

S E R M O N

Preached at

St. Mary-le-Bow

Before the

L O R D M A Y O R,
Court of Aldermen,

A N D

Citizens of L O N D O N,

On *Friday* the 26th of *June* :

A Day appointed by Proclamation for a
General and Publick Fast.

By *LILLY BUTLER* Minister of *St. Mary*
Aldermanbry.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *B. Aylmer* at the *Three Pigeons* in *Cornhil*, 1696.

To the Right Honorable
Sir JOHN HOUBLON,
Lord Mayor of the City of London,
And the Court of Aldermen.

MY LORD,

IN Obedience to your Commands, I have published this Sermon preached before you on our late General and Publick Fast day. I endeavoured to speak those things which were most suitable to the occasion of that our Solemn Assembly, and proper to excite only those Affections which became a People, humbling themselves before God, and supplicating for Pardon and Mercy and Assistance. And if the Printing of this plain Discourse, may in any measure help to forward that Reformation of our Lives, it was designed to convince
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*the bearers of the necessity and advantages
of, I shall bless God for this opportunity, of
doing something, how little soever it be,
towards the promoting the Publick Good;
Which that we may all, in our several
places, zealously endeavour to advance, is
the hearty Prayer of*

My Lord,

Your most obliged
and humble Servant

Lilly Butler.

Nehem.

Mr. BUTLER'S
Fast-Sermon

Preached before the
Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen,

June 26. 1696.

Houblon Mayor.

*Martis 30 die Junii 1690. Annoq;
Regni Regis Willielmi Tertii An-
glia, &c. octavo.*

THis Court doth desire Mr. *Butler* to Print his Sermon preached at the Parish Church of *St. Mary-le-Bow*, on *Friday* last being a general Fast-day, before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Citizens of this City.

Goodfellow.

Nehem. 9. part of the 26, and 27 Verses.

*They wrought great Provocations : There-
fore thou deliveredst them into the Hand
of their Enemies.*

THE Children of Israel being assembled together with ^{Verf. 1.} fasting, upon a day of publick and solemn Humiliation, as this is ; The Levites, in the Name of all the People, make an humble Acknowledgment to God, of their ungratetul and rebellious Behaviour towards him ; how they had all along defeated the gracious Methods of his Providence, to oblige and turn them to him ; and how justly at length they were punished by him.

He spared them long, and delivered them often, and did many great things for them. But *they dealt proudly,* ^{Verf. 16-17.} and hardened their Necks, and refused to obey. And though God was *slow to Anger,* and for a great while suffered their ^{Verf. 19.} Manners, and in his manifold Mercies forsook them not ; yet at length, when he saw they obstinately persisted to abuse his Patience and Mercy, and had aggravated their Sins to a most intolerable Degree, he became weary of forbearing. He gave his People to the Sword, and was wroth with his Inheritance. *They wrought great Provocations : Therefore he delivered them into the Hand of their Enemies.* In which Words we may observe, First, The Character of the Israelites Practice, *They wrought great Provocations.* Secondly, The Punishment

ment inflicted by God for it, *He therefore delivered them into the Hand of their Enemies.*

In this manner he did often punish their great Provocations. He had told them by *Moses*, Lev. 26. that if they walk in his Statutes, and kept his Commandments, he would give Peace in their Land, and none should make them afraid. Verse 6. *They should chase their Enemies, and make them fall before them by the Sword.* Verse 7. But if they should despise his Statutes, and abhor his Judgments, and break his Covenant, Verse 15. then he would set his Face against them, they should be slain before their Enemies, and they that hated them should reign over them verse, 17. And the Prophet *Isaiah*, long after, speaks to them to the same purpose, *Isa. 1. 19, 20. If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the Land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the Sword, for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

This was to be the standing Method of God's proceeding with them, and accordingly we find it observed in abundance of Instances. I shall therefore make it my Business at this Time, to apply this Account is given of God's Method in dealing with his People *Israel*, (as may be most suitable to the Occasion of our present meeting) to our own particular Case and Circumstances, by shewing, *First*, How justly we may be charged, as the *Jews* are in the Text, with having wrought great Provocations. *Secondly*, That we have great reason to fear, that our great Provocations may be punished by God as theirs were, that he may therefore give us up into the Hand of our Enemies. *Thirdly*, What a dreadful Judgment this would be, which our Sins threaten us with. *Fourthly*, What is the most effectual means to prevent this Punishment of our great Provocations. *Fifthly*, What Particulars are required of us, in order to the Discharge of that general Duty, which

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is so effectual a means to prevent this Punishment. These are all of them very proper Matter for our present Meditation.

First, I am to shew how justly we may be charged, as the *Jews* were in the Text, with having wrought great Provocations. This will manifestly appear, if we consider these following things.

First, To what a prodigious Height all Kinds of Iniquity are raised amongst us. Atheism and Infidelity have strangely improved their Interest in this Age, in respect both of the Number and Impudence of their Profelytes. And what *David* chargeth with Folly, but to say in our Hearts, Men are bold to profess with their Mouths as an Argument of a more discerning Wit and Reason. How insolently do many set their Mouths against Heaven, disputing the Being, and exposing the Oracles of God, and deriding all the sacred Mysteries of Religion? Are not profane Attempts daily made, to propagate the most unchristian Notions, with that Zeal and Earnestness, with which we are required to contend for the Faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints? With what Loudness and Affectation do Men profane the awful Name of God? As if Blasphemy were a sort of Eloquence, and Oaths and Curses Wit and Rhetorick; as if there were no greater Bravery, than, for Men to defie God and contemn his Judgments, and to curse themselves into Damnation. How is the Land overspread with Luxury and Intemperance? And what Numbers are there, that regard nothing else, even now that God so loudly calls for fasting and mourning, but to sit down to eat and drink, and to rise up to play? Chambering and Wantonness are become a Trade and Calling, and all the Arts of *Solomon's* Harlot, *Prov. 7.* have been daily practised in our Streets, with the greatest Cunning

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and Impudence. How many Examples, doth almost every Day produce, of such prodigious Frauds as former Ages were Strangers to? How little of that Sense of Honour is left, in managing Trade, which was wont to give such great Advantage to it? Men are now in so much *haste to be rich*, that the old, and honest Ways of Traffick, are too slow for the Violence of their covetous Desires, and they greedily run after the new Inventions of a corrupt and fraudulent Age. Notwithstanding the publick Dangers have threatned us, which are wont to unite a People amongst themselves; we have retained our old, and engaged in new Quarrels, and are still assailing one another with unchristian Censures and Revilings; and seem to be more heartily concerned for Victory, in our little Differences at home, than in our Wars abroad, for our common Safety, Liberties, and Religion. And are not all these very great Provocations?

Secondly, These will appear still *greater Provocations*, if we consider what Engagements we are under, to abstain from all Transgressions of the Laws of God. - This was a great Aggravation of the Sins of Israel, that they were a People in Covenant with God. The Sins of the *uncircumcised Nations* were nothing so great Provocations as theirs, who professed themselves the People, and were solemnly dedicated to the Service of God. And therefore this is often charged upon them, as a heavy Aggravation of their Disobedience and Rebellion against God, that thereby they had *dealt falsely in, and broken his Covenant*. The same Aggravation, only much heavier, are our Transgressions loaded with: We are as solemnly dedicated to God as they were, and engaged to him by the Rites of a *better Covenant, established upon better Promises*, and requiring a more easie and reasonable

able Service. We have generally made Promises, and Profession, of *renouncing the Devil, and all those his Works*, which notwithstanding are so commonly and so impudently practised by us, and are therefore false and perjured Wretches in every wilful Sin we commit. How great then are our Provocations?

Thirdly, Our Sins are very great Provocations, as they have been committed against the most prevailing Attempts of the *Spirit of God*, to restrain and reclaim us from them. This is particularly mentioned, as one Aggravation of the Sins of Israel, Verse 20. *that God had given them his Spirit to instruct them*; and Verse 30. *that he testified against them by his Spirit in the Prophets*. But we that are *Christians*, have clearer Revelations made, both of our Duty, and the Motives to it, than the Jews had, *by the same Spirit*. And these things have been taught and urged upon us, with great Plainness and Affection, by those whom the *Holy Ghost* hath set apart for the Work of the Ministry, who have not spared to tell us of our Sins, to warn us of our Danger, and to call us to Repentance. The *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* mentions this as a peculiar Aggravation of despising the Law of Christ, in comparing it with *despising the Law of Moses*, to do despite to the *Spirit of Grace*. The Sins of *Christians* are committed against more prevailing Methods of God's *Holy Spirit*, and these Methods have been nowhere used, with greater Strength and Advantage than amongst us; we have had more of his Light, more of his Calls and Invitations, more of his Warnings and Reproofs, more frequent and earnest Applications than most, if not than any other of the Christian Nations. Our Sins therefore, which, notwithstanding all this, we have multiplied against God, must needs be very great Provocations,

Fourth.

Fourthly, Our Sins are great provocations, as they have been committed against many and great Mercies. The Mercies of God are particularly insisted on, by the Levites in this Chapter, in confessing and aggravating the Sins of Israel. His choosing them for his People, his delivering them out of Egypt, his feeding them in the Wilderness, his long forbearances and his many gracious deliverances of them: And how like to these are the Mercies we have sinned against? How early did God choose us to plant his Gospel amongst us, and take us into Covenant with him? How graciously did he deliver us from the Tyranny of Rome, from a far worse Bondage than that of Egypt? What a rich and plentiful Land hath he planted us in? What an excellent Form of Government hath he Establish'd for us? How constantly hath he been watching over us, interposing for us, and making bare his Arm in our defence? How many signal Mercies and Deliverances have been crowded into a few years past? When our hearts were ready to sail for fear, and for looking for those things that were coming upon us, how seasonably did God send us a Deliverer, and surprise us with the safety of all that was dear to us? And when our danger was greater, because our fear was less, by what wonderful methods of Providence were the dark & bloody designs of our Enemies discovered and disappointed, and their expected Triumphs turned into everlasting Infamy and Reproach? If we look abroad, what Nation is there that hath had God so nigh unto them for all that we call upon him for; yea, for what we have neither asked nor thought of? And though we complain still, as we have always done, yet we should hardly be willing to change Conditions with any of the Nations round about us. How great then are our provocations, the abominable Transgressions which we have committed, against our good and gracious God, who hath striven

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by all the methods of Love, by the most valuable expressions of Mercy and Goodness, to ingage us to return to him?

Fifthly, Our Sins are great provocations, as they have been committed against the Discipline of God's Rod, and those many Judgments he hath sent to teach us Righteousness. This also is one of the aggravations of the sins of the Jews, mentioned in this Chapter, and they are often in other places upbraided with it, for being smitten in vain and receiving no correction, but still revolting more and more. And how just is this Charge against us also? How impregnable have our Lusts been against all the Batteries of the Divine Displeasure? How many fiery Trials have we past through without leaving any thing of our Dross behind us? God hath sent the Pestilence among us after the manner of Egypt; He overthrew some of us as he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; our young men he hath slain with the Sword: He hath visited us with intestine and foreign Wars; the Person of our Sovereign, our greatest Security upon Earth, and many Thousands of our Country-men are still exposed, to all the sharp and fiery Instruments of Death; yet have we not returned unto the Lord, but in this our distress we rather sin yet more against him. Our Lusts have increased and multiplied under the Curses of God, the severest Judgments he hath punished them with. Thus also have we wrought great provocations.

Sixthly, Our Sins are yet greater provocations, as they have been committed, even whilst we have been making publick Professions of Repentance. For this is the pretence of appointing and observing our monthly and yearly Fasts, that we may confess and bewail our sins, and humble our selves, with purposes of Reformation

formation and Amendment. The Prophet *Isaiah*, Chap. 58. 3. doth thus aggravate the Sin of the *Jews*. *In the Day of your Fast ye find Pleasure or Desire, i. e. Your sinful Lusts and Pleasures are still indulged by you, notwithstanding all your fasting. And how justly may this too be charged upon us? Have we abated any thing of our Wickedness since we began our Fasts? Are we not the same sinful People that we were before? What Lusts have we mortified, what wicked Customs have we abolished, what sinful Practices have we reformed, notwithstanding all our Confessions of Sin, and pretended Humiliations for it, notwithstanding so many solemn Professions of Sorrow and Repentance? How highly provoking is such Mockery and Hypocrisy? What a mean Opinion doth it argue we have of God? As if we thought him capable, of being imposed upon, by false Pretences, and hypocritical Shews, and meer outward Ceremonies of Respect, or of being bribed by these to dispense with the most abominable Impurities and Lusts. Thus we have turned our Fasting and Prayer into Sin, and made our Iniquities the more provoking, by these our solemn meetings. If we consider all these things together, certainly we cannot but confess that we of this Nation have wrought very great Provocations, that our Iniquities are increased over our Heads, and our Trespases grown up unto the Heavens. And will not God visit for these things, will not his Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this? Will not so loud a Cry of Sin awaken the divine Justice to a speedy Execution of the Judgment we have deserved, to withdraw his Protection, and to leave us to the Will of our merciless Enemies? That we may be possest with due Apprehensions of our Danger, I shall shew, Secondly, That we have great Rea-*

Reason to fear that our great Provocations may be punished by God as those of the *Jews* were, that he may therefore give us up into the Hand of our Enemies. For,

First, We have no such particular Promises of Preservation from, and Conquest over our Enemies, as the *Jewish* Nation had. God had expressly told them, that he would drive out the Nations before them, and give them a quiet and peaceable Possession of the Land of Canaan. But notwithstanding, for their great Provocations, he did often deliver them into their Enemies Hands. How then can we hope still to escape this Punishment, who have no such particular Promises, when our Provocations are as great as theirs? God did often deliver the *Jews* for the sake of his Promise to *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, 2 King. 13. 23. And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had Compassion on them, and had respect unto them; he delivered them from the Oppression of the King of Syria, because of his Covenant with *Abraham Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his Presence as yet*. But we have no such Promise made to any of our Fathers, and therefore have much less Reason to hope for that Defence and Protection from God, which the provoking *Israelites* did sometimes find against their Enemies. The Example of the Text then is a strong Argument against us, if God punished their great Provocations with the Sword of their Enemies, we have great Reason to fear that he will, much rather, punish ours in like manner.

Secondly, The Honour of God was more concerned, in defending and preserving the *Jewish* Nation, than it is in defending and preserving ours. For they were the only Worshipers of the Lord *Jehovah*, and

whilst they were so, it was in a manner necessary for the asserting of his Divinity, and the Preservation of the Knowledge and Worship of him, sometimes to appear on their Behalf, and not to suffer their Enemies utterly to prevail against them. And therefore, when the *Provocations* of Israel were great, he is often said to have wrought for his Name's Sake, that it should not be polluted amongst the Heathen, that they might not triumph and insult over the God of Israel, as *Rabsbakeb* did over the Gods of those Nations his Master had conquered, *Iſa.* 36. 18, 19. *Where are the Gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the Gods of Sepharvaim? Who are they among all the Gods of these Nations that have delivered their Land out of my Hand?* And God did not give them up to be destroyed utterly by their Enemies, till he had planted a Church among the *Gentiles*, and had made them his People who were not his People. But there can be no such Reason given, for God's defending and preserving us, notwithstanding our great *Provocations*. The Honour of his Name cannot be so much interested in our Safety, who are only a Part of his Church. The Christian Faith, and the true Worship of God, would still be maintained and preserved, though we should be so given up into the Hands of our Enemies, that we should be no more a People, and the Name of our English Church no more in Remembrance. How justly then may we fear this Punishment, if we still continue our great *Provocations*?

Thirdly, We have still greater Reason to fear this particular Judgment for our great *Provocations*, because it seems to be nearest at Hand. It is a Rod which God hath been, for some Years, shaking over us, and threatening to punish us with. The Sword is already

already drawn, we are actually engaged in War, with a subtil and potent Enemy; and if God but withdraw himself, and resolve to go out no more with our Hosts, there needs nothing more to bring this heavy Judgment upon us. And can we hope that God will always be active on behalf of so provoking a People, that he will not at length be weary of interposing and fighting for us? This is a Judgment then so ready, and so easie to be inflicted on us, that we have great Reason to fear that God may thus punish our great *Provocations*.

Fourthly, This is a Judgment that many amongst us seem to be fond of; some are wishing and praying for it, and others have engaged in the most horrid Villanies, that they might let it in upon themselves and us. And will it not be very just with God, and very agreeable to his Method of punishing, to cause them to inherit their own Choice, and to be filled with their own Devices, and to obtain the Miseries they so eagerly pursue, especially when we have all so highly deserved to partake with them by our great *Provocations*? When so many of us are weary of God's Mercies, and impatient under the Deliverances he hath wrought for us, and complain of the Oppression of his Blessings, may we not reasonably fear, that he will take up a Resolution of delivering us no more, and saving us no longer against our Wills; that he will make us sensible of the Value of those Blessings we despise, and murmur at, by forbearing to prolong our Enjoyment of them? If this be our Case then, if we have so much Cause to fear, that for our great *Provocations* God may deliver us up into the Hand of our Enemies, that we may be awakened to use our utmost Endeavours to prevent

this Punishment, it will be very seasonable for us to consider,

Thirdly, What a dreadful Judgment *this* would be, which our Sins threaten us with. What a wretched Condition should we be in, if God should give us up into the Hand of the Enemy we are contending with? Who can express the Violence and Cruelty, the Rapes and Outrages, the Wasting and Barbarities, the Burnings and Bloodshed, that have attended all his Successes? How much do these things transcend the most tragical Descriptions? with what barbarous Cruelty hath he persecuted his own most faithful Subjects, only for professing the same Religion with us? What Slavery and Tyranny are those very Persons subjected to, that support his Greatness and fight for him? What a dreadful Protector then, of Life and Liberty, of Property and Religion, must he be, especially for us who have so highly provoked him, and been the chief Bar to the Progress of his Success and Victories? Methinks the Thoughts of this terrible Judgment, our Sins so loudly threaten us with, should make our Hearts tremble, and our *Knees smite one against another*. But is there no *Hope in Israel concerning this thing*? Is there no *Remedy or escaping*? God forbid, that our Case should be thus desperate. We cannot tell but God may yet be prevailed upon, to *turn and repent and to leave a Blessing behind him*. I shall therefore shew,

Fourthly, What is the most effectual means to prevent that dreadful Punishment, our *great Provocations* threaten us with. It is in one Word, Repentance; a deep Humiliation and Sorrow for all our *great Provocations*, and a sincere Amendment of our Lives, for the time to come. This we have great reason to

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hope, might yet turn away the Wrath of God, and prevail for us against our Enemies. For,

First, This is a Means, God hath always prescribed, for the rescuing his People out of their Enemies Hand: When at any time he threatened his People, for their *great Provocations*, to give them over to the Sword, he still invited them to repent as a certain Means to escape it. The Prophet *Joel* describes the Enemies of *Judah* in a very lofty and terrible manner, Chap. 2. *A great People and a strong, there hath not been ever the like, neither shall there be any more after it. A Fire devours before them, and behind them a Fire burneth.* Nevertheless he tells them if they would but *turn and repent*, God would remove this great Army from them, Verse 20. and drive them into a Land barren and desolate: And for our farther Encouragement, let us consider,

Secondly, The Repentance and Reformation of his People, were generally followed, with most remarkable Victories over their Enemies. The Reformation in the Days of *Asa*, was followed with a Victory over a thousand thousand *Ethiopians*; and that in the Days of *Jehosaphat* with so signal a Victory over the Children of *Moab and Ammon*, that we read *2 Chron. 20. 29. That the Fear of God was on all those Countries when they had heard that the Lord fought against the Enemies of Israel*, and that in the Days of *Hezekiah*, with a wonderful Defeat of the victorious and insulting Army of *Sennacherib*. *These things happened unto them for Examples, and are written for our Encouragement.* And if we could but be persuaded to make the Experiment, I doubt not but we might yet reap the like happy Fruits of a great Reformation. For,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, When those that are God's People by Profession and Covenant, repent and turn to him, then those Ends and Reasons cease, for which God is wont to give them up into the Hand of their Enemies. Then God may defend and fight for them, without any Prejudice to the Honour of his Holiness and Justice and Providence. Nay, then the Glory of them is more fully manifested when he sheweth himself strong on the Behalf of them that are upright towards him. When the Righteous wash their Feet in the Blood of their Enemies, then saith David, Psal. 58. 10, 11. *Men will say, Verily there is a Reward for the Righteous: Verily he is a God that judgeth in the Earth.* When the Inhabitants of a Land have learned Righteousness, the great Design of God's Judgments is accomplished. Then there is no need of giving them up into the Hand of their Enemies, that they may return and seek God; or be a Warning and Example to others that afterwards should live ungodly. And,

Fourthly, As it doth very well consist with, and answer the Ends of his Wisdom, so it cannot but be very agreeable to his Inclinations, to defend and protect a holy Nation, a peculiar People, purified to himself, and zealous of good Works. He delights in the Prosperity of good Men, and rejoiceth over them to do them good. There is nothing more pleasing, or agreeable to his Nature, than to exercise loving Kindness and Mercy. How forward then must he be to exercise these upon a Church and Nation, reformed in Faith and Practice? If but a single righteous Man cry, *the Lord is ready to hear and deliver him*; how ready then would he be to hear, succour, and defend, a righteous Society of Men? Such an Opportunity of subduing the Enemies of a reformed People, he seems to lament

lament the Loss of, Psal. 81. 13, 14. *O that my People had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my Ways! I should soon have subdued their Enemies, and turned my Hand against their Adversaries.*

Fifthly, We have great Reason to hope, that God is thus graciously inclined to our Nation in particular, to give us yet most happy Success against our Enemies, if we would but yet repent, from his favourable Dealing with us, notwithstanding the Continuance of our great Provocations. He hath often stretched out his Hand against us, but presently taken it in again, as if he did not know how to give the fatal Blow. He hath suffered us to be encompassed with almost unavoidable Dangers, but still at length his Arm hath wrought Salvation for us. He hath saved us out of the Hand of our Enemies, when they have been ready to triumph, in their almost accomplish'd Designs against us; as if he were thus affectionately contending with himself concerning us, as we read he once was concerning Ephraim, Hof. 11. 8. *How shall I give thee up England? How shall I deliver thee into the Hand of thine Enemies? My Heart is turned within me, my Repentings within me are kindled.* What can be the Reason of all this Goodness and Forbearance and Long-suffering towards us, but his great Desire, that we should not perish, but rather come to Repentance? If now we seriously consider, on the one Hand, the imminent Danger, we have brought our selves into, by our great Provocations; and on the other Hand, the comfortable Hopes we may yet entertain, of Safety and Deliverance, of Success and Victory, if we did but repent and amend our Doings; methinks we should be all ready to do the utmost we can for the accomplishing of that which, is so necessary and prevailing a Means,

Means, to preserve us from the greatest Calamities, and to make us a flourishing and a happy People. Which leads me to shew,

Fifthly, What Particulars are required of us, in order to the Discharge of that general Duty of Repentance, to prevent our being delivered into the Hand of our Enemies. To this End,

First, Let us humble our selves before God, with Shame and Sorrow for all our *great Provocations*. Let us search and try our Ways, and set our Iniquities in order before us. Let us know every Man the Plague of his own Heart, and reflect upon all those prevailing Sins and Impieties, which overspread the Nation; let us be afflicted, mourn and weep for all our Abominations, and in the Anguish of our Spirits bewail the Folly and Ingratitude of them. This is the proper Work of this Day. Let us try then what we can do, what Impression we can make upon our Hearts, by reflecting upon God's Mercy and our Ingratitude. Let us employ our Minds in such Thoughts and Reasonings as these. Oh! How kind, how compassionate, how bountiful a Father have we offended and provoked? What could God have done for us that he hath not done? And yet what could we have done against him that we have forborn? *O the Riches of that Forbearance and Long-suffering* we have despised! *O the Height and Depth of that Love* we have abused! We have been obstinately fighting against God, whilst he hath been caring, and watching, and fighting for us. We have been taking part with his Enemies, the Devil and Sin, whilst he hath been defeating the malicious and cruel

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Attempts of ours. Thus have we requited the Lord, the Lord that made and bought us, our most liberal Benefactor, our most gracious Protector, the God of our Salvation. And can we forbear to add, *The Remembrance of these things is grievous unto us, the Burden of them is intolerable?* We abhor our selves for them, and bitterly bewail the Iniquity of these our Abominations. If we are not thus affected with Shame and Sorrow, for our personal and national Sins, we have been mocking God this Day, by an hypocritical Fast; and have made our Provocations and our Danger still greater. But neither is this all that God requires, in the Fast that he hath chosen, or for the procuring his Help against our Enemies, a Day for a Man to afflict his Soul; but to our Sorrow for what is past,

Secondly, We must add sincere and hearty Resolutions to forsake and turn from all our Transgressions, and to walk before God in Holiness and Righteousness all our Days. Let us resolve then every Man of us, by the Grace of God, to reform our Lives in every particular, wherein we have offended; to sacrifice our dearest Lusts to the common Safety of our Church and Nation; that there shall no longer cleave to us any of those accursed things, which may trouble our Hosts, or strengthen the Hands of our Enemies against us. With what Face can we complain of any Miscarriages, whilst we obstinately persist in those Transgressions, which so justly provoke God, to insatiate our Counsels, and to prevent the Success of the wisest, and the most sincere Endeavours for the publick Good? Every impenitent Sinner amongst us is a Traytor to his Country, and hath a Hand in all our Mismanage-

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ments and Misfortunes, and opposeth the establishing and perfecting of that Deliverance God hath wrought for us; and warreth against that Safety at home, which our Fleets and Armies are sent abroad to fight for. If then we have any Affection for the Country wherein we were born, and have enjoyed so great a Plenty of the richest Blessings; if we have any Value for those Laws by which our Liberties and Properties are maintained; if we have any Love for that Church wherein we were baptized, and enjoy such excellent Helps for the promoting our eternal Happiness; if we have any Regard to that Purity of Doctrine and Worship, which by so many Wonders of Providence, God hath continued to us; if we have any Concern for our Persons, Estates, and Families; if we dread the Thoughts of having all given up, to the Ravage and Fury of the most barbarous Insolence and Cruelty, that many Ages have produced; let us no longer delay the Time to keep the Commandments of God, let us not lose the present Opportunity of securing all the dearest Interests we have: Let it not be as a *Price in the Hand of Fools, that have not a Heart to use it*: Let us not refuse those Offers of Aid and Assistance, which the *Lord of Hosts* doth this Day call upon us, to dispose our selves for, by a true Repentance.

Thirdly, Let us endeavour to make this Reformation as general as we can: For, if it were but in any good Measure so, we might then be confident of the divine Protection, that God would *stir up his Strength and come and help us*; that he would make our *dwelling on high, and our Place of Defence the Munition of Rocks*, inaccessible to all the Attempts of our strongest

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Enemies. If then by our Example or Authority, our Exhortations or Reproofs, our Friendship or Advice, or by any other proper Means, we can diminish that Heap of Transgressions, which is already *grown up unto the Heavens*, and loudly calls for the Vengeance of God upon us, let us not be wanting to do our utmost. This is the most noble and blessed Design, we can possibly ingage in, to recover Men from those *Snares of the Devil they are taken captive by*, to check the Insolence of triumphant Wickedness, and to restore the Practice of true Christian Piety to its primitive Glory. For this purpose the Son of God came down from Heaven, and *humbled himself unto Death, even the Death of the Cross, to purifie to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*. And can we be more honourably employed, than in joining with the Saviour and Redeemer of Men, in *working together with him*, for the reclaiming a *crooked and perverse Nation*? We can do nothing more highly conducing to the Honour of our God and Saviour, to the Interest of our Church and Nation, to the subduing the Enemies we are at Strife with, to the Benefit of our *Protestant Brethren* abroad, to the procuring a safe and honourable, a lasting and happy Peace, to our own present Comfort here, and our everlasting Happiness hereafter. O let us not then be backward and unwilling to that, which we have all the Motives and Arguments in the World to persuade us to prosecute with all our Might. We have been forward enough in making Parties, for those private Causes we have espoused; let us try now, with the same Zeal and Industry, to make a Party, at least, for

God and the publick Good. Let us unite our hearty and vigorous Endeavours, to shame and discountenance Sin, to retrieve the Honour of despised Religion, and to increase the Number of the Friends and Votaries of abandoned Virtue. Such an *Association* as *this* would indeed be the Honour and Interest of us all. This would give us Ground to hope, that God himself would engage with us, stand by us, and avenge us of all our Enemies. Let us every one then consider, as in the Presence of God, what is in our Power to do, towards the Reformation of the Lives of Men; and what particular Methods of promoting this our several Callings and Places oblige us to; and what Account we shall be able to give of our Stewardship, when we shall stand before the Tribunal of God, if we do not improve our Talents to those Ends, for which he hath put them into our Hands. This is a Work of too great Importance, with respect to God, our Country, and our selves, for any little Considerations to excuse our Neglect of. And though after all we can do, we should have Cause to complain with the Prophet, *Isa. 49. 4, 5.* that we *have laboured in vain, and spent our Strength for nought; that the People will not be gathered; yet shall we be glorious in the Eyes of the Lord, and our God shall be our Strength.* He will support us under all our Disappointments; he will preserve us in publick Calamities, as shall be most expedient for us; he will make all things work together for our good, and at length bring us to that *City of God*, that Heavenly *Jerusalem*, where there are no Fears or Jealousies,

no Murmurings or Complaints, no Factions or Divisions, no Wars or Contentions; but where all the blessed Inhabitants shall be unspeakably and eternally happy, in the Enjoyment of the *God of Love*, and the *Prince of Peace*, and in the most hearty and constant Love of one another. For which Blessed Place God Almighty fit us all for Jesus Christ his Sake, *Amen.*

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