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Fast S E R M O N,
P R E A C H ' D
On the XIXth Day of *January*, 170³/₄.

Jeremiah V. xxix.

*Shall I not Visit for these things? saith the Lord:
Shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation
as this?*

THIS part of the Divine Prophecies, out of which I have chosen the Text, is a Description of the corrupt State and Condition of the *Jews*, both with respect to their Principles, by which they had corrupted their Holy Religion; and the Enormous Wickedness of their Practice, by which they had polluted themselves, and forfeited the Love and Favour of God. The Prophet not only Charges them with very great Sins, with the Guilt of Perjury, Adultery, and Blood, with perfidious Hypocrisie and Falshood, with Oppression, Covetousness, and Fraud, but with a universal Defection from God; and that they were perverse and Incurable in all these Crimes, because of a wretched and dreadful Agreement between the Priesthood and the People, to allow each other in their Sin: And upon the view of this, he breaks out into this Holy and Zealous Expostulation in the Name of God, *Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: Shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?*

The Words are not very difficult to be understood : But to touch a little on 'em, by way of Exposition, will direct us to their full Intent and Design ; and therefore I shall observe,

I. That the Text, altho' it be put by way of Question, must be understood as a strong and vehement Affirmation of this Truth, That God will *visit*, and will take *Vengeance on such a wicked Nation as this*; and 'tis very common with the sacred Writers, when they would affirm or deny a thing with the greatest Force, to put it into this Emphatical Dress, and represent it by way of Question : And the Meaning here is, That God will most surely accomplish his Design, to Vindicate his Law and Government, and Holy Institutions, by a severe and open Punishment of their Contempt of them. For,

II. By this word *Visit*, must be understood *Punish*: *Shall I not punish you for these things?* Thus, to *Visit the Iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children*, is to Punish the Posterity, who by pursuing the same wicked steps, as their Fathers did, justify their Fathers Impiety by their own. And in the Text, the next Words give us the full Sense, *Shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* Now these last Words are design'd to Enforce and Explain the former, they are a more Emphatical Expression of God's Anger, they speak the high Provocation of their Sin, and that the Indignation of God was hightned against 'em, and he was determin'd to punish 'em for it.

III. It must be consider'd, that this awful Threatning was directed against the whole Church and Kingdom of the *Jews*, they are Charged with universal National Guilt: And as by the Prophet *Isaiab*, this whole Kingdom was represented, both in their Guilt and Punishment, under that Figure, *The whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart faint*: The Plague had seiz'd the Head; the Governing Part were equally Corrupt with the lowest Order and Degree; the Contagion made its way through the whole Body, and the Punishment was of the same extent. So, in this place, the *Jews* are charg'd with

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with a Universal Rebellion against God; and the Punishment intended, is a National and Universal Judgment upon their Princes, the Priesthood, and the People, who were all Engag'd in such Abominations; by which the Purity and Holiness of God was provok'd, and his Justice engag'd to afflict and punish them.

Now, from hence it appears, that the Intent and Design of the Text is to assert,——

That the Universal Corruption and Guilt of a Church or Kingdom, does justly provoke God to inflict Publick National Judgments upon 'em.

And in order to Enforce the due Consideration and Improvement of this Point, I propose,

I. To enquire, *When a Church or Kingdom may be justly Charg'd with Universal Guilt.*

II. To assert, *The Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of Divine Providence, in the Execution of National Judgments, for the Punishment of such Universal Guilt.*

III. To enquire, *By what means the just Displeasure of God may be attain'd by a Nation, and an angry God become propitious, and reconcil'd to 'em:* And then apply the whole to our selves, to engage our solemn Repentance and Humiliation. And I shall dismiss the first Head in Three Particulars:

I. *When the Laws and Government of a Church or Kingdom are Unjust, or do encourage and promote Wickedness, it cannot avoid the Charge of National Universal Guilt.*

And the Reason of this is evident, because Laws are originally design'd to promote and secure the Happiness of Mankind, in the Enjoyment of the Blessings of our Social Nature, to the Honour of God; which cannot be done, but where they strictly oblige to Piety, Virtue, and Goodness. Moreover, When the Laws themselves are deprav'd and wicked, it is the Crime of the Legislators, who, in every Nation,

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are consider'd and esteem'd as the Head and Glory of a Church or Kingdom; and the Guilt of the Depravation of the Laws is justly chargeable upon them as such, because they have consented together to make the Law it self unjust, and pervert the Design of God, who has constituted Law and Government for our good. For this Reason the holy Prophet charges this as a National Crime upon the Jews, That *the Statutes of Omri were kept*, Mic. 6. 16. This Prince had given Incouragement to Idolatry, by adding Reputation to it, and by Law had introduced the Calves of *Jeroboam* into the Royal City; whereas, before his time, *Dan* and *Bethel*, and obscure Places, were only corrupted with this Worship: And because these Laws stood unrepealed, by which God was dishonoured, his Holy Institutions neglected and profan'd, he Charges the Guilt of this Sin upon the Church and State. And with the highest Reason too: For, since the Law is the Publick and Universal Voice of a Nation, a Kingdom must needs be universally Wicked, when the Laws of it are Unrighteous; and that, which ought to requite and reward the Practice of Virtue and Religion, does promote and incourage Wickedness and Vice. But in a Christian Church or Kingdom this Guilt is more aggravated, because here all the Laws and Government ought especially to be Subservient to the Interest and Glory of our Redeemer, according to that of the Prophet *Isaiah*, ch. 49. 23. *Kings shall be thy Nursing Fathers, and their Queens thy Nursing Mothers: They shall bow down to thee, with their Face toward the Earth, and lick up the Dust of thy Feet.* But when this Glorious purpose is not pursu'd, but the sacred Rites of Christianity are apply'd to Secular Ends, in contempt of the exprefs Laws of the Son of God; when the Glorious Exhibitions, and Confirming Evidences of our Saviour's Love, are distributed to polluted Mouths, that continually Profane the Name of God, and of our Holy Jesus, and are made to serve Carnal, Sensual, and Wicked Purposes, it must be look'd on as National Guilt, in such a Church or Kingdom, whose Laws do thus violate the Law of Christ. But,

II. *A Universal Neglect of the Execution of Good and Righteous Laws, and the Exercise of that Holy Discipline, by which Vice and Irreligion ought to be corrected, must be charg'd as a National and Common Guilt.*

In this case the Community is suppos'd thus far to have discharg'd their Duty, as to have made Laws to be a Fence, Encouragement, and Support to Virtue and Goodness: But then the general Neglect of their Execution, and the partial Administration, amounts to an Agreement to violate their own Act. Thus supine Negligence and Sloth, Fear and Cowardice, possesses a Nation, and influences Mens Minds, to connive at the Wicked, till Impiety does increase, and like a Flood overspreads a Kingdom. This shews how cold such a People's Affections were to God, and how little Zeal and Concern they had for his Glory, when their Laws against Vice were made; and their after Neglect is an Evidence, that they were not Hearty in their Design to destroy the Kingdom of Darkness, and to promote the Holy Throne and Dominion of Christ. For there is but little difference, upon the main, between condemning Religion, and suffering her to be insulted and mock'd, trampled on and scorn'd, by profane Scoffers at the Fear and Service of God. One would think, they worship no God, that can patiently hear his Name profan'd; and that they had crucify'd *Jesus*, that can look on, and express no holy Indignation, when the *Lord's Day* is polluted with Riot and Excess: And yet our Holy Profession, and our Laws, oblige us to more Concern in these Cases; and this Neglect makes us Guilty, as a Nation, because it is Universal. Hence 'twas, not for want of good Laws, but neglect of Execution, that made the holy Prophet charge the *Jews* with National Guilt, when he cries out, *Ah sinful Nation! a People laden with Iniquity! a Seed of Evil-doers! Children that are Corrupters!* Who had forsaken the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of *Israel*: For they had the *Oracles of God*, and the wise Constitutions of *Moses*, *David*, and *Solomon*; but they had neglected the Law of the Lord: The Priesthood, as in the Days of *Eli*, had let fall the sacred Discipline of the House of God, and the People were not censur'd and reprov'd as they ought. Thus their Guilt was equal by their neglect, and suffering Impiety to take

take root and grow; and in some Sense greater than that of those Nations, who knew not God, and had not such Excellent Laws for their holy Government. But,

III. *A General Contempt of Holy and Righteous Laws by the People, in Opposition to the Church of Christ, and Civil Government, does involve any Kingdom in National Guilt.*

Every Church and Kingdom is compos'd of Individuals, which make the Body of it. Now, tho' the Governing Part be never so intire and sound, yet if the Body be distemper'd, and a Universal Depravation of Manners spread over a Nation, to be sure it must be charg'd as National Guilt in the Estimate of God. Here they sin against the Mercy of a good Government, and with a high Hand in opposition to it. in this Case, holy and righteous Governors shall deliver their own Souls, and for some time ward off the Edge of Divine Vengeance. But God will judge such a Nation, as shall throw off, or oppose the Reins of Government, which is God's Holy Ordinance: He'll let loose the utmost of Divine Fury upon 'em. We have been an Instance of a corrupt People under a Great and Virtuous King, and we sinn'd against his constant Endeavours to Reform, and his own bright Example before us. We have now the Blessing of a QUEEN, that discourages Irreligion, and is an Illustrious Example to engage us in the Love of Piety: She recommends the Suppression of Vice, and calls us to Fasting and Prayer; being Her self deeply affected and concern'd at our Impiety, and the Judgments of God upon us. But in Opposition to such Goodness, we pursue our Sin, and are justly charg'd with National Guilt. For the Inferior Magistracy are, for the most part, unconcern'd; and the Higher Orders are not so Exemplary as they ought; and the common People resolv'd upon Iniquity, and mad, against the just Restraints of Lewdness: Thus Universal Contempt of God, and of the Laws of the Authority, Word and Ministry of the *Blessed Jesus*, and of that Holy Religion, which, at the very same time, we profess, fills up the Measure of the Nations Guilt; and the Good and Virtuous are so few, that they are scarce able to bear up against the Torrent of Impiety, tho' supported by the Law, and encouraged by the Throne: And
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is not this National Guilt? Is not our case like that of *Israel*, who murmur'd against *Moses*, and against *Aaron*, tho' cloath'd with the Authority of God? Is not our Guilt, as theirs, universal? And will not our Punishment be so too, seeing we hate to be Reform'd?

This may suffice for the First Point. I proceed to assert, *The Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of Divine Providence, in the Execution of National Judgments, and the Punishment of such Universal Guilt: Which I shall do by III Arguments.*

I. Divine Providence is concern'd to Punish such Enormous Guilt with Universal Judgments, in order to vindicate and display the Wisdom of God, in the Perfection of his Government: And this will be clear upon our Considering these things.

1. That God having infused into Man an Immortal Rational Spirit, does transact with us, and expect Service from us, suitable to this Principle of Reason; and therefore he has put us under a wise and holy Law. Now, this method being design'd to suit with our Capacities, therefore Rewards and Punishments are propos'd, to Engage us to answer the End and Purpose of God in it, by moving the Principles of Hope and Fear, which are the great Springs of our Action: And as we comport with this Design, by our holy Obedience to God, accordingly 'tis fit he should deal with us, in the distribution of the Good or Evil, the Life and Death he has set before us. For, there appears to be equal Reason, that God should make his Wisdom as Conspicuous in his Moral Government of Man, as in the Natural Order and Government of this World: And therefore, as God by Wisdom founded the Earth, and directs the Motions of the Heavens, so it becomes him to display his Wisdom in the Government of Reasonable Creatures; which cannot be done, but by the Punishment of Impenitent Sinners. According to the Prospect he at first gave us of Good or Evil, which is the Sanction of the Law, to Enforce our Rational Obedience. And therefore,

2. The Blessed God, as our supreme Ruler and King, cannot but take notice of the Violation of his Holy Law; and animadvert upon the Sinners by Afflictions: That Man, who is so fond of himself, may not be lifted up, to contemn and despise his Authority, and conclude the Deity too weak to sustain and support the Honour of his own Government, and rush with greater Violence into all manner of Iniquity, and aggravate his own Misery by a daring Opposition to the Wisdom, and Power, and Love of his Creator. This Effect, we know, the patient Forbearance of God has upon the Wicked: And the wise *Solomon* assures us, That *because Sentence against an Evil Work is not executed speedily, therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil*, Eccles. 8. 11. But if God should always suffer the Guilty to escape, 'twould be a Reflection upon the Wisdom of his Conduct, and tend to break the Divine Government; the Authority of God wou'd be no Check upon the Passions of Men, who are the Subjects of his Kingdom upon Earth: And to bear thus far, is not consistent with the Wisdom of Humane Government; much less with the infinite Wisdom of God, in a matter of so great Import, as the Eternal Felicity and Blessedness of his Subjects.

3. With respect to National Guilt, this Wisdom is conspicuous, in the publick Calamities he inflicts upon Kingdoms, Churches and States: Because such Universal Judgments are suited to the Nature of Societies; they teach and instruct the whole Body; and by removing some of the Satisfactions of our Social Nature, by a Universal Judgment, he corrects the Disorders of the Community, for the advantage of the whole: That Men, being united in the Fear of God, they may have the higher Obligations to Holiness, and the greater Preservatives against the Contagion of Evil Examples; which, in the End, wou'd destroy all the Benefit of Society, and frustrate the Purpose of God, in the fixing Government upon Earth.

But I hasten to Evince the Justice of this Method in Divine Government.

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II. *The inflicting Publick Judgments for National Sin, is necessary to illustrate the Justice of God in his Divine Government.* Divine Justice, in our present Consideration of it, has relation to God, as our Ruler, Head and King; it results indeed from the absolute Rectitude and Perfection of the Divine Essence: And therefore the holy Prophet infers the Necessity of God's Punishment of the Wicked, from the view of his most perfect Holiness, *Hab. 1. 13. Thou art of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and canst not look on Iniquity: Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy Tongue when the Wicked devoureth the Man that is more Righteous than he?* Thus, altho' God did forbear for a time, yet the Reflection upon the Provoking Wickedness of the Nations, and the perfect Purity of God, engages the Prophet's Wonder and Amazement, that they shou'd escape: And intimates, that it is fit that God shou'd sometimes execute Judgments upon a People, to illustrate the Justice of his Government; that as God is Holy, so it may appear, that his Rule is Holy, Just and Good, by proper Animadversions on the Guilty Unperswadable Sinner: And that this is Reasonable, must be acknowledged by us, because of our own Consent to the Excellency of Justice, and our Desire, that Injury and Wrong done to us may be punished. Indeed we are apt to pursue this Point too far, and insist upon it even to a culpable Revenge. But in some Cases 'tis permitted to us, as, that the Murderer shou'd be dragg'd from the *City of Refuge*, and deliver'd to the *Avenger of Blood*, and no Man's Eye was to pity or spare him, but execute Justice upon him; nor was any Satisfaction to be taken for his Life. But if this be fitting for us, and the Regards to Justice esteem'd Sacred by us; which Principle is only a Ray, or faint Impression of the Righteousness of God upon the Reasonable Soul, it must be necessary, that our infinitely Holy God should display his Justice in the Execution of his Judgments upon us; which will yet further appear to be mix'd with Kindness and Love. For,

III. *Divine Goodness and Mercy is discover'd in the present Punishment of ours Sins.* The Blessed God, in the Distribution of his Judgments, designs both the present and

future Advantage of Mankind : For were we suffer'd to go on in an Uninterrupted Course of Impiety, the Contagion wou'd spread it self so far, that none wou'd escape the Final and Eternal Judgment of God. Therefore he Hedges up our Way with Thorns, and makes the Profecution of our Lusts uneasie to us : He awakens some by his Severity upon others : He signifies, by the Voices of his Thunder, the Blessed Instructions of Repentance, and a Holy Return to God. In a word, We are judg'd in this World, that we may not be Condemned at the Bar of God : And this is often the happy Effect of the most tremendous Appearances of the Great and Terrible JEHOVAH. Considering the Proneness of our Mind to all manner of Wickedness, the Inticements of Society and Fellowship in Sin, if God did not, by Amazing Strokes, shake the Kingdoms of the Earth, and put us to a stand, and rouze our Consideration, and move the Conscience to Reflection on our past Sin, and work up the Soul into a fear of future Miseries, the State of Mankind wou'd be little less Miserable than that of Devils : All the sacred Bonds of Love, and relative Duty, wou'd be dissolv'd, by the raised Enmity of Mens Spirits, and their actual Rage and Fury toward each other, the World would become an *Aceldama*, a Field of Blood. For, were the Fear of the Superior Hand of God universally remov'd, I see not what cou'd restrain and govern the Lusts of Men, and preserve us from Exercising all that Violence and Mischief upon ourselves, which the very Devils wou'd desire to inflict upon us. Therefore, as God design'd to shew his Wisdom, in putting us under a Law, and governing us by our Hopes and Fears, which are the most Engaging Affections of the Soul ; so, in the actual distribution of his Judgments, he designs to do us good : And therefore in the midst of Judgment he remembers Mercy ; and never utterly destroys, till we are finally incorrigible ; and then 'tis fit, that, like *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, Showers of Fire shou'd Consume us ; or that Astonishing Storms shou'd sweep us from the Earth, which we have polluted by our Sin, because we wou'd not be led by the frequent awful Views of God's Power to Repentance : Which brings me to the Third Thing, *viz.*

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To enquire, By what means the just Anger of God may be atton'd by a Nation, and God may become Propitiouſ and Reconcil'd to 'em.

The answer to this Enquiry is, in One Word, By our sincere Repentance, by our Change of Life, and holy Reformation; and this ought to appear in a Publick and Universal Acknowledgment of our Sins and Return to God. This is the best Offering we have to present to God, and is more esteem'd than Thousands of Rams, and Ten Thousands of Rivers of Oil. Hence the Holy *Psalmist* encourages himself, and hopes for the Mercy of God upon his Humble Confession and Repentance, *The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit; a broken and contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Thou wilt not despise!* There is a high intimation of Mercy and Goodness in the Words; for it imports our Heavenly Father's Approbation and delight. And when we are thus upon the Knee, and in such a Disposition and Posture of Soul, we may hope for the Light of his Countenance round about us. Repentance makes us capable of Divine Mercy, and proper Objects of his Love: And it being the Design of God, by his Judgments, to lead us to Repentance: The first Motions of the Soul to return to God, do usually abate the Divine Anger, and some Beams of Love and Goodness dart forth upon us: Thus *Nineveh's* Confession and Acknowledgment found Mercy, because they repented at the Preaching of *Jonah*. And even *Ahab*, when he humbled himself by Fasting, and put on Sackcloth, and trembled at the Threatnings of the Great God, did immediately obtain a Respite and Stay of Execution, during his Life, *1 Kings 21. 29.* And thus, now the whole Kingdom is bowing down before God, confessing our Sins, and imploring Divine Mercy, we are encouraged to hope, that God will remember us with his Mercy, and spare that People he has so often Redeemed. But that God may be fully Reconcil'd, and delight in us to do us good, this great Work must be pursu'd by Perseverance in the Fear and Service of God, by an intire Change of our Purpose, and an universal Renovation of the Heart; and we must continue to Order our Conversation aright, that he may shew unto us, and ours, the Salvation of God. The Nation thus

thus prepar'd, shall be sprinkled with the Blood of *Jesum*, who alone is our proper Attonement, and meritorious Sacrifice, in whom God our Father becomes Reconcil'd to us. But I shall be more particular in our View of that Holy State, which we ought to return to, if we expect, that God shou'd become Kind and ~~Prosperous~~ to us. *Propitious*

I. *We ought firmly to believe the Sufficiency of Divine Power to punish, and the Veracity of his Threatnings against us for National Sins.*

Were this strongly impress'd upon our Minds, 'twou'd produce such a constant Holy Fear of God, as wou'd effectually humble us under the mighty Hand of God, and preserve us from Temptations to Sin, and the Pollutions of the World. The great Cause of National Guilt, and our persisting in our Impious Rebellion against God, is this: Men don't believe the Discoveries of Divine Power; the Omnipotent Arm of God is not regarded. We are apt to think, our present Peace shall not be disturb'd, and Divine Threats make no Impression upon us. This is it that hardens the Wicked in their Sin, and makes 'em ripe for Judgment: They say, *The Vision tarrieth*; the delay of Execution flatters 'em with Impunity; and because God spares, they conclude, he cannot or will not punish: This was the Case of the poor *Jews*, till God overturn'd their Church and Kingdom, and made 'em a Reproach in the Land of their Enemies. Let's observe their Conduct in this Chapter, and how perversly they refuse to hear the Voice of God, Vers. 12, 13. *They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he; neither shall Evil come upon us; neither shall we see Sword nor Famine: And the Prophets shall become Wind, and the Word is not in them.* Now this is direct Atheism and Infidelity; Divine Providence is denied; God's Authority, by the Mouth of his holy Servants, is despised; the Threatnings of God are represented, in the Language of our Age, only as a little Priest-Craft: And having thus renounc'd the Fear of Divine Power, and slighted his Terrors, 'tis no wonder, that they run on to such Impieties, and that God thus Expostulates with 'em, *Shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* Hereupon 'tis our Duty to endeavour the Confirmation of our Faith,

Faith, that it may engage our holy Fear, and dispose us to suitable Humiliation, and a sincere Repentance of our Sins; being convinc'd of the Power of God to destroy us, and that he may justly cut off this Nation for its Iniquities; and that we, in the midst of God's Judgments, may acknowledge him, and say, *Thou art Righteous in all thy Ways, and Holy in all thy Works.*

II. *It becomes us to reflect upon the Judgments God has brought upon Incurable Nations, and especially upon our own; and what Improvement we have made of 'em.*

The Judgments of God upon others, are his Voice to us; and therefore Divine Wisdom has left 'em on Record, as the Constant Instructors of every Nation, that whatever the Form of its Government be, yet that Religion and Righteousness, God's Honour, and the Nation's Happiness, shou'd be the end; and that the Behaviour of every Order and Degree shou'd be suited to this Blessed Purpose: But his Judgments upon his own People, who had the Law and Oracles of God, upon his own Church, whom he had sanctified to himself, are designed to be constant Monitors to us, who have the same Blessed Priviledges.

But besides these Instances from Scripture, a little reflection will revive upon our Minds the past Judgments of the great God upon us. Let us then remember, that God drew our own Sword against us, and permitted the Evil Spirit to stir up Discord, and blow the Flame, till it cou'd not be quench'd, but by Showers of our choicest Blood: We can remember this sometimes to worse Purposes, to Reproach the Innocent, or Excuse the Guilty; to Flatter the Great, or Support a Faction in the Kingdom, to Irritate and Provoke each other: But it becomes us to remember it as a just Judgment of God upon the Nation, for our Pride and Luxury, Violence and Oppression, and authoris'd Abuse of the Lord's Day, Sacred to the Memory of our Redeemer's Resurrection from the Dead. But how perverse a Use we have made of this, our present divided Temper, and Factions, Envy, Hatred and Malice, and renewed Aversion to pure Religion, sadly speaks. Nor did the

the Pestilence, Fire, and a foreign War, which God^t sent to punish us for our Disobedience to the former Voice of God, Reform us. *For all this, we sinned still, and believed not for his Wondrous Works.* And because we in this Kingdom have not tasted of the most dire Mischiefs of the War, we have had little concern upon our Minds about it; we han't consider'd, that the Blood of our Countrymen is poured out like Water upon the Ground, and fattens the Land of our Enemies.

Hereupon God has brought his Judgments nearer to us, and illustrated his Power and Justice by an Amazing Tempest, the Earth shook under our Feet, and the stormy Wind has accomplish'd his Word in the Execution of Judgment upon us, hitherto Incorrigible Sinners: By the Fury of the Wind we were made afraid, and our Habitations became a Terror to us; we look'd for Refuge, but we found it not, and Bitterness possessed our Soul: The Voice of Destruction was round about us, and fill'd us with Confusion and Horror: The Waves of the Sea poured in upon us; and many, who rejoiced in Plenty, by thy Hand, O God, became Poor! They that were gone down to the Sea in Ships, to behold the Wonders of the Lord in the great Deep, their Feet sank in the mighty Waters; they cried out, and there was none to help. Thus a great part of the Glory and Strength of the Kingdom perished, while our Enemies rejoice in our Calamities, and say, Their God hath forsaken 'em; they are fallen, and shall rise no more. Thus the Almighty Arm of God is not shortned; his Quiver is full of Arrows; He can *Hiss for the Fly out of Egypt, and the Bee out of the Land of Assyria,* to compleat our Destruction, if these Wonders of God do not lead us to Repentance. But,

III. *'Tis our Duty to reflect on our National and Particular Sins, humbly Confessing them to God, and Forsaking them in our whole Life.*

'Tis the Business of our Superiors to concern themselves about the Rectitude of Laws, and that nothing be encourag'd, that may break in upon the Sacred Worship of God,

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or be injurious to the Peace and Union of the Church, and Kingdom of his Son Jesus. 'Tis their Business to prevent publick Wrong, and promote Equity and Justice; to look into the place of Judgment, and see whether Wickedness is not there; and into the place of Righteousness, and see whether Iniquity be not there, Eccles. 3. 16. And if they correct not such Abuses, God will not forgive their Sin: But the whole Nation will certainly suffer, if the Superior Orders are become corrupt. But 'tis our proper Work to mourn for such Sins, and pray for that Publick and Universal Change, as may make Judgment run down as a Stream, and Righteousness like mighty Waters in all our Streets: And this is the Design of this solemn Day, that we might humbly confess the Sins of our QUEEN, our Princes, and all the People; that God may accept our Repentance, and forgive and turn away his Anger from us. But this is not to be expected, till we forsake our Pride, and Covetousness, and Oppression, and our secret Sins and Hypocrisie: For if God abhorr'd the House of *Eli*, for their Neglect of Holy Discipline, and Horrid Profanation of the Sacrifices; if the whole Kingdom of the *Jews* was broken, and cast out of the Heritage of God, for their Impiety; if the *Asiatick* Churches were made Examples of Divine Justice: What may we not expect, if we continue to Neglect or Profane the *Holy Sacraments*; to give the Bread of *Saints* to Infidels; to make no Distinction between the Family of the Holy *Jesus*, and of the Devil; and feed the visible Servants of the Devil with Angels Food? If we become still more Uncharitable, and make narrower Bounds to the Communion of *Saints*, than our Blessed and Holy Redeemer has determin'd, and continue to Reproach each other, because we agree not in External Rites, the Blessed God will not Forgive us: He will surely be Avenged on such a Nation as this.

III. *It becomes us to renew the Sacred Vows of God that are upon us, and confirm our Resolutions to persevere in the Love and Fear of God.*

This is one End of a solemn Fast, that when we confess our Sin, and are lifting up our Soul by fervent Prayer to
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God, we shou'd confirm and strengthen the Obligation upon us to a future Life of Holiness ; and that the Memorial of the solemn Vow the Nation makes this Day, shou'd constantly Engage our Care, Excite our Diligence, and Raise our Affections to the Ways of God ; that by our future Forgetfulness of him, we may not provoke him to destroy us. Thus, at this time, when we are affected with the Sense of God's Judgments, when we are reflecting on the Evident Demonstrations he has given us of his Anger, we shou'd give a Convincing Proof of our Hatred of Sin by our solemn Resolution to abhor it all our Life ; and our Covenant being thus renew'd, 'twill be a Preservative against Sin, when in our after-Thoughts we shall remember, that in the Hour of our Distress we did *swear*, and therefore must *perform* it, That we wou'd observe and keep the *Righteous Judgment* of God : Thus, by new Dedication, we shall become the Lord's ; and, while we fulfil our Vows, his Mercy and Goodness will be round about us.

IV. *If we expect, that God shou'd become Propitious and Reconcil'd to us, 'tis our Duty to Forgive others, and exercise Compassion, Love and Kindness to the Poor.*

Our Hopes of Mercy from an angry God ought to prompt us to shew Mercy to them that injure us : Else, how can we expect the Love of God, and ask that from Heaven, which we don't think fit by our Practice to approve on Earth ? 'Tis the Rule of Christ, *Matth. 5. 23, 24. If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy Brother hath ought against thee ; leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy way, first be Reconcil'd to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.* And I wou'd Charitably hope, that we are not come this Day before God in Hypocritie, with the *Leaven of Malice* in our Heart. But if we have ought against any Man, let us now, when we are looking up to God, put away all Wrathful Thoughts, that our Sacrifice of Fasting and Prayer may be accepted by the Father of Mercy ; and while we forgive others, our Heavenly Father may forgive us. To this it becomes us to add Compassion to the
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Poor, which is connected with the Duty of Fasting and Prayer, and esteem'd as an acceptable Sacrifice to God; and therefore the holy Prophet insists upon it, in order to turn away the Wrath of God from *Nebuchadnezzar*, Dan. 4. 27. *Wherefore, O King, let my Counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy Sins by Repentance, and thine Iniquities by shewing Mercy to the Poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy Tranquility.* The Blessed God, by this last Judgment, presents us with Objects of Compassion, the poor Families of our Brethren, who Perish'd at Sea, or were Ruin'd by Land; God has taken them, as it were, in our stead; not that *they were greater Sinners than others*: For, *except we Repent, we shall all likewise perish.* And therefore, since God has spared us, how shou'd our bounteous Love be enlarged to 'em, that the distressed Widows may have some Comfort in their Sorrow, and the Cries of the Fatherless may be chang'd into Prayers for us; and God may shew his Mercy upon us, when we put on Bowels of Mercy and Compassion to others.

And now my Brethren, let me beseech you, by the Mercies of God, and by the Wonders of his Judgment upon us, that with one Soul we may now lift up our united Cry to God for Pardoning Mercy; that it may not be in vain, that we have this Day drawn nigh to God; but that thy Salvation, O Lord, may appear, thy Mercy may blot out our Sins, through the sprinkling of the Blood of thy Son *Jesus!* Hear, O Lord, from Heaven, thy Dwelling-Place, the Prayer of all thy Servants; and, O Lord, pardon and forgive the Sins of our QUEEN and Princes, and of all thy People, that Her Throne may be Establish'd in Righteousness, and Her Reign be Long and Prosperous over us; that thy People may rejoice, and bless thee, and magnifie the Wonders of thy Power, live continually in thy Fear, and adore thy Love for ever!

And that God may Hear and Accept our Sacrifices, let us put away the Unfruitful Works of Darknes, that our Sins may not draw down the Judgments of God upon us, and make our Armies and our Fleets naked and defenceless, to their shame,
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in the midst of our Enemies; let us put away Wrath, Envy and Malice, Pride, Luxury and Covetousness; let us have no Fellowship with the Unclean, nor pollute our Mouths with Execrable Profanations of the sacred Name of God; let us keep the Lord's Day holy, to the Memory of our Redeemer's Resurrection; let us strive to Excel each other in Good Works, and our Ambition lead us to the Publick Good; let us not censure, but pray for, assist and support our Magistracy and Government, and discover a holy sober Zeal for the *Church*, by a Love to the Christian Life, and our Increase in the Spirit and Power of Holiness; let us become united in our Desires, to remove the occasions of Discord, and Exercise that Universal Love, which shone so bright in our Glorious King and Saviour *Jesus Christ*.

To all this the Occasion of this solemn Day is an Engaging Argument. Think then of the Fears that did possess our Soul in that Hour, when *the People were troubled at Midnight, and the Mighty were taken away without a Hand*, as *Elihu* speaks: Think how we began to search our Minds, to confess our Sins, and cry to each other, *Come, let us cry to God our Father, that he may spare us*; think what Rebukes Conscience then gave us, and in what Posture we wou'd have desired to be found, if God had darted the Bricks or Timber of our Houses on our Heads, as he did on others; think on the Vows we then made: And if this will not Reform us, we must expect a worse thing shall come upon us.

But, my Brethren, we have particular Obligations to a Holy and Devoted Life to God; our Profession pretends to more than others, and therefore we are obliged to bring forth more Divine Fruit than others: We esteem our selves bound to separate, that we may be more Pure in our Worship; but shall we be Impure in our Actions, Morose, Obstinate, Censorious, and Uncharitable in our Converse? Surely the Imitation of our Blessed Saviour shou'd be our Rule; that we may not be Conform'd to the Levity of the World, nor Polluted with its Defilement; nor yet proudly say to others, *Stand off, for I am Holier than thou*: In a word, That we shou'd know no Guile,
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