

The end and design of God's judgments : a sermon preach'd before the House of Lords, at the Abbey-Church in Westminster, on Friday, December 8, 1721. Being the day appointed for a general fast, for obtaining the pardon of our sins, and averting those heavy judgments we have most justly deserved, and particularly the plague, with which several other countries are at this time visited / by the Right Reverend Father in God, Thomas Lord Bishop of Norwich.

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Greene, Thomas, 1658-1738.

Publication/Creation

London : Printed for John Wyat, 1721.

Persistent URL

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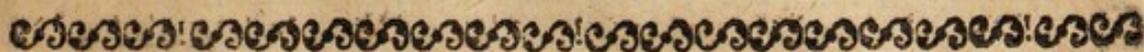
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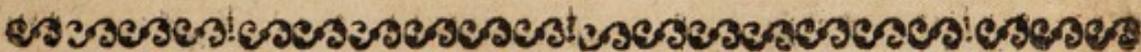
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The Sabbath of December 1721.

The Bishop of **NORWICH's**
Fast - S E R M O N
Preach'd before the
House of **LORDS,**

On **DECEMBER 8. 1721.**



(Price Four-Pence.)

Die Sabbati, 9^o Decembris, 1721.

ORdered by the Lords Spiritual and
Temporal in Parliament assembled,
That the Thanks of this House be, and are
hereby given to the Lord Bishop of *Norwich*,
for the Sermon by him preached before this
House in the *Abby-Church, Westminster*,
Yesterday; and he is hereby desired to
cause the same, to be forthwith Printed
and Published.

*W^m Cowper,
Cler^o Parliamentor^o.*

(Price Four-Pence.)

The End and Design of God's Judgments :

A
SERMON

Preach'd before the

House of Lords,

AT THE

ABBEY - CHURCH
IN

WESTMINSTER,

On FRIDAY, *December 8.* 1721.

Being the DAY appointed for a General FAST, for obtaining the Pardon of our Sins, and averting those heavy Judgments we have most justly deserved; and particularly the PLAGUE, with which several other Countries are at this Time visited.

By the Right Reverend Father in GOD,
THOMAS Lord Bishop of NORWICH.

L O N D O N:

Printed for JOHN WYAT, at the *Rose* in
St. Paul's Church-Yard. M DCC XXI.

The End and Design of God's Judgments.

A SERMON

Preach'd before the

House of Lords,

AT THE

ABBAY-CHURCH

IN

WESTMINSTER.

On Friday, Decemb: 1724.

Being the Day appointed for a General
Fast, for obtaining the Pardon of our
Sins, and averting those heavy Judgments
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larly the Plague, with which several
other Countries are at this Time visited.



By the Right Reverend Father in God,
THOMAS SHIELD Bishop of Norwich.

L O W D O N :

Printed for JOHN WYAT, at the
St. Pauls Church-Yard, MDCCLXXIV.

ISA. XXVI. 9.

When thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.



It being the Original Design of God's creating Mankind, that they might serve him here in Holiness, and so be happy for ever hereafter ; he has been pleas'd to exert himself towards them in various Methods, suitable to their Nature, as reasonable free Creatures, in order to produce that gracious End. Sometimes he deals with them in the Way of his Mercies ; by those gentler Dispensations , endeavouring to oblige and win them to their Duty, and as it is were with the Cords of Love, and the Bands of a Man , as he expresseth himself by his Prophet , Hos. xi. 4. to draw them to it. And sometimes he treats them in the Way of his Judgments ; by

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those severer Methods forcing them to consider, how Great he is, and how abominable they are, in persisting in their wicked Ways, and sinning against him. The Former is the Way, wherein the Gracious and Good God, the Father of Mercies, and Lover of Souls, chiefly delights to deal with his Creatures, that he may *by his Goodness, and Long-suffering, and Forbearance towards them*, as the Apostle speaks, *lead them to Repentance*, Rom. ii. 4. But the Latter is the Course, which he very unwillingly takes with them, when he is wearied with their continual Provocations, and they will not be prevailed upon by the Former, to amend their evil Doings.

It is of these Latter, the *Judgments* of God, which my Text, and the Solemn Occasion of our Meeting at this Time, do lead me to treat. Which I shall do in this following Method.

I. I shall shew, that the End and Design of God's *Judgments*, is to teach the *Inhabitants of the World to be Righteous*.

II. The

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II. The great Propriety and Fitness of them to that End.

III. That not to learn Righteousness by the *Judgments* of God, is an Argument of the greatest Perverseness, Wickedness, and Folly.

IV. I shall Conclude with an Application suitable to the present Solemnity.

I. I shall shew, That the End and Design of God's *Judgments*, is to teach the *Inhabitants of the World to be Righteous*. Thy *Judgments*, says the *Psalmist* unto God, *Psal. xxxvi. 6. are a great Deep*. And the same also is said by *St. Paul*, *Rom. xi. 33. O the Depth of the Riches, both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!*

Thus indeed they often are, with regard to *Private Persons and Families*; so deep and intricate, that we cannot find out the Reason of them. Which should teach us all, not to be too rash and hasty in giving our Opinion of them, with Regard to those *Private Persons*, as if they were undoubtedly greater Sinners than other Men, whom

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we see to be exercised with such severe Dispensations of God's Providence. There may be many other excellent Ends for them, than that which we suppose; and therefore it's a great Fault, and very unjust with regard both to God and them, for us to be too hard and severe in our Censures upon those, whom we see to be afflicted with them: Unless some very notorious Crimes in those Persons have been the Fore-runners of them. Then indeed, it becomes us to take notice of God's Justice, and to revere his Vengeance, and to learn from his Severity upon such great Sinners, to fear God, and to avoid those Sins, which have brought down such *Judgments* from God upon them.

But as to Nations and Kingdoms, when they are afflicted with God's *Judgments*, we may very safely pronounce, that they are the Crying Sins of those Nations, which have called loud for Vengeance, and provoked God to deal with them in so severe a Manner. I do not say, that we ought to pronounce them to be greater Sinners, than those Nations which God spares; for among Sinners, God may punish which of them,
and

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and when he pleases, and God has always undoubtedly most wise Reasons for what he does, in sparing the one, and punishing the other; but these he is not pleased to acquaint us with.

Now the Reason why God oftner punishes Nations, than single Persons, with his *Judgments*, may be this. A wicked Nation, as such, can be punished only in this World. As for single wicked Persons, if God permits them to go on in their vicious Courses in this World, without severely animadverting upon them for it, there is a Time most certainly coming, which he has given them sufficient Notice of, that they might consider it, and be reclaimed by the Terrors of it, and if they will not now be persuaded by them, he will then call them to a severe Account for them, and then shall they *feel a Judgment worthy of God*, in their eternal Destruction.

But there will be no Consideration of Mankind at that great Day, as united in such a Society as a Nation; but every one must answer for himself, and bear his own Burthen, which the righteous Judge of the World will then lay upon him. So

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that unless a wicked Nation be punished in this World, it must go unpunished as a Nation for ever. God knows indeed, which is the fittest Time to send his *Judgments* upon a wicked Nation, which is the Reason that they do not always feel them immediately, when others think that they may deserve them. But they have always Reason to fear them, for at one Time or other they will come most certainly, and heavily too; unless there be a proper Course taken to prevent them, by Repentance and an Amendment of their evil Ways.

God's *Judgments* upon a wicked Nation, are *Punishments* for their Sins. But *Punishments* are not always to destroy, but sometimes by Correction to amend that Nation, on which they are inflicted. For there are *Salutary Punishments*, as well as *Destructive* ones. They are severe indeed to those who are destroyed by them; but they are great Mercies to thousands of others, who are intended to be instructed and admonished by them to fear the Lord, and to forsake, and be reformed from those Sins, which have cost the Committers of
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them so dear. So that *the Judgments of God, which are abroad in the Earth, are indeed the wise Methods, which the great Physician of the World uses for the Cure of Mankind.*

For it is not that God takes Pleasure in such Severities, or that he delights in the Miseries and Calamities of his Creatures, that he makes use of such harsh and rigorous Ways with them, but purely out of a merciful Design to them, to hasten their Repentance, and to prevent their utter Ruine. He always first tries the gentler Methods of his Goodness and Forbearance, to bring Men to a Sense of their Duty, and to an Amendment of their Ways. But when the Perverseness and Obstinacy of Men will not be wrought upon by them, then is he provoked to change them into Ways of Harshness and Severity, and forceth himself, as it were, against his Inclination, to take the Rod into his Hand, and chastise them with it. His infinite Goodness is so averse to *Judgments*, that he is represented in Scripture, as not knowing hardly which Way to set about them: and therefore they are called by the Prophet, *his*

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strange Work, Isa. xxvii. 21. How loth does he, by his Prophet Hosea also, declare himself to come to it, saying, Hof. xi. 8. How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My Heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. And in other Places he calls upon his rebellious People Israel, in the most affectionate and moving Manner, to repent of their Wickedness, and so avert his Judgments. Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine Anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep mine Anger for ever; only acknowledge that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, Jer. iii. 12, 13. O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from Wickedness, that thou mayest be saved, Jer. iv. 14. and Again, Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my Soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, Jer. vi. 8. And at last, when he pours forth his Judgments, there is still a secret Mercy lying hid under that Severity. When he shews himself most angry with a wicked People for their Sins, it is still with a Design of Pity towards them.

them. He is loth to see them perish in their pleasant Ways, and therefore embitters their Lives by Miseries, rather than suffer them to be utterly undone by Softness and Indulgence. He casts them into the Furnace of Affliction, that he may refine and purify them from their Dross. He would fain have them repent and amend their evil Ways, and by his severe *Judgments* calls upon them *to bear the Rod, and who hath appointed it*; and to learn from thence to *go and sin no more, lest a worse Thing come unto them*, and they be ruined and undone for ever.

That the Amendment of a People is the Design of God's *Judgments*, is still further evident from hence also, that as soon as they have accomplished the End he aims at by them, he does always remove them. For undoubtedly, there never was any Nation in the World, that did not experience the Return of God's Mercy towards them, in his Pardoning, and even in his Blessing of them, upon their true Repentance. Whenever God's Providence has made use of his sharp and cutting Instruments to let out the Corruption of any wicked People, and the Event has answered his Expectation; he
that

that has wounded them, does then heal them; according to that of the Prophet *Hosea*, vi. 1. *Come, and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.*

Nay, if but the Threatning of his *Judgments* has the Effect he aims at, the Reformation of that People to whom they are threatned, there he stops, and goes no further, though even the very Time for them had been determined by him. As he has plainly shewn us in the Case of *Nineveh*; for as soon as he saw their Works that they repented in Earnest, and turned from their evil Ways, he also presently repented of the Evil which he said, by his Prophet, that he would do unto them, and he did it not, *Jonah* iii. 10.

And so I come to the second Thing I proposed, To shew the Propriety and Fitness of God's *Judgments*, to teach the Inhabitants of the World to be righteous. *When thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.*

Now this appears these Two Ways: First, they make Men more serious and disposed to consider, and so put them into
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the best Temper for Repentance. Secondly, they are apt to raise in Men's Minds a greater Awe and Fear of God.

First, they make Men more serious and disposed to consider, and so put them into the best Temper for Repentance. One of the great Causes, if not the chief, of the Wickedness of Mankind, is want of Consideration. Thus saith the Lord, by his Prophet *Jeremiah*, of his rebellious People *Israel*, Ch. viii. 6. *No Man repented him of his Wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his Course, as the Horse rusheth into the Battel: That is, they never considered the Evil, the Folly, and the Danger of their wicked Courses, whereby they had so long provoked God, but like that unthinking Animal violently rush'd on into the midst of Perils, not regarding what Mischiefs they were like to do themselves thereby. If Men could but once be brought to consider the Evil of their Ways, the Work of Repentance would soon begin to follow it. It would be almost impossible, that reasonable Creatures should continue in a Course of Sin, and should act so contrary to their Reason and their*

Conscience ; to their own Good and Interest in this World, and to their eternal Happiness in the next ; if they would but give themselves leave to think and consider what they are a doing, and whither those Courses will unavoidably lead them at last. For Vice owes all the Dominion it has over Men, to their unthinking careless Way of Living. Men stifle their Reason, and suffer themselves to be hurried by Sense into the Embraces of sinful Objects, not considering what the End of those Things will be ; what Mischiefs and Inconveniences they may plunge themselves into by them in this World, nor what is like to become of them hereafter, because of them. So that the only Way to bring them to abhor Sin and Wickedness, and to hasten their Repentance for it, is to make them serious and disposed to consider ; and nothing can be more likely to do that, than the Terrors of God's *Judgments*.

God has made Fear a very prevailing Passion in the Soul of Man. And This when rouzed, awakens all its Powers, to put forth their utmost Efforts for his Preservation. When Adversity and Affliction sit hard upon
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on Men, they take off all Lightness and Vanity of Spirit, and make them sober and attentive to the Voice of Reason and Conscience. They awaken Men's Minds, which before were stupefied with Sin, into Consideration, and make Men think seriously, whether they will or no, and by that Means soften them for the Impressions of wiser Counsels. *In their Afflictions*, says God, of that foolish thoughtless People, who would not before be prevailed upon by his Mercies, to repent and amend their Ways, *they will seek me early*, Hof. v. ult. Those will open their Eyes, and shew them their Wickedness, and that will put them upon the most effectual Ways to make their peace with God, and to seek his Mercy, by a true Repentance and Reformation. Just such was the Case of the Prodigal; he never thought of returning to his Father, till pinching Hunger and extreme Necessity forced him. They brought him to consider how greatly he had sinned against God and his Father, and that brought him to resolve on a Return to him.

Secondly, God's *Judgments* are apt to raise in Men's Minds a greater Awe and

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Fear

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Fear of him, and thereby to teach them to be Righteous. Though there are some Sinners, it may be, of so pliable and easy a Temper, as to be reclaimed by milder and softer Methods; such on whom the Threatnings of *Judgments* may have the happy Influence of reducing them to good; yet there are others likewise, and they generally the far greater Number, so hardened by long Habits of Vice, grown so headstrong and obstinate in their evil Ways, and so madly bent upon their own Ruin, that to try to reclaim these by gentler Arts of Persuasion is to no Purpose. *The only Way then left to deal with them, is Rigor and Severity.* When Sinners, says a late great Divine, are thus besides themselves, something that looks like Cruelty, is perhaps the greatest Mercy that can be shown to them, as being the only thing that can bring them to themselves again.

This God beholds, and therefore applies his Remedies accordingly. Then he leaves off Threatning, and proceeds to an actual Infliction of his *Judgments*. And when such Instances of God's Vengeance do lie heavy upon a wicked People, these are
apt

apt to awaken even the stupid and careless, and to strike upon their Minds a greater Awe and Dread of God, than any *Judgments*, though very severe, upon single Persons only are apt to do. The Fame thereof reaches further, and is more terrible. Wicked Men are oftentimes wont to encourage themselves in Wickedness by their Numbers. But when they hear of the heavy Wrath of God poured out upon whole Nations, for their Impieties, as by violent Inundations of Water, by a devouring Fire, by sudden and surprizing Earthquakes, by a dreadful Famine, by a raging Pestilence, by a lingring and destroying War, by dismal Storms of Wind, and the like: This is enough, one would think, to make the strongest and stoutest Combinations of Sinners to tremble and grow pale. When they hear or see how Great, how Mighty, how Terrible the Lord God of Heaven and Earth is, from whose all-seeing Eyes none of their Sins can be conceal'd, and whom no Numbers, no Powers are able to withstand or resist, when he arises terribly to take Vengeance upon an ungodly People: This, if any Thing, will affrighten the most bold

and daring Sinners into a speedy Repentance of their wicked Ways.

Whereas, if God should always suffer a wicked People, to go on without any such severe Checks in their Impieties; This, (considering the Proneness of Mankind to Wickedness,) would tempt others to think, that they may safely do so too, and so by Degrees would go a great way towards rooting all Sense of Goodness and Religion out of the World. And therefore to prevent That, which would be the saddest Calamity of all to Mankind, when his Mercy and Patience have been long despis'd, God suffers his Justice and *Judgments* to take place; that Men may be forced to Fear him, who is so terrible in his Doings, and to turn unto him that smiteth them. Which brings me to the Third Thing I proposed,

III. That not to learn Righteousness by the *Judgments* of God, is an Argument of the greatest Perverseness, Wickedness, and Folly. This Effect might in Reason be expected, That from the Terribleness of God's *Judgments* the Inhabitants of the World should be induced to reform and amend their
evil

evil Ways. And yet it sometimes happens otherwise, and they prove ineffectual to that End. There are some Tempers strangely refractory, perverse, and obstinate; and Sin, when it has been long continued in, is of an infatuating Nature, and renders Men incorrigible. Of this, wicked *Ahab* was a remarkable Instance; of whom the Holy Spirit of God has recorded, to his eternal Infamy, that *in the time of his Distress, he sinned yet more against the Lord,* 2 *Chron. xxviii. 22.* Such likewise did the obdurate *Egyptians* shew themselves to be. Every new Addition of a Plague did still but more and more harden their Hearts, and made them less willing to obey God, *in letting the Israelites go.* And this, to their Shame be it spoken, was the Temper of God's own People, the Children of *Israel*, who were so far from being reformed by the several fore *Judgments*, which God inflicted upon them for their Sins, that they still multiplied their Provocations, and grew but worse and worse for their Correction; which occasion'd God's desponding Complaint of them, for their Incorrigibility, by his Prophet *Isaiab*, Ch. i. 5. saying,
Why

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Why should ye be stricken any more, ye will revolt more and more?

But this certainly is the worst of Tempers, and usually is but a sad Prefage of the utter Ruin and Destruction of those in whom it is found. Such it was most certainly in all those Instances, I have just now named. All *Ahab's* House, though very numerous, were quickly after entirely destroy'd. All *Pharaoh's* Chariots, his Host, and his Captains, were dash'd in Pieces, and drowned in the *Red-Sea*. And *Israel* soon after that became a Prey to their Enemies, who miserably destroyed them, and carried them into a sad Captivity in a strange Land, from which they never returned to this very Day. Most dreadful therefore is the Anger of God, when his Patience, being long despised, is at last turned into Fury!

For this Reason, what dismal and terrible Destructions has he brought upon the Earth; at one Time, destroying a whole World of Sinners, by an irresistible Deluge, after he had a long Time strove with them, by lesser *Judgments* to reclaim them? For this, Five great Cities, deaf to all his former Warnings, were at last consumed by

Fire

Fire and Brimstone rained upon them from Heaven, and *are set forth for an Example, suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire.* For the Incurribleness of their Inhabitants, under God's gentler Severities, many have been the Alterations and Changes, and Desolations of several great and mighty Kingdoms, and many flourishing Churches ruined, so that nothing but the Names of them do now remain, and the very Places thereof are almost forgotten. And Foolish therefore must it needs be to the last Degree, as well as Wicked, for weak Mortals, poor sinful Creatures, to contend with the Mighty God for the Mastery. He always had, and ever will have the better. *God will not be outbraved by the Sins of Men.* But if they will still remain impenitent, under his lesser *Judgments*, he will still punish them more and more for their Sins, and add greater and greater Severities, till he has quite destroyed them. If they will not glorify him by their Repentance, for his Forbearance and Long-suffering, he will get himself Glory upon them by their Destruction. *O consider this all ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you!*

And

And so I come in the last Place to make an Application suitable to the present Solemnity.

We are met this Day, by the Command of our most Religious and Gracious Sovereign, to implore God's Mercy in the Pardon of our Sins, and in averting those *Judgments*, which we have the greatest Reason to fear, because of them; and in particular, that most grievous and heavy one of a *Devouring Pestilence*, with which several other Countries have lately been, and some are at this Time visited; and which has more especially so violently raged in a neighbouring Country, that within the Compass of a little more than one Year, it has laid waste many large Villages, and almost depopulated several very flourishing Cities: A *Pestilence*, so various in its Attacks, that it has hitherto eluded all the Arts of Physick to find out Remedies proper for it; a *Pestilence*, which notwithstanding all the Force that has been employed to keep it within Bounds, and the Methods that have been taken to put a Stop to it, hath still, in Defiance of them all, marched in Triumph, as it were, through several Parts of that unhappy Kingdom,

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dom, spreading its deadly Infection so uncontrollably, first on one Side, and then on another, as if it threatned to go through the whole Land. And whether or no it may not at last involve the neighbouring Nations, and ours among the rest, in the same most fatal and dreadful Calamity, God alone knows.

It is now Fifty Five Years, since this Nation was infected with any *Pestilential Distemper*; a Space of Time longer than ever this Nation was known to have escaped the like before. Not that we have less deserved such a *Judgment* than our Fathers before us did, (I wish I could see any Reason to suppose that;) but it has been owing to God's wonderful *Mercy* alone towards us, that he has spared us so long from so severe a Scourge.

For it has pleased God, like a prudent and indulgent Father, by various Methods of his Providence towards this Nation, of late Years, to endeavour to bring us to a Consideration of our wicked Ways, that we might amend them. One while inviting us to it by many Blessings, and at another trying to reclaim us by the Severity of his

Judgments, and then graciously removing them again; as he dealt with his own People the *Jews*, whom he was loth to give up fully to them.

It is still fresh in the Memory of most of us, how, but a very few Years since, for our Lukewarmness in the best and purest Religion in the World, for our Disregard to, and gross Contempt of the holy Duties of it, we were well nigh being deprived of the glorious Light of it, which shone in upon us at the Reformation, and being carried back into an *Egyptian* Darkness of Popery, and the Bondage of Tyranny and Slavery along with it. While the Fears of losing our Religion were upon us, and Idolatry, Superstition and Slavery, seemed to be coming upon us with a high Hand, it was indeed observed, that Men did appear more truly concerned for it, more devout in their Prayers, and more serious than ordinary in other religious Duties. But all this was but in Appearance only. For no sooner did God in his great Mercy raise up a *Deliverer* for us, our late Gracious Sovereign King WILLIAM, of Glorious Memory, and wonderfully conduct him hither for our Rescue,

Rescue, making all Opposition, in a most surprizing Manner, to fall before him ; but we, soon forgetting our Fears and God's Mercy together, return'd again to our old Indifferency for Religion, and for the Sacred Duties of it.

Upon this, we were engaged in a long and expensive War, in which, though God was pleas'd to give us many very considerable Successes and glorious Victories, yet the Loss of so many of our brave Countrymen, who were cut off by it, and the Decay of our Riches and Strength which attended it, and the inconsiderable Advantages which we gained in the Conclusion of it, in Regard to what, (as wise Men thought) we might justly have expected, do all shew it to have been a very severe *Judgment* upon us.

During this War, though God was loth to suffer us to fall into the Hands of Men, yet he was pleas'd to punish us himself by so furious and dreadful a Storm of Wind, in which many of our Ships were lost at Sea, and such incredible Mischiefs and Damage was done by Land, that the like is not to be parallel'd in any of our Histories.

Next to these, while we were yet endeavouring to repair those Breaches, which the just now-mentioned Calamities had made in the Wealth and Strength of the Nation; see how terribly God did of late shew his Anger against us in another Way, by giving us up to our selves, and chastising us very severely by one another.

It is the Observation of a late Great and Pious Prelate, that *when Impiety and Wickedness are at the highest Pitch in a Nation, then they themselves are the only proper Instruments to punish one another.* This was the sad Fate of the Jewish Nation, when their Iniquities were come to the full. As God had foretold by his Prophet, that *their own Wickedness should correct them,* Jer. ii. 19. so it hapned to them. The Romans, their Enemies, were gentle to them, in respect of their own evil Doings towards one another. None, says he, *but their own barbarous selves were capable of so much Cruelty and Inhumanity, as they experienced from themselves, and was indeed requisite to punish them to such a Degree, as their Sins had deserved.*

May we not justly say, that something very like this has been our Case? Such an unbound-

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unbounded Covetousness, and unsatisfied Love of Money, as was never known before in this Nation, having of late, (to the Accumulation of all our other manifold Impieties) shown it self amongst us, by the universal Inclination of all Ranks of Men and Women too to excessive Gaming, God was pleas'd to permit the Wickedness of some, and the Folly of others, to be the Occasion of bringing such a Curse and Blast upon us, as never was felt before by this Nation ; by which we have been all of a sudden strangely impoverished in the Midst of Plenty, our Riches having made themselves Wings, and flying away no body knows whither ; and more Families and single Persons have been undone and ruined, than hardly ever were known to have been so, by the most tedious and lingering War.

This is the sad State into which we are plunged, and it will require great Prudence, and a long Time to deliver us from the dismal Effects of this Calamity. I pray God inspire those, who have the Management of our Affairs, with Wisdom suitable to the Exigence of them.

But

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But if after all this, God should be pleased to send among us that dreadful Scourge of the *Devouring Pestilence*, which we have so much Reason to fear, this must of Necessity compleat our Ruin. I am sure it can hardly be expected that he should not, if we should still go on in those Sins without Repentance, which have provoked him to send those *Judgments* upon us already.

For surely, all this is not for nothing, that God has brought us thus low, and does still threaten to bring us lower, with more and more heavy *Judgments*. No; the Reason is plainly this, that we are still Impenitent. Notwithstanding the dismal Calamities we have already felt, Wickedness still overflows the Nation like a mighty Deluge, so as to overspread all Ranks and Orders of Men amongst us. Do not our Eyes behold it continually, in the open Atheism, Prophaneness and Impiety; in the Hypocrisy and Dissimulation; in the Contempt of God and his holy Worship; in the Prophanation of his holy Day; in the bold Infidelity, and *Denying the Lord that bought us*; in the dreadful Abuse of God's Great and Glorious Name, by the horrid Oaths, Curses,

ses, and Imprecations, which are heard continually in our Streets, and in the Places of Concourse and Conversation; in the Practice of the most filthy and abominable Lusts; in the Lewdness and Luxury; in the Oppression and Injustice; in the implacable Malice and Hatred of one towards another; and in our senseless Divisions and Animosities, without Cause and without End, which reign every where?

And can we then hope for *Peace* and *Mercy*, so long as our Abominations are so many? May we not much rather fear, that God should pour forth the Severity of his Anger upon us, until he hath consumed us, and there be no escaping? O let us all therefore, as we have too freely contributed to the heavy load of Guilt which lies upon the Nation, by our many and grievous Sins against the Divine Majesty, apply our selves heartily to the great Duties of this Day, a serious and deep Repentance and Humiliation of our selves before Almighty God for them. Who knows, but that so doing, we may still find Mercy with a most merciful God? Since *Peace* is not yet wholly hid from our eyes, O let us all be instructed,
and

and in this our Day see the Things that belong to it! Let us all seek the Lord while he may be found, and cry mightily unto him for the Pardon of our many and abominable Provocations. Let the wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and turn unto the Lord with all his Heart, and with all his Soul, that God may also be intreated to turn from his fierce Anger, that we perish not.

Lastly, To our Repentance and Prayers, let us add also our liberal Alms, and according to the Counsel given by the Prophet Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, Let us break off our Sins by Righteousness, and our Iniquities by shewing Mercy to the Poor, if so be it may be a lengthning of our Tranquillity.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Glory and Praise, both now and for evermore. Amen.

F I N I S.