

561
The Reasonableness, Pleasure, and Benefit of
NATIONAL THANKSGIVING.

A
SERMON

Preached *Nov. 29, 1759,*

At IPSWICH,

In the County of SUFFOLK,

By THOMAS SCOTT.

IPSWICH: Printed by W. CRAIGHTON.

Sold by T. Longman, in Pater-noster Row, London; J. Shave in Ipswich, Messrs. Thurlbourn and Woodyer in Cambridge, M. Steele in Bury, J. Glead in Norwich, W. Eaton in Yarmouth, J. and T. Kendall and W. Keymer in Colchester.

Psalm CVIII, 13.

*Through God we shall do valiantly : for He it is
that shall tread down our Enemies.*

THE Scripture is ever inculcating the Existence and Perfections of God manifested in the formation and government of the world. To establish our minds in the belief, and impress our hearts with the power of that noble Principle, a Divine Providence, the sacred Writings are perpetually introducing God in the scenes of Nature and the affairs of Men. He is represented as the great Supreme Agent, who conducts the common and extraordinary motions of the inanimate world, controuls the counsels and actions of mankind, and disposes all Effects and Events so as thereby to accomplish the wise and good designs of his own Moral Administration. The regular succession of day and night, and the changing seasons of the year, are *the Ordinances of Heaven and Earth which God hath appointed.* When it thunders, the Scripture calls us to *hear attentively the noise of his voice and the sound that goeth out of his mouth : He directeth it under the whole Heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the Earth. After it a voice roareth : He thundereth with the voice of his excellency.* Does it rain ? it is God which doeth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number :

A

Who

Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields. An Earthquake is in Scripture language the immediate operation of God, Who removeth the mountains, and they know not: Who overturneth them in his anger: Who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. If we proceed to the Affairs of Men, the Scripture, we find, is equally careful in declaring God to be the Great Superintendent and Manager of them. Do Empires grow up and perish? it is He that buildeth and planteth, that pulleth down and destroyeth. Do Nations rise and disappear, flourish and decay? He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them, He enlargeth the nations, and straitneth them again. Are publick Counsels divided, fluctuating, distracted? He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the Earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. Is the Administration of a Kingdom prudently conducted? the Lord is thereby exalted, he hath filled it with judgement: and, in consequence of his favour, wisdom and knowledge are the stability of these times, and strength of salvation. Is a Nation unprosperous in War? It is He who leadeth their counsellours away spoiled, and maketh the rulers fools: who poureth contempt upon Princes, and weakeneth the strength of the Mighty. Do They, on the contrary, prevail in battle? through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our Enemies. Thus Revelation, you see, is constantly calling our attention from Natural causes, instruments, and means, to the First cause, thereby teaching us to give unto the Lord the glory that is due.

So that the great Principle of Piety inculcated by the whole strain of Scripture, and by our Text in particular, is, that all National Prosperity, especially prosperity in war, is owing to the Blessing of Divine Providence : to which, therefore, it ought to be ascribed with most sincere, fervent, and solemn Thanksgiving. In treating this subject I shall shew,

In the FIRST place, that to honour God in this manner is a most reasonable duty, and, therefore, to every reasonable and well-disposed mind, a most delightful Employment.

For to ascribe our National Successes to God is ascribing them to their true Original Cause. Men cannot justly claim any honour from such events than what belongs to moral Instruments and Means, the honour of having faithfully employed the great talents intrusted to them for the benefit of mankind. The Wisdom of the Politician, and the prudent Conduct of the General, are the gifts of God. He, who is the fountain of light and wisdom, bestows the capacity and foresight, which form an admirable Oeconomy of Government, or settles an excellent plan of military operations. The Authors of such salutary measures are endow'd with their noble talents by Him. His Providence raises up persons of eminent abilities and public spirit in a Critical Season, whenever he is pleased to do some great thing for any People. The happy execution of well-concerted designs is owing to his over-ruling Influence. The health of the Seamen and Soldiers, the accidents of weather and opportunity,

tunity, together with the many little circumstances on which Victory so often depends, are not within the command of Men, but are entirely at the disposal of God. It would, therefore, be as absurd to impute Successes of this kind to Human Agents, or to Chance, as it would be to impute an excellent piece of workmanship to Casualty, or to the Utensil which the Workman uses in making it. But to ascribe our Success in War solely or chiefly to Second Causes, is not only absurd: It is also impious. It is defrauding God of his Right. It is snatching the government of the world out of his hands. It is laying the ax to the root of Piety, and levelling with one blow National Religion and Virtue.

Further, to consider and own our Successes as flowing from the Mercy and Benediction of God, is not more reasonable than it is delightful. It heightens greatly their value and our enjoyment. The happy consequences of a Series of Triumphs are not obstructed, nor is the security and glory of a People diminished, by just and pious acknowledgment of our being indebted to God for them. They receive, moreover, great addition of worth, and are relished with a much more sublime and exquisite pleasure. For, in this view, they are enjoyed as indications of the Divine Care of us. A man of a publick spirit, but withal destitute of Piety, rejoices in these favourable Events to his Country: and the more extensive his prospect is of the honour and benefit resulting from them, the livelier will be his joy. A Good Man has equal love to his nation, equal sensibility to
the

the glory and advantage from a course of Victories over the Enemies of his Country: But Devotion gives to him a vast superiority of Enjoyment. Gratitude to the Governour of the World pours into his heart additional joys; and swells his Triumph with divine pleasure, infinitely beyond the Exultation of a man who is void of this enlarging and celestial principle. Devotion is the noblest and most delightful exercise of a reasonable Being. A habit of Devotion is the richest ornament and glory of the human mind. Thanksgiving is the most animating part of Devotion. It opens, warms, and invigorates the soul by great and affecting conceptions of the glorious Attributes of the Supreme Being, exerted for the Good of his reasonable Creatures: and the more extensive his Benefits are, and the wider their influence is to make multitudes, entire Communities and Kingdoms happy, the more elevated are a devout man's views of the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, from whence these comprehensive blessings flow. Neither is this part of Devotion less honourable to God than delightful to ourselves. *Offer unto God Thanksgiving* is a precept, which intimates the Supreme Being to be particularly pleased with this oblation. He delights to behold his Reasonable Creatures rejoicing in the effects of his Goodness, and rejoicing in Him as the Author of their Blessings, and the God of their Salvation. It is surely a Sight peculiarly grateful to Him, to view a whole Nation kneeling before him, and adoring Him as the Fountain of their felicity, glorying in Him for the success
of

of their expeditions, and ascribing to Him the honour of their Victories. When this sacrifice of praise is presented by so many thousands, with one heart and one mind, it is an Act of Worship noble in itself, worthy of his acceptance, and tending to very happy Effects on the manners of a People. This leads me to observe,

SECONDLY, A truly thankful sense of our obligation to Providence for our national Successes, has a powerful tendency to make us a religious and virtuous People.

Pure, rational, and fervent Devotion, seasons the heart with every principle of solid and substantial Goodness. There is a close and inseparable connexion between a reverent Sense of the Supreme Being and a Solicitude to please Him. In particular, affecting views of his Benevolence, and lively sensibility to his Benefits, soften the mind in relenting reflections on our unworthy behaviour to him, and by the sweetest and strongest of all motives, Gratitude, stimulates us to render ourselves acceptable to Him in our future temper and deportment.

National Thanksgiving to God, is a means of diffusing a Spirit of Devotion through a whole Nation. And if once a People grow devout, rationally devout, they will soon be reclaimed from their follies, impieties, and vices. Every Individual, who feels his heart truly affected by the Goodness of God to his Nation, and clearly perceives his own security and comfort included in the general Prosperity,

rity,

city, will contribute his portion of Gratitude, thinking himself bound by the strongest ties to honour God by Obedience to his laws. Thanksgiving which ends in empty praise, is not Devotion. That which is real, that which flows from worthy sentiments of the Supreme Being, cannot terminate in the homage of the lips. It penetrates the soul, it fixes there a principle of Religion which will exert itself in great and extensive effects. It meliorates the heart, and prompts and determines us to all the works of righteousness.

Another Effect of Devout Gratitude to God, will be Gratitude to Men, whom He employs as the ministers of his Providence in doing us Good. If we truly honour Him as the Origin of our blessings, we shall not fail to behave becomingly to Those who have been subservient to Him in accomplishing the security and exalting the glory of his favoured people. A Contrary behaviour is the fruit of irreligion, as the Author of the History of the Judges has wisely remarked: *the Children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: neither shewed they kindness to the House of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.* It is a crime of the highest nature to be unthankful to God. It is also exceeding culpable to be ingrateful to our human Benefactors. Our wise and watchful Governours who plan the schemes of Defence and Triumph, our Generals and Admirals also, together with their Subaltern Agents, who expose their lives in
the

the execution of those schemes, have a just claim to their respective shares in our Esteem, Affection, and Praise.

Such then is the manifest tendency of National Thanksgiving to God to produce a spirit of piety, reformation from wickedness, and the prevalence of social Order and Virtue among a people. These Effects are infinitely more valuable than the temporal blessings conveyed and secured by the greatest successes. Victory over our Vices is incomparably more noble and beneficial than all the Trophies we gain from our enemies. When National Honours and Triumphs produce this fruit, when they are the means of awakening Piety, suppressing Immorality, and promoting a vigorous practice of all the social Virtues, then is our Cause of rejoicing increased beyond Expression, and a firm Foundation is laid of Confidence in God. For;

THIRDLY, to consider our successes as Effects of his blessing, and to offer to him sincere Thanksgiving on that account, is the way to raise our hope and fix our trust in his Providence for compleat Salvation.

Through God we shall do valiantly : For He it is that shall tread down our enemies. These are concise expressions and full of weighty meaning. They give unto God the Glory of Victories already gained, and express a Hope, yea more than a Hope, a Confidence in his future Benediction; and, through that Benediction, an Assurance of continued and accomplish'd triumph.

.. If we acknowledge the advantages we have hitherto obtained in war to be owing to His assistance, we cannot refuse to own that without the continuation of the same assistance Our Prosperity cannot be abiding. We have no reason, indeed, to fear that the courage of our Officers and Soldiers, our Admirals and Seamen, will forsake them. Yet, without the blessing of God, that wisdom and unanimity in our Counsels which has hitherto so well directed the Operations of valour, and laid out with so much judgement the Objects of our military attempts, may be destroyed by future divisions, or rendered ineffectual by numberless contingencies. So that in another Campaign things may turn against us, notwithstanding present appearances are so promising. Wherefore the favour of God alone can secure a happy issue to our affairs, and bring us with honour out of this long and dangerous war. But unfeigned thankfulness for the Mercy he hath already shewn us, and sincere Thanksgiving to Him on that account, is one means to engage the permanence of his favour. If withal our Thanksgivings are perfected in real reformation and obedience to his laws, we shall be certain of the future Operations of his Providence on our Side. *For righteousness exalteth a nation. Blessed is the People whose God is the Lord.*

On this firm foundation of Confidence in God, our souls will stand as on a high and strong Eminence, from whence we may take a large extent of glorious prospect. We widen

the horizon of our joy. We look round about us and see a great way forward. We contemplate our present successes as pledges of the Divine Affection and persevering Benediction. We justly consider the immediate honour and security resulting from our victories, as big with blessings to the Generations to come, and may triumph in well established hope that we shall transmit our religion, our laws, our liberties, our trade, our national glory, to our latest Posterity. *Through God we shall do valiantly: For He it is that shall tread down our Enemies.*

Now then, in order to impress our minds with such sense of our obligations to God as will effectually move us to becoming returns of Gratitude and Obedience;

Let us compare our present situation, in consequence of his Blessing, with That we were so lately in. This important and perilous war opened, in the year seventeen hundred and fifty-five, with the ill-conducted and unfortunate March of General *Braddock* against *Fort du Quesne*, erected by the *French* in the territory of *Virginia*, near the junction of the River *Monongahela* with the great and noble river *Ohio*. The disgrace of his defeat was somewhat qualified by Colonel *Monckton's* reduction of *Nova-Scotia*, and by Sir *William Johnson's* victory over the *French* army near *Lake George*. Which Victory, however, or rather Repulse of an attack, was the only fruit of the Expedition under that Commander against *Crown-Point*, a fortress built by the *French* on the lands belonging to the Province of *New-York*. The fol-

following year, fifty-six, will do no Honour to the *British* annals. Our Panic from the apprehension of a threatened Invasion, the scandalous behaviour of a *British* Admiral in the *Mediterranean* sea, and the Loss of the Island of *Minorca*, are still remembered with a blush, and will be read and talked of by our Childrens Children with astonishment and shame. The Divisions and Distractions which embroiled our Counsels quickly after, and the mysterious influence which defeated the formidable design against *Rocheport*, compleated our dishonour, heightened our danger, and brought us to the verge of destruction. We became a *By-word* of the Nations, and an hissing and a reproach among all Countries. Confusion covered us, Trembling took hold on us, and Despair sat in every Countenance. But on a sudden the scene began to change. Our God, who seemed to have cast us off, interposed in the article of extreme Distress. He raised up the Men whom He had chosen, whom he made the honoured Instruments of restoring and establishing Harmony in our Counsels, and of awakening and diffusing a Martial Spirit in our Fleets and Armies. From that time the *British* Sun emerged out of his Eclipse, and shone with his ancient Strength and Glory. From that auspicious Æra we have gone from strength to strength. The *British* Arms triumph in every Quarter of the World. *Europe, Asia, Africa, America* behold with wonder our victorious Colours. Our Enemies flee before us in every climate. Their wealthy Islands, their Forts, their strong City,

have submitted to our conquering power. All their vast and towering schemes of ambition are vanished as a vision of the night. Nothing is left them but Rage, Despair, and Empty Threats.

But this Subject is too interesting to be treated in such a cursory and general way. It deserves, it demands, the most distinct and particular view. Let us then observe,

That some of our most important Victories were gained by a very great inferiority of Numbers on our part, or against prodigious Advantages on the side of the Enemy in point of situation and the many and great difficulties and dangers which our Forces had to encounter: Dangers and Difficulties so many and great as to cut off almost all rational hope of overcoming them. The Victory in the plains of *Minden* is an instance of the former of these cases; the no less glorious Conquest of *Quebec* is an example of the latter.

In the next place, it merits particular attention, that our Successes have followed one another in a Chain, without the Intervention of any thing worthy to be called a Disappointment, to damp our joy and deduct from the value of our Acquisitions. This is the more remarkable on account of the vast and uncommon Extent of the War, and the great Variety of plans to be put in execution, over such a length of Seas, and in such widely-distant Regions.

The Space of Time, likewise, in which all these great things have come unto us, is worthy

thy of regard. The major part of them have been crowded into the narrow compass of a single Year. No single Year in our history was filled with such a number of Events so illustrious and beneficial to our nation.

In the last place, the Effects of our Victories do most of all challenge our Consideration. These Effects are, the Mischiefs prevented, the Loss to the Enemy, and the Gain to Ourselves. The Mischiefs prevented are many and terrible. The Overthrow of the numerous army of *France* by the renowned *Ferdinand*, saved Our King's Electoral Dominions from being turned into a Wilderness, and made a scene of famine and destruction. The Loss of our *American* settlements, the ruin of our trade, the filling of these Kingdoms with blood and rapine, the overthrow of the Protestant succession, and, therewith, of our civil and religious liberties, are the Evils which We have escaped. On the other hand, the Damage our Enemy has sustained is immense. By the havoc we have made of their ships of war, their Naval Strength is in a manner utterly broken. Their Trade is entirely stagnated. Its sources are stopped. Their principal supplies of Wealth are transferred into our hands. Several of their most valuable Settlements are snatched from them. Almost all their vast Dominions in *North America* have been compelled to obey the Scepter of *Great Britain*. But the gain to Us is greater than the Enemy's loss. We have not only acquired a mighty enlargement
of

of Dominion, and accession of Glory and Power, but also a very great extension of our Trade, and, which is of principal consideration, we are in possession of Securities, which, if we keep them, will obtain for us a most honourable Peace; a Peace, which will establish the enjoyment of our Religion, our Government, our Liberty, our Property, on a Basis that will endure for many generations.

Over and above all these Great and Good things, our favoured Kingdoms have not only been hitherto preserved in Tranquillity, amidst the miseries and horrors of war which have spread over many Countries: but God has likewise crowned this ever-memorable Year with a most wonderful Harvest, which for the abundance of Grain of all kinds, the excellent condition of every kind, and the uncommonly favourable Season for gathering it in, can scarce be parallel'd by another in the memory of the oldest person living.

Wherefore, let us offer unto God Thanksgiving. Let us with most fervent Gratitude ascribe our Salvation and our Triumphs to the powerful and gracious energy of his Providence. Let us, moreover, cheerfully trust that He will never leave us nor forsake us, until he hath made our Enemies our footstool. But then, to secure the Continuation of his favour, we must approve ourselves worthy of it. Let us honour him by reverent Observance of his Appointments; and by willing and vigorous Obedience to his moral Laws. So doing, we may assure ourselves of a glorious Period
to

to this war, and of transmitting to our latest Posterity the glory and advantages we have gained by it. For such blessed Conclusion of things let us earnestly pray. Far from delighting in War, and indulging a vain ambition to increase our greatness, let us beseech Almighty God to dispose our Enemies to the desire of Peace, and that he would be pleased to put an End to the miseries of mankind, by reconciling the Princes and Nations in lasting bonds of harmony and love.

H Y M N.

S I N G to the Lord, exalt his Name,
 The mighty God of War:
 Who guards our fertile fields, who brings
 Our trophies from a-far.

Our conquering Bands, with glorious toil,
 Have all the seasons try'd
 In frozen wilds and burning sands,
 Thy Providence their Guide.

On *Minden's* plain, our little Host
 Mov'd fearless to the fight:
 The hostile legions fled, they fell
 By thousands in their flight.

Triumphs

Triumphs on *India's* wealthy coast
 Secure our Merchants Gain.
 Fam'd *Senegal* his Gum resigns,
 And *Guadaloupe* her Cane.

In realms by *British* valour won,
 The long *Ohio* strays.
 And *Canada's* * Majestick Flood
 Imperial Homage pays.

Our Heroes climb'd his rocky Steep,
 Confusion broke our Foes.
 On the strong Citadel a-loft,
Britannia's Banner rose.

A Kingdom won! but oh how high
 The Price our Glory cost!
 Still give us wise and gallant Chiefs
 And lov'd like Him we lost.

Sing to the Lord, exalt his Name,
 The mighty God of War:
 Who guards our fertile fields, who brings
 Our trophies from a-far.

* The River *St. Laurence*, on which stands *Quebec* the Capital of the *French Empire* in *North America*.

H Y M N

For the Public F A S T, Feb. 16, 1759.

ALMIGHTY Ruler of the Skies,
 'Tis Thine alone to save.
 Vain is the Wisdom of the Wise,
 And Valour of the Brave.

The Wisdom of the Wisest fails,
 If thy Displeasure frown:
 No Valour of the Brave avails,
 If Thou wilt cast them down:

Upstarting from her low estate
 Of cowardice and shame,
Britain, arous'd, again is great
 In prowess and in fame.

Thy fav'ring Gales have borne along
 Her fleets to *India's* shore:
 Her armies in thy might were strong,
 Her foes insult no more.

Yet, trembling in our Joy, we kneel
 Before Thy awful feet:
 Our Sins, Indulgent Father, heal,
 And make our Bliss compleat.

The Pow'rs whom furious Discords rend,
 To Friendship reconcile:
 And bid sweet Peace her Wings extend
 O'er *Britain's* happy Isle.