

CHRIST is brought in by the sacred prophet as one that had heard the cries of his church, and had not been moved: but when he recollects himself, and considers that they were his people, and that he was in a special manner united vitally to them, and sweetly related to them; he became their favour. He could no longer bear any reserve or shyness towards them; but stirs up himself to relieve them, and give them a full and glorious deliverance. Yea, it hath so strong an influence upon Christ, that if this note be often founded in his ears, it doth, as it were, change his voice: and when he seems to have a mind to cast them off, he cannot: he is not able to bear the thought of making a separation or divorce between his own soul and the people he so dearly loves. See the astonishing contest between Christ and his servant Moses, concerning the people of Israel, in the great offence of the golden calf. Christ says to Moses, *thy* people—Moses says to Christ, *thy* people: and at last he conquers his favour, and prevails on him to take them again, and say *my* people, Exod. xxxiii. 7--11, 12: for in the 14th verse we are told, that the Lord Jesus repented him of the evil, i. e. he changed his conduct, with respect to the evil he thought to do unto HIS people. Now, you see they are God's people again: the repetition of the relation is a most powerful reason to persuade him to own them

them

them again, when he was on the very point of rejecting them, and turning away from them.

DEMONSTRATION 5.

The whole INTEREST of Christ in the world lies in his CHURCH and PEOPLE. He sees nothing of his image in any part of the corrupted and ruined world, but only in them. It is in the church he has put his name, i. e. his divine nature and resemblance. It is there he sees his image; and therefore he places his love there. And shall all this signify nothing with Christ: shall the governor of the world let things go contrary to his own INTEREST!

His people are like to him in that which is one of his greatest and brightest perfections, i. e. his HOLINESS, which gives him a greater and deeper interest in them. It is his interest of holiness that is opposed by the spiteful opposition to the church. All the hatred his enemies bear, it grows from the inward root of enmity, or keen hatred against the holiness of God himself. It is the holy image of God they hate. For thy sake we are killed all the day long, Ps. xliv. 22. Rom. viii. 36. Christ surely will concern himself in the church's interest, since it is entirely his own. His interest lies in the persons, the graces, the comforts, and noble actions of his people.

1. In the PERSONS of his people.—The wonderful structure of their bodies are the temples of his HOLY SPIRIT. The more wonderful structure, nature, powers; and affections of their immortal souls, are the habitation of God. Ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people, Exod. xix. 5. The Lord's portion is his people, Deut. xxxii. 9. The Lord Jesus hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his PECULIAR TREASURE, Ps. cxxxv. 4. The Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Israel mine inheritance, Isai. xix. 25. As the church is his treasure; and, as, where a man's treasure is, there is his heart: so, where Christ's treasure is, there is Christ's heart. His interest likewise lies,

2. In the GRACES, COMFORTS, and holy ACTIONS of his people.

If his church should be destroyed, whom hath Christ to love and imitate him, and to shew forth his glory? He hath none in the world besides, that do intentionally mind his honour, and take pleasure in glorifying his perfections, copying his lovely example, observing his word, and admiring his works of nature and grace. And will it stand with his interest to govern things contrary to their best interest, which is really deeply and eternally his own?

DEMONSTRATION 6.

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The ardent AFFECTIONS of Christ will certainly make all providences work for the temporal and eternal good of his church and people.

1. His LOVE. This includes his high esteem of his people, his good will to them, his desire of union with them, and his diffusing good through their hearts.—What hath Christ in the world as an object of his love since he created it, but the church. The men of the world hate him: he can see nothing amiable in them; because what was first lovely they have defaced and blotted out; but the church has Christ's beauty put upon her. Thy beauty was perfect through my comeliness put upon thee, saith the LORD GOD, Ezek. xvi. 14.—Besides the loveliness which is put on the people by Christ's righteousness, they have a love to Christ; and no man will act against those whom he thinks to be his friends. Christ is pure, self-active existence: there being nothing but purity and activity in Christ, his love must be the purest and highest love, the most vigorous and glowing affection that a GOD can feel. As fire sets all other bodies on fire, and assimilates all things to itself; so this love sets all other powers in the world in motion for his people. Christ cannot love them, but he must wish and desire all good to them, and do ALL GOOD for them;

them; because his love is not a lazy, indolent love, but hath it's raptures and infinite tenderness; and his affections are blended with his almighty power to work all that good for them which they are capable of in their present condition in this world. Now it is a certain truth, that Christ loves his church: for he carries them in his hand—he loves the very gates or outworks—he values one true christian, above the whole world of the wicked and finally impenitent sinners—he loves his people so ardently, that he overlooks their unkind suspicions, their peevish tempers, harsh misconstructions of his providence, and hasty rash expressions concerning his conduct and administration.

1. He carries them in his HAND, Deut. xxxiii. 3. and that not in a loose and careless manner to be cast out, but they are engraven upon the palms of his hands, and dart every moment on his eye; his people are ever before him; they cannot be forgotten for one moment. He waters them every instant of time, he keeps them night and day, Isai. xxvii. 3. xlix. 16. If Christ's eye be always upon the church, his thoughts can never be off from it in all his works of providence and grace.

2. He loves the very OUTWORKS of his church. The Lord loves the gates of Zion, Ps lxxxvii. 2.

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He rejoices in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights are with the sons of men; he loves the very ground they tread on. Prov. viii. 31. He loves a cottage where a church is, more than the stately mansions of wicked noblemen, or the grand palaces of kings. Christ loves the assemblies of his saints, because of the glorious truths revealed and preached; the pure ordinances administered, and the spiritual worship presented to him.

3. He values one true christian above the starry heavens, above the whole world of wicked and impenitent men. Christ is the GOD of all creatures, but peculiarly the GOD of Abraham and his spiritual seed. One Abraham is more deeply rooted in his heart than all the world; and he takes more pleasure in styling himself the GOD of Abraham, than the GOD of the universe. Christ has a greater value for one sincere soul, than for a whole city—he saves a Lot, and burns a Sodom: yea, than for a whole world—he drowns a world, and preserves a Noah: he secures his jewels, but flings away the wicked as dross.

4. He loves his people so tenderly, as to overlook their unkind suspicions and perverse misconstructions of his providence.

The Israelites had unkind suspicions of Christ and his servant Moses, at the brink of the Red-

Sea, when they saw the Egyptians at their heels; and they began to speak most peevish and bitter words against providence to Moses, *Exod. xiv. 11, 12*: but Christ did not, for this provoking language, draw up his cloudy pillar into heaven; but puts it in the rear of them, and wedgeth himself in between them and Pharaoh's enraged host, to shew that they should as soon sheathe their swords into his heart, as in their bowels; which was the highest expression of his affection. Christ loves his people freely, *Hosea xiv. 4*. I will love them freely: the Hebrew word *nedabab*, signifies liberally, nobly, or in a princely and royal manner. Christ loves us like a liberal prince, or in a most generous spirit like a king and a God, without any suspense, hesitation, or reluctance. I will love thee with a princely, spirit, without any repugnancy in my heart to draw me back from thee.

Now, put all this in one view, and consider it altogether: Can the governor of the world, the king of nations, the king of christians, the generous friend of man, the loving redeemer, the head of the church, the husband of believers, act any thing against his OWN AFFECTIONS, against his OWN INTEREST, against the members of his own body, and his flesh, and his bones? *Eph. v. 30*. Yea, will he not make all creatures, and all worlds, subservient to the happiness of them he so dearly loves!

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2. His DELIGHT in his people.—Delight is a mixture of love and joy in an object: it is feeling an object to be exceedingly agreeable to our taste. Christ inwardly feels his people to be infinitely agreeable to his nature, will, and taste: he views them as clear of all guilt, cloathed with his righteousness, adorned with the graces of his spirit, and heirs of eternal glory: and in these views, he delights in them with his whole heart and his whole soul. See what an inundation of sweetening joy there is in him, for which he appears to want terms of expression to suit the narrow conceptions of men. The LORD thy GOD in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with singing, Zeph. iii. 17. He appears in his expressions to know no measure of his delight in his church, and no end of it. I will rejoice over thee with joy. Joy sparkles up afresh after joy. It is his *rest*, where his soul, and all that is within him, centers itself with infinite satisfaction. Joy over thee with singing. A joy that blossoms into triumph.—Never had any person such charming transports in the company he most loved, as Christ has in his church. He doth so delight in the graces of his people, that he delights to mention their names. He mentions ENOCH's walking with GOD twice, and his name six times. He expresses the name of NOAH no less than thirty-seven times.

The times in which Christ expresses the names of Abraham and Jacob are almost innumerable; whilst the great names of the pagan heroes, who existed at the same time, are buried in dust and oblivion.

Certainly Christ cannot but delight in his church more than in the whole universe, because it is a fruit of greater labour, pains, and cost, than the whole creation of the world. The world was created in the space of six days, by a word or single volition—the erecting a church hath cost Christ more pains and time. Creation did not oblige Christ to sweat blood: but it cost him blood, and groans, and tears, to make a single christian.

Before the church of the Jews could be settled, he had a contest both with the peevishness and stubborn wills of his people, and the deep malice and violent rage and force of their enemies.

And the Lord Jesus must bleed and dye under pain, shame, wrath, and the curse, before the church of the Gentiles could be established and flourish.

Men delight in that which hath cost them much pains, and a vast price. Christ hath been at too much pains, and at too great price, to have SMALL DELIGHT in the church. Will he
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then let wild beasts and devils break through the hedge of protection, and tread down his people in the dust? Shall not all things in heaven, earth, and hell, be ordered to the good of that which is the OBJECT of his greatest DELIGHT in the world!

DEMONSTRATION 7.

The active OMNIPRESENCE of Christ in his CHURCH will make all PROVIDENCES work for the good of it.

Christ's vital presence would be an idle and useless presence, if it were not operative for their good. The very name of the gospel church is JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, the LORD IS THERE, Ezek. xlvi. 35. What would it signify to us if it were an indolent, useless presence? Christ's presence in his church is the GLORY and DEFENCE of it.— See the most judicious Mr. John Brine's sermon, on Zach. ii. 5. For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be a glory in the midst of her. His presence is a new covenant presence. Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy GOD; to love thee, to dwell with thee, to protect thee, and supply all thy wants to the very uttermost. GOD himself shews that from hence flows STRENGTH to our rational powers, HELP in all our duties and distresses, and SUPPORT in all our
graces

graces and comforts: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, Isai. xli. 10. that is, with my righteous power, with my power engaged most cordially to thee in a righteous covenant. His presence and providence in the world, is in a way of absolute dominion; but in his church, in a way of COVENANT RELATION. He is the GOD *of* Israel, a GOD *to* Israel, a GOD *for* Israel, yea, a GOD in the midst of Israel. Every one of these are rich engagements to protect, to provide for, and to govern every thing for his people's good. Christ is under an OATH to do good to all his children. Will he violate his oath, tear the seal, and break his covenant, who never broke his word with any of his people yet? Is it possible for Christ to act contrary to his own best INTEREST, to his best AFFECTIONS; to the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones? Eph. v. 30. And to his own most tremendous OATH, in which he has staked down all his attributes, to fulfill his promises!

DEMONSTRATION 8.

The PRAYERS of his church have a mighty force with Christ, to this great end of making all things work together for our GOOD.

Christ is intituled a God hearing prayer; and what prayers should Christ hear, if not the
prayers

prayers of his people, which aim at GOD'S GLORY
in their OWN GOOD !

Though the prayers of the church may seem to fail in some *particular* matter, yet in *general* they do not, they cannot fail, because they submit their desires to the will of GOD ; which always works what is the very BEST for his church, and for every single believer in the world.

When GOD our Redeemer would do any mighty work in the world, he stirs up his people to pray for it ; and their prayers, by his decree and appointment, have a close connexion *with*, and a mighty influence *upon*, the government of the world ; for when they come before him in behalf of the church in general, he indulges them with a greater liberty and boldness, and as it were a kind of authority over him, than upon other occasions of their own. Ask of me things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command you me, Isai. xlv. 11. Christ would be more freely and familiarly dealt with ; he gives leave for greater positivity, boldness, and confidence about the concerns of his sons, though they were things to come to pass in future time ; and indeed the prayers of the true church of Christ have a powerful and invisible efficacy on the great actions and events which are in the world : the BEING of the WORLD is maintained

tained by them from sinking. "PRAYER upholds the whole WORLD:" and it must needs be, and it cannot be otherwise, that the prayers of the church should have an influence on the affairs of the world, and make all things work together for our GOOD.

REASON 1. Because Christ hath a vast delight in the prayers of his people. The prayer of the upright is his delight, Prov. xv. 8. And he loves to hear the churches voice. Sweet is thy voice, Song ii. 14. The offering of Jerusalem shall be pleasant to the Lord, Mal. iii. 4. Prayer awakes providence to judge the enemies of the church. A parent delights in the voice of his child, not simply in his crying, but in the sense and meaning of his voice. CHRIST delights in the matter of their prayers, it being so agreeable to his own heart and will; and in the sense and feeling they have of the sufferings of the whole body.

REASON 2. Because PRAYER is nothing else but pleading GOD'S PROMISES.

To this all true christians are directed, by that Spirit who knows the mind of GOD, who animates and orders their petitions according to his will. Now GOD turns his own decrees and purposes about his church into promises to them, so the church turns those promises into prayers. Thus, promises being for the good of the church; and

and there being an exact harmony between those promises and the church's prayers; all those providences which are the issue and effect of those promises, and the answer of the church's prayers, must needs be for the church's good.

Conceive of it in this easy and delightful manner. GOD our Saviour copies out his decrees into the promises; believers take those promises, and turn them back to GOD in prayer; GOD returns their prayers back to them in kind PROVIDENCES; and they return those providences back to GOD in ardent GRATITUDE and eternal PRAISES.

REASON 3. Because there are united fervent SUPPLICATIONS and PLEADINGS both in HEAVEN and EARTH; all the hands of the whole family in heaven and earth are concerned in their petitions; Christ the Son of GOD, although he is GOD over all, blessed for evermore, yet he pleads his obedience and blood, and his FATHER answers him with good and comfortable words, Zech. i. 12, 13--20. The angels and glorified spirits long for our true and eternal good; and all the saints on earth ardently pray for the temporal, spiritual, and eternal happiness of the church of Christ on earth, and GOD the Father delights to hear the united supplications of his whole happy intelligent creation.

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RECOLLECTION OR REVIEW of the DEMONSTRATION
of the special GOODNESS of PROVIDENCE.

Thus we see what Christ's heart is most set upon, and what he loves best of all: that is, the richest display of his goodness in the church, and making every individual of his people eternally happy in God; and that all in heaven, earth, and hell, must work together for their good; it must be so, and it cannot be otherwise.

This has been made to appear with as clear and keen a method of demonstration, as ever was shewn by the best geometrician in the world; no Euclid, or even Newton, could ever demonstrate a proposition with clearer evidence and conviction.

We have seen this grand truth demonstrated first by an enumeration of all things; all persons good and bad—all things good and evil,—we have seen God our Saviour prefer mercy to the church before his own concern of justice towards himself—that he takes peculiar notice of the least of his children, and the meanest believer, and is vastly condescending to the weakest of them—that he often reveals to his people what he is about to do in the world and the church—and that he has given all the best, the very best things in heaven and earth to his people—even his best
blood

blood and foul, and his divine attributes and actions, and blessings.

We have seen it clearly demonstrated, that Christ, in the œconomy of the universe, has so settled the state of all things, that it cannot be otherwise; it must, by necessity of nature, unavoidably be so, that all things shall work for the churches good.

This has been evinced from eight grand sources of demonstration, and made as clear as the light of the meridian sun. It has been shewn, that all providences are designed to display SPECIAL GOODNESS in the very utmost perfection of beauty;—that God the Father has this deeply at heart; it is the favourite intention of his will and affections; and in order to effect it in the most endearing manner, he has put all his attributes, councils, and rights, into his Son's hands; he has given him every thing in heaven, earth, and hell; every thing material and spiritual, visible and invisible, temporal and eternal; and Christ has freely taken all, and is sworn into his grand employment, to make all things work for his people's good; and he will at last give up his account with honour to himself, and infinite joy to his dear people;—that in the church, and to every christian, Christ displays the glory of all his natural and moral perfections; not one at-

tribute shall be left unexerted, or eclipsed, or hid from our view.

That there is a vital union between Christ and his people; and this union is the most near, intimate, and intensely close, that can be in the nature of divine things. Christ ardently loves this union, and it is, and ever will be, prevalent with him to do the kindest things in the most pungent distresses of his people; and in all the greatest emergencies of the affairs of his church to the end of the world.

The whole interest and treasure of Christ lies in his church and people. The persons of his people are infinitely dear to him: their graces, good qualities of the heart, their comforts, services, and noble actions, are exceedingly dear to him; and he has a vast, an unbounded delight in those actions and graces: their best comforts he has the tenderest regard for, and will faithfully preserve, restore, and increase them. I will restore comforts to him and to his mourners, *Isai. lvii. 18.* I will not contend for ever: I will not always chide: I will not retain my anger for ever: I will not cast off for ever:—for then the spirit would fail before me and the souls that I have made. We have seen that Christ's people must be infinitely dear to him, because they are like to his person and excellence, in that which is the dearest

dearest and noblest **PERFECTION** of a **GOD**, that is, **HOLINESS**. It is this that is the glory of the divine nature, which he has infused into their souls, and created in their very hearts: and this image of **GOD** in them is the dearest thing in our world: and this makes **Christ** so deeply concerned for his people, because all the glory of his character is embarked with the souls of his people: and if they were to lose their holiness, he must be a greater loser than his people, and his loss could never be repaired: it must be an eternal loss to himself, and to his **Father**, and the **Holy Spirit**; and he could not look his **Father** in the face, nor make up his account with him to all eternity. Now this is a most glorious demonstration, that **Christ** will be sure to make all worlds subservient to the present and future happiness of his church.

The ardent **AFFECTIONS** of **Christ** is another source of demonstration, that he will make all things work for our good. He loves them in the most princely and royal manner, with the utmost generosity and magnificence, with all the tenderness of a perfect holy man, and all the bowels of an infinite **GOD**. My bowels are moved for him, **Jer. xxxi. 20**. Mine heart is turned within me, **Hosea xi. 8**. How shall I give thee up? His delight in his people is immense, it knows no bounds

bounds or end. My delights are with the sons of men, Prov. viii. 31. The word for DELIGHTS is not only in the plural number, but it's two first radical letters are doubled, which in the Hebrew language vastly increases the force and sense of the word; and thus it expresses the exceeding great delight and pleasure which Christ takes at all times in his people.—See Dr. Gill's exposition of the place: and Mr. Brine's most excellent sermon on the same text; a discourse I would warmly recommend to all my readers as one of the most sublime and animating in the world.

Now as Christ delights so much in his people as always to carry them in his hand—as he loves the very outworks of Zion; and values one gracious soul above a whole world of wicked, obstinate, impenitent rebels—as he loves his people so intensely as to overlook and forgive all their suspicious and hard thoughts of him; all their fretful tempers, and harsh expressions of his conduct—as he pardons all their peevish and passionate language and insinuations; surely he will make all worlds work for their good.

We have shewn that Christ feels an infinite delight in his people, that is, he hath a mixture of love and joy in their persons, their graces, and their actions; which is without all bounds, and
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without end: and this delight always animates him to do them good.

We have seen that Christ's omnipresence in his church secures them from ruin, and will make all things work for their good; for all his perfections attend his omnipresence in his church. This is not like hell, where some of his perfections are withdrawn for ever; such are goodness, mercy, love, and grace: and in this world some of his attributes are manifested, but not all. In the true church, all his glories are displayed with the brightest lustre; and the evidence is bright as the sun, that every attribute, being present with his people, they shall have the use and benefit of them all, in the richest and wisest manner and measure.

We have seen clearly that the prayers of the church have a mighty force upon Christ, because he hath a vast and unbounded delight in their prayers—and that prayer is nothing else but an ardent, constant pleading of all his promises; and that the united supplications and pleadings, both in heaven and earth, have a most astonishing force with his divine Father, to make all things work for our good.

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The glorious USES of the special GOODNESS of
CHRIST'S PROVIDENCE.

I. USE OF INFORMATION.

Christ will always have a church in the world; he will have some to serve him; his great design in making a world was not to have a sun, moon, and stars, but a church, a company of godly men and women, that might bear his image of holiness, and honour him; to whom he might speak and freely converse, and extend his grace abroad, and display the love his heart was so full of within, and which he ardently longed to diffuse amongst his people.

Christ will, in the greatest exigences, find out means for the protection of his people. This will be till his providence has an end at the conclusion of the world.

The church shall, in the end, prove victorious over all its enemies, or providence must miss of its aim. Christ is on the churches side, and he is stronger than the strongest, wiser than the wisest, and higher than the highest.

It is the best interest of nations and kings to bear a respect to the church, and countenance and encourage the worship of God amongst them. God's people are a real blessing in the midst of a land; their interest is greater than all the world besides.

besides. The NEGLECT of RELIGION is the RUIN of NATIONS! Those Persian kings reigned the longest who favoured the Jews most in building the second temple. GOD honoured or disgraced them as they were kind or cruel to his people. Gospel ministers are like chariots and horsemen to a nation or kingdom, 2 Kings ii. 12.

We may see hence, the ground of most of the awful judgments and plagues on the kingdoms of mankind. Men, by their neglect of the church, or their rage against it, will not acknowledge Christ's government of the world, for the good of the church. The church is the seat of his government; and from thence he extends it all round the globe, from pole to pole. This is a sublime and glorious idea, which demands our utmost attention.

What esteem then should there be for the godly! The providence of Christ being chiefly for the good of his people! Their persons and prayers uphold the universe!

It is foolish and mad for any men to contend against the welfare of GOD's people: it is to strive and fight against the almighty and unwearied providence of Christ! it is foolish, because it is exceeding SINFUL: it is very unsuccessful: it is very destructive: it is sure to bring vengeance and ruin

on kings and nations from the incensed Son of God.

USE II. Of COMFORT, OR CONSOLATION.

If all the providences of Christ be for the good of the church, if his eyes run to and fro to shew himself strong for them, it affords matter of great comfort. His providence is as vast as his omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience. Here are the RICHEST CORDIALS for all sincere christians: strong cordials, i. e. victorious over all OPPOSITIONS and FAINTINGS, and durable beyond all perishing or decay. Here are CORDIALS in duties and special services for the welfare of the church. Here are CORDIALS in meanness of condition and lowness of spirits, in weakness and staggerings of faith. Comforts or strong CORDIALS in the greatest judgments and wrath of Christ, on kings, kingdoms, and nations of bad men. Here are CORDIALS in the greatest extremities wherein his church and people can possibly be. Rich CORDIALS in fear of wants and poverty. The power of Christ, the governor of the world, cannot be doubted; and his love is as great as his power: his heart is as warm in love as his arm is strong in power: and his love, since it hath moved him to prepare an eternal heaven to entertain his people at the end of their journey, the same infinite love will not be wanting to provide temporal
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and spiritual comforts in the way; since all things, both good and bad, are at his command, and under the government of his gracious wisdom; his eyes run to and fro through the whole earth, not only to defend us in all dangers, but to supply all our possible wants,—for his strength in both these ways is most gloriously displayed to his people.

Here are rich **CORDIALS** in the low estate of the church at any time.—Christ's eye is upon his people, even whilst he seems to have forsaken them: his church hath his heart, and his churches relief is his **END**. **GOD** will judge his people, and repent himself, or, as the Hebrew **JITHNECHAM**, comfort himself concerning his servants. 'Tis a comfort to Christ to deliver his people; and he will do it in such a season when it shall be most to his glory and most comfortable to their hearts. He will always be **JEHOVAH JIREH**, the Lord that will see and provide. Great and good men shall be servants to his people; yea, the learning and knowledge of the world shall contribute to build and beautify his church. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box-tree together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious, *Isai. lx. 13.*

CHRIST doth usually leave his **CHURCH** to EX-