Chr 29.16. The public Ordinances in the purity and efficacy of them, there is not a more singular way to honour God, then to uphold and feed the Lamps of his Sanctuary, to preserve the Ark and the Oracles which are the glory of Israel. How prevalent are they to convert sinners, to direct sinners, to bring men unto repentance, unto faith, unto the knowledg and obedience of Christ, to strengthen them in all the fruits of righteousness which are to the praise of God in Christ?

2. The second Use of Gods liberal bounty unto us for outward things, respects *our selves*; and thus they are rightly employed when we use them, *In respect of our selves.*

1. *For our refreshing and comfort*: Therefore God gives us Oil, that we might anoint our faces; and Wine, that we might glad our hearts. It is a very curse when a man hath a dead heart under lively mercies, a great estate and no heart to use it; that yet he rejoyceth not all the dayes of his life, but is afraid to eat, and afraid to drink, and afraid to use any of Gods blessings; begs the mercies, and envies himself the use of them; he doth hereby injure the goodness of God in giving, and injure the mercies themselves which are given for our comfort; and injure particular nature, defrauding it of that benefit designed for its support and comfort. Behold, (said Solomon, Eccles. 5.18.) *it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour all the dayes of his life which God giveth him: for it is his portion* And v. 19. *It is the Gift of God, having riches, and wealth, to have power to eate thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoyce in his labour, &c.* Use them for our refreshing and comfort.

For the better
discharge of our
callings.

2. For our better service and discharge of our callings: We must not use them for themselves, but for a further end then themselves. As Sauce is used not for it self, but for that which is better then Sauce; so our outward blessings are to be used, so that by the use of them we may be the better fitted for Gods use and service. It is one thing to feed an Ox which you intend to kill, an other thing to feed an horse which you intend to ride. I must so feed my body in the use of mercies, that neither soul nor body hearby become unservicable, but more apt for the service of the God of my mercies, in my general and particular calling. Though the mercies be many yet the use must be sober; it were a mad thing because the streams are full, therefore to let in as much water as will run into my house. The Miller admits of no more water then will well drive the Mill and grind the Corn; and such a use of our mercies is right, which not drowns but drives, not suppresseth fitnessse, but which more fits me and enables me in my place. But of this more anon, and therefore I will not now enlarge.

In respect of
others.
For the refresh-
ing of others.

3. The third right use of our plentiful blessings respects others: If God makes our Cup to run over in his Bounty, we should make it to run over in our Charity. And indeed wherefore doth the Lord make our Cup run over, but that others should be refreshed by the droppings of the same? and wherefore doth he spread our Table, but that others might be refreshed by the crums which fall from our Table? But a meer doing good to others in a way of charity, is not sufficient where God hath deaft bountifully with us in particular, but a redundant, or exuberant Charity is required. The Apostle chargeth all who professe the Faith, to be forward to maintain good works, Tit. 3. 8. But then he hath a more special charge for rich men, and them unto whom God hath given all things richly to enjoy, not only that they do good, but that they be rich in good works, 1 Tim. 6. 17, 18. And in another place to sow liberally. For as Mordecai said to Hesther, touching the improvement of her honour and advancement with the King for the good of her nation, Esth. 4. 14. Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? The same I may say more positively, Therefore hath the Lord thus advanced thee in thy degrees, in thy dignities, in thy wealth, in thy friends, the Oil is more plenti-

plentifully poured on thee, that it may more plentifully flow from thee; the showers come more upon the Mountains, that they may drill more into the lower Vallies. He hath made thee, as it were, the Lord Treasurer, that thou mayest be not only faithful to him, but very beneficial to others.

This is not an Arbitrary thing, but a Necessary duty, the omission of it may endanger your souls. The Lord requires it at the hands of you to abound in good works when he abounds in his goodness toward you, and assuredly he will charge it on you in the day of Judgment. And besides the command and terror of the Lord, there are plentiful occasions and objects for your liberality. There are many hungry that need food, thirsty that need drink, strangers that need harbour, naked that need clothing, sick and imprisoned that need visiting; What should I speak of fatherlesse and widows, and blind, and maimed, and aged, and lame, and those that suffer for the confession of the truth; all which in Scripture are fit objects.

But then consider, That not a bare quality of blessing others is sufficient, but if the Lord hath dealt bountifully with us, a quantity is required, *Thou shalt open thy hand wide to the poor and needy*, Deut. 15. 11. just as men sow seed with a full hand; unto which the Apostle alludes, in 2 Cor. 9. 6. By this means you shall, 1. *Discharge your consciences in the duty of Charity*; And, 2. *Rightly improve the talents of mercy* committed unto you: And 3. *Raise up many prayers for your persons*, as Paul did for Onesiphorus. 4. *Evidence the liveliness of your Faith*, Jam. 2. 5. *Assure your selves of Gods Eternal mercies hereafter*. 6. *Draw down more outward mercies upon your selves*. The Fountain is not diminished but augmented by giving water to the thirsty, said Clemens Alex. Pedagog. l. 3. c. 7. The widows oil did increase by running; we do not lose, but increase our mercies by imparting of them for Gods honour, and the comfort of others: *Si frumentum servas, perdis, si seminas renovas*, Glossa in Mat. 16. 21. *Terrena omnia servando amittimus, largiendo servamus*, said Isidore. Give, (saith Christ, Luke 6. 38.) and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosome. Honour the Lord with thy substance, so shall thy barnes be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with

new wine. Prov. 3. 9, 10 Especially be resolved to act this now when you are coming to the Sacrament of the Lord Jesus, wherein the Lord deals bountifully with your souls, provides for you as a free gift the greatest mercy that ever was, the Lord Jesus Christ crucified and he is willing that you should enrich your selves with all the fulness of Christ, *frustra manus ad Deum expandit qui hanc ad pauperes non extendit*, said one, how canst thou expect much mercy who will shew none?

Abuse not the bounty of God unto you.

2. But I proceed unto the second general head, which was by no means to *abuse the liberality and bounty of God unto you in these external mercies*: and here let me open unto you, 1. *The wayes by which these blessings are abused.* 2. *The great sin and danger to abuse Gods external blessings*:

The wayes by which Gods outward blessings are abused.

1. *The wayes by which Gods outward blessings are abused are principally two, 1. Iniquity. 2. Vanity.*

By iniquity. When our plenty is the ground of idleness.

They are abused when they are made serviceable and *occasional unto any iniquity*. I will give you some special instances for this:

1. When we *make our plenty the ground of an idle and unprofitable life*; to live without any calling and employment, as if Divine goodness in any kind were a discharge from all industry, and that because Gods hand of goodness increaseth, therefore we should turn *Idols* that have hands and work not; or like *Solomon's lillies* that *spin not*; live so, as to be profitable neither to God, nor man. This was one of the *sins of Sodom, fulness of bread, and idleness*: Know we two things concerning this, *viz.*

That *poor men* must not live idely because God deals bountifully with others. For God made them not *flies* to suck out the blood of others, but men endowed with reason and ability to work, though not to give. That *rich men* may not live idely without a calling, because of Gods plenty to them: *Adam* had estate large enough, and family little enough when God made him and put him into Paradise, yet *Adam* in that good and great estate was to work and till the ground. Think of this you who are in great Places, who with wonderful injury to your consciences, losse of your precious time, neglect of your poor souls, advantage to vile temptations, unanswerableness to Gods mercies, adventure of a dreadful account unto God,

God, do nothing with all your mercies, and in all your courses, but lie down and sleep, rise up and eat and play, go forth in meer idle and fruitless visits, and thus you make an end of your time, of your mercies, of your souls and all.

2. When we consecrate, nay that word is not fit, *when we* Of luxury and imbezel Gods bounty and mercies, to luxury and drunkenness; I drunk ourselves. would to God there were no cause to speak of this, but so common is the abuse of mercies this way, that we may fear it to be one of the great transgressions for which God hath a controvertie with this land. Go through all sorts of men almost, where shall you find it otherwise, but swearing, and drinking, and shameful spewing, a sin so vile that the heathens anciently houted at it. The *Lacedemonians* when any was drunk brought out their children to behold him, that so they might learn to detest that shameful course; and God in his word threatens many a wound to it, and judgment, nay he poured down the flood on the old world, which was an eating and drinking world, and the Apostle assures us that hell and damnation attends it, 1 Cor 6. *Peter Valdo* from whom the *Waldenses* came, was in company once, where they were drinking somewhat freely, and one of the company presently fell down dead; this did so amaze his heart that he turned wholly from that course unto a sober and holy life, considering if God should have struck him, so, &c. Oh that those who are guilty of this sin, would now hear and fear, and do so no more.

3. A third sin is *loftiness*: When persons grow proud and Of loftiness. scornful of their brethren, or of God, upon the plenty which God bestowes on them.

The *Cyreneses* came to *Plato* and intreated him to draw out some wholesome lawes for them; who answered, That *Their prosperity was too great to obey any lawes, were they never so good*. They forget the rock from whence they are hewen out, of what poor originals they sprung, and what obligations all mercies are to a more faithful and humble service of the Lord; whereas in a meaner condition, they could hold some tolerable communion with God and do something in their families to advance his glory, be somewhat indutrious for heaven, and not onely attend the ordinances, but seem to be somewhat conscionable to endeavour obedience to the Truths delivered

vered, and hold some fair correspondency with Gods servants ; Now since God hath lifted them up (as I may so say) from the dunghil, like a horse well fed that kicks against the rider ; or the snake that was warmed in the bosom, that stung the party to death ; so these forsake the Lord, slight his Ordinances, neglect their families, puff up their hearts, not a word of God or heaven, not a look at the Church, not a respect to any of Gods people, but their hearts are swollen with stateliness and pride. I would say thus unto such persons ; First, Man abhorres them. Secondly, God abhorres them. Thirdly, God will judge them, they are the basest of all unthankful wretches, and you seldom see that prosperity makes any proud, but God by some great adversity will abase and depose them.

Of carnal confidence.

4. A fourth sin unto which Gods plenty may be and is abused ; is *carnal confidence*. They make abundance their confidence, the wedge of gold their help ; their wealth their strong and unmoveable mountain. Paul insinuates as much, when he chargeth *Rich men not to be high-minded* ; nor foolish minded, to *trust in uncertain riches*. The fool in the Gospel fell unto this security upon his plenty ; *Soul take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years* ; as if much outward goods could be defence, deliverance, safety, comfort, happiness to the person : whereas there is the same nature of imperfection in much, as in a little (where every part is imperfect, the accessse or confluence cannot make it perfect) and there is the same ground of mutability in the fullest, as in the lowest condition, a ship is bigger then a boat, yet it may sink as soon ; the fullest tides goes off as well as the niep tides, and a flock of birds can fly away as soon as a few.

Si tibi pulchra domus, si splendida mensa, quid inde ?

Your house is fair, your Table full, what then ?

Si species auri, argenti quæque massa, quid inde ?

Of gold and silver massie weights you boast, what then ?

Si tibi sponsa decora, si sit gratiosa, quid inde ?

Your wife may boast of beauty, and of birth, what then ?

Si faveat munus, si prospera cuncta, quid inde ?

(what then ?

You seem the Minion of the times, All hail is yours,

Tam

Tam cito, tam cito pratercunt hæc ut nihil inde?

As breath, or shade, or tide, all these fall off agen.

David's Mountain was quickly shaken, and *Job* the greatest man in the East, sunk down to be the poorest man in the world; you may make your plenty to be a staff to walk with, but not to lean on. As the Philosopher said of *Athens*, that it was a City *ad peregrinandum jucunda*, but *ad inhabitandum non tuta*, pleasant to sojourn in a while, but not so safe to dwell long in; that I say of all outward plenty, it may be a comfortable ship in our passage, but its a dangerous rock for our trust and confidence.

5. A fifth sin is *Covetousness and love of the world*: When ^{Of Covetous-} this cup causes a dropsie, and the table a Lethargy; when the ^{ness.} greater bounty of God doth contract our hands in giving, and enlarge our hearts in thirsting after outward things, a dropsie now is begotten, and a disease which will never be satisfied, yet this is ordinary to find, *the shortest bands and the vastest desires in the greatest estates*. Men are more taken up with the world, by how much the more they thrive in the world; the rich man commonly proves an old usurer. There be other sins unto which men make the plenty of mercies serviceable, as Oppression, and Injustice, Uncleaness, Gaming, &c.

Let us now behold in the next place, the sin and the danger of abusing Gods plenty thus to the service of our iniquities.

The Danger
of this abuse of
Gods plenty, it
is
Injurious.

1. This abuse it is a compounded *injury*, an injury compounded of many injuries, and indignities.

1. *God is injuriously abused*. The Apostle calls it, a *despising of* ^{To God.} *the riches of his goodness*, when they lead us not to Repentance. *Rom. 2. 4.* What then might he phrase it, when we positively make the riches of divine goodness to be as Brokers for our filthiness and wickedness, to sin against a kind, very kind God. But again, it is the most unkind return for all kindness; when the very goodness of God shall be made as a bellows to inflame the heart with sinning against God; and where the more kindness has appeared.

2. *The mercies are extremely abused*: They are oppressed and perverted and made to serve against their master; a very

To the Mercies
received.

violence done to them, as in the Law, violence is more dangerous then consent. We do cut the throat of them, and use them worse then *David's* messengers by *Hannun*, we do not only rob them of their excellency, but constrain them to take armes as it were against God himself.

To our Souls. 3. *Our soules are abused by it*: For as all sinning contracts a guilt, so the sinning under mercies increaseth the guilt, and the more plentiful the mercies have been, the more degree of intensive guilt is now redundant to the soul, for the sinful abuse of them. Not only the sins will come and accuse thee at the bar of justice, but the mercies of God as abused, will likewise rise up and give in evidence against you, how you forced them, &c. and it will be a sad day when thy health shall stand at the judgment seat with lust in it, and thy power with oppression in it, and thy wealth with covetousness in it, and thy strength with uncleanness in it, and thy plenty with profaneness in it.

Causeless. 2. It is a *most causeless form of sinning*, when God doth so bless a man, that there is not only the mercy proper for him and his condition, but he hath it in an abundant measure, what reason hath this man to transgress; the more mercy the less reason to sin, to see a poor almost starved beggar to steal, is not so much as to behold a wealthy man to rob; what cause hast thou to suck out the blood of the needy, and to skruce the bread out of the hands of the needy, who hast such a plenty of thine own? what reason canst thou give that thou shouldst turn thy self into a senseless stock, or a reeling ship, or a swinish beast by drunkenness, who hast a plentiful cup given to refresh thee and the bowels of others.

Prejudicial. The sum of all is this; thou wilt raise an exceeding cry in thy conscience, and an uncessant clamour in thy mercies (which are as weary of thee) as the children of *Israel*, of their bondage) and a cry in the soules of others against thee, whom thou hast by the abuse of mercies involved into the same transgressions, and some severe judgment to strip thee of thy mercies, and to consume thee with mercies. See *Lev. 18, 28. Joel 1. 5. Hos. 2. 9, 12.*

Abuse not
Gods Bounty
so Vanity.

But I proceed to the second way wherein men do abuse the plenty of Gods goodness to them, viz. to *Vanity*: and that is two fold either of. 1. *Feasting*. 2. *Apparelling*.

1. To

1. To *Feasting*; the miserable sin of this City, wherein By *feasting*, as if men were born only to eat, there are dayes without number, spent by many in nothing else, but in an unmeasurable and excessive luxuriousness of provision, as if those of *Corinth* were alive; *let us eat and drink for to morrow we shall die*. We have made our selves the Proverb of the world, that *we build as if we were to live for ever, and eat as if we were to die presently*.

Object. But it is objected, did not *Abraham* make a feast, did not *Levi* the publican entertain our Saviour with a feast; had not the primitive Christians their *Love Feasts*? Is liberality of cheer utterly against the liberty of Christians now.

Sol. I answer, No. Feasting, absolutely, and simply, is not unlawful; the instances alledged prove so much, and besides them we read that God himself appointed to his people *solemn times of feasting*, *Deut. 16. 15*. But yet in respect of Circumstances, Feastings may be very unlawful, and men offend in it. Feasting is Unlawful.

1. When the feasting is *unseasonable for the times*, as in the time of common judgments and calamities on our selves or others. When the Lord is wroth with us or with his Churches, *Isa. 22. 11*. *In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth*, v. 13. And behold joy and gladness, *slaying of oxen, killing of sheep, eating flesh and drinking of wine, let us eat and drink for to morrow we shall die*, v. 14. *It was revealed in mine eares by the Lord of hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till you die, saith the Lord God of hosts*: The unseasonableness of it made it an high iniquity, *Amos 6. 4*. *They eate the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall*, v. 5. *They chaunt to the sound of the Viol*, v. 6. *And drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the chief Ointment, but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*, v. 7. *Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed*.

2. When the feasting is *disproportionable for a mans estate*; When disproportionate for a mans estate; a large sail set upon a little boat: a moderate estate and yet immoderate provision. Two things are unseemly. 1. To see a rich man penurious. 2. And a poor man riotous.

When Prejudicial to a mans health.

When Incommodious to the Duties of our place.

When made an Artificial supplement to lusts.

When there is no minding of God, and the poor in our feasting.

When it is an ordinary every days work.

By apparel.

By an indistinction of Sexes.

3. When its *prejudicial to a mans health*; an eating not for strength, but for diseases, till we surfeit again.

4. When it is *incommodious to the duties of a mans place*, that he is thereby disabled for all holy meditations, prayer, reading, hearing, and also for the duties of his particular calling, fitter to sleep then work.

5. When it is only made an *artificial supplement*, and *incensive to lusts*; as many dishes are purposely invented and composed, not to satisfy or refresh nature, but to foment and assist the lusts of men, this is to become a Cook to the Devil.

6. When *Irreligion* begins the feast, and *uncharitableness* takes off the cloth; my meaning is, where there is no minding of God that gives these plenties, but swearing and roaring, scarce so little as to desire his blessing and guidance, and afterwards no remembrance of the poor who would be glad of the crums which fall from our Table, and of the offals which we rather tread under our feet, then think of putting into their bellies; *Dives* did feast thus.

7. When it is an *ordinary*, every dayes work is a feast as many contrive every day where to meet and be drunk the next; so others, how to renew a superfluous Table, So that the whole life is a Table-life, made a Guest at the Table, and men are even taken from the Table and the world at once, without any care and provision all this while for their famished souls.

I conjecture that these Circumstantial ingredients in feasting are like the Prophets herb which made them cry out that there was death in the pot: God grant that we be not guilty, or if so, that we presently reform.

Secondly, To *apparelling*, where all the bounty of Gods is turned into a fashion and gaudy sute. I know that there is a necessity and conveniency of apparel, they that wear soft raiments are in Kings houses, said our Saviour. Kings and Queens and great Personages may lawfully exceed others in the beauty and costliness of their robes, without any sin or offence; but there are many faults and abuses of Gods mercies by inferiour people this way.

1. An *indistinction of the Sexes*: When women turn men and but that they shew to the full their large and naked breasts, a difference could not be so well discerned.

2. An indistinction of places and callings: Thus amongst us An indistinction of Callings. the serving-man goes like the Gentleman, and when a stranger approacheth the house, he would by the cloths rather take the man to be the master. And so for women; every citizens wife flants it and braves it with her curled locks, sparkling Diamonds, rich Gowns, *as if they had been the children of the mighty*, and yet neither their birth nor their place, and condition of the husband can bear this.

3. A strangeness of attire, and perpetual inconstancy; half By a strangeness of Attire. naked and half clothed, one day buttoned like a Cappuccine Fryer, and the next as open as an Inn; as if a Christian should make an ape of himself, every day be ready to imitate every odd fancy, and strive how to deform himself. Now I meet a man in a garment as long as *Lazarus's* shroud, and a while after I meet him in a new impressi^on, it is as short as his girdle. And as for women, they are so like themselves in the levity of apparel, that it is almost unconceivable how to describe their first or their last fashion. To all which if we consider how much pride there is out of which all this grows, and how much *dispensum* of precious houres, and many times, what crushings of estates, and sometimes occasions to crush our consciences with sin; we will confesse that there is in this subject a great abuse of Gods mercies to the making up of a meer vanity.

I now proceed to the last particular, which respects the effectual, and as it were, irresistible collation of all this good upon *David*, notwithstanding all the distaste and opposition of his enemies; *Thou preparest a Table before me, in the presence of mine enemies*, (i.) *Hostibus videntibus imo & invidentibus*. Whence this Proposition is observable,

That notwithstanding all the evil distastes, and devices, and practises of evil men, God will plentifully blesse his people. Here Doct. Notwithstanding all the evil distastes of evil men, God will plentifully blesse his people.

1. *That evil men have not only evil hearts against the inward dignity of Holinesse, but also against the outward prosperity of greatnesse bestowed on Gods servants, not only their goodness but also their greatnesse is a great eye-sore unto them: Not that outward greatnesse is the thing which they hate formally and objectively (for that is it which they love above all things) but only personally or concomitantly, because good men (whom they*

they hate) do possesse these things. There is not only *Invidia*, an envy, that they do rise when sometimes the other sink; but also *Indignatio*, a disdain that they should possesse any comfort at all; *His horn shall be exalted with honour*. Psal. 112. 10. *The wicked shall see it and be grieved, he shall gnash with his teeth, &c.* And this appears,

By their dejection of spirit at their prosperity.

First, By that dejection of spirit in them upon the prosperity of holy men. *Hamans* heart was ready to burst, he halted and went home mourning and covered his head because of *Mordecai's* advancement, *Est. 6. 12.*

By their subtilty in laying snares for their ruine.

Secondly, By that subtilty of spirit in laying snares for their ruine: As when *Daniel* was preferred by *Darius*, ch. 6. 3. *Then the Presidents and Princes sought to find occasion against him*, and only found it in his sincerity to his God; and wrought the King, *That whosoever should ask any petition of any God or man for thirty dayes, save of the King, should be cast into the den of Lions*, v. 7.

By their lying suggestions against them.

Thirdly, By that lying pretence of spirit, suggesting false accusations against them to those in authority. As when *Zerubbabel* and *Joshua* were favoured so far as to build the Temple, then did *Rehum* and *Shimshai* and others write and accuse them to *Artaxerxes*, that they were a rebellious people that would not pay Toll, nor Tribute, nor Custome, &c. *Ezra 4. 12, 13.*

By their hostility of spirit.

Fourthly, By their hostility of Spirit, either private and treacherous in seeking the subversion of their flourishing prosperity, as the Papists against us in the powder plot; or else publick and professed, as they against us in 88. answering herein the outrageous acts of the ancient enemies of the Church, who if they could not blast the honour of it with disgrace, sought to bury and drowne the whole State of it in blood.

Yet God hath plentifully blessed many of his servants.

2. But then notwithstanding all this envy, and fraud, and plotting, and attempting God hath plentifully blessed many of his servants and people. Instances and demonstrations whereof abound to our hands in Sacred and Ecclesiastical Story; *Jacob*, how injuriously and fraudulently did *Laban* deal with him? in the day the droughth consumed him, and the frost by night, *Gen. 31. 40.* Twenty years he served in *Labans* house, of the which, 14. he served for his wives, and six for his cattel; and his

his wages were changed ten times. But God did see his afflictions, and all that *Laban* did unto him, and blessed him; and the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattel, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses. *Joseph*, how strangely and unnaturally was he handled by his brethren? They envied the favour which his father shewed him, and contrived first his death, but qualified it at length with his sale to the *Midianites*, and they put him off to an Egyptian Courtier, and he unjustly sends him to the prison, and yet God doth bless and advance him to be a Prince and Lord in the land of Egypt. The *Israelites* are envied by *Pharaoh* and his people who were grieved at their mightinesse, *Exod.* i. 9, 10, 11. and cunningly contrived a greater bondage for them by setting task masters over them to afflict them with burdens. But (saith the Text) *The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew*: as if their dealings had proved like showers of rain, which makes the corn and grasse to flourish. *David* is another pregnant instance, whose excellency, and fidelity, and successe, and Gods favour procured him the envy, and then the deadly hatred, and then the mortal plots, and then the hostile attempts of King *Saul* for his life; yet notwithstanding all the deadly intentions of *Saul*, and all the malicious and false accusations of *Cush* and *Doeg*, &c. God did advance him to the Throne and established the Kingdom in his hand. See *Psal.* 18. You read the same of *Mordecai* and the Jewes, of whom, though *Haman* proclaimeth, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the King will honour; yet we may rather say, Thus shall it be done to the man whom God will bless.

There are three special things which might be observed out of all this,

1. That the malicious envy of evil men hath not been able to hinder blessings from descending upon the godly.

2. That it hath not been able to tear off the blessings which have descended.

3. That upon their greater fretting and contriving, God yet hath added more blessings upon his servants. So that God hath blessed, and hath setled his blessings, and hath augmented his blessings on them. He hath given them possession, and they have kept possession and have flourished in the same. *Con-*

tra Gentes, though the heathens have raged and imagined a vain thing.

Reasons of it.
God only is
the Lod of all
blessings. Psal.

24. 1.

And the reasons of all this are;

1. *God only is the Lord of all blessings*: There is a blessing by way of *benediction*, thus we blesse God and man; and a blessing by way of *benefaction*, and thus it is proper to God to bles. Blessings are by way of *propriety* and *right*, *The earth is the Lords and the fulness thereof*: And by way of *authority*, *He ruleth in the Kingdomes of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*, Dan, 4, 17. If he be the Lord, he may then do with his own what he pleaseth.

Blessings be
long to God by
way of Causa-
lity.

Secondly, As blessings belong to him by way of *Soveraignty*, so they also *belong unto him by way of Causality*. Men may be either the servants of blessing, or the instruments of blessing, but God only is the cause, he is the fountain whence all the waters flow. And what cause is he, surely an effectual cause, such a cause as if he peremptorily sets upon the work the effect will follow. Two things shew a cause to be effectual, One is resolution of will, the other is, sufficiency of power. Gods powerful willing is as much as the successful effecting of a mercy, for it is the intire cause. There needs no more to the production of our mercies then his power and will, *ergo*;

God doth not
at all depend
upon wicked
men in the
blessing of his
servants.

Thirdly, *God doth not all depend upon wicked men in the benediction of his servants*: if there were a necessary concurrence of God and them, that the one must work as well as the other, then the cessation on the one part might be an impediment to the production on the other part (as is evident in all partial and concurring causes.). As if a mans motion depends partly on his Staff, and partly on his leggs, if either fail him, the motion also failes him; Or as a chest where two men have two keys, both must come to open for the treasure. But God, in the acts of benediction, hath no dependance on evil men; they concur not with him, neither *per modum principii*, for he alone is the cause; nor *per modum auxilii*, for he without them can blesse his all: The creatures have such an immediate dependance upon his pleasure and power, that *ad nutum*, at the beck of it, they go or come.

They cannot
frustrate Gods
pleasure.

Fourthly, Their *malicious renitency of spirit*, or attempt against

gainst Gods blessing of his people, is too impotent to frustrate Gods intension and pleasure. An effectual impediment must not onely have contrariety in it, but superiority: a drop of water cannot put out the fire, for though it hath a contrary nature, yet it hath not a greater power; now the malice and contrivances of evil men, they are too short and weak for the Divine intension of blessing, which is accompanied with an almighty arm. Not onely the persons but the actions of evil men are subordinate to God, and as their good intents and acts are subordinate to his assistance, so their evil are subordinate to his admittance; just as acts of inferiour Courts are revocable and voidable by the superiour. Hence it was that Balaam (one hired to curse the people of God by Balak, *Come curse me Jacob, and come, desie Israel*, Numb. 23. 7.) yet when he came to act this, he was at a stand, he could not do it, but cries out v. 8. *How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I desie, whom the Lord hath not desied?* v. 20. *Behold I have received a command to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it,* and thereupon c. 24. 13. he professeth unto Balak that if he would give him his house full of silver and gold, he would not go beyond the command of the Lord, to do either good or bad, of his own mind.

Lastly, *Evil men are but men, and God is a God*, and being but men, they can do no more then men. The Lord will cleer it to all the world, that *he rules the earth*, and that *his counsel shall stand*, and where he blesteth, that man shall be blest; and whom he curseth, that man shall be cursed; that the creatures can do neither good, nor evil; that his people are the generation of his care and love, though living in the midst of deadly enemies. Nay if God should be hindered by evil men from blessing of his people, then his people should never be blest, and there were no living for them on earth.

Now to the application of this, First, it seems to convince the folly of evil men who are enemies to all the Graces, and all the comforts of Gods people, and take much upon them to threaten and terrifie and crush them. I tell thee, O thou evil enemy:

1. When thou art rotting and stinking in the Grave. yet shall the righteous flourish; 2. When thou hast wound up grave, they shall flourish.

Use 1.

It convinceth the folly of evil men, who are enemies to Gods people.

When thou art

rotting in the up grave, they shall flourish.

Thou shalt not
effect the evil
thou intendest
nor hinder the
good God in-
tends.

thy hatred and plots to the highest, yet thou shalt neither effect the evil that thou dost intend, nor hinder the good which God doth intend, thou hast not power to act all that evil which is in thy will, nor to put by any of that good which is in Gods purpose. Men may stop the lower conduits, but who can stay the clouds from dropping? It is easie to blow out a candle, but is it possible for any man to withhold the Sun from rising? So great is the love of God to his people that he will do them good; so great is his faithfulness that he hath bound himself to do them good; so great is his power that in despite of thee he can do them good, nay if he please to magnifie his arm, he can make the very enemies of his people to become their footstool, as *Haman*, and strip them as he did the *Egyptians*, and put their ornaments and their honours upon his own people. Shall their unbelief (said the Apostle of the *Jews*) make void the truth of God? so here, think you that the malice of men shall make void the love of God, the intentions of God, the promises of God, the oath of God, the power of God? Why then wilt thou curse, where God will bless? is there any likelihood to bind almightiness? to overcome and alter God? though thou wilt presumptuously fight against him.

Use 2.

It may animate
the people of
God to trust
upon the Lord
in the midst
of all enemies.

It may serve to animate the people of God even in the midst of all enemies, and oppositions, and dangers, yet to trust upon the Lord for his blessings and their good; not to give up their expectations and hopes of good for the malice and insolency of evil men, for the Lord here prepares a table for *David* in despite of his enemies. There are four things which may keep up their hearts and hopes for the blessings which they do need.

God onely is
the Lord of
blessings.

1. *God onely is the Lord of blessings*: Not a blessing in their enemies hands but all in Gods: All their mercies, supplies, comforts, as they are not in their own hands, so neither in their enemies hands, but every one of them in Gods hands.

This God is
their God.

2. *This God is their God*; the God of blessings is their blessed God, theirs in singular affection, theirs in an everlasting Covenant (*Gen. 12. 2. I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing*) he hath made a Covenant of mercy and peace with them, to bless them, and never to turn away from doing of them good, *Jer. 32. 49.*

3. There is *nothing in God to alter his intentions of good*; for his love is immutable, and his faithfulness shall never fail, and the motive of his goodness (which is his own graciousness) remains for ever. There is nothing in God to alter his intentions of good.

4. There is *nothing in evil men which can frustrate the communication of any blessing* (which God intends unto thee) whether it be greater or lesser, for it is not their will, but Gods will which must stand, not their malice, but Gods providence. There is nothing in evil men to frustrate the blessings of God.
What greater power is there in evil men to hinder any good from thee, then to hinder any evil from themselves? God hath defeated their intentions many a time, but didst thou ever know or hear, that any evil man was able to defeat Gods intentions? hast thou not read, hast thou not known that power belongs unto the Lord, and that the Lord doth whatsoever he will in heaven and on earth?

Ob. Never object that evil men plot ruine, threaten ruine, are able to ruine, and particularly intend thy ruine, and to fleece thee.

Sol. But as David said, *let them curse, but O Lord bless thou*; Psal. 109. 38.
so say I, do thou commit thy person and expectations unto the Lord: *the curse causeless shall not come*; men can neither make us, nor marre us. *Isaac said of Jacob, I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed*; so the Lord of thee, I have covenanted with him to do him good, to prosper him, and certainly thou shalt be blessed and prosper. Let evil men do what they can for themselves, yet they shall never prosper, but shall be cursed, Prov. 26. 2.
Prov. 3. 33. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, and good mens prosperity, (let evil men do all they can) shall not be hindred by them. Dost thou think that God will lose the honor of his faithfulness? the honour of his paternal affection? the honour of his special providence? the honor of his gracious Covenant, for to give way to the unjust malice and vile spirits of vilest persons?

Thirdly, You have singular *cause to go on cheerfully in the service of God*. As the Apostle said, *if ye be followers of that which is good, who is he that will harm you?* Use 3.
You have cause to go on cheerfully in the service of God.
1 Pet. 3. 13. so say I, if ye go on in a good course, who is he that can hinder you of any good mercy? No people in the world have any such encouragements to hold on their course as good people have,

for they have a God that will keep off *all evil* from them; his defence is over them in a good way, his truth is their shield and buckler: that will withhold no good thing from them, but will bless his people with the blessing of peace, of all good: and no evil men can hinder any one comfort for soul or body, whiles it is good for them. What a comfortable encouragement is this to any man walking in the wayes of God? that if he lift up his eyes he may see a Covenant filled with all promises of good for the soul, and for the body; for this life, and for the life to come; and all these respectively made over unto him so far as expedient and good, for he delights in the prosperity of his people, Psal. 35. 27. and withall sees the Angel as it were keeping this tree of life, my meaning is, the resolute will of God and almighty power stretched out to execute all this good, that if heaven and earth should combine together, they could not divert, or hinder the least mercy from him. Therefore let us carefully and cheerfully serve our good God; remember but this, our own evils hinder us of more good then all the evil men of the earth can do.

Use 4.
Walk carefully
with your
God.

Let the people of God walk not onely cheerfully, but *carefully with their God*. Step not aside from him, grieve him not, provoke him not, For 1. Though wicked men cannot, yet *your own wickednesses may hinder blessings*, take off blessings, bring down sore miseries, and it is a great aggravation to sin so after blessings, *Deut. 32*. 2. It is *the way to get more blessings*, we need a blessing God still, to bless our persons and our actions, &c.

Use 5.
Bless the peo-
ple of God.

Bless ye the people of God: bless them in your 1. *Judgments.* 2. *Words.* 3. *Deeds*, for 1. It is an honour to imitate God to be like him. 2. It is your benefit, *Gen. 12. 3. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee*. Be not an adversary to them, for 1. yet God will bless them. 2. He will curse you.



P S A L. XXIII.

Vers. 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the dayes of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

TH E S E words are the sweet conclusion of *Dauids* Psalm, the first verse began with Gods special providence; and this last doth end with his God's continual goodness, in which you have

1. *Davia's confidence*, and there

1. The matter of which he is confident, It is,

1. Goodness.

And 2. Mercy.

2. The relation or habitude in a peculiar way of these to him [*shall follow me*]

3. The extent of time [*all the dayes of my life*]

4. The form of his confidence [*surely*] *vox fidei.*

2. *Davia's conscience* [*and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever*] Constancy of mercy and constancy of duty, meet together in Gods people.

I begin with the first of these (*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the dayes of my life..*)

Goodness is taken three wayes; either radically, for that Goodness nature.

nature which is not only good, but goodnesse it self. Or *causally*, for the fountain or spring of all the good which is derived to the sons of men. Or *virtually*, for the effects and peculiar good things which flow from that radical and causal goodnesse.

Mercy.

And so *Mercy* may be taken either essentially for that nature which is so ready to pity, and help, and blesse, and succour; or causally, for that divine graciousnesse which is the spring of all our mercies; or virtually, for the mercies exhibited and conferred on us.

Both.

Both which, in their kinds, are of two sorts, either *Spiritual*, which respect the condition of the soul for a better life, as divine favour, all the graces of the Spirit, divine assistance, &c. Or *Temporal*, which respect the condition of the person for the things of this life, as peace, wealth, health, liberty, &c.

Interpreters have several conjectures which of these kinds *David* here intends, whether the *Spiritual* or the *Temporal*; for my part I conjecture thus, That implicitly the *Spiritual* may be here thought on, but explicitly and primarily, the continuation of Gods goodnesse and mercy in *Temporals* is here understood. Yet because I will not go alone, I will briefly unfold either of the opinions in a twofold Proposition.

1. *That Spiritual goodnesse and mercy shall follow the people of God all the dayes of their life.*

2. *That Temporal goodnesse and mercy shall follow them all the dayes of their life.*

I will but touch on the former and insift more on the latter, as being (in my judgment) of primary intention in the Text.

Doct. 1. That Spiritual goodnesse and mercy shall follow the people of

Spiritual good- *God all the daies of their life.* For the opening of the *Affertion* shall follow

Gods people 1. That *Spiritual goodnesse and mercy* is threefold; namely, either, *Divine Graciousness*, which is that singular favour and love which God in and through Christ hath unto his people. This in Scripture is sometimes called the Grace of God, sometimes the Favour of God, sometimes his Kindnesse, sometimes his Love, sometimes his Loving kindnesse, sometimes his Mercy,

continually.
Spiritual good-
nesse and mer-
cy is either,
Divine Graci-
ousness.

Mercy, sometimes his Sure mercies. *Divine Graces*, which are those renewing habits or qualities of holiness, whereby our hearts are made holy, as sacred knowledge, justifying faith, love unfeigned, &c. *Divine Comforts*, as peace in conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, assurance of our present interest in God and Christ, and of the heavenly Mansions of glory hereafter.

2. That God may follow his people with these many ways, God followeth either in respect of, 1. his intention and affection, 2. his assistance and preservation, 3. his concurrence and augmentation, 4. Evidence and manifestation.

Now then if you,

1. Take spiritual goodnesse and mercy for *Divine graces* or *favour*, this doth alwayes follow the people of God in respect of intention and affection; for whom the Lord loves once he loves unto the end: but it doth not alwayes follow them in respect of evidence and manifestation. *Asaph* in this sense ex-
postulates, Will the Lord be favourable no more? and, is his mercy clean gone for ever? Psal 77.7. Not that the Sun did not rise, but because it was under a cloud; not that Gods favourable love did cease, but that he had not the evidence of it: Like as a Star doth shine in the heaven, though a weak eye many times misseth the place and sight of it.

2. So again, Take spiritual mercy and goodnesse for *Divine comforts*, peace, joy, assurance, &c. these do not follow us in their effects, though they may be said to follow us in their causes all our dayes; (i.) A Christian hath not alwayes actual peace, and actual joy, and actual assurance; for there is many times trouble in his conscience, and griefs in his soul, and tears in his eyes, and fears and questionings whether God be his God, and whether mercy belongs to him, yet in the Cause he hath these alwayes: As a mans inheritance may be sure in the Cause (namely, his fathers affection and purpose) and sure in the means of conveyance, namely, in the bonds and instruments (though he unnecessarily questions his personal validity and title many times.) In like manner the Christian (uprightly walking) hath alwayes causal peace and joy, &c. in a reconciliation with God, and through his Covenant, though not alwayes actual, &c.

Divine Graces
God follows
them in respect
of these.

3. Take spiritual mercies and goodnesse for the *Graces of Gods Spirit*, (which come from admirable mercy, and are the great tokens of his goodnesse) God doth follow his people in respect of these.

With Preservation.

First, With Preservation; 1. *Really*, though not equally, 2. *Effectually*, though not alwayes sensibly; 3. *Perpetually*, not for a time only. The Glasse may fall, but it shall not be broken, Grace may be battered by Temptation and bruised by Corruption, yet it is preserved. Even these stars he keeps up with his right hand, he will not suffer this seed to die, nor this smoking flax to be quenched, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, nor all the winds and storms cast down this house. That faith which preserves us to salvation, is preserved still by the power of God. There are two things which God will keep for ever, the one is his *own Truth*, the other is *the Graces of his people*; and therefore as his love will never turn away from you, so he puts his fear into his people that they shall never depart from him.

With Augmentation.

Secondly, With Augmentation: Which though it cannot be affirmed in respect of every particular inch of time, yet in respect of the course and state of Grace it doth hold, that God will still follow his people with such a succession as it were of help and divine influence, till their Graces come to that measure of perfection wherein he intends his own glory by them in this life; there may be many sicknesses, and yet the child come at length to a full man; so many failings, slips, sinnings, and yet God by his Spirit and Ordinances doth advance our Graces. The Lord doth alwayes keep the Graces of his servants, and in the event enlarge them; though there be not always an equal influence from God upon our graces, though sometimes it is greater, sometimes lesser, yet such a continuation there is of it, as effectually serves to uphold it, and finally serves for increase and growth.

God doth thus
follow his people
in spirituals
In respect of
themselves.
Because,
Subsequent
grace is as necessary
as Preventing grace.

Now the Lord doth (thus) follow his servants in respect of spirituals, 1. In respect of themselves, 2. In respect of their Graces, 3. In respect of God.

1. *In respect of themselves.*

1. Partly because this *Subsequent Grace* is as necessary for *our Stability*, as his *Preventing Grace* is for our *Conversion*. We could

could not be his, but by his Preventing Grace; and we could not continue his, but by his Subsequent Grace. The child needs a Nurse as well as a Mother, the Breast as well as the Womb. Neither are our hearts (of themselves) sufficient to keep our Graces, nor are our Graces (by their naked strength) able to keep themselves; for our hearts are a very deceitful creature, and our Graces are a very weak creature. The most eminent Saints have been found to be sinful men when left alone to their own best strength.

2. Partly that *our glorying might be still in him*: Cut off Our glorying the beams from the Sun and they instantly cease, their whole strength must be still in God. strength consists in their dependance on the Sun. God reserves the whole Latitude of Grace in his own hand, and lets out the nature and measures of it, that we might never glory in our excellency, who receive, but in his gracious bounty and fidelity who gives. Grace may be considered three ways; 1. In respect of *Inchoation*; 2. In respect of *Augmentation*; 3. In respect of *perfection*; and all is due to God.

3. Partly that *our dependance might still be on him*; for if Our dependance must be still on God. God will still continue his graciousness and grace to his people, then his people have reason still to depend on him, and trust on him for their supplies in spirituals. That exceeding goodness in God, that he will be our everlasting God, is ground sufficient for us to look up with confidence for everlasting strength and assistance.

2. In respect of *their graces*.

1. They are *the most necessary things*, the life of their lives If God will keep the feet of his Saints, will he not their Souls, will he not then their Graces. Eternal life depends on Gods keeping things. They are most necessary things.

2. They are the *most excellent Gifts*, which are without repentance. The most excellent gifts.

3. Though the *best, yet weak* in themselves. The best yet weak.

3. In respect of God.

1. Because the *election of God must stand sure*: Divine election, as it is very gracious in respect of the *cause*, so it is infallible in respect of the *event*, and the reasons thereof are The election of God must stand sure.

1. Gods prescience cannot be mistaken, 2. Gods will cannot be frustrated, and therefore doth he follow his people with subsequent grace, that it may never be said, he hath cast off his people whom he did foreknow.

He hath firmly
promised to
them eternal
life.

2. Because he hath firmly promised unto them eternal life and glory; this the Scripture declares much, and therefore it is said *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, and great is their reward in heaven, and Christ is gone to prepare a place for them; and he that believeth hath eternal life, and Titus 1. 2. *Eternal life, which God that cannot lye promised before the world began.* But there could be no assertion of the thing thus promised, unless God did follow his people with subsequent grace, not grace simply, but grace preserved and kept, delivers us into those eternal mansions. A motion not begun but continued, brings to the journeyes end, so, &c.

He hath pro-
mised perse-
verance to his
people.

3. Because he hath also promised perseverance unto his people; there is not only exhortments to the Saints to perseverance, as *Rev. 2. 20. Be thou faithful to the death*; not only Cautions; *Take heed, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain*, and take heed lest ye fall from your own stedfastness. Nor only encouragements, *He that continueth to the end shall be saved, Mar. 13. 13.* And in due time we shall reap if we faint not, *Gal. 6. 9.* But also expresse promises, that God will put his fear, that we shall never depart from him, *Jer. 32.* And that he will sanctifie us throughout, and preserve us unblameable unto the coming of Christ, *1 Thes. 5.* That he will finish what he hath begun; which promises are expresse evidences of what God himself doth undertake, and what he will perform in us, *Ergo*, he will still follow his people with spiritual mercy and goodness.

Use.

This is un-
speakable com-
fort to the peo-
ple of God.

The main use of this point serves for unspeakable comfort to the people of God, unto whom God hath begun in spiritual mercy and goodness: There is not a condition (on earth) more excellent then that which is spiritual, nor more assaulted by Satan, nor opposed by evil men, nor more feared (for the duration) by good men themselves then this, and yet the whole frame of it (from the beginning to the end) is wrought and sustained and supplied by an omnipotent and gracious hand: The Lord who hath begun the good work of grace will assuredly finish it; and he having in much mercy set his love upon you will never reverse it; *he is not as man that he should repent*: his goodness and mercy towards you are a Sun, which if they once rise, do never set again. Two things I would briefly commend to you.

1. One is to make it evident unto your souls, that God hath begun with you in spiritual favours and mercies, that you are the people of his love and grace; which may appear unto you.

Make it evident to your selves, that God hath begun with you in spiritual favours.

1. By the alteration of your Natures, in their inclination and bent: True grace makes us new persons, 2 Cor. 5. 17. *Ego non sum Ego*, said he in S. Ambrose.

By the alteration of your natures.

2. By your estimation of Gods favour and of his graces, as 1. In God, 2. Towards themselves, 3. In all persons; what is thy *Summum* and *Optimum*.

By your estimation of Gods favours.

3. By the dominion which grace hath and God hath, that they rule in the heart, and the heart is in service only to them, they have chosen the Lord, &c.

By the dominion on which grace hath.

4. By humble desires and endeavours after more growth, not as if we had already attained, Phil. 3.

By humble desires and endeavours after more growth.

5. By that tender regard of Gods Will to obey it, and of his honour not to slur it, Psal. 119 7, 10, 12, 13, 17.

By a tender regard of Gods will.

6. By the real hatred of, and conflicting with sinful lusts, and thereupon declining all appearances and inductions to evil, having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. I hate every evil way. Psal. 119.

By a real hatred of sin.

7. By superlative joy in the presence of Gods favour, drowing all carnal and worldly delights as the Sun doth the stars.

By superlative joy in the presence of Gods favour.

8. By that efficacie and strength of more love unto God, upon the evidence of his love.

By the efficacy of more love to God upon the evidence of his love.

2. Then comfortably to be confident that God will still follow you in this goodness and mercy: He will keep and preserve your persons, and he will keep and preserve your graces, he will not fail to supply you even unto the end. I cannot express the greatness of this mercy, our eternal happiness lyes in it, it is of the most singular concernment to the soul for blessedness, to be in favour with God, to have the Lord still following of us, and yet this the Lord will certainly perform to his people, he hath changed your hearts, he will keep your graces, he will save your souls, and what would ye more?

Be confident that God will follow you in this goodness and mercy.

Object. But now it is objected, how shall we hold out who are so weak; if we have any grace it is but of little strength.

How shall I hold out that have so little strength.

Answered. *Sol.* Because 'tis of *little strength*, therefore will the Lord follow it with *more strength*.

2. The *strength* of thy *grace* is much more in its *cause* than in *it self*. Weak *grace* has strong *helps*, the *Child* hath a *mother*, and the *Ivy* an *Oak*. If an *invincible strength* doth keep and lead on a weak *grace*, there is *safety enough*; my *grace is sufficient for thee*, said *God* to *Paul*, *2 Cor. 1.* and my *power is made manifest in weak ives* (thy *soul* shall be as a *watered garden*, the *slips* grow by it) thy *duration* depends not on thy *strength*, but on thy *Gods strength*.

Obj. Yea, but I am ready to sin and do sin so much, that the Lord may therefore leave me, because I do not follow him, therefore he may cease to follow me.

Answered. *Sol.* It cannot be denied, that a *person in Gods favour*, and in the *state of grace* hath a *sinful nature in him*, and that also he doth *daily sin*.

2. The *sins* (whatsoever they are) of such a *person*, consider them in their *proper merit* with reference to the *court of justice*, they *deserve that God should not love, nor follow us, &c.* and *God* may be *angry as a father*. But yet consider them in the *court of mercy*, and as taken off by a more sufficient merit in the *blood of Christ*, so they do not effectually prejudice us either for *Gods love* or *Gods subsequent grace*.

3. There are *divers sorts of sinning*: some by *ignorance*, as *Paul* before his *conversion*: some by *infirmity*, as *Peter* after his *conversion*: some of *malice* and full *delight*, which are *reigning sins*, and have in them, 1. *Clear light*; 2. *Complete assent*, both antecedent, and concomitant, and consequent: and 3. *Covenant of heart* to love and serve sin. Thus the *people of God* do not sin, and the former wayes do not move the *Lord* to cast them off, but he pities their *infirmities*, and will *pardon* them, and be *merciful* to their *transgressions*, and will *raise up his falling servants* with *renewed sorrow* and *repentance*, and will cause them to be more *watchful*, *prayerful*, *strong, &c.*

But Satan may hinder me of subsequent grace.

Obj. No, nor Satan, neither by his

1. *Accusation for sins past*, Ro. 8. 33. *Who shall lay any*

any

any thing to the charge of Gods elect? it is God that justifieth: Who can hinder the Lord from doing thy soul good? In vain doth the malicious adversary accuse, when the judge is satisfied and he himself hath acquitted and cleared the party accused.

2. *Temptations unto sins future*: indeed he may sift and winnow an holy person, he may strangely assault, and sometimes strangely prevail, but never so effectually, that either their grace shall utterly fail, or that Gods graciousness shall utterly cease; either God will deliver them *from temptation* by with-drawing Satan; or raise them at length *above the temptation* by making their Graces more resisting and victorious. Temptations resisted are disturbances to our Graces but never hinderances to our helps.

Ob. Yea, but the *World* may take us off from God, and then God from us.

Sol. No neither, for God will so follow his servants with his gracious favour and strength, that they shall *overcome the world*, he will yet give them hearts more crucified unto it, and raise their hearts to see the excellencies of his love in Christ, that they shall trample on all as dross and dung in comparison of Christ.

The World
may take us off
from God.
Answered.

Thus you see that the Lord will follow you with his subsequent grace, and none shall hinder it from following of you even unto the end; therefore lift up the feeble hands and knees; suffer not discouragements or diffidences to dwell upon your souls, as if the Lord would leave you and forsake you; there was never any servant of God whom he ever finally left.

This do 1. *Fear your own weakness.* 2. *Avoid occasions of weakning your strength.* 3. *Keep close to God* in all uprightness and humbleness of walking. 4. *Attend to the publick means* of your future strength and perseverance. 5. *Be fervent in supplication* to the Lord for this his strength and supplies of your gracious condition. 6. And *commit your souls and graces* for their preservation and progresse into the hands of God against all Satans suggestions and your own distrustful spirits. (Never think that the Lord will begin and not make an end, that he will leave so excellent a thing as Grace. First, It were *dishonourable to him*, in 1 his Promises, 2. Care, 3. Love to his people. Secondly, It were *uncomfortable to his people*.

people, they could never be sure of his favour, or grace, or heaven, if he would not follow these) : So shall you honor the Lord in the glory of his great goodness and mercy unto you ; so shall you honour him in the glory of his everlasting care for your everlasting good ; so shall you find his everlasting arms stretched out and underneath you to preserve you for ever to his everlasting Kingdom and glory.

A third use shall be to make use of God in this his goodness and mercy : *follow him* that his goodness and mercy in spirituals *may follow us*.

Use 3.
Follow God
that his good-
ness may follow
you.

Follow God
out of a sense
of your need of
more Grace.

Ob. How may we do that ?

Sol. 1. *Follow him out of a sense of your need of more grace and favour* : you find your corruptions grow strong and rebellious, that a little grace will not serve to keep you, but you are ready to fall, now follow the Lord that he would not leave thee but would graciously and effectually follow thee with more grace, more power, &c.

Out of an e-
stimation of
his further sub-
sequent Grace.

With earnest
and unsatisfi-
able affections.

2. *Out of an estimation of his further helping and subsequent Grace* ; you will never follow thoroughly unless you prize highly ; O Lord *thy loving kindness is better then life, &c.*

3. *With earnest and unsatisfiable affections* : make it more to you then heaven : Be not said nay : *I will not let thee go unless thou blest me.*

With believing
expostulations.

4. *With believing expostulations* : Urge the Lord through Christ with his own word, manifold promises : and why ? O Lord, wilt thou not remember thy everlasting truth ? have regard to my soul and to thy name. It is an honour and no loss, to be at heaven gates.

With patient
expectations
in the use of
the means.

5. *With patient expectations in the use of the means*. You shall know the Lord if ye will follow on to know the Lord : for he will command his loving kindness, and will strengthen thee with strength in thy soul. He will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

Doct. 2.
Temporal mer-
cy and good-
ness shall fol-
low Gods peo-
ple all their
days.

I now proceed to the second Exposition of the Text, which understand it of temporal mercy and goodness, and hence this Proposition doth arise.

That *temporal mercy and goodness shall follow the people of God all the days of their life*. David is confident of it here in the Text, and therefore as he blesteth God for what was past,
so

so he resteth on God for the future, no way doubting of the continuation, who had enjoyed so constant an experience of ancient mercies and goodness. The Apostle is apposite to this in *Heb. 13. 5.* *He hath said I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* v. 6. *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper.* What is that *I will never leave thee, &c.* but as much as I will ever bless thee, be with thee, do thee good, shew thee mercy, &c. So saith God to his Church in *Isa. 46. 4.* *Even to your old age, I am he, and even to hoary hairs will I carry you, I have made and I will bear, even I will carry and deliver you.* So *Jer. 32. 40.* *I will make an everlasting Covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good.* But for the Explication of the Assertion, you must distinguish 'twixt

Distinguish
B'twixt: Reality
and plenty.

1. *Reality and Plenty*: 'twixt *Presence and Abundance*: God doth not bind himself to the quantity, to a plenty or abundance of mercies and goodness, that his servants shall be all their dayes rich and great, but onely to the reality of supply: and therefore *David* doth not say *my full cup*, or *my eil*, or *my large Table* shall follow me, no but onely *mercy and goodness*. Though he might be taken shorter in the quantity, yet he was confident still for the quality; he might not have plenty yet he should have mercy all his dayes.

2. And as you must distinguish 'twixt reality and redundancy, so you must distinguish 'twixt *constancy and equability*. The river may run by the door and serve the house, when yet it is sometimes more high, and sometimes more shallow. Changes may befall a man in his estate, and yet mercy and goodness not change to the person under those changes.

And betwixt
constancy and
equability.

3. 'Twixt *Identity and perpetuity*. Though many a particular mercy may be called home (as an Ambassador when he hath done his work) yet if another comes in the room of it: if there be a succession of mercies that the need is still made up, as in a ship, if the old board be taken out, a new one is inserted; so when mercy succeeds mercy, as one hour in the day succeeds another. Though it be not the very same mercy, yet if it be a succession, it doth verifie the assertion, *That God will still follow his people with Goodness and mercy.*

Betwixt: Identity
and Perpetuity.

4. 'Twixt our *infidelity* and *Gods fidelity*: if you consult the

Betwixt our
Infidelity and
Gods fidelity,

the truth of this Assertion at the Barre of an unbelieving judgment, which in every difficulty and new occurrence consults with flesh and blood; with fancie and sense, that cannot see a-farre off; thus, we often judge that we shall perish (with *David*) and cry out with the murmuring *Israelites* that bread and water, and every thing fails us, though at the same time we are eating and drinking.

But if you will judge of the Assertion either in the *intention of Gods will*, or in the *expression of Gods promise*, then it is evident, that he who hath been our God, will be our God; and he who hath shewed us great mercy and goodness, his mercy endures for ever, and his goodness shall never fail us.

Arguments to
evince this
truth.

The nature
and qualities
of Gods love
to his people.

Six properties
of this Love.
It's a Special
Love.

Arguments or Reasons to evince and demonstrate the truth of the Assertion, are these:

1. Consider the *nature and qualities of Gods love unto his people*, and then it is evident that his mercy and goodness shall still follow his servants. That God doth love his people, no Christian (who believes the Scriptures) can question: Now this love hath divers properties or qualities in it.

First, It is a *Special Love*: He loves the worst of men as his creatures, and the best of men as his new creatures; he loves his enemies *in cursu nature*, but he loves his people *metu gratie*, with a gracious love. If then his common love, as respecting the very worst of men, nay his deadly enemies, be productive of much good; that it makes the Sun to shine on them, and the rain to distill on them, shall not his special love, his love of gracious favour produce rather much more mercy and goodnesse to his own people, his favourites, the family of love.

A Great In-
tensive Love.

Secondly, It is a *Great or Intensive Love*; a Love which doth not confine, or circumscribe it self with ordinary donatives, but riseth to effects of highest consequence, even to riches of Grace, and treasures of Glory. It did vent it self to the free giving of Christ (the unparellelable and incomparable mercy), If then his love will rise (and that for ever) to the highest demonstrations, will it (think you) fail in the lowest expressions? If it will not stick to give Grace (which in the lowest degree of it is more valuable then a whole World) nor fail to give Christ, who is (in a sort) as far above Grace, never imagine

gine that he will be as a deceitful river or failing staff in the poor things of this life, in these *minima bona* as St. *Austin* calls them, *Rom. 8. 32. He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.*

3. It is an *acting and communicating Love*: There is a love which is only in pretence, and it is like the barren womb, perhaps complementally verbal, but not at all effectually fruitful: And there is a love which is rich in *affectu*, in desires, but restrained in *effectu*, in supplies; the heart is bountiful, but the hand is not able. And there is a love which hath depth of will and strength of power, it is like the Sun still imparting light, or like the Fountain still dropping; such a love is God unto his people, not naked, not needy, but full and fruitful, a running Fountain, ever dropping, a constant Sun, ever shining; there is not the day, nor the hour, nor the minute which hath not a message of mercy in it from that love.

4. It is a *cheerful Love*; a love that is not only apt to do good, but also which delights to do good. As his mercifulness is a nature which delights in mercy, so his goodness is a nature which delights to do good to his people, *Jer 32. 41. I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.* Now an affection to do good, and an affectionateness in the doing thereof, makes the work an unweariable and perpetual work. Bounty will hold out if it be grounded in a 1. Rich, 2. a Sincere, 3. a Delightful affection.

5. It is a *very tender love*; a slighter love is like the chaff which every wind can move and turn, but a tender love is like the roots of an Oake which cleave fast to the earth; the more tender the love, the more tenacious it is. Two things are observed where love is tender, one that it is *more pitiful*, another is, that it is *more helpful*; and the reason of both is, because the more tender love is, the more natural it is, which of all loves is most sensible and yielding; as you see in parents to their children, who sometimes will almost starve their children to preserve life in theirs. Now the Lord doth love his people with a most tender love, more tender then that which in us is natural love, exceeding the love of a father to his child, *Psal. 27. 10.*

and that of a mother to her sucking child and son, *Iſa.* 49. 15. We do think it a monstrous unnaturalness for a woman to forsake her sucking child, the tears and cries whereof do so melt the heart to open the breasts. Why then! if Gods love be more tender, &c.

An invariable Love.

6. Lastly, It is an *Invariable Love*; not a flash or passionate love, which flames a while and cools as fast, but a stable and permanent love, which began before any time, and which shall last beyond all time. It is a love of Eternity, in which there is no beginning nor ending, and therefore it will never fail us.

Consider the nature and circumstances of Gods Covenant.

2. Secondly, The *nature and circumstances of Gods Covenant*, and then likewise it will appear that Gods goodness and mercy will still follow us.

There are four things considerable in Gods Covenant,

In it.

Consider the Universality of Good.

1. One is the *Universality of Good*. It is the very *Summa Totalis* of all the good which we need either for Soul or body, either for this life or the life to come. The treasures of all our mercies are cabined as it were in it.

The Perpetuity of Time.

2. Another is the *Perpetuity of Time*. As it is for all good; so it is for all times; and therefore as it is called a gracious Covenant for the freeness of it, and an absolute Covenant for the fulness of it; So it is called an everlasting Covenant for the duration of it.

The Validity of Engagement

3. A third is *Validity of Engagement*. God doth not onely affirm but solemnly bind and engage himself in the highest obligations of his honour and with the utmost of his will and power, to perform at all seasonable times, all that necessary and convenient good for his people.

Fidelity of Performance.

4. And the last is *Fidelity of Performance*. That the Lord will not fail nor shall any word of his Covenant fail; Heaven and earth shall rather be crusht and crackt into nothing, before any one iota or tittle of Gods promises shall be nullified or falsified. See *Ier.* 31. 35. ver. 37. Doth it not then hence undeniably appear that goodness and mercy shall alwaies follow the people of God, when as God himself who is the fountain of all mercy and goodness, who onely hath the sovereign authority and ability over them, hath so freely not onely affirmed but engaged his will and power to perform, not onely some good.

good but every good, not for a while, but at all times unto his people.

3. Thirdly, Consider the *nature and quality of his Providence*, and then also it will appear that Goodness, &c. Consider the nature & quality of his Providence.

1. His providence is a *vast care* for all the world.

2. It is a most *watchful* care over his own people, both *against evils* which might annoy them and *for good* which may supply them. As his *eyes run through the whole world*, so they are *strong in the behalf of his people*; not onely strong to defend them, but as strong to supply them, and therefore you read in *Zach. 4. 2.* that the *golden Candlestick* had not onely *seven Lamps* (to imply Gods exact Omniscience) but also *seven pipes* (to imply Gods exact Providence) and *two Olive trees*, one on the right side of the Bowl and the other on the left side thereof, v. 3. to import his continual feeding and supporting of his Church.

3. As it is an active care, so is it an *effective* care; it is a care of influence as well as of guidance; not onely to order but also to blefs. Not onely to know what we want, *Matth. 6. 3 2.* but also to add unto us all the things that we need, v. 3 3.

4. And it is likewise a *daily care*. Not a care for a day onely but an every daies care: as the daies succeed the daies, so Gods care doth follow his people from one day to another, and therefore is it he bids you *every day to come* unto him for daily bread.

4. Fourthly, Consider yet again, the *relation betwixt God and his people*, so may it appear that goodness and mercy shall follow them all the daies of their life. There are two sorts of relations; some which infer only a *temporary obligation*, as that of Masters to their Servants, who are onely bound to provide cloath, feed, lodge their servants, during the term of Covenant whether for weeks or year or years, upon the expiration of which there is a Cessation of any further care and Tye. Which include a *Perpetual Obligation* as that of an husband to a wife, or of a Parent to a child, the relations here are constant and the obligations thereupon cease not; Such a relation as this, is there betwixt God and his people, even that of an husband to a wife which is a Covenant for life it self, and that of a Parent to a child, who is not onely bound for the matter to

Consider the Relations betwixt God and his people.

Some Relations infer onely a temporal obligation.

Others include a perpetual obligation.

provide but for the duration to provide as long as he is a Parent, either immediately at his own house or equivalently in a dowry respecting life in a marriage. That God who enjoins a constancy of provision from us to ours (or else accuseth us to be worse then infidels) will not he (standing in a more neer relation to us) extend and continue his care and goodness?

There is a continued necessity of Gods peoples part for the continuation of Gods goodness.

5. Lastly, There is a *continued necessity on his peoples part for the continuation of his fatherly goodness and mercy*; Their life is altogether on him. Their life of *nature* is but a breath depending on his power. Their life of *condition* is but a beam depending on his sun. Their life of *Faith* is but an hand still opening or gathering at his tree; every day feeding on his promises and blessings. There could be no continued living without his continued mercy and goodness; *Ergo*.

Use.

Thus you have the explication of the Assertion, I now proceed to the application of it to our selves :

It informes us of the Precedency & Stability of the condition of Gods people.

1. It may inform us of the *precedency as also of the stability of the condition of godly persons*. 'Tis true that all these outward things are mutable in their nature, as very flitting shade, and that some evil men may in number of outward things exceed the possessions of the righteous; but there are two things of which the righteous persons may be confident, one is *sufficiency*, another is *perpetuity*; They have a good hold and shall hold it for term of life. Whereas the wicked in their abundance shall be driven to their feet, and their wealth shall melt as the fat of lambs and grease; there is a perpetual slipperiness and inconstancy in their conditions, yet the righteous shall dwell in the land for ever, goodness and mercy shall follow him all the daies of his life; And therefore if ever you would get a good and a firm possession, get good hearts; the best hearts get the onely advancements in Heaven, and the best estates on earth. We all account an inviolably certainty to be far better then a controlable plenty.

Use 2.

It informes of the inexcusableness of Gods people for their passionate unbelief.

But secondly, It may inform us of the *utter inexcusability in the people of God, for their passionate unbelief*, fearful tremblings and predominant suspicions and conclusions oftentimes that they shall certainly want, and that goodness and mercy will fail them, and not follow them all the dayes of their life. *I shall one day perish*, said David; what shall we put on,

what?

What shall we eat and drink? say the *Disciples*. We are not unlike these, nay I pray God we be not worse then these; like to the murmuring *Israelites*, who spake against God, saying, *Can God furnish a Table in the Wilderness?* behold he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed, can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? *Psal.* 78. 19, 20. So we, the Lord will not answer us, will not do us good, he is weary of us, our estates shrink, mercies grow low and thinne, we begin to want, we shall want, we have called and yet there is no answer; endeavoured, and yet there is no mercy; surely the Lord will leave us, &c.

Now thou unbelieving heart who chargest God thus foolishly, *hast thou not known? hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?*

What is the Lord in himself? is there any change in him, in whom there is not so much as the shadow of change? assuredly Consider what the Lord is in himself. he is as good a God as ever (*his goodness remains for ever*) as himself, merciful a God as ever (*his mercy endures for ever*) as faithful a God as ever (*his faithfulness abides to all generations*) as compassionate a father to pity thee, as wise a God to consider thee, as All-sufficient a God to help thee, as willing a God to bless thee as ever. If the fountain remain the same, why shouldst thou premeditate want of water? If the Sun continue the same, why shouldst thou fear a decay of light? if the God of all Grace, and the Father of all mercies remain the same, why shouldst thou suspect? why shouldst thou fear? why shouldst thou challenge the duration, the continuation, the course of his goodnesse and mercy towards thee all the dayes of thy life?

Or look on the Word of God: What one syllable or hint hast thou there that God will fail thee? the onely way to judge what God will do, is seriously to look upon what God hath said. Look on the Word of God. Doeſt thou discern in the least degree that he hath called in the Charter, or altered the Deeds and Grants, couched in his gracious promises? surely they are springs of goodness, and seals of truth for ever; they are not clouds that vanish, but wells which run; not a womb which growes barren, nor breasts which grow dry, but as the Sun and the Ordinances in heaven are

that are settled for ever, all of them are Yea, and Amen.

Look on the
dealings of
God with you.

Or look on the *dealings of God with you*: What hath he been unto you? or what hath he done unto you? hath he been as the dry and barren wilderness that no mercy ever found you out? or when was he as the deceitful Brook? name the time that he ever failed you, or left you destitute of his goodness and mercy. Thou must needs say of his goodness, what *Samuel* said of his help, *hitherto hath God helped us*. So hitherto hath God blessed me, never yet did he fail me, but hath fed me, but hath clothed me, but hath lodged me, but hath provided for me. What, and yet in much experience to give way to much diffidence, to feel goodness and yet to question it; to confesse a continuation of mercies, and yet to suspect a continuance of mercies.

But we are not
so distrustful
of Gods good-
ness for the fu-
ture.

Ob. But it is here replied, we are not so distrustful of Gods goodness for the future. True, sometimes some transient thoughts arise, least all will not hold out with us, but for any over-ruling diffidence that God will not follow us with Goodness and Mercy, we dislike it, we are not guilty of it.

Answered.

Sol. I answer, that even *the most believing heart* may sometimes feel some *throws and passions* of unbelief, which it doth dislike, resist, and bewail. Though Temporals be far lesse then Spiritualls, yet our hearts are as apt (upon occasions and in streights) to be shaken about them, as well as about the other.

2. That even *those passions and fits of distrust are unlawful and sinful*: Though I dare not pronounce of them they are a grand iniquity, yet we may every one (with *Asaph*) confesse and bewail, *This was my infirmity*, they are the smoke in the candle, the lameness in our thighs, the palsey in our hands, the flashes and births of unbelief.

3. But let us though take heed, lest while we would flatter and relieve our selves with an *opinion of infirmity*, we be not in the mean time *guilty of reigning infidelity* in this particular, that the very dominion of unbelief is upon us in a prevalent and habitual distrust of Gods goodness and mercy for the future.

Reigning Infi-
delity in this
may be known.
By excessive
dejectedness.

Ob. How may that be known? will you say.

Sol. I conjecture thus:

1. *Excessive dejectedness* doth demonstrate an excessive di-

distrustfulness: When the heart of man is like a stone, still heavy; or like the sea, still tumultuous; or like the mill still ground with cares and fears, and griefs; that if he looks in, all is a combustion; if he looks out, all is but a consumption; if he looks up, all is but a conclusion; troubled within, decaying without, and hopeless above (.i.) he feels his heart still unquiet, he judgeth his estate still pining, and his God in a resolution of failing: Affuredly he doth not believe that *goodness and mercy will follow him all the dayes of his life*. Faith for the future, doth proportionably revive us for the present. *David d'd believe and therefore did not faint*, Psal. 27. 13. So much faith, and alwayes so much cheerfulness. It cannot be but a life of faith should shew it self in a liveliness of heart, for faith will dislodge our cares, and answer our fears, and shew our helps and so ease our hearts. But thus it is not with every man, look on the countenances of men, feel the pulses of men; O they look like death, their hearts are sunk, their hopes are gone, they run to solitary places, sit down and weep, and vex, and meditate on nothing but misery and poverty, think on nothing but want, fear nothing more then want, talk of nothing but want, even oppress and consume away, and make an ead of their lives, for fear least goodness and mercy should not follow them all the dayes of their life.

Secondly, *Wayes of unlawfulness* do also evidence hearts full of distrustfulness; a good God is never trusted but in a good way. If we will borrow the help of sin, we palpably distrust the goodness of God. For did we believe that God would not fail us, we would never assay whether any wicked way would help us. *He that believes makes not haste*. *Saul did not believe and therefore he goes to the Witch; and the Israelites, and therefore they rested on the King of Assyria and Egypt.*

O Lord be merciful unto us: How frequent is this to seek to strengthen our selves and to settle our estates by wayes of sin? One man will provide for hereafter, by usury, another by oppression, another by lying, another by fraud and cozening, another by flattery, another by apostasie. They do not believe that Gods goodness is sufficient enough, or that it is constant enough. Did they believe that there was a God, and

Wayes of unlawfulness.

that

that the earth is the Lords and that he keepeth mercy for ever for them that fear him, and that the man who trusts upon the Lord shall be blessed, that he shall be as the tree planted by the waters, that his roots shall spread and his leaf shall be green, or that God would never forsake him, how could it be that his heart should thus forsake the Lord, and lean to the ways of sin and curse. *Faith keeps the eye upon Gods truth, and the foot onely in Gods way*; it knowes that Divine goodness is as able to perform, as Divine graciousness is willing to promise, and that those ways which are contrary to Gods lawes are never certain for our comforts; but that as all mercy springs from God, so it shall be disbursed and found in paths onely of obedience.

When Divine engagements prove to us no encouragements.

The promises breathe upon a trusting soul Support.

Composure.

Alacrity.

Thirdly, When *Divine engagements prove unto us no encouragements*, it is an argument we do not trust God for the future: There are four things which the promises of God (those I mean by Divine engagements) breathe upon a trusting soul.

1. *Support*: They are as a Cordial to keep a man from fainting, so David saith *Psal. 27. 13. I had fainted unless I had believed, to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*

2. *Composure*: Like Christs voice, they rebuke the winds and seas; we are never more Gods, and more our selves, then when we can believe the promises. Now our fears abate, and cares vanish as the clouds when the Sun breaks out; the heart hath least tumult, when it hath most faith; no flesh so patient as the sound, nor heart so quiet as the believing.

3. *Alacrity*: For *Hagars* eyes are now opened to see more water then in her own bottle, a spring of water to preserve her own life and her childs. The promises of life, if we do believe them, do alwayes excite hearts of life; living promises cause lively hearts. *I will yet trust, and I shall yet see him to be my God, and the help of my countenance, Psal. 42.* Promises believed are like the honey which *Jonathan* tasted, which did lighten his eyes, and repair his spirits; the soul gathers strength and courage by them; God hath undertaken for me, he will not fail me, his bond is faithful and I believe performance, and now the heart is up, it is alive, joyful not onely in possessing, but believing, it is quickned, enlarged; as it is joiful in possession, so

it is cheerful upon the certioration of mercies.

4. *Expectation*: When the husband writes word that at such *Expectation*, a time he will come home, the loving wife will then prepare and look for him: I will certainly do thee good, saith God; this is a faithful saying, saith the believer, and therefore *I will look up for the God of Jacob, and will patiently wait for his salvation*. Now say of what influence are Gods promises for your future good? I assure you there is no credence if there appear no influence. I do not ask what these promises are in themselves for their composition, but what are they in you for their operation? are they the ministration of life unto thee? or rather are they not as a dead letter unto thee? Do not the consolations and engagements of God seem a small thing unto thee? If a man, a sinful, weak, deceitful creature promiseth to feed thee, to supply thee, &c. this fetcheth up thy heart; if a God, an Almighty, All-sufficient, faithful God promiseth, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, but my goodness and mercy shall follow thee, all the dayes of thy life; yet this affects us not, revives us not, as if the matter promised, were not material, or that he who makes the promises were not faithful.

Fourthly, *Neglect of the soul in spirituals*, evidently shews that we do not trust on God for futures in temporals: he who gives all his time to the World, trusts on God at no time; the man will be up in duties, who is up in faith. Faith never yet allowed any man to cashiere heaven, that so he might get earth, (*i. e.*) to renounce a heavenly course, that so he might enlarge a worldly estate; for it will neither let in sin, nor shut out God, to settle or insure our selves. Did a man believe that the Lord would not fail his body, would he not the more cheerfully look to his soul, and serve that God who is so faithful? But behold men and their wayes, very drudges to the earth! and so onely painful for after times, that they wholly forget eternity, as if there were not a God in *Israel*; they trust to their own inutterable toilings, and not to his faithful undertakings; they conceive that times for obedience, are the times of hinderance

*Neglect of the
soul in spiri-
tuals.*

The next use shall be for *instruction*, in case that we do find our selves thus unbelieving of Gods subsequent mercy and goodness for our temporals, then

Use 3.

Instruction.

Be humbled
for our unbel-
ief.

1. To be humbled for this unbelief. 2. To beg earnestly for the pardon of it. 3. To go on no more in it.

1. To be humbled for our unbelief in Gods goodness and mercy for the future. There are two great sins which a man should humble his soul for; One is *Unthankfulness* for what we hath received; Another is *Unbelief* for what he wants. When a man is able neither to bless God, nor to trust God; the good that he hath done, a man regards not, the good that he will do, a man believes not; when every experience stands for a cypher, and every promise seems a lie. Oh how should this break and abase our vile spirits, which are so averse to bless a good God, and to rely upon a faithful God.

Beg earnestly
for the pardon
of it.

2. To beg earnestly for the pardon of it; do not think it a small thing, for *First*, It is a *sin*, and therefore should move us in special to confess it, and to beg remission for it. *Secondly*, It is a *great sin*: Unbelief, like oyl, swims above the water. It is a sin which in every part and kind of it, seems to rise above other sins. It did so provoke the Lord in the *Israelites*, that he *swore in his wrath they should never enter into his rest*. Our reigning distrusts for earth, may in the end prove unto us the loss of heaven.

Go no more on
in this distrust-
ing way.
Oppose it.

Thirdly, *Go no more on in this distrusting and unbelieving way*, approve it not, feed it not with unworthy arguments, and suspicions, and prejudices, but oppose it in all, the very heart of it, and all the causes of it, and occasions of it. Three things I will propound for this;

1. *What causes and occasions of this distrust they are which we must oppose.* 2. *After what manner we must oppose them.* 3. *What motives so to do.*

What are the
causes of it,
which we must
oppose.

Quest. 1. *What the causes of this distrust on God for future Goodness and Mercy are which we must oppose.*

Sol. I conjecture that the causes of our actual distrusts in this kind are these,

The very na-
ture of unbel-
ief.

1. *A very nature of Unbelief*: that spirit of infidelity which is born with us into the world, which tumbles with us in the womb, and cries out (as it were) as soon as we are born, and still inclines us to depart from the living God. As in other things so in this, we go astray from the very womb, and are more apt to trust in lying vanities, then upon the rock of

our salvation. There is not only a natural rebellion in our pervers wills to the righteous lawes of God, but also a native unsubjecti- on in our minds to the faithful promises of God, we are as prone to incomply with his truth, as we are to inconform with his holi- nesse; and to suspect his goodnesse, as we are to disobey his commands; our hearts do not onely contradict the will of his authority in what he would have us to do, but the will also of his mercy in that good which he himself undertakes to do for us.

2. *Extreme ignorance of God*: Though knowledge be not alwayes sufficient to produce faith, yet ignorance is alone able to elicit unbelief. *How shall they believe in him* (said the Apostle in an higher Article) *of whom they have not heard*; Ro. 10. 14. for it is not conceivable how the heart of man should be raised to any credence, where there is not some proportionable evidence of those motives which onely do elevate it thereto: but men are generally ignorant of the nature and excellencies and covenant of God. They do not apprehend what an absolute Being he is in himself, and what an All-sufficient Being he is to the creatures, how infinite in goodness, how rich in mercy, how illimited in his greatness, how immense in his power, how gracious in his promises, how plentiful in his compassions, how invariable in his truth, how active in his providence, how willing, how able, how faithful to do good to the people of his Covenant: and hence it is that they are so full of their carnal disputes, of their tumultuous fears, of their anxious cares, of their continual distrusts.

3. *Instability of judgment*: That slipperiness and incon- stancy which makes our minds to reel and waver, that though sometimes we do discern the true and proper grounds of confi- dence in God, yet we quickly lose them, and hold not fast to our principles, but give way to corrupt reasonings which cor- rupt us from a firm assenting to the truths of God. We do not alwayes judge what God alwayes is; though there be a nat- ural uniformity in Gods goodness and mercy, and the same uni- formity in his promises of that goodness and mercy, yet in us there is a deformity and diversity of judgment concerning this. Sometimes we judge him able and faithful, and another time, we question (as they) *can the Lord give bread also*? One while

Extreme igno-
rance of God.

Instability of
judgment.

we are perswaded of his will, and another while we are half perswaded that he will be favourable no more. Whiles the judgment is thus divided, how can it be but our hearts, though sometimes like a ship they rise up as if they would touch heaven, yet by and by they should sink down as if they would fall into hell; a wavering judgment doth alwayes engender an unbelieving heart: whiles the mind is so doubtful, the will cannot but be distrustful.

Preposterous-
ness of reason-
ing.

4. *Preposterousnesse of reasoning*: There is a *perverse sense* of reasoning, when a person will judge of Gods intentions thus and thus, and so they must be because he will judge so, this is either extreme folly, or extreme melancholly; and there is a *preposterousness* of reasoning, when a man will begin his judgment there where he should end it: as thus; There are two wayes wherein we judge of Gods intentions, One is *in his promises*, and these are his charter which he makes. Another is, *in our sense*, and this is our evidence which we make. In a right reasoning from both which we should proceed by descending (*i. e.*) first to look at Gods intentions in his promises, and then to follow those down unto our sense and experience. But generally we reason and conclude of his intentions for our good, first (if not onely), by *sense*, making our sense and feeling, a leading case, as it were, or a rule both to our faith, and to Gods goodness; and because we do not first with our eyes see, or with our fingers handle and possess these outward things, therefore we conclude that God never intends to bestow them on us. Never considering that though we may *affirmatively* argue from the promise down to sense, *v. g.* God hath promised unto me a continuation of mercy and goodnesse, therefore I shall successively, upon all convenient times partake thereof. Yet we may not *negatively* argue from our sense up to Gods promise, as thus, I do not now see much good, and therefore God doth not intend to do me any good; For this is to reason and conclude that there is no Sun in heaven because it is not yet day; or that there will be no fruit this ensuing year, because we see no buds now, whereas the fruit is now in the root, though it be not in our eyes and mouths till the proper season. And yet this is the most frequent way with us to conclude both for our souls and bodies, namely, to conclude no grace for the one, nor

mercy for the other; no heaven for that, no earth for this; because many times our hands are empty, when yet at all times Gods hands are full; our good is certain in his promises, though not alwayes evident in our feeling. It is just as if a man should cry out he shall die for thirst, when yet the fountain is full and runs, and if he would but turn the cock, even his Cistern should have water enough.

5. *A limitation of God*: To speak properly, God (who is infinite) cannot be limited, but we limit and streighten him, when we limit and streighten our thoughts concerning him, as when we ingloriously determine his nature or attributes concerning effects, and means, and times, v. g.

In respect of effects: When we confesse a sufficiency of power to produce some blessings, which (perhaps) we need not, and therefore do more rightly apprehend his power to cause them, but other mercies which we greatly need and wish, and see much difficulty and contrariety before we can attain them, here now we halt and as *Zacharius* to the *Angel*, whereby shall I know this? *Luk. 1. 18.* or as *Sarah* about a child also in her old age, she thought that could not be, *Gen. 18. 13.* This is a limitation of God, a coarctation of his hand, as if some mercy were easie for God, yet some other were too hard for him to effect, and it is impossible to salve the soul from a distrust of Gods goodness, whiles it doth limit God in his power or any other attribute. If we conceive of God as a particular cause productive onely of some good, and not as of an universal cause able to send out, and command every good, we shall be ever and anon apt to distrust him and to perplex our selves.

In respect of means: And thus we limit God when either we bind him in his providence absolutely to means, or curiously to our means. 'Tis true that the operations of the Divine attributes do usually appear in means (and therefore if there be any lawful meanes to convey and minister our helps, we are bound to use them) and likewise that sometimes we do hit upon those particular means which God doth use as servants and instruments of our good. But then in all exigences whatsoever, to bind Gods intention and power to means (which can yet abundantly work above them, and without them, and contrary unto them) or else to our particular means, which we make the onely

Esa. 55. 8, 9.

onely pipes to bring in our supplies and future mercies ; As this is an injury to Gods greatness , so it is a ground to strengthen our distrustfulness ; it is but to measure the powers of his intention, by the weakness of our apprehension; and no otherwise then as if one would take the Circuit of the Heavens by a span. For the thoughts and abilities, and waies of God hold as ample a disproportion to our thoughts and waies, as the Heavens do to the earth , which to them is not so much as a span ; it is but a point and but an imaginable point too as Astronomers do observe. Because God doth not appear (in his subsequent mercy and goodness) in one way , therefore he will appear in no way; or because he doth not arise in one way, therefore he cannot supply us in his own way. This is an unreasonable and unjust illation of an unbelieving judgement, for though God be pleased so far to honour us with his love , as to make us privy to the assured intentions of his mercy for us, yet he honours his own wisdom so far as to reserve the particular waies of distributing our good unto himself. He is able to continue our mercies by any means , but he will continue them by his own and the mercies may be still sure & sufficiently near, though the waies how to bring them may be very secret and far off from our thoughts.

In Respect of Times.

In respect of times ; and thus we limit God when we will not suffer him to date his own grants, but (which is most indecent) prescribe him (the free giver) to our humours and hastes of unbelief ; as if he wanted wisdom to hit the season , who yet hath been so gracious as to promise the mercy. How ordinary (though) is this to give up the estate of Gods Churches , and our own private hopes for the particular mercies which we need , because God comes not at that day which we assign him. Whereas it was onely our presumption thus to limit God , who never yet made a promise of any good but took the best time to perform it ; Not Gods promise but our own presumption fails us. We unworthily distrust him as unfaithful , because we have unwarrantably made our selves too boldly presumptuous to limit him to our time ; mistaking God who is nor to *pay* but to *give* , and his mercies , which are not *debts* but *almes* . But this limitation of God to our time , is the occasion why we do distrust him so much for the future ,
for

for we cannot hold up our trust, if once we suspect him in his truth, we will never believe that he keeps mercy, unless with all we believe that he will keep time.

6. *A Mis-construction of Gods afflictions*; Wherein because God doth take off some particular mercies, we are apt to conclude against his intention for a continuance of mercies: as *Hezekiah* in his great sickness hastily concludes, *I shall not see the Lord in the land of the living, I shall behold man no more with the Inhabitants of the world*, *Ez.* 38. 11. and so *Asaph*, because of present troubles, questions future mercies: *hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* *Psal* 77. 9. And thus do we find in our selves, that present afflictions are made grounds unto us of future distrusts. No! the Lord loves us not, he is sore displeased with us, how can we expect more mercy when the Lord recalls his mercies; can we believe that he will continue in goodness, who thus doth cut off his kindness? It is hard (I confess) to believe God when we feel evil, yet afflictions are so far from abridging Gods course of mercies that even all this while they themselves do prove singular mercies to us.

Quest. 2. The next Question is, *How we must oppose this* *How we must*
our distrustfulness in the nature and occasions of it: *oppose our dis-*
distrustfulness.

Sol. I will not insist much on this, onely a few directions will I commend unto you for common helps unto us all:

1. *Oppose it with Tears*; thus did the father of the child in the Gospel oppose his particular unbelief: he cried out with tears. A mourning heart is sometimes a way to get more strength against an unbelieving heart. No heart is so under the bondage of sin in general, or under the dominion of unbelief in particular, as the unsensible heart; when a man either feels not his sinful distrustfulness, or if he doth yet he bewails it not. Slighted sins ever prove the most insolent and imperious sins. But as Christ did grieve at the hardness of heart in the Jewes, so should we mourn for, and bewail the great incredulity of our own hearts, frequently confessing and compelling our hearts to break out into tears, because they cannot break out into Faith; that we should be so vile as to make even our God a lyar, and our Father to be unnatural, and though we cannot say but that he is the fountain of all mercy & very faithful-
ness.

ness it self, yet by our unworthy distrustings we interpret him to be but as a dry wilderness, and his Word of truth to be but a speech of deceit or falshood. Oppose thy distrustfulness in this mournful way, and know that God who gives an heart to bewail, will in time give strength to conquer: We seldom fall down in tears but thereupon rise up more in Faith.

With a greater studiousness of God.

2. Oppose it with a greater studiousness of God; They that know thy Name will put their trust in thee, Psal. 9 10. more light would beget more heat. We see it in experience that when we fully and thoroughly know a person both for ability and honesty, it doth induce us with the more easiness to trust and credit his undertakings for us. I know the man (say we) he is able & honest, he will not deceive me nor fail me and I am sure enough. I beseech you study God more; the foundations and sinews of your Faith are in him; be not strangers in communion with him, No, nor yet be strangers in the apprehension of him. You would not easily distrust his goodness, if you knew his fulness and faithfulness; the Arguments of your distrusts dare not shew themselves before his attributes, they cannot stand, they would be found to be no weight, a very vanity, most irrational fancies. If you knew the Lord in the exceeding greatness of his power, constant kindness of his Will, freeness of his goodness, absolute dominion over all, tender care over his, and unchangeable truth, your grounds of distrusts would be ashamed, you would hiss at them, you would not hearken to them, did you thus know the Lord.

With all parts of Resistance. Do not favour the thoughts of distrust. Do not believe thy unbelief.

3. Oppose it with all parts of Resistance, v. g.
1. If it were possible, do not favour the thoughts of distrusts, so much as to hear them.

2. However do not believe thy Unbelief; if thou must not receive an accusation against an Elder, but before two or three witnesses, 1 Tim. 5. 19. shouldst thou believe an accusation against thy God without any witness at all; there are three things which are not subject to any accusation:

1. Infallible Truths. 2. Supreme Laws. 3. The great God who must judge all. Thy heart is deceitful above all things, folly and falshood are in it, and it is *Adversarius nobilis*, should it be believed against God?

3. Accuse, chide, condemn, silence thy distrusts; why doest

Accuse, chide silence Distrusts.

doest thou distrust the Lord, doest thou well to bely truth it self, is not the Devil the slanderer of God? thou speakest falsely of God, there is a lye in thee, O thou false heart, I hate thy unbelief, I judge it, I condemn it, speak no more, suggest no more, the Lord is true, though every man be a lyar.

4. *Side with God against thy distrustful suggestions.* Loe I Side with God
O my unbelieving heart, which scares me with fears, that the against dis-
Lord will fail and not follow me, See, is not this his word trustful sugge-
wherein he hath promised, *never to leave me nor to forsake me*? rations.
are not these the instances and confessions of his people that
he hath *remembred his word*, that he hath *dealt well with them*
according to his word, that he hath *remembred his Covenant to a*
thousand generations; that not one word hath failed of all his
promises? Nay, and unless thou wilt impudently out-face
all experience (which justifies the truth of God) thou
knowest that he hath kept touch with me all my dayes; his
word hath been a tried truth even to me: he hath from time
to time still followed me with his mercy and goodness. And
should I now credit thee against a God of goodness, a word
of truth, a cloud of witnesses and mine own experience.

5. *Object unto thy distrustful heart, the experimental fals-* Object the ex-
hood of its own strong persuasions. Thou hast many a time rai- perimental
sed turbulent suspicions and conclusions in me against the fide- falseness of thy
lity and perpetuity of Gods goodness and mercy, as if God own strong
would have left me in such a strait, or would forsake me at such persuasions.
a time, because I saw no probable means and waies; Yet even
in all those times, God did fall in with unexpected (and unde-
served) mercy and goodness. I did not perish as thou saidst
I should, he did not forsake me as thou saidst he would, his
words have been found a truth, and thy suggestions have been
found a falshood. *David* came to the promised Kingdome,
though his heart said, he should one *day perish by the hand of*
Saul, and *Jonah* came into his holy Temple, though his heart
said; *I am cast out of thy sight*, Jon. 2. 4. Should such a
branded accuser as thou, convicted as well as indited of perf-
idiousness and falshood, a very infamous traducer be heard,
be regarded, be credited by me; who can testify for the fide-
lity of God and have found thee to be so often false in thy per-

petual suggestions against him. Thou knowest that upon the issuing out of more mercy and goodness, 'I did then humbly acknowledge the falshood and folly of my unbelief, and should I now again hearken unto the suggestions thereof?

Weaken thy
too strong Affec-
tion to earthly
things.

6. *Weaken that too strong Affection of thine to earthly things.* Thy superlative love, hath caused most of thy superfluous thoughts. Where the love of worldly things is too great, there the distrusts for their supply are too many. The ill stomach is it which causeth the ill head, and the vast Sea is most unquiet. If thou didst not thirst after worldly things as the only good, thou wouldst not be so unquietly distrustful about them. More indifferent affections would assuredly meet with more quiet and confident expectations.

Oppose it with
fervent and
daily supplica-
tions.

4. *Lastly, Oppose it with fervent and daily supplications.* Use even that very little Faith which thou hast to send up more strong cries against thy distrusts. Thou doest daily pray (I question it not) for daily bread, but as oft as thou prayest for more mercy, so often do thou pray for more Faith; Trouble that unbelief which doth so trouble thy Soul. Strength from Heaven, can conquer strength for earth, thy diffidence is not so strong but Omnipotency can conquer it: as thy necessities are not so many but All-sufficiency may fill them; nor so urgent but fidelity can succour them. Oh! that thou couldst once come to a generous estimation of things, even that thy belief for mercy were far better then the mercy it self, and thereupon be more ardent to trust then to get: but be serious in this and constant, so shalt thou be rid of an unbelieving spirit, and get both Heaven and Earth too.

Motives to this

Quest. 3. Now the third Question, *What motives to excite us thus to bewail and judge, and oppose our distrustfulness of God for his future goodness and mercy towards us in the things of this life, all the dayes of our life.*

Sol. I will reduce all that I intend for this, unto a few heads:

1. *The Injury we do unto God, by this distrustfulness.* 2. *The Injury we do to our selves in our Souls; scondly, in our bodies; thirdly, in our profession.* 3. *The Injury which we do to our possessed and received mercies.* 4. *The Injury we do to our future hopes and expectations.*

1. It is an *Injury unto God*.

It is an Injury
to God.

1. To his *All-sufficiency*. You make him less able then the poor creature; for the greater credence supposeth the greater ability, and the greater distrusts implies an opinion of the greater impotency. Thou wilt trust man more then thou wilt trust God, & what is this but that thou exalts the insufficiency of the creature above the All-sufficiency of the Creator. Will ye make him no God, or a God yet less able then a man? Thou deniest unto the great God that fulness which thou unjustly ascribest unto an impotent piece of clay. Thou dost not believe that God is a God, the onely being of himself, and the sole cause of all Being unto us, that he is the Lord of Heaven and earth, infinitely good in himself and able to do whatsoever he will; If thou didst, wouldst thou distrust him for a morsel of bread? wouldst thou depart from the living spring?

To his All-sufficiency.

2. To his *Fidelity*. We do not judge him faithful if we do distrust him: and what is the height of this sin to make the God of truth to be a liar. If thou believest his truth, why dost thou not trust him; If thou dost yet distrust him, thou dost interpretatively say, He will not be faithful though he hath promised. Nay, thou dost not insinuate onely a particular but an universal unfaithfulness to be in him, for if thou judg him to prove unfaithful in the less, how canst thou credit him in the main things of a better life? Where the things promised are of higher consequence, and therefore of more difficult credence. And what can be now said more to disgrace the Lord? with us the man is lost, if his credit be lost, if he be one whom no man will trust a word that he speaks; and surely all this glory of God is blemished, if we blemish his fidelity; Now you ravel and untwist all the cords of his excellencies, what is all his mercy, or all his goodness, or all his power, or all his sufficiency, or all his promises, if yet he should be unfaithful, if he should not perform any of these according as he hath said?

To his Fidelity.

3. To his *Immutability*, both of nature and of love, and of counsel and of promise. We cannot distrust his subsequent goodness and mercy but must imagine that either the nature of God is not as it was, or his love is not to us as it was, or his

To his Immutability.

purpose stands not as it did, or his promise alters from what it spake. Some change or other we must necessarily affix unto him who *yet is not as man that he should lie or as the Son of man that he should repent.*

To his Providence.

4. To his *Providence*. As if it were not the constant spring at which we should draw, but that it were like some climates, where one half of the year is day and the other half is night; So Gods Providence would take care for one part of our lives but leave us (to I know not what shiftings) for the other part, as if he were a God of half of our lives, and yet we are bound to seek to him and to trust on him all our dayes.

It is an Injury
to our selves.
To our Souls.

2. It is an *Injury to our selves.*

1. To our *Souls*; a distrustful heart of Gods future goodness and mercy is of all the most unquiet and distressed. It doth beget tumult and trouble in those two faculties, which if they be disturbed the whole man is necessarily disquieted.

One is in the *Imagination*, filling it with a Labyrinth of strange and vain thoughts; he that will distrust a perpetual providence, cannot avoid the burden of perpetual vexations, for all error both multiplies and intangles our thoughts which will never settle either on themselves or other objects if once by unbelief they unsettle from Gods fidelity and care; like a ship on a rowling Sea, which staies no where because it hath no anchor. One while we think of this friend and he doth nothing, another while of that kinsman and he owns us not, then of such a course and that fails us, and then of another shift and that is disappointed, and then of some sinful trick but this conscience will not suffer us to act. And now we fret and vex, and think again, and vex again, and do nothing but change our thoughts, as the ship doth the waves, but still we are upon a Sea of tumultuous unquietness.

Another is in the *Conscience*; for as distrustings are a Sea in the mind, so they are a sword in the conscience, they vex that and wound this, there they are trouble and here they are guilt, which of all troubles is the most troubling; And these two take their turns, and so the poor Soul is extremely and perpetually hurried and tormented. When the mind hath done thinking then conscience begins judging, and when the bitterness of guilt begins to abate in the conscience then multi-

tudes.

tudes of caring thoughts begin again to work in the mind. O Lord, what a strange sin is this *distrustfulness*: which burdens the mind, wounds the conscience, cracks the soul, never brings good, never gives ease, never affords peace.

2. To our *bodies*: I will not say much to this, but onely that our distrustfulness of Gods future goodness and mercy is the way to weaken the rafters, to shake the foundations, to crack the golden bowl, and to lose the silver cord. In a *natural* way, it wastes our spirits, dries up our moisture, consumes our strength, and shortens our lives. And in a *judicial* way, it is the very sinew of discontentment, which discontentment is a very grave to our lives, an advantage to those temptations which may make an end both of body and soul for ever.

3. To our *profession*: how can we glory in the relation of children, when by distrustings on God, we act the condition of servants; of servants, nay of slaves, the worst of servants? Or why do we boast in the name of Christians when by such continued distrusts we act onely the lives of Heathens; to this purpose Christ to his Disciples, *Matth. 6*. The life of a child is a dependance on his father, and the life of a Christian is a dependance on his God. Thou woundest thy soul and disgracest thy profession, as if the God of a Christian who hath provided infinite glory would cease to provide necessary mercy for him.

3. *It is an injury to our possessed and received mercies.*

1. To the *seal of them*; every received mercy as it is a fruit of bounty, so it is a pledge of constancy. It is like a part of money paid upon bond, which confirms the future payments for other particular dayes; so our mercies possessed, they are the particular performances of Gods covenant, assuring us of the universal, that the rest will come in at the day of our occasions and necessities. But distrustfulness takes them for absolute acquittances and not for particular assurances, for utter discharges, though they be but further pledges, and pawns of the good yet behind, wherein God will be as faithful to our provision as he hath been already to our sustentation.

2. To the *fruit of them*; Every mercy because it comes from graciousness should therefore be worn with thankfulness; but he who is distrustful for mercy to come, is alwayes unthankful.

ful for goodnesse that is past. No man can bless God; who dares not trust him. This you shall find in experience, that if you be apt to question what God will do, you will also be as apt to ask what God hath done. When future promises seem false, their former mercies seem little; if they seem to be lies, these will seem to be cyphars.

To the use of
them.

3. To the *use of them*: Though all mercies are given to be oyl to our wheeles, I mean to be encouragements to our duties, yet this is certain, that he who is high in diffidence, is ever low in obedience. If we will not take hold of Divine promises, it cannot be expected that Divine Precepts should take hold of us; for no man is willing to serve him whom he dares not trust; and if we once give way to mistrust Gods faithfulness, farewell all endeavours of fruitfulness. It is a common observation, that diffidence in God, makes us either to be Apostates, or barren, or very slow.

To the comfort
of them.

4. To the *comfort of them*: All present mercy, is as no mercy to him who distrusts God for future mercy; we lose the joy of what God hath performed, if we renounce the hope of what God hath promised. Your bread will be that of sorrow, and your waters those of *Marah*, &c. for distrusts are of that nature that when they withdraw our eyes from God, they also withdraw our eyes from his kindness, and make us to relish nothing but wants and miseries. It is but as the troubling of cleer water, which turns all to mudd and thicknesse.

To the duration
of them.

5. To the *duration of them*: Now like a Posie they wither in the hand; Unbelief makes Winter dayes, troublesom, and short.

It is an injury
to our future
hopes.

Either our
mercies shall
be none.

4. It is an injury to our future hopes as to mercies expected;

1. Either *that they shall be none*: It is but just that God should frustrate your labours, when you (as much as in you lies) evacuate his promises. You may sow with much industry, and reap an harvest of meer vanity, because infidelity hath blasted all. Though our industriousnesse be a subservient means, yet Gods goodnesse is the supreme cause of all our mercies the which he may therefore withhold, because we withhold our faith. Nay we do indeed keep off his mercies when we do keep off our faith; as he who will not come to the spring for water,

ter, is the onely enemy to the quenching of his thirst. Sure I am that God doth threaten the distrusting person, Jer. 17. *That he shall not see when good cometh.* He is under an outlawry, and is excluded the priviledge of blessings.

2. Or that they shall be mean : *Joash* smote the earth but thrice, and *Elisha* was angry with him, for he should have smitten it five or six times, and then *Syria* had been consumed, 2 King. 13. 18, 19. It is even thus in our case for future blessings, the more distrusting, believing, and the lesse degree of mercies ; the milk comes out most fully when it is sucked, and most sparingly when forced. How can a man carry away more from Gods promises then his hand of faith will hold ; according to this faith be it unto thee, said Christ to him in the Gospel ; not that we can deserve any blessing more or lesse, but that God will fill a man according as he is able to receive. The great *Vintage* is for the believer, but the *gleanings* are the most that a distrusting spirit can expect.

3. Or long in getting : For our unbelief doth ever set back our grants, and it is one main delay to our suits. It is true that God is ready enough to give when we are upon our knees, but what he gives he still puts into our hands, if we want hands we must long wait for his gifts, he doth not give until we will receive : We are not able to take what God is willing to give until we do, at length, get at least desires. O that we could trust a good and faithful God ! mercy is not more difficult to any then to him who is most facile to distrust God. The unbelieving heart, though naturally most impatient, yet exposeth it self most to a necessary and unavoidable patience, for it is made to stay because it makes not it self to wait.

4. Or slower in the tasting : The sweet waters run in the quiet streams but those are most brinish which are most tumultuous. It is faith which gets the pure mercy, the bread that hath no sorrow with it ; but unbelief untunes the spirit of man for the mercies of God, and we cannot taste them, but with some gravel ; not winnowed wheat, but in the eare with the chaff in it. The old scent of the vessel, my meaning is, the remembrance of our quarrelling unbelief doth much abate the delicacy, and at least taints the more complete comfortableness of what is given to us.

Or more un-
trusty in the
fruition,

5. Or more untrusty in the fruition : Even because we are so distrustful of God therefore may these outward blessings prove the more untrusty to us : of necessity we must leave them : but many times strong unbeliefs are punished with short enjoyments ; God will give the mercies to upbraid our unbelief, this I can do ; and he will quickly pull off the mercies again to punish our unbelief, and also this I can do to the unbelieving person.

Use 4.
Trust upon the
Lord for his
mercies all the
dayes of our
lives.

Now I proceed to a fourth Use from this, that goodness and mercy shall follow us all the dayes of our lives, which is this therefore, *all the dayes of our life to trust upon the Lord for his goodness and mercy to us* ; and with David here, to set it down with confidence, that *Surely, surely Goodnesse and mercy shall follow us.*

Because this is a singular point, and the most proper improvement of the text, I will the more largely insist on it by declaring these particulars.

1. The manner how we must perpetually trust upon the Lord for his goodnesse and mercy.

2. The motives to excite us perpetually to trust.

3. The meanes to enable us thus to do.

4. The resolution and removal of some grounds which do restrain, or disturb our hearts from a perpetual trusting on him.

The manner
how we must
trust on God
for his perpet-
ual mercy.
Trust and
work

1. The manner how we must trust on the Lord for his perpetual mercy and goodnesse.

1. *We must trust and work* : Where the Lord affords meanes for any mercies, though we must not rely on those meanes, yet we must use those meanes. Confidence and diligence must go together ; Confidence in promises, and diligence in callings. God (indeed) is a free Agent and infinite, and therefore can work by any meanes, and above any meanes, and without any meanes but we are dependant agents, and must not so much look at the absolute power of God, as to the ordinary dispensation of that power which is in second causes and means (otherwise 'tis presumption) and at the precept of God which is alwayes subservient (*ex parte nostra*) to the executions of the promise of God. Now the Lord hath called men unto particular orders and kinds of life and labour (he made not man to play

play but to work) and commands men in those particular callings to be faithful and diligent, and upon their faithful diligence hath promised to distribute and to continue his course of mercy and goodnesse. So then confidence in Gods goodnesse must be accompanied with diligence in our callings; the *bread of idleness is neither sweet nor sure*: but as our faith must attend Gods promises, so must our diligence attend our faith. The promise is (as it were) the mother to faith, and diligence is (as it were) the hand-maid unto that faith: *An eye upon heaven, and an hand upon the plow, this is the way to reap an harvest*: an eye upon Gods goodnesse, and wise industriousnesse in our places this is the sure way to find blessings; the *diligent hand makes rich*.

2. *We must trust and be Sober*: To boast of a vast faith, and yet to be guilty of a wasting hand, is just as if one should pluck ^{Trust and be} the tap out of the barrel, and yet perswade himself that God ^{sober.} will still quench his thirst. No but as true trusting in God requires diligence to obtain, so it requires frugality to keep; otherwise we make God to be the Steward of our lusts, and not the Patron of our mercies. The riotous and luxurious person is neighbour to the poor man, and he that will melt his mercies may justly want them. God indeed doth promise to feed our bodies, but not our lust of gluttony; to clothe our backs, but not our lust of pride; to quench our thirst, but not our lust of drunkennesse. If we will trust for mercy, and still abuse mercy, in the end we shall find that our faith was but fancy, and our estates will be poverty. But the true dependance, accompanied with a wise and sober use shall be sure enough of the length and continuance of mercies: the father though rich, will give enough to the stayed child, but holds up to the prodigal son

3. *We must trust and Obey*: Trust goodnesse and keep up- ^{Trust and o-}rightness. Uprightness though it be not *necessarium causans*, yet ^{bey.} it is *necessarium recipiens*. Rest on a good God, and walk before a good God; how can we be confident if we be disobedient. Evil wayes justly raise in us fears of curses, rather than expectations of blessings: as the idle hand is neer to poverty so the wicked heart is neer to curses. It is but equal that God should decline them in the course of his goodnesse, who fall

from him in the course of obedience ; if thy heart be false, never puff up or deceive thy self, thy mercies are not sure ; disobedience either hath no possessions, or not long : the life of wickednesse is quite contrary to the life of faith, or benefit. But then we rightly trust on Gods perpetual goodnesse, when we carefully look to wayes of uprightnesse. *Trust on the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed*, Psal. 37.3. *And no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*, Psal. 84.11. Truly (or yet (.i.) however, or without all doubt let men think and speak as they please and come what will come, yet) *God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart*, Psal. 73.1.

Trust on God
and on none
else.

4. We must *trust on God and on none else but God*, not partly on the Lord, and partly on our own *Wisdom and Sufficiency*, not partly on God, and partly on the *arm of flesh*, on the power or kindnesse, or relations of men ; 'Tis to divide the body from the soul, or beames from the Sun ; if we part our faith, we may justly be parted from our mercies, we must not multiply Gods, if we will have the true God to multiply blessings. If God be not trusted alone, he is not trusted at all. You may (without question) use all lawful means as your wisdom, and diligent, and lawful improving of your estates, (not trusting on man) and you may in a lawful manner use the counsel, love, and help of friends. But on none must you trust except God alone, you now hit upon the string and vain of his jealousy ; you touch him in the glory of a God, if you trust on any but him ; it is dangerous, as *Jacob* I shall get a curse in stead of a blessing, so &c. He will be so far from blessing you, that he will certainly inflict on you that heavy curse, *Jer. 17.5. Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord, v. 6 For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places of the wilderness in a salt land and not inhabited.* And so for confidence in our abundance ; (when a man makes the mercies which he hath received from God to be his God) *Lo,* (saith *David* Psal 52.7.) *This is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, &c.* This man in v. 5. is one that God will destroy, and take away, and pluck out of his dwelling place,

and

and root out of the land of the living. Single Faith is the only way for singular blessings. If God alone be enough to thy Faith, he alone will be enough to thy condition.

5. We must *trust and expect*: *I will hearken*, saith David, *Trust and expect what God the Lord will speak*. For a man to be sensible of his wants, and apprehensive of Gods sufficiency to supply them, and hereupon to bow his knees in prayer, to beseech a continuation of mercies, to think just then that God is willing to answer me, but then I rise up and never think of that God and of his mercies more with any expectation that he will do me good, but fall to distrusting as soon as I have done praying, and reasoning and concluding yet God will not do me good; this is an odd trusting, to trust and murmur, to trust and vex, to put on our seal, and pluck off our seal; to think that God is good whiles we are praying, and yet he will be unfaithful when we are risen. No, but we must trust and maintain our trusting by a confident expectation that that God whom we have thus trusted will surely do us good; as we must look to him, so we must look from him. Faith must have an Ear as well as a Tongue; it must not onely report our requests to God, but must expect Gods answer and decree (as it were) upon our report.

6. We must *trust and wait*, look, and look again, *Psal. 40. 1. I waited patiently, and he inclined unto me*: Not trust God and limit God; I know thou only art able to do me good, and wilt do so, but thou must do it *now*; this is not right trusting of God, for *he that believes makes not haste*. Then we do rightly trust on God, when 1. We acknowledge him alone to be our all-sufficient God, the fountain of all mercies. 2. When his promises of good draw us unto him. 3. When we move him in the name of Christ, and for his own sake, to make good those promises unto us. 4. When we do rely upon him, that he will be faithful unto us in the performance of those promises. 5. When we expect this performance. 6. When we quietly wait the Lords leisure, committing the quantity of our mercies, and the season of our mercies, and the methods of conveyance of those mercies wholly unto the wisdom of a good and of a faithful God.

7. We must *still trust, and still pray*: Faith must not fail, *Still trust and still pray.*
and

and Prayer must not faint ; but Faith must send out Prayer, and Prayer must keep up Faith until God supply us with his mercies and goodness. If at any time you would unlock the door of treasury, you must then use your key and your hand. You shall not want of mercy from God any time of your life, but then this treasure cannot be fetcht out unlesse you use the key of Prayer and hand of Faith. And therefore the Apostle joyns these two together, *Phil. 4. 6. Be careful for nothing* (do not you unnecessarily burthen your thoughts, distract your minds, vex your hearts, but *cast your care on that God who careth for you*) *but in every thing* (in every occurrence and time of need, for what thing soever it be) *let your requests be made known unto God.* If in that manner which I have delivered Faith goes out and Prayer goes up ; it cannot be but like *Noahs Dove*, they should still return with an Olive branch ; or like the Bee, they should return with Honey, with perpetuated answers of all necessary and convenient blessings.

Motives.

Secondly, The *Motives* to excite us unto a perpetual trusting on God for his perpetual goodness and mercy.

In respect of
our selves.
Our perpetual
necessity.

1. In respect of our selves :

1. Our *perpetual Necessity* of his goodnesse and mercy : occasions do still renew themselves, which put us upon a dependance. Either sicknesse of body, or weaknesse of body, or preservation of life, or blessing on our labours, or supply of some special exigences, we are ever in some want or other of more counsel from God, or more wisdom from God, or more strength from God, or more food and cloathing from God, the supply of all which is only to be had from God. We can no more help our selves at one time then at an other, our helps, our deliverance, our preservations, our prosperities, our safeties are still and only in his hands.

Our perpetual
duty.

2. Our *perpetual Duty*. *Trust in the Lord for ever*, *Isa. 26. 4.* so that Prophet : *and trust in him at all times*, so *David*, *Psal. 62. 8.* It is not a peculiar or extraordinary duty, as fastings and vowings are, which are to be used and made only upon some special and temporary occasions, but an ordinary, daily and constant duty. As we desire to live at all times, so must we trust at all times. If he will be our God for ever, then our hearts must rely and trust on him for ever.

3. Our great Honour : This indeed is the life of a Christian and ^{Our great Honour.} of a Child. It is the life of Heathens to vex themselves with cares, but it is the life of Christians to cast their cares on God. Now they are distinguished from other men, and do shew themselves to be more than men, to have better hopes than in earth ; that they have a God who will never leave them nor forsake them.

4. Our best Comfort : Therefore is this trusting called a re- ^{Our best Comfort.} resting, *Psal 37.7.* It will ease you of all those unreasonable scruples, and doubts, and hurrying cares and imaginations, and it will free you of all those cutting and oppressing fears, and instead of both it will fill your consciences with peace, and your minds with hopes. The believer is above all wants and discomforts. Thou art never in the harbour until thou canst cast anchor by faith ; thou art above all wants and fears of want ; for the Lord will do thee good, he will not fail thee ; this now is the strength of thy heart and the joy of thy heart.

5. Our surest Gain ; If you be not less than believers, you cannot be less than possessors ; *believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established,* said Jahoshaphat, *2 Chro. 20.20.* *My heart trusted in him, and I am helped,* said David, *Psal. 28.7.* O how great is the goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust on thee before the sons of men, *Psal. 31.19.* Mark the place, goodness is the thing which we desire, great goodness that is as much as we can desire, O how great goodness, this is more than we need to desire. Here is great goodness, and so great that David cannot express it, and therefore saith, O how great is, &c. and this unexpressibly great goodness is laid up, laid up (i.) Kept safe and sure as a treasury and singular portion by the Lord (and therefore he saith which thou, *Thou hast laid up*) But for whom, for them that fear thee ; abundant and exceeding goodness is laid up for them ; yea, it may be laid up and never come out to them ; nay, and now he adds, *Which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee.* Mercy is laid up if we fear the Lord, and mercy shall be laid out, if we trust on the Lord, even that great and unutterable goodness and mercy which the eyes of man never saw, nor the ears of man ever heard, nor could it enter into the heart of man to imagine. If we by faith magni-
fie

He the Lord our God, he will then magnifie his mercy above all his name; God will be glorious in mercy if we do glorifie him by beleieving.

2. In respect of God.

In respect of
God.
God doth de-
light to do us
good for ever.

1. The Lord doth delight to do us good for ever: He takes it as an unworthy affront and vile prejudice to himself, when we imagine that his hand is shortned, that it cannot save or that any thing is too hard for him (as in *Moses*) or that he faints and is weary. It is no troublesome thing to him to lengthen a mercy as once to give it. Nor is it a burdensome thing to him to hold open the fountain: he delights to shew and continue greater mercies then the things of the world come to, and therefore repines not to shew himself the Lord of earth, who is willing also to shew himself the Lord of heaven.

He doth de-
light in this
that we trust on
him for our
good.

2. The Lord doth delight in this, that we do trust upon him for our good: so *David* assures us, *Psal. 147. 11. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.* Man is often troubled and grieved because of the frequent seekings and relyings of others upon him, for he hath but a weak bottom, and his bounty is onely as water in a bucket, which may be all spent. But the Lord doth not so, for in him goodness is as water in the Sea which can never be diminished or exhausted. So far is he from it that he both commands and commends our trusting on him, still and takes it for a kind of honour that we do him, and indeed so we do, we honour him most when we trust him most, for now we make him a God indeed, and our God, and exalt all his attributes, &c.

Our trusting
on him doth
still ingage
him.

3. Our trusting on him doth still ingage him: There are two things which do engage the Lord to come in to the good of his servants; One is his own faithfulness, he will remember his Covenant for ever. *Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it,* 1 *Thes. 5.* Another is our faith; look as if a bond be drawn of mutual Covenant, if both the parties put to their seales, it is now firm; if we put to our seal of faith, to Gods seal of truth, now the Lord is fully engaged, a man may sue him now upon his Covenant; Thou saidst that if I would trust thee, thou wouldst do me good; Lord, I do trust on thy word of

Now you may
sue:

And now God truth; remember the word upon which thou hast caused me will perform. to trust. And now the Lord will assuredly perform his Cove-
nant,

nant. Read *Iſa. 26. 3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth on thee.*

And now give me leave to make a little digression for the occasion of the Sacrament, this day you have heard that temporal goodness and mercy shall follow the people of God all their dayes, and it is as sure that spiritual goodness and mercy shall follow their souls; why doth the husbandman plow his land and sow his seed, and water the furrowes still, but that another crop is to come?

A digression
upon occasion
of the Sacra-
ment.

And why doth the Lord continue still his blessed ordinances of Word and Sacrament: but because he intends more spiritual mercy and goodness unto our souls? Two things the continuation of heavenly means may assure Gods people of; One is of *their own imperfection*, that they are yet but children he drawes out these brest so much and often: When we need no more grace then need we no more means; the staff is taken away when the person is perfectly recovered, and our perfect recovery is not till we get into heaven.

Another is of *Gods constant intention of the best good unto them*: as the removing of his ordinances is a token of great wrath, so the continuation of them is a sign of great mercy, both to call some and to strengthen others. Now this is the present duty of you, who have (I hope) in some competent and conscionable measure, searched your wayes, humbled your hearts, renewed your repentance and desires after Christ. I say your main present duty is now, with *David*, to say, *Surely Faith now our goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* Surely present duty, ly the Lord will do me yet more good, who need it, and prize it, and seek it. Tell me, doest thou not need more strength against thy sins? more additions to the graces of faith, knowledg, love, patience, meekness? and more enlargements to thy affections, in fear, and joy, and hatred, and desire, and hope, and love, and delight? &c. more strength to thy heart for tenderness, and softness, for uprightness and steadfastness, for heavenly mindedness and godliness? to thy life for more evenness, comeliness, wisdom, fruitfulness. O now trust on the Lord, trust on him in and through Christ for spiritual mercy and goodness in all these to follow thee; believe on the Lord that he will add more grace, more strength, more peace this day.

1. Loc! The Lord Jesus is come again in the ordinance of his 3. Motives,
last.

last supper : he out of whose *fulness* thou *maist* receive grace for grace ; he in whom are all the promises are yea and *Amen* ; he who hath said, *That sin shall not have dominion over you, but judgment shall break forth into victory* : he who by his death made thy peace , by his blood purchased thy soul, by his Spirit hath changed thy soul, by his grace hath hitherto kept and preserved thy soul ; Jesus Christ yesterday, to day and for ever ; he is the object of thy faith for ever , as willing to give thee grace as to give thee heaven, as willing to add to thy good as to begin it ; as willing to continue and finish as to begin and add.

2. Here is the seal of God which thou maist look on this day to assure thee of his immutable goodness and mercy. What is the Sacrament a seal of ? surely of the New Testament, of the Covenant of grace , and what is that Covenant ; but *I will be their God and they shall be my people ; I will shew them mercy , I will give grace, keep grace, strengthen grace, comfort grace , crown grace.* And is this Covenant like that Covenant which the Jews brake and vacuated ? O no ! it is an everlasting Covenant, *The Lord will never turn away from doing of us good.* This Sacrament then is the seal of Gods gracious and eternal Covenant, how shouldst thou put thy seal unto it. Trust on the Lord for ever, for in him is everlasting strength, everlasting goodness, everlasting mercy and faithfulness, thou needest more pardon and grace, thou seekest to him for more, thou preparest thy self for more, thou art even now going for more. O then believe, believe, and thou shalt find more and go home with more.

3. The Sacrament will do you no good now , if you bring not faith now ; in renewed duties a renewed faith is necessary for renewed mercies. True, the Habit continues and needs not to be renewed , but the act must be renewed as the child again must apply the mouth to the brest. You cannot rightly imagine that your former acts serve for all future times.

Means to enable to a perpetual trusting on Gods goodness and mercy.

A distinct conviction of God in the peculiar attributes of help. His allsufficiency.

Thirdly, The *Means* to enable us to a perpetual trusting on Gods goodness and mercy all the days of our lives. The best that I can think on, I will represent at this time unto you.

1. A clear and distinct conviction of God in the peculiar attributes of our help : as,

1. His *Allsufficiency*. Inform and stablish the mind and judgment

ment with the nature of that God whom thou serveſt; do not interpret him by the traditions of men, nor of thy own diſtempers, nor of thy own thoughts. *Hagar* ſaw no more water then was in her *bottle*, and therefore ſhe feared and wept. She did not ſee the ſpring which was neer unto her, if ſhe had, ſhe had been quiet. We judg of God by that ſtrength which we ſee in man, and by that love we ſee in man, and by that power which we ſee in man, and by thoſe raies and ſhadowes of good which we ſee in man, and becauſe we obſerve an imperfection and frailty in the creature we are apt to judg of the ſame in the Creator: But the clouds are one thing and the Sea another; the ſtreames are one thing and the ſpring another: The *Portion of Jacob* is not like *idols* nor yet like the creatures, he is infinite in goodneſs, there is no ſearching of his underſtanding, his mercies are like the great deep, and there is no end of his greatneſs. O Chriſtian, the God whom thou ſerveſt is ſo perfect, that no good can be added unto him, and ſo full that all good comes from him and ſo infinite that nothing is diminiſhed in him, he loſeth nothing by eternal communications of his goodneſs; what is the Sun impayred by all the light which it hath given ſince the Creation to this day? he makes happy and yet is not the leſs happy, he makes good, and yet is never the leſſe good, he ſhews mercy and yet is ſtill full of mercy.

2. His *Immutability*: Do not ſhadow and eclipse the unchangeable God with imaginations of changes, what he was, that he is for ever; his name is not, I was, nor is it, I will be, but *I am*, is his name, even *Jehovah*, by that will he be known for ever: Was he able once, he is able for ever; was he loving once, he will love thee for ever; was he merciful once, he will ſhew mercy for ever; was he faithful once, he will keep truth for ever; ſearch the Scriptures and peruſe them well, thou ſhalt find him like himſelf in his nature, like himſelf in his love, like himſelf in his Covenant, he will not alter the thing that is gon' out of his mouth: When thou beholdeſt God as he is in himſelf, and as he hath made known himſelf, a ſtrength without weakneſs, a fulneſs without defect, a ſtability without change, a ſovereignty without dependance, a truth without falſhood, how will thy heart hereby be enabled to adventure for ever to truſt on him?

His Immutability.

A ſolid demonstration that he is our God.

2. A ſolid demonstration that he is our God: This God is our

U u

God

God (saith David, Psal. 48. 14.) and thence concludes, *he will be our Guide even to death.* I confesse that a stranger hath not that ground of confidence as a child; and he who suspects his interest in God, will not so confidently bear up in his hopes from God. When a man is still to say as they of David, *What portion have we in David?* so, what interest have we in God? Absolute fulnesse when it is out of a Relation is a weak motive, but then it is strongest when it becomes Relative. Greatnesse and ability in a father affects the son much, and a rich man in bond is very apt to quicken our confidence of the good which he undertakes; so God in Relation, and God in Covenant, &c.

Therefore rest not in a condition of doubtfulness, give all diligence to make it sure, that the Lord is reconciled to thee in Christ, that he is become a father to thee, that he is entred into Covenant with thee, and that he hath by his own promises made himself a debtor to thee. Thou wouldst not imagine what wings and strength this would add unto thy confidence of his perpetual goodnesse for thee; thou wouldst not fear to go to thy father, nor to trust upon thy God. *I am thine*, saith David, *save me*; and so the Church, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.

An Advancing
study of the
Promises.

3. Know them.

3. An *Advancing study of the promises*; the promises are to Faith, as the aire is to the wings of a bird, or as the water is to the fins of a fish; they bear up the heart and raise it unto God. If you know not them in the several branches of them answering your several occasions, if you know them not in the cause of them that they are the expressions of God, of the gracious intentions of a God who hath as much power to execute them as he had will to make them; it is impossible that you should by Faith rise up unto God to trust upon him: but you must acquaint your selves with the Word of God, with those precious promises upon which Faith onely can work.

4. Credit them.

And then as you must know them, so you must give credit to them against all words; though the *mountains should be cast into the depth of the Seas*, though the *fig-tree should not blossom*, though thy heart should say the contrary, believe them not, consult not with them: though heart and flesh say to the contrary, yet God is thy portion for ever. Honour the Lord in his promises above all, Remember him who hath said, that

He

He will never leave thee nor forsake thee. It is God who hath said it, who hath said it and will perform it; Thou maist venture thy life, yea, thy Salvation upon what he hath said, for he is able and faithful who hath promised thee. If corrupt reasonings interpose themselves and question how it can be; if unbelieving sense suggests, I can see no hope or probability in all the world how this will be effected, shut thy ears against them and thy heart against them, and say, though I see no means, I yet see promises; though I cannot see the man who will do me good, yet I do see the God that will do me good; his word hath been tried seven times, I have his promise, I will live and dye upon it. *Abraham* did not consider his own body but God who promised.

4. *A Right improvement of Experiences*; if thou wouldst enable thy heart for the future, look unto what hath been past. *A Right improvement of Experiences.* *Asaph* was quarrelling for the future, *Will the Lord be favourable no more!* how doth he take off his heart from this and set it right again? See *Psal. 77. 10. I will remember the years of the right hand of the most high. v. 11. I will remember the works of the Lord, surely I will remember thy wonders of old.* A right remembrance enabled him to a future confidence. *q. d.* What! The Lord be favourable no more, and merciful no more! away, away with these thoughts; he who hath been merciful to me so many years, so able to do me good, and so willing, that sometimes he hath almost wrought wonders to do me good, shall I question this God for the future? indeed I did question his future goodnesse, but it was my present infirmity: and so he reared up his faith again. The like should we do, bring out experiences and they will revive our trustings: Why! I was as ill deserving heretofore, as unworthy heretofore, as unable of my self heretofore, in greater wants heretofore; I did then call upon the Lord and he heard me, trust upon the Lord and he helped me; he is as able now, as near now, as good now, as willing now, as faithful now; I will trust him again, for he will be faithful and good to me for ever.

5. *Keep up the power of Godliness.* The more careful life and the more confident trusting go together. Guilt in conscience is a great weakning to forwardness in believing. *David's* lines. *Keep up the power of godliness.* sins were so hard upon him, that he was not able to look up;

the wounded eye is not so ready to see, and the wounded hand is not so able to stretch out and clasp. Great disputes in conscience ever breed great disputes with Gods promises. Therefore be not formal in a good way nor willingly wandering in an evil way; but keep thy heart right, love the Lord indeed, fear him indeed, serve him indeed, with an inflamed heart, with a perfect heart. Three things will come upon this: 1. *Serenity of Conscience.* 2. *Safety of Comforts.* And 3. *Confidence in God.* Thou wilt not be afraid to go to a well pleased God; the promises lye open to thee, what should hinder but that God will blesse the upright, or that they should believe it.

A right improving of present mercies.

6. *A right improving of present mercies:* Mercies abused may justly make us fear whether the Lord will trust us with more such mercies: the ill Debtor hath not the face or hope to come to his Creditor whom he hath wronged, or dealt unkindly or falsely with. The heart is ready to sink and checks it self when calling for more mercy, which knows that it made Gods mercies to serve against Gods glory. But the servant who hath imployed the stock for his masters advantage, may confidently come and desire more supply. If thou usest mercies well, thou wilt be more confident that God (upon occasions) will intrust thee with more. Thou hast the same truth now to plead (his promise) and the same end now to urge (his glory.) Be faithful in the possession, and thou mayest be confident in the expectation of mercy and goodness.

Be much in prayer to God to help thy unbelief.

7. To all these *add much Prayer to the Lord to help thy Unbelief, and to increase thy Faith:* And likewise be conscientiously conversant in reading and hearing of his Word, and receiving of the Sacrament, through these is the Arm of the Lord revealed, and by them as Faith is wrought, so it is strengthened and enabled to all its acts.

Scruples resolved.

Fourthly, The Cases of Scruples resolved and taken off, which either keep off, or keep us weak in trusting on Gods future goodness and mercy.

I have but little in hand.

Object. For a man objects, I should trust on the Lord that his goodnesse and mercy would follow me all my dayes, if I did not see so little in hand, but so little a portion is not likely to hold.

hold out for a long life and many occasions.

Sol. But first, Art thou sure that *thy life shall be long*? per- Answered.
haps it shall be short, very short, this night, the next day, or the next week, and then a little mercy may serve for a little time. Thou shalt not need mercy for thy life, when life is gone.

2. But admit that thy life shall be long, and that which thou hast for the present is little, yet thou hast no cause to distrust for the future. A thing may be little in a double respect, 1. In the *Quantity* of it, 2. In the *Cause* of it. The Christians portion for externals may be little in the *quantity* of it, perhaps it may be no more then *daily bread*; but yet it is never little in the *cause* of it, the cause of thy little good, will be a constant cause of sufficient good unto thee. As the light in the morning depends upon the Sun, so a little under supply, if they be but drops still trickling from a living spring, will hold out all thy dayes, shouldst thou live as long as *Methuselah*. Not what thou see'st in hand, but in Gods promises, is that which must be the ground of thy confidence. This (I think) may stay thy heart and support thy confidence, that God who hath given thee little will still give thee enough, for he hath said, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*.

Obj. But many losses are upon me, and my estate begins to pine away, and therefore I fear that mercy and goodnesse will not follow me all my dayes. Many losses are upon me.

Sol. 1. *Dost thou not live though? Hast thou not food and rayment?* If so, then hitherto thou hast goodnesse and mercy. Answered.
What if a man loose five or six ounces of blood? perhaps he might well spare it, too much in the veins causeth Feavers and diseases. Thou knowest not but thy plenty might make thee sick; and what if God to keep thy soul right, hath restrained thee only to a wholesome diet, to a moderate estate, which though it be not so large as before, yet is it a pregnant testimony of his goodnesse and mercy. The convenient estate is alwayes a good and the best mercy. Again, thou hast lost nothing which could be a spring or cause of perpetual good to thee, if it had, it had not been lost; the Sun is not down, &c.

2. *But how comes this impairing?* If by sinful acts, then mend.

mend thy heart and God will mend his blessings; do thy first works, so shalt thou have (if fit) thy first wages: If it comes in a way of unavoidable providence, then observe whether though much be gone yet sufficient is not left; sufficient, not to Lust, but to Nature; sufficient, not for the Wayes of sinful expending, but to the Duties of thy calling. If so, then present mercies are enough for the present, and thou hast still cause not only to trust God, but also to blesse him.

Or thirdly, Suppose that, (which is not) that all indeed were lost, that thou hast nothing in hand, yet hast thou still cause to trust, because enough still appears in Gods promises. The Birds chirp and sing at noon, who yet know not whereto find a supper; Providence to them is a continual Storehouse: Learn of them, if thou hast any thing to support, yet blesse and trust, be confident that the Providence of a Creator, the Goodness of a Father, or the Promises of a God will find out something (which thou mayest call mercy) for the next meal.

We know not
what the malice
of men may do
against us.
Answered.

Ob. But we know not what the *Malice, and power, and cruelty of evil men may do*, who may strip us of all.

Sol. I. It's true, That if the mercies of the wicked be cruel, without all doubt their cruelties are cruelty it self. 2. But then, thou art never so in evil mens fingers, but thou art more in Gods hands; they may take away things but not mercies. As yet Divine Power hath kept Divine Blessings, Why shouldst thou question whether God will be able hereafter, who is faithful now? It is not what man can do, but what God hath promised: as the infidelity of some, so the malice of none shall evacuate his truth; as our own hearts, so our *Enemies* shall be found *Liars*: no more but this, even in the worst of times thou hast the best of promises to look upon, and a God who will know thee in adversities, as well as in liberties. I told you before, that though the candle may be put out, yet the Sun cannot, and Clouds will drop, when Pipes are stopped.

Ob. But yet I see no *Probable wayes of my future subsistence* and how things will hold out with me.

I see no probable
wayes of
future subsistence.
Answered.

Sol. I. Nay but do not play the foolish Prodigal, who must have all his portion in his own hands, and then spent all and came to beggery. It is far better that God should dispense thy mercies by degrees, then that thou shouldst have still the sight and command

mand of them, thy mercies were lost if thou wert the Master of them.

2. Thou wouldst scourge thy child to cry out that it shall be starved, because it hath not bread and butter in the hand, when yet there is great store in the cupboard: And what is due to thee who livest upon present mercies, and hast a plentiful reversion of them for all seasons in the immutable promises of a God?

3. Do thou thy duty of walking uprightly and diligently and to trust on God and leave it to him for the wayes and methods: Believe me thou shalt find him as good as he is able, and as wise as he is faithful.

Obj. But yet we have heard, and perhaps seen many good people in great straits.

Sol. 'Tis true; He who hath promised them mercy and goodnesse, hath not yet promised them exception from the crosse and troubles.

Many of Gods
people have
been in straits.
Answered, ...

2. But didst thou ever read or know any good man that wanted mercy and goodnesse in his greatest trouble? the ship may be in a storm, but was it without a Pilot? The good man hath alwayes that mercy which is a proper mercy for his condition, he hath the presence of God in his assistance, in his consolation, in his direction, in his patience, in his preservation even to the very last. To think that a good man must alwayes have Plenty, Prosperity, Dignity, Liberty, Health, &c. this is a folly, as if Goodnesse and Mercy were to be seen onely in a Sun-shining day; or as if God did not reserve peculiar mercies for every estate; Goodnesse and Mercy are like the Sun which riseth not onely in the Summer, but in the Winter; Read the Apostle, *At the worst*, 2 Cor. 4.8. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; We are perplexed, but not in despair; v. 9. Persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed;* there was much mercy in the midst of much misery: yea, and a little before this, 2 Cor. 1.4. He saith of God, *That he comforted them in all their tribulation.* Men troubled but God comforted, and v. 5. *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us so our consolations also abound by Christ.* So that here is no trouble without a comfort, nay no suffering so great but it is exceeded by a greater comfort from Christ.

Obj.

Shall we not
be too bold in
often trusting?
Answered.

Obj. But shall we not *Be too bold in softening coming and trusting* on God still, still, from day to day.

Sol. 1. Nay then if Infidelity will turn into Modesty, and thou wouldst turn believing into a complement, I know no such strains of courtesie at the Court of Heaven.

2. With man this were a wise demurre; for we find it even in the highest Professions of Love, and desires of being bold and free, yet frequency breeds a burden. We are apt to deal with people too familiar with our kindnesse, as with old servants, cast them off: It is thus with vain man, with false-hearted man, but it is not so with God. Repent to the highest, believe to the utmost, thou shalt neither consume his treasury, nor offend his kindnesse: He knowes, O man, that thou needest him daily, every hour, every moment, he therefore calls on thee, chargeth thee to come and trust, takes it ill if thou misse his door, if he doth not at all times upon all occasions hear of thee: he is not weary of doing thee any good.

Many of Gods
people have
been in straits
Answered.

Ob. But may not this be *Worldlinesse still to crave* for outward Mercy and Goodnesse?

Sol. No; There is a difference 'twixt a perpetual seeking and an only seeking. It is duty *Still to seek our bread from heaven*, though it is sinful worldlinesse, when *We seek bread onely*. 2. And *'Twixt Daily seeking, and Principal seeking*: if we seek for them as the best things we sin; if we seek them as subordinate to the best things, now it is but the acting of duty. Outward mercies are not so sufficient, as to seek them *Only*, nor so high, as to seek them *Primarily*, nor yet so low a cyphar as to neglect the seeking of them *Wholly*. God hath given them to us for the present, and hath promised them unto us for the future and therefore we may seek unto him for them, and also trust upon him for them, that so Goodnesse and Mercy may follow us all the dayes of our lives.

P S A L. 23.6.

— *And I will dwell in the House of the Lord
for ever.*

THE former words declared *David's Confidence*, and these last words do discover *David's Conscience*. God will follow *David* with mercy all his life; and therefore *David* will follow God with duty all his dayes. So that in this verse God and Man do meet, *Mercy* and *Obedience*, *Goodness* and *Godliness* embrace each other. Here is a *Continued descent of blessing* from God, and also a *Constant rent of service* from *David*.

I will briefly open the terms, and then insist on such Propositions as naturally result from them.

1] (*i.*) *David*, who had received so many mercies already and was assured of the perpetuity and duration of them.

Will dwell] *Revertar*, saith *Arias Montanus*: Perhaps he thought *David* had a mind of Heaven, unto which he should be (after all goodnesse participated here on earth) graciously turned over at last; *Requiescam*, saith *Pagnin*, I will rest, &c. and indeed if any house be our rest, it is the house of God. *Sedebo*, saith *Musculus*, I will sit, not step in and then run out, but *Stay*, *Abide*: we read it *Habitabo* I will dwell. To dwell in a place is more then to view it or eat in it, or lodge in it. It imports a willing and settled residence: indeed *Habito*, I do dwell, may be capable of constraint (*Woe is me that I must dwell in Mesech* said *David*) but *Habitabo* I will dwell, this implies a voluntary and delightful residence, and not onely residence but also employment, &c.

In the house of the Lord] The house of God is sometimes taken for, 1 *Heaven*, this is that Upper House, that House of State, *In which*, *Christ* saith, *Joh. 14.2.* *There are many Mansions.* *S. Paul* calls it a *Building*, *not made with hands*, *eternal in the heavens*, *2 Cor. 5. 1.* Even the poorest Saint who

hath not any house on earth, hath yet an house in heaven.

2. *The Church or people of God*, whether distributively; every pious person is Gods house *Hebr. 3.6.* or collectively and thus it is sometimes taken for a particular assembly, *1 Tim. 3.5.* and sometimes for the Catholick Church, *Heb. 3.2.*

3. *Mount Moriah*, where *David* intended to build a Temple to the Lord, but *Solomon* built him an house which Temple was a figure of the Church of God The House of the Lord (in this place) is taken for the Temple of the Lord, the place of publick and solemn worship where sacrifices were offered and other holy duties performed of praying and praising God.

לארר ימי *For ever*] *Leorer jamim*; In *longitudinem dierum* for length of dayes, a long time, all my time will I spend where God is worshipped and in the worship of God: *Cum Membris Ecclesie in cultu publico*, saith *Musculus* upon this place.

There are three Propositions observable out of these words, viz.

1. That the Church is the House of God.
2. That we must join our selves for ever to the publick worship and service of God.
3. That singular mercies should lead us on to the most singular duties.

That the Church of God is the House of God; there is *Ecclesia Malignantium*, this is *Domus Iniquitatis*, the Divel's Chappel. 2. *Militantium*, This is *Domus sanctitatis*, God's Oratory. 3. *Triumphantium*, This is, *Domus Majestatis*, the House of Glory.

The Church is sometimes taken,

Locally, For the *Recipiens*, and this is *Domus Dei* too, *Quoad separationem*, it is a Mansion set apart and devoted to God for his worship, and *Quoad Operationem*, God is pleased to fill this Temple with his Glory in the faithful and powerful efficacies of his Ordinances.

2. *Personally*: For the *Constituens*, and so the Assembly professing the true Faith and Worship of God is *Domus Dei*: As in an house, there

1. Is *Fundamentum*, the corner-stone upon which all is laid, so the Church hath its foundation, even Jesus Christ and none other.

2 Arc.

Deft. 1.
The Church
of God is the
house of God.

2 *Are munimenta*, as the pillars and beams; so there are several truths and Articles of faith which strengthen and preserve the Church.

3. *Are several rooms*: Some large, others narrow, some high, others low: So in the Church there are Christians, some of a larger stature in grace, others of a narrower degree and compass.

4. *Several officers*: One above, another under; so in the Church there are several persons, some above, and some below, some to teach and govern, and some to be taught and governed.

5. *Several provisions* for those of the household, whether men or babes, so in the Church there are several gifts, some for to edifie the strong Christian, others to edifie the weak Christian.

6 *Master and servants*: So in the Church Christ is the master, and all the faithful are his servants, He gives laws, and they give obedience.

But I pass over this assertion, and proceed to the second.

That *we must dwell in this house of the Lord for ever* (i.) We must dwell We must perpetually joyn our selves with the people of God, in this house of the publick worship and service of God. the Lord for ever.

For the manner of worshipping God it is two fold. *viz.* either.

Private and personal; which is performed by our selves alone, as private reading, meditating, praying, &c. Not in private. publick and common; which is done in the joint society of Christians, But in publick. as publick preaching, praying, receiving of the Sacraments, and praising of God by many.

This was enjoyed in the old law, when the Jews had a solemn place designed by God himself for publick worship, *Whether the Tribes went up to worship*, Psal. 122. 4. *Even the Tribes of the Lord, unto the Testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord*, said Hezekiah, in Isa. 38. 22 And it was likewise in practice by the Apostles amongst whom we read of *Peter*, that he went to the Temple at the hour of prayer; and we read of *meetings the first day of the week*, and *S. Paul* imposeth it as a charge, not to forsake the assembling of *our selves together*, Heb. 10. 25.

and reproveth in the Corinthians, not that they meet together, but only when it was for the worse; I know it satisfies some if they do any thing at all for the private, and others that they joyn with the Catholick Church, but yet more is required, we must joyn with some particular Church in publick worship.

Reasons.

The reasons whereof I conjecture may be these.

Divine institution.

1. *Divine Institution*: which hath appointed the Church, both for his publick worship and other publick meanes of good. *Mar. 18. 17.*

Divine presence.

2. *Divine presence*: It is true that God is present in all places, nor is he excluded from any, but in his publick ordinances, there he is most especially present, *Mat. 18. 20. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* See *Acts 2. 1, 2. &c. 4. 31.*

Divine Glory.

3. *Divine Glory*: Which is by this means publickly pro noted and propagated; many convinced, many converted, many encouraged, &c.

Divine promise.

4. *Divine promise*: There hath God covenanted to pour out his treasure, to answer wonderfully in righteousness, *Psal. 65. 5. And to command the blessing, Psal 133. 3.*

Our own profession.

5. *Our own profession*: We are to distinguish our selves from unbelievers, and to make publick notification of our faith: Though faith be private, yet *the profession of it must be common and publick.*

Our mutual edification.

6. *Our mutual edification*: We are to edifie one another. *Heb. 10. 24, 25.* But this cannot be without society, &c.

Use 1.

Reproof of those who forsake the Assembly.

The first use of this shall be to reprove those who abstain or withdraw themselves from the publick places of Gods worship: Many are at home employed in worldly business or carnal sports, when they should be at the Congregation; they willingly estrange themselves from the assemblies of the Saints, and are serving the Devil when they should be serving God: Others proudly conjecture that they can receive as much good at home, by reading of a good Book, as they shall by coming to hear the Word publickly taught them. Though first their study (if it be strictly examined) is onely a pretence of doing some private good. *Secondly*, They be generally most remiss in all family and private duties: *Thirdly*, Private performan-

ces.

ces must so be done, as with all, to make way for, and to give way unto publick Ordinances. *Fourthly*, Their example brings a prejudice on Gods publick worship, and strengthens others in a total neglect of Gods publick worship and service. *Fifthly*, And why are the publick Ordinances appointed? Others conscientiously pretend against the publick assemblies, because of mixtures with evil men, and humane institutions, and Ordinances which they imagine to be utterly incompatible with the divine Ordinances. To these much might be said in a large way against the many exceptions which they take and make, and the weak and erroneous grounds, upon which they build onely this for the present.

1. The Church militant is mixt of good and bad.

2. Though there be not an intrinsecal Union of all, yet if there be a common profession of the same faith, there is no complete reason for a local, though there be for an affectionate separation.

3. Humane institutions are of two sorts; either prescribing a direct and immediate worship, as they of *Rome* do for invocation of *Saints*, adoration of the host, &c. Or directing about the worship of God; the which being indifferent in themselves are not reasons sufficient for a publick separation.

4. Things introduced *circa cultum*, about the worship of God, are either, 1. Simply evil, and manifestly idolatrous, in such cases we may separate. 2. Doubtfully good, in such cases Christians should studiously and humbly seek solid resolutions, and still keep to the publick society.

5. There is a double society with evil men, "Either in their particular actions and wayes which are evil, this is not to be done. "Or in their publick actions, as the presenting of themselves to the Ordinances; and this may be done, for though the men be evil, yet those actions are duties common to evil men and good. I must not cease my duty because an evil man pretends towards it. "It is a great misery and curse to be debarred of the Society of Saints. It was *Cains* curse to be driven from the face of the Lord, and to be a Vagabond. "Again, Separation from the Assembly of Saints is a ready way either to Apostacy and Errors in Judgment, or Wickedness in Life. See *Heb.* 10. 23, 25, The great hereticks (anciently) were unquiet,

schism.

schismaticks, they first left the Society of Christians, and then impugned the truths of Christ. “*And what hope of Society with Saints in heaven, when a Voluntary Dereliction of their Society on earth? if we will not be fellow-Christians, shall we ever be fellow-Citizens.*”

But to these persons I would present these considerations; By their voluntary absenting of themselves from the publick Ordinances, they do

1. *Deprive themselves of Christs Special prsence*: The Ordinances are the very Arms of Christ, by which he manifests himself wonderfully in all his Offices. He hath not designed them as vain and nominal Images, but as lively Oracles, and singular Conduits for grace and comfort.

2. *Deprive themselves of all Ministerial instructions*: The Lord calls men to the work of the Ministry, and by his good Spirit gives them gifts, and graces, and assistances for their work, which is to gather and convert souls, and to build up and strengthen souls, and to refresh and comfort souls, of all which the Church-decliners debar themselves.

3. *Deprive themselves of all Sacramental good*: No marvel they go with such unbelieving hearts, with such cold affections, with such remisse graces, who deny unto themselves the Seal of the Almighty, the sight of the blood of Christ, that sweet communion with him in the Sacrament.

4. *Deprive themselves of the publick good of publick worship*: The prayers of the assembly of the Saints are *atrisonantia suspiria*, like those of the Apostles, they shake heaven and earth; but as *Peter* said to *Simon Magus*, *Thou hast no part nor portion*, so we may say to these, in all the singular good which is drawn down from God by publick worship, These self-sequestrators have no part or portion.

Obj. Indeed they who are detained by an immediate effect of divine Providence.

Sol. The good may run to them from the publick Market, but such as voluntarily detain themselves from publick worship, I fear, are far from publick blessings.

But I hope better things of you, though I thus speak, and my Exhortation to you shall be this, That as amongst all the City, you have expressed your forwardnesse to the publick worship of
God,

Use 2.
Exhortation to
forwardnes
in attending
upon the pub-
lick Ordinan-
ces.

God, so you would still continue in the same.

1. O the Ordinances of God they are precious things ! they are the Oracles of God for Wisdom, Treasures of God for Benefit, Chambers of presence for Expression of favour : The Ark (which was the publick testimony of Gods presence) was the glory of Israel. If God should send a famine of the Word and shut up these publick places with publick calamities, or but a while restrain some of you from them by personal sicknesses, I believe you would be like the fish out of the water, and you would highly account of them then, and pant after the living God, and cry out with *David, When shall I appear before God?* and confesse with him, *Psal. 34. 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee :* and *v. 10. A day in thy Courts is better then a thousand.* There you have the most excellent society, not only of men, but of Angels; not only of Angels, but also of the blessed Trinity. There you speak to God, and there God speaks to you; *Joseph and Mary found Christ in the Temple.* There you have the most excellent employment, a kind of heaven upon earth : The works ! not poor and carnal, but all of them heavenly and spiritual; reading, preaching praying, blessing of God. There you discern the most excellent operations, counsels, directions, comforts, convictions, &c. One man raised from the dead by hearing the voice of Christ, another man delivered from Satan by that power of Christ here made manifest in weakness; another freed from fetters of unbelief, and like the Cripple healed, leaping for joy; so a particular hearer enabled to believe, and in believing to rejoice with joy unspeakable; another cured of his pride, another of his hardnesse, sins, temptations, impediments; doubts dissolved and broken down; graces, comfort, strength diversely and singularly imparted.

2. The very Sociation of our selves with the people of God in publick, is of great influence. The weak Christian (much in tears) keeps humility in the strong Christian. The strong Christian (much in joy) strengthens the weak Christian in Faith and hope. What affections do we, as it were, impart to one another? how we raise the hearts of each other to pray, to hear, to sing? we not only act our own parts but help others, and are by them interchangeably helped again, with wisdom, patience,

To Associate with Gods people in publick, is of great Inducement.

Our duties are more strongly Efficacious.

courage, &c. and holy affections.

3. *Our duties are more strongly Efficacious in the publick:* If a single prayer may do much with God, what will a band of prayers (an army of them) do? a threefold cord, &c. when there is a common cry and agreement; when many Saints at once cry out, Father, pity us, spare us for thy mercies sake, be our God, remember us for thy Names sake, &c.

Publick Answers are of most power.

4. *The publick Answers are of most power:* Private answers more scrupled then the publick, and never settled by them; now the Broad Seal comes to the Privy Seal. Even those comforts which we found in private, and perhaps suspected, if yet we find the Lord in his publick Ordinances to seal them, they are more firm and satisfying unto us. Now think of these things, and for the time to come loose no more Sermons, no more Sacraments, if thou believest that the Lord hath appointed them, and is present with them. I beseech you then, sin not against your own souls, neglect them no more, but prize them more, make more use of them, least the Lord remove the Candle-stick, and depart with his Ordinances, and bestow them on a people which will fear him and improve them better.

Now the Means to keep us close to the Ordinances in publick, are these,

1. *Humility of heart:* The full soul despiseth the honey-comb. Our needs are yet many, the earth needs the Sun every day. Our vessels, though cast, are not fully finished; Grace is yet weak, and Corruptions too strong. And consider,

2. The power of God in his Ordinances to cast down, to raise and build up.

3. The Wisdom of God to prescribe and continue them; if he hath a tongue still to speak, we must have ears still to hear.

But I hasten to the third and last Proposition, which is this, viz

Doct 3
Singular mercies should lead us on to singular Duties.

That singular mercies should lead us on to the most singular duties. Everlasting duties should attend everlasting mercies. [*I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*]

Thus was it with David elsewhere, *Psal. 116. 8. Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling, (great mercies, many mercies) v 9. I will walk be-*

before the Lord in the land of the living. What's that? (i.) As long as I live I will serve my good and merciful God; and therefore he geminates the words in *Psal. 16. O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant*; Thine I am, and thine I will be. Thus was it also with *Hezekiah, Isa. 38. 20. The Lord was ready to save me, therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed Instruments all the dayes of our life in the house of the Lord.* The man was lately at death's door, but God recovered him and shewed mercy on him: How doth he take the mercy? why, to the house of God goes he, and there he will serve the Lord, not for a fit, or a while, but all the daies of his life. But now when I say, That mercies should lead on duties, or that constant mercies should make us constant servants, I mean the Assertion thus,

Whether the mercies be *Privative* in deliverances, or *Positive* in blessing of us; *Spiritual* to our Souls, or *Temporal* to our Bodies and estates; whether the one, or the other, or both, all of them should lead on to *Duty*. Mercy, whether Privative or Positive, Spiritual or Temporal.

1. With more *Watchfulness* and *Exactness*: The Righteous God should have servants, but the Bountiful God diligent servants. Mercies should as it were trim up our duties, raise us to more care and study to please the Lord, as the candle burns clearer after snuffing. Leads to duty. With more Watchfulness.

2. With more *Affectionateness*: The Holy God hath servants, but the Merciful God should have chearful servants. The Lock should turn more readily after Oiling, and the Heart be more hearty after Blessings. We should serve the Lord with more delight and liberty of spirit. (Like the green grass after showers, &c.) With more Affectionateness.

3. With more *Faithfulness*: We should now so Serve the Lord, that we will Serve none but the Lord; no sins, no times, no persons in any sinful ways. With more Faithfulness.

4. With more *Resoluteness*, against all fears, and threats, and troubles; through good report and ill report, against the examples and practises of others as *Joshua*, and contempt of others as *David*. We must serve him in the heat of the day, who hath lookt upon us in the cool of the day. With more Resoluteness.

5. With more *Vigorousness*: After mercies we should exert all our strength, go almost beyond our selves; put out our With more Vigorousness.

very best of parts, and hearts to worship and glorifie God. Indifferency is a gross iniquity, after much mercy, and the dull servant, is almost a stranger, and as no servant.

With more
fruitfulness.

6. With *more fruitfulness*: Like trees watered in the spring, we should abound in the work of the Lord, double our works where God hath trebled his mercies, by better society, better industry, better counsel, better affections, better conversations.

With more
steadfastness.

7. With *more steadfastness*: Not serve the Lord with uneven feet, nor yet with wearied feet, but keeping in, and keeping on in the good way and work of God, all our days.

Reasons.
Duty is the end
of mercies.

Object. But why constant service after constant mercies?

Sol. 1. Because *duty is the end of mercy*: See *Rom. 2. 4.* Mercies are not given as Tombs to look on, but as chariots to carry us on with more delight in our journey to heaven. *There is mercy with thee that thou maist be feared*, said *David*, *Psal. 130. 4.*

More mercies
is a new obli-
gation.

2. *More mercy is still a new obligation to more obedience*: There is a difference twixt the payment of a servant, and the encouragement of a Child; the servant is paid his wages, and then there is an end of his service: The Child receiveth a gift, and this cheers him up to obey his Father more. We are bound in service to God all our lives (till we are out of our time or Apprentiships) both for the absolute authority he hath still over us, as also for the perpetual equity of his righteous will; but besides these, there are Gods cords of love, the tokens of his affections which ought to inflame our hearts with answerable love, and that love will bring obedience with it. *Mercies are Gods gifts, but yet they raise our d. bts.*

God is to be
honoured with
his mercies.

3. *God is to be honoured with his mercies*: But when we serve him most, we honour him best. He doth not give his mercies to us, to serve our selves or our lusts, but for his honour and our comfort, and encouragement.

We must give
an account for
mercies.

4. *We must give an account for mercies received*: The account will be heavy, if our service be bad; you know what became of the servant, who did not use the Talents.

Use 1.

This serves to reprove a world of people, who prove idle Tenants after all mercies; *mercies in the womb, in the birth, at the brest, in Childhood, in age, in placing, in calling, in preserv-*

ing,

ing, in delivering, in recovering, &c. like the Israelites who became the vilest people in the goodliest Canaan, or like the high mountains which the more exalted they are, the more barren commonly they are. What use made the Church anciently of all her prosperity? when times grew more easie and safe, and rich, it became more proud and forgetful of God. Nay, see it in our selves; our low, mean, straitned, distressed, sick dayes are the times of highest seekings of God, and most careful walking before him: The higher Sun, the lesser shade; The cold aire begets the purest whitest Snow, the which is melted again by the heat of the Sun; so &c. Our worst times usually are our best, for when plenty comes, when health comes, when more mercy comes, all our tears are dried up, strictness of duty is laid aside, we hardly know that God is our prosperity, who knew our souls and bodies, in the dayes of our adversity.

This, though I would say to such who prove either less good, or more wicked, after all Gods mercies; this unanswerableness

Our unanswerableness to mercie.

1. Is an *indecent thing*: As incongruous, as *Pharaohs* ill favoured kine in a plentiful pasture. Two things are very unbecoming, one to see men impudent in evil, when Gods hand of judgment is on them; another to see them barren in Good, when Gods hand of mercy is on them.

2. It is a very *sinful thing*: *Do ye thus requite the Lord?* A very sinful faith *Moses* to the Israelites, *Deut.* 32. Of all sins, ingratitude to God is one of the worst; and of all ingratitude none like this, to be more sinful where God hath been more merciful.

3. Is a very *dangerous thing*: for what comes of it but this, A very dangerous thing.

1. The comfort of former mercies is gone, 2. The blessing on present mercies is removed, 3. And the hope of future mercies is sunk up? If after good mercies we turn evil servants; mercies will leave us, and curses will follow us: If mercies make us not good servants, judgments will find us out and punish us for being evil. It is an argument that the person is not good, whom mercies make not better, and that God will draw off mercies, if we draw off our duties.

Use 2. Since everlasting and continued mercies, should be attended with everlasting and continued duties; let us therefore be humbled for our former neglects, and unanswerableness; (O it should cut our hearts, that ever a good God should be slighted, that we have made no better use of Gods mercy and goodness towards us.)

For the time to come match Mercies and Duties together. And for the time to come let us strive To match Mercies and Duties together, that Righteousnesse and Peace may kisse each other, that our Obedience may ascend unto God, as his Blessings do descend upon us, that he may find us faithful Servants, as we find him still to be a bountifull Master.

For the executing of this, let us

Often peruse the manifold Mercies of God.

1. *Often and seriously with a distinct survey, peruse the manifold mercies of God unto us.* Mercies lose themselves and make no impression when they are inconsiderately tumbled up, like Counters when jumbled together they make no summe. As it is with our sinnes when we make them but a general notion (*that we are all sinners*) they never melt our hearts to sorrow; so when the mercies of God are confusedly thought on (*God hath been good to us*) this affects not our hearts unto Obedience: but seriously and articulately review Mercies, such Mercies to your Boddies, such to your Soules, such to your Estates, such to your Tradings, such to your Selves, such to your Children, Families, such a time the Lord delivered my Ship from drowning, my House from burning, my Estate from cosenage, my Body from sicknesse, my Life from death, &c. Now your hearts will be excited to fear and serve that God better.

Consider your own unworthiness of the least Mercy. 2. Especially if (in the second place) you likewise admit of two other considerations, One is *your own utter unworthiness of the least of all the Mercy and Goodnesse which God hath shewen unto you.* That you have been a very sinful people and have deserved no Mercy, but Wrath and Hell fire, and all sorts of Curses, Curses, continued Curses; instead of Mercies, continued Mercies; that where you see a Mercy, there you might have felt a Curse. It is of the *Lords Mercies that we are not consumed*, and notwithstanding our sinfulness and unworthinesse, yet his mercies are renewed every morning. Lam. 3.

Another is the *Scope and intention of Mercies* that they sweetly bespeak us to better Obedience, as if every Mercy should say thus; Saith *Ease*, Thou wast in grievous pain and greatly unfitted thereby to serve God, I am now come from the Lord unto thee to remove that from thee that thou mayst enjoy thy self better, and serve thy God better: And so saith *Health*, Thou wast lately in a dangerous condition, the shadowes of death were upon thee, and thou then wert neither fit to receive, nor able to do any good; Now I am sent also from the Lord to deliver thee again into the land of the living; now make peace with God, now study his Will more, now order thy heart and life better for his Glory; So saith *Plenty*, In the dayes of penury thou wast filled with cares and feares, thou didst spend thy time in worldly projects and vexations, now the Lord hath sent me to take off those shackles, and fetters, and he hath blessed thy Estate that thou mightest attend to his service without carking care, or vexing fear, &c.

3. When mercies come, *Strive (therefore) to love the God of thy mercies*: Consider out of what a kind affection mercies do spring, and also what tender expressions they are of themselves, and what peculiar suffrages, and helps and comforts they are to thy person and condition; how proper thy supplies are, how sad thy condition without them; and hereupon excite thy heart to a better love of this good God, and know this, that where the heart is raised to a better love of God, it will be inabled to a better service of God. No services are so ready or so easie, or so exact, or so stedfast as those which love begets.

4. As soon as any *New mercy comes, humbly acknowledge before the Lord, his free Grace*, and continued goodness unto thee, and beseech him by his *Spirit of wisdom to teach thy heart* further by it to *Fear and serve him*; put out your mercies as you do your monies presently; mercies have the best Operations whiles fresh in memory and feeling; and therefore pose thy self a little, as thus,

Wherein am I failing? Wherein am I negligent? What further and other good concernes me to do? Wherein and how may

The Scope and Intention of Mercy.

Love the God of thy Mercies

Humbly acknowledge the free Grace of God, and beg wisdom to profit by Mercies.

may I better the good which I do? I find my heart, that it hath been too much set on the World; Well, I will now set it more on God; I find it more distrustful, I will strive now to trust the Lord more; too remisse, I will serve him more exactly; too wandering, I will serve him more uprightly. This is more mercy I must be the better for it, I must live the better for it; it is unreasonable that God should lose by his gifts, or that I should not get him more Glory by his Blessings.

MATTH.]



M A T T H. 10.

Verſ. 29 *Are not two Sparrowes ſold for a Farthing? and one of them ſhall not fall on the ground without your Father.*

30. *But the very haire of your head, are all numbred.*

31. *Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value then many Sparrowes.*

THE words comprehend in them a comfort unto the Diſciples (and with them to all the Church of Chriſt) againſt all their Oppoſitions and Perſecutions and miſerable Evils, drawn from the *Providence* of God. The Church is like a Ship at Sea, endangered by Waves and Winds, but *Divine Providence* ſits at the Helm, and powerfully guides and preſerves it.

Ob. That which the Apoſtles might moſt fear was the endleſs and boundleſs rage of wicked men who had power in ſome meaſure answerable to their malice.

Sol. But ſaith Chriſt *v. 28.* *Fear them not,* and he uſeth two Arguments for this;

1. *They*

1. *They can (at the worst) but kill the body.* That which is more precious, is more safe : They are not able to kill the soul.

2. *Nothing can befall you without a Providence ;* your Father is not idle, he is not asleep, he doth not forget you, nor your condition, he doth regard you, watch over you, and will order in a wise and gracious sweetnesse, every occurrence for his glory and your good, so that not the least thing shall befall you but he will direct and order it.

Ob. We doubt of that, might they reply.

Sol. Nay do not, saith Christ, What do you think of those silly Birds which fly up and down, which none takes notice of, with any singular eye, which one man hunts, and another man for his pleasure kills, yet not one of them falls to the ground but your Father orders it so, permits it to be so, it doth not come by an idle chance, but by his working Providence : and do you think that any evil, that any thing shall befall you and your Father not take notice of it ? and your father not ordering and governing of it : Nay if God hath an eye for them, be confident that he hath a singular care for you ; not onely the Moments, the great Moments of your Life and Death are ordered by him, but even the *Haires of your head are numbred (.i.)* he knowes them all he looks to them all ; and if to them, much more to your persons, and safeties, and preservations.

I will not insit on many things, which the words can yield out, but draw onely those illations which may discover unto us something of the *Doctrine of Divine Providence*, viz.

Two Propositions.

1. *That God hath a Providence extending to all the Creatures, and the things about them.*

2. *That God hath in a more singular way, a special Providence over his Church and people.*

Doct. 1.
God hath a Providence extending to all the Creatures and the things about them.

That God hath a Providence extending it self to all the Creatures, and the things about them ; here in the Text, to the Sparrowes and to the falling of every one of them ; and not only to the soules and bodies of his people, but also to the very *Haires of their head.* Psal. 33. 13. *The Lord looketh from heaven, he beheadeth all the sons of men.* V. 14. *From the place of his habitation, he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.* V. 15. *He fashioneth their hearts alike, he considereth all their works.*

works. Read the 104. Psalm and you shall see his Providence reaching from the upper chambers of heaven to the lowest rooms and foundations of the Earth, the Seas, the Mountains, the Valleys, the Beasts, the Birds, the Sun, the Moon, and Man and all. *Angelos in celo, vermiculos in ceno.*

For the Explication of this Point, let me inquire these particulars, viz.

1. What this Extensive Providence is ?
2. How it may appear to be so ?
3. Why it is so ?
4. Some useful Applications to our selves ?

Quest. 1. What that Providence is, which extends to all the Creatures ?

Sol. Divine Providence is an external action of God whereby he doth conserve and govern all things wisely, holily, justly, and powerfully to the admiration of his own glory. *Divine Providence what it is ?*

Here divers things are to be observed :

1. That Providence is an Action] God did not make the world and so leave it to its own inclinations, and wayes, and ends, but he followes that work of Creation, with the working influence of continual Providence, he still looks upon it, and is dealing in it, and therefore saith Paul Act. 17. *In him we live, and move, and have our Being.* Some call this Action, the virtue of God, *Vis impressa slectendo creaturas*, a strong impression which he makes upon the Creatures, both in respect of its nature and operations ; and they who call it *The Will of God working effectually upon the Creature*, say not amisse. *It is an Action.*

2. It is an External Action] The actions of God are distinguished (by Divines) into Internal and External. The Internal are such as respect the persons of the Trinity, as to Beget, and to be Begotten, and to Proceed, all which are confined among themselves. The External Actions are such as look out to the World, and in which all the persons of the Trinity have an equal concurrence. For though the eternal generation of the Son, and proceffion of the Holy Ghost be proper actions of the persons in Trinity being restrained to one, and not common to them all, yet Creation and Providence which are conversant about the Creatures, are actions common to all the Trinity, every person partakes of them. *It is an external action.*

It is an action
of God.

3. It is an action of God] There is a kinde of Providence which we ascribe to man, but this is weak, and short, and restrained; it is only of some things which are about our selves, and within our own sphear, and there too, it is very halting and feeble. We cannot foresee all occurrences, nor determine any issues, nor command and order as the nature and wayes of things do require. But properly and immediately Providence appertains to God. For, 1. None so fit to govern the world as he who made it. 2. None so fit to order and direct as he, who because he did put in variety of inclinations in the diversity of the Creatures, doth therefore know which way to turn them. 3. None so fit to sustain and restrain, and bring things about, as he who hath infinite wisdom and power in his own hands, and therefore Providence is *an action of God*.

It extends to
all things.

4 It extends to all things:] There is no created thing whatsoever, over which God doth not extend a Providence, *Psal.* 113. 6. *He beholdeth the things both in heaven and in earth.* 2 *Chr.* 16 9. *The eyes of the Lord ran through the whole earth.* The most excellent Creatures are sustained by it, and the most contemptible are not neglected. Not only the Angels in heaven, but the poor Men who are cast upon the dunghil; Not only the glorious Stars, but the lowest piles of Grass and the Lillies; Not only that immortal Soul of man, but the very Hairs of his head are under a Providence: For, 1. Providence is *Coextensive with Creation*, and therefore it is as large as heaven and earth, as the whole world. 2. Providence is *Coextensive with Divine knowledg* ad extra; but known unto God are all his works, *Ac.* 15. 3. *Every thing is kept in an Order and Harmony*: Although to us there may be some confusions, yet to God there is no disorder, but all things wheel about and meet in those ends which he hath intended, and unto which he doth direct them. There is not any one creature, not any one action of the creature, not any one change about the creature, not any one occurrence, not any one issue and event of any one action, but is under the powerful eye of Divine Providence. Those creatures which seem to work in a more necessary, and determinate, and natural way, and those which work in a more noble and arbitrary way, all of them are sustained, ordered and guided by God. Like a master of a family whose
care

care extends to wife, to children, to servants, to the oxen, to the sheep, to the house, to the land, to every thing about every one of these; so it is in the Providence of God over the great family of heaven and earth.

5. Consider the *Acts of Providence*,] which principally are The Acts of Providence.
two,

1. *Conservation*:] The preservation of things is the great Conservation.
finger of Divine Providence; S. Paul calls it *the upholding of all things* (Heb. 1. 3.) *by the word of his power.* Job 10. 12. *Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.*

Now the conservation of things is twofold, viz. either,

1. *Immediate*, by the word of Gods power.

2. *Mediate*, which is the holding of them up by means and wayes. *He giveth meat to all flesh*, Psal. 136. 25. *He prepareth rain for the earth, and maketh the grasse to grow upon the mountains, and giveth to the beast his food, and to the young Ravens that cry*, Psal. 147. 8, 9. And for us his servants, harken to Christ, *Mat. 6. 30. If God so cloath the grasse of the field, &c. shall he not much more cloath you, O ye of little faith?* And ver. 32. *Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things*; viz. of meat, drink, and cloth, v. 31. The means of preservation by providence are sometimes more open, (.i.) Such as stand before our eyes, as when we see victuals to feed us, drink to refresh us, friends to help us, power to rescue us: and sometimes they are secret, God will bring in a good, in a way that we could not think on, beyond our thoughts and imaginations.

Again, Things are preserved by Providence two wayes,

1. Either in respect of their *Primitive and created Consistence*, when they are individually kept safe and sound, not corrupted nor changed; thus Angels, Souls of men (abstractively considered) and the Heavens are preserved by Providence.

2. Or in respect of *Succession and Propagation*; which is a lengthening of things by a new Generation: *Thou renewest the face of the earth.* Thus God preserves mankind upon earth, for though one Generation dies another comes; and thus he

preserves his Church on the earth, though some Members die, yet others live and survive in their room. And thus he conserves the seasons of Winter and Summer, of Spring and Autumn, in a Vicissitude or course of Revolution and Succession.

Gubernation. 2. *Gubernation*:] This is an other part of Providence, by which the great God doth moderate all things even good and bad; so that nothing falls out by chance or fortune, but according to his own counsel, both for place, and time, and manner, and event.

This Government of things, is either,

In keeping things in their Order. 1. *In keeping things in that Order wherein they were at the first created*; *Psal. 119. 91. All things continue according to thine Ordinances.*

In exciting the Inclinations of the Creatures. 2. *In exciting the Inclinations of the creatures.* He stirred up the heart of *Lydia* to hear, and He stirred up the heart of *Cyrus* to do good to his Church.

In directing all Inclinations, motions and actions for his own glory. 3. *In directing all Inclinations, motions and actions for his own glory,* as the Agent doth the Instrument; yea, though it be the persecutions of his servants, *Phil. 1. 12.*

Impeditio est efficientiæ reprimens. 4. *In Restraining and hindring,* by which he knits up the actions of the Creatures which otherwise they would do; as *Abimelech* was restrained from touching *Abrahams* wife, *Laban* from touching of *Jacob*, the *Angel* from destroying the *Israelites*, when he slew the first born in *Egypt*, *Exod. 12. 23.* And the *Sun* in *Joshsua's* time from running its course, and the *fire* from burning the *three children*, and the *Sea* when the *Israelites* were to passe through, and the infinite malice of the *Divel*, and the remainder of *wrath* (in evil men against his Church) doth God restrain.

In Effecting all good. 5. *In Effecting all Good*: There is no good, Spiritual, or Moral, or Natural which attends upon us, but by a commission from Divine Providence. Hast thou friends, health, peace, plenty, safety, any comfort? God by his providence hath given all those dayes unto thee; *These are the children which the Lord hath given*, said *Jacob*.

In permitting of evil. 6. *In Permitting of evil*: *Non sit aliquid, nisi Omnipotens fieri velit, vel sinendo ut fiat, vel ipse faciendo*, said *S. Augustin.*

Euchirid. ad Laurent. 6. 95.

Object.

Object. It is a great question, especially about the evil of sin, how that falls under Divine Providence? to which in a word thus, How sin falls under Providence.

Sol. Things fall under Providence four wayes,

1. Either in respect of their *Causation* and *Production*, when the effect comes from a producing and approving will of God, thus all good hath a reference to providence. *Malum ordinabile est, & ratione ejus in quo est, & ratione ejus ad quod est, & ratione ejus quod ex ipso est.*
 2. Or in respect of *Permission*; when God doth not effectually hinder the free inclinations of the Creature: And thus sin is under Providence, not causing, not approving, but permitting or suffering, by leaving the sinner to himself or to Satan. *Alex. Aletius. 1. p. 9. 38. Art. 1.*
 3. Or in respect of *Limitation*: Thus also doth Providence deal about sins, *Gen. 20. 6. I also With-held thee.* He checks and holds evil men, who else would put no bounds nor measure to the vilest kind of sinning, confounding all order and being in the world. *4. Judicialiter deferendo: So I gave them up to their own hearts lusts,* *Psal 81. 11, 12.*

7. In *Judging of evil men*: Thus Providence appears many wayes, as in the defeating of their plots, insatuating their counsels, smiting them with diseases, turning their own plots upon their own heads, overthrowing them with variety of sudden and exemplary deaths, yea, then when they think to do most hurt to the Church of Christ. In Judging of evil men.

6. Lastly, Consider the *Qualities of Providence*] and they are four; viz. The Qualities of Providence.

1. *Wisdom*:] For God doth all this in singular Wisdom. As he made the world, so he governs it by Wisdom. Now the Wisdom of Providence is manifold. 1. In the *fitting of Means*, 2. In the *fitting of Times*, 3. In *leading out an intended Issue through difficulties and improbabilities*, 4. In *bringing every thing to its best End*.

2. *Holiness*:] God doth moderate, restrain, guide, suffer, deal in every thing after a most Holy manner, *He is holy in all his wayes.* You must distinguish 'twixt what man doth and what God doth. Man doth sin but God doth not, his providence about sin is good and holy, though the sin it self be vile and odious. Holiness.

3. *Justice*:] Gods Providence doth so order things and events, it brings matters about so, that no man hath reason to As the Sun on the Dung-hill.

accuse God or complain of him. If we could pry into the secret reasons of things, or view out the singular ends which God hath in his eye, we would in all the contrarieties of things sit down and admire the admirable proceedings of his Justice. If the Church be afflicted, if the enemies prosper, if good things stand off, if evil things stick close, if an issue will not yet be, yet God is just in all these, though the wicked be not presently punished, nor the Church delivered.

Power.

4. *Power*:] How can all the Creatures be upheld but by power? and how can the Oppositions of the Devil and his Instruments be limited and defeated, but by power? and how can helps come in in the times of distresse, but by power? how can deliverance break in to the Church against all hope, but by power? When we see great matters done by weak means, and God sometimes working strange effects without means, and so wonderfully turning about the hearts of men, &c. This declares, That there goes a power with Providence.

How it appears
there is a Pro-
vidence.

The Scripture
clears it.

Quest. 2. How may it appear that there is such a Providence?

Sol. 1. *Scripture clears it all over*: When you read of any good which God brought, any evil which he prevented, any occurrence which fell just as he foretold, any watching over a nation or person, any supportings, any comfortings, and helps, and deliverances, any friends stirred up to shew kindnesse, any raising out of obscure conditions to unexpected greatnesse, any preservations, &c. all these say expressly there is a Providence, that doubtlesse there is a God who hath regard to the works of his hands, doubtlesse there is a God who hath an eye to this world.

Effects and Is-
sues do not fly
out of second
causes accord-
ing to their
intention.

2. *Effects and Issues do not fly out of second causes according to their intention and desire*; therefore there is a Providence. There is that laboureth night and day, who beats his braines, breaks his sleep, watcheth the advantages of enriching his estate, yet he cannot multiply and enrich himself: *It is in vain to rise early, and to go to bed late*, except the Lord comes in with the blessing of his Providence. Thou hast the self-same constitution, the same air, the same diet, the same recreations, the same outward comforts in all respects as another, yet cloaths do not warm thee, food doth not nourish thee as the other; Why? because Divine Providence gives out it self in the one, and holds

holds in the blessing from the other ; Therefore, saith *Solomon*, *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, &c.* but it is Gods Providence which casteth in the effect. You shall see many devices in the heart of a man, and yet none of them do stand ; this way I may have it, or that way, I doubt not, yet God brings the effect, neither the one nor the other way, but a third which we could not think on.

3. *Things are brought about even then, when we judge no probability, nay, an utter Improbability in respect of second causes,* Things are brought about where there is no probability in respect of second causes. therefore there is an active and working providence. *Joseph* is to preserve *Egypt* alive, and his fathers house alive ; but he is laid hold on by his brethren, cast into the pit, took out, and sold to the *Midianites*, clapt in the prison at *Egypt*, and at length freed out of all to be a Prince and Ruler, *Gen. 45 5.* *God did send me before you to preserve life.* 50 20. *Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to passe as it is this day, to save much people alive.* *David* is to be a King, *Saul* throws his Javelin at him, sends men to kill him, environs him about the Mountains, banisheth him his Country, yet at length the Crown is set on *Davia's* head. *Israel* is promised a deliverance, *Pharaoh* deals craftily with them, imposeth harder bondage, and made them to serve with greater rigor, yet God did then fetch them out.

4. *If there be a God, then there must be a Providence ;* There is a God, God is the first cause, and that is absolutely most active, and therefore there all second causes depend, for being and operation, upon the first. Nothing can move or preserve it self, by it self, but he who gives motion and Preservation to all besides himself. for There is a God, God is the first cause, and that is absolutely most active, and therefore there must be a Providence.

5. *The translation of Kingdomes, the rewards and punishments of men on earth ; the changes about our conditions, shew clearly that there is a providence.* The translation of Kingdomes, rewards and punishments shew a providence.

6. Lastly, *Look on the very attributes of God ;* is he not most wise, most just, most merciful, most powerful ; then how can things be neglected, how can they happen by chance, &c.

Obj. But against all this, it may be objected ; it seems there is no such providence, which doth order and preserve, and limit and punish ; for we see that. 1. *The vilest sinners go unpunished,* The Attributes of God, prove his providence. The vilest sinners go unpunished.

punished, and 2. Prosper in their proceedings. 3. The best men to be oppressed with many wants, afflictions, persecutions, and to set down with the worse.

Answered.

The present execution of vengeance, no sure Rule to deny a providence.

Gods providence appears either in the present or subsequent punishing of sinners. Eccl. 3. 12.

1. Sol. To the first I answer?

1. That the immediate and present execution of vengeance upon evil doers, is not a sure Rule to deny a Providence: God is gracious, and patient, and long-suffering, even towards those who despise the riches of his forbearance.

2. Gods providence appears either in the present, or else in the subsequent punishing of sinners: If that evil men might go on for ever unpunished, then there were not a providence; but though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his dayes be prolonged, yet it shall not be well with the wicked; neither shall he prolong his dayes, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God, And Isa 65. 20. The sinner being an 100 years old shall be accursed: So 1 Tim. 5. 24. Some mens sins are open before hand, and some, they follow after: God doth sometimes take the sinner in the acting of his sins; sometimes divers years after, when he hath filled up the measure of his sin, sometimes he reserves the wicked for the great day of wrath: There is a sure punishment, though not alwayes a present punishment for every sinner.

There are divers sorts of punishments.

3. There are divers sorts of punishment: Some are apparent and Obvious, which are like strokes on the shoulders; a man may see that God hath rewarded the proud, according to their pride, and the sinner, according to his sin in some notable disgrace, or disease, or curse; others are invisible and secret, like a wound in the hidden parts: now God doth usually bring on all vile sinners, either some visible, or else (which is the greater kind of punishment) some inward and invisible wrath, by giving them up to reprobate minds, seared consciences, impenitent hearts, or by striking their consciences with sad horror and accusations, which rack and perplex them as hell it self.

Evil men do prosper.

Answered.

God will magnifie his bounty as in outward things even to the wicked men.

To the second; That evil men do prosper: So I answer, Neither doth that conclude against a divine providence, for as much

1. God will magnifie his bounty in outward things, even to the wicked; though they be wicked, yet they are creatures too; and therefore he makes his Sun to rise upon the unjust, as well as the

the just, and the rain doth drop on both of them, but then God doth not bestow these things on them, to maintain and reward their sinning, but to uphold their being.

2. *It is a wise providence that evil men have so much of outward things*, because none should esteem these outward things to be the highest and chiefest good. That cannot be the best good which the worst people may have. *It is a wise providence that evil men have so much of outward things.*

3. It had been better for them to have wanted them, for Gods bounty to them, and their abuse of that bounty, encreaseth a fiercer damnation. At the best, their great estate is decaying like a flower and the grass, *Psal. 37. 1, 2.* And because they have tasted so liberally of Gods kindness, and have employed it onely against Gods glory, their felicity shall be short but their misery shall be endless. *Dantur bonis ne puniuntur mala, dantur malis ne puniuntur bona, dantur bonis et malis ne puniuntur summa bona.* Aug.

3. *Sol.* To the third; That good men are oppressed with many wants, I answer. *Good men are oppressed with many wants.*

1. *No good man ever wanted that which was good for him*: I may want a thing which is good, but not which is good for me; for God will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly, *Psal. 84. 11.* The goodness of things to me consists in conveniency and suitableness. Meat is good, but not to the weak and sick stomach, because it is not now convenient; liberty is not alwayes good for a good man, nor yet health, &c. many things may be good to some good people, which are not alwayes good to every good man, and therefore it is not want. *Answered. No good man ever wanted what was good for him.*

2. *The goodness of an estate doth not consist in the abundance of goods, but in the contentment of the mind*: That man hath a good estate who hath a contented heart with a little portion: A good stomach and a clear house, and a little victuals, is far better then a large table, and a dark chamber, and a sick heart; a good man hath no want, so long as his conscience is clear, and Gods loving favour serves in, though it be but a bite of bread. *The goodness of an estate consists not in abundance, but in contentment.*

3. Nay, and again; If you will judge of Providence by abundance, then you may see *Riches and Goodnesse meet together* as well as *Riches and Wickednesse*; and *Honour and Goodnesse* as well as *Honour and Wickednesse*, &c. *Abraham* was as wealthy as most in his time, and he was behind none for Faith and Obedience: *David* had the Crown on his head, and

the Scepter in his hand: And *Solomon*, none came neer him for Riches, and State, and Wisdom. We do not see every Wicked man mighty in his Estate, nor every Good man low and poor; nay if we should set the one against the other, for **one** Good man whose Estate is mean, you have thousands of Evil men whose Conditions are Beggerly.

God hath settled on them a high Estate above and so need not great Estates here below.

4. *What should we stand upon great Estates here, when God hath settled an high inheritance above.* If a sufficiency for food and raiment for thee and thine, and with that the blood of Christ, and preciousnesse of promises, and the consolations of the Spirit, and assurance of heaven cannot prove a liberal Providence unto thee, then get more faith to know the wayes and expressions of a good Providence, *Psal. 31. 19. O how great is thy Goodnesse which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, &c.*

Ob. But they are afflicted, none the like, and persecuted of all men, where is now a Providence?

Sol. I shall reserve this to the next Proposition about the Church, and there it shall evidently appear, that of all other things, the afflictions and troubles of the Church do most singularly prove a Divine Providence.

The next Proposition is this, *viz.*

Doct. 2.
God hath in a more singular way a special Providence over his Church and people.

That God hath in a more singular way a special Providence over his Church and people. The Text is clear for it, *The very haire of your head are all numbred, (not one of them which is not under guard and protection) and ye are of more value then many sparrows (i.) your Father hath a regard far more intimate and affectionate towards you then them.*

This may appear if you consider some more singular expressions in the Scripture, which do open a more singular kind of Providence, *Zach. 2. 8. He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye.* There is not a part of the body which we defend more then the eye, and not one part in the eye of which we are more vigilant then the apple of the eye, that middle point, the principal organ of seeing; now God professeth himself to be as sensible of his Church, to have as tender a regard to his people as any man can to secure that choice and principal part of his eye, *Il. 49. 15. Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea they*

they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Observe the passages of either, the Parents, the Mother expresseth the most enlarged, and neer tenderneſſe, and though ſhe ſhewes a care over all the ſervants, yet the choicer is to her children, and though there be a greater height of care for children then ſervants, yet it is more to a child of her own womb then to an annexed child, and of all the children of her womb, ſhe doth expreſſe the bowels of tenderneſſe to that child which is ſucking at her breaſt, and there again moſt to a ſon. So though God doth by his general Providence, eye, obſerve, diſpoſe, bring in, for all the creatures of the world, yet in a more ſpecial and ſingular way for his own Children and Church, and therefore he addes in that place v. 16. *Behold I have graven thee upon the palmes of my hands, thy walls are continually before me.* Iſa. 40. 11. *He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd, he ſhall gather the lambs with his armes, and carry them in his boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young.* God hath a double flock, *A great flock in reſpect of Creation, and a little flock in reſpect of Election,* although he looks on both, yet here is his principal care; and look as the Shepherd with a diſtinguiſhing eye, and tenderneſſe, reſpects the tender lambs, &c. ſo doth God his, &c. Therefore his people are called his jewels. Mal. 3. 17. *In that day that I make up my jewells, &c.* It is true that an intelligent houſholder doth not neglect the courſeſt Veſſels, nor except the meaneſt glaſſe, but of all the houſhold goods under his poſſeſſion and care, there are none of them locked up with ſuch narrow and ſure ſafety as the precious jewels, ſo it is in Gods care of his jewels. Iſa. 27. 3. *I the Lord do keep it, I will wa-ter it every moment, leſt any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.*

The Ark was a type of the Church, which was all, and al-ways covered with *Wings of Cherubims* intimating the Divine protection. Hence it is that *Gods eyes are ſaid to be over the righteous* (i. e.) He hath an eſpecial watchfulneſſe for them: and the Lord is round about his people from hence forth even for ever, *Pſal. 125. 2.* as the mountains are round about *Hiernſalem*, and he is called the *Covert*, the *Refuge*, the *Defence*, the *Rock*, the *Shield*, the *Salvation*, the *High Tower*, the *Deliverer* of his people. Now that God hath a ſpecial Providence

This special Providence appears : over his people may appear thus :

First, If you consider the *Actions of Providence*, you shall see them in a more singular way exercised about the Church, I will instance in some,

exercised about the Church. 1. *Impedition or hinderance*, which is the staying off of evil; though evil be intended against the Church, though it be contrived with the most subtle policy, though it be armed with the most terrible power, though it be ready to cast forth it self like an over-flowing flood, yet God hath interposed, and he hath hindered and prevented the same, he hath brought them as a bird out of the snare, and pulled them as a fire-brand out of the fire.

Pharaoh.

When that *Pharaoh* snaped out the methods of ruine for the *Israelites* by vexing out their lives with cruel bondage, and by destroying their lives in their posterity, yet God did hinder the last intention in the preserving of children.

Achitophel.

Achitophel gave most horrible and pernicious counsel to *Absalom* immediately to assault his father, and his weak and faint followers, God did interpose, and did crosse and turn aside the intention, by giving more acceptation to the advice of *Hushai*.

Haman.

When *Haman* had plotted the death of the *Jewish* nation, meerly from a disrespect from one poor *Mordecai*, when he had raised up the Gallows to hang him, and got the commands sealed to destroy the rest, yet God hindered all, he dashed the project and wonderously preserved all of them; the King cannot sleep and he must read in the book of Chronicles, and then he must pitch on that leaf which recorded *Mordecai's* fidelity, and so stir up the heart of the King to honour him, and save the rest of the *Jews*.

Saul.

All their intentions and plots are but like a ship trimmed and ready to launch, but a contrary wind bindes up the motion. When *Saul* had often pursued *David* like a Partridge on the Mountains, and had at length invironed and incircled him, that there was no way to escape, yet God did hinder this, by calling *Saul* back again, *The Philistims invade the land*.

Sennacherib.

When *Sennacherib* came against *Hezekiah* and threatens with a blasphemous insolency to swallow him and his people up though God himself should set in to his rescue, He did put a hook into his nostrills, turned him home again, and hindred his proud intentions and threats. So true is that of the Prophet, *Isaiah* 8.9. *Associate your selves together,*

O ye

O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird your selves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. V. 10. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand for God is with us: and Job 5. 12. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprize. 13. He taketh the wise in their own craftinesse, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. 15. He saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty.

2. *Permission or sufferance.* If God doth permit any miserable evils, if he doth not totally restrain the operations and intentions of wicked men, but they do exercise the poyson and scourge of their malice upon the Church, yet God doth here also singularly present himself.

■ Moderating that boundlesse rage: He sets upon the power of the mighty, and binds the wrath of the cruel; As he bounds the raging waves of the sea, thus farre shall ye go, and no further; so doth he stint the pride of evil men, as he did the insolent desire of the Devil against Job 1. 12. Behold all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand.

In qualifying external troubles with internal comforts. Though the body smarts, yet the conscience smiles; though the estate be peeled, yet the soul is cheered; when Paul was neer pulling in pieces, Acts 23. 10. and brought into the Castle, v. 11. The night following The Lord stood by him, and said, be of good cheer Paul, &c. 2 Tim. 4. 17. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me. When wicked men do suffer, they suffer all over, they suffer within, as well as without; like persons in a Feaver, extremely scorch'd with heat, not onely in the visible and fleshy parts, but in the secret spirits and humours. But though a storm be upon good men without, they have a calm within; like a man in a Castle, in the inward rooms of which all is quiet and still, though the blustering winds do beat upon the outward superficies: Ps. 25. 4. Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distresse, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible one is as a storm against the wall.

In converting their miserable evils to spiritual good: That all their miserable evils to spiritual good.

all the rage of evil men shall be but as poison tempered by the skilful and tender Physitian, not to be death but to be physick; and all the blusterings of them, shall be but as the Wind to the Wheat, clearing it more of the chaff; or as fire to the gold purging it more from the dross. Their repentance and sorrow, and meeknesse, and patience, and faith, and zeal, and heavenly-mindednesse, and love of Christ and his truth, shall spread with more purity, and beauty, like the *Starres*, with more glory in the darkeſt nights.

Preservation.

3. *Preservation*: Though God doth *Preserve man and beast*, Psal. 36.6. Yet there is a more singular degree for the Church then for others, in which respect of comparison *Elihu* saith, Job 36.6. *He preserveth not the life of the wicked*, and God is said to *Know them as farre off*, and *To cast them off*, and *To hide himself from them*, and *To reject them*. But *David* saith of the righteous, Psal. 34.10. *The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall want no good thing*. Not that there is no preservation of the wicked, (for the continuation of their being, depends upon preservation) but that it is not in such a singular way, as that which respects the Church; *Noah* hath an Ark when the rest perished: hence those phrases Psal. 31.23. *The Lord preserveth the faithful*. 2 Sam. 8.6. *The Lord preserved David whitherſoever he went*. Gen. 48.15. God (said *Jacob* to *Joseph*) *which ſed me all my life long unto this day*. 16. *The Angel which redeemed me from all evil*, &c. He is said to preserve the *Life of the Saints*. Psal. 41.2. *And the wayes of his Saints*, Prov. 2.8 and the *Souls of his Saints*, Psal. 121.8. and the *bodies of his Saints*, 2 Thes. 5.23. 2 Tim. 4.17. *I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion*. 18. *And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom*. Hence it is that God is called the keeper of *Israel*; *The Lord is thy keeper*, Psal. 121.5. *The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand*. 6. *The Sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the Moon by night*. 7. *The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil*. Psal. 31.20. *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man, thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues*: see a notable place *Iſa.* 27.3. Nay he is said to keep them as the apple of his eye, Psal. 17.8. so Psal. 84.11. The

The Lord God is a Sun and a Shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

2. If you consider the *Means and Ways* which God hath used for his Church, you must confesse that his Providence is singular. The method of Providence is here special. Observe now,

1. *God can do great good to his Church and people by weak Means:* He can strengthen a few to overthrow a many; you remember the story of *Gideon*, that he with 300 men chased the *Midianites*, who were as the Sand of the Sea, *Judg. 7. 7.* So

2 *Chron. 14. 9.* *There came out against Asa an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots: v. 11. And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on thee, and in thy Name we go against this multitude: O Lord, thou art our God, let not man prevail against thee. v. 12. So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.*

2. He hath done great good for his people by *strange Means*; many times he hath put but a conceit, an alarum in the fancies of the enemies of his people and they have fled, as in 2 *Kin. 7. 6* *The Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of Chariots, and a noise of horses, and they presently conceit it, that the King of Israel had hired the Kings of the Hittites, and of the Egyptians; and therefore they arose and fled for their lives, v. 7.* When the *Israelites* came to the Sea, the Red Sea, and the *Egyptians* did pursue them, God brake open a strange means for their deliverance, he did cleave the Sea asunder, and commanded it to stand on heaps till his people were all passed over. When *Elisha* was in the *Wildernesse*, far enough from the market or the stalls, God sends an *Almoner*, even a *Raven* to feed him.

3. He hath done great good against *Means*, when in probability they were cast upon the unavoidable ruine, yet God hath come in and helped. When *Daniel* was cast into the den among the *Lions*, yet Divine Providence secured and preserved him, in suspending and restraining the fierceness of them. So for the three Children, the fire is bound up that it could not scorch or hurt them.

4. He

And without
any Means.

4. He hath done great good *without any Means*. He hath put forth his Almighty hand and hath saved when there was none to deliver. *Not by might, or by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, Zach. 4* 6. When there hath been no sense or rational conceits how things should be brought about, yet he hath done it.

Consider the
fruits of Pro-
vidence.

3. Consider the *fruits of Providence*, the Church hath more special testimonies herein then any people; God hath provided better things for them then others: They have Christ in the Ship, and Grace in the Heart, and Peace in the Conscience, and such a savoury blessing with every blessing, that even the *little which the righteous hath, is far better then the revenues of many wicked*. The estate of a wicked man may be larger, but that of the good man is better: The *Quantity* on his part may be greater, but the *Quality* of this mans condition is sweeter. It is mercy all over. It is a *Blessing* without a *Curse*, and a *Portion* without *Sorrow*. So that Divine Providence is more choice to the Church then others in all sorts of things; in Spirituall there is no comparifon, and in Temporall, to the Church, all good is seasoned and sweetned; but to others, either they find or put a curse and fowness into it.

Consider the
Issues of all
Occurrences.

4. If you consider the *Issues of all Occurrences*, this manifests a Singularity of Providence. That every thing should still fall out for good, whatsoever the estate be, yet it shall be good; whatsoever the change be, yet it shall be good: though one estate be opposite to another, and one change to another, yet each of them shall prove in the event for good; *All things shall work together for good to them that love God, Rom. 8. 28*. Divine Providence doth, as it were, compact all the operations of second Causes. He doth so admirably temper, and command, and direct them, that though they be like several Rivers, one flowing this way, another that, yet all of them Center in the Ocean. So though the intentions of agents be several, and their practises opposite, and occurrences various to a person and to his condition, yet God orders all, not only for his glory, but for the particular good of a person or Church. When the Church hath rode it out in blood, a ship upon a sea of blood, when it hath been blazing at the stake, when it hath been tortured in the prison, yet all these have been additions, improvements,

ments, advantages to the Church. When God doth bring an affliction to the estate of his servants, when he doth exchange their tempers, when he drawes back their outward comforts in the nearest relations, when he doth deny them such or such a good, when he doth suspend a good which they may and do desire; yet all, whatsoever the occurrences may be, descends at length like a cloud full of blessing, and good, and comfort; so that a man shall confesse, in *respect of Afflictions*, it was good for me that I was thus afflicted; as a man who was unwilling to bleed, yet when he sees the corrupt matter now out, he is glad with all his heart. And he shall confesse, in respect of his *Denials*, If God had granted me my desire, I should have rued it all my dayes: And he shall confesse, in respect of the *Suspensions* or prorogations of good, If God had let down such a good at that time that I so importuned him, it had marred much of the good which I now enjoy.

As these particulars do prove the Singularity of Providence towards the Church, *He hath not dealt so with every Nation*: So this singular special Providence is very admirable, as will appear in seven things:

1. *It is altogether Gracious*; from a Gracious affection, to a gracious end, All for good. This Singular Providence, is
Altogether Gracious.

2. *It is very Tender*; his eyes are over the Righteous, he carries the Lambs in his bosome; compasseth them about as the hills did *Jerusalem*; is a wall of fire about them. He hath seven eyes, is very watchful against any evil that may hurt them. Very Tender.

3. *It is Mysterious*: The Lord hath many hidden wayes to do them good which we discern not. In the vision of the Golden Candlesticks, *Zach. 4. 3.* there were seven Lamps, and seven Pipes to the seven Lamps. God doth his people good by contraries, he doth them good by all the evil that doth befall them; brings life out of death. Mysterious.

4. *It is Glorious*: He useth not only all ordinary creatures, but the very Angels as ministring Spirits for their good and defence; as in *Hezekiahs* case. Nay, Jesus Christ himself as an Head, as an Husband, as a King undertakes for them. He is the Bowl upon the top of the Golden Candlestick, *Zach. 4.* and walks amongst the Golden Candlesticks, and holds the seven

Stars in his right hand, *Rev.* 2. 1. And is the Captain of the Lords Hosts, *Iosh.* 5. 14, 15. And fights for them, and prevails, *Rev.* 12.

Exact.

5. It is *Exact*, in respect of,

1. *Wayes*, *Psal.* 1 9. The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.
2. *Times*: When judgments and dangers are abroad; he makes an Ark for *Noah*, is a Sanctuary and hiding place, is a Pillar and a Cloud, *Isa.* 4. Lifts up a Standard against the flood, will not suffer the Destroyer to enter, *Exod.* 12. Never leaves, never forsakes them.
3. *All about their Persons*: Present with them in the fire, and in the water: No, not an hair of their head shall fall. *Senacherib* shall not shoot an arrow into the City.

Miraculous.

6. Not only ordinary, but *Miraculous and Extraordinary*, working miracles:

1. For their good, he divides the Sea, cleaves the Rocks, rains down Manna from heaven, makes the Sun to stand still, and to go backwards.
2. Against their enemies, he throws down stones from heaven, makes the stars to fight against them, and the winds, and the waters.
7. *He hath rebuked Kings for their sakes*, as *Pharaoh*, *Senacherib*, and destroyed them, and nations too, making all attempts against his people unprosperous; so that the stout hearted have slept their sleep, and have not found their hands, but their bows, and swords, and armes have been broken.

Reasons of this Singularity of Providence. They are the people of Gods singular Affection.

But you will say, Why this Singularity of Providence towards his people?

1. The Church are *the people of Gods singular Affection*; they are a choice people, the people of his Love, his delight is in them. Now where Love is Singular, there Providence is Special; you may alwayes observe, peculiar intentions of care, and forecast, and help, and defence according to the singular degree of Love. God will *give Kingdoms for the ransom* of the people whom he loves, and will dash in pieces the gates of hell to secure his own inheritance.

2. Providence *runs through a singular Covenant* to the Church and people of God, which is a most Special thing. In the Covenant there is a choiceness of Divine affection, and a choiceness of good; a bond of truth and wisdom to seal and execute all this. Things befall us from God, either as a Creator, or as from God reconciled in Christ: What I do as a man, is one thing, what I do as a father is an other thing; what I am as a general Friend, is one thing; what I am as an Husband, is an other thing. The Covenant hath the precious blood of Christ, the precious promises, the riches of mercy; if any good be more excellent than other, either for the kind and nature of it, or fruit & virtue of it, it is that which comes out of the Covenant; for the Fountain here is all graciousness. Now God hath entered into peculiar Covenant with his Church, and therefore his Providence working for them according to the temper of the Covenant (which is an eminent bond of unspeakable graciousness) it must needs be more special.

Now I come to make some useful Applications of this. Is there a providence extending it self to all the Creatures, and more especially to the Church and people of God? Then,

First, *Let us learn to depend on that Providence*: Why? all our beings are from God, and all our Comforts are from God; there is none so able to fulfil our necessities, and none so willing to do us good, and all issues do befall us according to the commands of his Providence: We cannot command any good to our selves, nor can we command the creatures to yield out their helps and assistances: They are Gods rewards to lay out their strength according to his directions; and when any pressures and troubles are upon us, who can remove them, who can bless them, but he who appointed them? and why then should we not depend on his Providence? If God had no Providence actually working in the Occurrences which do befall us, or if that Providence were not All-sufficient to over-master, rule, order, guide, restrain, deliver; or if it were not Omniscient and wise, to direct the best means, and to bring in the best good, and to square out the best condition, and to confer an help, and take off an evil in the fittest times, then there were little reason to depend on it. Or if we could by taking care and thought add to the continuation of our comfortable Beings;

Use I.

Depend on that Providence.

but things will not be according to our cares, nor according to our desires, nor according to our projects, when we have laid out our own conditions; God will alter this and make it otherwise, he will for ever reserve the glory of an absolute and supreme and Universal cause to himself, therefore depend on his providence.

What it is to
depend on

Gods Provi-
dence.

To commit our
persons and
conditions to
the will, wis-
dome, power,
and goodness of
God.

Obj. But you will say, *what is it to depend on providence?*

Sol. I answer, it includes two things.

1. *A committing of our persons and conditions to the will and wisdom, and power, and goodness of God:* So David styles it in *Psal. 37. 5. Commit thy way unto the Lord (i. e.)* if there be a thing which thou wouldst have brought about, do not think to effect it by thy own strength or wisdom, but put it into Gods hands, give it up unto him to do it for thee, and trust on him for it, So *1 Pet. 2. 23.* Christ is said *to commit himself to him that judges righteously:* and *1 Pet. 4. 19* We are commanded *to commit the keeping of our souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator:* and *2 Tim. 1. 12.* Paul is persuaded that *God is able to keep that which he had committed unto him.* When I acknowledg God to be the fountain of my being and to be the fountain of my comforts, of my helps, of my health, of my plenty, of my life, of my liberty, of my peace, of my deliverance, and mine eyes are upon him, expecting these according to my particular exigences; Now I commit things to God; now I depend on his Providence.

To submit our
thoughts and
affections unto
God, in the
particular dis-
positions of our
persons and
conditions.

2. *A submitting of our thoughts and affections unto God in the particular dispositions of our persons and conditions.* That when I want any outward good upon my seeking of God, (whom I acknowledg to be the Father of Lights, the spring of every mercy) I now lay down this comfort at the feet of God, and affectionately say: "Lord, if thou wilt bring about this comfort, I will bless thee, if thou wilt not, I will thank thee; it is that which I would have, not peremptorily, but submissively: *Not my will, but thy will be done;* if this good may be for thy glory, and for my good, I desire it; if not, I desire to want it as well as to enjoy it; it may seem good to me, but not to thee, and therefore I give up both my comforts and my desires, both the things and the times into thy own hand, what thou wilt, and when thou wilt, so let it be.

In like manner when we are in crosses, sufferings, afflictions:
 "O Lord, thou art the great and good God, not an hair can
 "fall without thy providence, much less can an affliction touch
 "me, or renew it self upon me; what I suffer, that I have de-
 "served, thou only art able to pardon sin, and to remove affli-
 "ction; I desire thee if it be thy will, if it be for thy glory, if it be
 "for my good to take off thy hand, I know all things are so
 "ordered by thy providence, that they shall work for good to
 "them that love thee; and therefore if it be for good, take
 "away this cup from me, yet not my will, but thy will be done:
 "If it be for good let thy hand rest yet upon me, till thou hast
 "purged out my pride and sinfulness, till thou hast perfected
 "my patience, till thou hast beautified my faith, till thou hast
 "raised my heart intirely from all earthly delights, to thee the
 "highest, the only God and good.

Obj. But what shall we do, we cannot depend on God, we cannot trust on his Providence, commit all to him, submit to his will: Consider a few things.

But we cannot depend on God.

Consider.

Thou must depend on some.

1. *Thou must depend on some*: For thou art a creature, and thou art exposed to want and need, and such occurrences as exceed thy power; and there is none better to depend on than God; what dost thou see in thy self, to depend on thy self; what dost thou see in man, or in the sons of men; all their strength is but borrowed, and weak, and changeable; man dieth, and his thoughts die, and his strength dies; but God is most good in himself, and independent, and all mighty, and wise and ready, and sure; why then, canst thou not depend on him: What the creature cannot do, he can, and when they can but bewail thee, he can comfort and help thee.

2. *No better way to gain our good then by depending on God* No better way for it, Prov. 3. 6. *In all thy wayes acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths*; when thou art in any straight, and knowest not good, then by which way to turn thee, and friends know not which way to counsel thee, yet if thine eyes be to God, he will point out the way, and direct thee, Psal. 37. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass*: There is the effecting of the good; God will make it to be, though thou knows not how to compass it; if thou wilt leave it to him, he will deliver it to thee, Psal. 37. 9. *The salvation of the righte-*

to gain our good, then by depending on God.

See Isa 17. 8.

ous is of the Lord; he is their strength in the time of trouble, v. 40. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them from the wicked, and save them because they trust in him.

No surer way
to miss our
good, then not
to depend on
God?

3. No surer way to miss our good then not to depend on God, Psal. 52. 7. Lo! this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches; why loe! what of him? see v. 5. God shall destroy him, take him away, pluck him out of his dwelling place, and root him out of the land of the living. Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord, Jer. 17. 5. And v. 6. He shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited, Isa. 7. 9. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

Who ever de-
pend on God
but sped well.

4. Who ever depended on him but sped well? Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them, said David. Job did, and he came up fresh again: David, though he walked through the valley of the shadow of death, yet he would fear none ill; Paul did trust in him, and he was delivered.

Why not de-
pend on him
now, who hath
provided for
thee hitherto.

5. Why wilt thou not depend on him now (when thou hast wit and use of reason and limbs, and strength) to do thee good? Who did take care for thee in the womb, and in thy swaddling garments? when thou wert not able to shift for the least good, nor strong enough to put by the least evil, wilt thou forsake his care now? Who took thee up from thy mothers womb, and was thy God, when thou didst hang upon thy mothers breast? Psalm 22. 9, 10.

Why not de-
pend on him
for accessories,
who hath con-
ferred the prin-
cipals.

6. Why wilt thou not depend upon him for accessories; who hath of his own graciousness conferred the principals? If he hath done great matters for thee, will he not do the lesse? if he hath given thee that which none but a God can give, will he not break open the ordinary courtesies of a daily friend, for food and raiment? Rom. 8. 32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

What is it to
God to do thee
good?

7. What is it to him, to come in and do thee good? what expence is he at? or to what trouble and pains is he exposed? he can say the word, and still all thy troubles; he can speak the word, and all obey him: He can command his loving kindness in a mo-
ment,

ment, and do thee what good he pleaseth; what is it for him, to turn, to guide, to restrain, to take off, to let down, to command any good to thee, or evil off thee; who every moment satisfies and sustains a whole world of creatures?

8. *Consider of Christs reasonings here:* He looks after the Sparrows, much more after men; after the grass and Lillies, *Mat.* 6. *Much more after you, O ye of little faith;* after strangers, much more after those of his own household; after enemies, much more after friends, after them that hate him, much more after them that love him; after all, much more after his children: Is God worse then an infidel, not to provide for his own family?

Consider Christs reasonings here.

We may raise our selves to a dependance upon Gods Providence; by such reasonings as these.

1. Conclude, *from the less to the greater;* if he clothes the grass, feeds the Ravens, much more you, &c.

To raise our selves to a dependance.

2. Conclude *from the greater to the less:* If God have given you his Son, how should he not with him give you all things, *Rom.* 8. 32. If he give grace and glory, he will not withhold any good thing, *Psal.* 84. 11.

Conclude. From the less to the greater. From the greater to the less.

3. Conclude *from things past, to a providence for things present:* As *David,* 1 *Sam.* 17. 37. The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the Lion, and out of the Paw of the Bear will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistim.

From things past, to things present.

4. Conclude *from things past and present to things future:* As *Paul.* 2 *Cor.* 1. 10. Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, in him we trust that he will yet deliver us: So *David,* *Psal.* 23. He reckons what God had done, and was still a doing for him, and thence concludes, v. 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the dayes of my life.

From things past and present to things future.

5. Conclude *from large relations to special:* Gods Providence extends to strangers, shall it not to those of his own household? if to enemies, then much more to children.

From large relations to special.

6. Conclude *from ancient effects of Providence to the Church, for a Providence suited to thy present condition:* The Lord hath thought on his Church, in her low estate; delivered Israel out of Egypt, overthrown *Pharaoh*, rescued *David*, preserved the Jews against *Hamans* Plot, built his Temple and the walls of Jerusalem, against Plots, Scandals, Weapons, in *Ezrah* and *Nehemiahs*

From ancient effects of Providence to a Providence in our present condition.

time : Thought of Joseph in the Prison ; *Daniel* in the Lions Den ; the three Children in the furnace ; *Jonah* in the Whales belly. Given rest to the Church in the midst of bloody persecutions in *Pauls* time, and in *Constantines* time. Saved Israel by 300. men of Gideon, discomfited the Philistims by *Jonathan*, and his Armor bearer ; delivered King *Asa* by a few against a Thousand Thousand, *Hezekiah* from *Senacherib*, and *Jehoshaphat* from the Children of *Ammon*, *Moab*, and mount *Seir*. Certainly the Church is still under the same Covenant, and under the same providence, if we do but bring the same vessel of faith and Prayer.

Obj. But I would have this good, and yet it sticks, God will not send it out.

Sol. Our desire is not the square of good, neither must our will be the rule of Providence.

2. Yet he doth not, hereafter he may, he depends aright on Providence, who doth not cull out his good, nor set God a day.

Obj. But the case is difficult.

Sol. To whom are difficulties ! to man, to us ; but is there any thing too hard for the Lord ? is his hand shortned, that it cannot save ? and what is it for him to alter the heart, or to make the will to yield, or to remove the grounds of resolutions, or to take off impediments, or to cast in irresistible motives ? He can make the *Egyptians* as willing to send out his people, as to keep them back ; and now to adorn and enrich them, as once to oppress and spoil them. Nothing stands in his way, as a bar against his power ; neither the depths of misery, nor the hopelessness of our insufficiency, nor the deadness of visible means, nor the combination of powerful insolencies, nor the conspired intentions of ruine are any thing to him, his own arm alone can doe it, and that which is infinitely exalted above all strength, can be stayed by none.

Use. 2.
Let us not vex
and disquiet
our minds and
hearts :

Mat. 6. 28.

If there be a Providence generally extending to all, and especially to the people of God : *Then we should learn not to vex and disquiet our minds and hearts.* This is it which *Christ* lessoned his Disciples, since there was a God who looked to the Grass, and to the Lillies, and a father who looked unto them, therefore they should not take thought and care, *Mat. 6. And their hearts should not be troubled, 1 Pet. 5. 7. Cast all your care upon*

upon him, for he careth for you, (i.) Do not ye perplex your selves about your conditions, your safeties, your supports, you may ease your selves of all this, there is a God who takes care for you, who mindes you, who thinks on you, who will provide well enough for you. *Phil. 4. 5. Let your moderation be known to all men, the Lord is at hand* (i.) do not you rent your selves with excesse of grief, or vastnesse of getting, or impatience in suffering, as if there were none neer to help you, *The Lord is at hand*, your help, your strength, your supply, your comfort is not farre from you, v.6. *Be careful for nothing.* (i.) whatsoever your condition be, do not you now afflict your selves with anxieties, and feares, and thoughtsomnesse, *But in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God,* (i.) Bless for what you have, and pray for what you want, and leave it to God, and so in patience possesse your soules. There are divers things about which we vex our selves in vain, (surely they are disquieted in vain, said *David* in another case, *Psal.* 39.6.) We vex our selves in vain about

1. One is the *Deadnesse of means*. When we desire a good and though we conceive a life in the fountain (an ability in God to do it) yet we apprehend a deadnesse in the meanes, we cannot see any sensible testimonies, or probabilities in the second causes to stay us, and feed our hopes and expectations, and therefore we fret and vex at our own unhappinesse, and the exigences that we are put to. The deadnesse of means.

2. Another is, the *Crossenesse of events*. When we have looked for light, and behold darknesse; when we have expected favour and meet with disregard; when we have set down comfort, and are arrested with sorrow; when we have written for plenty, but the answer is poverty; when we have promised to our selves security, but a shipwrack of many losses hath sunk our estates. Now the soul is filled with variety and curiosity of disturbing thoughts, and doth most artificially torment and disquiet it self with excessive sorrow, and melancholly, and bitternesse. The crossenesse of events.

3. A third is, *The weaknesse and thinnesse of our conditions*: The weaknesse of our conditions. when there is no more then from hand to mouth, and that it is with us as with a candle fed with a drop of oyl, if you do not

adde another, the flame goes out. So when our livings have but this peny and stock, and but this piece of bread, and that we may say, *I have but a handful to make a cake for me and my child, that we may eat and die.* This impotency of condition is that which doth sad and grieve, and distract us, and thrusts out many violent expressions, What shall we eat? and what shall we drink? *Shall we die for thirst? Can he give bread also?*

The great strength of a present affliction.

4. A Fourth is, *The great strength of a present affliction:* Or the successive exchange of many afflictions. When there doth betide us an intimate and quick crosse, in a good which lay next the heart; or else afflictions come like *Job's* messengers, one had scarce delivered his errand, but another brings news of another losse, and perhaps, the next afflictions are the forest tidings; I say when afflictions come thus on a person like waves in the sea, one riding on the neck of another; or like soldiers in a battel, one file of men presenting and giving fire after another; and then a main body of afflictions, encountring us at once. Oh this is a sad estate and we think that we may take good leave now to be angry, nay to be impatient, and vex, and despair, as if there were no Divine Providence in such a condition as this.

Strange interruptions after probable proceedings.

5. A Fifth is, *Strange checkings and interruptions* after fair and probable proceedings. When we have chosen means and have consecrated them by prayer and dependance, and have endeavoured with all fidelity and uprightness, not to mingle any unlawful act or course, to finish a lawful desire; and God hath seemed to breath on all, and to smile on the enterprize; yet on the sudden he checks all; it is with us as with the Sun, which though it did shine yet there comes a cloud and clasps it, and covers it; so God doth many times put all our probabilities to a stand, nay he turnes them rather to the contrary that it shall not be, nay and perhaps wheels things about so that it shall never be. The heart in such a case is put to it, it is troubled, it stands still, it admires, it is disquieted; it knowes not what to make of Providence now.

The doubtfulnesse of posterity.

6. A Sixth Case of vexing, is *The doubtfulnesse of posterity.* Perhaps a man hath many children, little means, few or no friends, the mother is dead, the children yong, the goods divided, very, very mean, and he is dying. Here armies of cares and

and of feares multiply in the mind, and disputes, and projects, and when all the imaginations and devices are summed up, they come to nothing, they can contribute no effectual relief or enlargement, yet the man is troubled, and thinks, what shall become of mine?

Now I shall endeavour to shew unto you how the goodnesse, and wisdom, and power of Providence may take off all these grounds of vexation.

Touching the first, which is *The deadnesse of meanes*, that either they are not, or they work not, they do not set out to further, or bring in our good; they are as it were asleep, though we knock at them, yet they hold in that good and assistance, which God hath put into them, I say concerning this, observe the powerful methods of Providence, viz.

1. *The fountain of our good is not in the means*: they are the channels which let in the ship many times; they are the cisterns or rather the pipes to convey the water, but the spring of all good is in heaven. When thou art sick thy health is not in the Physicians hand, but in Gods hand; when thou art needy, thy relief is not in thy friend, but in thy God; it is *He that filleth the hungry, and satisfieth the needy*. When I give a man a gift, he takes it out of my hand, my heart was the cause of the gift, my hand was onely the instrument, the means which we see are but as it were the fingers of God his lower hand; but his love is the fountain of all the benefits we enjoy: and therefore God doth many times shut up the means, he closeth that hand because we should learn whence to draw our helps, and know to whom we owe all our mercies. Yea and we find thus much, that God doth draw us up to himself by stopping up those lower wells of water. When the rivers fail us, then we will look up to the clouds for rain; when means stand as unuseful, or as unable, then we can look up to God and say, if the Lord himself be not on our side, &c. we can now confesse, that all mercy, and all helps, and all comfort is onely in Gods hands, he who is essentially good hath the command and distribution of every good.

The power of Providence may take off all these grounds of vexation.

Case I.
The deadnesse of the means.
The powerful methods of Providence in this Case.
The fountain of our good is not in the means.

2. *No means of themselves alone, are able to do any thing*; No means of themselves alone are able to do any thing. They cannot turn themselves nor incline themselves to our help unlesse God turn, and incline, and command them. If God will

will not act and use them, the instrument can do nothing (as the hammer or rod) if we use them not. They do not work to our helps, in a natural and necessary way, but by appointment and order, according as God is pleased to work or not to work, so they prove assistances or no assistances unto us: like *Job's* friends who came to comfort him, but they did for a while onely look on him and were silent, so the means can but look on us, and we on them, till God bid them become comforts and helps, *There is none saved by the multitude of an host.* All the means in the world nakedly considered, are but as a mill, which if the wind comes to it, then it can grind the corn, but if the Wind forbears, the Mill is at a stand; Or like a Dial, on which if the Sun shines, it may direct us; but if the Sun lies under a cloud, it is of no present use to us, so if God hold off from the means, if he breathes not upon them, if he doth not cast a lively influence into them, they can and will do nothing for us. If thou be troubled in thy mind, thy dearest friend cannot be comfort to thee unlesse God doth put power into his conference; he may speak words unto thee but not comfort to thee; and if thou be diseased in thy body, thy most skilful Physitian cannot be health, and ease to thee, unlesse God doth put health into the potion or plaister, he may prescribe cordials, but he cannot prescribe health or life. For God hath a Providence which over-rules all means, and all means being but subordinate agents depend on God, both for being, and working, and restraint; they are not the absolute Lords of their own operations, and God hath so intrusted them with power to do us good, that yet he keeps in his own hand the delivery out of that good; as a Master who though he hath put a Cabinet or Box of Treasures into his servants chamber, yet he keeps the key himself, so that none of it comes out, but by his will and appointment; in like manner, though God hath laid several aptnesses in the Creatures to do good, yet God keeps the key (*.i.*) God doth so determine of things that they shall not bestow themselves in their own way, but onely according to his direction, otherwise we might bow down and kisse the Creature.

God doth usually take away the effectual virtue of the means, when we set our confidences on them.

3. *God doth usually take away the effectual virtue of means when we set our confidences on them.* There is an use of means and

and there is a confidence on means ; I may put my hand upon them, but I may not put my heart upon them. If I set up means as causes, and look upon them as the springs of life and death, that if I have them I am surely made, if I have them not, I am certainly marred. When a man will put his whole condition into the hands of such and such means, this man doth in his heart depart from God, and God ordinarily doth dash the confidences of such a person, as Jer. 2. 36 *Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way, thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt as thou wast ashamed of Assyria: v. 37. Yea thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head, for the Lord hath rejected thy confidences and thou shalt not prosper in them.* When Israel did dote on her lovers, God threatens to make her ashamed of her lovers, so when we do dote and set our affections and persuasions, that it shall be done, and cannot but be done, if such means present themselves, without eying the great power of the all-disposing God, he will frustrate our confidences, and stay the means before our faces, we shall see the means to flie off, or to sink, or to deny their help unto us.

4. *Divine Providence will seldom work and appear in set means* (i.) in such ways which we cut out through a diffident curiosity. There are two sorts of set means.

1. Such as *God hath drawn out*, this is a way walk in it. It is such a path which he hath commanded us to tread in and to expect his blessing.

2. Such as a *Distrustful heart deviseth*: Which is either some merely conceited form of help, or else a determination of Providence to this or that way onely. v: g. If God doth not stirre up such a friend, or if he doth not speak by such a Minister, or if he doth not blesse the directions of such a Physician, when we tie and limit Providence thus to arise in our own wayes, we cause Providence to hold back; God keeps in much good, for which we set him our wayes and our times: God hath several means to do us good, and he doth it not alwayes by one, because he is able to do it by any, and sometimes he holds up himself in all, that we should learn to trust on none of them but on himself.

3. *Gods Providence ordinarily doth make choice of neglected and*

Providence will seldom work and appear in set means.
Two sorts of set means.

Providence ordinarily makes choice of despised means.

and despised means. For things do most appear as gifts from God, when the creatures in our opinion and reason, are either most unable, or most improbable to yield them unto us; the way that we least thought on: as *God doth chuse the weak things of the world.* 1 Cor. 1. 27. *To confound the things that are mighty; and v. 28. Base things and despised things;* I say as he doth make choice of these in the ministrations of the Gospel of Grace, so he doth bring about our temporal good oft times by the service of most unlikely and disregarded means. Though *Naaman the Assyrian* despised the waters of *Jordan*, and preferred those of *Abana* and *Pharpar* Rivers of *Damascus* 2 King 5. 10. Yet those slighted waters did cleanse and cure him. And when *David* presented himself to deliver *Israel* from *Goliath* and the *Philistims*, though his brethren rebuked his audacity and forwardness, and though *Saul* feared his youthfulness and inability, and though the *Philistim* derided and cursed his bold attempt, yet *David* slings him down with a little stone to the ground; so doth God give great deliverances to his people, and great overthrowes to their enemies, and much good to us, not alwayes according to the fulnesse and fairness of means, but sometimes by weak, and mean, and unexpected instruments. The friend which thou hast set up as thy refuge, doth fail thee, when a person by whom thou couldst not expect an assistance doth plentifully refresh thy bowels; It was the poor man whom none regarded, that *Did deliver the City* strongly besieged, *Eccl. 9. 14, 15.* And the broken pieces of the ship landed all the souldiers safe in *Paul's* shipwrack, *Acts 27. 44.* As it was said of *Luther* who was the instrument stirred up to shake the chair of *Rome*, *Vir sine spe, sine re, contulit orbis opes.* A worthless, regardless, slighted work, yet an occasion of the greatest reformation in Christendom.

God can quicken dead means. 6. God can quicken dead means. Though the means (which we can find out) be as improbable to bring in our desired good as *Sarah's* womb to conceive a child, *Yet she received a child when she was past age,* Heb. 11. 11. For God quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which be not, as though they were, Ro. 4. 17. In Ez. 37. 1, 2. God leads the Prophet into the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and they were very many, and very drie, now saith God unto him, v. 3. *Son of man, can these bones*

bones live? He answered, O Lord God thou knowest; Then God commanded him to prophesie unto them, and bone came to bone, and the sinewes and the flesh came upon them, v. 7,8. And breath came into them, and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army, ver. 10.

Thus it may be in the deadnesse of all means, when there may be as little reason to look for any good from them, as for life and strength from dead and dry bones, yet God can breathe upon them, and put a life and strength, and desire, and help from them unto us. Even when we come to say *There is no hope*, yet then can God revive the root and cause it to send out the branches; and when darknesse hath almost extinguished all light, yet God can create and inable the most fainting means with sufficiency of strength and assistance. Isa. 50. 10. *Who is he that walks in darknesse, and sees no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* Though it comes to that, *By whom shall Jacob arise for he is small?* Or to that, *I looked on my right hand, and there was none to deliver;* Or to that, *Master save us or else we perish,* yet Gods hand is not shortned that it cannot save. He can stir the hearts of people and give charge and commission unto them to consider of thy person, and of thy condition, and to speed in to be help, or counsel, or comfort, or deliverance, or stay and refuge unto thee.

7. *God is not tied to any Means:* The Obligation here is on our part, not on Gods. He can do us good in every means, whether great or weak, whether manifest or secret; yea, though means do fail, yet he can do us good without them. Forasmuch as he is an independent Agent, and borrows not any good to do us good; and he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we are able to ask or think: This is no extraordinary experience, that when we have tired out our selves in the use and expence of means, and all of them have spent their skill, and power, and readinesse to do us good, and now God must shew his immediate finger, yet he hath spoken the word and we have been healed. Many a person hath been cast aside as a dead man by the judgment of a College of Physicians, whom yet God hath (without them) alone restored

God is not tied
to any Means.

to life again. Though the subject cannot perform any things of office without the Kings Seal and authority, yet the King may and can perform them without us: Second causes cannot do good without the consent and influence of the first, yet God can bring about his purposes and intentions without them: As he is *Absolute* to chuse what means he pleaseth, and *Wise* in the using of them to pitch on the best, so he is *Omnipotent* to command by his own arme all our helps and supplies:

Case 2.

The crossness
of events.

The goodness
of Providence
in this case.

We must not
think to wrong
Providence of
its rights.

The second Cause of Vexation, was the *Crossness* of events: When our projecting thoughts are disappointed; not that issue which we designed, but some other quite contrary befalls unto us. In this case we should feel out the goodnesse of Providence and not vex. Therefore know,

1. *That we must not think to wrong Providence of its Rights:* There are *Regalia* amongst us, some Royalties which are the Kings Prerogatives, upon which no subject may presume to intrench. And there are *Magnalia*, some wonderful and peculiar rights which God assumes to himself, the which no creature must wrest out of his hands. *To be a fountain of good*, none but God can be this; and *to be the End of things*, none but He; and to set up peremptorily such a particular Issue, that this shall be, or that thus and thus it shall be; this is one of the *Rights* of Providence. Such an issue and event we may propound with a reservation and submission, as S. James said, *If God will*, but peremptorily we may not. Only he hath liberty to set up such a particular issue, who hath of himself power and wisdom to shape Occurrences so, as effectually to drive and fall into that issue.

Jam. 4. 15.

The Issues of
Providence are
ever better
then the Issues
of desire.

2. *The Issues of Providence are ever better then the Issues of Desire:* There are some issues which fall out by Providence according to our desire; there be some issues which we do desire, but Providence defeats them by making things to be otherwise. Now the issue of Providence is alwayes the best, because it is an issue grounded upon a faultlesse goodnesse, and upon an unerring wisdom and prescience: I can (at the highest) but think it will be good for me, but God doth clearly know it will be bad for me. That which I desire is not therefore good for me because I desire it, but that which God brings upon me, is therefore good, because he hath done it. The thing that I desire is pleas-

plenty, and the thing which God layes on me is poverty; That scarcity which God brings is far better (in the proof of it) then that plenty which I crave; for my plenty might have been a surfet, a snare at that time, but my scarcity hath kept me closer to God, humbler in my mind, more diligent in my calling, more depending on Gods promises, more careful in prayer, more watchful in my conversation then perhaps I should have been if my condition had been more full and great. The thing that I lay out is *Health*, and the thing which God brings is *Sickness*. My health (in this case) would not prove to me such a mercy as my sickness; my Shop perhaps had been fuller with that, but my Soul is now made better with this: Many a man has cast anchor by sickness at Heaven gates, who hath been sayling in the time of his health with full speed to Hell. You make much ado to compass and fetch in such a worldly creature, and propound much comfort in the enjoying of it; you can no sooner taste it, but either it riseth against you as a discomfort, or else is taken away from you, and the short twinkling of your comfort ceaseth. Do not vex at this, but see the Art of Providence which thus corrects our settlings on the creature, and makes us to know that the creature is no more and no longer a comfort then God will make it so; and that our souls must mount higher to find an Ark to rest in, then the deluge of vain things. Why should I not yield to that issue of Providence, which hath at once hindred an evil, and done me a kindness; I saw the good which such an issue of my desire would have brought, but I saw not the evil which lyed under or mingled with it; I saw not what evil might have come with it, or what ill blood it might have bred in my heart (perhaps not able yet to enjoy and use such a mercy.) * 'Tis true, this issue which God brings is contrary to my expectation, but it shall not be contrary to my good, even discomforts let in by a sweet providence, though they do not relish, yet at length they prove most singular Consolations.

3. There are divers sorts of crossings, 1. Some which proceed from *Ignorance*, as when unwittingly we let slip a word, or bolt out an action which proves an impediment to the design of an other. 2. Others which proceed from *Malice*; when with that evil man we sow Tares on purpose to hinder the wheat.

There are divers sorts of Crossings. Some which proceed from Ignorance. Or from Malice and

and harvest. We lay plots and devises to crosse the intentions of our neighbour from the comfortable attainings of his desires.

O: from Prudence.

3. And some which do spring from *Prudence*; as the father doth many times crosse the child, not out of *Ignorance*, because he knows not his desire, or what is fit; nor out of *Malice*, to vex the heart of his dear child, but of a *Pious Wisdom*, knowing, That not what he desires, but perhaps what he dislikes is best for him: Even *Phyſick*, though the patient likes it not, is better then *Meat*, which yet he craves. And thus doth God crosse events to his people out of a singular respect, and out of wise grounds to their good; not that he envies them the enjoyment of any thing which will prove good to them, but that he hinders much evil which would otherwise break in upon them.

If God crosseth the injoying of one good, it is to bestow a better good.

4. If God crosseth the injoying of one good, it is because he hath purposed to bestow upon us a better good: As we cannot always discern the real proof of a good, so we are not able to comprehend the Latitudes of a good; there may be a better good for thee then what thou hast had, or what now thou craveſt. And it may so fall out that one outward good may hinder another, there being some good things of the same kind which are incompatible at once and God doth therefore disappoint us in the lesser, having reserved for us by his special Providence a more suitable good in all concurrence of circumstances. The father crosseth the child in a mean Cottage, because he intends to settle on him a large and more noble inheritance. If thou art crossed in thy design of a particular good, it is because Providence seeth it will not be good for thee, or not good at this time, or that there is a better good then that intended to thee, which though for the present thou canst not see, yet hereafter when things do ripen and open themselves thou shalt confesse with thankfulness.

There is a double crossing of an event.

5. There is a double crossing of an event, one by *Absolute denial*, another by *fitting and preparing a fit season*, which is a space of ripening, &c. And by a thing that is contrary God can further our good, though it be contrary to our expectation, yet it may be subordinate to Gods disposition.

Case 3. The weakness and unlikelyhood of our present conditions

A third Case of Vexation is the *Weakness and Unlikelyhood of our present conditions*, which are feeble and too short to

main.

maintain us and ours. Our lives in this case seem like a long piece of wick with a few drops of oil to feed the Lamp. Perhaps many mouths, and little money, or rayment, or meat, yet here Providence may succour the soul, by considering,

1. *Divine Providence is a Daily care:* You see those flying creatures, the birds, the Ravens, and the rest of them, they feed so to day, that they know not where to expect their breakfast to morrow, but God provides a new Table for them every day, they step out and find it so, and therefore they sleep quietly in the night. You know what Christ counselled his Disciples, *Mat. 6. Take no thought for to morrow; and he bade them to pray, Give us this day our daily bread.* If God were weary to give thee thy daily penny, or unable to continue mean supplies, unto thee, then thou mightest have some reason to vex. But as David spake, *Psal. 37. 3. Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* If thou canst find an hand to labour, and Faith to trust, God will find meat to feed thee, and raiment to cloath thee.

2. *The blessing of Providence can add more means to a little,* The blessing of Providence can add more means to a little, *strengthen a little to continue till more comes in.* There is a marvellous art in Divine Providence.

1. *Addition;* which is a strange succession of one means in the room of another, that when one is ended another begins. *Eliab* is sent to the brook *Cherith*, but then God commanded the *Ravens* to feed him there, *1 King. 17. 4, 5, 6.* After that he is sent to *Sarepta*, but then there also God had commanded a *Widow* woman to sustain him, *v. 9.*

2. *Continuation,* *1 King. 17. 14. The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. V. 15. And she, and he, and her house did eat many dayes.* It is not what we see in hand, but what we can feel out in Providence. A condition which is weak in sight may be full in providence. I may give my child so much to day, and yet I reserve more for him against to morrow. That which he hath is but little and will not endure, but that which I will daily dispend is more, and shall be enough to keep him: Some Christians do live more upon hand then others. God doth as it were (to their eye and observation) deliver out every day all the allowance they have, and others have

an estate crouding in more plentifully at once. There is but a very little difference 'twixt the one and the other; for that providence which hath given out (at once) a large provision for many dayes to the one, doth yet find out continual and daily provision successively for the other; and what matters it if I live by a successive spending of the much meat which I have, or by a successive and fresh supply every day from the market?

Case 4

The present or successive exchange of many and greater afflictions. In this case consider, All afflictions take their commission from Providence.

A fourth Case of Vexation is the strength of a present or successive exchange of many and greater afflictions.

For the asswoyling of which, observe these particulars;

1. *All afflictions take their commission from Divine Providence:* They are not things which come by chance, but by order and appointment. *Job 5. 6. Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.* It is an arrow which comes from an high quiver; the blows which thou feelest are below, but the hand which strikes is above. As *Paul* said in an other case, *How shall they preach except they be sent?* *Rom. 10.* So I say of all afflictions, They are messengers; as *Ehud* said to *Eglon*, *I have an errand to thee from God.* So may every affliction say, I am a messenger dispatched from God. It is an arrest served out of the Court of heaven; *Mic. 6. 9 Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.* Affliction is as a rod, it is a smart kind of Doctrin (and therefore it is elsewhere called the scourge) but God appoints it, not one lash befalls us but by his command; *Amos 3. 6. Shall there be evil in a City and the Lord hath not done it?* There is evil of iniquity, and this man doth, this is a sinful evil, in which God hath no effecting hand; and there is an evil of calamity, and this God doth; this is a miserable evil in which God hath an inflicting hand. Nay, the Apostle oft times tells us of a preordination to afflictions, *Rom. 8. 29.* So *1 Thes. 3. 3.* He would have no man moved by these afflictions, *knowing that we are appointed thereunto.* So that Providence must necessarily have a hand in our afflictions, forasmuch as they and we never meet but by Gods appointment of them for us, and of us to them. *Job* was sensible of this, and therefore he falls to blessing, *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken, blessed be the Name of the Lord.* If there were no other reason but this, not to vex; it were sufficient; viz. That God is the absolute

Lord

Lord of life and death; he is the Lord of our mercies and of our afflictions, *Is it fit to say to him, what dost thou?* David quiets himself by this too, *Psal. 39. 9. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because thou didst it.* q. d. It is the Lord, and I have no more to say. So the Church, *Mic. 7. 9. I will bear the indignation of the Lord.* q. d. It is not for me to mutter, to murmur, I have deserved it, and God hath brought it; it is my cross, and I must bear it; I must sit down quietly and thankfully under it.

2. *Divine Providence* doth not only command the being of affliction, but qualifies every affliction, so as that it shall be a ^{Providence} *mercy to his people.* Affliction is like a *Sword* which ^{qualifies every} *can kill* affliction that and may lance too, It is like a *wind*, which can sink, and may further the ship too: Now however afflictions may prove to ^{it may be a} *evil* men, yet to good men they are ever for good. Physick, though it be not good to the palate, yet it may be good to the person. *No affliction for the present seems joyous, but afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness, Heb. 12. It is good for me, said David, that I was afflicted, for now have I kept thy Testimonies.* There is a double way of afflictions,

One *Natural*, and this is but to strip us of some comfortable good, to step in 'twixt us and our delights, to cut down our Flower, to cloud our Sun, to darken our Day, to make a separation 'twixt a man and his temporal comforts: I delight in a child, and death snatcheth him away; in a wife, and she is rented from me; in a friend, and he is gathered to his last home too. Afflictions thus considered are like *Abimilechs* servants who stopped the Wells which *Abrahams* servants did dig, so those poor and low Wells of Consolation which our judgments and affections have found out, when afflictions come they stop them; they are like some higher Tides and waves which do cover the shore, and bereave us of our nearest contentments, and so are an heavy pain to us.

Another is *Infused*: as in the matter of physick, there is the natural strength and virtue of every ingredient, and there is the superadded virtue of the Physicians art compounding and qualifying the ingredients: If the ingredients should be given single, and as they are able to work by their meer natural ability,

lity, they would quickly tear out the heart of a patient, but being corrected and tempered, now they do but drive out the disease of the person. Thus doth God qualifie all afflictions for good; as when he blessed the waters of *Jordan*, they cured *Namam* of his Leprosie; so when God tempers the afflictions, they shall cure his servants of their sinful corruptions. *Isa. 27. 9* *By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin.* You do not cast gold into the fire to consume, but to purifie it; nor doth God cast his people into afflictions to destroy, but to better them. *Ezek. 20. 37.* *I will cause you to passe under the Rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the Covenant.* Thou mayest well kiss that rod which hath occasioned thee to so near, so great, so sweet a communion with God. Every affliction is either as *Jonathans* arrow, to inform us; or as *Abigails* counsel, to hinder us; or like the *Prodigals* penury, to recal us; or like *Josephs* look, to revive our memories; or like *Elishas* waters, to cleanse; or like *Dauids* rod to quicken, &c.

Providence
doth proportion
all afflictions.

3. *Divine Providence doth proportion all afflictions.* There is a threefold proportioning of an affliction,

One, *By suiting it with the particular Exigence and need of the person*: When it is such a kind of physick as directly and aptly hits with a peculiar disease in a man. That if a man could open his heart, and his way, and his condition, and then open the secret message of the affliction, he may by observation of either say, Here is a disease and there is the remedy. Nay, he may by Prayer and search see the disposition of his soul in the kind and manner of his affliction. Look as the Word when it comes in power to the conscience, it delivers the very frame of the heart unto it self, so when afflictions come with a blessing, they reveale much by their circumstances, what is amiss or what is to be done. They point unto a man his pride, or carnal affections, or negligence, or hypocrisie, or unfruitfulness, or disregards to God, &c.

Another, *By accommodating it with the strength of the person*: So the afflictions sent by the hand of special Providence, they are not rigors but chastizements; they are inflicted not according to the full desert of him who suffers, but according to the merciful wisdom of him who correcteth. *Job 34. 23.* *He will not lay*

lay upon man more then is meet, said *Elihu*. Isa. 27. 8. In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it. 1 Cor. 10. 13. God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, and he will make you able to bear it. If God brings a strange affliction, he will supply with strange strength. God hath a right in all our comforts, and he is the better good then that which is taken away. If he brings a sudden affliction, he will supply with speedy patience; if a strong affliction, then with a strong Faith: So that though the affliction be near, yet God will be near too, and if that be high, his power shall appear in weakness. A great affliction shall have a great effect at the last, and sufficient strength for the present; sufficient, though not instantly to alter the affliction, yet to bear it, and to make an holy use thereof.

A third, *By moderating the time*; I will not contend for ever, said God, Isa. 57. 16. So 1 Pet. 1. 6. For a season if need be, ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations. Affliction comes not but when there is need, and no longer then needs must shall it abide; it is for a season; a season is some congruous portion of time, it is not a perpetual endurance, but a convenient space.

4. *Successive afflictions are, as it were, a course of Physick*, Successive afflictions are as prescribed by a wise and faithful Providence: A single affliction doth not make us many times understand, it doth not awaken us; as *Samuel* at the first call knew not that it was the Voice of God: a man is apt to lay the blame on the unseasonableness of the air, or other accidents, but when God repeats his strokes, when he charges afresh, and enters with a deeper wound, now the heart startles, something is amiss, Or this pride must be lest, this perfunctory serving must be reformed, this filthiness, this unprofitableness, this worldliness, &c. God doth never multiply crosses without special reasons, and therefore do not vex when Crosses renew themselves. If the former cross had done all the work, a new should have been spared. God hath no delight to afflict thee, but he will again, and again repeat his strokes, rather then thou shouldst once, and for ever lose thy soul. If thou wilt not humble thy self under lesse afflictions, look for greater; and more afflictions will befall thee if former do not mend thee: It is a wise and good providence which will give physick so long till the disease be cured.

Case 5. A fifth case of vexing, is the checking of a good, which might be desired, and hath been sought in lawful wayes, and lawfully too, and with fair probability, yet on a sudden it is turned upside down, there presents it self some hindrance or defeatment: The case (in some respect) may be the *Israelites*, when they fought against the tribe of *Benjamin*. The ground was just; *Benjamin* would patronise a most abhorred Villany, counsel is asked of God, directions given and followed (*Judg.* 20. 18. to 26.) more then once, and yet when they come to fight, *Israel* fled before *Benjamin*; the first day they lose twenty and two thousand, and the next eighteen thousand: We should not in such a case vex and disquiet our hearts, for as much as Providence hath a hand in all this: therefore consider.

In this case consider.

This may be because we ascribe the efficacy of our good, rather to the means, then to God.

I. Visible prosperities are oftentimes checked: *Because we are apt in this case to give and ascribe the efficacy of our good, rather to the means then to God:* Probable means do (through our corruption) stand twixt God and his glory. Now we think the Church is safe, all must needs go on; for strength and wisdom, and good success hath been on our side, and such an instrument hath done much already, how apt are we in this kind to cast all the glory, and applause, and issues on second agents, and God who hath done all is least of all in our thoughts and confidences. So in other occurrences, when means seem to comply with our projects and desires, and fall in as aptly as we would have them, we do not usually look up above them, nor see the hand of Providence, thus working and forming them, but ascribe the main fruit to the strength of our own devices and contrivances, or to the meer powers of the creature, and therefore God doth disappoint us of our desires, least we should disappoint him of his glory.

This may happen to affect us with the instability of the creatures.

2. Good ready to be delivered, by the probability of means, many times sticks in the birth, so affect us with the instability of the creatures; that though they look bigg and promise fair, yet on a sudden they fall aside from us; Like a ship floating towards a point, or an arm of land, you would think it would cast anchor there, but the water winds aside, and the ship passeth away; so do second causes with which we deal, they are of a strange and deluding nature, we think that they will empty their helps and assistances, and comforts, we are ready to seize on them

them, and then like flowers which we purpose to take in the next morning, they are fading; or like a flock of birds upon which we think to spread the nett, they rise and flie; so mutable are all the creatures, and so deceiveable are our settlements and expectations here below. No man can assure himself by an uncertain help, of a certain comfort: We are oftentimes mocked with the vanity of pretences, and are apt enough to build strong inferences upon weak and paper bulwarks, to create assured, and much good & contentment, from the smiles and towardlines of ordinary probabilities, yet thus we find it, that fair probabilities as they do excite in us great hopes, so they many times slip away and leave us to great sorrowes; yet thus much we get, *viz.* an experience of the creature, and of our own compactings, that we may not trust, no not the complements of means, they are like the Pharisees in this, that *they say and do not*. He is a wise Christian that enjoyes a good, so as he would want it, and desires it so as he would miss it, and expects it so as he may be denied it.

3. *God would also acquaint us hereby, with the insufficiency of all means, that though they promise, yet they cannot perform to us any good without his leave:* As in marriage there must not only be the consent of the child, but of the parent too, for the child is not *sui juris*, to dispose and bestow himself; so is it to the fruition of any good, the consent of the parent, of the *father of lights*, from whom descends every good gift, must be asked, or else the creature, the means are insufficient, they are not absolute in their wayes.

God would acquaint us hereby, with the insufficiency of all means.

4. *Divine Providence doth many times interrupt probabilities, to see whether we can trust on it in improbabilities:* There is a double ground, which a man may assume of confidence, that God will do him good.

Providence doth interrupt probabilities to see whether we can trust in improbabilities.

One is the *serenity and ripening concurrence of apparent means and wayes*; when they do as it were all of them offer their service, and put to their helping hand, to further and finish a desired good; in such a case a mans spirit is a float, he is persuaded that he shall enjoy and take possession, that God will now effect it, for he seeth all the means on his side.

Another is the *fidelity, and goodness, and virtue of Gods promise*; which though it be not so sensible a ground, yet it is a more sure, and certain, and heavenly ground; and it is the right and only ground of faith. God hath said, that *he will be*

my God, that he will be all *sufficiency* to me, that he will be my exceeding great reward, that he will do me good, that if I acknowledge him in all my ways, he will direct me, and if I commit my ways to him, and do good, and delight in him, he will bring it to pass: These are his promises, but improbabilities break in, the means fall off and seem to turn against the promises, or the promises were putting forth the hand, as it were in the means, and now pluck it in again; I say, God may do this of purpose, to strein up our faith, to fix it upon promises, that we shall not receive that good by a way of *sense*, but by a way of *faith*, that we should cast our selves (against all changes and interpositions) upon Gods good words, and presse our good, yet after all this, out of the breasts of Gods gracious and faithful covenant: And believe it, that mercy tastes most sweet, which comes in the way of *Faith*, then of *Sense*; the good which God doth deliver out of a promise to faith and Prayer, infinitely exceeds that which I have fetched in, by the cunning of my own head and industry! well then probabilities do many times shrink, that faith may have room to work. It is a fine temper to fear when things are probable, and to trust when things are improbable: In an height of means, to be low and submissive (knowing that God may check all) and in an estrangedness of means to be high and depending (knowing that God is able to command all good unto us.) Providence may pluck back a good where the way seems open, and yet Providence can put forth the good, even when the way seems to be shut up and closed.

5. *The goodness of a good is not alwayes, where means are fair, but where Providence is gracious:* The greatness of a good, is not alwayes where desire, and the fairness of second agents are not sure trials of a means are fair, convenient estate; that is not alwayes good for me, which I have not, but which I want, and then it is to be reputed a good when it doth not only give present content, but future satiety; gracious, when it will prove a good as well as seem a good, it is good indeed. But of this I touched somewhat in the second case.

This makes us take out the sting which sin hath put into the good we do desire. 6. *Checking of probabilities about a particular good, doth many times cause us to take out the sting which some sin or other hath put into the good which we do desire;* perhaps either some former sin or some present corruption needs pardon and healing: If

thou shouldst enjoy thy good and thy sin together, the evil of thy sin would marre the sweetness of thy good, but God doth therefore interrupt thy hopes that he may bring thy good as a mercy.

A sixth Case of Vexing, *Is the doubtfulness of posterity:* When we are to leave a posterity behind us in a sort utterly destitute and unable to shift for themselves; Yet there is no reason herein to be so thoughtsom and disquieted if we could eye the strength and way of Providence: therefore consider;

Case 6.
The doubtfulness of Posterity.
In this case consider:
Providence never dies.

1. *Providence never dies.* Behold I die (said Jacob to Joseph.) But God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers, Gen. 48. 21. So here, though thou dost die, yet God doth not die, and his care of the creatures is from everlasting to everlasting. Child, I can leave thee no riches, yet I bequeath thee to God.

2. *Providence is not restrained to an Age, or to a Person, or to one Generation:* I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee; Gen. 17. Yea Providence hath expressed it self particularly to the Children, as well as to the Parents; to the Orphans and Fatherless, as well and more then to others. The poor committeth himself unto thee, and thou art the helper of the fatherlesse; Psal. 10. 14. A Father of the Fatherlesse, and a Judge of the Widowes, is God in his holy habitation, Psal. 68. 5. In thee the Fatherless findeth mercy: Hos. 14. 3. Enter not into the field of the fatherless, for their Redeemer is mighty, he shall plead their cause with thee, Prov. 23. 10, 11. So that be it thy Children have neither Father nor Mother, yet God will be a Father to them, and if thou canst discern something in that word *Father to thee*, verily there is as much in it *For thine*. If as a Father he can take notice of thy needs and will supply them, He is and will be the same to thine: Father, said Esau to Isaac, hast thou but one blessing? Nay if God be a Father to thee, and if he be a Father to thine, he will find a blessing for thee, and thine: Psal. 112. 2. The generation of the upright shall be blessed. 102. 28. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee. Now for Children who are unable to shift for themselves, Providence doth come in for them. Moses, you know, was put to the

Providence is not restrained to an Age, or to a Person, or to one Generation.

Boat before he was able to man the Oar, or Sail; he was but three moneths old, and his mother provides him a Coffin (an Ark of Bull-rushes) into which she puts him: What can she expect but that she anon shall see the River to rise, and the waves to cover him over as in his grave, but Providence had an eye to him; *Pharaoh's* daughter must come down to wash her self just at that time, and at that place, and she spies the Ark, finds the Child, and God gave such a piercing Rhetorick to the tears of the Babe, that she is moved to compassion, and becomes a diligent instrument of his preservation and raising *Exod. 2. 3. to v. 10.* I will adde another instance, it shall be in *Hagar's* child, she wanders in the Wilderness of *Beerfheba*, the water is all spent, the poor child is cast under one of the shrubs, she steps aside as most unwilling to see the death of the child; but Providence stept in here, *God heard the voice of the lad*, Gen. 21. 17. (the very sighs and cries of a poor child get up to heaven) and God sent her to a Well of water, and so the child is preserved, v. 19. So true is that of *David* Psal 22. 9. *Thou art he that took me out of the womb, thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my mothers brest, I was cast upon thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mothers belly.* The milk of Providence is sweeter and surer then that of the brest. So *Psal. 27. 10.* *When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up, (i.)* God will be a Father unto me, though they should cease to be so, either through an unnatural estrangement or civil disablednesse, or irremediable dissolution by death. There be four things that a Parent should look after for his Child, One to make him Gods; The next, to make him the Commonwealths; and a Third, is according to his ability, allow him for present and future; and the Last is, to refer him to Gods Promise, and Providence. Be not solicitous what great estate, what mighty friends, what marvellous helps thou mayest leave thy child; but be careful to make him a child of God as well as the child of a sinful man, and then be sitting and forming, and shaping of him to some particular calling, where he may lay out himself in a serviceableness to the Church or State. Be not thou wanting in thy duty, and God will not be wanting in his Providence. It is no rare experience to see the Children of the rich to melt a fair estate, which the Pa-

rents with much cunning and forecast have settled on them to raise, and secure, and perpetuate their names; and on the contrary to look upon the children of the poor, yea many of them Orphans (cast onely to Gods finding) to have mounted the highest steps of Ecclesiastical dignity, and to have had the highest Ensignes of civil honour born before them in this City. The which as it is not the least prejudice to such persons, so it is an high evidence of a Providence which findes out the most shiftless and neglected persons. We need say no more but this, Let Parents take care that themselves be good, and to make their children so; and as their own, so their childrens rise, and safety, and helps, do depend upon the same sufficient and faithful hand of Providence.

And thus having unfolded these Cases of vexing with a demonstration of the strength of Providence to remove them, I will conclude the Use with some enforcements or arguments, since there is a Providence, why we should not vex. Thus they go:

I. *Vexing about our Conditions and issues is not good, it is sinful.* For if Contentment be good, then Vexing must needs be bad, yea, it springs from an ill cause, which is Unbelief, or Pride, or both. The want of Faith begets our troublesome thoughts, and the height of spirit loads us with our many Vexations. He who will not trust God, must resolve to be a burden to himself; and if we will not submit to Gods finding, we must to our own perplexings. What an high iniquity is this, when the child will take the room and authority of his father? and when Man shall fret that he is not the disposer of his own Condition? *O that I were King in Israel!* said villanous Absalom; and this is not much behind it, when thou wouldest correct God for his Providence, or direct him how to bestow his hand better.

2. As it is not good, so *It doth no good*, Mat. 6.27. *Which of it doth no you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?* The good Prophet speaks of them who *Wearied themselves for very vanity*; and so here, a vexing for outward matters and issues, it is a vain disquietment, when we have paced the round, and tossed thought over thought, and find that this will not be, and that

that may hinder, we are still as we were, for issues flow not from thinking, but from Divine Providence; not from our perplexings, but from Gods appointings; and let us break our hearts with troublesom musings if we will, yet they shall be additions of our fears, but no furtherances of our desires.

It doth much hurt.

3. As it doth no good, *So it doth much hurt*; God seeth us to be a grumbling people, and such as will not be satisfied with the goodnesse, and power, and wisdom, and fidelity of his Providence, and how justly may he curse our present blessings, who distrust and suspect him so for future mercies; nay it doth untune us in all spiritual duties. We are usually at a losse by reason of the crowd of unbelieving and vexing thoughts, and are in our hearts murmuring, and quarrelling, and fearing, when our tongues say we know not what: nay, and in our closer performances we feel many just reproaches, and smitings, upon the desires of great mercies: Why, thou then wilt not trust God for a bit of bread, nor a piece of cloth?

We may have our needs supplied without all this ado.

4. *We may have our needs supplied without all this ado:* Matt. 6. 31. *Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewith shall we be clothed? v. 32. Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. v. 32: But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added unto you. q. d.* You need not keep such a stir, you need not rent your thoughts with care, and doubt, and suspicion for your convenient sustenance and provision. More then meat, and drink, and cloth, what would you have? and those your Father will not fail to cast upon you: Go follow your work, look after the main business for heaven, and these things shall be added unto you they will come in of themselves as smaller matters into a greater bargain.

If we have these things with vexing, they will be more bitter to us.

5. Lastly, *If things do befall us when we have vexed our selves into the possession of them, yet now they are mingled and brackish,* they are not so cleer and sweet. What comes unto us after believing, is sweet and comfortable; but that which we take after vexing, loseth its taste, neither will it at all have the relish of a mercy, till we have repented of our former unquietness. He who is impatient till he hath a good, is usually unthankful when he hath it: for he who knowes not how to depend, hath yet

yet this lesson to learn how to bless. Neither can I expect a contentment of mind in the fruition, where there hath been an unbelieving turbulency in the expectation. Either the grants of vexation are no mercies, or else they will cost us many prayers and after-tears to make them so. When the *Israelites* would (by all means) have a *King*, they had him, but it was *in wrath*. It is an unhappiness when we will force God, as it were, to give us things with a blank, (*i.e.*) the things which we vexingly ask, but not with a blessing sealed upon them. When God must answer, not our needs, but our humours; not our wants, but our pleasures; we find usually such mercies to prove hard crosses and troubles; and we scarce taste a delight before we break out into new complaints, so that by our vexing we have procured to our selves a further burthen.

As the *Israelites* about the *Manna*.

A third Use which I would observe for our practise from the Doctrine of a general and special Providence, shall be this, *Wait upon Providence*. Then *In all the suspensions of any promised and convenient good to wait upon Providence*. All our good doth lie in the hand of Providence, and this hand doth many times prevent us, it poures good upon us, as a Cloud oft times on a sudden befores our expectation, poures down the rain upon the earth, and many times it is no more but ask and have: we feel our want, espy a mercy; beg it, and presently enjoy it. Yet many times Providence is pleased to delay us, to put us off, we cannot get our good in the means which we use presently: now in this case I say, it is our duty to *wait upon Providence*.

Use 3.

Wait upon Providence in all the suspensions of any promised and convenient good.

Waiting upon Providence is, *An illimited resignation of our selves and desires to the seasons or times of Gods good pleasure with a continued expectation of some good promised.*

(Waiting, what,

It is *An illimited resignation*.] He doth not depend, who strives to be the author of his own good; nor doth he wait, who sets down his own time. "If the Lord will yet exercise my heart, my body, my estate, my children longer with afflictions, if he will not yet be pleased to command my helps, and deliverances, I desire to stay his time. Since he doth hold off the mercy which I desire (though he have promised it, and I have asked it) yet I resign up to him still, not onely the donation, but the season of my mercy. He is the Lord and may do what he will, and he is my God, my times

It is an illimited resignation.

“are in his hand. If my sufferings be longer, yet my heart
 “shall be made better; if my mercies be delayed, yet my God
 “will hear me at length, but for the When, that I leave to
 “him.

It is a length-
 ned expectati-
 on,

2. It is *A lengthened expectation.*] He who waits at the door knocks often, and repeats his strokes; if he knock and go away he doth not wait. *Isa. 8. 17. I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.* In waiting though God seems not to look, yet we will look; though he seems not to hear, yet we will not spare to call; Patience is even an ingredient of waiting. When you would have a mercy from God, you must not be in haste (Now, or Never), neither must you be hasty with God. You must not be angry, as if he were slow or backward; but if he answers not, you must sit down with quietness, and renew your prayers, and hearken till he speaks.

The way of
 Providence in
 respect of times
 and seasons.

Now because this Point of Waiting which respects the times of our grants and deliverances is hard to be practised (yet it is very sweet and comfortable) I will deliver unto you the power and wisdom and way of Providence in respect of times and seasons, that so we may frame our spirits the better to waiting

Times do be-
 long to Provi-
 dence as well
 as issues.
Psal 31. 15.

1. *Times do belong to Providence as well as issues. My times* (said David) *are in thy hands:* Not onely the times of his sorrows, but the times of his comforts. Therefore he is said, *To appoint times and seasons, Dan. 11. 27, 29, 35. Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Job 7. 1. All the dayes of my appointed time will I wait till my change come, Job 14. 14. So Psal. 102. 13. The set time is come. Eccles. 3. 1. To every purpose under heaven there is a time. Hab. 2. 3. The vision is yet for an appointed time. To change the times, Dan. 2. 21. He changeth the times and the seasons. To hasten things in time, Isa. 60. 22. I will hasten it in its time.*

Providence:
 doth take time
 before it doth
 us good.

2. *Providence is pleased to take time before it doth us good:* (i.) Though God hath undertaken for us, though he hath assured us of our supply, though he doth intend a mercy to us, yet he doth not alwayes perform it presently, there may be a space 'twixt his intention, and 'twixt the application of our good. For as he is the God of our mercies, so he is the Lord of our times

times; he doth many times *Delay us*, when he doth not purpose to *Deny us*. The *Israelites* deliverance was not in a moment; divine Providence was the hand which brought them forth; but then they lay in *the house of bondage* many years. *David* is promised a Kingdom, but he must stay for it; yea, and in his troubles he is not immediately rescued, but he is put off, as it were, from day to day. Though *Paul* could be confident that he who had and did, now would deliver, yet he was delayed, and so long till he even despaired of life, and *had the sentence of death*, &c. 2 Cor. 1.8,9.

3. *Providence will find a time to do us good*: Though God doth take time, yet he will not lose time, he will be mindful of his Covenant, he will not forget the cry of the poor alwayes. *Hab.2.3. The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie, though it tarry, wait for it*, because it will surely come, it will not tarry. As Providence is an hand full of blessings, so it is an hand which is sure and certain. The Sun you know hath a time to with-hold, but then it will have a time to rise and shew it self again. So though God doth (to our sense) seem to neglect us in the wayes and vigors of his Providence, yet he hath a time to answer all our prayers, to fulfil all our necessities. *Isa.40.27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lrd, and my judgment is passed over from my God?* q.d. *Israel* thinks that I will never do him good, that his enemies shall insult over him for ever, and though he hath solicited help from me, and as yet hath it not, therefore I am purposed for ever to with-hold; but then observe, *v.28. Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.* V.29. *He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.* V.31. *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as Eagles, they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint.* Hence that promise, *They that wait for me shall not be ashamed.* When a man looks, and looks, and nothing at all comes of it, he is ashamed for being so disappointed; but saith God, I will not disappoint you, I will not fail you, you shall never be ashamed;

none shall upbraid you and say, Lo, this is your God upon whom you put such confidence, O what would he do for you, and now he hath done just nothing. There are two reasons why God will surely find a time to do us good: "*The power of his fidelity*: For Truth is the Seal of his goodnesse, and God will not, nay cannot be unfaithful, *It is impossible that he should lie*. "*The Honour of his Name*: If he should not keep truth, if he should promise our helps, our comforts, our mercies, and command us to look to him only, and yet never come in, his honour would be under a cloud: who would think well of him, or trust him, or speak of his goodness.

Hebr.6.

The time of
Providence is
always best.

For Donation.

4. *The time of Providence is alwayes the best time*: The case stands thus, There is a good which God hath promised and I have desired, the only thing in dispute 'twixt me and God is the time; I would have my time, and God will have his time; I shall have the good, and in his time and not in mine; Now I say, That Gods time is best for *Donation*. A mercy, though it shall not come too late, yet it may come too soon: As every good is not fit for every man, so every time is not fit for the enjoying of every good. There are several fruits this Autumn on the Trees, if you should gather them all at once, you should find an heap of rottenness in stead of a store-house of plenty; it is the seasonable gathering which makes them to continue. He who hastens his mercy doth thereby loose it, but he who can stay Gods time shall enjoy his mercy with sweetness. Our desires are many times but violeat humours, but Gods grants are ever wise: As he gives liberally, so he orders his givings with discretion; and though he stayes long, yet his answer is ever seasonable. A mercy comes in a season, when it proves a mercy in all respects; not only when it is a thing suiting with my desire, but also advantagious to my person and estate; when it prejudiceth no good which I have or which I want, and yet it doth notably suit with my exigence. If it had come sooner, I had not been ready, or if it had stayed longer, I had been damaged: If it had come when I prescribed it, it had been lost; and coming now when God appoints it, I am preserved; when a mercy comes so as to preserve me and it self both, then it is seasonable. *In an acceptable time have I heard thee, in a day of salvation have I favoured thee, Isa.49.8. David had*

had his Kingdom at such a time which made more for his quiet and safety.

And as Gods time is best in respect of the Collation of any outward good, so it is best in respect of the *Remotion* of any outward evil and affliction. A Plaister is not presently to be plucked off, lest the wound grow raw and corrupt again. The sick man saith, Now is the time to go abroad, but the Physician prescribes him yet a longer space of Chamber-imprisonment, knowing, that though he feels some strength, yet the open air is not yet fit for a crazy body. God doth then remove the affliction, when it hath wrought its Errand; and when we are indeed purified in this fire, then is it time to be taken out: Many a man had returned to his former sins, had he not been held off by longer afflictions. There is a marvellous wisdom in Divine Providence in discerning of suitable mercies, and of seasonable times.

5. *The Delays of Providence are not denials but preparations:* The delays of Providence are not denials but preparations. If God takes time to answer, that space is, as it were, the ripening of thy mercy for thee. Gods delaying of us occasioneth divers things,

“*Intimate discoveries of the Spirit:* A mans corrupt heart Gods delaying will shew it self at such a time; when the fire is put under the pot, how doth it fetch up the scum? One would hardly believe that pride, and quarrelling, and murmuring, and riling, and impatience, which now discovers it self in the heart, because it cannot presently have what it doth instantly expect; yea, what throwes of unbelief, that surely God will forget us because he doth not open at once? Yea, what excursions there are to run after the Creature? Yea, what imbecillities of Spirit, that we are ready to break asunder, and to sink, and to faint? So that if a man (and perhaps a well-conceited Christian) would take a view of his soul at such a time, he might write down so much of sinful corruption, which may call for his sorrow and reformation all his dayes; *God will not help*, there's despaire; *Why will he not help?* there's pride; *When will he help?* there's impatience; *I will seek out for other helps*, there's infidelity; *It is in vain to seek to God for help*, there's atheistical murmuring.

“*Inward humblings of the Spirit:* For the tender soul may Inward humblings of the Spirit. haply

haply reflect on it self, and search for the reason of Gods delaying in its own former or present dispositions. What am I? What have I done, that the Lord doth thus absent himself, and puts me off from day to day? Have not I put off the directions of his Word thus? the motions of his Spirit thus? Have not I delayed him, that he now doth thus delay me? and perhaps some special corruption may be discerned, for which, when the soul is truly humbled, then will be Gods time to send out the mercy desired.

Stedfast seekings.

“Stedfast seekings : It is that which trebles prayer, and makes it to flow with strength. God delights in Importunity, and a mercy which we have won from God by the forciblenesse of prayer, it doth tast more like a mercy, and sticks by us most. *This is the child, saith Hannah, for which I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him, 1 Sam. I. 27.*

Contented submissions.

“Contented submissions : God doth by delayings work two mercies at once, One, that at length we shall have the good we crave; Another is, that he hath in the mean time wrought our hearts to his will and pleasure. That whereas at the first the pride of our hearts would take stomach to quarrel with God for his slowness, now it can stoop, and come before the Lord, and say, “Lord, even as thou wilt, so let it be; I am willing “to abound, and I am content to want; if thou wilt bring it “to pass, I desire to blest thee; if not, I yet desire to submit “unto thee. Remember, that some crossings of our desires here below, cause our trustings to fly up to God; and some delayings will lesson our submittings and waitings upon his will. Now this is ordinary, God will satisfie our will, when we have risen so far as to submit to his; and when I can be able to deny my self, God will not easily deny my suit. No man staves longer at heaven gates, then he who will be served at first knock; but he who can by Prayer and Faith deliver in his suit, and stay till God be pleased to speak, he is the man who shall speed best; for we are never fit to enjoy Gods Answer, if we be too hasty to stay Gods Leisure.

Providence many times doubles the mercy by delaying of it.

6. *Providence many times doubles the mercy by delaying it :* As it is with some Trees, which are more slow in their bearing, but then when they bear fruit, it is with an abounding recom-

pence.

pence for the former backwardness; we shorten our mercy many times by hastning it, as the Prophet spake in another case, *For your shame ye shall have double*; so I say, For your waiting you shall seldom be answered with a single mercy: Though it be not lawful for us to give Use for time, yet God doth without any blemish to him make us amends both for our prayers, and for our patience; *Abraham* staves a long time for a son, but then when he came, he was a choice child, such an one in whom *all the nations of the earth should be blessed*. *Joseph* would fain have been delivered out of prison when he interpreted the Butlers dream, but staying a while for Gods time, he had not a naked, but an honourable deliverance; he was not only taken from prison, but raised to be a Prince in *Egypt*. A man in a sickness desires a speedy exemption, but God oft times makes him feel his hand a long time, and by the means, at length gives him a double health, one of his body, another of his soul; and who would not then stay and wait for that God, whose delayings are but the treasurings of more mercy for us?

Now what shall I say more to stir up your hearts to wait on Divine Providence? Consider with all this, that,

1. *That Promises fill up Providence for them that wait*: They are breasts full of goodness, or as a spring full of water to derive out abundant mercy through Providence unto waiting persons. What a happy condition is a good Christian in? for either he hath enough in hand, or else if the good be delayed, it lyes sure for him in the Promises. *Isa. 64. 4. Since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. Isa. 30. 18. Blessed are they that wait for him.*

2. *The Promises have surely opened themselves to them who have waited*: *Isa. 25. 9. Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him and he will save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.* And what wilt thou have more? Thy God doth even wait to be gracious unto thee; he doth, as it were, watch the fittest time for the best good, and will certainly perform it. Thou mayest by impatience hinder thy good, and trouble thy own soul, but the best way to reap is to wait till the harvest, till that season comes,

Use 4.
Be contented
with our pre-
sent portions
and estates.

If there be a Providence extending to all, and wisely ordering, and preserving, and sustaining, then we may learn one lesson more, *viz. To be contented with our present portions and estates.* There are two great quarrels which men have. one with God, another with their conditions; and this well attends that, for no man will like his condition who is displeased with his God. O, saith one, who can live upon such means? as they said, *The land is too strait for us*; so here, Our portion is not enough, would God we had more honour, or more riches, or more ease, or more friends; we are as good as others. and need them as much as others, and would (perhaps) use them better than others. And thus we fret away our dayes, either in envying the greatnesse of other mens estate, or in the complaining of our own shortness, any condition seems better and bigger then that which we enjoy.

To frame the
heart to con-
tentment; con-
sider,
Providence
gives to every
man his porti-
on.

But to remedy this distemper, and to frame the heart to contentment, consider,

1. *Providence gives to every man his portion: Dan. 4. 17. The most high ruleth in the Kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. So 1 Sam. 2. 7. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up.* One man is in a great estate, another in a low estate; one hath more, another hath lesse; yet the portion of either is from God. Our conditions are measured out not by the strength of our own prudence, nor by the meer virtue of our own diligence, but by the effectual direction and blessing of Providence. The master in a family gives to one servant more, to another lesse; nay, the father gives a larger estate to one child then to another. We are all the servants and the children of the great God who is our master and father, and we fall not into our estates by a shuffling chance, but by the provident dispensation of a wise God. Whatsoever thou hast, whether it be more. or whether it be lesse, it is either a shower, or else the drops of Providence. That God who gives to every creature his being, finds also a certain allowance to sustain and support him.

The present e-
state delivered
out by Provi-
dence is e-
nough.

2. *The present estate delivered out by Providence is enough:* An estate may be termed enough in a double respect, "either when it is all that we are *able to desire*," or when it is all that we *need to desire*: In this respect that condition w^{ch} we have is enough (i.) we need

need not desire more, *Having food and raiment let us therewith be content*, saith the Apostle. There be desires of superfluity, & desires of conveniency. Gods providence doth not dispense an enough to that, but to this. The father gives enough to the child to supply his wants, though he gives him nothing at all to gratifie his wantonnesse and folly. Once more observe, that we must distinguish of our estate, either as *given unto us*, or as *abused by us*; many a man indeed is cast into nothing and is so far from having enough, that he hath nothing at all. Not that Providence gave him no estate, but because he like the Prodigal, hath wasted his stock in riotousnesse or indiligence. No estate will prove enough to him who trades in a licentious voluptuousnesse, or else sits still in a course of lazy idlenesse.

3. *Every mans present portion given unto him by Divine Providence, is best.* Since the fall every one is, *Ager inter medicum & morbum*, He is a sick and crazy man. Now that diet is best for the sick man, not which his diseased appetite doth crave, but which his wise Physician doth prescribe. It was a good answer of a heathen (*Thymarides*) when one wished unto him, that the Gods would grant unto him whatsoever he would have: Nay, said he, I had rather have the things which the Gods shall think good to give me. God is a wise God, and all bestnesse depends upon a wise goodnesse. There is a double estate which may befall us; "One is in *Reals*, as in more or lesse of Riches, Lands, &c. "Another is in *Personals*, as in Husband, Wife, &c. Do I abound in *Reals*, or do I want? have I much, or have I little? all is best; Doth the Patient, by the prescription of his *Galen*, eat? that is best; doth he fast? that is best; doth he labour? that is best; doth he recreate himself? that is best.

Our present
portion given
to us by Di-
vine Provi-
dence is best.

That is best which is fittest, not which is largest: Were you to buy a shoe for your child, one of the longest size were not best, though it be greatest. That condition which suits my mind, which fits me, which I can weare with most serviceableness to God, that, that is best; for as all good, so the degrees of good do consist not in an absolute amplitude, but in a suitable conveniency. O that I had greater means! saith one; and yet a man who can walk in his cloak may perhaps stumble in a long gown; thou who canst serve God in a moderate estate, might'st

per;

perhaps trip in an embroidered condition; a plain coat will keep the child warm, when the laced coat may make him proud and cold; it is a difficult thing to bear every estate. A man knowes not the secret weakness of his own heart; as it is hard in a short estate to be quiet, so it is not easie in an high estate to be humble. Greatness of estate, is a strong inducement to pride; and is it not better to row in a narrow river, where the boat is able to deal with the stream, then to thrust it into the wide sea, where every wave may burst it asunder, or sink it? Some want is good to make us remember God, but many a man who hath broken into an high fulness, hath easily forgotten his God, and quickly lost his soul. "Again for *Personals*, Providence is eminent in this condition too. Sometimes it brings a good husband and a good wife together; sometimes a wife *Abigail* and foolish *Nabal*, a proud & froward and ill-natured husband, and an humble, meek, and amiable wife together, and so on the contrary.

This is a strange working this, that God should link persons so contrary into the deepest society of union; and many complain of this as their burthen, of which they (*sinfully*) desire to be rid. But all this is best, not that any sinfulness in husband or wife is good naturally, but that God disposeth of these contrary natures for good: the evil qualities of either married party do cause more humbling, more praying, more circumspection, more indignation against those sins.

Use 5.
Let us apply
our selves to
the wayes of
Gods Provi-
dence.

If there be such a Providence of God which is full of power to dispose, and alter, and help, and succour, and also of wisdom to hit the peculiar seasons of all suitable good for us; and also of *fidelity* and truth, to deliver the same out unto us. Then let us be advised to *Apply our selves to the wayes of Gods Providence*; as *Jacob* said to his sons, *Gen. 42. 1. 2. Why look ye one upon another, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; so I say here, why do we stand in an idle contemplation of our own necessities, why do we content our selves with the feelings and complainings about our exigences, we have heard that there is sufficiency in Divine Providence? There are some things which God alone doth, and that there is no concurrence of man; as in the works of Creation and Redemption, they were intire and absolute, God was in them alone; but there are o-*
ther

ther things which though God will do, yet he expects and requires a motion from us too; as in the works of Providence, though God hath undertaken all our supplies and comforts, yet we must be working, we must not lie in the ditch and think that a God help me, is enough; but as *Jeremy* in the dungeon, though he were not able by his own strength to get out, yet when they let down cords and rags he put them under his armes and so got forth; In like manner, though Providence doth bless us, yet we must serve Providence; though all our helps be from Providence, yet we must put forth our selves to the wayes by which the same Providence will do us good; though there be a spring of water, yet we are so wise as to carry our vessels unto it.

Now because this is a Point of much consequence, give me leave to prescribe some directions for the application of our selves to such wayes by which we may find Divine Providence to be a blessed and comfortable Providence unto us.

Directions for
the application
of our selves to
the wayes of
Providence.

1. If we will enjoy the good of Providence, *We must use means.* You know that *Jacob* had a singular promise that God would go with him in his journey, and that he would bring him back again to his fathers house; yet at his returning, hearing of his brother *Esau* and his armed men (who might have interrupted his safe passage) he gets him to God by prayer and *wrestles with him all the night*; he sets upon God first, and then upon the means how to secure his passage, *he sends presents unto his brother* as so many Ambassadors to treat with his rough spirit, and to ingratiate himself, and he orders and marshals the droves of cattel, and God blessed the means so used for his peace and comfort; 1 Chron. 19. 12. *If the Syrians be too strong for me then thou shalt help me, and if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then, &c.* v. 13. *Be of good courage, and let us behave our selves valiantly, for our people, and for the Cities of our God, and let the Lord do what is good in his sight.* Christ himself hath set us this lesson by his own practise, when the Devil tempted him to cast himself down from the pinnacle, he rejected the temptation, and (as it may be conceived) came down the staires; though he had the guard of Angels to keep him, yet it was *in all his wayes.* We must indeed put our selves upon God, but then it must be in Gods means: if a

We must use
the means.

man be sick, he must not content himself with this, I have poured out my prayer to God who is able to heal me, and hath said that he will do me good, and so lie still in his sick bed; but he must know that as health is in Gods hand, as in the fountain, so it is in the Physicians hand, as in the instrument and means: though a Prophet assures *Hezekiah* that he shall recover, yet he must hearken to the counsel of a Physician too, *Let them take a lump of figs & lay it for a plaister upon the boyl, and he shall recover.* And this holds in Spirituals, as well as Temporals; the things which God hath joyned together, no man must put asunder, viz. the *End* and the *Means*. If a man expects Heaven, he must go with his face thither-ward; if a man expects mercy, he must repent, and believe; if he expects grace, he must hear and pray for it. Though *Solomon* saith well, *He who regards the wind shall not sow*, yet it is as true, that he who doth not sow shall not reap. A confidence of means (which sets them up as the absolute and principal commanders of our good) is very vile, and yet an using of the means is that without which we shall seldom obtain our desired good.

Ob. But sometimes and in some cases no means appear.

Sol. I answer, where God hath gathered up all our good into his own promises, there the whole endeavour of the soul must be taken up with faith and prayer: as suppose the many conduits which are the passages of our waters, to be stoppt up, or cut off, now there is nothing else to be done, but to make our addresse to the springs; so where God cuts off all second helps and furtherances, there, as *Jehosaphat* spake, *We know not what to do, yet our eyes are towards thee.* We must cast our selves intirely on God, as the three Children, *Our God is able to deliver us; And let the Lord do what seems good in his own eyes,* but where means are extant, there we must serve the Providence of God in the use of them.

2 If we would find the good of Providence, *We must use only lawful and warrantable means* There are two sorts of means to bring about a desired good. "Some *indirect*, preternatural and devised by the temptations of Satan, or the haste of our unbelief, or strength of sinful greedinesse. "Others are *Direct*, connatural, and appointed by God, such as he commands, and his word will warrant. *This is the way, walk in*

it; where we see God going before us, there we may safely follow, and if we have his word to warrant, there we may expect his goodnesse to blesse and prosper. Observe a few things.

1. *God appoints no sinful means.* Evil wayes are not the pipes which Providence hath laid, but our own corruption: for as God is good, and promiseth good, so he brings our good by good means, all his wayes and methods are answerable to his nature and will, which is goodnesse it self, and the rule of goodnesse, he will not have us do any evil that good may come thereof.

2. *He doth not prosper or blesse such means.* When Israel applies it self to Egypt and Ashur, God did reject their confidences and they shall not prosper in them, *Jer. 2. 36, 37.* See that place and consider it well in *Isa. 31. 2.* *He will arise against the house of evil-doers, and against the helps of them that work iniquity.* One of these you shall ever find, that when men do use unlawful means, either God denieth them that good which they seek, or else they turn the good which they get into a curse. *Saul* will resort to the Witch at *Endor*, to consult his own safety against the army of the Philistims, but he had a message which brake his spirits, and then a sword after that which cut off his life. *Ahab* is sick for *Naboth's* Vineyard, he cannot get it by sale and exchange, and therefore he will have it by false accusation and murther, but then the Prophet meets him, *1 King. 21. 19* *Thus saith the Lord hast thou killed and also taken possession? in the place where doggs lick the blood of Naboth, shall doggs lick thy blood, even thine.* And *Chap. 22. 38.* This was fulfilled on the King, and *They washed his chariot, and the dogges licked up his blood, according to the word of the Lord which he spake.* *Gebazi* hath a busie covetousnesse in his heart, he will be taking, though his Master holds off, and he longs for a talent of silver, and two changes of raiment; and all this with a lie, *Behold there are come to my Master from Mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the Prophets; Well, he gets the silver and the raiment, and with them a Leprosie which cleave to him and his seed for ever,* *2 King 5. 22-27.* All unlawful wayes are hedged about with curses; unjust gettings are like sand, clasp a handful of it, it will presently slip away; though

God doth not prosper or blesse such means.

we bring it home, yet God will blow upon it, Hag. 1. 9. (i.) He will blast and shrivel it as the malignant wind doth, even, the bearing and hopeful plants. Do, go and defraud the labourer, but *That silver which thou withholdest, shall cry out against thee as a witnesse, and shall eat thy flesh*, Jam 5. 2, 3, 4. Do, go and by lying, and usury, and bribery, and colenage pile up even treasures of gold, but being treasures of wickednesse, they shall be cursed with confusion and ruine. *As the Partridge sitteth on eggs and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his dayes, and at his end shall be a fool*, Jer. 17. 11. So true is that of Solomon; *The way of the wicked shall not prosper, and he who makes haste to be rich, shall not be innocent*, Prov. 28. 20, 22.

Gods wayes
onely are the
wayes of blessing
and enjoying.

3. *Gods wayes onely are the wayes of blessing and enjoying.* We may say of the means appointed by him, what Isaac said to Jacob when he did smell his raiment, *See, the smell of my son, is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed, therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatnesse of the earth and plenty of corn and wine*, Gen. 27. 27, 28. Where thou seest Gods prohibition, thou canst not there expect Gods blessing; but that way is ever hopeful where a command begins it, and a promise ends it. In all lawful means God stands at the entrance with his Precept and at the issue with his Reward, *Do good and verily thou shalt be fed*, Psal 37. 3. Be it that the means which thou usest to bring about thy good; are not in the eyes of men so likely, nor in the practise of them so commonly used, yet if God hath sealed them by his word, either thou shalt have the good which thou desirest; or else this comfort, that thou hast not put forth thine hand to iniquity to procure thy comfort. God promiseth David a kingdom, Saul who then possessed it, sought his life, and falls into Davids hands more then once, *Behold the day* (said David's men unto him) *of which the Lord said, I will deliver thine enemy into thy hand*: But he said, *The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my Master the Lords anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him*. q. d. It is true God hath promised me the kingdom after him, but he hath not warranted this way of wickednesse to be my means to get it. And so he holds off Abisai in 1 Sam. 26. 8, 9. And after all this, David is brought in a righteous, and loyal, and obedient

1 Sam. 24. 4.

way to enjoy the Crown, and to rule after his own heart, Prov. 3. 6. *In all thy wayes acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* The means which we wickedly take, are sometimes more quick and speedy, but then they are surely dangerous; but the means which God appoints, though they may be sometimes slow, yet they are surely comfortable.

3. If we would find the good of Gods Providence, then *we must* If we would find the good of Providence, we must be upright. *get our hearts to be upright. I am the Almighty God (or the God of All-sufficiencies) walk before me, and be thou perfect,* said God to Abraham, Gen. 17. 1. *q. d. I am Infinite Goodnesse, and am able to do thee any good; I can bring upon thee any needful blessing, and hinder from thee any hurtful evil, and take off from thee any uncomfortable crosse, and all this I will do for thee, if thou wilt walk uprightly before me,* Job 22. 21. *Acquaint thy self with God, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee,* v. 22. *Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart.* v. 23. *If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy Tabernacles.* v. 24. *Thou shalt lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir, as the stones of the brooks.* v. 25. *Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver.* v. 26. *Then thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God.* v. 27. *Thou shalt make thy prayer to him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows.* v. 28. *Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee, and the light shall shine upon thy wayes.* Isa 33. 15. *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly.* v. 16. *He shall dwell on high, his place of defence, shall be the munition of rocks, bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.* You shall find Providence spreading it self for the upright. *The eyes of the Lord run too and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect or upright towards him; said Hanani to King Asa.* There is Strength for them, Prov. 10. 29. There is Gladness for them, Psal. 97. 11. There is Light in darknesse for them, Psal. 112. 4. There is Sure dwelling for them, Psal. 140. 13. and Prov. 2. 21. *Nay Every good thing is for them,* Psal. 84. 11. If a man hath a crooked heart, and an hypocritical heart, that he will have an heart, and an heart, his heart is not

not single and plain before the Lord, he doth not love, nor bestow himself intirely on God, but will observe him meerly for his own ends, and will make a division in God himself, that he must tolerate such a lewdnesse or wickednesse, and then he will be for him in any other command. I say when the heart is so full of flawes and secret rottennesse that as the *Jewes* spake half in the language of *Ashdod*, and half in the *Jewish* language so the heart is half for God, and half for some worldly or fleshly lust, nay and perhaps the better half is for these; how just is it with God to deny his gracious power, and his gracious defence, and his gracious comfort, and his gracious help to such a person, and to leave him in the blessings of Providence, who leaves his God in the sincerity of his affections. How canst thou expect Gods hand, who wilt not give unto him thy heart? and why should he blesse thee, who wilt make all Gods blessings but to serve against him? If thou wilt not be a faithfull servant, what reason hast thou to think that he will be a good Master? Therefore this do, if thou wouldst find God for thee, then find thy self to be for God; the righteous shall be blessed, and not forsaken; the land of uprightnesse is impaled with the arm of God, and watered with the showers of Heaven. No good heart hath found God otherwise then a good God; but the hypocrite, as he hath a flaw in his heart, so he hath a moth in his estate; though he hath some rejoicing, yet it shall be short, for God will not lay out himself for him who layes out himself for sin.

Get and exercise
Faith.

4. If we should find the good of Gods Providence, *Then we must get and exercise Faith.* Faith is the eye which sees our good, and the hand into which God delive sit. You know that the Covenant of Grace is a Banner of mercy displayed, there is not a kind or degree of convenient good which is not infolded therein, and Faith is the arm which carries this Banner. It is like that great Vein which lies at the Liver, into which all the blood doth empty it self, so Faith is the great Grace of the Covenant, unto which God hath promised to dispense all our mercies. All the promises look towards Faith, as the faces of the Cherubims did toward the Mercy seat. As God answered *Abraham* when he intreated for *Ishmael*, *O that Ishmael might live in thy sight*! said God, *I will make of him a great*

great nation, but my Covenant will I establish with Isaac, Gen. 17. 20. So though God doth cast many good things even upon evil men because they are his creatures, yet the Believer he hath the special grants of assured and sweetest mercies. Neither is there any better or surer way to enjoy our good, then by Faith to trust upon God for it. *Psal. 37. 39. The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, he is their strength in the time of trouble. v. 40. And the Lord shall help them and deliver them from the wicked, and save them because they trust in him.* It is easie to demonstrate unto you, the yieldings of Providence in all respects unto Faith.

“*Removing of evils and hindring of them:* These are actions of Providence; and then you know it is faith which hath found deliverances (*our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them*) and it is Faith which hath got hinderances, (*i.*) Gods Providence to hinder attempts. *Hezekiah* did trust in the Lord his God, and the Lord hindered *Senacherib's* enterprize, and turned him back to his home again.

“*Preservation* is an other act of Providence, which whether you take for safety of our persons, or the sustaining of our persons by cloth and meat; in either respect Faith finds Providence good for it: No better way to secure our persons, then by Faith to commit them to God; and he is sure to be fed who is able to believe: Every believer may say as *Jacob*, Gen. 48. 15. *God which hath fed me all my life long unto this day.* Yea, and that promise of perpetual finding (*Heb. 13. 5. He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*) is the portion of Faith. Now wouldst thou have any good from God? then, as he in *Jehoshaphat's* case, *Believe, and ye shall be established;* if thou

² Chro. 20. 20

wouldst get a blessing, get Faith. Go unto the Lord as *Jacob* did, and say, O Lord, thou didst say, That thou wouldst do me good, thy good Word hath caused me to apply my heart only to thee; thou art the All-sufficient God, and full of goodness and truth; I desire thee for thy mercy and truths sake, to perform and remember the Word upon which thou hast caused me to hope: Ah! be thou the God of my mercies and of my comforts; O Lord, I am not able to command the least blessing to my self, but mine eyes are towards thee, I rest on thee to be my God, my portion, my help, my stay, my deliverance,

my

my comfort, my good which thou hast promised, and which now I crave. Do thus by Faith, put it on the Lord, nay, put the Lord to it, shew him his own hand, let him know that he hath undertaken for thee, and thou art his, and on him wilt thou stay thy self. Say, "O Lord, whether should a Child go, but to his father? and whether should a Believer go, but to his God? If man promiseth unto man, it is thy command that he perform it, though it be to his losse, and it is his honour to be faithful; Now thou art truth it self, who hast promised and canst not lie, nor deny thy self; Lo, Lord! is not this the word which thou had said? hast thou not promised every good thing, and this in particular? and thou knowest I need it, and do desire it for this end, that I might serve thee better; I take thee at thy word, commend my case to thy good mercy, and will rest my self on thy wisdom and fidelity, and do beseech thee for thy Covenants sake to bless me. In this rest and quietness shall be our Salvation and strength; and no way like this to get God to open his hand and to work for us. Whereas unbelief shuts up heaven, Faith opens it, God will not do good to him who makes him a lyar; but if we can by Faith give glory to God, it shall be a name of joy and praise to him to do us any good assuredly, with all his heart, and with all his soul.

5. If we would find the good of Providence, *Then we must be diligent in our Callings.* The bread of Idleness is neither sweet nor sure; *An idle soul shall suffer hunger,* saith Solomon, Prov. 19. 15. Even Adam in the state of Innocency was to dress the Garden; and now it is imposed on all, by the sweat of their brows to eat their bread. As in an army the General appoints every souldier to his proper place and service, and there to stand and act; so hath God designed all men to several employments, one to be a King, others to be Ministers, one in this kind, another in that kind of life; and all, both to preserve society, as also to sustain themselves. So that the plantation of particular callings is from Gods providence. Hence 1 Cor. 7. 17. *As the Lord hath called every man, so let him walk.* Again, as God hath limbed out particular callings of life, so he hath injoynd industry in them. You know when an Artificer

ficer contrives the variety of wheelles; one greater, another lesser; one above, another below; all this Artificial composition is for motion: So, the several forms of mens callings they are to be managed with action and labour, 1 Cor. 1. 17. We are to walk in our callings. Eph. 4. 28. We are to work in our callings, *Let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good.* 2 Thes. 3. 12. *Exhort them that are such, (i.e.) those that would not work, v. 10.) and command them by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread.* Yea, and God hath undertaken for many blessings to them who are industrious and diligent in their callings. Prov. 10. 4. *The hand of the diligent maketh rich.* 13. 4. *The soul of the diligent shall be made fat.* 12. 24. *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule.* 21. 5. *The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness.* Yea, and God hath threatned the idle life with poverty, with shame, with penury. As he hath not promised the idle person a bit of bread, so he hath commanded to give him nothing, 2 Thes. 3. 10. *This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat:* So then, if we expect any good from Gods Providence, we must be in our callings, and diligent in the duties of them. Thou must not say, Well, God is All-sufficient, his providence is ample and active, I have nothing, and I will do nothing; God will take care for me, therefore I will sit still, and sleep, and play, or beg, and so I will live. Nay, an idle life, and a believing heart are far enough asunder; to live by Faith is to live upon Gods promises; but God is so far from promising any good, that he threatens the idle person exceedingly. Idleness is that which causeth God to forsake our bodies, and the Devil to possess our souls. No man hath less Means to preserve the Body, and more Temptations to infect the Soul than an idle person

Objeſt. But will some say, We are not able to work, and then are we debarred from all good from Divine Providence?

Sol. I answer, There are divers sorts of disablements,

“ Some *Natural*; as old age, which hath devoured our strength, and hath scarce left life enough to keep up our life. For those who have laboured but now cannot, Providence stirs

up pity and the bowels of charitable compassion to relieve and support them; and hath provided their table, and lodging, and stay in the houses, and hearts, and hands of the able and merciful.

“Some *Accidental*; as when the instruments of labour by some accident are taken away. The Souldier in the War loseth his arms, and hands, and leggs, he can only look upon what he should do, but is not able to do what he would. Now Providence here again hath commanded arms of help to them who are else every way helpless.

“Some *Voluntary*; who have integrity in their limbs, and marrow in their bones, but laziness in their spirits. They are able, but not willing; like the Drones which soyst into the Hive and steal away the sweet provisions of the laborious Bees. So do these, live unprofitably and suck only from the fruits of the diligent. God hath provided the Magistrate to relieve these with a whip of Correction, and an house of Labour.

Obj. We can get no work.

Sol. 1. Why did you put your self out of it? you had employment, but any service is too much to an evil and idle person.

2. Perhaps you did much work with one hand, and did overwork with the other: There was a false finger in the work; and verily it is rare to find a theevish nature, a pilfering hand, very far from a lazy, and idle, and slothful disposition. Well then, be you doing, if you expect that God should be doing: thrust not your selves out of the way of his Providence; to thy shop again, and to thy needle again, and to thy labour again if thou wouldst be fed and clothed. If thy heart be honest, and thy hands painful, and thy desires moderate, and thy soul believing, God will so water thy labours with his blessed providence, that thou shalt have sufficiency, though not magnificence; enough shall be thy portion all thy dayes.

Use 6.

Let us quiet
our selves under
all the injuries
which light on
us in this life.

If there be a Providence which doth wisely dispose all things, then this may yet lesson us to *Quiet our selves under all the injuries which light upon us in this life.* David was once in a great strait, when his own son turned Traytor and pursued him; and that which might add bitterness to his sorrow, was this, that

Shimei

Shimei barks against him, and reproacheth and railleth at him : And thus said *Shimei* when he cursed *David*, *Come out, come out, thou bloody man, thou man of Belial*, 2 Sam. 16. 7. How doth *David* take this ? So, *Let him curse, because the Lord hath said to him, Curse David. Who shall then say to him, Wherefore hast thou done so ?* In like manner should we incline our hearts, like the rocks, to an unmovedness when the waves of injurious tongues do split themselves against us : We should have an eye to Gods Providence in them ; they could not befall us without the permission of Providence. If any person withhold his favour from us, if he doth bestir himself in our disgrace, if he seeks our hurt and prejudice ; though the person sins in it, yet we are to look higher then the stone that is thrown ; we are to have an eye even unto heaven : God hath many lessons for us even through our injuries and reproaches.

1. *To compassionate the bitter stomachs of wicked persons*, and to pray the more for them, who revile and injure us.

2. *To arm us against those evils which they unjustly cast upon us* : If we be not so, yet we might have been so, or may be so as they reproach us ; and therefore now we are to bless that God who hath withheld us, and to pray to him still to keep us, and so to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

3. *To frame us to much holy Circumspection* : What indignities would malicious tongues fasten on us, having occasion given, who are so plentiful already in their reproaches meely from their own grounds of malice ? The souldiers in an army are alwayes in the best and strictest part of military discipline, when the enemy inrounds them with their weapons and guns. The eye which God hath on us, should be the principal reason of a circumspect conversation, but the eye ever of our enemies, may be a good occasion for us to be watchful and tender.

I will now close up this Doctrine of Providence with an Use of Comfort and duty to the Church and people of God.

First, For *Comfort* :

Since there is a special Providence actively and effectually

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lay-

Use 7.

Comfort from
Gods provi-

dence.

For the
Church.
Tract. in Joan.
124.

laying out it self in a singular way for the good of the Church, then this may be as a rock for the Church to stay and rest it self in all the varieties and difficulties of its militant estate and condition. S. *Augustin* well distinguisheth of the Church, that there are two parts of it: *Una est in fide, altera in specie*, One is in Faith, Another is in Vision: *Una in tempore peregrinationis, altera in eternitate mansionis*, one is travelling, the other is lodging; one is in labour, the other is in rest; one is in the way, another is in the country. Now we are not to speak of that Church which is above all adversity, but of that which is exposed to afflictions; not of that which is perfectly victorious, but of that which is continually agonizing and combating; not of that which rejoiceth above all Tentations, but of that which is assisted in all Trials. This Militant part of the Church, though it be as Gold, yet it is like Gold in the fire; though it be built as a Rock, yet many waves do beat upon that Rock; though it be as the *Ark of Noah*, built and preserved by a special hand of heaven, yet it is moving upon a tumultuous deluge of Troubles. It's true, that all men whatsoever, are by reason of sin capable of many calamities in this life; but the Church (by reason of its goodness) is exposed to a more keen and sharp edge of malice, and reproach, and persecution, and hardship. That holiness and integrity which (one would think) should be the guard and defence (as it is the honour and glory of the Church) occasionally proves (by reason of that opposite wickedness in evil men) to be the reason and mark of all contradiction and contempt. Yea, so deeply is the Church (oft times) attempted, assaulted and oppressed, that as *David* heretofore staggered in a survey of the prosperity of bad men, and of the calamity of good men, so many hearts (now) are neer to suspect and admire either the reality or efficacy of a special Providence, seeing such sensible confusions, and as it were, oblivions and neglects of Providence: That God, who is so good and gracious, should suffer his Church to be so tired out with miserable evils, which Church, he saith, that he doth affectionately love. And that God who is so just should yet leave his Church to the cruelties and injustice of the enemies. And that God who is so Omnipotent, should not by force of hand rescue the people of his Covenant, and purchase out of the claws and tyrannous insolency;

lency of them that hate his Name, and would utterly ruinate his servants. But as they say of the Air, that though that part which is next to us be full of Meteors, and Vapours, and Thunders, yet that which is nearer heaven is serene, and calm, and peaceable, and quiet; so I say here, that though to a sensible eye the Church (by all oppositions) seems to be neglected, yet look upon it with a spiritual eye upwards to the workings and admirable love and care of Divine Providence, it is most calm, and sweet, and safe, and happy. And that you may the more quiet your hearts in the truth of this, I will shew unto you six Comforts which the Militant Church may confidently draw from Gods Providence.

1. From the *Purpose of it and counsel.* Six Comforts
 2. Another from the *Power and might of it.* for the Militant Church.
 3. A third from the *Tenderness and affections of it.*
 4. A fourth from the *Wisdom and skill of it.*
 5. A fifth from the *Fidelity and truth of it.*
 6. A sixth from the *Stability and constancy of it.*

1. One Comfort which the Church may take from Providence, respects the *Purpose and counsel of it*: Where all that I will touch is this, That Divine Providence hath decreed and purposed all calamities for the good of his Church. From the Purpose and counsels of Providence.

1. Nothing befalls them but what God hath decreed and determined; as nothing befel Christ but what God had before ordained: They are *afflictions to which we were ordained*, 1 Thes 3.

2. All is decreed for good, in *Josephs case*, *Dauids case*, the *Apostles case*, for persecutions *they were to the advantage of the Gospel*; *All things shall work for good*, &c. They are not devastations and destructions, but explorations and advantages. It is one thing which the enemies of the Church intend, and another thing which God doth determine. He who thrust his spear into the side of his adversary purposed his death, but he did rip open and let out an imposthume and so saved his life: so though wicked men project ruine and rasing to the ground, that the House and Name of God may be no more in remembrance, yet God decrees admirable good by all encounters and oppressures to his own people. The gold is never purer then in the fire, and the wheat never cleaner then in a wind, and the water never clearer then when it runs among the stones and rocks, and the sheep never keep together so orderly in their

own pastures as when the wolves are about to worry them, and the musical instrument never sounds so sweetly as when you strike it with your fingers. So is it with the Church, the times of its calamity are the times of its beauty; their hearts are never more humbled, their ways never more reformed and made white; their graces and heavenly opportunities never more improved, their fellowship never more kindled, and their prayers and dependancies never more doubled and quickened then when the bondage of *Pharaoh*, the threatnings of *Herod*, the rod of *the wicked* doth rest on the backs of the righteous. If wicked men do tear their bodies, yet God will preserve their souls; if they deform their beauty, yet God will reform their hearts; if they waste their estates, yet God will make up their comforts; if they take away their lives, yet God will give them heaven. There is no calamity which befalls the Church, but either it shall be a Medicine to heal, or a Lash to quicken, or a Trial to discover; it shall be an advantage to the Gospel, an enlargement of the stock, and a step to glory.

From the power of Divine Providence.

2. Another Comfort respects *the power of Divine Providence*: The power of Gods Providence is an All-mighty hand, and the Church (even in its most calamitous straits) is held in this hand; they are Stars held in Christs right hand, *Rev. 2. Isa. 51. 12. I, even I am he that comforteth you. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, who shall be made as grasse?* 13. *And forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched out the heavens and laid the foundation of the earth, & hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy; and where is the fury of the oppressor?* 15. *But I am the Lord thy God, &c.* 16. *I have covered thee with the shadow of my hands.* *Isa 41. 8. Thou Israel art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.* v. 10. *Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.* v. 14. *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel, I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer the holy one of Israel.* If God be with us (said the Apostle) who can be against us? *Rom 8. 31.* He means, None can in a final and total victoriousness be against us

us. When *Josua* was by *Jericho*, he lifted up his eyes, and behold there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand, and *Josua* went unto him and said, *Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?* and he said, *Nay but as a Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.* So when you hear that the power of God is a Fort, and a Tower, a Strong Hold, a Sure Defence, an Almighty Arm, a Valiant hand which laid the foundations of the Earth, and spread out the Heavens, at the shaking of which the Nations tremble, and the inhabitants fall down for fear; that it is glorious in terribleness, and none can harden himself against it and prosper, and it doth whatsoever it will; O! will you say, this were a good shield, and a safe protection, but for whom is this power, is it for the Church, or for the adversaries thereof? Nay verily the arm of his power is stretched out and brandished for the good of his Church, and for the confusion of her enemies. Therefore as the Prophet spake to the distressed part of the Church in *Isa. 8. 12.* *Say ye not a confederacy to all them to whom this people shall say a confederacy, neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.* v. 13. *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.* v. 14. *And he shall be for a sanctuary, &c.* So though there be a confederacy, a multitude of combined enemies in malice and power, yet fear not, there is a greater power on the Churches side, One God is stronger then all.

But let me break this into some particulars, the power of Providence is many ways for the Church :

I. *It doth bridle all the power of the enemies; Voluntatem habent, potestatem non habent.* They have a malicious will of their own, but no power of their own, they can do neither good nor evil. As they have *No power* but (as *Christ* said to *Pilate*) what is *Given to them*, so they are not able to exercise any power above Gods pleasure. The curst Dogg may snarle, but he can bite none further then his chain doth reach: Gods Providence hath a power, which is a chain cast over the malice of evil men, restraining their wrath, as *David* speaks; and a hook in their nostrils as *Isaiah* speaks concerning *Sennacherib*: *Thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might,* said *David* 1 Chron. 29. 12. We are deceived when we so much exalt and fear the strength which evil men assume to them-

The power of Providence, Brides power of enemies.

themselves and boast of, and withal when we say that the Church is weak and gasping. If all the Divels in hell should present themselves in their legions, and every wicked man living should concenter with all the armories of rage and desperatenesse against one poor silly weak disarmed member of Christ, and his Church, they are not all of them able (unlesse God give way) to speak good nor evil, not able to touch the least hair of his head, as Christ here speaks, Isa. 59. 19. *When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.* They may intend, but shall not act; they may rage, but they shall not effect; they may threaten, but they shall not execute, they may shew themselves to be wicked men, but God can laugh them to scorn, and dash their counsels, and annihilate their strength, and withhold their arm, all their malice is under command, and power under controll, *Omne sub imperio imperium majore.*

H. 2. King of France, These eyes shall see thee burned, but, &c. Ahab; Keep him in Prison till I return in Peace, but &c. Confounds their power.

2. *It can confound all their power:* When they have plotted and consulted; when they have begun, and think to prosper; when they have atchieved some part of their design, and applaud their villanous insolencies; when they think to break the heart of the Church with unsufferable rigors, yet then can the power of Providence arise, and brandish it self, and disappoint, and rescue. It can take out the prey from the teeth of the lyon, and in a moment put a period to a *Babel* of haughty cruelty. When *Pharaoh* contrives an extinguishment of *Israel*, God can quench his rage in the deeps of the sea, and in despite of him lead away his people. When *Sennacherib* vaunts himself against the remarkable weaknesse of *Hezekiah*, God fetcht him home with haste and his own sons did kill him. When *Julian* the Apostate had vowed an extreme Oblation of all the lives of the surviving Christians, as *Gregory Nazianzen* reports, God struck him with an arrow, and he desperately threw out his blood against him whom he could never conquer. When *Eugenius* the Tyrant endeavoured against the armies of the Christians under *Theodosius*, God gave the very winds a power to wrest the weapons out of the enemies hands. When the *Moabites* confederated wth the *Amonites* & those of Mount *Seir*, against *Judah*, God did turn their weapons against themselves, and they mutually became their own executioners. How easie

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is it with God, (and he hath done it) to overthrow his Churches enemies, even with their own fears, or else to cut off the prime inspirer, and *Achitophel* with a sudden blow; or else to actuate some unexpected and weak resistances to their grand and notable defeatings; even a *Gideon* with three hundred men, or a *David* with a stone, *So that no weapon that is formed against the Church, shall prosper.*

3. *It is able to wind in unto the Church its intended good, even by the very malice of its enemies.* *Joseph* is sold by his brethren to be a bondslave, but by Divine Providence to be a Prince and a Father: *Haman* aims at the ruine of *Mordecai*, and yet after all his stirrings, he is forced to hold the stirrup to him, and to be Herald of his honor. The *Pharisees* and Scribes never leave till they kill Christ, and thereby occasion the greatest happiness which ever the Church could enjoy.

4. *It is able to prosper the Church, yea under all the oppressions of its enemies.* *Pharaoh* sets Taskmasters over the *Israelites* to afflict them with their burdens *Exod. 1. 11, 12.* but the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. As a Tradesman may thrive exceedingly in the confluence of all envy, so the Church may prosper in the midst of all opposition. *Even when the enemies rage, will God set his King upon his holy Hill of Zion, Psal. 2. 1, &c.*

5. *It can give strength to his Church to suffer, and power to conquer all its enemies.* In all these things *we are more than Conquerors*, said *Paul*, *Rom. 8.* and though the Dragon made war with the Saints, yet *They overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the Testimony of his word, Rev. 11.* This is certain, Providence is able to stop evil men that they shall not imploy their malice, and if they do, he can deny them occasion, and if they lay hands he can yet deliver them, and if they kill them yet they shall never conquer them, for Grace knowes no death, and the Church shall abide for ever, no not the gates of Hell shall prevail against it.

3. Another comfort to the Church, may be, the *Tenderness of Providence*; therefore you read that God stands in all the relations of affection to his Church as a *Father*, *Jer. 31. 9.* *I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first born.* As a *Mother* to a sucking child: *Isa. 49. 15.* As a *Shepherd* to his

Sensible,

Pitiful

Thoughtful,

Helpful

flock, *Jer. 3. 10.* He that scatters Israel, will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd with his flock. As a Friend to his Familiar acquaintance: *Cant. 5. 16.* This is my beloved, and this is my friend O daughters of Jerusalem, saith the Church; and Abraham is called The friend of God. Yea and observe the bowels of his compassion towards his people distressed and afflicted. *Exod. 2. 23.* The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God. *v. 24.* And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and Jacob. *v. 25.* And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them. So *Exod. 3. 7.* I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their Taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. *v. 8.* And I am come down to deliver them. *v. 9.* Now therefore behold the cry of the children of Israel is come up unto me, and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. *v. 10.* Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt. *Isa. 63. 9.* In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them, in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the dayes of old. *Deut. 32. 10.* He kept them as the apple of his eye, as an Eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead them. Now what a comfort is it to the Church, that the Almighty God is its most gracious and tender Father? that his singular affections and thoughts are yerning towards it? that he is so sensible, and so compassionate? How can it be ill with the Church, whilst its God hath power enough to help, and love enough to bestow it?

The wisdom of
 Providence.
 In what it consists.

4. Another comfort to the Church respects the *Wisdom of Providence.* The wisdom of Providence consists in 1. *A discerning of what may be good for the Church.* 2. *A foreseeing of all the evils which may or shall befall it.* 3. *A disappointing of those evils.* 4. *An ordering of them, if they do befall it.* 5. *Devising means of safety.* 6. *In seasonable supplies of strength or deliverance.* Now what a comfort is this, that the Church being to deal with strong enemies, hath yet a

more.

more powerful God ? being to deal with malicious and cruel enemies, it hath yet a most tender and affectionate God ; and being to deal with politick and subtil enemies, it hath yet a wise and understanding God, against whom there is no wisdom nor counsel ; who is able *To take the wicked in the work of their own hands.* It is true that the enemies of the Church are subtle, as well as malicious ; they are not onely the generation of the *Dragon*, but also the seed of the *Serpent* ; and are called *Foxes* for their wilinesses ; hence you read of their *Traps*, of their *Nets*, of their *Devices*, *mischievous Devices*, of their *Snares*, and *Ginnes* (in the Scripture) ; they have their pretences, blends, cunning semblances to cover their rotten hearts and intentions, and yet mischief, and falshood, and death is in their thoughts : But God is wiser then man, and he takes the wicked in their own devices , and incloseth them in their own net, and causeth them to fall oft times into the very pit which they dig for others ; he sees all the contrivances, and can blow upon their consultations, and find wayes to rescue and deliver his own people.

5. A fifth comfort is from *The fidelity and truth of Providence.* The fidelity of Providence. We all know that God hath undertaken great matters for his people ; you cannot imagine that particular case and exigent where Providence will not put in for the Church. Now *God is faithful who hath promised.* Though you may see the Church like a Tree, lopd even to the root, that the enemies scorn at it, as an outcast, and as one forsaken ; though it be brought to that sensible perishingness as *Ezekiels* dead dry bones, yet God will breath again upon it, and it shall live in his sight, he will gather again his elect, and cause them to take root downward and to bring forth fruit upward, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform it ; *Josh. 23. 14. Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you, all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.* You never read the time, nor ever shall know the day when the enemies shall make an utter end of the Church ; but God hath been and will be in some part of it, directing ; in another part strengthening, in another comforting, in another helping and delivering, in another restraining, and scatter-

ing, and confounding the enemies of it.

The constancy 6. Lastly, *The constancy of Providence is another comfort.*
of Providence. Providence is an eye still open for the Church, Psal. 121. 3.

He that keepeth thee will not slumber, vers. 4. *Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.* v. 8. *The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for ever more.* So Isa. 51. 7. *Hearken unto me ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings.* v. 8. *For the Moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wooll, but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.* So Isa. 42. 14. *I have long time holden my peace, I have been still, and refrained my self, now will I destroy, and devoure at once.* v. 15. *I will make waste mountains and hills.* v. 16. *I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things strait, these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.* Providence hath worked hitherto and still doth work. 1. The same God. 2. The same Church continued. 3. The same Covenant; 4. Great instances of it still. Nay God must deny his own oath and his own seal, if he will utterly leave his Church. He hath entred into an everlasting Covenant with it. Now put all these notions together, may not the Church of Christ take courage and heart which hath a God who is the author of all good, decreeing nothing but good unto it, who hath an Almighty power exercising it self for it, Most tender affections towards it, Wisdom to foresee, and divert, and defeat and supply; Faithfulnessse to bind himself to all this; Stability that he will never leave nor forsake but as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from hence forth and for ever. What could we wish more to the Church then good? and what more for the safety of it then a singular love, an infinite power, an exalted wisdom and, an everlasting fidelity to act and perform all this? Therefore let us not Forget the Lord our Maker that hath stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. Neither let us Fear every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy, for where is the fury of the oppressor, Isa. 51. 13.

For Duty.

Secondly, For Duty.

There

There are divers things which do concern the Church, especially at those times when the enemies insult over it, and she seems to be desolate and is much oppressed, and God goes not forth with her armies. Learn,

1. *To reform the Provocations of God:* Even Israel may see before the men of *Ai* if Israel hath sinned. Gods own people shall feel the smart of the rod, if they trespass against him. It is not that his hand is shortned that he cannot save, but our sins will separate 'twixt God and us: In all the calamities of the Church let us not accuse God for want of affliction, but our selves for want of obedience; not him for want of justice, but our selves for want of Repentance; not him for want of power, but our selves for want of carefulnesse and observance. Psal. 81. 13. *Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my wayes.* 14. *I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.* 15. *The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him; but their time should have endured for ever.* The Church many times (like our bodies) contracts many vile and dangerous humours, and therefore no marvel if God opens a vein (even by their enemies sword) to let out the rank blood. If the Ministry be contemned, the Sabbath prophaned and despised, swearing grows high and common, drunkennesse (like the deluge) spreads over all sorts of persons, that there remaineth scarce any more then a Name, a formal Profession: We may say, That Divine Providence is just in permitting the enemies to afflict his people, that at length they may see from whence they are fallen and repent, and then assuredly they shall find the Lord to be merciful unto them. And verily God doth for this cause (many times) suffer his own to be shaken, attempted, oppressed, that they might by their calamities understand and reform that which they would not heed in the dayes of their peace and security. We learn that in affliction which we would not hearken unto in prosperity; when the Thief was on the Crosse, then he thinks of an heavenly Kingdom. To reform the Provocations of God.

2. *To put it self upon this singular providence by fervent and humble prayer:* See the practice of the Church in this *Isa.* 63. 15. *Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory. Where is thy zeal and thy strength* Put our selves upon this Singular Providence by fervent Prayer. strength

strength the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained? 16. Doublesse thou art our father, though, &c. Thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer, thy Name is from everlasting. 17. Return, O Lord, for thy servants sakes, the tribes of thine inheritance. 18. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while, our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. 19. We are thine, thou never barest rule over them, they were not called by thy Name. So again in the next Chapter the Church goes on in the same Pathetical form of importunate Prayer. Isa. 64. 1. O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. v. 6. We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses as filthy rags, &c. Our iniquities like the wind have taken us away. v. 7. And there is none that calleth upon thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee; for thou hast hid away thy face from us, and hast consumed us because of our iniquities. v. 8. But now, O Lord, thou art our father, We are the Clay and thou our Potter, and we are all the work of thine hand. v. 9. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever; Behold, see we beseech thee, we are all thy people. v. 10. Thy holy Cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. v. 11. Our holy and our beautiful house wherein our fathers praised thee is burnt up with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste. v. 12. Wilt thou refrain thy self for these things, O Lord? Wilt thou hold thy peace and afflict us very sore? Nay, see God putting his people upon this course, and answering it. Isa. 62. 6 Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence. v. 7. And give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. v. 8. The Lord hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, surely I will no more give thy Corn to be meat for thine enemies, and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy Wine for which thou hast laboured. v. 9. But they that have gathered it shall eat it and praise the Lord. v. 11. Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him and his work before him. v. 12. And they shall call them, The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called, Sought out, a city not forsaken. There is no better way to appease God then true repentance, nor surer weapon to overthrow the enemy then faithful and earnest prayer:

3. Engage this singular Providence for you by your trust in God, and your dependance upon his Providence for your selves and for his Churches. To quicken you to this, take these Motives, Engage this singular Providence by our Tru2.

1. You are commanded to trust in God, to cast your care upon him, 1 Pet 5.7. To cast your burden on the Lord, Psal. 55. 22. To commit the keeping of your souls to him in well-doing, 1 Pet. 4.19. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, Psal 37. 5. Now it is observable that every one of these injunctions have annexed to them a singular encouragement, Cast your care on him, for he careth for you. Cast thy burden on the Lord and he shall sustain thee; he will never suffer the righteous to be moved. Commit the keeping of your souls to him, as unto a faithful Creator. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass.

2. He will undertake, and can and doth order all things after the counsel of his own will whether you will trust him or not. That which Elihu spake may be applied in this case, Job 34.33. Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompence it whether thou refuse, or whether thou chuse.

3. There is no people to whom God is so much engaged as to his Church and people. 1. In the affections of a gracious, and eternal, and choice love. 2. In the relations of father, husband, king. 3. In the obligations of an everlasting Covenant, so that he must deny himself if he deny his vigilant care over his people in covenant with him.

4. There is no people for whom he hath done as for his Church, he hath not done so to or for any nation: He is a God doing wonders, great and strange things against all the fury of oppressors.

5. He never yet failed his Church, but hath left large testimonies of his Providence in their lowest; meanest and most hopeless condition. So that we may comfortably trust and depend upon his Providence. Though the Churches time be never so troublesome: Though the Church be brought never so low: Though the deliverances of the Church stay never so long: Though the helps of the Church on earth be never so few and contemptible: Though the Calamities of the Church should be yet far greater.

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