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A
S E R M O N
O F
Divine Providence,
In the Special Preservation
O F
G O V E R N M E N T
A N D
K I N G D O M S,
On *Psal.* CXXVII. 1..

*By WILLIAM PINDAR, late Fellow of University-
Colledg in Oxford, and Chaplain to the Right Ho-
nourable Ford, Lord Grey of Werke.*

Published on the Discovery of the Late PLOT.

L O N D O N: Printed by *M. Clark*, for *H. Brome*,
at the Gun in *S. Paul's Church-yard* near the
West-end. MDCLXXIX.

A
S E R M O N

O N

Psal. CXXVII. 1.

— *Except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman
waketh but in vain.*



ING Solomon, to whom this *Psal*m is intitled, doth in the beginning of it assume the person of an *Ecclesiastes*, addresses his discourse to the people, and instructs them who is to be the object of their trust and dependance; or if King *David* made it for the use of his Son (whom he designed to leave his Successor in the Kingdom, and therefore took care to instruct him early, who was to be his, and the Kingdoms Keeper) he inculcates upon him the same lesson; by shewing the being, and necessity of Gods Providence, in order

V. Jun. & Trem.
in loc.

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der to the good regiment of all humane affairs, and to the accomplishing of those designs which men have under the Sun; without which, those means will not be able to produce their ends, which yet seem very accommodate to them, and in most mens account, might be thought sufficient to effect them. *For except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it.* Men may take a great deal of pains to very little purpose, unless God prosper the work of their hands; though they dig deep, lay the foundations of the structure they design, upon a rock; and so *build their nest very high*; yet if God speak the word, the rock trembles, the building shakes, and then as the Prophet saith, *The stone shall fly out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.* Nor is Gods Providence less necessary to the prospering the designs of our heads, then it is to the accomplishment of the works of our hands: For as a City cannot be built without him, so nor will it stand long unless he establish it; nor can it be upheld in peace, or defended in war, unless he protect and keep it; no provident circumspection and watchfulness of the Magistrates, no care and diligence of the Ministers that attend them, and execute their commands, can secure it from secret Enemies,

or

Hab. ii. 9.

Ver. 11.

or from open violences, unless God be pleased to superintend and watch over it; *For except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.* And as the Psalmist teacheth us that neither the private nor public administration of affairs can prosper without Gods blessing; so in the three following verses the remaining part of this *Psalm*, he informs us that the very continuance and succession of Families must be ascribed to the same cause; *For loe children* (saith ^{2 Sam. xviii. 24, 25.} he) *and the fruit of the womb are an heritage and gift,* ^{2 Kings ix. 17.} *that cometh of the Lord.* ^{Eccl. xxi. 11.} That they are at all made and born into the world, and that they live in it, to bear up their Fathers Name and Family, comes peculiarly from the benediction of God, *this is a gift that cometh of the Lord.* So that the main point which the Text recommends to us, is the necessity of Gods care and providence to the preservation of all Government, and public Societies, and without it the insufficiency of all other means to preserve them from ruine under the similitude of a *Watchman*, who was used to be placed upon some eminent Tower of the City; sometimes in time of Peace, always in time of War, both by day and by night, to give notice of any Enemies approach against the City, or of any sudden evil, such as Fire or the like, springing up within it. And in the handling of this Subject,

I shall offer these things to your consideration.

I. That it is God that keeps the City, or the concern that God's Providence hath in the preservation of Government, and all publick Societies ; and this Point is implied in the Text.

II. The insufficiency of all other means, or any thing that men can do to preserve the public welfare, unless God's Providence be pleased to superintend and keep it ; and this is fully expressed, Except the Lord, &c.

III. The great obligation incumbent upon us to engage God's care to watch over the public by endeavouring to make our selves worthy of such a keeper ; and this Point is inferred, and it is that Use which we are to make of the Premisses.

1. It is God who keeps the City, his Providence is concerned in the preservation of Government, and all publick Societies.

As soon as God had by his Almighty Word created the World, and made his eternal Power, Wisdom, and Goodness illustrious, in this most august and beautiful Temple which he erected to his honour ; although he furnished it with its portion of Goods, gave it sufficient abilities to perform all the offices of its nature ; yet he did not manumit it, and as if he foresaw that he should be otherwise employed, or that business would interrupt the
stream

stream of his happiness, did he resolve to take no further care of it; but as he knew that by the law of its nature it was dependant upon him, so did he always design to reign over it, to sustain, and uphold it, and to make his Name more glorious, and his Attributes yet more illustrious in his Government of it.

The continuance of all things as they were from the 2 Pet. iii. 4.
beginning of the creation, the regular motions of
the Heavens, the constant returns of Summer
and Winter, seed-time and harvest, day and night, in Gen. viii. 22.
their proper seasons; the alternate mutations of
bodies, and the safety of the universe, notwithstanding
the mutual oppositions of contrary
material Principles, doth manifest, that the
world is no more governed, then it was made
by chance, but that the Lord hath prepared his Psal. ciii. 19.
throne in the heavens, and that his Kingdom ruleth lix. 13.
over all, that he ruleth in Jacob, and unto the ends
of the world.

Nor doth he only as the common Father of the world, extend his care and providence to his whole Creation, but he more particularly exercises it about the concerns of his rational off-spring; and yet more peculiarly about them, as they are linked together into several Societies, and by the benefit of wholesome Laws, prudently formed into various Govern-

ments : for for these it is that the Text insinuates God hath a more especial regard, *For it is he that keepeth the City*, that watcheth over the Nation, and preserves the publick weal of the Kingdom, and that, both from the secret machinations of intestine Adversaries, and from the open violences of Foreign Enemies.

1. It is God who preserves the Government from suffering any notable change, or dissolution, by the secret machinations of home-bred Adversaries.

There never was, nor, considering the present constitution of humane nature, probably can be, such a Government contrived, and managed, as will give content and satisfaction to all its Members ; for suppose men could agree to new-model every Government, even after the *Platonic* or *Eutopian* order ; because a very few persons, in comparison of the rest, can but have a share in the Legislative or Executive power of it, therefore will a great many in all likelihood be disquieted, that some share doth not fall to their Lot, who, it may be, will think themselves as able to govern as they are, who ingross the Dominion to themselves.

Numb. xxvi.
11.

For this very reason we know, that *Corah* and his Company gainsaid Gods own constitution ;

tion; and it is natural for ambitious and aspiring men in such circumstances (of whom there is good store in every Kingdom) partly out of revenge, and partly out of hopes to rise by a change, to oppose themselves to the established Government; besides, those advantages of honour, and reputation, and wealth, which are the usual rewards of them that bear Rule, will but raise the envy and anger of many men who will think themselves hardly dealt with, that they have not the same opportunity of being considerable in the world; and this will kindle in them great desires of change, and make them watchful to apprehend any occasion wherein they may effect it. Add to this, that oftentimes there are so many private interests driving on, contrary to that of the publick; and many mens tempers and dispositions are frequently so opposite to that which is requisite to make them peaceable and Loyal Subjects; and sometimes a Magistrate may do things that will be harsh and ungrateful to the Subject; men are naturally so ready to shake off any yoke that is troublesome to them, and very desirous to enjoy an unbounded liberty; many men are so weary of that which they have been accustomed to enjoy, and so desirous of change and Novelty, fancying

cying to themselves great happiness in another turn : These things being well considered, we cannot but say , that it is *God who keeps the City*, from being ruined, by these inward causes of dissolution ; that it is an illustrious argument of the Providence of God, that Government and Society is preserved in the world, notwithstanding that so many men by interest, by inclination, by humour, are still concerned to disturb it.

Psal. lxxv. 1.

Ver. 5.

Ver. 7.

Psal. xciii. 5.

King David, who understood very well the art of Government, praises God upon this account, and acknowledgeth this Salvation as his own wonderful work : *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion.*—*Thou shalt shew us wonderful things in thy righteousness, O God of our Salvation.*—*For thou stillest the raging of the Seas, the noise of its Waves, and the madness of the people, even of that people, who being considered under the former circumstances seems as ungovernable as the vast Ocean, and yet are by the wise and powerful Providence of God so secretly over-ruled, as to pay due subjection to Government, or at least hindred from giving any great disturbance to it ; For though the waves of the sea be mighty, yet the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier.*

And this God doth, *i. e.* preserve Government

ment from dissolution by intestine Adversaries, sometimes by turning the Counsels of the Conspirators into foolishness, as he did that of *Achitophel*; and by making the hidden things of darkness be strangely brought to light, as in the case of the *Powder-Plot*: And when a Conspiracy is ripened into actual Rebellion, he stops it; sometimes by taking off the principal person concerned in the Defection, as in the case of *Absalom*, of *Sheba the Son of Bichri*, and of *Wat Tyler*; sometimes by disposing the minds of the people to return to their duty, as by *David's* message to the men of *Judah*, after the Rebellion of his Son; and as was done by an Apologue handsomly applied to the Commons of *Rome* by *Menenius Agrippa*. *2 Sam. xx. 22.*

And as God doth by his Providence preserve Government from ruin by the secret Machinations or open tumults of intestine Enemies: so,

II. It is he also that preserves it from the open Violences of forein Adversaries.

For God is in a peculiar manner styled in Holy Writ the *Lord of Hosts*, the sole Arbiter of the success of War; it is he alone who scattereth the people who delight in it; he that maketh wars to cease in all the world, that breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the *Pfal. lxxviii. 30.*
Pfal. xli. 9.

chariots in the fire: It is he that can put a hook in the nose, and a bridle in the lips of a proud and insolent Enemy, and can turn him back by the way by which he came. When the

Isa. xxxvii. 29. *haughty King of Assyria boasted the extent of his Conquests, God tells him how it came to pass that his Arms had been so prosperous;*

2 Kings xix. 25. *Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps.* But when this

Isa. x. 5. *rod of Gods anger, and the staff of his indignation, had done the work which God had appointed him, then did he punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks, and after a wonderful manner delivered Jerusalem out of his hands.*

And it sometimes has graciously pleased Almighty God to magnifie his power in the preservation of a people when a potent Enemy has been ready to devour them, and there has appear'd no probable humane way of escaping his fury. For when things seem to be desperate, all help has failed them, and scarce

Gen. xxii. 14. *hope is left behind, then Jehovah-jireh, it is Gods time of appearing with succour, and in the mount will the Lord be seen; then as the Psalmist expresses it, when the poor committeth him-*

self

self unto him, doth God take the matter into his hand; for he is the helper of the friendless.

When one Nation becomes a scourge to another, takes their fortresses, vanquishes their powers, and treads them down as the mire in the streets; though the Conqueror may be only driving on the ends of his own ambition, malice, revenge and covetousness, (for which God will take a time to reckon with him,) yet doth he all this while carry on the great design Isa. x. 6, 7. &c. of Gods Providence, and is only the minister of His vengeance, which He by him pours out upon that people against whom he is sent; and in this execution he cannot go beyond the Commission which God hath given him; He puts bounds to the raging of the Sea, and to the fury of men, and they cannot exceed those terms which he hath set them. So then, that a peoples Enemies do not prevail against them, or if they do prevail, that they do not make a full end of them, and *the consumption doth not* Ver. 21. *overflow in judgment*, is solely to be ascribed to the good Providence of God, which is the great defence of a Nation: *For it is the Lord who keeps the city.*

And the greatness of this blessing, that God should have such a special concern for the pre-

servation of publick Peace and Order, and Government, and especially from the evil Machinations of intestine Enemies, will appear by considering these two particulars; and which may pass also for such reasons of his Providence, as may make the Wisdom of his doings conspicuous to us.

1. Because the world would not be otherwise tolerably habitable, if Gods Providence did not watch over it, and preserve that Authority in it which he had conferred on the Magistrate. We may as well imagin that a Ship could live at Sea in a great tempest, when it is tossed among rocks and quicksands, and wants a Pilot to manage her; as that Societies made up of men of different interests, of distracted minds, of boisterous passions and extravagant humours, should yet flourish and be upheld in peace and safety, if the great Governour of the world did not oppose himself to those overflowings of ungodliness, and took care to preserve that order which himself had constituted: If he by whom Kings reign, did not sustain and uphold Government, and defend that Authority by his Providence which he has derived to Magistrates his Deputies in administering the affairs of his natural Kingdom; all Societies would fall in pieces, and
confusion

confusion and misery would cover the face of the earth. For how should Justice be administered, where the Magistrates Authority is not owned, where every mans will is the measure of right and wrong, and where it is accounted no duty to be obedient to Laws? How should property be preserved, where all inclosures are broken down, every mans right is invaded, and the distinctions between superiors and inferiors are confounded? How should a Kingdom stand, when the Pillars thereof are undermined, Religion is exploded, mutual Trust and Fidelity is derided, the offices of Charity are neglected, and men let themselves loose to all licentiousness? But thus it would be, if God should relax the reins of Government, withdraw for a while his providential Care and Goodness, which maintains and defends it, and leave things to be ordered by the turbulent and contrary humours of degenerate men.

Alas, *who could live, if God should do this?* If he should not reign as King, the floods would ^{Numb. xxiv.} 23.

lift up their waves, and rage horribly, and no humane power could be able to say unto them, *Peace, be still.* And therefore the blessing must ^{Psal. xciii. 4, 5.} needs be great, by which Order and Happiness are preserved amongst us, and the world becomes an habitation fit for us.

2. By this means also all our own study, and care, and industry that is laid out upon the preservation of the publick is not in vain, but effect those ends to which such means are designed; for the work must succeed which God hath prospered, when he keeps the city, the watchman waketh to very good purpose. And therefore upon the consideration of this great blessing, that Gods Providence watcheth over a Nation for good, we are kept off from all despondency touching the issue of our own labours about the same end; we are taught to rely upon him who is All-sufficient, and encouraged to use all rational means to preserve our selves, because God keeping us, they cannot be in vain. So that being secured of Gods Providence, we have all imaginable assurance given us, that if we be intent upon the doing of our duties for the preservation of the publick; the Body Politick will be preserved in a good Athletick frame and temper: For as God doth not use to work miracles to preserve the careless and the dissolute, who neglect the ordinary means of their safety; so nor doth his Providence ordinarily forsake them, who use all the care that becomes them for the securing of themselves, and then resign themselves to the Divine will and pleasure.

I should now pass on to the second Particular, but that it is fit that I should say something in answer to an Objection, which will spring up in every ones mind upon his hearing of the Premisses. For if God thus keep the City, that is, has such a care for Government, as has been declared, then how comes it to pass that Government is sometimes overturned by the arms of a prosperous rabble, that a flourishing Nation is sometimes brought to ruin by the evil devices of Intestine, and sometimes by the invasion of Foreign Enemies? How comes God to permit wickedness to possess the place of judgment, and iniquity the place of righteousness? all civil and sacred rights to be invaded, and nothing but confusion and desolation to be spread over a Nation.

Ecccl. iiii. 16.

For answer to which doubts it must be considered, That a Nation may by their sins forfeit all the right it had to Gods providential care and Protection over it; so that he may in justice leave it to be punished by the malice and rage of its enemies, and use them as his rod, to scourge the wickedness of a perverse and rebellious people. That God has frequently dealt thus with several publick Communities, when their sins have been ripe for vengeance, the Histories of his dealings with several Nations

Gen. xv. 16.

Lev. xviii. 24.

25.

Deut. xxxii.

19.

2 Kings xvii.

6, 7, 18.

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2 Chro. xxxvi.
14, 17.
St. Luke xix.
41, 42, 43, 44.
1 Thes. ii. 15,
16.

ons set down in the Holy Scriptures, make clearly evident. And that there is very good reason that he still should do so in the like cases, that is, punish a Nation severely, when its sins reach heaven, and sometimes blot it out from under it, when it is past all remedy, will appear evident also to the sober considerer of these following things: For,

1. These dealings of God vindicate the honour of his Attributes before all men, and give clear demonstration of his impartial Justice and Providence to the world. It may be the people over whom God extended his care, and made them dwell at ease, *sacrificed to their own net, and burnt incense to their drag*, ascribed their prosperity to their own policies, and thought that their success was the sole product of their own wisdom and industry; or it may be, they begun to think God such a one as themselves, that their prosperity was an approbation of their wickedness, that the respite of judgment was the remission of their guilt, and because the Divine sentence was not executed, therefore they were acquitted, and *their hearts thereupon fully set in them to do evil*. Thus those Scoffers whom St. Peter described (2 Ep. 3.) thought the evil day was far from them, indeed so far, as that it would never over-

Ecc. viii. 11.

overtake them, since all things continued as they always were, they ask, Where is Gods promise of his coming to judgment? It may be the impunity of such a people does at length become a scandal to their neighbours, and they begin to cry out, *Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are they happy that deal very treacherously?* And in these or the like cases, it is but necessary that God should convince them and the world, by a Demonstration *à posteriori*, how much they were mistaken in their notions of Him and his Providence; since now he means to assert his own honour by making such a people as notorious for their punishments, as they had been infamous for their crimes. For thus did God resolve to vindicate himself and the former methods of his Providence in the overthrow of the *Egyptians*, *I will get me honour (saith he) upon Pharaoh and upon all his host, and the Egyptiaans shall know that I am the Lord, &c.* Jer. xii. 1.
Exod. xiv. 17,
18.

2. Kingdoms as such, are only capable of being thus punished by God in this life, in being bereaved of all those blessings which make them a happy and a flourishing Nation. This is the time of recompence to them; the rewards or punishments of the other life being there only to be measured out to every single
C person,

person, according to the things that he has done in the body, whether it be good or bad.

3. God makes public Judgments become common Antidotes against the poison of wickedness, by disburthening the world of that heavy load of incorrigible sinners that oppresseth it, and making posterity afraid of imitating their vices, out of hopes of impunity, when they have seen that sin in the end has become so great a reproach to a people, that it has only brought forth the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. The Israelites whom God had owned in Egypt for his own peculiar people, and delivered them thence, from the house of bondage, with a mighty hand, and so as to make his name renowned among all the Nations, and was carrying them through the Wilderness towards the land of Promise; yet their frequent rebellions against God in the Wilderness, made him swear in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest; and accordingly none of them did enter into Canaan, save Caleb and Joshua: but God made them sojourn in the wilderness forty years, that those incorrigible sinners might be cut off, and a better generation of men might be grown up, to possess the land which God had provided for them.

Deut. xxxii.
33.

Heb. xi. 3.

Numb. xiv. 30.

Public Afflictions are the last Remedies which God useth for the curing of public Maladies ; but when the methods of his Patience fail, and he is weary with bearing, then the nature of the distemper, and the ends of his Government require, that he should lay the ax to the root, and the fan to the floor, and that he should burn up the chaff with unquenchable Fire. This account of Gods dealing with *Judah* doth the sacred History give us ; *And the Lord God of their fathers sent unto them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling-place : but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy ; therefore he brought upon them the King of the Chaldees, &c.* 2 Chro. xxxvi, 15, 16, 17.

It is true, in all National Judgments, good men oftentimes bear their share, as well as the wicked ; for they are all equally members of the same *Body Politic*, and therefore the same distempers of State will affect them both. But this still makes a calamity become far the more grievous to the Public, in that those men that are the salt of Society and keep it from putrefaction, those that by the fervency of their Prayers and the holiness of their Lives kept

Psal. lxxv. 4.

Isa. ix. 12, 17.
21.

off Gods judgments for a long time ; and when the divine displeasure begins to arise, do as *Moses* stand in the gap, and mediate for the people, that the whole Nation perish not ; that these men are swept away in a common calamity, that bear up *the pillars of the earth*, is very inauspicious to the Public, and augments their miseries. God would have saved *Sodom* for ten righteous, and it is for the sake of good men (the Rabbins say) that the world is preserved ; to see them therefore perish in the common fate is a sad instance, that *Gods anger is not turned away, but that his hand will be stretched out still.*

Lev. xiv. 44,
45.

4. National sins by a natural efficacy produce publick miseries ; fit and dispose a State for its dissolution. They are like the *fretting leprosie in an house*, which diffuses its venom through every part of the building, and the plague is not to be cured, but by rasing it to the foundation. Thus fell the Jewish State by the *Romans* ; thus did the *Greek Empire* lose its glory and splendor, and *Mahomet* prevailed ; and thus the *Britains* (saith *Gildas Sapiens*) were lost, when the *Saxons* invaded them. And this every Nation tends to naturally, according to the prevalency that Idleness and Luxury, Pride and Intemperance and Factionness have over them. While

“ While States and Commonwealths have
 “ been in their growth and rising, Arts Milita-
 “ ry have flourished; when they have been set-
 “ tled and stood at a height, Arts Liberal; and
 “ drawing to their declension and ruin, Arts
 “ Voluptuary.

*Bacon, Adv. of
 Learn. l. 4. c. 2.
 p. 131.*

And thus briefly I have endeavoured to give
 some account, why, notwithstanding Gods
 great care and concern for the preservation of
 Government, and public Society, yet a flour-
 ishing Nation may be sometimes ruined by
 Rebels from within, or by the invasion of a
 potent Enemy from without.

I come now to consider the second particu-
 lar, and which is expressed in the Text, *viz.*
 The Insufficiency of all other means or any
 thing that men can do to preserve the public
 welfare, unless Gods Providence be pleased to
 superintend and keep it: For *except the Lord
 keep the city, &c.*

And this Point, namely, *That all that men can
 do will not be able to secure the publick welfare, un-
 less God be on their side, and keep it;* stands up-
 on these four following Reasons.

First, Because the over-ruling hand of
 Gods Providence orders all the affairs of the
 world as it best pleases him; and this I think
 is clear in that I have said upon the first parti-

cular; and if it be so, then the consequence of it must be also evident, *viz.* That the public welfare cannot be preserved without his blessing, by whose guidance all things are ordered, without whose concurrence nothing can be effected, upon whose disposal all success dependeth. For how should we prosper, if God be not on our side? Are we stronger than he? Can we wrest the Government out of his hand, by our policies out-wit the *mighty Counsellor*, or weary him by resistance, to whom *power alone belongeth*? Or if God be not for us, can we think that he will not be against us? Do we suppose that God will stand *neuter*, an unconcern'd spectator of all human affairs that are represented upon the theatre of this world; not caring who wins the prize, nor who becomes a prey to a powerful and cruel enemy? Is there no interest but our own going on in the world? Has not God the great ends of his Wisdom, Justice and Goodness to promote, the glory of his Name and Attributes to secure, by his providential dispensations? Yes of this we may be well assured, that God is absolute and supreme in his authority, wise and righteous in all his ways, and that he who made all things by the word of his power, will rule and govern them so as to illustrate his Glory, and

accom-

Isa. ix.

Psal. lxii. 11.

accomplish his ends by the power of his Providence.

Secondly, All that men can do will not be able to preserve the public welfare, unless God be pleased to keep it; because our understandings are too shallow, our powers too little, our lives too short and uncertain, to compass any considerable designs, or to do those things that will secure a Nation, without the blessing of Gods Providence. For,

(1.) The wisest Politicians cannot certainly foresee what things may rise in their way to stop the attainment of their ends, so cannot tell what means to furnish themselves with, that may be able to remove those obstacles. Men cannot bring about their designs, but by means that are proper and adequate to them; what means will be so they cannot certainly tell, unless they could also know what impediments they must remove, before they can compass their ends: this cannot be known, unless they could foresee all those possible accidents, which may suddenly spring up contrary to their designs; but such foresight is beyond the sphere of a human intellect: The wisest man can but guess probably in some things, he may be to seek in many, and it is possible that he may be mistaken in all. A design may go
on.

on very glibly for some time, when on a sudden some undiscernible accident arises, which mars the project, though very finely spun, stops the Politician in the midst of his career, and then *the wise are taken in their own craftiness*. Machiavel observes it of *Cæsar Borgia* (the base Son of Pope *Alexander VI.* whom for his Policy he proposes as a fit pattern for Princes,) that he had considered and foreseen all the consequences that his Fathers sudden death might produce; and accordingly was so well prepared for such an accident, that his Enemies, of whom he had good store, should not be able to do him any great damage upon it, or to influence the Conclave contrary to his interests. But he, as cunning as he was, did not foresee nor provide against that sudden accident which did fall out, and which was his ruin; for he did not consider that himself might be sick, as he was, when his Father died suddenly of that very Poison which they had both prepared for them that they hated, and which was given to themselves by mistake; upon which account he could not in that exigent look after his affairs, but was forced to shift for his life, which he after lost unlamented. Thus (as *Eliphaz* saith) *did God disappoint the devices of the crafty, so that their hands could not perform their enterprise.*

Job v. v. 12.

Frou

From what small and contemptible beginnings have the greatest matters that could concern the public risen ! Upon what slender and secret hinges have the fates of whole Nations turned ! Who would have thought that *Masaniello* a poor simple Fisherman, should have in a few days time gained an absolute unlimited power over the City of *Naples*, and caused such revolutions in it, as scarce any History can parallel ? And how was it possible for the wisest Statesman to have foreseen, and to have been furnished with means to have prevented such an accident ?

God indeed can certainly foresee the most minute and remote contingencies that can possibly arise about any affair ; he can bring about his ends without means, or by very unlikely ones ; he sometimes *chuses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and the base things of the world and things which are despised, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.* Thus did he baffle the counsel of *Achitophel*, which was accounted as wise as if a man should have enquired of the oracle of God, with the worse counsel of *Hushai*. He made *Haman* minister to the honour and advancement of him whom he most hated, *Mordecai* ;

1 Cor. i 27, 28.

2 Sam. xvi. 23. ch. xvii.

Esth. vi, vii.

and afterwards ruin'd him with his own project, and he was taken in the crafty wilyness that he had imagined. He at the same time delivered the Jews in captivity when they were upon the brink of ruin, even after they had been devoted to it by *Ahasuerus* himself. So great, so efficacious is the Divine Wisdom.

But now men are posed with every difficulty that arises, and even when they have gone a great way toward their design, and a little cross unforeseen accident emerges, it puts them to their wits end, and dashes all their hopes of success in a moment: For *malum ex quolibet defectu* is here also found true; if one link be but broken in this chain of consequences, the desired Conclusion will never be inferred.

(2.) Our powers are very little, our hands are too weak to effect all those things which even our wisdom tells us are necessary to be done in order to the security of the Public Weal; and we must be forced to venture much of our affair in another bottom, and commit our business to Instruments, which can act as freely as our selves, and not only so far as they are influenced by us. We cannot say to them, as God does to the waters of the Sea, *Hitherto shall ye come, and no further*: We cannot bound
their

their operations, for they are free and not natural Agents; and being so, they may several ways spoil the fairest design we can possibly engage in. But admit our Instruments should prove wise and faithful, yet still our powers would be too little, unless we could either so keep under our enemies, that they should not be able to obstruct our affairs; or so to influence them, as to make them promote them. For although neither the power nor the cunning of our enemies should be equal to ours, yet if their malice be great, that may make them very vigilant to gain an opportunity, wherein they may do most prejudice to our affairs.

God indeed can make his enemies serviceable to his ends, he can make them do His business, when they think most certainly that they are driving on their own. When through envy the Brethren of *Joseph* sold him into *Egypt*; this they thought was an effectual course to prove the vanity of his dreams, and to prevent their falling down before him and worshipping him; when loe by that very action God was making way for his exaltation to the Government of *Egypt*, and so for the certain accomplishment of his dreams: and when through false accusation he was cast into pri-

son, this was but one farther step towards his Advancement. When *Judas* betrayed, *Pilate* condemned, and the *Jews* crucified the Lord of Life, every one of them was driving on their several interests; *Judas*, that he might get money; *Pilate*, lest he should not shew himself a friend to *Cesar*, and that he might gain the favour of the *Jews*; the *Jews*, that they might revenge themselves upon him who had prophesied evil against them, and prevent the *Romans* from coming and taking away their Nation, upon the score of the common peoples running after *Jesus* as a King.

And yet God did not only blast these counsels of the wicked, and made their execrable villany so far from promoting their several ends, that it was the only thing that defeated them; (for we know what *Judas* got by the thirty pieces the price of his Treason; *Pilate* not long after lost *Cesar's* favour, and killed himself in his banishment; and the *Romans* within forty years after did come and took away the *Jewish* Nation, and they, once Gods peculiar people, continue yet vagabonds upon the face of the earth:) God did not only I say defeat their several ends, by those very actions which they expected would have secured them; but, which is the thing I aim at, he did

accomplish his own great and glorious end by the treasons, and conspiracies, and malice of his bitter enemies; an end worthy of God, to draw the greatest good out of the greatest evil, and by which he manifested the glory of his Attributes as clearly, as he did by the Creation of the world: For by the death of his Son did he destroy the works of the Devil, bruise the head of that old Serpent, his first and greatest enemy; and so accomplished the Redemption of mankind.

But now to make the force and powers of ones enemies the proper means of accomplishing his designs, is the proregative of him alone who is omnipotent; but unto man such power is not granted, as to over-rule the actions of his enemies, and to make them in any sense be subservient to his ends; and then, how should he, without Gods blessing, be able to secure to a people their happiness? But further,

(3.) We are too weak and insufficient to compass any considerable designs, or to give any lasting security to the Public, because of the frailty and shortness of our lives; we cannot secure to our selves one moments continuance in our present station, then how should we be able to secure greater matters? We are daily obnoxious to many casualties which may

Prov. xxvii. 1.

cut us off in the midst of our days and business ; which may surprize us unawares when we are most healthful and vigorous, when we are within the prospect of harbour, and about to enjoy the fruit of our labours : Insomuch as upon this account we cannot promise ourselves the life of one day, becaule *we know not what a day may bring forth*. We are made up and compounded of contrary principles, that are often jarring and clashing among one another, and threaten to us, that our abode cannot be long in these frail Tabernacles, though we should happily escape all sad and sudden casualties; nay, though upon the account of our happy and healthful constitutions we might hope to reach the ordinary age of man ; yet do our lives wholly depend upon the good pleasure of God, and he may require them when he will, insomuch as when we attempt the performance of any affair, we can only say, as

Chap. iv. 15. St. James teacheth us, *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that* ; but this we cannot promise, this we must not build upon, without a pious submission and an humble reference of our selves and our affairs to the wise disposal, to the sovereign will of our great Governour, *for we are not our own* ; and therefore upon this score of our dependent conditions, we cannot accom-

accomplish any thing without his Blessing whose we are, and by whom we subsist. And yet after all,

(4.) Though we were much wiser and much more powerful than we are, and could assure our selves of a longer and more steady continuance of our lives than we can ; yet all this would not do the business, the employment would be still too arduous to be undertaken, the work too great to be performed by Mortals ; the greatest Monarch would be crushed under the ruins of his own Government, unless God upheld both him and it. *By me* (saith he) *Kings reign* ; it is by Gods special appointment and designation that Kings are his *Vice-gerents* in the world ; it is by his peculiar care and protection that their authority is preserved, and that their persons are at any time fenced and secured, from the malicious designs or the outrageous violences of wicked and unreasonable men. The nature of Government is such, that it requires a Divine Wisdom, and an uncontrollable Power to sustain it, and to maintain its interests.

For he that can preserve it must be able to penetrate into the secret counsels of such as confederate against it ; he must not wait to know causes by their effects, for then he may
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be to seek for such remedies, as are proper for the curing of public distempers, when the opportunity of applying them is at hand; but he must see the Tempest afar off, whilst it is wrapt up in its seed and principle, and may be covered *with a mans hand*. He must hold the reins of mens Passions in his hands, be able to slack their fury, and check their impetuosity; know how to mix and compound their Hopes and their Fears, their Love and their Hatred, their Anger and their Jealousies, so as to make them refract and contemper one another: so he must extract the most sovereign preservative of Government out of those things which would be its greatest bane; and that which in its own nature is apt to disturb, must be so managed as that it may promote and advance publick Peace and Security.

He that is able to discharge this Province, *must neither slumber nor sleep*, lest the mischief that walketh in darkness, come in an hour when it is not expected. He must have an universal influence over all those second causes whence arise great Dearth, contagious Sicknesses, violent Tempests, fearful Inundations; all things wherewith the life of man is nourished, preserved and defended, must be under his disposal; the Heavens above, and the Earth

Earth beneath, nay, the Winds and Seas, which seem least capable of a Law, must obey him.

Finally, he that can manage this employment, must, after a Nation has been broken to pieces by factions and civil discord, after it has been cast down to the lowest degree of misery, *servants have ruled over it with a rod of iron, and there was none that did deliver it out of their hands*; he must be able then to rescue it from utter ruine, to reunite the shattered pieces of it into one again, to give it a Resurrection, and *make the dry bones live, to make David his servant King over it*, and restore it to its pristine Glory and Liberty. Lam. v. v. 8.
Ezek. xxxvii.
5. v. 24.

Sedition is commonly the work of mean Varlets; a *Masaniello* and a *Wat Tyler* can give sufficient disturbance to a lawful Government: *Rome* was most endangered by the *Bellum Servile*, the mutiny of its Slaves; for *behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth*: But to prevent public mischiefs or redress them, to restore lawful Powers, to establish and defend our Princes as at the first, and our Governours as at the beginning, This is indeed a great and a noble undertaking.

These things the Patron, the Preserver, the Saviour of a Nation must do, and these he

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only

Isa. lx.

Psal. cxxxv. 6.

Psal. cxxi.

only can do, who has infallible Wisdom, irresistible Power, supreme Sovereignty over the whole world; who is intimately present to every part of it, fills the whole heavens, *sitteth upon the circle of the earth*, and doth whatsoever it pleaseth him, *in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places*. So that our help cometh still from the Lord who made heaven and earth, for it is the Lord who is our keeper; and except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. And therefore,

Thirdly, We see the great obligation that is incumbent upon us to engage Gods care to watch over the Publick, by endeavouring to make our selves worthy of such a *Keeper*; and the consideration of this is the *Use* we are to make of the premisses.

Lev. xxvi.

Deut. xxviii.

For by some things that were discoursed upon the first particular, we might see that a Nation might be in such circumstances, that God would not only refuse to watch over it for good, but he would *set his face against it* to destroy it, and to make it become an *astonishment and a proverb* among all Nations. For God flees from the Tents of the wicked, he knoweth the ungodly afar off, he will have no intercourse of Friendship with them, shew no acts of kindness to them, but leave them to perish by their own transgressions. To

To prevent this great evil, and still to secure Gods protection over us, let us put in practice that advice which the Prophet *Isaiah* gave to his own Nation, *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well, &c.* And then, *If ye be thus obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,* Isa. i. 16, 17. Ver. 19. v. 20.

Now as there are some great personal sins which do more than others, wast the Conscience, destroy the clearness, the tenderness, the peace of the Mind; and which banish the Holy Spirit from us, and cast us speedily out of Gods presence: So may there be also some great National sins which may quite break the league of amity which has been between God and a people; which may incense him beyond all patience, oblige him to become their enemy, to give them a bill of divorce, and utterly to forsake them; and such are avowed Atheism, open general Profaneness, great abuse of Gods Mercies, Contempt of his Word, murmuring at his Providences, mainteining Factions against his Government, Unthankfulness for Gods Blessings, perverting of Justice, oppressing of the Poor, and the like; and instances might be given how much woe these have wrought

Deut. xvii. 12.
ch. xix. 13.

to a people, where they have become National, either by the general practice, or by the practice of those in high and eminent place; or by the impunity of the guilty, when evil is not put away from a land by executing of judgment upon the Transgressors.

And therefore as we heartily desire that publick Peace and Happiness should flourish among us, it will concern every man, according to the station which God has placed him in, to avoid, discountenance, suppress and punish those wasting sins especially, which are so directly levelled against the honour of God, and the fear of His Name, shall I say? Nay, against the Majesty of the Prince, and the safety of the people; which break up the foundations of the earth, and let in a whole deluge of calamities into the world.

Deut. xxiii. 14.

When God warns the Congregation of Israel to avoid all pollutions, he gives this reason for his injunction, *For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp to deliver thee, therefore shall thy camp be holy, that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.* And there are some pollutions which will defile a whole Land, not only make God forsake it, but make it also spue out the inhabitants thereof; when a people grow impudent and incorrigible in their
sins,

sins, then the shew of their countenance doth witness against them, they declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not; then woe unto their souls, for they have rewarded evil unto themselves, saith the Prophet. Therefore, if we would secure Gods presence among us, and his care over us, we must put away our abominations from before his eyes, and cease to do evil; we must not touch the unclean thing, and then I will be a Father unto you, saith the Lord Almighty.

Lev. xviii. 25.

Isa. liii. 9.

2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

And because God hath distinguished us as it were, from the rest of the world, by the greatness and multitude of his choicest mercies; has set up his kingdom among us, the Scepter of righteousness, by bestowing upon us his Holy Word and Ordinances, the means and advantages of Grace and Salvation, and the tokens of his special presence, having so made us, as St. Peter speaks, *A Royal Priesthood; a holy nation, a peculiar people*: Therefore, there is a farther duty incumbent upon us, as we would have the continuance of God and his Blessings amongst us; and that is, That we should walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Our conversation must be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ; we must walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in eve-

Eph. iv. 1, 3.

Phil. i. 27.

Col. i. 10.

Isa. v. v. 2, 6.

Matt. xxi. 43.

ry good work ; For God expects, and justly, that his vineyard should bring forth fruits answerable to all the care and charge wherewith it has been fenced and cultivated ; or else he *will lay it wast, and command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it.* In this case our Lord told the Jews what usage they were to expect from God, and what, by analogy of reason, should be any other peoples portion, that should do as they did. *Therefore I say unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* Which heavy judgment may God avert from us ! and may he still delight to dwell among us, to watch over us, and to bless us, for Jesus Christ his sake, *To whom, &c.*

Dom. 5. post Trin. Coll.

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

F I N I S.







