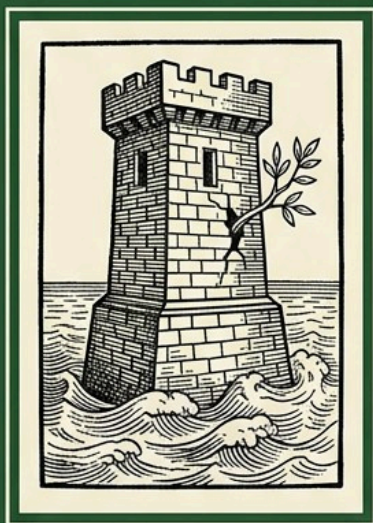


A WORD OF  
COMFORT FOR THE  
CHURCH OF GOD

THOMAS WATSON



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# A WORD OF COMFORT FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD

*Thomas Watson*



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## ABOUT THIS BOOK



A 1662 sermon preached in the shadow of the Great Ejection, expounding Psalm 46:5. Watson argues that **God's providential presence in the midst of His Church** renders all opposition futile — tracing His deliverances through history by unthought-of, contemptible, and contrary means. He then turns prophetic, warning of nine sins that drive God from a nation, before offering six **seeds of hope** for suffering England. Tender, bold, and anchored in Scripture throughout, it remains one of Watson's finest pastoral addresses to a church under fire.



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## TITLE PAGE



**Π** APAMYΘION: OR, A WORD OF COMFORT FOR THE  
Church of God.

By THOMAS WATSON, Pastor of Stephens Walbrook,  
LONDON.

\_Isa. 40. 2.\_ Speak ye comfortably to Hierusalem.

LONDON, Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, at the three Crowns  
at the lower end of Cheapside. 1662.

## TO THE READER



**C**hristian Reader,

HOW infinitely happy are they who have a God to go to! The Saints have that great Prince on their side, by whom Princes reign. They are in such a condition, that nothing can make them miserable; take away their money, their treasure is in heaven; banish them their Countrey, they are Citizens of the New Jerusalem; cast them into bonds, their Consciences are free; kill their bodies, they shall rise again; take away their names, they are written in the book of life. This calls to mind that golden aphorism, Isaiah 3. 10. It shall be well with the righteous. Nay, at present, it is well with them; they are favourites of the King of heaven; the Lord sets them as a seal upon his heart; he sympathizeth with them in all their sufferings. When the rage of the enemy is kindled, are not Gods repentings kindled too? Hosea 11. 8. And while his heart is full of sympathy, so long his head will be full of care. This tender care of God towards his Church Militant, is the Subject of this ensuing discourse; Cordials are kept for fainting. Out of this Vial are poured forth, not chymical, but spiritual drops of consolation to animate us. God himself is the Churches Life-guard. The Lyon of the Tribe of Judah, marcheth in the head of the Saints Army; This makes Jerusalem, terrible as an Army with banners, Cant. 6. 4.

Jesus is our Emmanuel; Then, what need we fear though the earth tremble upon her pillars? I shall not further expatiate, but commending this small piece to the blessing of God, I remain.

Walbr. April 19. 1662. Thy Friend and Servant in the Gospel,  
THOMAS WATSON.

## A WORD OF COMFORT FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD



PSAL. 46. 5.\_ God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.

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SOLomon saith, A word fitly spoken, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver, Prov. 25. 11. In which regard I have made choice of this Scripture, which may be a word in season, to revive the desponding hearts of Gods people. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.

This Psalm is a Triumphal Exultation, wherein the Church with joy commemorates former deliverances, and by faith depends on God for future mercies.

God is our refuge and strength, ver. 1.] The Saints in all their dangers have an Asylum, or Garrison to retreat to, they know where to put in for Harbour, the Name of the Lord is a strong Tower, and this is their Refuge and Fort-Royal.

A very present help] God is an help at a pinch. An Army may be worsted ere their Auxiliary Forces come; but God never comes too late, his help is at hand, his Forces are in the field, he is a present help. An help [in trouble.] The Aethiopick, renders it, in vehement trouble.

God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. What is meant by this, in the midst of her? This looks back to the former verse, where there is mention made of the City of God, ver. 4. There is a River, the streams whereof shall make glad the City of God; by this City of God, is meant Jerusalem, which is called the City of Jehovah, Isa. 60. 14. and the holy City, Isa. 52. 1. This City of Jerusalem is put by a Synecdoche, for the Church of God here upon earth; and of this the Text speaks, God is in the midst of her.

The words consist of two general parts.

1. The Churches privilege, God is in the midst of her.

2. The Churches safety, She shall not be moved: That is, so as to be removed.

Doctr. When the Church of God is beleagured and environed with Enemies, God is in the midst of her. Deutr. 23. 14. For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy Camp to deliver thee. Jer. 14. 9. Thou O Lord, art in the midst of us. The Church of God hath not only enemies without her, to conflict with, but within her, such as are Hypocrites and Apostates; she complains that her own sons vexed her Cant 1. 6. That is, those who had been bred up in her bosom, and pretended Religion, these false Friends vexed her; the Churches Enemies are of her own house: But be they what they will, Forrain or Intestine, the Church hath ONE that will take her part; when she is most assaulted, she is most assisted, God is in the midst of her.

But what Prerogative is this to have God in the midst of his Church? Where is he not? He is an immense, infinite being, and his circumference is every where. Psal. 139. 7, 9. Whither shall I flie from thy presence? If I take the wings of the morning, and

dwell in the uttermost parts of the Sea, even there shall thy hand lead me. What priviledge is it to have God in the midst of his Church, seeing he is in the midst of his enemies too?

There is a twofold presence of God.

1. There is his universal presence, whereby he is in all places. Jer. 23. 23. Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord? This is no priviledge at all; for this universal presence is with the damned, they have the presence of his power and justice.

2. There is a peculiar presence of God, and this is confined to his people. This presence of God is either, 1. In heaven, which is nothing else but his glorious presence. Psal. 11. 4. The Lords Throne is in heaven. Or, 2. On earth, and that is either,

1. His favourable presence, whereby he manifests the pledges of his grace and goodness towards his people; and so he is present in the Assemblies of his Saints, breathing forth the sweet perfume of his Spirit. Exod. 20. 24. In all places where I record my Name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. This is that presence the Saints desire in the Ordinances, Gods quickning, sanctifying, comforting presence; the smiles of his face, the kisses of his lips; nothing is so delightful, as to hold the King in the Galleries. and have the Banner of his love sweetly display'd, Cant. 2. 4.

Or, 2. His providential presence, wherein the Lord appears admirably for his people in his providential actings, shewing himself to be a wonder-working God; and this is chiefly meant in the Text, God is in the midst of her, to defend, to deliver, to bless: Thus he was with his people Israel by the pillar of fire, and a cloud; and thus will he be present with his Church to the end of the World.

The Reasons why God is in the midst of his Church to defend and bless it, are,

1. The dear interest he hath in it. The people of God are called a peculiar people, 1 Pet. 2. 9. The World lies in Common, and is as so much waste ground; but the Church is Gods Vineyard and Enclosure, therefore he will hedge it in with protection: Cant. 8. 1. My Vineyard which is mine is before me. The Saints are Gods Jewels, Mal. 2. 17. Therefore he will not let them be lost: For their sins he may sometimes lay these Jewels to pawn, as he did, when Israel was in Babylon, but he will recover the pawn. The Church is una cum Christo Caro, Christs mystical body, the least bone whereof he will as surely preserve, as he did every bone of his natural body, John 19. 36. A bone of it shall not be broken.

2. God is in the midst of his Church, because of the intire love which he bears to it. Psal. 132. 13, 14, 15. The Lord hath chosen Sihon, he hath desired it for his habitation, this is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it. God loves his people with the choicest of his love, they have the spirits of his love distilled; and to shew this, he calls them by those Titles which denote love; the apple of his eye, Deutr. 32. 10. The dearly beloved of his soul, Jer. 12. 7. His Treasure, Psal. 135. 4. His Turtle-dove, Psal. 74. 19. His Spouse, Cant. 5. 2. His Orchard of Pomgranates, Cant. 4. 13. His glory, Isa. 46. ult. God loves the World with a more common love, his Church hath the cream of his love: 'Tis one love wherewith a man loves his Bird, and another wherewith he loves his Child; and God cannot but love his people, because he sees his own image shining in them. They are adorned with the graces of his Spirit, as a chain of pearle: And as they have the beauty of inherent holiness, so they have an interest in the unspotted holiness of Christ. Gods

love to his Church is vehement, like the Coals of Juniper, or the Sun-beams contracted in a burning Glass, which are more intense and ardent; and because he loves Sion, therefore he is in the midst of it, to defend and bless it. Zeph. 3. 17. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rejoyce over thee, he will rest in his love.

3. God will be in the midst of his people, because they are engaged in his quarrel. Jer. 15. 15. Know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke! All the oppositions the godly meet with, are for standing up in the defence of Truth; if they would desist from Religion, and throw off Christs colours, they would have none to oppose them; but because they espouse Christs quarrel, and fight under the Banner of his Gospel, therefore Gebal and Ammon, and all the powers of Hell unite and muster their Forces against them. The Princes of Persia had no other Article against Daniel, but the Law of his God, Dan. 6. 5. Now, because the Church of God appears in his Cause, and loseth blood in his quarrel, therefore God is in the midst of her, he counts himself concern'd in point of honour to stand by his people.

But wherein doth it appear that God is in the midst of his Church?

Answ. It appears,

1. By his strange preserving and delivering his Church.

1. By unthought of means; when Israel were hem'd in, the red Sea before, Pharaoh and his Host pursuing behind, God preserves them by unthought of means, they never thought of the parting of the waters; Who would have imagined that God should have made a Cawsey in the Sea? So when flesh failed in the Wilderness, the

people of Israel could not devise how God should spread them a Table there; there was no plowing or sowing, nothing to be seen but wild Beasts and Serpents; the Lord made the Heavens a Granary, and rained down bread upon them; here he was in the midst of his people.

2. By contemptible means: The blowing of Trumpets, and blazing of Lamps, made the walls of Hiericho fall down, Judg. 7. 20. Jeremy was drawn out to the Dungeon by rotten rags, Jer. 37. 11. God often saves his Church by despicable instruments, he makes use of rotten rags. God raised up Luthar in Germany against the Pope, the Enemy looked upon him with a contemptible eye, one of them said, He was fitter to pray in a Cloyster, than to do any great Exploits abroad: But God made him a rare Instrument in his Church, he did so shake the Popes Chair, that never to this day hath he sat safe in it.

3. By contrary means: That the Rock should be set abroad, that Jonah should be saved, by being swallowed up; God made the Fish a Ship in which he sailed safe to shore. That the Raven, who is so unnatural, she will hardly feed her young, should bring meat to the Prophet Eliah, this shews God is in the midst of his people: How often is it seen that God makes use of a contrary wind; the Enemies of his Church shall do his work, he will play his game by their hand.

1. Either he will make his Enemies friendly to his people. Exod 12. 35. The children of Israel borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and the Lord gave his people favour in the eyes of the Egyptians. God can make wolves to suckle his lambs: Or,

2. He will work divisions among his Enemies, and turn their own weapons against themselves. 2. Chron. 20. 23. The children of Ammon fell upon the Inhabitants of Mount Seir, and after that, every one helped to destroy another. Thus God makes the Seed of the Serpent, a means to break the Serpents head. We read in Ecclesiastical History, in the time of the good Emperour Theodosius, when the Persians did shoot their arrows against the Christians, by a sudden and violent wind their arrows were driven back, and did flie in their own faces.

2. It is evident that God is in the midst of his Church, by his seasonable appearing for his people. When the Church of God hath been brought very low, nothing in view but desperation, their power hath been gone, and their hopes gone, then God hath step'd in for their relief, and given the Victory on the Churches side. Deutr. 32. 36. The Lord shall repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up and left. When Peter was sinking, then Christ put forth his hand, and took him into the Ship. When the Church of God hath been inter malleum, & incudem, like Isaac on the Altar, going to be sacrificed to the rage and fury of men, then hath the Providence of God step'd in as the Angel, and said, Lay not thy hand upon the child. God may let the Enemy nibble at the heel of his Church, but still he defends the head; when malice is boil'd up to revenge, and the designs of men carry destruction in the Front, now appears the Churches morning star of deliverance. This shews God is in the midst of Zion, because when things have seemed to be in the forlorn hope, and all given for lost, now God hath come riding in the Chariots of salvation.

Vse 1. Here is good news for the Church of God, Gods people are apt to despond when they see things move excentrick, and go cross to their expectation, God is in the midst of Zion. He hath a special super-intendency over the Affairs of his Church; God hath more care of his Church than we can. We read in Ezekiels Vision, of a wheel within a wheel, Ezek. 1. 16. Gods Decree is the inner wheel that turns all the outward wheels of Providence; the Church never wants Enemies to assault, and make inrodes upon her, but God is in the midst of her. Here is a River of consolation, whose chrystal streams may refresh the City of God. Gods eye is upon his people for good; The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him and it is a watchful eye, for he neither slumbers nor sleeps, Psal. 121. 4. But what priviledge is this that Gods eye is upon his people, his eye is upon the wicked too? I answer, Gods eye which is upon Zion, is not only an eye of inspection, but an eye of benediction: Zion hath not only his eye, but his heart. Psal. 5. 12. For thou Lord wilt bless the righteous, with favour wilt thou compass him, as with a shield.

2. If God be in the midst of Zion, then see the Churches beauty and strength.

1. The Churches beauty, God is in the midst of her, this is her glory and beauty. *O quam candi-rubra Ecclesia, & eximio praelucens fulgore!* Zac. 2. 5. I will be the glory in the midst of her. This is the best Jewel of the Churches Crown; as the Diamond to the Ring, as the Sun to the World, which doth bespangle it with its beams, so is Gods presence to his Church. The Ark which was the emblem and sign of Gods presence, was stiled, the glory of Israel. Why is

the Church called a Royal Diadem, and a Crown of beauty, Isa. 62. 3. but because God casts his resplendent lustre upon her? I will be the glory in the midst of her.

2. See here the Churches strength. God is in the midst of her; he is with his Church not only to behold her, but uphold her. The Church of God is like a Castle walled in with rocks, Isa. 33. 16. his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks. But a man may starve upon a rock, therefore it follows, bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure. If God be in the midst of Sion, he will be both defensive and offensive. He is both a Shield and a Sword, Deut 33. 29. Happy art thou O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! God is a golden shield to his people, and a flaming sword to his enemies, Zach. 2. 5. For I saith the Lord will be unto her a wall of fire round about. A wall, That is defensive; a wall of fire that is offensive, Isa. 27. 2. In that day sing ye unto her a Vineyard, of red wine, I the Lord do keep it, I will water it lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. They that go to overthrow the Church must do it in such a time when it is neither night nor day, for God hath promised to keep it, night and day.

3. See hence how vain are all the attempts and combinations of wicked men against the Church of God. God is in the midst of her. When we look upon things with an humane eye, we may wonder the Church of God is not over-topped: that the Sea should be higher than the earth yet not drown it, is strange; So that the power and force which seemes to be so much above the Church should not overflow it, is not a little to be wondred at, but God is in the midst of her, therefore she is impregnable; men must first overcome God, before they can overcome the Church. How simple

is the wisdom of man when it sets it self against God! What do men do when they wage War against the Church? they attempt impossibilities, God is in the midst of her. What an infinite disproportion is there between the Enemies and God? as much as between finite and infinite. Will weak man go to measure arms with God? How easily can God check the pride, and break the power, and infatuate the counsels of the wicked? He can destroy his enemies with the turning of an hand, Psal. 81. 14. with a word, Psal. 2. 5. with a breath, Isa. 30. 28, with a look, Exod. 14. 24. It needs cost God no more to destroy all his Adversaries, than a cast of the eye: For men to contend with the great God, is as if a child should go to fight with a Giant, or Archangel; or as if the Thorns should set themselves in battel array against the fire: Oh how vain and silly are all attempts against the Church! God is in the midst of her. Zac. 12. 3. In that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensom stone to all people. The Enemies are heaving at the Church to remove it, but it is a burdensom stone that will fall upon them, and grind them in pieces. Zac. 12. 6. I will make the Governours of Iudah like a Torch of fire in a sheaf. The grand opposers of Zion shall be as combustible matter, and the Church as a Torch of fire to burn them up.

4. If God be in the midst of Zion, then it follows that all Providences towards the Church shall be for the best. There is nothing stirs in the World, but shall carry on Gods designs; as the cross wheels in a Watch carry on the motion of it, and serve to make the Alarum strike. That which the wicked intend for the destruction, shall turn to the deliverance of the Church: As Luthar wrote to the Elector of Saxony, Let Your Highness know that the Affairs of the Church are far otherwise ordered in heaven, than by the Emperour and States at Norimberg. While the Adversaries go

about to ruine the Church, they shall only repair it. God is in the midst of his people, therefore the most violent storms of persecution, are but as the beating of the wind against the Sails, which makes the Ship go faster, and brings it the sooner to its desired Haven.

Vse 2. Let us labour, that as God is in the midst of his Church, so he may be in the midst of our hearts. 'Tis little comfort to hear that God is in the midst of his Church, unless we find him in the midst of our hearts: As he, who when he was drowning, saw a Rainbow, What am I the better, saith he, that the World shall not be drowned, if I drown? So what are we the better that God is in the midst of his Church by his providential presence, if he be not in the midst of our hearts by his sanctifying presence. It should be our care not only to have Christ with us, but in us. Col. 1. 27. Christ in you the hope of glory. This will be a Cordial when we are dying; what though death be in our body, if Christ be in our heart? This should be our wisdom and ambition, not only to have the presence of God with us, but the Spirit of God in us. Gal. 4. 6. God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.

2. If God be in the midst of his Church to uphold and preserve it, then let not Gods people give way to distrust and despondency, let them not fear the Enemies of the Church. Psal. 46. 1, 2. God is our refuge and strength, therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the Sea. If we should be in new straits and exigencies, let us not say we shall be undone, God will set all his Attributes on work for his people. His wisdom shall be to guide them, his power to defend them, his holiness to sanctifie them, his mercy to save them. To fear the creature, is to undervalue God. When Antigonus over-heard his

Souldiers saying. How many their enemies were, he steps in suddenly with these words, And how many do you reckon me for? This word, God is in the midst of her, should beat down unbelief, and put to flight a whole Army of fears that are apt to arise in the heart. It is high ingratitude either to murmur or distrust, after so many signal mercies and preservations as we have received. But because the hearts of Gods own people are ready to be over-powered with a spirit of fear, I shall therefore prescribe these five antidotes against fear.

1. God will have a Church upon earth. Mat. 16. 18. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Neither the Serpents subtilty, nor the Dragons fierceness shall overturn the Church. The Ship in the Gospel was tossed, because sin was in it, but not overwhelmed, because Christ was in it. Be of good comfort, Christ is in the Ship. Exod. 3. 2. The Angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and the bush burned, and was not consumed. An embleme of the Church Militant, this bush burns, but is not consumed, for God is in the midst of her. *Ecclesia potest opprimi non supprim;* The Church of God may be oppressed, not suppressed. Cain put the knife to Abels throat, and ever since the Churches veins have bled, but she is not so weak, but she can stand upon her legs. The Church Universal is not extinguished.

Not but that the Church of God may suffer in several parts of it. For, as by virtue of the Covenant made with Noah, the whole earth shall never be overflown with a deluge, yet there may, and hath been such inundations since, that several parts of the earth have been swallowed up with water: So the Church Universal cannot be extinct, yet it may suffer in some parts and branches of it, as the seven Asian Churches had their golden Candlesticks removed.

2. The suffering of any particular Church, is for their good, Jer. 24. 5. Them that are carried away captive of Iudah, I have sent into the Land of the Caldeans for their good. God makes use of the wicked for the good of his Church. He sometimes suffers his people to be cast out in the open field, and lets the wicked pour waters of affliction upon them, but he is all this while laying his people a whitening, Dan. 12. 10. Many shall be tried, and made white; the wicked are flails to thresh off the husks of his people, files to brighten their graces, leeches to suck out their noxious blood. Tully makes mention of one Phereus, whom his enemy running at with a Sword, accidentally opened his impostume, and so cured him. The enemies of the Church, only cure the impostume of pride; Isa. 31. 9. Gods fire is in Zion. This Fire is not consuming, but refining. The Church is Gods House, the enemies think to break down the Walls of this House, but they shall only purge the floor. They think to crucifie, they shall only clarifie Gods Church, and take it off from its fulsome lees. Thus God turns all the sufferings of his people to their good. He stretcheth the strings of his Voial, to make the musick better.

3. The more Gods Church is opposed, the more it encreaseth. It receives its augmentation, by its diminution, Exod. 1. 12. The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied. Witness the ten Persecutions in the time of Nero, Dioclesian, Trajan, &c.

Sanguine showers have always made the Church grow the more: The more the Torch is beaten, the more it flames. Julian therefore did forbear to persecute the Christians, not out of pity, but envy, because they grew so fast. Religion is that Phenix which hath always revived and flourished in the ashes of holy men. The

Church of God is a Palmtree, with this motto — Percussa resurgo — The more weight is laid upon it, the higher it riseth. Ecclesia dum premitur floret, dum caeditur vivit.

4. When the Church of God is lowest, mercy is nearest: The sorer the pangs, the nearer the deliverance. Isa. 33. 9, 10. The earth mourns, Lebanon is ashamed, Sharon is like a Wilderness, now, will I rise, saith the Lord, now will I be exalted, now will I lift up my self. If you go to the Thames, and observe the ebbing of the water, when the ebb is at the lowest, an high tyde is ready to come in: So when the Church of God seems to be at a dead low water, the spring-tyde of deliverance is nearest. When Dioclesian raged, and things seem'd desperate, soon after was the golden time of Constantius. 'Tis usually darkest a little before morning.

5. Though the Church of God may seem sometimes to be in the wain, yet when she loseth ground in one place, she gains in another; as when the fire is quenched at one end of the house, it breaks out at the other. Or as the Sun when it leaves our Hemisphere, goes to the Antipodes. At Rome there were two Lawrel Trees, when one withered, the other flourished: An emblem of the Church Militant, when it seems to wither in one place, it shall revive and flourish in another. All this may comfort us concerning the Church of God, and may be as Physick, to kill the worm of Unbelief and Fear in our hearts. God is in the midst of her, Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed.

If God be in the midst of his Church, let us do two things.

1. Let us take heed of driving God from us. There are wayes whereby we may drive God from the Nation. As when Bees are in the Hive, and bring their honey, you may drive them out with

smoak. So sin is a smoak that will drive God out from a people. Isa. 65. 3, 5. A people that provoketh me to anger, these are a smoak in my nose. In particular, there are Nine sins which drive God out of a Land, and when he marcheth out, judgement marcheth in.

1. Idolatry. 2 King. 17. 12, 18. For they served Idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing, therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight. Idolatry is a sin which breaks the Marriage-knot, and makes the Lord disclaim his interest in a people, Exod. 32. 7. Thy people have corrupted themselves. Before, God called Israel, HIS PEOPLE, but when once they had defil'd themselves with Idolatry, then God disclaims them; he doth not say to Moses, MY people, but THY people, as if he had quite discarded them, and cut off the entail of mercy. Take heed of Idolatry; yea, and of Superstition too, which is a Bridge leading over to it. Superstition is an intermixing our fancies and inventions with divine institutions; 'tis an affront offered to God, as if he were not wise enough to appoint the manner of his own worship.

2. Rapine and Oppression. Jer. 12. 7, 8. I have forsaken my house, my heritage is to me as a speckled bird. Or as a bird of prey. When Gods Dove becomes a Vulture, and is given to ravening and cruelty, staining her feathers with blood, God will then break up House, and be gone.

3. Uncleaness Hos. 7. 4. They are all Adulterers, as an Oven heated by the Baker. They who should have been Temples of the Holy Ghost, are hot Ovens burning in lust. Vers. 12. I will spread my net upon them. That is, I will spread the net of my judgements over them, and they shall be taken in the Net.

4. Covetousness. Jer 6. 12. I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the Land, for from the least of them, even to the greatest, every one is given to Covetousness. When men smell rank of the earth, when they love the Exchange better than the Temple, and are more for the earthly Mammon, than the heavenly Manna, God will take his leave, and be gone. God is a Spirit, he can no more converse with an earthly people, than a Prince can converse with a Swine.

5. Apostacy. Jer. 6. 28. They are all grievous revolters, Reprobate silver shall one call them, because the Lord hath rejected them. This made God remove his golden Candlestick from the Church of Ephesus, because she had left her first Love, Rev. 2. 4. And if apostacy will make God depart from a people, then how can we expect he should stay long with us? Where is that zeal for God, and love to truth, as formerly? We live in the fall of the leaf; There are many who courted the Queen of Religion when she had a Jewel hung at her ear, but when she is in her night-dress, and her Jewels of preferment are pull'd off, now they desert her. Lots wife was turned into a pillar of salt, for looking back. If all who look back, should have this judgement inflicted on them, we should hardly go in the streets for meeting pillars of salt. Merchants tell us of divers Ships cast away at Sea; I believe there have been of late more shipwracks at Land, than at Sea, I mean, such, as have made shipwrack of faith and a good conscience. The golden head is degenerated into Iron, a more faeculent and impure mettal.

6. Weariness of Gods Ordinances; Amos 8. 5. When will the New Moon be gone, and the Sabbath? Vers. 11. Behold, the dayes come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the Land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the Word of

the Lord. God hath fed this Nation with the finest of the wheat, even the bread of life, we have had the Cream of Ordinances, God hath come down to us in a golden shower of blessings, the Vintage of other Nations, hath not been so good as the gleanings of England, but have not we said, What a weariness is it? Mal. 1. 13. Is not our sin Sermon-surfeiting? though we have liked the dressing, we have loathed the food; we have said, Who is this Moses? and what is this Manna? and may not we fear God is now coming to punish us for this sin? When we have lost our stomachs, God may cause the cloth to be taken away; and would not that be dismal? How sad is it for any Nation, when their Seers are blind! In what a condition is that people, who have husks given them instead of Manna, and Musick instead of food! Weariness of the Gospel, forfeits the Gospel. If God sees that Sanctuary-blessings bear but a low price, he will remove the Market.

7. Perjury. Jer. 11. 10. The house of Israel, and the house of Iudah have broken my Covenant; therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape, and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. When a people play fast and loose with God, breaking their Solemn Vows and Obligations, whether Sacramental or other, this is a God-provoking sin, it will make the Lord go away from a Nation, and though they cry after him, he will turn a deaf ear. God will pass by infirmity, but he will punish Treachery.

8. Hatred of Reformation. When God calls to a people by his Word, Spirit, Judgements, but they regard him not, he will pack up and be gone. Jer. 7. 13. I spake unto you rising up early, but you heard not, therefore will I do to this house which is called by my Name, as I did to Shilo. Why, what did God to Shilo? There the

Priests were slain, the Ark was carried away captive, all the signs of Gods presence were removed, the Vision ceased, and we never read that the Ark returned to Shilo any more. Hath not God called to us to be an holy reformed people, but are there not those found among us, who hate Holiness, and cry down Reformation? Oh take heed that God doth not do to us, as he did to Shilo, unpeople us, unchurch us, and send a flying roll of curses against us.

9. Incivilities offered to them who labour in the Word and Doctrine. God will avenge the wrongs done to his Embassadors. 2 Chron. 36. 16, 17. The Lord God of their fathers sent to 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. Let us take heed of these sins, which will cause God to depart from the Nation.

2. If God be in the midst of his Church, let us do what we can to keep God among us. Israel endeavoured to keep the Ark among them, which was the sign of Gods presence, Hos. 9. 12. Wo to them, when I depart from them. If God be gone, then all other blessings go too; peace and trading will be gone; Oh let us strive to keep God among us. What is the glory of a Nation, but the presence of God in his Word and Ordinances? Zach 2. 5. I will be the glory in the midst of thee. If God be once gone, the glory is departed. If God be gone, England will be like an house that hath the furniture taken down, and is falling to ruine. Isa. 13. 31. Owles shall dwell there, and Satyrs shall dance there. If God be gone, Satan will be the next Tenant.

Quest. How shall we do to keep God amongst us?

Answ. 1. By Prayer. Jer. 14. 9. We are called by thy Name, leave us not. Exercise eyes of Faith, and knees of Prayer; let us hang upon God by holy importunity, and not let him go. Luke 24. 29. They constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards evening. Is not God upon the threshold of his Temple ready to fly? Are not the shadows of the evening stretch'd out? And may we not fear the Sun-setting of the Gospel? Oh let us by humble prayer lie at Christs feet, and constrain him to stay with us; Prayer makes a sweet sound in Gods ears, and he will not go away where there is that musick.

2. By setting upon the work of Reformation. Ier. 7. 3. Amend your wayes, and your doings. There is a prophane party in the Land, who drink, and roar, and declare their sin as Sodom; These Sampsons are like to pull down the house upon our head; instead of bringing the water of tears to quench Gods anger, they adde oile to the flame. The men of Lystra seeing the miracle wrought by Paul and Barnabas, cry'd out, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men, Act. 14. 11. But we may now say, The Devils are come up to us in the likeness of men; Never was there such a spirit of wickedness in the Land, never were there such heaven-daring abominations committed; but though Israel play the Harlot, yet let not Iudah offend, Hos. 4. 15. Though others are licentious and exorbitant, (being carried to hell with wind and tyde) yet let us keep our garments pure, and preserve the Virginity of our Consciences; let us labour to reform our selves, and mourn for what we cannot reform in others. Let us walk accurately and circumspectly, Eph. 5. 15. Let us shine forth in a kind of Angelical brightness, that we may not only profess the Gospel, but beautifie it. Were we such a

Reformed People, we might keep God still in the midst of us, and as a pledge of his favourable presence, he would entail his Gospel, that Crowning Blessing, both upon us, and our Posterity.

Quest. But is not the Decree past? Are there any hopes that God will be still in the midst of England?

Answ. There is hope in Israel concerning this. I would encourage Gods people, and speak something that might be as the Cork to the Net, to keep their hearts from sinking.

I confess, when I look upon the dark side of the cloud, it fills me with trembling and astonishment; the sins and divisions of the Nation are gray hairs upon us; it is ominous, when the joints of the same body begin to smite. But though we have many Symptomes of a dying Patient, yet there are six seeds of hope left, that God will still abide in the midst of England.

1. That there is a generation of righteous persons in the Nation; God would have spared Sodom, if there had been ten righteous persons in it; it is to be hoped there are many tens in England. Isa 65. 8. As new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it. Though the Vine in England is so blasted, that the Lord might cut it down, yet there are some good Clusters, and for these God may spare the Vine, and say, Is there not a blessing in it? Were the godly, (who are the Charets and Horsemen in Israel) removed, the Lord would make quick work with the Nation; he would destroy the weeds, were it not for the Corn. The Ship of Church and State would soon be drowned, if the Elect were not in it. The Saints stay Gods hand when he is going to strike. Gen. 19. 22. Haste thee (to Zoar) for I cannot do anything

till thou become thither. The Saints are the excellent of the earth, Psal. 16. 3. Precious and honourable, Isa. 43. 4. and for their sakes God may yet be entreated to be propitious to us.

2. Another seed of hope is, that the Lord keeps up a spirit of prayer among his people. The Spartans Walls were their Spears. The Wall, and Bulwark of a Nation, is Prayer; as there are crying sins in the Land, so there are crying prayers. Whole VOLLIES of sighs and groans are daily sent up to heaven. When the Lord intends to pour out the Vial of his indignation, he stops all the sluices of prayer. Ier. 7. 16. Pray not for this people. God hath not said so yet; Prayer is a powerful Orator for mercy, it comes, as it were, with Letters of mandamus to heaven. Isa. 45. 11. Concerning the works of my hands command ye me. Prayer staves off wrath from a Land. Exod. 32. 10. Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them. Why, what did Moses? he only pray'd. Prayer overcomes the Almighty; it finds God free, but leaves him bound. This gives some crevis of hope, that God will not wholly leave us; there are those that cry day and night, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach. When Prayer leads the Van, Deliverance brings up the Rear. Psal. 10. 17. Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.

3. Another seed of hope is, the tender respect God hath to his own glory: This was Joshua's Argument, Josh. 7. 9. What wilt thou do unto thy great Name? If the People of God should be extinct, and the cause of Religion trampled under foot, this would reflect upon the glory of God, and his Name would suffer. The wicked seldom prevail, but they blaspheme, they say, Where is your God? Psalm 42. 10. Now, Gods glory is dear to him, it is the most orient

Pearl of his Crown; he will stand upon his honour; while he consults his peoples safety, he promotes his own glory. Psal. 106. 8. Nevertheless he saved them for his Name sake.

4. Another seed of hope is, the blessed intercession of Christ; The Lord Jesus hears the names of his people upon his breast, and sets them as a golden Signet upon his heart; his prayers go up to heaven as sweet odors. Revel. 8. 4. The smoak of incense ascended up before God out of the Angels hand. Though our sins go up to heaven, as the smoak of a furnace, yet Christs prayers go up as the smoak of incense. Christs intercession is meritorious, his blood will never leave crying, till the blood of his enemies be shed.

5. A fifth seed of hope is, the mercy of God. Isa. 63. 9. In his love, and in his pity he redeemed them. God is the Father of mercies, 2 Cor. 1. 3. Mercy doth naturally issue from him. He is rich in mercy, Ephes. 2. 4. He delighteth in mercy, Mic. 7. 18. Justice is Gods strange work, Isa, 28. 21. Mercy is his proper work: Why may not Mercy give the casting-voice? And that which may make us hope in this mercy, is, 1. The mercy of God is free. Hos. 14. 4. I will love them freely. Mercy sends out its pardons to whom it will; Mercy doth not go by desert, but by Prerogative, I will love them freely. 2. The mercy of God is healing. Hos. 14. 4. I will heal their back-slidings. Mercy can heal the impurity and stubbornness of a people; Mercy can as well give repentance, as deliverance. Mercy can destroy the sins of a Nation, and save the Nation. It can burn up the Chaff, and save the Corn. I will heal their back-slidings. Mercy can stop the bloody issue of sin, and so make way for the issues from death, Psal. 68. 20. Pliny saith, the water-courses of Rome are the worlds wonder; but behold here a Sacred Water-course of Gods mercy, this is a sweet wonder; Mercy can overcome

a sinful people, it can save a Nation in its Climacterical year. We read that the fire of the Lord fell, and licked up the water, 1 Kings 18. 38. Thus the fire of Gods mercy can lick up, and devour the water of our sins.

6. The last seed of hope for England, is, That there have been many sins committed in the Nation, which are not the sins of the Nation; some have perjured themselves, but all have not. A sober and considerable party in the Land (however traduced) have entered their dissent, and openly protested against the scandalous actings of others; so that it is to be hoped, the Lord will not impute the sin of some to the whole. There are a certain number that said as David, 1 Sam. 26. 11. God forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lords anointed. They looked upon it as impious and irrational, to go to cut off the HEAD, to preserve the body. Thus I have showed you a Rain-bow in the cloud, and given you some probable grounds of hope, That the Lord will still be in the midst of England, Which I intend as a preservative against despondency, not as fuel for security.

Quest. But how is it possible there should be any good towards us? That the sins in which the Nation hath been so steeped, and parboil'd, should be forgiven? that our divisions and animosities should be healed, Gods Ordinances refined, and the Lord continue his gracious presence in the midst of us?

Answ. I say with our blessed Saviour, Luke 18. 27. The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God. What cannot that God do, that can create? God can bring about those things, which in the eye of sence are not feasible. That Iron should swim, that the Rock should be a Spring, is in nature impossible, but God hath brought this to pass. Cannot God untye those knots which do

amuse and puzzle us? Zach. 8. 6. If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts. Can difficulties pose the Almighty? Jer. 32. 27. Is there any thing too hard for me? Did not he make the dry bones live? Ezek. 37. 7, 8. God can bring light out of darkness, harmony out of confusion; he can do more than we can think, else he should not be God. How apt are Gods own people to be discouraged with seeming impossibilities? Moses who was one of the brightest Stars that ever shined in the Churches Orb, yet ready to hesitate, and sink at seeming impossibilities, Numb. 11. 21. The people amongst whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen, and thou hast said, I will give them flesh that they may eat a whole month; shall the flocks and the heards be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the Sea be gathered together for them to suffice them? As if Moses had said in plain English, he did not see how such a numerous people could be fed for a month. God gives him a kind of check for his infidelity, vers. 23. Is the Lords hand waxed short? Do I find mouths, and not meat? Cannot I make provision for my household? Is the Lords hand waxed short? That God who brought Isaac out of a dead womb, and the Messiah out of a Virgins womb, what cannot he do? When things act never so irregularly, God can put them in joint again. When his Church is so low, that she seems to be in the Grave, and have a Tombstone laid upon her, he can in an instant cause a glorious resurrection. Therefore let us not be out of heart, but still rest on the arm of Gods power and Sovereignty, remembring there are no desperate Cases with God.

To conclude all, the Lord may let his Church be a while under hatches, to punish her security, and awaken her out of her slumbering fits, yet, surely the storm will not continue long; The Church shall not dye in travel, but God will manifest that he is in the midst of Zion, and after his Church hath suffered a while, (as her head Christ hath done) he will cause the morning star of her Salvation to appear, and she shall come out of all her troubles, as the wings of a Dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.

FINIS.

## THANKS FOR READING



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