

Responding to the Throat Distemper: Ebenezer Parkman's Sermons on Micah 6:9¹

by Ross W. Beales, Jr.

In October 1736, nine-year-old Ebenezer Parkman of Westborough, Massachusetts, became ill, first with vomiting and a fever, followed by a sore throat that his father, the Reverend Ebenezer Parkman, believed were symptoms of the throat distemper, an outbreak of diphtheria that was sweeping through New England. Parkman was well aware of the deaths among children that accompanied the illness. His response to a disease that had no known origin or effective treatment was both typical and appropriate in a culture that saw the hand of God in all things and God's judgments in response to the sins of individuals and an entire people. As he wrote in his diary, "I Desire to Humble my Self under the mighty Hand of God, as for the Sins of the Land in General that have brought Divine Judgments upon us, So for my own Family's Sins, and my own personal Offences" (Oct. 1, 1736).²

Parkman and his colleagues had ample opportunities to preach in response to the throat distemper, as the disease ravaged towns in New England not only in the 1730s but down to the Revolution as well. Their sermons, offered at fasts that were occasionally colony-wide but more often prompted by illnesses and deaths at the local level, used biblical texts that may seem gloomy to the modern mind, but that suggests how far removed we are from a world view in which God's judgments were deserved and the people's sinful natures evident in their daily lives and shortcomings. The calamities of nature (for example, drought, earthquakes, and epidemic disease) were evidence of God's judgments upon a sinful people and a call for individual and collective reformation.

Some texts were especially appropriate in response to the throat distemper – for example, Micah 6:9, "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."³ Parkman used that text at fasts in Shrewsbury (Sept. 11, 1740), Southborough, and Upton (Dec. 14, 1758) and also from the Westborough

¹Parkman Family Papers (American Antiquarian Society), Box 1, Folder 4.

²Dates in parentheses refer to Parkman's diary. The extant portions of the diary through 1755 (except 1736 and 1742, which were acquired by the American Antiquarian Society in 1985) appear in Francis G. Walett, ed., *The Dairy of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782*. Part of the diary for 1737 and Nov. 1778 through 1780 are printed in *The Dairy of Rev. Ebenezer Parkman, of Westborough, Mass., for the Months of February, March, April, October and November, 1737, November and December of 1778, and the Years of 1779 and 1780*, ed. Harriette M. Forbes ([Westborough:] Westborough Historical Society, 1899). Unpublished portions of the diary are held by AAS (1736; 1742; 1756 - May 1761; June 1764 - June 1769; Nov. 10-21, 1772; June 1773 - Oct. 1778) and by the MHS (Aug. 1771 - June 1773; 1781-1782). For Clifford K. Shipton's sketch of Parkman, see John Langdon Sibley and Clifford K. Shipton, *Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Harvard University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts* (18 vols.; Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Boston, 1873-1999), 6:511-27. A transcription of the entire extant diary may be found at The Ebenezer Parkman Project: <http://www.ebenezerparkman.org>.

³Parkman's sermon on Micah 6:9 is reminiscent of the jeremiads that Perry Miller analyzes in "Declension in a Bible Commonwealth," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 51, No. 1 (Apr. 1941), 14-49.

pulpit on three occasions relating to the throat distemper (Aug. 31, Sept. 14, 1740; Nov. 24, 1745).⁴

In that sermon, he reminded his audience that “the Glorious God is the Superintendent and Sovereign Ruler of Heaven and Earth, That not So much as any Smallest Accident falls out without His overruling Hand.” Indeed, “when God almighty sees meet to inflict such a Judgment as this of the wasting Sickness, He has Something Special in View.” Was not his voice as “loud and terrible as Thunder declaring to us that He has a Controversie with us; that He Contends, and pleads, and Commands?” Clearly, the people at every level had “forsaken” God’s law: “If we Should look up above us to our Rulers, or round about us to our Equals, if we look without, or examine ourselves within, we are, of all Orders and ages, full of Iniquitys and Abominations of almost every kind.” He listed the range of the people’s sins: “Atheism and Infidelity,” “Pride, vain Confidence and Security,” “Envys and Discontent,” “Grudgings of Heart, burnings, Strifes and Feuds, Hypocrisy and lifeless Formality, Unfaithfulness, Lying and horrible Profaneness, Sabbath breaking and a Spirit of Disobedience and Resistance, worldliness and Sensuality, Luxury and Intemperance, Lewdness and uncleanness, Dishonesty, unrighteousness and grievous Oppressions,” to which he added “incorrigibleness and Insensibility.”

What was a sinful people to do? Remember, he urged, “how gracious God has been to us and to our Fathers in this Land.” God had treated them with “So much tender Mercy and faithfulness,” but in recent years, God had been “forced to Shew His Fierce anger against our Sins in Sorer Judgments.” The judgment that was now upon the people was the throat distemper,

⁴Parkman used 1 Peter 5:6 (“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time”) for a colony-wide fast on Jan. 8, 1736 that was called by Governor Jonathan Belcher “on account of the unusual, malignant and mortal Distemper...by which great Numbers, especially of the younger People, have been removed by Death”; at a fast in Marlborough “on account of the Sickness in that Town” (Mar. 12, 1740); in Hopkinton “on account of the Throat Distemper” (Oct. 2, 1740); and in Shrewsbury “on occasion of the mortal Sickness among them (the Fever and Flux)” (Oct. 10, 1745). He used that text for a fast called “on the Account of the Small pox and other Malignant Distempers at Boston and divers other Towns” (July 2, 1752). In his afternoon sermon that day, he preached on 1 Kings 8:37-38, “If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, *or* if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness *there* be; What prayer and supplication soever be *made* by any man, *or* by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this house.” He also used 1 Pet. 5:6 at a fast in Rutland (Apr. 27, 1742) “upon the great Affair of dismissing their Pastor” (see Westborough Church Records, 62 [Apr. 22, 1742]; Local History Room, Westborough Public Library, also at New England’s Hidden Histories, <http://neh-viewer.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/#/content/Westborough/viewer/Church20records2C2017241787/76>); at Southborough “on account of the small pox there” (Dec. 24, 1760); and in Westborough for a “*Publick Fast*, recommended by the Congress, on Account of the present Distresses; and the Meeting of the *General Congress* at *Philadelphia*” (May 11, 1775).

At a fast in Grafton, his text, Hos. 14:1, reminded his audience, “O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” Other texts in response to the throat distemper were Matthew 24:44, “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (fast at Southborough, “on occasion of the sickness,” Jan. 24, 1754, and again in Westborough “considering the Sickness had entered into the town of Shrewsbury,” Feb. 17, 1754); Psalm 78:11, “And forgat his works, and his wonders that he had showed them,” at Westborough, Feb. 26, 1749, “on Occasion of the Throat Distemper being among us again”; and Prov. 13:21, “Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repaid,” at Westborough, Dec. 6, 1767, “at a Time when the Throat Distemper had broke out again among the Children” (see sermon DCCCCXXII, first preached Oct. 2, 1757, Parkman Family Papers [American Antiquarian Society], Box 1, Folder 5).

and, as Parkman urged, “we are to Sett ourselves to repenting and reforming.” Repentance had to be immediate, unfeigned, and thorough. There were to be no “hypocritical appearances of Repentance.” There was “no further room for dallying and lingering, nor for trifling with either God or our own souls.”

There's no evidence of individual or collective reformation, although that doesn't mean that Parkman's words failed to strike to the hearts of some of those who heard him. And, of course, there's no evidence that the throat distemper was affected by anything that was said from the pulpit. But Parkman's sermons did provide a context in which a lethal disease could be understood — not, of course, from a medical perspective but rather in the context of a religious world view.

Editorial Criteria

The transcription of these sermons follows the so-called expanded method, the goal of which is to provide a transcription that is more readable than a literal transcription, yet not one that is completely modernized. Superscript letters have been brought down to the line and abbreviations expanded; interlineations and marginal insertions have been silently included in the appropriate line; some punctuation has been silently inserted (or deleted) to make the text easier to read. All sentences start with a capital letter and end with a period. Numbers from 2 to 8 in square brackets (e.g., [8]) indicate where new pages in the manuscript begin.

A few footnotes provide biblical texts (in the King James version) to which Parkman referred. Indeed, the sermons are packed with biblical allusions – a reminder that Parkman's audience, at least ideally, was well versed in the scriptures. Thus, when we read “etc.” in the sermon, we might imagine that at least some of his audience could call to mind appropriate passages from the Bible.

A final note: just before the application in the first sermon, there is a double slash, followed by “After this brief Explanation.” At the end of the sermon, the double slash reappears: “//Again,” presumably indicating to Parkman that he should return to the application in order to complete the message of the second sermon.

Ebenezer Parkman's Sermons on Micah 6:9

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| LXXIV. Westborough, Aug. 31, a.m., 1740. | } | Shrewsbury, Sept. 11, p.m. Fast there, |
| LXXV. Sept. 14, a.m. | } | on occasion of the Throat Distemper. |
| | | Nov. 24, p.m., 1745. |

Mic. vi.9.⁵

The Lords voice cryeth etc.
Hear ye the Rod and Him etc.

⁵Micah 6:9, “The LORD's voice crieth unto the city, and *the man of wisdom* shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.”

The Prophet Micah was Contemporary with Isaiah, Hosea and Amos. In these Times Gods professing people were Sunk into grievous Declension, and Wickedness greatly abounded. In the former part of the Chapter before us, the prophet delivers a very Solemn Message. Hear ye Now, Says he, what the Lord Saith. God will have him lay before them the Grand Cause of the fearful Judgments which hung over them. Arise (this is the Command of God to the Prophet, Arise), contend thou before the Mountains, and let the Hills hear thy Voice. Manage thou, and defend my Cause with the Rulers, princes and Superior powers of the Land. This is accordingly, with Solemnity, addressed to them in v. 2, and they are assured that the Lord had a Controversie with them which He would plead with them. This he proceeds to in v. 3 and the Succeeding v. down to the 8th, and God having fully acquitted and vindicated himself in those passages, way is Made for him immediately to call upon them to hearken and attend to the Design of God in those Punishments He was inflicting on them, as in the v. of the Text. The Lord's Voice etc. Now because God in his holy and wise Providence is visiting us in His Anger, and inflicting grievous and Sore Judgments upon us; and is in an Observable Manner now Smiting us of this place in particular, it must needs be very useful to explain and very Seasonable to apply these words in the ensuing Discourse. Let us then Enquire

1. What the Lords Voice is that cryest unto the City?
 2. How the man of wisdom Shall See his name?
 3. What the rod here mentioned is, with the [application?] of it?
 4. What is to be heard therefrom and how must they be heard?
1. First, The Lord's Voice which declares his Mind and Intention; His determinate Counsel and Design, expressed by His Messingers (which we have in his word) and evidently revealed by his Providences, Learn, the Voice of the Prophets, the Ministers of God with His Word, is the Lord's Voice. And it explains providences, to men. When this Voice Cryeth, It argues men to be dull and heavy, Sleepy and prone to disregard. But as this Crying is the evidence of the greater Plainness and Earnestness, So it bespeaks the more obedient Regard as appears by what next follows in the v., Scil: a direct Command from God, "Hear," etc.
 2. Secondly, The Man of Wisdom Shall See His Name q.d. whensoever the Voice of God cryeth unto the City, whatsoever the Generality, the wicked and looser Sort will do, yet whosoever is wise and Considerate will attend to the will of God and seek the Glory and Honor of God. The Prudent and discreet will endeavor to know and understand the State of the Cause of God and how the wonderful works of God may be exalted.

[2] But there are various ways of translating this Commandment. Wisdom will See and own God, His Glorious Perfections in His remarkable Operations. What I have mentioned I take to be the most easy and Unforced. Or thus, that all wise and understanding persons will see the Attributes of God, His Power and Wisdom, Holiness and Righteousness in his wondrous Dispensation. Ps. 107, ult. [Jeremiah?] 9:12.⁶

⁶Jer. 9:12, "Who *is* the wise man, that may understand this? and *who is he* to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth *and* is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?"

3. Thirdly, The Rod is the Particular Judgment or Calamity itself which God in his holy providence sees meet to distress His people by. And all Sorts of Judgments or Afflictions which God is pleased in His Holiness to improve for the Correcting and punishing His people, are the Rod of God. Job. 9:34.⁷ Let him take His Rod away from me. It is also called Scourge in Isa. 28:15.⁸ As to Him that hath appointed it, He is no other than God almighty, for is there Evil in the place and the Lord hath not done it? Certainly this Evil is of the Lord who is nevertheless most holy in creating it.

4. Fourthly, As to what is uttered by the Rod and Voice of God.

1. It is First, A Declaration of the Sins of the people is contained in it. Thus in v. 10, 11, 16. And then again,

3. Thirdly, a Denunciation of Wrath against them for their Sins is contained therein. v. 13.14.15.16.

2. Secondly, there is a close Expostulation and Reprehension, in which the Equity, faithfulness and Kindness of God are vindicated; and the utter unreasonableness and ingratitude of the people are made manifest. V. 3.4.5. But what do all these intend unless we Should Subjoin

4. Fourthly, That in this Voice of God and his Rod, there is a very loud Call to deep Repentance and unfeigned Reformation. Such is the purport of all the Messages and of all the Judgments That God being infinitely holy and righteous He may not bear for ever the wickedness and ungodlessness of Men, especially the Hypocrisy and Ingratitude of his own people, that their Sins being infinitely offensive and intolerable, He is obliged to inflict grievous Punishments upon them unless they Shall with brokenness of Heart turn therefrom and beg forgiveness etc. But that indeed if they Shall See the Error of their ways and truly

5. turn to God that then God will etc: And this is the Thing that is made the Duty of all Persons in a Time of Judgment and Indignation and whosoever is wise and prudent will attend to the Command of God to do so; will acknowledge the Divine Hand and Submit to the Divine Mind. // After this brief Explanation

Application We will hasten into an Application hereof to ourselves as we are now under the terrible Judgments of God, Throat Distemper and Warr with Spain.

1. And here, In the First place, These Judgments of God which are His Severe Rod upon us, but in a peculiar manner this Judgment which is now among ourselves and which have been of God's appointing, do utter the Voice of the Lord. It crys aloud unto us who are

⁷Job 9:34, "Let him take his rode away from me, and let not his fear terrify me."

⁸Isa. 28:15, "Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves."

under them. It is too atheistical to attribute these Strange Occurrences to Nature; and to make light thereof as if only a Chance had happened. For how evident it must needs be to us who have been taught the lively Oracles (by which we may help the feebleness of our Natural imperfect, clouded Reason), that the Glorious God is the Superintendent and Sovereign Ruler of Heaven and Earth, [3] That not So much as any Smallest Accident falls out without His overruling Hand; but then especially that Great and Extraordinary Events are never brought about without His supreme appointment and Disposal. And it cannot be imagined that either So grand a System is maintained without Government or that That Government especially the more remarkable Parts of it without Some great and worthy Design. This will easily and incontestably prove that when God almighty sees meet to inflict such a Judgment as this of the wasting Sickness, He has Something Special in View — And have we carryd with So even an Hand and been so Perfect before God as that we Should be at any great Loss what the End and Design of God Should be in thus afflicting us. With the Point of The Same Destroying Sword has He written in Characters of Blood, nay in Characters, awfully flaming and bright as Sun Beams, what His holy Intentions are. The Voice he utters at the Same Time, is it not loud and terrible as Thunder declaring to us that He has a Controversie with us; that He Contends, and pleads, and Commands?

1. And to be briefly particular, First, Is there not a plain and loud Declaration of the Sins and Iniquities of His people, And that He is most Angry with us for them. For what doth the Land perish; for what are the Hopes thereof destroyed? May not the Answer be that in the prophet Jeremy? The Lord saith because they have forsaken my Law which I Set before them and have not obeyed my Voice neither walked therein — but have walked after the Imagination of their own Hearts — Therefore Thus Saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, behold I will feed them even this people, with Wormwood, and give them Water of Gall to Drink.⁹ If we Should look up above us to our Rulers, or round about us to our Equals, if we look without, or examine ourselves within, we are of all Orders and ages full of Iniquitys and Abominations of almost every kind. Spiritual Sins and outward and Gross; Secret Sins and open. For what Atheism and Infidelity, what Pride, vain Confidence and Security, what Envys and Discontent, what Grudgings of Heart, burnings, Strifes and Feuds, Hypocrisy and lifeless Formality, Unfaithfulness, Lying and horrible Profaneness, Sabbath breaking and a Spirit of Disobedience and Resistance, worldliness and Sensuality, Luxury and Intemperance, Lewdness and uncleanness, Dishonesty, unrighteousness and grievous Oppressions to which we may add incorrigibleness and Insensibility — all those and many more are justly chargeable upon [us?], and the Judgments God inflicts upon us are, no doubt, to set them before us, that we may be awakened to a serious Consideration of them. How aggravated and magnified also are they considering all our Circumstances and Obligations and Pretentions! These Dispensations declare to us the heinousness and intolerableness of our Sins above other peoples, and how odious we are rendered in the Sight of both God and man by them. But Again

⁹Jer. 9:15, “Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, *even* this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.”

2. Secondly, God herein Expostulates and reasons with us, and it severely Reproves us also. [4] For these Providences may call to our Remembrance how gracious God has been to us and to our Fathers in this Land; how great His Mercys were and his loving kindness towards them, how wondrous the works which He wrought for them And has never given up any Ground to complain of Him, because He has been very abundant in Goodness towards them. He has great room to Say New England as to the House of Israel, in Jer. 2:5.31.¹⁰ And in our Context v. 3¹¹ and onward. For wherein has God abused us that we should leave Him as we have done? What Iniquity have we found in His Hand? Was He not full of Mercy and Compassion when He Saw the heavy Burthens which our Fathers underwent on the other side of the Flood, and when he brought them
 Ps. 44:3¹² over into this Land, which they got not by their own Bow, nor by their own Arm, but thy right hand, O Lord and thine Arm, and the Light of thy Countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them. And again in the long Course of the Warrs and Sore Troubles of the former Days, how merciful and faithful was God to us from Year to Year? God calls to us as it were in those Terms, O my people, remember now what Philip King of the Narragansetts attempted, and others at the Eastward as well as those from the Northwest and from Canada increased by the Warrs of the French Nation with great Britain, and in America, that we may know the Righteousness of the Lord. How great have been our Obligations when He has treated us with So much tender Mercy and faithfulness! But then how unfit has it been for us to make Him such Returns as we have! When He has inflicted his Chastizements upon us, how moderately and gently, as long as easy Methods could be Imagined to do us Good, And when of latter Years He has been forced to Shew His fierce anger against our Sins in Sorer Judgments, has not this carried in it a most just Reprehension of our ingratitude, untractibleness and unworthiness? This is the Voice of these later Signs, And by how much the more terrible and awful the Visitations have been, by So much the more plainly doth God Sett before us the unreasonableness and wickedness of our Conduct. But this is not all, Such Dispensations are indeed themselves, punishments and what we have been and are Still Suffering are grievous punishments but yet,

3. Thirdly, They are Denunciations of Still more grievous and heavy, in Case the End and Design of these are not answered. God has over and over told his people that if when he brought upon them etc. for their Sins, they did not answer his purpose, He would visit them with Still greater plagues, and would increase them on till they Should be brought to utter Ruine and it will be but just and righteous — But O how fearful is this! How Shocking is the very Thought of it! And there is no Doubt to be made that God will be as good as His word, and Steddy in the Course of His dispensations. For He is most wise and powerfull and holy in all that He doth. What a Deplorable End then Shall we be brought to! If He Should for wise Ends of His Government of the world preserve the

¹⁰Jer. 2:5, “Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?”

Jer. 2:31, “O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?”

¹¹Jer. 2:3, “Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.”

¹²Psalms 44:3, “For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favor unto them.”

outward State, yet if the Spirit of God be withdrawn, and merely a Temporal prosperity enjoyed, the people being given up to walk in their own Counsels, This would be an inexpressibly heavy Judgment. For the flourishing of a Land is according as the Cause of God flourishes therein.

4. What Now then, in the Last Place, is called for from us; what is the loud Voice of the Rod of God upon us, but that we Sett ourselves with all Sincere Purpose of Heart to turn to the Lord Repenting unfeignedly of our Sins and reforming our whole Behaviour? Gods Eye is upon this, to see us truly and thoroughly Sensible etc. This is the present Errand of both the word and providence of God to this whole people. See the Text. [5]

Sermon ii.

The Judgment
of the Throat
Distemper

What we have now before us is, a little more distinctly, to consider the Voice of God the Judgment which is now upon us; And as the Cry of every Judgment or Punishment from God is against Sin, and we are to Sett ourselves to repenting and reforming from it, So we Shall best take that Method with them which will be most comprehensive, and which will let none escape.

1. Here then For our Repenting, we may in the First place hear the Rod, with respect to our Repenting it Self. For in this, no doubt, we have offended heretofore, and therefore had need look well to it.
1. As in the First place, if we have not hitherto been Sincere and Upright, we must now See that we rectifie this.

We may have been brought to much Sorrow for our Sins, but this may have been by our being brought into Some Extremitys and Dangers; and we have been frighted to See what wrath we are exposed to, and what amazing and intolerable punishments we are just ready to fall into. This has greatly alarmed us to see Hell beneath wide yawning to devour us: and to consider that those Torments are exquisite and eternal — this has roused and awakened us, and when we have considered that Sin was the Cause of all the Evils we either feel or fear, and that as certainly as we die impenitent we must be eternally dammed — it has made us resolve that we will repent immediately lest we Suddenly fall down into that Pit of Woe, that Lake of Misery, and anguish Eternal But when we are moved only by this and don't consider that our Sin is an infinite Injury done to the Glorious God, nor is our Affection to Sin broke, but we could gladly enjoy it, if it were not for the punishment and dreadful Torment that must follow it, our Repentance is not genuine. 'Tis time the Terrors of the Lord may perswade us to a true Repentance when they lead us to consider the Evil and vile Nature of Sin as well as the bitter Fruits and Effects of it: But we can't be upright in our Repentance till we have our Souls brought to loath it and to be sett against it for its intrinsic hatefulness, unreasonableness and unfitness. Sometimes indeed Several Temporal Considerations, Sufferings or Disadvantages may make men repent of their Evil ways but I do not Stay to insist on them. Frequently also persons have been so much urged and pressed to the Duty of Repenting by the Sermons they have read or heard that they have undertaken something

of it, Some perhaps for the Reputation of it, especially if they have been Scandalous — etc. Others, tis like, to get rid of this Importunity and to give Ease to their own Consciences which have filled them with trouble and Disquietment. And So then after this, as oft as they are called upon to repent, they judge they have obeyed already, whereas they never went into it from a right Motive, nor went any Thing Thorough with it until this Day.

2. Which leads me to a Second particular. The Voice of Gods Rod would have us See whether we have been Impartial and Universal, whether we have made a thorow work of it. I make no Scruple that many of us, from the Inducements forementioned (that is, by see[6]ing the Trouble and Disgrace to which Sin exposes us etc.), may have been brought to Resolve with ourselves that we would repent. We may have sett to it; we have wept for many of our sins, and indulged and promoted our Sorrow to a great Degree; we can confess it freely: we have come really to be ashamed for sin; and we can say we hate sin; that we have broke off from Sin; and we may have made many promises finally to reform from it and have done with it; and yet these Things may not come up to a true Repentance. The Reason is, Sin as Sin, all Sin without Exception may not be heartily and Intirely repented of. Both Saul and Judas confessed and were Sorry for what they had done: and Saul promised he would not hurt nor hunt David any more: but yet he never leaves off. Simon Magus left his Sorcery and professes to be a Christian, but yet his heart was not right.¹³ Some Sins are hated, and reformed because they are contrary to a beloved Sin. The Man that grows old in his Covetousness abhors the profuseness and Prodigality of Youth. Sometimes, there is So much the greater to do in protesting against and in putting away all other Sins to the utmost that the Darling Sin may be more secure. Sometimes Sins in General are confessed and lamented that they may keep from particulars, from a Thus and Thus have I done. But there are many that think they have done full enough and judge they are true penitents and Converts when they have not done near so much as this, when even this falls Short. For they over rate their Sensibleness, their mourning, and reforming when it has been really so Scanty, So unsteddy, and So partial, that they have Never properly repented to this Day. Now the Voice of the Lord which cryeth unto us would have us be So faithful as to examine into what our Repentance is; the Rod of God calls upon us for what is true, and intire.
3. Thirdly, We must see that it arises from an Evangelical Principle. What I mean by this is, that whereas the Law of God in thundering out its Curses against all the ungodly, fills us with terror and distress at the apprehension of the wrath of God. The Gospel displaying the Mercy of God to lost sinners and making its gracious offers through Christ, Should draw the Heart to an humble and thankful Hope of the Divine Favour notwithstanding our Guilt; and an hearty Acceptance of the Grace tendered upon the Terms thereof. Accordingly the Goodness and Love of God leads us into an ingenuous Repentance and driving away Despair we offer up our minds and Desires in like Language with the Saint in Ps: 130:3-4.¹⁴ Thus the people converted by St. Peters Sermon, pricked in their Hearts by the Consideration of their Guilt and Danger, rejoice to hear of the remission of Sins

¹³See Act. 8:9-24.

¹⁴Psalms 130:3-4, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But *there* is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

through Christ. Act. 2.37.38.¹⁵ Now we ought to look and See whether we have a right apprehension of Christ and a due Sense of the kindness and Love of God in Him, that by that we may be Suitably encouraged and constrained to loath our Sins, to grieve for our disingenuity therein, and to forsake them — [7]

4. Again, Fourthly, Our Repentance must be Steady, and enduring, not transient and temporary. Alas how unsteady we are prone to be! We have our Sudden Flushes; For being awakened by a Sermon or a Providence, our Danger affrights us; our Consciences flie in Our Faces, we are full of Shame and Trouble; We regret our Past Behavior and purpose a New Life: we rush into innumerable promises and engagements to break off from every sin, and to become universally holy; and we think we never can be too Sorrowful for our past sins or too watchful and Circumspect to prevent our falling into any for the Future. But as wrought on and Zealous as we now seem, yet this Temper doth not remain. Those Flashes vanish: Our serious mood is over after but a little while. Our Goodness is as the Morning Cloud and as the Early Dew, it goeth away.¹⁶ We turn back as a deceitful Bow,¹⁷ ungrateful to God and unfaithful to ourselves. But the Rod of God upon us convicts us of this inconstancy and proclaims the worthlessness of Such a Repentance and requires of us that if ever we would do any Thing to any purpose our Repentance must be more solid and permanent. God's people of old were Severely reprov'd for their unsteadiness in Ps. 78:34, 35, 36, 40. v. 56, 57. Hos. 5.15¹⁸ compared with Ch: 7.16.¹⁹ Having noted these Things concerning Repentance I will add but this one Thing more of it. Scil.

5. Fifthly, That the voice of God in and by His Rod calls for an immediate Repentance without any Delay. But by this is not meant that they must be immediate with only a Deceitful Pretence, but an unfeigned and thorow Repentance must [be] immediately both felt and manifested. For the hypocritical appearances of Repentance may have Served to quiet our Consciences or the Importunities of the messengers of God to consume away the Time and protract the Delay: but this is So far from appeasing that it the more enflames the Anger of God. The loud Cry of the voice of God therefore to us by So severe Judgments is that we presume to mock and insult the Divine Majesty no longer; not even upon our utmost peril. For now unless we repent, we perish. We have been often reprov'd and have hardened our Necks²⁰ and if we are at all continued to do so we have

¹⁵Act. 2:37-38, "Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

¹⁶Hos. 13:3, "Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff *that* is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney."

¹⁷Psalms 78:57, "But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow."

¹⁸Hos. 5:15, "I will go *and* return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early."

¹⁹Hos. 7:16, "They return, *but* not to the Most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this *shall* be their derision in the land of Egypt."

²⁰Prov. 29:1, "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

reason to expect sudden Destruction²¹ will come upon us, and without Remedy. There is no further room for dallying and lingering, nor for trifling with either God or our own souls. For whilst we loiter and put off and want to consider a little further — or get this or the other Article accomplished, we are at once Snatched away. This therefore is the earnest message of this Rod of God that if we will return, let us return. If we would ever Repent, let us do it. Now is an accepted Time etc.²² Therefore to Day etc. Otherwise He Swears in His Wrath²³ and we are Swept away as a Flood.

Thus I have shewn something of what our Repentance itself Should be. I would

2. Secondly, consider of the Sins which the voice of God in his Judgments calls us to repent of. In this it is my great Duty to be upright and impartial because of that Command of God to his ministers in Isa: 58.1. Cry aloud, Spare not.²⁴ We may not Shun to declare the Counsel of God and we have That Charge from God, If any one declare my word let him do it faithfully. For as it is writ[8]ten in the Prophet Jeramy, Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord Deceitfully. And as I mentioned before in the Discourse (See p. 3.) Some Number of Sins which are declared to be among us; So here let me urge to you that Those and whatsoever other Sins we are found Chargeable with We must unfeignedly, universally and immediately repent of. And allow me to be particular and distinct in setting before you the Sins we are now called and required by the word and providence of God to humble ourselves for and to put away from us. This I do with a View to move and stir up your Affections in this work.

Jer. 23:28²⁵
Ch: 48.10²⁶

We Should carry up our Penitent Thoughts to

1. First, Our Original Defection and Revolt against God and from thence consider that the whole world is thereby become Guilty before God and we ourselves are by Nature Children of wrath.²⁷ See also what has flowed from hence,
2. Secondly, Our Universal and total Depravity and Corruption
 - 1.) The Blindness of our Minds.
 - 2.) The stubbornness of our wills.
 - 3.) The Vanity and irregularity of our Associations being destitute of what they ought to be filled with and being filled up with what is unprofitable and hurtful
3. Thirdly, Our horrible Neglect of God and of our Souls and Care about Eternity

²¹1 Thess. 5:3, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

²²2 Cor. 6:2, "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation."

²³Heb. 3:11, "So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest."

²⁴Isaiah 58:1, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

²⁵Jer. 23:28, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What *is* the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD."

²⁶Jer. 48:10, "Cursed *be* he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed *be* he that keepeth back his sword from blood."

²⁷Eph. 2:3, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

4. Fourthly, Our Spiritual Sins.

- 1.) Our Pride, Self Sufficiency, towering Ambition and Conceitedness, attributing to ourselves all our Excellencies and honoring and glorifying ourselves.
- 2.) Envy and Discontent at the Endowments Prosperity and flourishing of others, grudging and repining at the Distributions of Divine providence.
- 3.) Unmortified Anger, forwardness, Contentiousness, Bitterness, irreconcilableness and uncharitableness.
- 4.) Inordinate Love of the World. Covetousness which is Idolatry – what a multitude of worshippers hath the God Mammon.
- 5.) A Sensual, Carnal Mind, running after and willing, Sunk into Sensual Gratifications.
- 6.) Spiritual Sloth, and Security.
- 7.) Murmuring under Divine Corrections
- 8.) A Spirit of unfaithfulness and Hypocrisie
 - (1.) To God whom we pretend to worship, and to whom we are bound in Sacred Covenant
 - (2.) to Man, being untrue and full of Dissimulations.

5. Fifthly, Our Gross, outward Sins.

- 1.) Disregard to the holy Name of God.
- 2.) — to the Holy Day of God.
- 3.) Intemperance in both Meats and Drinks.
- 4.) Time-wasting – Idleness —
- 5.) Impuritys — wantonness and Laseiness.
- 6.) Lying, Cheating, Deceiving, Dishonest Gains.
- 7.) Oppression and Violence.
- 8.) Want of Mercy and Kindness.
- 9.) Stubbornness, and ungovernableness, resisting Authority and impatience of Contradiction or Reproof.

In these all Orders, Ages and Sexes are chargeable. We may justly confess as Daniel the prophet Ch. 9.11,14.²⁸

//Again,

²⁸Daniel 9:11, “Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that *is* written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.”

Daniel 9:14, “Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us; for the LORD our God *is* righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.”