

Resolved
That the sum of £1000
be given to the
non-Resident
And that **Mr. W. A. K. E.**

S E R M O N

BEFORE THE

the House of COMMONS.

June 5th 1689

Printed by

Jovis 6^o die Junii 1689

Resolved,

THat the Thanks of this House be given to Mr. *Wake* for the Sermon he Preached before them yesterday; And that he be desired to Print the same.

Ordered,

THat Mr. *Grey* do give him the Thanks, and acquaint him with the Desires of this House accordingly.

Paul Jodrell,

Cl. Dom. Com.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the
Honourable House of Commons,
AT
St. MARGARET'S WESTMINSTER
June 5th. 1689.

Being
The FAST DAY

Appointed by the
KING and QUEEN'S Proclamation,
TO
Implore the Blessing of Almighty God upon their
MAJESTIES Forces by Sea and Land, and
Success in the War; now declared, against the
FRENCH KING.

By WILLIAM WAKE, Chaplain in Ordinary to
their MAJESTIES, and Preacher to the Honourable
Society of Gray's-Inn.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *Rit. Chiswell* at the *Rose and Crown* in *St. Paul's*
Church-yard, and *William Rogers* at the *Sun* over against
St. Dunstan's Church in *Fleet street*. 1689.

JOEL, II. 12, 13.

Therefore also now saith the LORD, Turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with Fasting, and with Weeping, and with Mourning.

And rent your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God, for He is Gracious and Merciful, slow to Anger and of great Kindness, and repenteth Him of the Evil.

THough the time of this Prophecy be uncertain, so that neither the Jewish Rabbins, nor Christian Antiquaries are able to give us any tolerable account of it, yet is the Design plain, and the words of my Text a most proper and pathetick enforcement of the Great duty of this day, to turn unto the Lord our God with all our Heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, — for he is Gracious and Merciful, slow to Anger and of great Kindness, and repenteth him of the Evil.

If we look into the foregoing Chapter, we shall there find an astonishing Account of the great Evils that were just ready to befall the Jews for their Sins. But that which is yet more surprizing, is, That though all this was about to come upon them, yet were they nevertheless insensible of their danger, nor took any the least care to prevent their utter desolation.

To awaken a stupid and inconsiderate People, a Nation dead in Sin and Security, in the beginning of this Chapter he prepares a lofty and magnificent Scene. He sets before them a Prophecy of yet greater dangers than any they had hitherto experimented, and that in a manner so unusual, with such a Pomp of Words, and in such Triumphant Expressions, as carry a terror even in the Repetition of them.

joel II. 1. Blow ye the Trumpet in Zion, sound an Alarm in my holy Mountain; Let all the Inhabitants of the Land tremble, for the day of the LORD cometh; for it is nigh at hand: A day of darkness and of gloominess; a day of Clouds and of thick darkness; as the Morning spread upon the Mountains; a great People and a strong, there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it. A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burneth: The Land is, as the Garden

den of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness. The Earth shall quake before them; the Heavens shall tremble; the Sun and the Moon shall be dark; and the Stars shall withdraw their shining.

—10.

Whatever be the Import of these Phrases; whether by the mighty and terrible Host here spoken of, we are only to understand that swarm of (a) Locusts, and other Insects, that we are (b) before told were utterly to devour all the Fruits of the Land: Or whether under the Character of these, we shall (c) with most Interpreters, comprehend the numerous and mighty Armies of the Chaldeans and Babylonians, which at divers times brought such Desolations, as we read of, upon the Jews: This is plain, that we have here the denunciation of some Judgment worthy of God, and great as the sins and incorrigibleness that occasion'd it.

(a) Jud. i. p. tant in diebus mirabilem Locustarum super judaam venisse multitudinem, ut cuncta comperent, & non dicam fruges, sed ne vinearum quidem & arborum Cortices, ramosque dimitterent, ita ut omnino vivore consumpta venter arborum rami, & sicca vinearum flagella remaneret. Hieron. in Joel I. v. 6. (b) Ch. I. 4. (c) See among the Ancients, St. Hierome. loc. cit. Drusius in Joel I. 1. Gratius in Joel I. 5. Theodoret in Cap. 1. 4.

And now, who would not here expect the final desolation of such a People as this? But behold, God even yet in his Anger remembers Mercy; and though they had hitherto neglected all the Calls and Invitations of his holy Prophets to Repentance, yet He resolves once more to try, whether they would now at least in their dangers hearken to his

Ἰνὲς μὲν ἐν Ἱαώτι τριπλάσις, εἰς τὴν Ἀσσυρίων καὶ Βαβυλωνίων ἑξαπλασίαν — ἐγὼ δὲ ἀλλοῦσθαι αὐτὸν ἕγωμαι καὶ ταῦτα ὑπολαμβάνω δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ εὐχθὲν νοσήματα τὰ ὄντι γερωνῶδες. v. pl.

Ad-

Admonitions: He raises up Joel at once both to set before them his Judgments, if they continu'd still *impenitent*; and to encourage them, by *repenting*, not only to prevent their Ruine, but to assure themselves of his Favour. That though they had so long neglected him, yet if they would (c) *now*, even now at the last, return with a true Zeal, and a sincere Affection to their Duty, they should not fail to meet with a favourable acceptance from him:

גם עתה
ver. 12.

Therefore also now saith the LORD, Turn ye even to me, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rent your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

It is not my intention to seek a Parallel of all this, either in the *sin*, or in the *danger* of our own Countrey. I would willingly hope, that neither our *Guilt*, nor our *Incorrigibleness* have been so heinous as theirs, nor shall any such deplorable Judgment as this, ever, I trust, be made the punishment of what our Iniquities have indeed but too justly deserved. No, blessed be God, who by a wonderful Concurrence of great and singular Mercies,

cies, seems rather to call upon us to celebrate his Goodness, than to deprecate his Judgments; to praise his Name in *Hymns* of Triumph and Eucharist, than to weep between the *Porch* and the *Altar*, in melancholly *Litanyes* to avert his Anger, and implore his Mercy. But yet since the *Goodness*, as well as *Judgments* of the Lord, are designed to bring us to *repentance*, and that whether we look back into our own particular Actions, or consider those Publick and National Transgressions, whereby we have so long and loudly call'd to Heaven for vengeance; we must with shame and indignation confess our selves some of the greatest of Sinners; I cannot but think, both the Solemn Occasion of *this Day*, and the Design of my *Text*, to be a most proper and seasonable Admonition to us, to turn unto the Lord our God, and to implore his Blessing upon our present Enterprises, that those vile *Insects*, the *Locusts* and *Caterpillars*, that have so barbarously consumed our Neighbours round about us; our worse than *Assyrian* or *Babylonian* Enemies, may not be able to prevail against us.

And indeed, however it has pleased God, as at this time, to give us some Encouragement to trust in his Mercy; yet we cannot so soon forget,

B

that

that we have also born the *punishment* of our *sins*. For not to repass upon the things that are at a greater distance from us; let the Instances still fresh in all our Memories, speak to us: What just Apprehensions did we but very lately lie under of our *Lives*, and of what is yet dearer to us than our *Lives*, our *Liberty*, and our *Religion*? How did our Enemies not only project our Ruin, but as if it were already accomplished, begin to say in their hearts, nay, they began freely to speak it out to us; *Aha! so would we have it: Persecute them, and take them; for there is none to deliver them.*

Psal. LXXI. 9.

And if now we are no longer exposed to those dangers that *so lately* threatned us; if God has begun, upon our late more serious Concern for Religion, and more general return to him, to give us some Testimony of his gracious Designations towards us; This certainly ought to be so far from lessening our *solemn Humiliation* at this time, that it should rather engage us to be the more forward in perfecting our *Repentance*, the greater Encouragement we have to hope, that it shall be accepted at our hands. And I must now beg leave, with so much the more Earnestness, to enforce the *Duty* of my *Text*:

There

Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rent your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God.

By how much I hope I may with the greater assurance propose to you the *Promise* of it for your Encouragement:

For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

I have already pointed out to you the two great parts of my *Text*; and which must therefore be the Subject of my Discourse upon it; *viz.*

I. The Address of the Holy Prophet to his Country, and in that the *Exhortation*; which I am earnestly in the Name of *God* to recommend unto you this day;

To turn unto the LORD your God with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.

II. The great *Encouragement* which he offer'd to induce them, and which ought to be of no less a force to stir up all of us to a serious and diligent performance of it.

B 2

For

For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

I begin with the former of these, the Exhortation of my Text :

- I. To turn unto the LORD your God with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.

And here I presume I shall not need to tell you, That all this is but a larger Paraphrase of what I may in other Words call a General and National Repentance, of those Publick and National Sins which had provoked God Almighty to send down so many Judgments upon them, and to threaten them with yet greater, if they continu'd still in their Impenitence. And indeed, what could be more reasonable, than by such a Solemn and Universal Acknowledgment both of the Evils they had committed, and of the Judgments which they deserved, and of the sorrow they were now touch'd with for their Offences, to appease God's Anger for that General Incurribleness, by which they had so long exposed both his Goodness and his Justice to Contempt, among the Heathen round about him ?

For

For however it be very certain, that all the outward pomp and solemnity of Repentance, the fasting, and the weeping, and the mourning, are at best but a form of Godliness, empty and unprofitable, unless there be also added to these that true and inward change of Mind, in which alone consists the Power of it ; yet there may be such Circumstances and Cases put, wherein this Duty must pass beyond the Heart and the Closet, and the Humiliation will be imperfect, if it be not as publickly set forth to the Eyes of Men, as it is sincerely perform'd in the sight of God.

And such especially must be the Repentance for National Sins. Where Mens Transgressions have been open and notorious, there their Return also must be no less Solemn and Evident ; that so the Honour as well as Justice of God may be vindicated in their Forgiveness ; and some sort of Reparation made not only for the Guilt which they have contracted, but also for the Scandal which they have given to his Honour and Religion in the World.

Now 'tis this which at once both declares the Piety, and commands the publick Humiliation of THIS DAY.

(c) *ἵνα ἂν μὴ πάντων ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν ἐπιπέσωκεν ἡ σκευή τῆς ἐπίστεως, καὶ ἵνα τῶν πρώτων τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν μὴ ἀποπέσῃ.* *Christ. Hsm. ad pop. Antioch. 3.*
DAY. (c) And for the due discharge whereof, I must intreat you to go along with me in these following Reflections.

1st. That though, as I have just now shewn, there must be the publick marks of Sorrow and Humiliation in our publick Repentance, yet we must by no means stop in these; nor think that this is all that God requires of us in order to our forgiveness.

This was indeed the Vanity of the Jews heretofore, and is too much the folly of some misguided Christians now. Their Indignation against their Sins, and against themselves for having committed them, was spent especially in the outward appearance of sorrow. They rent their Cloaths; and put on sackcloth; they wept, and fasted and went softly; and then they supposed they had done their business; though it may be their Souls were not yet Humbled; nor their Hearts at all broken with any true Contrition for their Sins.

And so among those of the Church of Rome at this day. If we may believe some of their greatest Casuists, an external Worship is sufficient to carry a man to Heaven, without the trouble of the

2 Sam. iii. 31.
1 King. xxi. 27.

the true inward Devotion of the Soul: He may repent without Contrition; may fast with a full Meal:

Nay, and if the Pope pleases, (d) may obtain a plenary remission of his Sins, *se anche non fosse confessò ne contrito*; though he has neither confess'd them to any Priest, nor finds in his own Heart any manner of Contrition for them.

(d) This Passage is so very Extraordinary, that I ought to give some Account of it. Pope Boniface IX. having grant-

ed a large Indulgence at Rome, whether the Lombards, by reason of the Wars they then had, could not go to gain it, at the Prayer of John Galeas, Visconte of Milan he grants the same Indulgence to Milan he had done at Rome, viz. that all the Subjects of the said Galeas, though they had neither Confess'd their Sins, nor were Contrite for them, should yet be absolv'd of all their Sins; only for visiting a few Churches, and paying the Sum of Money prefix'd by the said Bull:—Cioè (says their own Historion) che Ciscioscuvo nel dominio del Visconte, se anche non fusse contrito, ne Confessò, fosse assolato di ogni peccato. Bern. Corio nella sua Hist. di Milan. terza part. pag. 627. Ed. Venet. 1565.

I shall not need to say how many new ways of Salvation of this kind they have found out; by wearing a Leathern Girdle about their Loins, or Scapularies over their Shoulders; by lifting themselves into such or such certain Fraternities; by dressing of Altars, and going on Pilgrimages; by Holy Water, and Agnus dei's: And all which, and infinite more of the like kind, if, as our late Masters tell us, they are not Authorized by their Church, yet I am sure are publickly Recommended by their Greatest Men, and generally practis'd too, without any censure or contradiction among them. This is certain, that all these, and

See Dr. Bre- vints Saul and Samuel at Endor. Crasset devotion veritable envers la St^e. Vierge. part. ult.

and whatever Artifices of the like kind, Men may please either to flatter themselves, or to delude others withal, without a true Contrition, and a serious Reformation they are all but Vanity; They make a shew of Piety in the Eyes of Men, but they avail nothing to our forgiveness with God.

I will not now dispute of what use some of these External Performances may be to assist our Repentance, and render our Sorrow for Sin the more solemn, and so in some Cases, as I have before observed, the more pleasing to God. I know well enough that St. Paul has told us, that Bodily Exercise, where 'tis discreetly order'd, does profit a little, though it be not like Godliness, profitable for all things. But then as 'tis plain, that the greatest part of those Follies so much magnified and recommended in the Church of Rome, are but vain and ridiculous Impositions to cheat the silly and superstitious Multitude; so 'tis certain that the best of these things are neither in themselves Meritorious, much less Satisfactory for Sins, as they pretend them to be, nor otherwise of any value at all with God, than as they are attended with that true Repentance, which alone can either incline his Mercy or obtain our Forgiveness.

If

1 Tim. 4. 8.

If we will therefore make our solemn (e) Humiliation this day acceptable to God, and available to our selves, our Country, and our Religion, we must take the Method of the Prophet in our Text: We must turn unto the Lord our God with all our Heart, and then our fasting, and our weeping, and our Mourning shall indeed be pleasing unto him. We must rent our Hearts and not, i. e. rather than our Garments; must humble our Souls first, and then the violence we do our Bodies will be consider'd by him. When Jonah denounced Gods Judgments against Niniveh, we read in his 3d. Chapter, That the People of Niniveh believed, and Proclaimed a fast, and put on Sackcloth, from the greatest of them even unto the least. (f) But was this therefore that Repentance for which he spared them? No, it is not so much as once mentioned among the Reasons of it. It was the Reformation of their Lives that tied up his Hand, and sheathed his Sword, ver. 10. And God saw their Works, that they turn'd from their Evil way; and God repented of the Evil that he said he would do unto them, and he did it not.

(e) Νηστεύειν ἢ νύγλω λέγει τὴν τῶν πολλῶν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀκερβῆ νηστεύειν, ἢ τὴν τῶν βροματῶν ἀποχρῆσιν, μόνον, ἀλλὰ τὴν τῶν αἰμασθημάτων. Chryl. Hom. ad Antioch. 3.

(f) Ἄλλ' ἢ σκευὴ τί ποτε ἔδει τὸ λῦσεν τὴν ἀσφαλίτην ἐκείνην ὀργῶν, ἀεὶ ἢ νηστεία μόνον καὶ σάκκον; ἢ ἔτιν εἴπεν; ἀλλ' ἢ πῶς τὸς τὰ βίβη μεταβολῆν πόθεν τὸ το δὴ πῶς εἶπ' αὐτῶν τῶν προσθηκῶν ῥημάτων, ὅθεν ἔδει τὸ ὀργῆς ἢ δὲ διαλαχέσθαι καὶ τὸ ἐκείνων νηστείας αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν τὴν τε καταλασγῶν λέγων, καὶ τὴν καταλασγῆς τὴν αἰτίαν διδύσκων, ἢ πῶς τὸς εἶποι. Καὶ εἶδε τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν ὃ δὲ εἶδε ἔργα ποία, ὅτι ἐνήστευσαν; ὅτι σάκκον ἀειβόησαν; ἢ δὲν τῶτων, ἀλλὰ πάντα ταῦτα συγκρίτους, ἐπίμαζεν; ὅτι ἀπέστρεψεν ἔκαστος ἀπὸ τῶν ἀδῶν αὐτῶν τῶν πονηρῶν, καὶ μετενόησαν ὅτι τῆ κακία ἢ ἐλαλῆσαν πηήσαι αὐτοῖς ὃ κείνην ὀργῆς ὅτι ἔχῃ ἢ νηστεία ἐξήρασαν τὰ μὲν αὐτοῖς, ἀλλ' ἢ μεταβολῆν τὸς βίβη τῶν δεινῶν κατέστησεν ἴλαο τοῖς βασιλέσσι καὶ εὐμενῆν, ἔτι. Chryl. ad Antioch. Hom. 3.

C

2. And

2. And this brings me to a second Remark for the farther clearing of this great Duty; viz. That not only these outward marks of penitence are not sufficient to the discharge of it, but though we should to these add a true and real sorrow of heart for the Sins we have committed, even this would not be sufficient to purchase our forgiveness.

Now by true sorrow, I do not mean that little imperfect sorrow, which looks rather to the danger of our Condition, than to the heinousness of our Offences; and bewails our Transgressions more out of an apprehension of those Judgments that may be the Consequence of them, than out of any real regret that we have sinned against a most Gracious and Merciful God. For however those of the other Communion, out of their great tenderness to Sinners, have declared such a sorrow as this, if accompanied with Confession, to be sufficient for Mens Salvation; and therefore have resolved, that true Contrition or a sorrow for sin committed, with a purpose of sinning no more, is not necessary to the Sacrament of Penance, after the Commission of mortal Sin, but that Attrition is sufficient, though a Man knows it to be no more; Yet I suppose it needless in this place to obviate

Conc. Tr. Sess.
xiv. cap. 4.

obviate any such gross Error, however otherwise of very great danger, in the Practice of this Duty. Be the sorrow for sin never so sincere; and our Resolutions thereupon no more to return to the Commission of it never so firm and well grounded, yet if instead of making good these Resolutions we shall stop here, we are but half Penitents; we yet want that change of life, which alone is able to compleat the Nature, and render the Practice of our Repentance acceptable unto God, and available to our forgiveness.

3. In short, thirdly, if we will truly discharge that Repentance, to which we are here called, we must do it not by being sorry for our Sins, or by resolving against them, but by an effectual forsaking of them; i. e. as our Text speaks, By turning unto the Lord our God. This is that which alone can implore his Favour, and commend us to his Mercy. And this was what I before observed in the Case of Nimrod: When God saw their works that they turned from their Evil way, then he repented him of the Evil that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

Nay, but it is not any turning unto God that will suffice neither: We must turn * even unto him, and

* Veraciter
integraliter.
Lyr. Mercer.

†*Revera, Ex animo, non simulatè.*
Druf. feri ac bonâ fide.
 Grot.

and with all our † Heart: Words very Emphatical, and which offer to us two great Conditions, which are absolutely necessary to render our Conversion every way such as it ought to be. First, That it must be hearty and sincere: There must be nothing of the Hypocrite mix'd with it; our Souls must go along with our outward Performances; and these penitential appearances be the true Declarations of that real inward sorrow which we feel in our Hearts for our Offences. For God is not a Man that he should be mocked. He sees into our very Souls, and knows the secrets of all the Children of Men. And Secondly, That it must be intire and without reserve: As we must be sorry for every Sin we have already committed, so we must resolve against ever committing any for the time to come; For God is of purer Eyes than to behold the least Iniquity; and if our Repentance be sincere, so shall we be too. The same Piety which moves us to hate any Evil, will equally fill us with an Aversion against all. And if we desire to continue but in one Offence, it is because that we do truly repent of none.

So that now then if we will answer the design of this day: if we will render our fast such as the Lord has chosen, and has promised to reward with the

Psal. xlv. 21.
 1 Chron.
 xxviii. 9.
 Rom. viii. 27.

Habac. i. 13.

the Blessings both of this life, and of that which is to come; we must not think it enough that we comply with the outward Ceremonies and shew of Repentance, but we must indeed resolve to bring forth the fruits of it. Whilst we Address our selves to God for Pardon, we must take heed to dispose our Souls in such a manner, that we may be fit to receive it.

And if we thus improve the great Solemnity of this day, we shall not fail to meet with a favourable acceptance at the Throne of Grace. God will be jealous for his Land, and pity his People: He will perfect the great Deliverance he has begun for us, and once more render us the fear and the terror of all our Enemies round about us. Our Faith which has so often triumph'd over all the Arguments of its Adversaries, shall now no less triumph over all their black Designs to root it out and to destroy it; and shew to all the World, that though for our Tryal God may sometimes permit the Winds to blow, and the Floods to rise, and the Storms to beat against our Church, yet has he founded it on that Rock that shall never fail; Nor shall the gates of Hell, either the Power of France or the Cunning of the Jesuit, or the Malice of Both, ever be able to prevail against it.

And

Joel. ii. 18.

Deut. ii. 25.

Matt. xvi. 18.

And this brings me to the other thing I am to speak to: Our *Encouragement* to this Duty.

II. For God is Gracious and Merciful, slow to anger and of great Kindness, and repenteth him of the Evil.

It is not at all needful for me to enter on any particular *Explication* of all these Gracious *Attributes*, and shew what *Arguments* every one of them affords to engage us to *Repentance*. Two things in *General* there are, which will at first sight arise from them to excite us to it, *viz.*

1st The *Goodness* and *Mercy* of God to the greatest *Sinners* upon their *Repentance*.

God is Gracious and Merciful, and of great Kindness.

2^{dly} His *unwillingness* to pronounce any *Judgments* at all against them, and his readiness to *recall* them, if they *repent*.

He is slow to Anger, and Repenteth him of the Evil.

And

And 1st Of the *Goodness* and *Mercy* of God to the *Greatest* of *Sinners* upon their *Repentance*.

He is Gracious and Merciful and of great Kindness.

When God Proclaimed his own *Name* in the midst of the People of *Israel*, we read in the xxxiv. of *Exodus*, that he chose to do it not so much in the terrible *Attributes* of his *Majesty* and *Power*, as in the soft *Idea's* of his *Mercy* and *Goodness*, *The Lord, the Lord God, Merciful and Gracious, long-suffering and abundant in Goodness and truth; keeping Mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.* And if we look into all the following *Representations* which he makes of himself, whether by his *Holy Prophets* under the *Legal*, but especially by our *Blessed Saviour* and his *Apostles* under the *Christian Dispensation*, we shall find there is no *Character* he so much delights in as this. of being *Good* and *Gracious*, not willing that any should *perish*, but that all should come to *Repentance*; 2 Peter iii. 8.

And now what more forcible *Encouragement* can any one desire to bring him to *Repentance*, than to be thus assured of the *Goodness* and *Mercy* of

of God to the greatest of Sinners, if they *Repent*? That he will not only forgive him upon his return, but will even assist him with *Grace* and *Strength* in the doing of it. That he desires not the death of the most Profligate Offender, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. In a word, That he has promised forgiveness, without exception, to the most wicked Men upon their *Repentance*; so that if they will but yet break off their evil Course, and keep his Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, they shall surely live, they shall not dye. Ezek. xviii. 21.

Many are the ways, and excellent the Methods that God has taken to convince us of his Mercy, and the time would fail me to enter on a particular Consideration of them.

Sometimes he declares not only that he is ready to pardon us if we repent, but that he even desires we should repent that he may forgive us. And least his Word should not be sufficient, he confirms that desire with an Oath, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your Evil ways, for why will ye die O House of Israel?

Sometimes

Sometimes he *Expostulates* with us in the way of Reasoning, to see if by that means he may be able to bring us to consider his Love and Affection to us. *Isai. i. 16. Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the Evil of your doings from before mine Eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well. — Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Tho your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be white as Snow; though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wooll.*

If he Exhorts us to *Repentance*, he always does it upon this Promise, that he will Pardon us if we repent. *If we turn from our Sins, Iniquity shall not be our ruine.* Ezek. xviii. 30.

If he threatens Judgments, yet still he keeps a reserve for Mercy to triumph over Judgment; and will rather be thought inconstant in his most Peremptory Decrees, than inexorable to Repenting Sinners. Thus he commanded *Jonah* to go to *Niniveh*, and to pronounce an utter destruction against it. He fix'd the very time too, *Let forty days and Niniveh shall be overthrow.* *Jonah. iii. 4.* But what now was the issue of all this? Why, the City believed, and feared God, and turn'd from their Evil way: And God repented of the Evil that he said he would do unto them, and he did it not, *Jonah. 3.* — 10.

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And

And what must the Consequence of all these *Reflections* be, but to engage us not to dispise the Goodness of God, whereby he thus Graciously invites us to *Repentance*; but to conclude with Holy David, Psal. cxxx. 3. *If thou LORD shouldst be extream to mark what is done amiss, O God who may abide it? But there is Mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be feared.*

And what I have now said of *Gods mercy* in General, will yet more hold in the other Part of this *Character*, wherein is set out to us in Particular.

Secondly, his great unwillingness to pronounce any *Judgments* at all against *Sinners*, and his readines to recal them upon their *Repentance*.

He is slow to anger, and repenteth him of the Evil.

And because I would now, were I able, speak not so much to your *Reason*, as to your *Sense* and *Experience*, to your *Consciences* and *Affections*; I will for the Proof of this no more lead you back to the *Israelites* in this *Prophecy*; to *Past-times*, and unknown *Countries*; but will rather desire you to consider your own *Times*, your own *Country*,
and

and if you will allow me freely to add it, your own *Souls*. Which of all these will not afford me an *evident Demonstration* of the *Patience* and *long-suffering* of God? And speak him in the words of the *Text*, to be a God *slow to anger, and that repenteth him of the Evil?*

That after so many *Sins*, as we have every one, the very best of us *committed*, we are yet alive this day, whereas God might, if he had pleased, long since have cut us off in the *midst* of our *Sins*: That after so many calls and invitations as he has sent to bring us to *Repentance*, he is still pleased to call and to invite us to it: That notwithstanding we have so far abused his *Goodness* and *long-suffering*, as to improve that which above all things should have the most engaged us to our *Duty*, into an encouragement to go on the rather in our *Sins*; he nevertheless still continues to us the Offers of *Pardon* and *Peace*, if we will even now in this our day consider the things that make for our *Peace*: What is all this but a most *Demonstrative*, as well as a most *Affectionate* Proof, that God is indeed *slow to anger, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance?*

Lam. iii. 33.

That he has deliver'd us out of so many dangers, in which, but for his *Providence* over us we must long since have perish'd: That he has smitten us in *Mercy*, not in *Judgment*; to correct and admonish, not to ruine and destroy us: That upon our deprecating his *Anger*, he has at any time heard our *Prayers*, and answer'd our *Desires*: What is this but a plain Evidence that he smites not willingly, nor loves to afflict the Children of Men: and so is a God repenting him of the Evil that he is at any time forced either to threaten us with, or to bring upon us.

Ezek. xviii.

And if we look into his *Dispensations* towards us in the common concern of our *Country* and our *Religion*; How slow must that God have been to *Anger*, who after so many years *Attendance*, nevertheless still calls upon us, as at this day, to turn from our *Evil way*, and from the violence that is in our *Hands*, that our *Iniquity* may not be our *ruine*?

And for his repenting him of the *Evil*, which we have sometimes forced him by our continual *Provocations* to send upon us: Let the *Instances* which we our selves have known suffice to tell us, how unwilling he has shewn himself to bring us to an utter *desolation*.

When

When it pleased God for our iniquities, to despise, in his indignation, both the King and the Priest; Lam. ii. 5. and by the deplorable Judgment of *Civil Confusions*, had proved and exercised us about Twenty Years; with what a Miracle of *Mercy* did he Psal. cxxvi. 1. turn again the Captivity of *Sion*, and restore to us both our *Government* and *Religion*, as before?

When this would not do, but our *Sins* and our *Prosperity* return'd together; so that we were again in a very few years become ripe for judgment; He called forth a *destroying Angel*; He put a new *Sword* into his *Hind*, and commanded him to slay his *Thousands* and *Ten Thousands* in our *Streets*. The *PLAGUE* consum'd our *Strength*, and hardly was that pass'd, when another *Vengeance*, a *devouring FIRE*, such as scarce any Age or *Country* has ever heard of, burnt down our *Dwellings*. And had not the *Hand* of God wonderfully interposed, we must have been as *Sodom*, and we should have been like unto Isaiah i. 2. *Gomorrhah*.

And yet how did he then cover us with his hand in that day of his displeasure? He neither suffer'd our *Enemies* to invade us from abroad, nor any *Domestick Quarrels* to embroil us at home.

home. He preserv'd us in Peace ; he sent again the Blessings of Plenty and Prosperity among us, and our City is risen more Great and Glorious out of its Ashes.

What shall I say to the *fears* and *jealousies* we have labour'd under since, from a restless Party, Enemies to the Name of *Protestant*, and by *Principle* conjured, if they can, to root it out of the World ?

In how many *dangers* has God deliver'd us ? And how many Designs, for ought we know, may he have prevented, which have not yet been brought to light ? And when at last, either to awaken us the more effectually to a *Repentance* of our *sins*, or it may be to accomplish the number of their *Iniquities*, he deliver'd us over for a little while into the hands of our Enemies ; and to convince the most incredulous among us, what the true *Spirit* of *prevailing Popery* is, suffer'd them with such an inconsiderate Fury to pursue our Ruine, that no Ties, either of God or Man, were sufficient to restrain them ; but all Obligations, whether of *Justice* or *Conscience*, were equally trampled under their feet : How did it then please our *Almighty Defender* to assert his *Character* of being a God *repenting him of the evil* that he had brought

brought upon us, in a manner that is the *Wonder* and *Astonishment* of the present, and, that I am perswaded, shall be the *Praise* and *Triumph* of his *Church* in all succeeding *Generations* ?

He rais'd us up a *Deliverer* out of the *House* of his *Servant David*. He touch'd his *Princely Heart* with a *Generous Sense* both of the Evils which we had suffer'd, and of the greater that we apprehended. His *Honour* and his *Zeal* enflam'd him to do somewhat worthy Himself ; and that might answer the mighty Hopes God had prepared us to conceive of Him. He meditated the great Work of delivering our *Country* from *Oppression*, and our *Religion* from *Destruction*. And by the Blessing of God, he accomplish'd it, in a manner, so extraordinary in all its Circumstances, as, I think, should not suffer us to doubt from whose *Providence* it was, that this *Redemption* was sent to us. This *was the Lord's doing*, and, whatever it is, I am sure ought to be, *marvellous in our Eyes* : And may, I think, be a *final*, I hope it shall be an *effectual* Confirmation to us of this Great Engagement of our *Text*, to turn to him with all our hearts ; *viz.* That he is a God *repenting him of the evil* ; and therefore whose *Mercy*, if we now truly

truly do so, we may securely depend upon both for the *forgiveness* of our *sins*, and for our *deliverance* from those *dangers* which our *sins* have so justly expos'd us to.

And now what remains, but that having all these great Encouragements, such *Promises*, or rather, such an *Earnest* of God's Favour to us, we resolve, every one of us, seriously to comply with the great Design both of this *Day* and of this *Discourse*; and by our sincere *Repentance* for our past Offences, obtain that Blessing we so much desire both for our *Countrey*, and for our *Religion*.

Never was there a *time* wherein we had greater Reason to hope for God's Acceptance than at this *Day*; and such an *Occasion* as this, to implore his Favour, there may not perhaps again occur in the Course of many Ages.

For indeed what is it that we are now assembled to recommend to His Mercy, but in Effect the preservation of our *Selves*, our *Laws*, our *Liberties*, and our *Religion*, against the Violence of those who have long conspired both *Their* and *Our* destruction.

That

That he would *preside* in our *Councils*, and go forth with our *Armies*; and so direct the one, and prosper the other, that we may again enjoy the Blessings of Peace and Security; that there may be *no decay*, *no leading into Captivity*, and *no just complaining* in our *Streets*. Psal. cxliv. 14.

And this he will do, if we be not our selves wanting to our own preservation. Only let us act as becomes *Good Christians*, and *True Englishmen*; let us do all things for the Glory of God, and for the Safety, Honour, and Welfare of our Country: In the words of *Joab* to his Brother *Alishai*, upon an Occasion not much different from our own at this time; *Let us be strong, and of good Courage, and let us play the Men for our People, and for the Cities of our God; and then he will not fail us, nor forsake us.* 2 Sam. x. 12.

But if instead of pursuing the things that make for our Peace, we shall still go on to precipitate our own destruction: If when we are call'd this *Day* to turn unto the *LORD* our God with all our hearts, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; we shall instead thereof *fast* only for *strife* and for *debate*: Ira. lviii. 4.

E

If

if when we should be here prostrating our selves before the LORD, to implore the Completion of that Great Deliverance he has begun to work for us; we shall, on the contrary, continue ungratefully to murmur against his Providence, and be ready almost to implead his Justice for what he has already done; and with those repining *Israelites* of old, be looking back again to our *Egyptian Bondage*, when we are brought even within prospect of the *Promised Land*: In a word, If when we should be uniting our selves against the *Common Enemy* of our Country and *Christendom*, we shall suffer a *Spirit of Faction and Sedition*, of *Mutiny and Discontent*; of *private Interests*, and *unseasonable Resentments*, to distract our Councils, and divide us against one another; What can we then expect, but that God should at last give us over into the hands of our Enemies, and *make those that hate us to rule over us*.

Wherefore now, arise O ye *Worthies*, ye *Chosen*, and *Counsellours* of our *Israel*; Consult, consider, and resolve: And may the God of Heaven; the God before whom we are here assembled this Day; He who *has*, and *does*,
and

and we trust *will* still deliver us; our *Rock*, and our *Defence* against the Face of our Enemies, so direct and prosper all your Consultations, that the Children which are yet unborn, may rise up in their Generations, and call you *Blessed*, when they shall enjoy the Benefits of that Peace, that Security, which we trust shall descend to them, through your Wise and Vigorous Resolutions.

Behold this day the Eyes not of your own *Nation* only, but of all the *Nations* round about us, fix'd upon you: The Fortunes, I do not say, of every single Person among you, though that were somewhat; nor of your own Country and Religion only, which ought to be much more valued; but what is yet more considerable, the Fortunes of all the *Reformed Churches*, and *distressed Countries* of *Europe*, depending on the success of our present Enterprizes. This is the fatal *Crisis*, that must secure or ruine both them and us for ever.

May the Consideration of all these things, inspire every one of you with a *Spirit* suitable to that great Trust that is here committed to you: A *Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding*; a *Spirit of Prudence and Discretion*; a *Spirit of*

Charity and Moderation; but above all with a Spirit of Piety and Unity; that being endu'd with all these excellent Qualities, ye may become the Repairers of our Breaches; the Restorers of our almost lost and trampled Liberties; the Defenders of our Faith; the Support of your Country; the Avengers of your barbarously abus'd Allies; the Scourge and Terror of the Universal Enemy of Truth, Peace, Religion, Nature: In short, of all the common Laws and Rights of God and of all Mankind.

May your Councils be Govern'd with such a Calmness and Temper, as may settle and compose all the unquiet and dissatisfied Spirits (if there be any) yet remaining among us; and suffer none to regret our wonderful preservation, but those only whose fury had once prompted them to attempt, and whose Principles still carry them on, to desire our Destruction.

May your Resolutions be as speedy, as the publick Necessities are pressing; and their Execution be accompanied with a Fidelity and Success that may equal not only our Expectation, but even our very Hopes and our Desires.

And

And for the accomplishment of all these Blessings, and whatever else may serve to make these Kingdoms Happy.

May We all this day, fast the fast which the Lord has chosen; to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy-burdens, and to let the Oppressed go free.

Let us confess our wickedness, and be sorry for our sins. Psal. xxxviii. 18.

Let us turn to the LORD our God with all our heart; and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. Joel. ii. 13.

Let us deal our Bread to the Hungry, and bring the Poor to our Houses. Ia. Lviii. 7.

Then shall we call, and the Lord shall answer; we shall cry, and he shall say here I am. Our light shall break forth as the Morning, and our righteousness as the Noon-day. —8.

God shall come, and shall not keep silence: He shall save us from our Enemies, and put them to shame that hate us. Psal. l. 3. Psal. xlii. 7.

He shall arise, and all our Adversaries shall be scatter'd; they also that hate us shall flee before us; Like as the smoke vanisheth, so shall we drive them away; terror and dread shall fall upon them. Psal. Lxviii. 1. Exod. xv. 16.

So

So shall all our Mourning be turned into Laughter, and our Heaviness into Joy; and we shall yet sing the Song of Moses and of the Lamb; when he shall have given us rest from all our Enemies round about us;

Salvation and Glory, and Power, and Praise, and Thanksgiving, be to him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for Ever and Ever. Amen.

F I N I S.

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