

A SERMON
OF
PUBLIC THANKSGIVING

BY
RICHARD DAYRELL, D.D.

LONDON
1759

A

J. Bowman.

S E R M O N

Preached before the

Honourable House of COMMONS,

At St. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER,

On *Thursday*, November 29, 1759.

Being the Day appointed for a

PUBLIC THANKSGIVING

FOR THE

Signal SUCCESSES of his MAJESTY'S ARMS, &c.

By RICHARD DAYRELL, D. D.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. WALTER, at HOMER'S HEAD,
CHARING-CROSS.

*not in Sabm or
Church.*

172. Dayrell.
Folio.

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Preached before the

Honorable House of Commons

At St. Margaret's, Westminster,

On Sunday, November 29, 1739

By the Rev. Dr. Richard Dayrell

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P S A L M XCV. 1, 2.

O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the Strength of our Salvation; Let us come before his Presence with Thanksgiving, let us shew ourselves glad in him with Psalms.

PR A I S E and Adoration are the most pleasing Incense that *Man* can offer; or the *Deity* will vouchsafe to receive. This is the End of the Creation;— This the general
Voice

Voice of Nature ;— This the Harmony and
Connexion of both Worlds. For,—if to Thee,
the Heavens and all the Powers therein con-
tinually do cry, all the Earth doth worship
Thee, the Father Everlasting. All thy Works
animate or inanimate bless Thee, and praise
Thee, and magnify Thee for ever. The
Birds of the Air have no other Song, the
Beasts of the Field no other Voice than to
proclaim *Thy* Praise. The mute Inhabitants
of the Waters silently breath forth *Thy* Praise,
and even the dull Clod, and tender Herb seem
to implore the Tongue of Man ——— of Man,
——to whom Language, that great, and dis-
tinguishing Prerogative was given by his all-
wise Creator to glorify Him ; and to tell of all
his wondrous Works. But,—if those amazing
Themes of Creation and continual Preservation
are inexhaustible——how shall *He* be able
with all the Powers and Faculties of his Soul

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in any Degree to acknowledge extraordinary undeserved Favours, and unexpected Deliverances ! yet---small as the Tribute is, Gratitude will be an Oblation which God will not disdain to accept.

Grateful then---for ever grateful let us be for the crouded Succession of Victories which *this* Day's Solemnity calls upon us to commemorate; but in what Language can we with greater Propriety express ourselves than in that of the inspired Writers. These were *Victories*, which none but the Lord of Hosts could give; for, "*One chased a Thousand, and Two put Ten Thousand to flight.*"

"*How beautiful have been the Feet of them who have brought good Tidings !*" And from what Quarter of the Globe have not good Tidings arrived? Our Messengers, like those of *Job,*

Job, but far different their Tale, have closely succeeded each other; and while *One* was yet speaking, and relating the glorious Field of *Minden*;---another comes,---and the Capital and strong Holds of *America* are fallen into our Hands. *This is the Lord's Doing, and it is marvellous in our Sight.*

Never can Providence be seen more conspicuously; never can Man appear more weak than in Times of Dangers, Difficulties, and Distresses;---and---can there be Times more dangerous, more difficult, and distressful, than when Nation riseth up against Nation---when Laws divine and human lose their just Authority---when Property has no Security,---when the sacred Ties of Religion are violated,---and when Life itself has no Protection.

To deprive Us of our most undoubted Right, to introduce a most arbitrary Government,

ment, and to establish a most idolatrous Religion; and to give us Chains for the Liberty we now enjoy, has been the Plan of our Enemy, and if human Skill or Power could have effected it—*those who now contend with us had long since been Lords over us.* For, People of different Laws, Religion, Customs, and even from the remotest Distance, have by them been brought and cemented together, with the same Labour and Difficulty as Bodies are compounded of heterogeneous Particles, to cooperate and act with them. But,

How doth Disappointment sharpen—and Disgrace give Edge to Revenge and Resentment? What Preparations are they now making to set the Battle again in Array in all its Horrors?

Secure of Conquest, and relying on the
B Arm

Arm of Flesh, in Imagination they had long ago swallowed us up. But it hath pleased the Almighty to raise up a *King* over us to whom He hath given a wife and an understanding Spirit—We are blest in *Counsellors* in whom there is Safety, and in *Commanders*, to whom He hath imparted the Spirit of Courage and Conduct. Such happy Instruments, under the benign Influence of Heaven, have already defeated, and will continue to defeat all their ambitious Views; and God will still be propitious to us, *if in all our Ways we acknowledge him.* And,

That we should acknowledge Him, He hath very deeply imprinted in the human Mind several of his Excellencies and Perfections, and hath bestowed on Man several Affections which answer to them; Thus,

Fear

Fear and Love naturally arise from a devout Contemplation of *that Power*, which alone is able to kill, or to save alive ;

Hope and Faith will look up to *that Wisdom*, which ordereth all Causes and all Events ;

Trust and Confidence cannot but rely on *that Goodness*, which is always displaying itself over the Works of the Creation.

What then but the most careless Inattention, the most supine Negligence, or an absolute Unbelief, can hinder us from the continual Exercise of some or other of these Duties ? If we reflect on our Existence, we shall find that we were made and endued with Intelligence by our All-beneficent Creator, that He might communicate his Goodness to us in proportion to what our Nature is capable of receiving.

Nor is there a single Moment in our Lives which brings not Grace, or Favour, or Protection with it.

Hence Man becomes the particular Care of *Providence*, and on that Foundation rises his Subjection to, and Dependence on his Maker.

Take away this Support—remove this Connexion, and what is *Man*? If he examines, he must soon know himself to be the most deplorable Being in the Creation; continually exposed to Wants, which he cannot relieve, and hourly liable to Miseries which he can neither foresee or prevent; ever most weak, when he presumes he is strong; ever farthest from the Execution of his proposed Design, when left to his own Guidance and Conduct. Can a Being of such a Nature that is *not able*

to add one Cubit to his Stature ;—surpass by the Beasts in Strength and Activity---and in all his Pride and Glory excelled by the Lilly of the Field ;

Can such a Being find out, or carry on thro' a various and intricate Series of Causes, proper and fit Means for the Attainment of any one the least distant End ?

If such be his State—where must he find Resource ? *In all his Ways let him but acknowledge God, and he shall direct his Paths.*

Various are the Paths of Life, and the Intricacies and Labyrinths of them far too many and too perplexing for human Conduct or Wisdom. Not only therefore in the general Plan, not only in the great Outlines, but in every less and minuter Parts of Conduct, in
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our private Intercourse with each other, in all our Pursuits and Engagements, in all our Designs and Interests, *God* should never be forgotten. All our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, should constantly be directed to our Maker, Preserver and Benefactor; therefore ought all our Measures to be such as we are sure that *God* will approve, and then all our pious Endeavours will be crowned with Success; for which our Homage and Adoration will be constantly due.

And Societies as well as Individuals are equally Children of one great Family, and consequently claim one common Father. The Origin and Establishment, the Continuation and Preservation of States and Empires;—their Revolutions and Declensions,—their Fall and Destruction, are most stupendous Marks of the divine *Power, Wisdom and Goodness*. And
that

that we might not be ignorant of the Causes which brought Prosperity or Misfortunes to past Ages and Nations, *Sacred History*, that faithful Clue, will guide and conduct us to Examples of People who have long left the Theatre of this World, but whose Actions still live on Record for *our* Instruction. In the Conduct and Administration of those ancient Governments, the Hand of Providence, in various Periods of Time, has one while been darkly traced out---at another more clearly discern'd;---but in that of the *Jews*---it continually shone out in meridian Lustre. For this Oeconomy not only had its Being from the divine Lawgiver himself; but was promulgated to the Children of *Israel* with all the Awe and Splendour of heavenly Majesty; and God vouchsafed his Presence in the Top of the Mount while his Servant *Moses* was delivering the Law to his People at the Foot of it. What a
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distinguishing Mark was this of the Favour and Goodness of God? How gracious the Terms which were offerd, *If ye will obey my Voice indeed, and keep my Covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar Treasure to Me above all People; for all the Earth is mine.* And the more effectually to secure them in their Allegiance and Duty; and to guard them from *Idolatry*, the fatal Source of all Wickedness; the Being of one true God was laid down as the first Object for their Faith—and the Foundation, and Cornerstone of their Religion, Laws, and Government. And that this governing Principle might be always kept alive in their Minds, God frequently revealed Himself to them in Oracles and Appearances, yet—no Means were sufficient to restrain this rebellious People; and Laws, like the Cords on the Hands of *Samson*, had not Strength enough to bind them. For such was their Perverseness, that
almost

almost the first Crime they committed after receiving the Law, was *that* which was most particularly forbidden by it. Murmurings, Rebellions, and even Infidelity itself, were the Consequences of their idolatrous Worship of the *Golden Calf*. But to reclaim them, and (if possible) to draw them back from their Errors and Vices, God was pleased to raise up Prophets among them, who used the greatest Freedom in admonishing, in threatening, and upbraiding them for their Ingratitude; but when these Means had no Efficacy, when these Arts could not avail—Tyrants were stirred up, those Scourges of the Almighty, who brought War and Devastation into their Country, who treated them with the utmost Rigor and Barbarity, who loaded them with Chains and made a Mockery of their Miseries and Calamities. Even *then*, if in their Distress they cried unto the Lord, He was ever near, ever

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ready

ready to relieve and deliver them out of all their Troubles. But whenever they lived, and continued in the Ways of Virtue, Piety and Obedience, the certain Consequence was some signal Distinction of the divine Favour and Protection. If at War, they were successful and triumphant; if in Peace, the Blessings of Plenty, Union and Harmony attended them, and the choicest Gifts of Heaven were poured down upon them. But too often when *Jeshurun waxed fat, then he forsook the God that made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation.* At length the Repetitions of their Wickednesses were so frequent, their Provocations so insulting, that God in his highest Displeasure cast them off; and as the worst of Punishments, and the heaviest of Judgments, He finally gave them up to follow their own Wills and Inclinations; inevitable Ruin was soon the Consequence: and their own unparalleled

paralleled Destruction came from, and was brought about by themselves.

How long did Mercy plead in behalf of this obstinate and sinful People, how unwilling is God described by the Prophets to give them up to Justice! But had he not finally been avenged of such a Nation, had not their Punishments been as extraordinary as their Crimes, his Wisdom, or Power, would have been impeached, which do now, and for ever will stand manifest, clear, and wonderful to all future Generations. The History of the *Jews*, is in Fact one continued History of the Mercy and Goodness, the Wisdom and Power of God, and happy for them would it have been, had these divine Attributes brought forth in them the pleasing and grateful Fruits of Love and Fear, of Hope and Faith, of Obedience and Dependence; but alas! a

Jewish Breast was far too rugged a Soil for the tender Plant of Gratitude to thrive in, and in whatever Breast that Virtue does not thrive, every rank Vice will deeply strike its Root, and spread its baneful Influence. How injurious the Effects of it to human Society! how deeply do *we* poor Mortals feel when we have bestowed a Favour or a Kindness, and find it unreturned, unthanked for, or forgotten! how severe the Stroke of Neglect and Contempt, where Thanks and Acknowledgments should be paid! If such be *our* Sensations in the little Intercourses and Concerns which *we* have with each other; and where too we are all upon a Level, how must the Almighty feel (who can only be said to feel on our Accounts) from the daily Provocations of Ingratitude, which he receives from his Creature Man. And such are the Returns for the constant and highest Obligations which
he

he is daily loading him with—Shall Favours be despised then, because they are common? why don't we refuse to breath the common Air, or take our daily Food, for they are the constant Gifts of one great and all-gracious Benefactor. For want of due Reflection on God and himself, Man neglects his Duty and forgets his Dependence and Situation in the Scale of Beings. Were he but often accustomed to meditate (too often he cannot) on the immense Distance between himself and his Creator, he would learn *to walk humbly with his God*; but though a *Worm be his Sister*—yet would he find himself allied to Angels, and connected with the Deity—conscious then of the Dignity of his Nature, he would never hesitate to offer up his Homage and Worship to the Author of it. But should an unguarded Moment drive this Reflection from his Mind—as soon as he cast his Eyes on the Works
of

of Nature, the pleasing Ideas of Gratitude would return.—And were he to contemplate th adorable Plan of Revelation, Hymns of Praise and Adoration would incessantly, and almost involuntarily burst from him; and even in his most private Transactions, he could not be insensible with the least Glance of Thought, that God presides over human Affairs; whenever Difficulties arise in the Conduct and Management of any Business, after various Efforts and repeated Trials, human Wit and Invention are overpowered, the Pursuit is dropt, and Despair is coming on; *then* a lucky Circumstance, (as 'tis called) arises in the Mind, the Knot is untied, and Things go smoothly on, and are conducted to their destined End. But who gave this unexpected Turn of Thought, who suggested this silent Hint? even that Being alone who framed, and knows every Spring, and Motion of the Heart. And not only the
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Virtues, but even the Vices of Men contribute to work his Pleasure. The Love of Conquest, and Thirst of Power, were Motives in the Breast of *Cyrus* for making War, and extending his Dominions, but these Passions were calculated for the Accomplishment of a Plan he never thought of, and as designed, became the Means, by which the enslaved People of God procured their Liberty, obtained Privileges, and re-established their long neglected Government, and publick Worship. Thus was it the Voice of God, as well as of Ambition, which drew *Cyrus* into the Field, and made him Conqueror of the World; and thus, *a Man's Heart may devise his Way, but the Lord directeth his Steps.* But,

Though God over-rules, yet he does not arbitrarily controul the Powers of Man; and human Conduct is so far from being excluded from

from the Transaction of human Affairs, that he is endued with Abilities and Faculties on Purpose for the Government, and Management of them. And the right Application and Exertion, or the Neglect and Abuse of these Talents, will always decide the Fate of Nations; for by the Wills and Actions of the Inhabitants Kingdoms flourish, and are established; or decay, and are overthrown.

The same Covenant therefore which God originally made with the *Jews*, has always been, and is now in full Force with every Kingdom under Heaven. By hearkening to, and obeying the Voice of God, a People may become a *Treasure* to Him; or by refusing to hear, or attend to the divine Commands, they will be liable to his heaviest Displeasure.

An unreserved Obedience to the Laws of God is the surest Means of procuring his Favour,

vour, and, how amiable must a Society be, whose fundamental Principle of Action is sinless Obedience. A Situation more to be wished for, than expected in our State of Infirmary and Imperfection. Yet, we may be assured that all the divine Laws are designed for, and conducive to our Happiness; and whenever we go astray from the Observation of them, every devious Step we take carries us so far into the gloomy Paths of Misery and Wretchedness. Divine Mercy will overlook Sins of Frailty, but how can wilful Transgressions be atoned for? —Even against *these* the Gates of Heaven are not so barred, but that Repentance and Reformation will gain Admittance. Amendment of Life and Manners is one constant Sacrifice—one continual Thanksgiving; and the Glory of a Nation is the Practice of Virtue; but the Continuance in Sin is a Disgrace and Reproach to any People. Though we cannot lite-

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rally be guilty of the Idolatry practised by the *Jews*, yet what do we less than sacrifice to the *Golden Calf*, when we put our Trust and Confidence in any Thing but God himself? When we rely and depend upon our own Wit or Wisdom, when we think that we compass our Designs by our own Resolution and Power, when we impute Success to our own Skill and Management, do we not *sacrifice to our own Net*? do we not vaunt with the *Assyrian King*, *That we have done it by our Strength and Wisdom, for we are prudent*? So far were the Heathens themselves from leaning on the bruised and weak Reeds of human Support, that we always find them at their Altars, imploring the divine Assistance before any Enterprize, supplicating Mercy and Forgiveness at the Miscarriage of it; or in Acts of Praise and Adoration, when successful; always imputing to their own Sins and Wickedness the ill Events of Things; always attribut-

ing,

ting, with the humblest Acknowledgments, the prosperous Issue of them to their Gods.

And how ready was the Royal Psalmist to return Thanks, for the daily Providence and Protection of his God; but when any peculiar Mercies were vouchsafed to him, what Raptures of Adoration, Praise, and Confidence do we hear? *I will love Thee, O Lord, my Strength; the Lord is my Rock, my Fortrefs, and my Deliverer, my God, my Strength, in Him will I trust.* He knew the Power and Efficacy of Praise; he found by Experience, that with such Sacrifices God was well pleased. But not content to give Glory unto God in his more private Meditations and Devotions, his grateful Heart pants to spread forth his Creator's Praise; and with the most pathetick and warm Exhortations, he invites all Mankind to join in this most amiable

Duty: Oh that Men would praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the Wonders which he doth for the Children of Men!

Shall not *we* now accept of this Invitation of *David*, shall *we* not follow his Example in the Closet, and in the Temple? Every Person's particular Conduct must direct him in the former,—but let the latter be the Subject of this Day's Commemoration.

If it is at all Times, and in all Places, our most bounden Duty to return Thanks, can Time or Place be better adapted to this sacred Purpose? When new, and remarkable Blessings have been granted to us, then the wonderful Operations of Providence are strongest on our Minds; then warmed with Gratitude, are we better disposed to all the Acts of Worship and Thanksgiving. But much should I take from that

that pious Warmth were I to enter on the History of our late happy and rapid Successes; it is therefore more peculiarly *my* Duty to endeavour to avail myself of this present happy Disposition.

Oh come then, let us this Day sing unto the Lord; let us heartily rejoice in the Strength of our Salvation; Let us come before His Presence with Thanksgiving; let us shew ourselves glad in Him with Psalms.

All Adoration is due to the Almighty for giving us the Subject of this Day's Solemnity. We may keep it with Joy—but let our Joy be decent; let it be a *Christian*, not a *Roman* Triumph. Insolence ill becomes us at any Time, and much less so, when the Sword is not sheathed; nor the Fate of War decided. Too often the Remembrance of Mercies dies
with

with the Day appointed for the Observation of them. But ours sure have been too signal, and too great to deserve so short-lived a Fate. Vanishing and unavailing — contemptuous and affronting to the Deity must that Gratitude be which reaches not the Heart. With one Heart then, and one Mind (if we wish for the Continuance of divine Favours and Mercies) let us fly to, and take Security in Religion, which is of more Force than the closest Phalanx, or the strongest Bulwark. Religion is the Mother of true Courage, and the surest Leader to all Success. Clad in *her* celestial Armour, *having on the Breast-plate of Righteousness; and the Helmet of Salvation; taking the Shield of Faith, and the Sword of the Spirit;* we shall be in all Parts invulnerable. And to the Religion of Christians, let us add the Resolution of Men; and *while the Praises of God are in our Mouths, let a two-edged Sword be in our*
Hands.

Hands. What Success may we not expect, what Invasions need we fear, if the same Unanimity and Loyalty, which are paid to our King and Country, be joined also in the Exercise of Religion and Worship to our God. Praises and Thanksgivings will be the most powerful Intercessions^{or} at the Throne of Grace for Blessings on any People; *these* the only Refuge in Times of Danger; *these* the only Means of Security in Times of Peace and Tranquility. And while we are returning Thanks for past Mercies, in humble Trust and Confidence let us hope for more; among which let us principally implore God, that He would be pleased to take our most gracious Sovereign and his faithful Ally into his Protection against all the Assaults of their Enemies, and that He would keep them safe under the Shadow of his Wings, until this Tyranny be over-past. And among our many late Blessings, let it never be forgot
how

how our Fields did stand so thick with Corn, *that they laughed and sung*: But how would their Joy have been turned into mourning—how would the fruitful Fields have languished, had they been reaped by hostile Hands! But our Garners are now full, affording all Manner of Stores; how providential this extraordinary Abundance! *That* God, who foresaw our future Necessities, gave, before we could either ask or know what we should want, such Provisions as War required, but has not exhausted. And whenever it shall please God to give us the Blessings of Peace, may he grant us to enjoy that Plenty which his Bounty hath so liberally bestowed upon us; and may he continue that Union and Harmony now flourishing among us, to his Honour and Glory, to his Adoration and Worship, now and for evermore.

F I N I S.

