

# THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE



OBADIAH SEDGWICK

# THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE



OBADIAH SEDGWICK

# THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE

OBADIAH SEDGWICK

MONERGISM BOOKS

Copyright © 2024

Published by Monergism Books

P.O. Box 491

West Linn Oregon 97068

[www.monergism.com](http://www.monergism.com)

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher or author, except as permitted by U.S. copyright law.

Editor's Note – Though it is rare for errors to remain post-edit, unfortunately they may remain if uncaught. My sincere apologies in advance where such errors occur. As the Puritan Edward Leigh once said "If thou findest faults and Errata in the book, let love cover them, for to err (as the Satirist saith) is the sad privilege of mortality, and he (of all men) erreth most, who challengeth a privilege from error."

# Contents

1. CHAP. I. God hath Providence extending to all Creatures and what concerns them.
2. CHAP. II. God hath in a more singular way a special Providence over his Church and People.
3. CHAP. III. Waiting and Depending upon Providence.
4. CHAP. IV. Divine Providence doth proportion all Afflictions.
5. CHAP. V. Use and Comforts to the Church from Divine Providence.

## CHAP. I. GOD HATH PROVIDENCE EXTENDING TO ALL CREATURES AND WHAT CONCERNS THEM.

**M**<sup>att. 10.</sup>

29. *Are not two Sparrows sold for a Farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.*

30. *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

31. *Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many Sparrows.*

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 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 sweetness, 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 anything 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 only the Moments, the great Moments of your Life and Death are ordered by him, but even the Hairs of your head are numbered (i.e.) he knows them all he looks to them all; and if to them, much more to your persons, and safeties, and preservations.

I will not insist on many things, which the words can yield out, but draw only those inferences which may discover unto us something of the Doctrine of Divine Providence, viz.

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.

That God hath a Providence extending itself to all the Creatures, and the things about them; here in the Text, to the Sparrows and to the falling of every one of them; and not only to the souls and bodies of his people, but also to the very Hairs of their head. Psal. 33:13. The Lord looketh from heaven, he beholds 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 considers all their works. Read the 104th 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.

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 ourselves?

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.

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 ways, and ends, but he follows 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 flectendo 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 amiss.

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 procession 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.

3. It is an action of God] There is a kind of Providence which we ascribe to man, but this is weak, and short, and restrained; it is only of some things which are about ourselves, and within our own sphere, 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 ways 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.

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 run 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 dunghill; Not only the glorious Stars, but the lowest piles of Grass and the Lilies; Not only that immortal Soul of man, but the very Hairs of his head are under a Providence: For, 1. Providence is Co-extensive with Creation, and therefore it is as large as heaven and earth, as the whole world. 2. Providence is Coextensive with Divine knowledge ad extra; but known unto God are all his works, Act. 15. 3. Everything 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 extends to wife, to children, to servants, to the oxen, to the sheep, to the house, to the land, to everything 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 two,

1. Conservation:] The preservation of things is the great 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 favor, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.

Now the conservation of things is twofold, viz. either,

1. Immediate, by the word of God's power.

2. Mediate, which is the holding of them up by means and ways. He giveth meat to all flesh, Psal. 136:25. He prepareth rain for the earth, and maketh the grass 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, hearken to Christ, Mat. 6:30. If God so clothes the grass of the field, &c. shall he not much more clothe 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.e.) 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 ways,

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.

2. Gubernation:] This is another 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,

1. In keeping things in that Order wherein they were at the first created; Psal. 119:91. All things continue according to thine Ordinances.

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.

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.

4. In Restraining and hindering, by which he knits up the actions of the Creatures which otherwise they would do; as Abimelech was restrained from touching Abraham's wife, Laban from touching of Jacob, the Angel from destroying the Israelites, when he slew the firstborn in Egypt, Exod. 12:23. And the Sun in Joshua's time from running its course, and the fire from burning the three children, and the Sea when the Israelites were to pass through, and the infinite malice of the Devil, and the remainder of wrath (in evil men against his Church) doth God restrain.

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 days unto thee; These are the children which the Lord hath given, said Jacob.

6. In Permitting of evil: *Non fit aliquid, nisi Omnipotens fieri velit; vel sinendo ut fiat, vel ipse faciendo*, said S. Augustine.

Object. It is a great question, especially about the evil of sin, how that falls under Divine Providence? To which in a word thus,

Sol. Things fall under Providence four ways,

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. 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. 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 deserendo*: So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, Psal. 81:11,12.

7. In judging of evil men: Thus Providence appears many ways, as in the defeating of their plots, infatuating 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.

6. Lastly, Consider the Qualities of Providence] and they are four; viz.

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 hitting of Times, 3. In leading out an intended Issue through difficulties and improbabilities, 4. In bringing everything to its best End.

2. Holiness:] God doth moderate, restrain, guide, suffer, deal in everything after a most Holy manner, He is holy in all his ways. 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 itself be vile and odious.

3. Justice:] God's Providence doth so order things and events, it brings matters about so, that no man hath reason to 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.

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 distress, 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.

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 supporting's, any comforting's, and helps, and deliverances, any friends stirred up to show kindness, any raising out of obscure conditions to unexpected greatness, any preservations, &c. all these say expressly there is a Providence, that

doubtless there is a God who hath regard to the works of his hands, doubtless there is a God who hath an eye to this world.

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 laboreth night and day, who beats his brains, 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 clothes do not warm thee, food doth not nourish thee as the other; Why? Because Divine Providence gives out itself in the one, and 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 God's Providence which causes it 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; therefore there is an active and working providence. Joseph is to preserve Egypt alive, and his father's 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 pass 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 David'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; for God is the first cause, and that is absolutely most active, and all second causes depend, for being and operation, upon the first. Nothing can move or preserve itself, by itself, but he who gives motion and Preservation to all besides himself.

5. The translation of Kingdoms, the rewards and punishments of men on earth; the changes about our conditions, show clearly that there is 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.

Ob. 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, 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.

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. God's providence appears either in the present, or else in the subsequent punishing of sinners: If that evil men might go on forever unpunished, then there were not a providence; but though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet it shall not be well with



the wicked; neither shall he prolong his days, 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 men's sins are open beforehand, 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 always a present punishment for every sinner.

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 itself.

To the second; That evil men do prosper: So I answer, Neither doth that conclude against a divine providence, for as much as

1. God will magnify 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 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.

3. It had been better for them to have wanted them, for God's bounty to them, and their abuse of that bounty, increaseth 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 God's kindness, and have employed it only against God's glory, their felicity shall be short but their misery shall be endless.

3. Sol. To the third; That good men are oppressed with many wants, I answer.

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 convenience and suitableness. Meat is good, but not to the weak and sick stomach, because it is not now convenient; liberty is not always good for a good man, nor yet health, &c. many things may be good to some good people, which are not always good to every good man, and therefore it is not want.

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 than 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 God's loving favor serves in, though it be but a bit of bread.

3. Nay, and again; If you will judge of Providence by abundance, then you may see Riches and Goodness meet together as well as Riches and Wickedness; and Honor and Goodness as well as Honor and Wickedness,

&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 near 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 Beggarly.

4. What should we stand upon great Estates here, when God hath settled a high inheritance above. If a sufficiency for food and raiment for thee and thine, and with that the blood of Christ, and preciousness 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 ways and expressions of a good Providence, Psal. 31:19. O how great is thy Goodness 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.

## CHAP. II. GOD HATH IN A MORE SINGULAR WAY A SPECIAL PROVIDENCE OVER HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE.

**T**he next Proposition is this, viz.

That God hath in a more singular way a special Providence over his Church and people. The Text is clear for it, The very hairs of your head are all numbered, (not one of them which is not under guard and protection) and ye are of more value than many sparrows (i.e.) your Father hath a regard far more intimate and affectionate towards you than 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 than the eye, and not one part in the eye of which we are more vigilant than 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; Isa. 49:15. Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Observe the

passages of either, the Parents, the Mother expresseth the most enlarged, and near tenderness, and though she shows a care over all the servants, yet the choicer is to her children, and though there be a greater height of care for children than servants, yet it is more to a child of her own womb than to an annexed child, and of all the children of her womb, she doth express the bowels of tenderness 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 adds in that place v. 16. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms 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 arms, 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 tenderness, 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 jewels, &c. It is true that an intelligent householder doth not neglect the coarsest Vessels, nor except the meanest glass, but of all the household 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 God's care of his jewels. Isa. 27:3. I the Lord do keep it, I will water 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 always covered with Wings of Cherubims intimating the Divine protection. Hence it is that God's eyes are said to be over the righteous (i.e.) He hath an especial

watchfulness for them: and the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever, as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, and he is called the Covert, the Refuge, the Defense, the Rock, the Shield, the Salvation, the High Tower, the Deliverer of his people. Now that God hath a special Providence 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,

1. Impedition or hinderance, which is the staving 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 itself like an overflowing 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. When that Pharaoh shaped out the methods of ruin 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. When 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 cross and turn aside that intention, by giving more acceptance to the advice of Hushai. When Haman had plotted the death of the Jewish nation, merely 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 wonderfully 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 honor him, and save the rest of the Jews. All their intentions and plots are but like

a ship trimmed and ready to launch, but a contrary wind binds up the motion. When Saul had often pursued David like a Partridge on the Mountains, and had at length environed and encircled him, that there was no way to escape, yet God did hinder this, by calling Saul back again, The Philistines invade the land. 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 nostrils, turned him home again, and hindered his proud intentions and threats. So true is that of the Prophet, Isaiah 8:9. Associate yourselves together, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, 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 enterprise. v. 13. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. v. 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 poison and scourge of their malice upon the Church, yet God doth here also singularly present himself.

1. Moderating that boundless 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 far 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 near 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 fever, extremely scorched with heat, not only in the visible and fleshy parts, but in the secret spirits and humors. 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: Isa. 25:4. Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, 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 the rage of evil men shall be but as poison tempered by the skillful and tender Physician, not to be death but to be physic; and all the blustering's 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 meekness, and patience, and faith, and zeal, and heavenly-mindedness, and love of Christ and his truth, shall spread with more purity, and beauty, like the Stars, with more glory in the darkest nights.

3. Preservation: Though God doth Preserve man and beast, Psal. 36:6. Yet there is a more singular degree for the Church than 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 afar 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 preserves the faithful. 2 Sam. 8:6. The Lord preserved David whithersoever he went. Gen. 48:15. God (said Jacob to Joseph) which fed 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 ways 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 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 confess 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 a 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 broke 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 Elijah was in the Wilderness, 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 ruin, 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 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.

3. Consider the fruits of Providence, the Church hath more special testimonies herein than any people; God hath provided better things for them than others: They have Christ in the Ship, and Grace in the Heart, and Peace in the Conscience, and such a savory blessing with every blessing, that even the little which the righteous hath, is far better than 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 man's 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 than others in all sorts of things; in Spirituals there is no comparison, and in Temporals, to the Church, all good is seasoned and sweetened; but to others, either they find or put a curse and sourness into it.

4. If you consider the Issues of all Occurrences, this manifests a Singularity of Providence. That everything 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 practices 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, advantages to the Church. When God doth bring an affliction to the estate of his servants, when he doth exchange their tempers, when he draws 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 confess, 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 confess, in respect of his Denials, If God had granted me my desire, I should have rued it all my days: And he shall confess, 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.
2. It is very Tender; his eyes are over the Righteous, he carries the Lambs in his bosom; 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.

3. It is Mysterious: The Lord hath many hidden ways 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.

4. It is Glorious: He useth not only all ordinary creatures, but the very Angels as ministering Spirits for their good and defense; as in Hezekiah's case. Nay, Jesus Christ himself as a Head, as a 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 Lord's Hosts, Josh. 5:14, 15. And fights for them, and prevails, Rev. 12.

5. It is Exact, in respect of,

1. Ways, Psal. 19. 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 a hair of their head shall fall. Sennacherib shall not shoot an arrow into the City.

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, Sennacherib, 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 arms have been broken.

But you will say, Why this Singularity of Providence towards his people?

1. The Church are the people of God's 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 always observe, peculiar intentions of care, and forecast, and help, and defense 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 another thing, what I am as a general Friend, is one thing; what I am as an Husband, is another 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 and 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 itself 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 fulfill 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 ourselves, nor can we command the creatures to yield out their helps and assistances; They are God's stewards 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; 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 forever reserve the glory of an absolute and supreme and Universal cause to himself, therefore depend on his providence.

Ob. 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 God's 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 acknowledge 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.

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 acknowledge 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 a hair can fall without thy providence, much less can an affliction touch me, or renew itself upon me; what I suffer, that I have deserved, thou only art able to pardon sin, and to remove affliction; 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 entirely from all earthly delights, to thee the highest, the only God and good."

## CHAP. III. WAITING AND DEPENDING UPON PROVIDENCE.

**O**b. 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.

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 than by depending on God for it, Prov. 3:6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths; when thou art in any straight, and knowest not 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 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.

3. No surer way to miss our good than 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 lo! 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.

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.

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 mother's womb, and was thy God, when thou didst hang upon thy mother's breast? Psalm 22:9,10.

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 less? 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?

7. What is it to him, to come in and do thee good? What expense 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 moment, and do thee what good he pleases; 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 Christ's reasonings here: He looks after the Sparrows, much more after men; after the grass and Lilies, Matt. 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 than an infidel, not to provide for his own family?

We may raise ourselves to a dependence upon God's 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.

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.

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 Philistine.

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 days of my life.

5. Conclude from large relations to special: God's Providence extends to strangers, shall it not to those of his own household? If to enemies, then much more to children.

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 Haman's Plot, built his Temple and the walls of Jerusalem, against Plots, Scandals, Weapons, in Ezra and Nehemiah's time: Thought of Joseph in the Prison; Daniel in the Lions' Den; the three Children in the furnace; Jonah in the Whale's belly. Given rest to the Church in the midst of bloody persecutions in Paul's time, and in Constantine's time. Saved Israel by 300 men of Gideon, discomfited the Philistines by Jonathan, and his Armor bearer; delivered King Asa by a few against a Thousand Thousand, Hezekiah from Sennacherib, 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.

Ob. 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.

Ob. But the case is difficult.

Sol. To whom are difficulties? To man, to us; but is there anything too hard for the Lord? Is his hand shortened, 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 ruin are anything to him, his own arm alone can do it, and that which is infinitely exalted above all strength, can be stayed by none.

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 Lilies, and a father who looked unto them; therefore they should not take thought and care, Matt. 6. And their hearts should not be troubled, 1 Pet. 5:7. Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you, (i.e.) Do not ye perplex yourselves about your conditions, your safeties, your supports, you may ease yourselves of all this, there is a God who takes care for you, who minds 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.e.) do not you rent yourselves with excess of grief, or vastness of getting, or impatience in suffering, as if there were none near to help you, The Lord is at hand, your help, your strength, your supply, your comfort is not far from you, v. 6. Be careful for nothing, (i.e.) whatsoever your condition be, do not you now afflict yourselves with anxieties, and fears, and thoughtfulness, But in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, (i.e.) Bless for what you have, and pray for what you want, and leave it to God, and so in patience possess your souls. There are divers things about which we vex ourselves in vain, (surely they are disquieted in vain, said David in another case, Psal. 39:6.)

1. One is the Deadness 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 deadness in the means, 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 unhappiness, and the exigencies that we are put to.

2. Another is, the Crossness of events. When we have looked for light, and behold darkness; when we have expected favor 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 ourselves security, but a shipwreck 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 itself with excessive sorrow, and melancholy, and bitterness.

3. A third is, The weakness and thinness of our conditions: when there is no more than from hand to mouth, and that it is with us as with a candle fed

with a drop of oil, if you do not add another, the flame goes out. So when our livings have but this penny 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?

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 cross, 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 loss, and perhaps, the next afflictions are the sorest 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 battle, one file of men presenting and giving fire after another; and then a main body of afflictions encountering 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.

5. A Fifth is, Strange checking's and interruptions after fair and probable proceedings. When we have chosen means, and have consecrated them by prayer and dependence, and have endeavored with all fidelity and uprightness, not to mingle any unlawful act or course, to finish a lawful desire; and God hath seemed to breathe on all, and to smile on the enterprise; 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 turns 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 knows not what to make of Providence now.

6. A Sixth case of vexing, is The doubtfulness of posterity. Perhaps a man hath many children, little means, few or no friends, the mother is dead, the children young, the goods divided, very, very mean, and he is dying. Here armies of cares and of fears 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 endeavor to show unto you how the goodness, and wisdom, and power of Providence may take off all these grounds of vexation.

Touching the first, which is The deadness of means, 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 physician's hand, but in God's 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 only 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 confess, that all mercy, and all helps, and all comfort is only in God's hands, he who is essentially good hath the command and distribution of every good.

2. No means of themselves alone, are able to do anything; They cannot turn themselves nor incline themselves to our help unless God turn, and incline, and command them. If God 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 only 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 a 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 unless 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 skillful Physician cannot be health, and ease to thee, unless God doth put health into the potion or plaster, he may prescribe cordials, but he cannot prescribe health or life. For God hath a Providence which overrules 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 entrusted 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 servant's 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.e.) God doth so determine of things that they shall not bestow themselves in their own way, but only according to his direction, otherwise we might bow down and kiss the Creature.

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 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 slay the means before our faces; we shall see the means to fly off, or to sink, or to deny their help unto us.

4. Divine Providence will seldom work and appear in set means (i.e.) 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 only, v.g. If God doth not stir up such a friend, or if he doth not speak by such a Minister, or if he doth not bless the directions of such a Physician, when we tie and limit Providence thus to arise in our own ways, we cause Providence to hold back; God keeps in much good, for which we set him our ways and our times: God hath several means to do us good, and he doth it not always 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.

5. God's Providence ordinarily doth make choice of neglected 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 choose 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 Kings 5:10. Yet those slighted waters did cleanse and cure him. And when David presented himself to deliver Israel from Goliath and the Philistines, though his brethren rebuked his audacity and forwardness, and though Saul feared his youthfulness and inability, and though the Philistine 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 overthrows to their enemies, and much good to us, not always according to the fullness 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 soldiers safe in Paul's shipwreck, 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, constulit orbis opes*. A worthless, regardless, slighted work, yet an occasion of the greatest reformation in Christendom.

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, Rom. 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 dry; now saith God unto him, v. 3. Son of man, can these bones

live? He answered, O Lord God thou knowest; Then God commanded him to prophesy unto them, and bone came to bone, and the sinews 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, v. 10.

Thus it may be in the deadness 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 darkness hath almost extinguished all light, yet God can create and enable the most fainting means with sufficiency of strength and assistance. Isa.50:10. Who is he that walks in darkness, 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 God's hand is not shortened 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 God's. 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 ourselves in the use and expense of means, and all of them have spent their skill, and power, and readiness to do us good, and now God

must show 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 to life again. Though the subject cannot perform any things of office without the King's 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 choose 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 arm all our helps and supplies.

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 behappens unto us. In this case we should feel out the goodness 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 King's Prerogatives, upon which no subject may presume to intrench. And there are *Magnalia*, some wonderful and peculiar rights which God assumes to himself, 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.

2. The Issues of Providence are ever better than 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 always the best, because it is an issue grounded upon a faultless goodness, 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 plenty, and the thing which God lays on me is poverty; that scarcity which God brings is far better (in the proof of it) than that plenty which I crave; for my plenty might have been a surfeit, 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 God's promises, more careful in prayer, more watchful in my conversation than 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 hath cast anchor by sickness at Heaven's gates, who hath been sailing 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 than God will make it so; and



that our souls must mount higher to find an Ark to rest in, than the deluge of vain things. Why should I not yield to that issue of Providence, which hath at once hindered 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 lay 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 diverse sorts of crossings, 1. Some which proceed from Ignorance, as when unwittingly we let fly a word, or bolt out an action which proves an impediment to the design of another. 2. Others which proceed from Malice; when with that evil man we sow tares on purpose to hinder the wheat and harvest. We lay plots and devises to cross the intentions of our neighbor from the comfortable attaining's of his desires.

3. And, some which do spring from Prudence; as the father doth many times cross 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 Physic, though the patient likes it not, is better than Meat, which yet he craves. And thus doth God cross 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 anything which will prove good to them, but that he hinders much evil which would otherwise break in upon them.

4. If God crosseth the enjoying 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 than 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 larger and more noble inheritance. If thou art crossed in thy design of a particular good, it is because Providence sees it will not be good for thee, or not good at this time, or that there is a better good than that intended to thee, which though for the present thou cannot see, yet hereafter when things do ripen and open themselves thou shalt confess with thankfulness.

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 God's disposition.

A third Case of Vexation is the Weakness and Unlikelihood of our present conditions, which are feeble and too short to 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 raiment, or meat, yet here Providence may succor 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 today, that they know not where to expect their breakfast tomorrow, 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 counseled his disciples, Mat. 6. Take no thought for tomorrow; 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, Psalm 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 a hand to labor, and faith to trust, God will find meat to feed thee, and raiment to clothe thee.

2. The blessing of Providence can add more means to a little, or strengthen a little to continue till more comes in. There is a marvelous 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. Elias is sent to the brook Cherith, but then God commanded the ravens to feed him there, 1 Kings 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 Kings 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 days. 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 today, and yet I reserve more for him against tomorrow. That which he hath is but little and will not endure, but that which I will daily dispense is more, and shall be enough to keep him: Some Christians do live more upon hand than 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

crowding 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 days 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?

A fourth case of vexation is the strength of a present or successive exchange of many and greater afflictions.

For the assoiling 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 a high quiver; the blows which thou feelest are below, but the hand which strikes is above. As Paul said in another 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 doctrine (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 oftentimes 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 God's 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 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, Psalm 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, Micah 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 mercy to his people. Affliction is like a sword which can kill and may lance too. It is like a wind, which can sink, and may further the ship too: Now however afflictions may prove to 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, Hebrews 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 Abimelech's servants who stopped the Wells which Abraham's 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 contentment's, and so are a heavy pain to us.

Another is Infused: as in the matter of physic, 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 mere natural ability, 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 qualify all afflictions for good; as when he blessed the waters of Jordan, they cured Naaman of his leprosy; so when God tempers the afflictions, they shall cure his servants of their sinful corruptions. Isaiah 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 purify it; nor doth God cast his people into afflictions to destroy, but to better them. Ezekiel 20:37. I will cause you to pass 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 Jonathan's arrow, to inform us; or as Abigail's counsel, to hinder us; or like the Prodigal's penury, to recall us; or like Joseph's look, to revive our memories; or like Elisha's waters, to cleanse; or like David's rod to quicken, &c.

## CHAP. IV. DIVINE PROVIDENCE DOETH 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 physic 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 itself, so when afflictions come with a blessing, they reveal 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 hypocrisy, 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

chastisements; 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 upon man more than is meet, said Elihu. Isaiah 27:8. In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it. 1 Corinthians 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 than 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 a holy use thereof.

A third, By moderating the time; I will not contend for ever, said God, Isaiah 57:16. So 1 Peter 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 than 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 physic, 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; O this pride must be left, 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 than thou shouldst once, and for ever lose thy soul. If thou wilt not humble thyself under lesser 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 physic so long till the disease be cured.

A fifth case of vexing, is the checking of a good, which might be desired, and hath been sought in lawful ways, and lawfully too, and with fair probability, yet on a sudden it is turned upside down, there presents itself 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 patronize a most abhorred villainy, counsel is asked of God, directions given and followed (Judges 20:18 to 26), more than 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,

1. 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 than to God: Probable means do (through our corruption) stand betwixt 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 mere powers of the creature, and therefore God doth disappoint us of our desires, lest we should disappoint him of his glory.

2. Good ready to be delivered, by the probability of means, many times sticks in the birth, to affect us with the instability of the creatures; that though they look big 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, 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 net, they rise and fly; so mutable are all the creatures, and so deceivable 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 pretenses, and are apt enough to build strong inferences upon weak and paper bulwarks, to create assured, and much good & contentment, from the smiles and towardliness 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 sorrows; yet thus much we get, viz. an experience of the creature, and of our own compacting's, 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 enjoys 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 ways.

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.

One is the serenity and ripening concurrence of apparent means and ways; 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 man's 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 God's 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 strain 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 ourselves (against all changes and interpositions) upon God's good words, and press our good, yet after all this, out of the breasts of God's 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 a 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 always where means are fair, but where Providence is gracious: The greatness of desire, and the fairness of second agents are not sure trials of a convenient estate; that is not always 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 safety; 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.

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 mar 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 thoughtsome and disquieted if we could eye the strength and way of Providence: therefore consider;

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 itself particularly to the Children, as well as to the Parents; to the Orphans and Fatherless, as well and more than to others. The poor committeth himself unto thee, and thou art the helper of the fatherless; Psal. 10:14. A Father of the Fatherless, and a Judge of the Widows, 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 Boat before he was able to man the oar, or sail; he was but three months 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 herself just at that time, and at that place, and she spies the Ark, finds the child, and God gave such a piercing rhetoric 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 add another instance, it shall be in Hagar's child, she wanders in the wilderness of Beersheba, 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 stepped 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 mother's breast, I was cast upon thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly. The milk of Providence is sweeter and surer than that of the breast. So Psal. 27:10. When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up, (i.e.) God will be a Father unto me, though they should cease to be so, either through an unnatural estrangement or civil disableness, or irremediable dissolution by death. There be four things that

a parent should look after for his child; one to make him God's; the next, to make him the Commonwealth's; and a third, is according to his ability, allow him for present and future; and the last is, to refer him to God's promise, and Providence. Be not solicitous what great estate, what mighty friends, what marvelous 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 parents 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 only to God's finding) to have mounted the highest steps of ecclesiastical dignity, and to have had the highest ensigns of civil honor born before them in this city. The which as it is not the least prejudice to such persons, so it is a high evidence of a Providence which finds 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 children's 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:

1. 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 God's finding, we must to our own perplexing's. What a 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 villainous 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, Matt. 6:27. Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature? The 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 perplexing's, but from God's appointing's; and let us break our hearts with troublesome musings if we will, yet they shall be additions of our fears, but no furtherance's of our desires.

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 goodness, 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 loss by reason of the crowd of unbelieving and vexing thoughts, and are in our hearts murmuring, and quarreling, and fearing, when our tongues say we know not what: nay, and in our closer performances we feel many just



reproaches, and smiting's, upon the desires of great mercies: Why, thou then wilt not trust God for a bit of bread, nor a piece of cloth?

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. 33. 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 than 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.

5. Lastly, If things do befall us when we have vexed ourselves into the possession of them, yet now they are mingled and brackish, they are not so clear 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 knows not how to depend, hath 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 turbulence 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 humors; 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 ourselves a further burden.

A third Use which I would observe for our practice from the Doctrine of a general and special Providence, shall be this, 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 pours good upon us, as a Cloud oft times on a sudden besides our expectation, pours 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.

Waiting upon Providence is, An unlimited resignation of ourselves and desires to the seasons or times of God's good pleasure with a continued expectation of some good promised.

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 only 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 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.”

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.

Now because this Point of Waiting which respects the times of our grants and deliverances is hard to be practiced (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.

1. Times do belong to Providence as well as issues. My times (said David) are in thy hands: Not only 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 days 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.

2. Providence is pleased to take time before it doth us good: (i.e.) 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 always 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; 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 always. 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 a hand full of blessings, so it is an hand which is sure and certain. The Sun you know hath a time to withhold, but then it will have a time to rise and show itself again. So though God doth (to our sense) seem to neglect us in the ways and vigor's of his Providence, yet he hath a time to answer all our prayers, to fulfill all our necessities. Isa. 40:27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, 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 forever, and though he hath solicited help from me, and as yet hath it not, therefore I am purposed for ever to

withhold; 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 goodness, and God will not, nay cannot be unfaithful; It is impossible that he should lie. The Honor 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 honor would be under a cloud: who would think well of him, or trust him, or speak of his goodness.

4. The time of Providence is always 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 God's 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 a heap of rottenness instead of a store-house of plenty; it is the seasonable gathering which makes them to continue. He who hastens his mercy doth thereby lose it, but he who can stay God's time shall enjoy his mercy with sweetness. Our desires are many times but violent humors, but God's grants are ever wise: As he gives liberally, so he orders his giving's with discretion; and though he stays 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 advantageous 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 itself both, then it is seasonable. In an acceptable time have I heard thee, in a day of salvation have I favored thee, Isa. 49:8. David had his Kingdom at such a time which made more for his quiet and safety.

And as God's 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 Plaster 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 marvelous wisdom in Divine Providence in discerning of suitable mercies, and of seasonable times.

5. 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. God's delaying of us occasioneth diverse things,

Intimate discoveries of the Spirit: A man's corrupt heart will show itself 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 quarreling, and murmuring, and rising, and impatience, which now discovers itself in the heart, because it cannot presently have what it doth instantly expect; yea, what throes 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 imbecilities 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 days; God will not help, there's despair; 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 humbling's of the Spirit: For the tender soul may haply reflect on itself, and search for the reason of God's 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 God's time to send out the mercy desired.

Steadfast seeking's: 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 forcibleness of prayer, it doth taste 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. 1:27.

Contented submissions: God doth by delaying's work two mercies at once, One, that at length we shall have the good we crave; Another is, that he hath in the meantime 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 wait; if thou wilt bring it to pass, I desire to bless thee; if not, I yet desire to submit unto thee. Remember, that some crossings of our desires here below, cause our trusting's to fly up to God; and some delaying's will lessen our submitting's and waiting's upon his will. Now this is ordinary, God will satisfy our will, when we have risen so far as to submit to his; and when I can be able to deny myself, God will not easily deny my suit. No man stays 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 God's Answer, if we be too hasty to stay God's Leisure.

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 recompence for the former backwardness; we shorten our mercy many times by hasting 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 stays 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 Butler's dream, but staying a while for God's time, he had not a naked, but an honorable 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 delaying's are but the treasuring's 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 lies 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.

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 honor, 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 days, either in envying the greatness of other men's estate, or in the complaining's of our own shortness; any condition seems better and bigger than that which we enjoy.

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 less; yet the portion of either is from God. Our conditions are measured out not by the strength of our own prudence, nor by the mere 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 less; nay, the father gives a larger estate to one child than 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 less, 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.

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 which we have is enough (i.e.) we need not desire more, Having food and raiment let us therewith be content, saith the Apostle. There be desires of superfluity, & desires of conveniency. God's 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 gratify his wantonness 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 riotousness or indiligence. No estate will prove enough to him who trades in a licentious voluptuousness, or else sits still in a course of lazy idleness.

3. Every man's present portion given unto him by Divine Providence, is best. Since the fall everyone is, *Aeger 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 bestness depends upon a wise goodness. There is a double estate which may befall us; One is in Reals, as in more or less 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 labor? That is best; doth he recreate himself? That 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 wear 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 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 knows not the secret weakness of his own heart; as it is hard in a short estate to be quiet, so it is not easy in a 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, than 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 a 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

wise Abigail and foolish Nabal; a proud & froward and ill-natured husband, and a 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 burden, 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.

If there be such a Providence of God which is full of power to dispose, and alter, and help, and succor, 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 ourselves to the ways of God's 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 ourselves with the feelings and complaining's 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 entire and absolute, God was in them alone; but there are other 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 arms 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 ourselves to the ways 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 ourselves to such ways by which we may find Divine Providence to be a blessed and comfortable Providence unto us.

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 father's 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 cattle, and God blessed the means so used for his peace and comfort; 1 Chron. 19:12. If the Syrians be too strong for me than 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 ourselves 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 practice; 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 stairs; though he had the guard of Angels to keep him, yet it was in all his ways. We must indeed put ourselves upon God, but then it must be in God's means: if a 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 God's hand, as in the fountain, so it is in the Physician's 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 plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover. And this holds in Spirituals, as well as Temporals; the things which God hath joined 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 stopped up, or cut off, now there is nothing else to be done, but to make our address to the springs; so where God cuts off all second helps and furtherance's, there, as Jehoshaphat spake, We know not what to do, yet our eyes are towards thee. We must cast ourselves entirely 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 greediness. "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 goodness to bless and prosper. Observe a few things.

1. God appoints no sinful means. Evil ways 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 ways and methods are answerable to his nature and will, which is goodness itself, and the rule of goodness; he will not have us do any evil that good may come thereof.

2. He doth not prosper or bless such means. When Israel applies itself to Egypt and Asshur, 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 Philistines, 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 murder, 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 dogs lick the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. And Chap. 22:38. This was fulfilled on the King, and They washed his chariot, and the dogs licked up his blood, according to the word of the Lord which he spake. Gehazi hath a busy covetousness 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 Leprosy which clave to him and his seed for ever, 2 Kings 5:22-27. All unlawful ways are hedged about with curses; unjust getting's are like sand, clasp a handful of it, it will presently slip away; though we bring it home, yet God will blow upon it, Hag. 1:9. (i.e.) He will blast and shrivel it as the malignant wind doth, even, the bearing and hopeful plants. Do, go and defraud the laborer, but That silver which thou withholdest, shall cry out against thee as a witness, and shall eat thy flesh, Jam 5:2, 3, 4. Do, go and by lying, and usury, and bribery, and cozenage, pile up even treasures of gold, but being treasures of wickedness, they shall be cursed with confusion and ruin. 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 days, 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.

3. God's ways only are the ways 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 fatness

of the earth and plenty of corn and wine, Gen. 27:27, 28. Where thou seest God's prohibition, thou canst not there expect God's 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, Psa. 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 practice 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 David's hands more than once, Behold this 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 Lord's 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 wickedness to be my means to get it. And so he holds off Abishai in 1 Sam. 26. 8, 9. And after all this, David is brought in a righteous, and loyal, and obedient way to enjoy the Crown, and to rule after his own heart, Prov. 3:6 In all thy ways 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 God's Providence, then We must get our hearts to be upright. I am the Almighty God (or the God of All-sufficiency's) walk before me, and be thou perfect, said God to Abraham, Gen. 17:1. q.d. I am Infinite Goodness, 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 cross, and all this I will do for thee, if thou wilt walk uprightly before me, Job 22:21. Acquaint thyself 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 defense, 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 ways. Isa. 33:15. He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly. v. 16. He shall dwell on high, his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure. You shall find Providence spreading itself for the upright. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show 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, Psa. 97:11. There is Light in darkness for them, Psa. 112:4. There is Sure dwelling for them, Psa. 140:13. and Prov. 2:21. Nay Every good thing is for them, Psa. 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 single and plain before the Lord, he doth not love, nor bestow himself entirely on God, but will observe him merely for his own ends, and will make a division in God himself, that he must tolerate such a lewdness or wickedness, and then he

will be for him in any other command. I say when the heart is so full of flaws and secret rottenness that as the Jews 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 defense, 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 God's hand, who wilt not give unto him thy heart? And why should he bless thee, who wilt make all God's blessings but to serve against him? If thou wilt not be a faithful 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 thyself to be for God; the righteous shall be blessed, and not forsaken; the land of uprightness is impaled with the arm of God, and watered with the showers of Heaven. No good heart hath found God otherwise than 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 lays out himself for sin.

4. If we should find the good of God's Providence, Then we must get and exercise Faith. Faith is the eye which sees our good, and the hand into which God delivers it. 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 unfolded 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 itself, 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 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, than 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 easy to demonstrate unto you, the yielding's of Providence in all respects unto Faith.

Removing of evils and hindering 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 hindrances, (i.e.) God's Providence to hinder attempts. Hezekiah did trust in the Lord his God, and the Lord hindered Sennacherib's enterprise, and turned him back to his home again.

"Preservation is another 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 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 truth's 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 myself, but mine eyes are towards thee, I rest on thee to be my God, my portion, my help, my stay, my deliverance, 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, show him his own hand, let him know that he hath undertaken for thee, and thou art his, and on him wilt thou stay thyself. 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 loss, and it is his honor to be faithful; Now thou art truth itself, who hast promised and canst not lie, nor deny thyself; Lo, Lord! Is not this the word which thou hast 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 myself on thy wisdom and fidelity, and do beseech thee for thy Covenant's 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 liar; 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 soldier 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 God's 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 enjoined industry in them. You know when an Artificer contrives the variety of wheels; one greater, another lesser; one above, another below; all this Artificial composition is for motion: So, the several forms of men's callings they are to be managed with action and labor, 1 Cor. 1:17. We are to walk in our callings. Eph. 4:28. We are to work in our callings, Let him labor, 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 threatened 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 God's 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 God's 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.

Ob. 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 labored 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 labor by some accident are taken away. The Soldier in the War loseth his arms, and hands, and legs, 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 foist 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 a house of Labor.

Ob. We can get no work.

Sol. 1. Why did you put yourself 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 thievish 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 yourselves out of the way of his Providence; to thy shop again, and to thy needle again, and to thy labor 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 labors with his blessed providence, that thou shalt have sufficiency, though not magnificence; enough shall be thy portion all thy days.

If there be a Providence which doth wisely dispose all things, then this may yet lesson us to Quiet ourselves under all the injuries which light upon us in this life. David was once in a great strait, when his own son turned Traitor and pursued him; and that which might add bitterness to his sorrow, was this, that 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 God's Providence in them; they could not befall us without the permission of Providence. If any person withhold his favor 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 than 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 merely from their own grounds of malice? The soldiers in an army are always in the best and strictest part of military discipline, when the enemy surrounds 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.

## CHAP. V. USE AND COMFORTS TO THE CHURCH FROM DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

I will now close up this Doctrine of Providence with a Use of Comfort and duty to the Church and people of God.

First, For Comfort:

Since there is a special Providence actively and effectually laying out itself in a singular way for the good of the Church, then this may be as a rock for the Church to stay and rest itself in all the varieties and difficulties of its militant estate and condition. St. Augustine well distinguishes 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 æternitate mansionis*, one is travelling, the other is lodging; one is in labor, 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 Temptations, but of that which is afflicted 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 defense (as it is the honor 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 near 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 of them that hate his Name, and would utterly ruin his servants. But as they say of the Air, that though that part which is next to us be full of Meteors, and Vapors, 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 show unto you six Comforts which the Militant Church may confidently draw from God's Providence.

1. From the Purpose of it and counsel.
2. Another from the Power and might of it.
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.

1. Nothing befalls them but what God hath decreed and determined; as nothing befell 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 Joseph's case, David's 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 ruin and razing 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 dependencies never more doubled and quickened than when the bondage of Pharaoh, the threatening's 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.

2. Another Comfort respects the power of Divine Providence: The power of God's 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 Christ's 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 grass? V. 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? V. 15. But I am the Lord thy God, &c. v. 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. When Joshua 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 Joshua 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 Defense, 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 Church's side, One God is stronger than all.

But let me break this into some particulars, the power of Providence is many ways for the Church:

1. 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 God's pleasure. The curst Dog may snarl, but he can bite none further than his chain doth reach: God's 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 themselves and boast of, and withal when we say that the Church is weak and gasping. If all the Devils in hell should present themselves in their legions, and every wicked man living should concenter with all the armories of rage and desperateness against one poor silly weak disarmed member of Christ and his Church, they are not all of them able (unless 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 show 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 control, *Omne sub imperio imperium majore*.



2. It can confound all their power: When they have plotted and consulted; when they have begun, and think to prosper; when they have achieved some part of their design and applaud their villainous insolencies; when they think to break the heart of the Church with unsufferable rigors, yet then can the power of Providence arise, and brandish itself, and disappoint, and rescue. It can take out the prey from the teeth of the lion, 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 weakness of Hezekiah, God fetches 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 endeavored 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 with the Ammonites & those of Mount Seir, against Judah, God did turn their weapons against themselves, and they mutually became their own executioners. How easy is it with God (and he hath done it) to overthrow his Church's 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 defeating's; 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 bonds slave, but

by Divine Providence to be a Prince and a Father: Haman aims at the ruin 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 employ 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 knows no death, and the Church shall abide forever, 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 flock, Jer. 31:10. He that scatters Israel, will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth 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 days 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 yearning towards it? That he is so sensible, and so compassionate? How can it be ill with the Church, while its God hath power enough to help, and love enough to bestow it?

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 powerful God; being to deal with malicious and cruel enemies, it hath yet a most tender and affectionate God; and being to deal with politic and subtle 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 only the generation of the Dragon, but also the seed of the Serpent; and are called Foxes for their wiliness; hence you read of their Traps, of their Nets, of their Devices, mischievous Devices, of their Snares, and Schemes (in the Scripture); they have their pretenses, blends, cunning semblances to cover their rotten hearts and intentions, and yet mischief, and falsehood, and death is in their thoughts: But God is wiser than 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 ways to rescue and deliver his own people.

5. A fifth comfort is from the fidelity and truth 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, lopped 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 Ezekiel's dead dry bones, yet God will breathe 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 scattering, and confounding the enemies of it.

6. Lastly, The constancy of Providence is another comfort. Providence is an eye still open for the Church, Psal. 121:3. He that keepeth thee will not slumber, v. 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 evermore. 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 reviling's. v. 8. For the Moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool, but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation. So Isa. 42:14. I have long time holden my peace, I have been still, and refrained myself, now will I destroy, and devour 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 straight, 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 entered 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 itself for it, Most tender affections towards it, Wisdom to foresee, and divert, and defeat and supply; Faithfulness 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 henceforth and forever. What could we wish more to the Church than good? And what more for the safety of it than 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.

Secondly. For Duty.

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.

1. To reform the Provocations of God: Even Israel may flee before the men of Ai if Israel hath sinned. God's own people shall feel the smart of the rod, if they trespass against him. It is not that his hand is shortened 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 affection, but ourselves for want of obedience; not him for want of justice, but ourselves for want of Repentance; not him for want of power, but ourselves for want of carefulness and observance. Psal. 81:13. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways. v. 14. I should soon

have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. v. 15. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him; but their time should have endured forever. The Church many times (like our bodies) contracts many vile and dangerous humors, 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, drunkenness (like the deluge) spreads over all sorts of persons, that there remains scarce any more than 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 days of their peace and security. We learn that in affliction which we would not hearken unto in prosperity; when the Thief was on the Cross, then he thinks of a heavenly Kingdom.

2. To put itself 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 the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards me? Are they restrained? V. 16. Doubtless thou art our father, though, &c. Thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer, thy name is from everlasting. v. 17. Return, O Lord, for thy servants' sakes, the tribes of thine inheritance. v. 18. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while, our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. v. 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 pathetic form of importunate prayer. Isa. 64:1. Oh 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 righteousness as filthy rags, &c. Our iniquities like the wind have taken us away. v. 7. And there is none that calls upon thy name, that stirs 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 very wroth, O Lord, neither remember iniquity forever; 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 thyself 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 labored. 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 than true



repentance nor surer weapon to overthrow the enemy than faithful and earnest prayer.

3. Engage this singular Providence for you by your trust in God, and your dependence upon his Providence for yourselves and for his Churches. To quicken you to this, take these Motives:

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, Psalm 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, Psalm 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 recompense it whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose.

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 Church's 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.

FINIS.