

NEHEMIAH
ON THE
WALL
IN
TROUBLESOM TIMES;
O R,

A Serious and Seasonable Improvement of that great
Example of Magilstratical Piety and Prudence, Self-denial
and Tenderneſs, Fearleſneſs and Fidelity, unto In-
ſtruction and Encouragement of preſent and
ſucceeding Rulers in our Iſrael.

As it was delivered in a SERMON Preached at
Boston in N. E. May 15. 1667. being the
DAY of ELECTION
T H E R E.

By that faithful Servant of Chriſt,
Mr. JONATHAN MITCHEL, late Paſtor of
the Church of Chriſt at Cambridge.

*Pſal. 78. 70—72. He choſe David his ſervant—He brought him to feed Jacob
his people, and Iſrael his inheritance. So he fed them according to the inte-
grity of his heart, and guided them by the ſkilfulneſs of his hands.*

*Joſh. 7. 10. And the Lord ſaid to Joſhua, Get thee up: wherefore liſt thou thus
upon thy face?*

*Iſa. 32. 1. 2. — Princes ſhall rule in judgement And a man ſhall be as an hiding-place
from the wind, and a cover from the tempeſt, as rivers of water in a dry
place, as the ſhadow of a great rock in a weary land.*

CAMBRIDGE;

Printed by S. G. and M. F. 1 6 7 1.



Christian Reader,

THe still-out-stretched hand of Gods powerful Wrath over this poor Country, in smiting down our Pillars, plucking up our Stakes, and taking from us the breath of our Nostrils, is a matter so doleful and solemnly awful and tremendous, that we may well sigh out our sorrows, in the words of the lamenting Church, Lam. 5. 16, 17. The crown is fallen from our head : woe unto us that we have sinned. For this our heart is faint, for these things our eyes are dim. How oft have we seen Aaron called up to Mount Hor, and Moses to Mount Nebo, and there stripped out of the Rags of Mortality, to be clothed with the Glory of a better World ? O how much of our glory have we sinnea down into the dust ! Abraham is now ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledgeth us not ; yet let our Father and Redeemer whose Name is from everlasting, vouchsafe to return, for his servants sake, the Tribes of his Inheritance : Let him not suffer us to erre from his wayes, nor harden our heart from his fear ; but so awaken, affect and teach us to profit, that being deeply and duly humbled under his mighty hand, he may please to lift us up in due time. Let those dreadful Thunder-claps which of late have broken over our heads, awaken and call us up from the bed of Sloth, to wrestle in Prayer with the God of Salvations, whose mercy endureth for ever, that he may be prevailed with to raise the Tabernacle of David which is fallen, and repair all our breaches, to give (as Eleazar after deceased Aaron, so) Joshua to succeed Moses, furnished with a double portion of his Spirit, to encounter and overcome all emergent difficulties he may meet with, in the race he is set to run. That growing spirit of wantonness under, and weariness of Gods Rule in Common-wealth and Church, cannot but adde weight to that load, which lyeth on the Shoulders of such as are called to bear the burthen and heat of such a day. To encourage the hearts and strengthen the hands of

To the Christian Reader.

the Builders of our Jerusalems Wall, was the pious design, and prudent scope of that Worthy Servant of Christ, who is now at rest, in Preaching this following Sermon to a great and honourable Auditory. What is here presented, was taken out of the Copy written by the Authors own hand: Had he lived to review and prepare it for the Press, it had probably come forth with greater lustre and vigour. That his praise-worthy pains taken in Studying, Writing, Praying and Preaching, and of others in Publishing a Discourse so seasonable and useful, may not be lost; that the Living God may yet delight to appear for us in Mounts of Difficulty, to settle our Shakings, heal all our Back-slidings and Breaches, and to give us such skilful State-Physicians, as may by apt means prudently used, recover us to a better condition of Health; that the Beauty of the Lord our God may be upon us, and his Glory on our Children, let be the travail of thy Soul, in prayer to Him in whose favour is life. To whose blessing I commend thee, in perusing what is here put into thy hands; and rest.

Thine in the Lord Jesus,

F. S.



At the ELECTION at Boston,
May 15. 1667.

Nehemiah 2. 10.

— *There was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.*

THe Occasion of these words, and frame of the Context, is known and obvious to every Reader, we need not take up time in that.

The words are a short, but notable Character or description of good *Nehemiah*, when appointed to be Governor or Ruler in *Judah*, and that in a time of trouble (of great Affliction and Reproach, as *ver. 3. of Chap. 1.* and the whole frame of the Story tells us) then he willingly undertakes the Charge, and comes with this design, this was his aim and spirit, (as it was afterward his practice) to seek the Welfare of the Children of *Israel*. If you ask who or what *Nehemiah* was, that was now come to be Ruler in *Judah*, (for so he was, *Chap. 5. 14.*) or what his business or design was? You are answered in this Periphrasis, *There was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.* It is brought in here as that that was the grief of the back-friends of *Judah*, (*Sanballat and Tobiah* when they heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly, saith the Text) but it was a truth in it self; (that is it that I aim at) this was the News that was then to be heard at *Jerusalem*: and it was no small joy to them, that there was come a man (*viz. Nehemiah*) whose aim, business and spirit was to seek the welfare, (or the good, as the word is) of, or that that was good for, the children of *Israel*.

But without further Preface, the words plainly afford us this Truth:

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Doct. *It is the Work and Spirit of faithful Rulers, to seek the welfare of the People, especially when as they are the People of the God of Israel.* Or,
It is the Duty and the Spirit of faithful Rulers, even in difficult and troublesome Times, (you may adde that, for that was the case of the Text) to seek the good (or welfare) of the People, especially when as they are the People of God.

Thus *Nehemiah* did, this was his *Spirit* and *Character*, and he made it his business all the time he was Ruler in *Judah*, as the whole after-story shews, which is a large *Comment* on the *Text*; and his commended Example is here set forth in the Book of *God*, for others *Instruction* and *Imitation*. Rulers (I say) are to seek the welfare, the good of the People: *Rom.* 13. 4. He is the Minister of *God* to thee for good; speaking of the Civil Magistrate: he is so by his Place, and he ought to be so in his Practice; *Ezth.* 10. 3. *Wealth-good* (the word is) or *welfare*: the same word is there in the *Hebrew*, with this in the *Text*. *Luk.* 22. 25. Civil Rulers are called *Benefactors*, (saith *Christ*) and such they ought to be, as they may justly and truly be so called; *Benefactors*, εὐεργέται, doers of good, to and for the people they rule over, especially when they are the people of *God*; so we know *Israel* (the children of *Israel*) were *Gods* Covenant people, *2 Sam.* 7. 24. and to seek the welfare of such a people (the children and people of *Israel*) that hath an *Emphasis* in the *Text*, was emphatically the design and desire of good *Nehemiah*; that consideration moved his heart when he was in the Court of *Persia*, both to pray for them, and to endeavour their help, *Chap.* 1. 10. The safety of *Jerusalem*, the holy City, by his building up the Wall thereof, was his main design, *Nehem.* 2. 13, 17. So *Psal* 78. 71. 72. great is the Trust and Obligation upon *David*, when set to feed (to Rule) *Jacob*, that are the people of *God*, and *Israel* his inheritance: *Psal.* 122. 9. so speaks *David*, a Ruler, to *Jerusalem*. For the Religious Interests thereof (Because of the House of *God* that is in it) he is eminently affected to seek its good.

For

For a little *Explication*. The *Object*, [the Peoples welfare] and the *Act*, [Seek] are here considerable.

Quest. 1. *What is that good, or welfare of the people, which Rulers ought to seek? or wherein doth it consist?*

Ans^r. Take it in the Example of *Nehemiah*, the improvement whereof the Text leads us unto.

1. They are to seek the Maintenance and furtherance of true Religion amongst a people. *Nehemiah* did not think himself unconcern'd in that; or that he being a *Civil Ruler*, had nothing to do in matters of Religion: He encouraged and assisted *Ezra* in the Reformation of Religion, *Chap. 8. & 10.* He put forth his Authority to restrain and redress sundry abuses therein; as *Nehem. 13. The defiling of the Temple, ver. 7, 8, 9. Neglect of the Levites, ver. 10—13. Profanation of the Sabbath, ver. 15—22.* Religion is the chief and principal thing, wherein the welfare of a people stands; it is impossible they should be well and do well without this, whereby they may come to serve God and glorifie him, and attain Salvation for their own Souls. The weal, the excellency, end and happiness of Mankind, lyes in true Religion: and therefore if Rulers seek the weal of a people, they must needs seek the advancement and establishment of this. Hence *Religio est summus politica finis*; Religion is the chief and last end of Civil Policy. *Alsted. Encyclop. p. 1389.* Gods Commandments are the Rule of man's good, *Deut. 6. 24. & 5. 29.* so is the first Table as well as the second: hence they must be keepers of both Tables.

2. In subordination to Religion, they are to seek also the external, temporal welfare of the people:

1. Consisting in their Safety; that *Nehemiah* taketh care for in the first place; (the preservation and safety of their persons and enjoyments, both Publick and Personal, Religious and Civil) To that end he builds the Wall of *Jerusalem*, for their safety, that they might not be a prey unto, or reproach amongst their Adversaries, *Nehem. 2. 17.* This is fundamentally necessary to the welfare, or well-being of a people, they cannot possibly have well being, without the preservation of their Being, both Personal and Political. When *Nehemiah* came to seek the welfare

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welfare of the children of *Israel*, his great business was to build the Wall of *Jerusalem*, in which place their principal Concernments, both of Religion and Government, were laid up, *Psal.* 122.3,4,5. That *Jerusalem* have a Wall for the safety and preservation of it, (and of what is contained in it) is requisite to the welfare of *Israel*.

2. Their *Honesty*: Rulers are to seek to maintain, cherish and preserve *Civil Honesty* amongst a people, by restraining and redressing Injuries between man and man, and other Crimes and Misdemeanours, by the Administration and Execution of *Justice*; by the free passage of *Righteousness*, which assigneth to every one his own; and of *Equity* also, abating the rigour and extremity of strict Justice, where need is. *Nehemiah* left an eminent Example of this, *Neh.* 5.7—13. causing them to deal honestly, yea mercifully with their poor brethren, according as the distress of the time required, suppressing the biting *Usury* that was among them; he frees the oppressed from their oppressions, and taketh care that *Righteousness* and *Equity* may obtain amongst the people; this also is a part of his care for the good of *Israel*. That people may live together in *all honesty* as well as *godliness*, is the care and the benefit of good Rulers, *1 Tim.* 2.1,2. and so that *Judgement* and *Justice* may be faithfully administered, which is a main *Basis* of the welfare of a people, and a main part of the work of Rulers, *1 Kings* 10.9. *Jer.* 22.3,15,16. *Amos* 5.24. *1 Pet.* 2.14.

3. Their *Prosperity*, in matters of outward Estate and Livelyhood, by such help as the care of Government may contribute to that end. That that we commonly call (*Wealth*) is a part of the wealth or welfare of a people, though not the greatest part, as the world is apt to esteem it. Good Rulers will gladly be a furtherance thereunto, what in them lyes, that the *Commonwealth* may flourish and prosper in that respect, but especially in reference to necessary livelyhood, when it is a time of distress and poverty, or special scarcity in this or that, of food or clothing: when the people are in a low condition (or many of them at least) wrestling with many and great difficulties, or in a dearth, *Chap.* 5.3. how careful is tender-hearted *Nehemiah* of

the people at such a time, *Nehem. 5.* he took great care that things might be so carried on, that poor people might be provided of necessaries, and be able to sustain their Families, that they might not perish in a time of dearth and scarcity, *vers. 2, 3, &c.* this was part of the good he did for the people, *ver. 19.* So *Gen. 41. 33—36.*

4. Their *Tranquility, Quietness* (or Peace) in the enjoyment of all those, (both Religious and Civil good things.) That was the scope of *Nehemiahs* care and endeavours in many of his actings. That the people might enjoy Peace and Tranquility, he doth endeavour to prevent and hinder both *Disturbances* from without, (hence he built the Wall of *Jerusalem*) and also to establish *Unity, Love and Peace among themselves*; to that end he took care to quiet Complaints and Contentions, and to heal dissatisfactions that arose among them, *Neh. 5. 1, 2—6, 7.* It is the great fruit and benefit of good Government, that the people may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in the wayes both of true Religion, and civil Honesty, (or in respect both of their Religious and Civil Concernments) : *Tim. 2. 2.* That of *Tertullus* was a great commendation of *Felix* his government, had it been true, and spoken without flattery, *Acts 24. 2.* the enjoyment of Quietness (Peace and Tranquility) is an excellent fruit of good Government. Thus of what the welfare of a People is. Now

2. To [Seek] a peoples welfare, is to put forth utmost and best Endeavours to procure, promote and maintain it; to study it, and to speak for it; to act for it, as occasion is. It is not an empty wishing and wounding, (I could be glad, saith a man, to see it go well with such a People) nor yet to talk of it onely, and speak great words, but to do (effectually and vigorously to do) for it what in us lies, as the case requires. Seeking implies positive and industrious Endeavours, in the use of all due means, to obtain a thing; as the use of the Word, in other places shews : See *Psal. 34. 14. Prov. 11. 27. & 15. 14. & 18. 1. Mat. 13. 45.* Take a man that seeks Wealth, or seeks Honour, how diligent, active, sedulous is he in his way, he layes out himself in industrious pursuit after it : To doth a

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faithful Ruler seek the welfare of the people, so *Nehemiah* did (as the story tells us.) But I may not enlarge here.

Reas. 1. Why it is the Work or Duty of Rulers to seek the good and welfare of the people; 1. *Because this is the way whereby the Ruler, as such, glorifies God*: viz. by seeking the good and welfare of the people. To glorify God, is the last end and great duty of every man, and thither we are to refer all we do, 1 *Cor.* 10.31. Now we serve and glorify God in our several stations, (and as placed amongst men in this world) in a way of seeking and serving the good of men: hence the *Law*, which is the *Rule* of our serving and glorifying God, we know *one Table* of it is taken up in enjoyning of us to do good to men, to seek and further the good and welfare of our *Neighbour*, in all that concerns him, (in his Honour, Life, Estate, &c.) Would you *serve God*? then saith the Lord, *Love your Neighbour*, seek the good and welfare of your Neighbour as your own: this is that Eternal, immutable, Moral Rule that lies upon all men. Hence it lies upon the Ruler, that he do in his place, and according to his *capacity* and *compass*, (which is greater then that of a private person, and therefore more is expected from him) seek the good of the people he stands related to. For [*our Neighbour*] is any one or more of Mankind, whom we have any opportunity or capacity to do good unto, *Luk.* 10.29—37. and the more Spiritual opportunity, advantage and obligation we are under to do good to another, the nearer Neighbour he is. Hence the *People* are the *Rulers* next Neighbour, (as I may say) they are the direct and eminent Object of his love, and of the fruits thereof, whom his Place gives him the highest advantages and obligations to do good unto. Hence to seek the good of the people, is the great work and duty which the Eternal Law of God layes on those that are called to place of Rule and Government.

Reas. 2. Hence, *The next end of the Ruler, as such, is to be for the people, and to promote their good and welfare*: As the last end is the glory of God, so the next end is the good of the people, *Rom.* 13.4. As 1 *Cor.* 11.9. i.e. Woman is lastly and as *Homo* (or one of mankind) for God; but nextly and as *Mu-*
lier

lier (in her proper place and Sex) for the man, to be an Help to him, *Gen. 2. 18.* So the Ruler is (as every man is) lastly for God, but nextly, and as a *Ruler*, for the *People*. The people are not for the Rulers, but the Rulers for the people, to minister to their welfare. Now it is the excellency (the goodness) of every thing, and the duty of the rational creature, to serve to its End; and the more aptly and fully that any do serve to their End, the better and more excellent they are. Jun Brut. pag. 74. B. can. pag. 751.

Reas. 3. From the Trust that is committed unto Rulers: They are entrusted by God (yea by God and Man) with the Publick Weal, and God will call for an Account of it, they are his *Ministers*, his Trustees for that business, *Rom. 13. 4.* No man can wholly excuse himself from being his *Brothers keeper*, *Gen. 4. 9.* but the keeping of the Common-weal of all their Brethren, is in a particular manner committed to Rulers, they are called in Scripture *Shepherds*, *Psal. 78. 71. & 77. 20.* *Ezek. 34. 23.* *Mic. 5. 5.* *Jer. 23. 14.* who are entrusted with the *Flock*; *Nursing-fathers*, who are entrusted with the care of the *Childe*, *Numb. 11. 12.* *Isa. 49. 23.* These and such like *Titles* import the Trust they are charged with. If the people or their welfare should ever miscarry in their hands, through their default, it will be required of them by the Lord. The peoples welfare is a *depositum* committed to them to keep. If but one Neighbour commit a thing to another to keep, *care* and *fidelity* in that *Trust* will be required, *Exod. 22. 7—12.* much more when a whole People, and God by them, do commit their whole common welfare unto such and such to keep.

Quest. 2. Why they are especially to seek the welfare of the people of God; or to seek the welfare of the people over whom they are Rulers, especially when as they are the Lords people.

Reas. 1. From the Preciousness of such a people, and of the things that are laid up with them: The Lord hath but one Darling in all the world; and that is his People, Jer. 12. 7. the dearly beloved of my Soul, even sinful Israel is so called; Israel is his Son, his first-born, Exod. 4. 22. and such an one he puts to you to nurse, who are Rulers in Israel; they are his Por-

tion, his Inheritance, his *peculiar Treasure*, Deut. 32.9. even when found in a desert land, ver. 10. there he leads them about as a *Flock*, by the hands of *Moses and Aaron*; and they are to him as the *Apple of his Eye*, ver. 11. *Psal.* 135.4. *Exod.* 19.4 5. *His Vineyard*, *Isa.* 5.7. and this he commits to your care and keeping (as *Cant.* 1 6.) With what care is such a Trust to be managed and looked unto? and how solemn would the account be if neglected? as *1 King.* 14.7. & 16.2. They are the Brethren of Christ, and what is done to or for them, yea for the least, for a despised handful of them, he accounts as done to himself, *Mat.* 25:40,45. They are the Spouse of Christ, of whom he is very tender, for whose welfare he is exceeding jealous, *Zech.* 1.14. They are the *Household of Faith*, and there is a specialty of duty and obligation to do good to such, to seek their good and welfare, *Gal.* 6.10. The nearer that any are to God, the nearer they are and ought to be to us. Gods people are precious and honourable in Gods sight; yea if any part of his people be more holy, more reformed, more conformable to his Will and Image than others, they are the more precious: and so they should be in our sight, and will be so with all that have a heart after the heart of God, and that love the righteous as such, *Isa.* 43.4. *Jer.* 2.3. When and while *Israel was Holiness to the Lord*, (an holy people) not onely by designation, but also in measure *actually* so, the Lord was more then ordinary tender and chary of them.

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Remember also the precious things that are laid up with and among the people of God; as *viz.* The holy Ordinances of God, The Truth of Religion, The dispensation of the glorious Gospel, The helps of everlasting Salvation: These things are high and strong obligations to seek the good of such a people, *Psal.* 122.9. and to maintain, preserve and promote these Enjoyments, wherein the choicest part of their welfare is contained. When the Ship is loaden with Plate and Treasure, it highly concerns the Master and Pilot to be very careful of her, that she miscarry not.

Reas. 2. The glory of Gods Name is eminently bound up and concerned in the welfare of his people; and therefore, if
Rulers

in Troublesome Times.

Rulers seek the glory of God, they must intensely seek the welfare of his people. It is true, that God who brings good out of evil, can and doth make the adversity and sufferings of his people turn to his glory; but that it doth so, is but by accident, and a working by contraries. The peace and welfare of the Lords people, hath a more proper and direct tendency to the glory of God, as well as their own comfort. Indeed if you speak of bare outward quiet and prosperity, singly considered, that hath not so near connexion with the glory of God (though that was an outward blessing, and was accounted a great favour in *Solomons* time, *1 Kings* 5.4) but take the whole welfare and peace of a Religious people together, that compriseth the flourishing of Religion, the open exercise of Gods Worship, the free passage of the Gospel, the most advantageous enjoyment of all the helps of Salvation, and of all encouragement in the wayes of God: and there is a very near and direct connexion between this and the glory of God; his glory is eminently bound up in it. So *Psal.* 102.16. when *Zion* is pull'd down, laid in the dust, as *ver.* 14. lies in rubbish, the glory of Gods Name suffers, and is eclipsed, (*Ezek.* 36.20. *Isa.* 52.5.) But when *Zion* is built up, and restored from her Captivity into a condition of welfare, then the Lords glory appears, shines out, and is advanced. So also under the *New Testament*, when deliverance, peace, rest, and visible welfare is given and granted to the Church, it is counted and spoken of as a great glory to God, and his Name is thereby lifted up amongst men. So in the time of *Constantine*, as ~~that~~ is commonly taken in *Rev.* 12.10. (The Kingdome of God is after a sort visibly seen, saith *Brightman* on the place, when God setteth up godly Rulers to govern his people.) And so upon the more full and final deliverance and restauration of the Church, and peaceable flourishing of Religion therein yet to come, (the great issue and scope of the *Providence* of God, of the *Promises* and *Prophecies* of his Word, and of the *Prayers* and *Hopes* of his people) the peace and welfare of his people will be matter of great and wonderful glory to God, and an exaltation to his Name and Kingdome in the world, *Rev.* 19.1,2,5,6. & 11. 15-18. It is therefore no

carnal thing, but an holy duty to desire, and in our places to seek and endeavour the Peace and Tranquility of *Israel*, not for low and sensual ends, but that God might have glory by his mercy to us, and by more abundant and fruitful service from us. And look as it is in the Body *Natural*, though God can and doth turn Sicknes, Diseases, and other like Afflictions, into great good to his people, and glory to his Name; yet notwithstanding Health is to be prized, prayed for, and by all lawful means sought after: and it is a duty of the sixth Commandment so to do. The same may be said of *political* health and welfare: God is to be submitted to, and glorified in Affliction and Tribulation, if he please to bring it; but he is to be waited on in all regular wayes (in the use of all lawful means) for welfare, even outward peace and welfare: and it is a great glory to his Name, where he bestows it upon a people of his, (publick peace and welfare upon a whole people especially) and he is to be glorified for it. And hence to act against the welfare of the people of God, is (in Scripture account) to act against the Lord himself, and against his Name and Glory, (which shews how eminently the same is concerned in them, and in their welfare) *Psa.* 83. 3, 4, 5. (such are enemies to God, therefore to his glory, *ver.* 2.) & 74. 7, 8, 22, 23. *Zech.* 2. 8. And on the contrary, all that *Nehemiah* did for this people, and for their welfare, he did it for God, and the Lord accepted it, *Neh.* 5. 19. & 13. 14. And so *Heb.* 6. 10. you shew love to Gods Name, when you minister to his Saints.

Reas. 2. The Rulers *own good* and *comfort* will eminently hereby be promoted; God will graciously remember *Nehemiah* for good, for all the good turns that he doth for his people, *Neh.* 5. 19. & 13. 31. So *Heb.* 6. 10. God will in a Gospel-way (by his rich grace) richly reward every such service; *Moses* had the recompence of reward to look unto, and so hath every faithful Ruler, *Heb.* 11. 25, 26. If you would study for your own welfare, and contrive to finde out a way how you may be well, and do well enough (for one) whatever comes, there is no way in all the world like this, Faithfully to seek the welfare of the Lords people: Be and do for God and for his people,
and

and you shall be sure to do well whatever come. *Ebed-melech* that did but do for one *Jeremiah*, found a reward even in those saddest times, *Jer.* 39. 16, 17, 18. much more shall they (one way or other) that do for a whole Body of the Lords people. *Lam.* 4. 27. the poor, i. e. specially the poor people of God (the afflicted *Jews*) then in his Dominions in Captivity, if there was any way in the world to lengthen out his Tranquility, that was it. As *Numb.* 10. 29, 32. the Lord hath spoken good concerning *Israel*, if you faithfully seek their good, you shall partake in the good and blessing that the Lord hath laid up for them; you shall be blessed with them and among them, not in this onely, but in another world: for *they shall prosper that love Jerusalem*, and faithfully seek the peace thereof, *Psal.* 122. 6.

USE I. This Point shews us what ought to be the general End and Rule of all the Motions and Actions of Rulers, viz. the welfare of the people. To that scope *Nehemiah* bends all his Actions and Endeavours; and *Finis est mensura mediocrum*, the End serves to measure, regulate, direct and limit the means, and shew what should be done. That *Maxime* of the *Romans* was and is a Principle of right Reason, *Salus Populi Suprema Lex*, [The welfare of the People is the Supreme Law] and is engraven on the Forehead of the Law and Light of Nature. Hence it is owned and confirmed by the *Scriptures*, as we see in the Text; and it is easily deducible from the Law of God: for that that is indeed the Law of Nature, is a part of the Eternal Law of God; and the Law of God enjoyns, that in Humane Civil Affairs, things be managed according to right Reason and Equity; and that Rulers, as they are for the people, so they are to make it their main business, and the scope of all their Actions, Laws and Motions, to seek the welfare of the people. There is Sun-light for this *Maxime*, and it was never doubted nor denied by any that held but to Rational and Moral Principles. Hence this Law being Supreme, it limits all other Laws and Considerations. Hence it is impossible that a people or their Rulers should be bound by any other Law, or Custome, or Consideration whatsoever, to do any thing that is really and evidently contrary to this. If it be indeed contrary or destru-

destructive to the welfare of the people, (of the Community they stand charged with) it is impossible they should be bound in *Conscience* to do it.

This is the *Compass* that Rulers are to steer by, and the *Touch-stone* of Right and Wrong in all their Motions, *viz.* What is for or against the Publick good, and the Welfare of the people, *Rom.* 13. 14. That bounds and regulates his whole Ministration. What is for the *Common good*, that and that only you are to do; and all that are set in place of Rule and Government (be they of higher or of lower quality) do stand charged with the welfare of that people, whom they are Rulers over.

I know when it comes to particulars, the doubt will still be, What is for the welfare of the people. One will say, this is most for the common good, another that. But

1. It will help much if this Principle be settled and acknowledged, That in Civil Affairs, the Consideration of the welfare of the whole, is that which shews and determines what is right, and weighs down all other Considerations whatsoever. Men will say, We must do what is right, whatsoever comes of it: *Fiat Justitia ruat Caelum*. True, but it is most certain it is not right, if it be against the welfare of the people. It is impossible that any thing should be truly right, that is destructive to the common good: for it will constantly hold, *Salus Populi Suprema Lex*.

2. Consider the things wherein the welfare of a people does consist, which are above-mentioned, [*viz.* Religion in the first place, and then their Safety, or the Preservation of their Being, both Personal and Political, and their participation in the Rules and Fruits of Righteousness, Equity, Order and Peace] and that will help to discover and discern what is for the welfare of the people, or for the common good, and what not. There is need of much prudence and wariness in particular Applications and Cases; but those general Principles will hold, That a peoples welfare lies in such things as these, and that Rulers are bound in all their Motions and Actions to seek the welfare of the people, and to do nothing contrary thereunto.

USE II. Hence see, that difficulties and troubles do not excuse, nor should discourage Rulers from doing the work of their Places which God calls them unto, or from seeking the welfare of the people: Such things do not excuse, nor should discourage from taking and accepting the Place of Rule when called to it. As they did not *Nehemiah*, though he heard before that their condition was a condition of great affliction and reproach, *Neh. 1. 3.* yet he voluntarily left the Court of *Persia*, to embarque with the *Jews* at *Jerusalem*, when in so stormy a time as this was; and how is he honoured in the Book of God for it? It was a difficult time and task that *Moses* was sent upon, accompanied also with a deep sense of his own infirmity and unfitness, *Exod. 3. 4.* he could not but be slow and backward to such a work; but yet when he was over-backward the Lord grew angry, and chides him into a consent: but (I say) difficulties and troubles should not discourage nor hinder Rulers from doing the work of their Places when set therein, *i. e.* from faithful seeking and acting for the welfare of the people, which is (as we have said) the summary work of the Rulers Place. Consider a little the difficulties that lay upon the *Jews* and their Rulers at this time in *Jerusalem*, after their return from Captivity, and in the dayes of *Nehemiah*.

1. They were a small, weak and despised people, *Nehem. 4. 1, 2, 4.* & *1. 3.* & *2. 19.* Contempt and reproach is a bitter and killing thing to ingenuous Spirits; yet this they were fain to bear and pass through. It was a *day of small things*, which others, yea even themselves are apt to despise, *Zech. 4. 10.*

2. They were in the midst of Enemies, and Adversaries round about them, of several sorts and Nations; *Sanballat* a *Moabite*, (from *Horonaim* a chief City of *Moab*, *Isa. 15. 5.* *Jer. 48. 3, 5, 34.* called the *Horonite*) and *Tobiah* the Servant, the *Ammonite*, on the East, *Neh. 2. 10.* (*The Servant*, he was Governour of the *Ammonites*, but of a base and servile spirit; some think that of a mean man, he was got into Place, and therefore is called *Tobiah the Servant*: such are often worst, *Prov. 30. 21, 22.*) *Geshem* the *Arabian* (*Neh. 6. 1.* & *4. 7.*) and others on the South; and the *Samaritans* on the North, *Neh.*

4.2. Ezra 4.9,10. Thus they were beset round with Adversaries, and Ill-willers, and many Informers and Complainers there were against them, as before in the dayes of Zerubbabel, Ezra 4. & 5.

3. Their Adversaries did labour to affright them with the Accusation of *Rebellion*, Neh.2.19. an old *Artifice*, but it was an injurious Calumny, and most groundless Accusation. The building of the Wall of *Jerusalem* for *self-preservation*, had nothing in it of *Rebellion*: but many clamours and stories they raised of that nature, Neh.6.6,7,8. and see their end therein, ver.9. to weaken and discourage them from their work, that their hearts and hands might fail them therein, that was it they aimed at.

4. There were Discontents and Divisions among themselves, Neh.5.1. Great Complaints of the *Inferiour* sort against their *Superiours*; of the Poor against the Rich; of Brethren against Brethren: yea, there were among themselves that were helpers to their Adversaries, and complied with them, even some *chief men* and others, Neh.6.17,18. and thereby, among other evils, it came to pass that nothing could be kept within its due compass, but every thing was carried and reported to their Adversaries, ver.19. *They uttered my words* (or my matters) *unto him*; and that doubtless not in the fairest dress. Yea, there were some of the Prophets that endeavoured to weaken the hands of faithful *Nehemiah*, and to put discouragement upon him, Neh.6.10, (This *Shemaiah* is conceived to be the same that is mentioned Ezra 8.16.) 11,12,13. (By the way, who would have said that that would have been a sin, which might seem to be a prudent retirement for safety? yea, but for *Nehemiah*, in a case so circumstanced, to act fear and discouragement to the prejudice of his Cause and Work, would have been a sin.) But ver.14. there were also that raised Slanders of others of their *Prophets*, those it's like who were of another minde, ver.7.

Vid Eogl
Annot.

5. They were poor, and low, and weak as to outward estate, conflicting with wants and straits, and many difficulties in that respect, very unable to support themselves, and to bear the Publick Burthens that were then upon them, Neh.5.2-5. and ver.18.

ver. 18. The bondage was heavy upon this people : Neh. 9. 37. We are in great distress.

6. Hence there was *hard Work*, and *weak Instruments*, ready many times to be discouraged, *Neh. 4. 10.* the Workmen themselves, and those that should joyn hands together to labour and carry on the work, began to mutter and be discouraged, by the difficulty of the work, and their own weakness; *We are not able, say they, to carry it on :* At the same time when the Adversaries were high, *president* and threatening, *ver. 41.* their own workmen began to be disheartned and *diffident*, *ver. 10.* Here was a juncture of discouraging trial. Hence hard shifts they were fain to make to carry on the work, and to put forth themselves to the utmost, and beyond an ordinary measure, by the care and courage and conduct of good *Nehemiah*, *ver. 16, 17.* Every one had both his hands full, and they were fain to do two works at once, the work of a *Souldier*, and of a *Labourer*, *ver. 18, 21, 22, 23.*

7. It was a time of many *fears*; wherein they had many fears among them, and many that heightned those fears : many Reports, Threatnings and fore-speakings of this, and that, to that purpose, *Neh. 4. 12. & 6. 9, 13, 14, 19.* It is observeable, that that was the drift and endeavours of Adversaries and Ill-willers, *Fear, fear, fear*; a discouraging *Heart* and *Hand-weakning carnal fear*. The great word of *God* to godly Rulers is, *Be strong, and of a good courage*, fear not when in *Gods* way and work, *Josh. 1. 6, 7, 9.* But the word of *Satan* and his Instruments is, *Fear, be afraid*, look upon the danger of being faithful : But (as to man and second Causes) they had many very great causes of fear, many dangers round about them, and to be faithful in duty in a time of fear, proves a difficult task to flesh and blood.

8. Which was worst of all, Among this people of the *Jews* after Captivity, when engaged in Reforming work, there were many sins, disorders and miscarriages, which were provoking unto *God*, and a great exercise of discouragement to their faithful Leaders; such in *Ezra's* time as made him *blush before God*, and fear what *God* would do with them, *Ezra 9.*

6, 10, 14. And before that in *Haggai's* time, such neglects of carrying on Temple-work, and of finishing what was begun, as he sharply reproveth, yea as God reproveth from Heaven, by Drought, Blastings, &c. *Hag.* 1. 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11. & 2. 16, 17. And here in *Nehemiah's* time there were faults, evils and distempers found among them, as *Neb.* 5. 1, 6, 7, 9. & 13. 4, 5, 10, 15, 18, 23, 24, 26, 27. not onely matter of *Affliction*, but sinful *Corruptions* and Distempers do sprout up among a Reforming people, and those they have to wrestle with: yet neither did these take them or their Leaders off from their Work, nor utterly overturn it; nor did the Lord cast them off (though he chastened them) but helped them along, though in much infirmity. He was with them at many a dead lift, (*Hag.* 2. 4.) and after *frowns*, yet *smiled* on them again: especially while the Leaders were faithful to search out and testifie against *evil*, and to set upon *duty* when called to it; and the people were willing to hearken to them, and to be reduced and reformed by them: both which may be observed of them all along in the story, *Hag.* 1. 12, 13. *Ezra* 10. 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 14.

* *Vid.*

Apud Til

Lightfoot

knowl. of

Times,

p. 226, 10

251.

9. Lastly, we may remember the long time wherein this poor people were conflicting and labouring under Difficulties and Infirmities, and what a succession of Difficulties and Troubles did attend them in the Reforming, and Rebuilding work they were upon. From their first Grant by *Cyrus*, unto the beginning of *Nehemiah's* Government (in the twentieth year of *Artaxerxes*) according to the shortest Account, were 82 years (so *Usher* in his *Annals*. *Junius* saith 146. *Lightfoot* saith but 37, but few embrace that *.) Almost all that time, & so afterward in the time of *Nehemiah's* Government, they were followed with various Troubles and Exercises (as the story at large tells us) Times, though they had their lucid Intervals, and the Lord still helping in the issue.

Thus that word was made good, *Dan.* 9. 25. that *Jerusalem*, both City and Wall, *should be built again in troublous times*. Yet notwithstanding all this, they went on in their Work with *Courage*, and *Constancy*, and *Confidence* in God, *Neb.* 2. 20. and he did prosper them, not by preventing Difficulties, but by carry-

ing

ing on the Work in their hands through all Difficulties, and in the midst of all their Infirmities. And it is observeable, That every *Tragedy* they passed through, had a glad *Catastrophe*; every stress had a comfortable issue: God still helped them in the conclusion and upshot of every business, that they came off well at last, though with much tugging and wrestling, much exercise of Faith and Patience. So in the Building of the Temple, (thus it went on heavily, and met with many obstructions, and many Adversaries; yet they got through at last, to their great joy) *Ezra* 6. 15, 16, 22. So here in the building of the Wall, *Neh.* 6. 15, 16. & 12. 27, 43. And so in the Reformation of Abuses, *Ezra* 10. *Neh.* 5. & 13. The story of the *Church* in all Ages, & especially in the Scripture, informs us, that the best and greatest works God hath delighted to carry on through many Difficulties and Oppositions, and in much felt infirmity of Instruments. The time of *Moses*, of *David*, of *Israel*, all along in the *Old Testament*, will furnish us with many Instances of it; yea and also of the *Apostles* in their Work under the *New Testament*, *Act.* 20. 19. 1 *Cor.* 16. 9. & 3. 3. 2 *Cor.* 11. 23--28, 29, 30. *Gal.* 4. 13, 14. the glorious Gospel must be preached & carried on through *Infirmity of the flesh*, i.e. through outward meanness and affliction of Instruments, yet not therefore to be despised. The whole Church of God, and every particular concernment thereof, is in a *Militant* conflicting condition in this world; and it must be no stumbling to us to see it so: it occasions the more exercise of *Faith*, *Patience*, *Prayer*, &c. in the work (as we see in the example of *Nehemiah* all along) and the more of God to appear in the issue of it, *Neh.* 6. 16.

Go on therefore in the Work of the Lord, and in the Service of your several Places, and be not taken off by trouble, difficulties, oppositions, felt infirmities in your selves, weaknesses and distempers in persons and things round about you, (which will alwayes be.) When were there work for Patience, Faith, Fortitude, Self-denial, and for the Spirit of a Souldier, Wrestler, &c. if it were not for such things? We must none of us say, of one Order or other, I will serve God in my place, and help build the Wall of *Jerusalem*, if I may do it with ease,

and tranquility, without trouble, without hazard, without reproaches, and ill-requitals from men, &c. Christ is little beholden to us, if that be all we will do for him; that is too low for the Spirit of a good Soldier of Christ Jesus, 2 Cor. 6. 4, 5, 8. Yea, now you look like the Ministers of God, when you cheerfully discharge your Places, though surrounded and loaden with Afflictions, Distresses, Labours, false Reproaches, &c. Now you are drest like a Minister, like a Servant of God, and of his people in Publick Work; and through such things as these, you must go on in your Work, as the Apostles then did.

USE III. A threefold Exhortation: 1. To our Rulers and Leaders. 2. To the People. 3. To both joyntly, or to the whole.

1. To Rulers and Leaders, who are betruſted with the Government of this people; Let them be Exhorted by the Word, and in the Name of the Lord, to follow the Example of good Nehemiah, and to be of this Spirit, to make it your work and business to seek the welfare of the Lords people. The Concernments of a People framed into a Body Politick, are put into your hands, and of such a people as are the people of God (that no Christian Spirit can deny) a part of Gods Israel, though but a part, yet no inconsiderable part of the people of God at this day in the world: such a part of Gods people as are retired into these Ends of the Earth, for known ends of Religion and Reformation, to serve God in his Temple and Ordinances according to his appointment: You are betruſted with as precious an Interest as is this day upon the Earth; viz. with the Lives, Estates, Liberties, and Religious Enjoyments of some thousands whose Names are written in Heaven, and bound upon the Breast and Heart of Christ Jesus: yea, with so much of the Interest of Christ, his Truth, Wayes, Worship, Gospel, Name and Kingdome, as is to be found here amongst this people. This part of Israel do under God confide in you, and betrust you with their Welfare: To be Instrumentally the Saviours and Preservers hereof, is a thing more honourable and excellent (yea and more profitable too, as will appear one day) then to be Owners of all the Wealth of both the Indies. Poor
Nehemiah,

Nehemiah, who sought and maintained the welfare of the children of *Israel*, when but an handful, a poor small and despised people, is more honourable in the Book of God, then all the great Ones of the Earth in his time. The Lord Jesus Christ, having ask'd and obtained this piece of the *ut. most ends of the Earth* for his possession, doth commit it unto you, as Instruments under him, to keep and maintain his possession in it. The eyes of the whole *Christian World* are upon you; yea which is more, the eyes of *God* and of his holy *Angels* are upon you, to see and observe how you Manage and Discharge this Trust now at such a time. And though your Obligations and Encouragements from men, from the people over which you Rule, are but small, there is little outward advantage you have by them to engage you to them, or their welfare; (and hence they that look no higher then the world, will never do much for such a people) yet to men of *Religion*, and *Conscience*, and *Faith*, there is enough to be said to oblige and encourage them: the Charge and *Commandment* of *God*, and *Duty* to him, is the highest *Obligation*. Remember that the Lord, the great God, layes this solemn Charge and Injunction upon you (*Honoured Fathers*) as you will answer it at the great Day, That you seek the good, and be tender of the welfare of this people: and *God* may be bold with you, though we may not; he speaks not without Authority to *Command*, nor without Riches and Power to *Reward* you; he hath given an *Advantage* to set before you, and encourage you by, though we your poor people have not; he hath the *Promise* to encourage, as well as the *Precept* to binde and oblige: they that can really believe the Promise, will never stick at any Duty, and so not at this duty of the Precept. When *Moses* chose to suffer affliction with the people of *God*, he made the best bargain for himself that ever man did. *Paul* never gain'd so much, as when he lost all for Christ. The Lord will not let you be losers by any thing you do for his people, *Neh. 5. 19.* Every penny-worth of such Service shall have many pounds of reward, *Mark 10. 29, 30.* *God* in Christ is a rich and gracious Rewarder, as well as a sovereign Commander; and therefore when you are before the Lord, and look to him (as it is before him,

him, and in his Name that we now speak) the Exhortation mentioned is strong and powerful, and wants no strength of *Argument* to back it, to perswade and constrain (encourage and oblige) to seek the welfare of such a people.

And some Helps to this purpose (or useful Directions) we may readily gather from the Example of *Nehemiah*.

Direct. 1. *Put on bowels of Compassion*, so as to have a lively sense of the Condition and Concernments of this people: So *Neh. 1.4. & 2.3. & 5.18*. Think not that it is well enough if I can shift for one; *Nehemiah* was not of that minde, he took a view of their case, (in special to see where ought was broken down and out of order in the Wall of *Jerusalem*, that he might stir up himself and them to mend it) *Neh. 2.13, 15, 17*.

2. Be studious and solicitous about the *Publick Welfare*; bestow intense thoughts, study and care concerning it, what may be needful or expedient for it. *Neh. 5.7. My heart consulted* (took counsel, the phrase is) *in me*; his minde wrought about the business: he is also very vigilant and industrious to foresee evils, and to use means to prevent the same, and to order things in their time and place; as may be seen in special in *Chap. 4.* at large.

3. Practise *Self-denial* and *Patience*; faithful Rulers will finde much need of that, especially among a people that are poor and full of infirmities: *Neh. 5. 14, 15, 16, 18. He requires not the bread of the Governour*, (i.e. the Maintenance belonging and futable to such a Place) because many heavy burthens were upon that poor people. This was a voluntary departing from his own Right, and it cannot be urged as binding where the case is not alike (though where, or so far as the case is alike, the fear of God will teach it, as it did him, *ver. 15.*) We may fear indeed that there is not that done by the people with us, that should be, and might be in this particular; it may be time will teach us more of our duty in that matter: But to be sure great things cannot be done by this poor people; and where so it is, Rulers shall honour God and themselves much by *Self-denial*, and condescending to mean things; and to do that out of love to God and his people, for the which they are not rewarded by men:

men : (Oh there are but a few such *Nehemiabs* in the world, we have cause to prize and be thankful for such, you cannot finde the people upon earth that have so *Self-denying* and condescending a *Magistracy*, as the Lord hath given unto us.) But the less your reward is on *Earth*, the greater it shall be in *Heaven*. As you are to practise *Self-deniall*, so also *Patience*. When God chose a Ruler for *Israel* in the *Wilderness*, he chose the meekest man in all the *Earth*, (*Numb. 12. 3.*) a man of patience, and he had need be so, to bear the Infirmities, Murmurs, Unthankfulness, and the Distempers of the people. *Moses* was a *Nursing-father*, *Numb. 11. 12.* The Nurse had need have more patience then the Childe, else what will become of it? If when the *Childe* is froward and unquiet, the *Nurse* should be so too, what work would there be? Though it be a time of strife (the great distemper) of the Congregation, *Moses* and *Aaron* must carry it with patience and moderation, else God will not take it well, *Numb. 27. 14.*

4. *Courage* and *Constancy* was another imitable excellency in *Nehemiah*, and without which he could never have done his work, nor stood up for the welfare of that people, especially at such a time. Many sought to drive him from his work by fear, but he abode undaunted and courageous in the Lord, *Neh. 6. 9, 11*, (he counts that such an act of fear was very unsuitable to one in such a Place) 13, 14, 19. Threatnings, Letters, Prophets, all cannot discompose him by fear : yea, he hath such a Courage, Faith and Presence of Spirit, as to encourage others in time of danger, *Neh. 4. 14, 20.* (*Our God shall work for us*) If the Spirits of Leaders fail when Difficulties and Troubles come, all fails ; but God hath appointed them to Spirit all about them, to be both the *Head* and the *Heart* of a people, *2 Chron. 1. 10, 7, 8.* That (I say) is the great word of God to good Rulers, onely be strong, and of a good courage, viz. in the way of the Rule, *Josh. 1. 6, 7, 9.* and they have a strong word to build upon, (*ver. 5*) *I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*

5. *Wisdom* and *Prudence* in the management of Affairs ; as it is mentioned in Scripture as a Requisite in Civil Rulers, *Deut. 1. 13, 15.* *2 Chron. 1. 10.* so it was not wanting in *Nehemiah*, as

the whole frame of the story shews us. I might instance in some acts & fruits of his Wisdom; as in his practising the lesson that we have since had from Christs own mouth, *Beware of men*, (*Mat. 10. 16, 17.*) *Neh. 6. 2, 3, 4.* in his not being carried with pretences, and taking plausible shews of Reason, no not from *Prophets* themselves, *Neh. 6. 10, 11, 12.* nor with great words from others, *Neh. 2. 19, 20.* His putting great Trust into the hands of faithful men, *Neh. 7. 2. & 13. 13, &c.* We may here remember, That Religion is the truest Reason; *Honesty* the best Policy; and to keep in the way of the Rule, in the fear of God, is the highest *Wisdom*: and all sinful deviation or turning to crooked wayes, is *folly*, *Job 28. 28. 1 Sal. 111. 10. Prov. 10 9.* But Religion doth not take away, but establish the prudent managing of Affairs, as to the manner and circumstances of Actions. How often may the same thing be done, and the same end attained, in a discreet, moderate, comely and prudent way, as well as in a way that is less expedient? *David* guided them with the skilfulness of his hands, as well as with integrity of heart, *Psal. 78. 72.* Leaders are to exert a skilfulness and prudence in the manner of the Conduct of Affairs.

6. Be much in Prayer on all occasions: *Nehemiah* was a praying Magistrate, and therefore so helped and blessed in his way and work, *Neh. 6. 9. & 4. 8, 9. & 1. 4, 11.* (He laid the ground-work and beginning of his work and business on Prayer, and so he carried it on.) He will have an *Ejaculation* to Heaven, even when he is upon Action, and hath not time for more, *Neh. 2. 4.* The Prayers of Rulers and Leaders for the People, are a precious means of the peoples welfare. That is one good way of seeking their good, to set God on work by Prayer; and engage him to do them good, *Psal. 51. 18.* When *Hezekiah* and *Isaiah* do both cry and pray to Heaven, there is good hopes it shall go well with that people, and that God will appear for them, as he did, *2 Chron. 32. 20, 21, 22.* How oft did the Prayer of *Moses* and *Aaron* for *Israel* in the Wilderness, slip in between them and destruction, *Numb. 14. 12, 13—19, 20. & 16. 20, 21, 22, 45. & 21. 7.* It was an exemplary passage of that worthy *Priest* of *Orange*, who when he had but one breath to draw,

draw, spent half of it on the people in prayer for them, crying (as he fell down slain) *Oh my God, take pity of my Soul, and of this poor people.* V. Clark
Martyr.
pag. 274.

2. This Point may afford several *Instructions* to the People.

1. It gives a Direction whom to make *Choice* of for their *Rulers*; viz. Such as may be most fit and likely, faithfully to seek the good and welfare of the people; and of such a people of God as through grace are in this *Wilderness*, and so circumstanced as they are. But I shall not insist on this.

2. Learn and be exhorted hence highly to prize and honour such *Rulers* when Chosen, and called to Place of Government. Such as have it upon their heart, and make it their business faithfully to seek your best welfare; such as are in measure of *Nehemiahs* Spirit; those whose design it is to seek not themselves, nor great things for themselves, (alas they are not to be had here) but the welfare of the people, their Safety, Peace and Prosperity, (and the Prosperity of Religion, which is the principal part of our welfare) out of love to God and to his people; Be assured your welfare is bound up in such. It is God that works and maintains a peoples weal, but he does it by means, and especially by this means of faithful *Rulers* and Leaders. It was the great work of Gods mercy to the Jews after the Captivity, (which the story is taken up in) that he raised up for them, and among them, faithful Leaders to be Instruments of their good; *Zerubbabel*, *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, to rebuild both the Temple and City of *Jerusalem*, and settle things in the Church and Common-wealth. When God means well to a people, (hath thoughts of peace, *Jer.* 29. 11. & 32. 41.) he gives them such Leaders as shall cordially seek their welfare: when ever he hath good dayes for his people, he layes in this, *Isa.* 1. 26. & 60. 17. *Jer.* 23. 4. (See 1 Kings 10. 9.) So of old in the Wilderness, *Psa.* 77. 20. Which Text of Scripture we heard well improved in a Sermon on the like occasion now Seven years ago; wherein it was said, That that was the Thirtieth year currant that God had given us godly *Magistrates*: if so, this is the Thirty seventh year currant, wherein we have enjoyed that mercy. Whereupo. it was then solemnly

added (by that Reverend Servant of God who then Preached) That the Sun shines not upon an happier people then we are in regard of this mercy: The Lord make us thankful for it, and give us to know and prize the things of our peace, and faithfully to adhere thereunto, (not meddling with them that are given to change) as also to love, honour, and acknowledge those that are and have been the Instruments of our peace and welfare, as doth become us.

3. Pray much for Rulers, that God may dispose and assist them to seek and promote your welfare, 1 *Tim.* 2. 1, 2. (that it may be well with us, that we may enjoy welfare under their Government) their work is great and weighty, and you are concern'd therein unspeakably, [*viz.* to be Instrumental under God of your whole welfare] and therefore you had need to pray hard for them. It was a good speech of *Bugenhagius*, (*apud Gerhard. de Magistr. Polit. pag. 924.*) *Si tam prompti essemus, &c.* If we were but as forward to pray for Magistrates, as we are to *censure* and blame them, things would be better with us then they are.

4. Let people be friends and *Helpers* to their own welfare; or every one in your several places seek the common good of the whole. If Rulers are to *seek* the welfare of the people, then surely people themselves are not to *prejudice* or neglect their own welfare. The *Patient* must contribute Endeavours towards his own health, as well as the *Physician*, else there will be but little good done. It is the Rulers work eminently, as his Place is more eminent; but it is also the work of every one, according to the compass of his capacity and opportunity, to seek the welfare of the place and people, where & among whom he lives, *Jer.* 29. 7. So the Lord speaks to Captives in *Babylon*, during the time of Gods patience with it; much more doth that duty lie on those that dwell in *Zion*, to seek the good and the peace of the place, both by Prayer to God, and by all other due means within their power. Love thy Neighbour, much more a whole *Community*, a multitude of thy Neighbours, is the Lords charge to every one. A little more particularly.

1. Be sure (every particular person, I now speak to even them that are in private capacity) ~~to~~ do no *hurt* to *Israel*, (to the Lords people among whom you live) either *directly*, or *indirectly*; either wilfully or carelessly: that is just contrary to seeking the welfare of the place and people where you live; which is a Moral and great duty lying upon every Soul. Woe to that person, whosoever he be, that shall be a willing or blameable cause of hurt or harm to the *Lords people* here, whom he that toucheth will be found to touch the *Apple of his Eye*, *Psal. 34. 21.* When God called *Abraham* forth to follow him in a way of Reformation, he gave that word along with him, *Gen. 12. 3.* and so to *Jacob* or *Israel*, *Gen. 27. 29.* and he did and will make it good. If you love your Souls, take heed of touching *Israel* to their hurt: yea even words that tend to the reproach or prejudice of the people of God, or Builders in *Jerusalem*, is not a small matter, *Neb. 4. 2, 3, 4, 5.* (such *Imprecations* tell us, what will be the portion of such except they repent, though not that ordinary and private Spirits should be forward to wish that it might be so to particular persons) *They have provoked anger* (*Thee* is not in the Hebrew) irritated and raised spirits (by their Scoffs and Reproaches) *before*, or in respect of the *Builders*. The words may carry that meaning.

2. Think it not enough to do no *hurt*, but according to your place and opportunity do *good* to *Israel*, to that part of it in special in which the Lord hath cast you. Be willing to put forth thy self for the publick good according to thy *Talent*. Hast thou Estate which the Lord hath blessed thee with, (and gotten, it may be, here under the shadow of the Government?) let not the Publick suffer for want, when as thou hast it by thee. Hast thou Ability to serve the Country any other way? be ready thereunto: Do not onely *pray*, but put forth *endeavours* according to capacity and opportunity for the peace and good of *Jerusalem*; else you do but dally in praying, if you will do nothing for it, *Psal. 122. 9.* Seek it in the use of all due means. A publick Spirit even in a private person is a precious thing; i. e. according to the compass of his place to be ready to do

Nehemiah's on the Wall

for the common good. Could the Heathen (the *Romans* and others) produce such Sayings as these; *That man was not born for himself, but for his Country; That even to die for it is sweet: Dulce & decorum pro Patriâ mori*; and boast of those among them that practised accordingly: and shall Christians be strangers to such a Publick Spirit, or be backward to act for the common welfare. Here in *Nehemiab's* time every one set his hand to, to build up the Wall of *Jerusalem*, and the particular persons and companies that did their parts therein, are to their honour recorded in the holy story, *Neh. 3*. Oh that is a pleasant sight, to see all sorts contributing to the Safety, Peace, Welfare of *Jerusalem*, and joyning *Hearts and Hands* therein. *Neh. 4. 6*. Oh! have you a minde to *build* or to *save* the Wall and Welfare of *Jerusalem*? Are you *cheerful, cordial, forward, industrious* therein? not a man to *talk* onely, but to *work* when the case requires it.

2. **Keep Order**: keep in your places, acknowledging and attending the Order that God hath established in the place where you live. *Numb. 2. 2*. the *Israelites* were commanded to pitch every man by his own Standard; the *LXX.* render it *non confusus*. *According to order*: So *1 Thess. 4. 11*. Act *orderly* if you would act any thing for the publick welfare; leave the guidance of the Ship to those that sit at Helm, and are by God and his people set there, and whom you are immediately flated under: onely pray for them. And if there be place for a modest Suggestion, tender it as becomes you, but juggle not into their Places, nor refuse to acquiesce in their Conclusions. This people of the *Jews* after the Captivity, we finde them ready and willing to be ordered by those the Lord set over them; and by that means things went well, or when ought was amiss it found amendment, *Ezra 10. 2, 3, 4, 8, 12, 14. Neh. 5. 12, 13. & 13*. It was a good time in *Issachar*, when as, *1 Chron. 12. 32*.

3. The third Branch of the Exhortation. Let me speak a few words unto *All*, to Rulers and People both together. The Command is (as we see) that we all ought to aim at, and be studious of the common good, the *weal and welfare* of the

whole; the *Lines* of every ones wayes and actings should meet in that *Center*. In the fear of God be faithful and careful herein. And to this end, let me add a few general Helps and Directions from the Word of God, such as may concern both Rulers and People in their several capacities, though more eminently the former, as having the main stroke in the Conduct of Affairs.

1. Be sure to fix upon a right *Business*, or settle upon a right *Interest*, even the true Interest of Christ Jesus; i.e. Be found in, and cleave to the way of the Rule, the way of Gods Word, in those things especially that are of publick and general Concernment. Faithfully keep with God, and then he will be with you; as we well heard the last Year, from 2 Chron. 15.2. That therefore is the sure and certain way to welfare, Deut. 5. 29. In matters of Religion and Reformation in a special manner (which is our main Interest) keep close to the right way, turn not from it to the right hand or left; not in those things especially that concern your publick *Profession* and *Practice* in the sight of the World. Take heed of Corruption here.

(1.) Do not wrong and marre an excellent Work and *Profession*, by mixing and weaving in spurious *Principles* or *Practices*; as those of *Separation*, *Anabaptism*, *Morellian* (Anarchical) *Confusion*, and *Licentious Toleration*. If any would secretly twist in and espouse such things as those, and make them part of our Interest, we must needs renounce it as none of our Cause, no part of the End and Design of the Lords faithful Servants, when they followed him into this Land that was not sown. *Separation* and *Anabaptism* are wonted Intruders, and seeming *Friends*, but secret fatall *Enemies* to Reformation; as *Paul* in a case not much unlike, 1 Cor. 3. 10—15. In this Work here on foot, there was a good Foundation laid, viz. Christ as the onely Law-giver in his Church, and Reformation designed according to his Will and *Apostolical pattern*; but take heed how you build thereupon. If you should build the *Hay* and *Strubble* of such things as those, then verily (though sincere persons will be saved, and the main of the Work may be saved and revived at last) yet verily sooner or later there will come a

Fire

Fire that will *burn* up this *Stubble*, and then your poor Leaders that would have led you the right way, may be remembered when it is too late. Do not on pretence of avoiding *Corruption*, run into sinful *Separation* from any of the true *Churches* of God, (and what is good therein) or from the Children of the Covenant. Prize and hold fast the Covenant of God to you and yours. Keep with God in his Covenant, and walk up to it, and you may boldly trust him, God-All-sufficient will keep you. If we will own Gods Covenant but for one generation onely, (when as *Gen. 17. 7.* the Covenant runs to us and our seed after us in their generations) how justly may the Lord tarry with us but for one generation, and then break up house, and leave us to confusion.

(2.) On the other hand, do not so avoid *Separation*, as to neglect or prejudice *Reformation*. The good old *Non-Conformists* were very zealous for *Reformation*, and yet alwayes steadfast Enemies to *Separation*: those two may well consist, and they left us a good example therein. Such things as are or have been known *Corruptions* in other Churches, it is no part of sinful *Separation*, but a part of just *Reformation* to avoid them, or refuse to propagate, practise or continue them. Christ would not separate from (or cast off) the *Temple*, but he was zealous to *purge* the Temple, and so should we be. And it is our Errand into the Wilderness to study and practise true Scripture-*Reformation*, and it will be our Crown (in the sight of God and man) if we finde it, and hold it without *Adulterating deviations*. Oh seek and keep it, and hold it fast, *Rev. 3. 11.* To leave the Children of non-scandalous Orthodox Christians *Unbaptized*, will (I doubt not) be one day found a thing displeasing unto Jesus Christ. But on the other hand, to Baptize in such a lax and licentious way, as serves to dress men in the *Livery*, without bearing the Yoke of Christ; to have his Name upon them, with rejection of his Government, this will not serve either the Principles of Reformers, or the Rules of Scripture. So though Rigid Severity in Admissions to the Lords Table is to be avoided; yet to be lax and slight therein, to admit all sorts to full Communion,

In Troublesome Times.

or upon very slight *Qualifications*, is against the Principles and against the Interest of *Reformation*. Again, to put *Election* of Church-Officers into the hands of All, (though matters ought to be so unblameably carried, as none may have any just *Objection* against the person Chosen, without matter of *satisfaction* given them) is such a piece of ruining Confusion, as none of the *Wayes* or *Models* of *Church-Government* that have been of any repute in the world, would ever admit of. *That is an Anabaptistical Tenet*; Spanhem. Disput. 1. Thes. 53. Take heed of Extremes, and of passing from one Extreme to another, (or from flying from *Papall* or *Prelatical Tyranny*, into *Morellian Anarchy*) which mans weakness is very apt to do. Pray and study to find and keep the true Scripture-way, and be not hurried from it on one hand or other, by the Devices of our cunning Adversary (*Satan*) whose wiles we should not be ignorant of.

So also in Civil Concernments, fix upon a right *Basis*, upon Foundations and Principles that are Righteous and *Rational*, and that will hold, and let not one thing jostle out another. But I forbear to meddle there.

In all avoid Irregular *Extremes*, and wilde *Extravagancies*; be for safe and sober *Principles* and *Practices*. It was a wise mans *Motto*, (viz. Sir *Nicholas Bacon*) *Mediocria Firma*: Things carried with Moderation and Mediocrity are firm and stable; Extremes soon run themselves out of breath, tumble down of themselves, and so end in Confusion.

2. Study *Unity*, (and to that end *Order*;) i.e. Unity in the Lord, and in his Truth and Fear. Unity in Sin, Errour and Evil is a piece of *Hell*; but Unity in Peace and Righteousness is no little part of *Heaven*, and a main Ingredient in a peoples welfare, *Psal.* 133. 3. To this end,

(1.) Let all that fear God heartily Unite in the main; yea all that fear God will Unite therein: i.e. in the main Concernments both of things of Religion, and of the good of the People. He that fears and loves God, will love his *Truth*, love his *Word*, (the Rule of Faith and Life) and love his *people*, and love their best *welfare*; and the main Concernments of all

Nehemiah to the Jews

all these things are so plain and palpable, as he that cordially loves them will (unless transported in a pang of Temptation which will not hold) see and close with them, and unite therein.

(2.) Let not them that *Unite* in the main, be *dis-united* by lesser Differences; but therein attend the means of *Help*, and be set down by *Order*.

1. Attend the Means of discerning and finding out the right way even in lesser matters, and of agreeing therein. There is nothing so little in the things of *Religion*, or of the *publick Welfare*, (especially in matters of practice, wherein we must of necessity act and practise one way or other) as that we may neglect it, or neglect our best Endeavours to finde it out, and attend the minde of God therein. We must not disregard *the least of Gods Commandments*, nor teach men so to do, Mat. 5.19. Though the Points of *Baptism*, *Church-Order*, and such like, be not Fundamentals of *Salvation*, yet they are matters of necessary practice, (and of no small moment neither) wherein we ought to use all the means that God hath appointed, and gives opportunity to know and do his Will, and to labour to agree therein, that *we may speak the same thing*, 1 Cor. 1.10. • We should not think it a light thing to be of many mindes, but diligently use the utmost means to agree.

2. If after the use of all Means, some smaller and lesser Differences do remain, (as some there will be while we dwell in the flesh) Agree not to *Disagree* about them, but to manage them with Love and Meekness. Agree, I say, not in order to *Separation*, that is a strange *Agreement* to agree to *Divide* and *Disunite*, but in order to Union and Communion: and in the issue, let Order carry it; be set down by Order, submitting one to another in the Lord, 1 Cor. 14.32,33. There cannot be peace (but confusion) if there be not an orderly subjection one to another.

You will say these are but *generals*. It is not easie to speak more then so here: but yet they are such generals as (I humbly conceive), admit an easie application to *particulars*.

3. Let

3. Let every one take heed of *Sin*, and study *Holiness*, and practical *Piety*, or close walking with God, *Prov. 14. 34. Joel 3. 17.* Be an *holy*, and you shall be an *happy* People. If any sin be *sprouting* up or getting head, timely observe it, and *weed* it out of your Souls, Churches, Families, Towns, Country. Let *Ministers* reprove sin, and spare not, *Isa. 58. 1.* Let *Magistrates* impartially *punish* it, (and God forbid that should ever be found with us, as *Amos 5. 10.*) And let all sorts of men stand up against sin in their several places, and in all regular wayes, (for a *disorderly* ungrounded and ill-managed *Zeal* often doth more hurt then good.) Keep out *Sin*, and that will keep out *Sorrow*. *Isa. 4. 3, 5.* when *Jerusalem's* remnant are *holy*, and thereby a beauty and glory to God, then upon all that glory there shall be a defence. We in these places are eminently obliged, and eminently advantaged to be an holy people; and God expects it from us: If we be not so, we may expect his Rod, *Amos 3. 2.* yet if we bear his Rod, and be improving of it unto holiness and amendment, he will not cast us off.

4. In this way (of regular walking before God) put your trust in the Lord God Almighty, *Zeph. 3. 12.* Be *humble* and *believing*: Carry it humbly before God and man; be not *haughty* because of the holy Mountain, nor in any other regard. I wish our whole course, garb and guise might speak *Humility* and *Humiliation*, in so humbling a time as this is. Carry it in all things as becomes a poor and afflicted people: But if you be the people of God, and God Almighty be your God, then put your trust in him. *Psal. 62. 8.* that was the great duty of *Israel* in the Wilderness of old, and the want of that the great Controversie, *Psal. 78. 22.* Never did God take person or people into Covenant and near fellowship with himself, but he put them upon this sooner or later, to venture all upon God, and to rely upon his Mercy, Power and Faithfulness, having no other string to their Bow but Faith in him: So *Abraham* and *Jacob* often: so *Israel* at the Red-Sea, and in the Wilderness, where they were called openly to *act* and *live* by Faith in the sight of the world, both as to Protection and Provision. And never was God known to fail a people, that in a way of well-

doing did trust themselves with him. We have sundry times read of *Weapons formed*, but never of any that *prospered* against a *Reforming* people, and *relying* upon God. The story of *Asa*, of *Jehoshaphat*, of *Hezekiah* may easily be remembered, 2 Chron. 14. & 20. & 32. and of *Nehemiah* also, *Neh.* 4. 11, 15. & 6. 16. & 10 in the Promise, *Isa.* 54. 17. That *denomination* [of a *Reforming* people] may (I hope) in some comfortable measure be given to this people. Reformation is that that we are engaged upon, & are labouring in, though with much infirmity and trouble, and sometime ready to say as they, *Neh.* 4. 10. yet the Work is in hand, and not quite given over : And there is a *desire* to fear Gods Name, and do his Will, as *Neh.* 1. 11. I hope the greatest and swaying part do sincerely say, *Thy Will be done*, though through weakness we cannot reach it ; we should not *despise*, as *Zech.* 4. 10. God may chasten us for neglects and faults, as he did them when they were upon *Reforming*-work after the *Captivity*, *Hag.* 1. [And indeed there are such faults among us, as do give matter of *fear* as well as *hope*; I mean, fear of very sore and smart Chastisements : we have no cause to flatter ourselves, or to be secure.] But yet God will be slow to cast off his poor people ; though he *chasten* us, yet he will not *kill* us, nor *destroy*, but *save* in the issue, *Psal.* 118. 18. and therefore we should be slow to cast off our hope. Lay aside *Security*, and be awakened. (If there be things of moment amiss among us, and we will neither *mend*, nor *endeavour* it in good earnest, but it may be fall out with those that would mend us, verily God will make us know that he is in good earnest, and will not be dallied with ; it is a jealous God with whom we have to do) but do not lay aside your Hope and Faith. Yea, whatever the Lord do with us, we ought with humble reliance on him, to leave our selves with him. You that have *Faith*, put it forth ; *pray* down, and *believe* down Mercy for the Lords people, (all manner of mercy, *preventing* mercy, *reforming* mercy, *pardoning* *sanctifying* mercy, and *delivering* mercy.) That of *Asa*, *Help us, for we rest on thee*, (2 Chron. 14. 11.) is wont to bring a good issue.

5, Lastly, Let every one be and do for God and for his people

people now, as they would wish to have done, when the great Day of Account shall come. For God, and for His People, is the *Motto* of every gracious Soul, 2 Cor. 5. 13. and he that is indeed for God, is for his People, (that is certain, 1 Job. 5. 1. & 4. 20, 21.) and doth sincerely seek their good and welfare. Why now hearken to this word, all you that stand before the Lord this day; we must ere long meet in a farre greater Assembly then this is, where we must give Account of our speaking, and of our hearing and doing; when Christ shall break out of the Clouds, who is the only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords, and sit him down on the Throne of his Glory, and call all Nations, and us all before him; and when it shall be said, What you did to my Brethren, to my People, yea to the least of these my Brethren, you did it unto me? and what good you did not do, what you neglected, or had no heart, no affection to do, nor courage to do for these, you did it not to me, Mat. 25. 40, 45. How will these things look then? when all worldly Interests shall be worth nothing; when Estates, and Friends, yea Crowns and Kingdomes shall appear to be but pebble stones, compar'd with one good look from Christ Jesus! Will it not then be a comfort to have sought the welfare of the children of Israel? and will it not then be more bitter and terrible then many deaths, not to have done it, or to have done the contrary thereunto? What the Apostle saith to Ecclesiastical, I may say to Civil Rulers, 1 Pet. 5. 2, 4. Feed and rule the Lords people, and seek their good in the integrity of your hearts, and when the chief Shepherd, and chief Ruler shall appear, then shall you receive a Crown of Glory that faderh not away! And so all the people of God in your several places, the Lord is with you, while you be with him; as we excellently heard the last year: and if you be with him, you must and will be with and for his people; yea chuse to suffer affliction with them, if that be their condition, as Moses did, Heb. 11. 25. And you will every one say, as you sometimes had that word on such a day as this, sweetly left with you by that faithful Nathaniel now with God, Psal. 122. 8. For my Brethren, and companions sake, I will now say to Jerusalem, Peace be within thee: and because

because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good; that is the voice of every Soul that loves our Lord Jesus in sincerity. In that Spirit and way persist, act and walk in your several places, and hold on therein against all Temptations, in faith and love through Christ Jesus: And at that day, when every Cup of cold water to a Disciple shall be rewarded; when the house of Onesiphorus shall be remembered; when every act of love to the faithful shall be honourably acknowledged: Then shall you stand in the Congregation of the righteous, (in the same company then, that you cleave unto now) And the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give you a Crown of Righteousness, and unto all that love his appearing.

A F I N I S.
