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Mr. Hyde's
THANKSGIVING SERMON.

A
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DELIVERED AT LEE,

December 15th, 1796,

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY AUTHORITY FOR A

Public Thanksgiving.

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Pastor of the Church in LEE.

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A

THANKSGIVING SERMON.

JUDGES VIII—34, 35.

AND 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.

THE history of God's ancient people was written for the use of all succeeding ages, that they might not be without evidence of the divine faithfulnes, in the *fulfilment of promises*, and in the *execution of threatenings*. Most of the signal deliverances, experienced by that people, were effected by the instrumentality of *some man*, or *some men*, evidently raised up by God for those very purposes.

THE words, from which will be delivered a discourse, on this occasion, are the conclusion of an interesting part of their history. At a time when Israel was greatly impoverished, having experienced, for seven years, the oppressions and depredations of the Midianites ; and when

the hearts of all fainted, by reason of the number and strength of their enemies, the Lord graciously interposed, and raised them up a deliverer. This deliverer was Gideon, the son of Joash. For the zeal of this man to destroy the worship of Baal, he obtained the name, *Jerubbaal*. With a small number of men, this leader (Israel's God being on his side) put to flight, and completely subdued, an army of Midianites, which, for multitude, is represented to have been like grass-hoppers in the field.* The deliverance of this memorable day was followed with a peace, in Israel, of forty years, even until the death of Gideon. But, that ungrateful people made poor returns to the *Divine Author* of their blessings, and to *him*, who was used as an instrument of procuring and continuing them. This shameful ingratitude is particularly expressed, and laid to their charge, in the words, chosen as a text. “*And 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.*”

OUR situation, as a people, in many respects, is similar to that of the children of Israel; so that these words afford instruction, which is well adapted to our own case. For this purpose I shall improve them——and, therefore, request your attention to the following thoughts, which they naturally suggest.

* Judges 7, 12.

I. THE Lord our God hath delivered us out of the hands of all our enemies, on every side.

II. OUR blessings and privileges have brought us under the strongest obligations to remember HIM, who conferred them on us.

III. THE holy anger and righteous displeasure of God may be provoked, by the manner in which we treat those men, who have been used as *instruments of procuring and continuing* our blessings.

IV. THAT which was said of the children of Israel, may, with the strictest truth, be acknowledged by us—*The LORD our GOD hath delivered us out of the hands of all our enemies, on every side.*

FROM the time the children of Israel first entered the land of Canaan, until Gideon was placed at their head, was a space of about two hundred years. In this space, they experienced remarkable deliverances, and grew up into a nation, formidable to neighbouring powers, in numbers and strength. It is not so long a space as this, since our venerable and pious *forefathers* first placed their feet on New-England's shore. From the persecutions of their native country, and the perils of the sea, a small number, about one hundred persons, sought an asylum on that spot of ground, ever since known by the name of Plymouth. This was in the year 1620, a few days short of 176 years. The history of this country, since that time, is no less astonishing, than that of the Israelites from their first entrance

into the land of Canaan, until their deliverance from the oppression of the Midianites. Like them we have experienced a series of *oppressions*, and a series of *remarkable deliverances*. Comprising in our view the whole of these United States, we may probably say, that our increase in *population* and *wealth*, exceeds every instance known in the history of nations. In this short space, notwithstanding all the ravages of war, an extensive empire has been settled, and our number has so increased, that we already begin to reckon *millions*.

IF, on reading the history of the children of Israel, during the period referred to, we feel constrained to acknowledge *the Lord was on their side, and fought their battles*, the same acknowledgment will be no less irresistible, after a thorough attention to the history of our *own nation*. We turn our eyes over the accounts of *their* remarkable deliverances, which took place one after another, and *wonder* at their *unbelief*—we wonder, that by *them* the hand of God was so little acknowledged. But, why should we wonder at *their unbelief*? Let us turn over the pages of God's providence, which relate to *ourselves*. These pages are already filled with accounts of the wonderful interpositions of God in our favour, and of the astonishing ingratitude of this people. For ignorance of these things there can be no excuse, while the means of information are so abundant, and so easy of access. Our fathers, who are yet sojourners with us, can relate many things to which they have been eye-

witnesses. Accounts, also, of God's remarkable providences towards us, have been published in a variety of books, and interspersed among a variety of subjects. They are to be found even in those lessons, given out from school-books, to exercise our children in reading.

Thus abundant, and thus easy of access are the means of information, with respect to the past dealings of divine providence with our nation. It will be needless, therefore, to descend, at this time, to a lengthy recital of particulars. Such, however, is our proneness to *forget*, that we need to have our minds often refreshed with things already known. "*The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.*" †

It was the Lord, and he alone, who effected the settlement of our fathers in this land, and who prevented the savages of the wilderness from entirely cutting them off. In number, we were then few—in strength, feeble, and straitened as to resources. Not only so, our management of the natives was often unjust, and really provoking. They were numerous beyond all calculation, quick to resent what they deemed impositions, and cunning and persevering in their attempts to glut their revenge. When these things are called to mind, it becomes matter of astonishment; that the natives did not spill all the blood of the first emigrants to this country. They were suffered often to trouble, severely to

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† Psalm 3. 2.

distress, and to chastise our fathers, as the Canaanites did the children of Israel; but, they were kept by the invisible, though mighty power of God, from giving any fatal blow. The sovereign Ruler of the universe had purposes to answer, in *their extirpation*, and in *our increase*; just as he had in cutting off the *Canaanites*, and in establishing the *children of Israel*.

THESE are events, on which our fathers often conversed, though now so little thought of, by their posterity. Some of my hearers, now advanced in life, shared in some part of the distresses of those days; and by comparing them with the *peace* and *prosperity* of the present time, they must acknowledge, that the Lord hath sent us great deliverance.

It is true, we still hear of the unhappy natives, and of their distressing our frontier settlements; but, their number is astonishingly reduced, and their exertions have become feeble. Comparing them with ourselves, we may say, Providence hath turned the scale. A short time since, *they* were numerous, and *we* were few—now *we* are numerous, and *they* are few. It is a day of recounting the mercies of the Lord to this people; and our deliverance from this enemy, once so much dreaded, ought not to be forgotten. Our fathers, doubtless, were often engaged in fervent prayer for the event, which, *we*, *their posterity*, now see accomplished. Probably *they* thought, it would be one of the greatest mercies to this land to be delivered from so severe a scourge; and as we have experienced this

deliverance most certainly from us *heart-felt* acknowledgments are due.

BUT, this is not the only deliverance from enemies which we have experienced :—others, equally great, are to be acknowledged.

OUR rights have been invaded, and our liberties attacked, by that nation from which our fathers emigrated, and to which we had long been in the habit of looking, as a guardian, protector, and parent. This was a most trying stroke of providence ; but, a *necessary link* in that chain of events, which has brought us to our present happy state. When these unnatural enemies arose up against us, and grasped at our liberty, we sought for redress, by petitions expressed in the most humble language ; and which were so often repeated, as to become tiresome and provoking to the invaders. We were necessitated to resist, or to see our infant country holden in bondage. How trying was the alternative ! How small the prospect of being able to defend our rights ! we were weak, at best, and made more so, by being divided in opinion among *ourselves*. We were poor, we were destitute of arms, we were unacquainted with war. Our enemies were rich, inured to war, and powerful by sea and land. *This* was our state, and *these* our prospects, when hostilities commenced between Great-Britain, and our own land.

OUR situation was very much like that of the children of Israel, when overpowered by the Midianites. They suffered long, before they dared to resist ; and so did we. Gideon was

raised up by that God, who causeth nations to rise and fall, at his pleasure, to be *their deliverer*. In like manner, there was one raised up to head our feeble and undisciplined army, who was firm in principle, undaunted in courage, and unrivalled in wisdom and prudence. This distinguished leader and general of our armies persisted in the cause he espoused, amidst embarrassments, which would probably have disheartened almost any other man. The cruel tongues of envy and slander were busy in attacking his character, and measures; but he turned not to the right hand, nor to the left.

AFTER a struggle of eight years, in which many lives were lost, and in which time success was various, the Lord discomfited our enemies, and brought them to such terms of peace, as were favourable to our rights, liberties and privileges. This is another great deliverance, which we have experienced from the hand of the Lord our God; and the most of us can say, it is within our memories.

THE distinguishing mercies of God towards this people, with respect to their enemies, do not *close* with this account. We have had need of further *corrections*, and further *deliverances*. Our God, by whose hand we had so often been redeemed, and by whose care we had so long been preserved, for a season almost gave us up to *ourselves*; and we were on the point of plunging into the greatest of all temporal evils, a *civil war*. The gloomy cloud hung over our heads, and threatened us with a storm, which, in its conse-

quences, would have been dismal and horrid in the extreme. But, that God, who remembereth mercy in the midst of judgment, dispelled the cloud, and once more brightened our prospect, by causing the inhabitants of the several States to form, and voluntarily to unite in, a constitution of government, founded on the natural rights of man, and on principles of true liberty. This is another distinguished era, in the history of our nation.

THAT a form of government should be so constructed, as to meet the *views*, and unite the *feelings*, of so many inhabitants, as were contained in these several States, was an event, which, in prospect, appeared very dark. But, the attempt was made, and success followed. The supreme Ruler of Nations, in his good Providence, caused the clashing interests of individual persons, and of individual states to coalesce; and, though probably actuated by a great variety of motives, their views centred, and a constitution was adopted, which, in its operations, must hitherto have more than answered the expectations of all *reasonable men*. It is mysterious, on serious reflection, how even *small societies*, which are composed of *selfish men*, and men of different views and interests, are ever *built up*; but, it is much more mysterious how so large a body of men, as that which composes these several states, in which there are almost as many *opinions as persons*, should, at the same time, unite in a national compact, and be agreed how they will secure

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the property, persons and privileges of each other. To the invisible power and agency of GOD must the accomplishment of this event be ascribed. It plainly evinces, that HE who holdeth the hearts of all men in his hand, is able to bring *order out of confusion, light out of darkness, good out of evil*, to make the wrath of man praise him, and to restrain the remainder of it.

UNDER this constitution, we enjoy the privilege of having men of our own country, and of our own choice, at the head of our public affairs. Here all denominations of Christians are allowed to enjoy their principles, and to worship GOD, according to the views they entertain of his holy word. In an emphatical sense, we now sit under our own vines and fig trees. In view of this event, we may truly say, The Lord hath delivered us from great evil, and hath raised our nation to an unparalleled height of prosperity and happiness.

BUT, there is another evil, which, through the merciful interposition of GOD, we have hitherto escaped, and which ought not, on this day of recounting divine favours, to be forgotten. I refer to the many and crafty attempts which have been made to draw us into the war, in which many of the European kingdoms have, for several years, been involved :—a war which has been carried on with an unusual spirit of *martial enthusiasm*, and attended with an uncommon profusion of human blood. In the midst of all our national happiness, this has been an evil, with which we have been imminently threatened.

CONNECTED, as we have been, with two powerful nations, bitter in their opposition to each other, and each watching with a jealous eye, every advantage the other might derive from us, our situation has been critical in the extreme.— To maintain *neutrality* has been the *professed object* of our *Executive*; and that he has been enabled to steer our political ship, in such a dangerous sea, must be owing to his being endowed with no inconsiderable share of that wisdom which is profitable to direct. By the appointment, and under the direction of God, he has hitherto been our deliverer. We are free, even to the present day, from the ravages of war. In this land of freedom, the Church of Christ may live without persecution. A preached Gospel may be enjoyed by all classes of our citizens. God's holy sabbaths may be observed by all those who fear his Name; and the ordinances of his house are steadily administered in the Church. From this brief sketch of national mercies, it must appear, that what was said of the Israelites in the text, may, with the strictest truth, be applied to us—
The Lord our God hath delivered us out of the hands of all our enemies on every side.

II. Our blessings and privileges have brought us under the strongest obligations to remember Him, who conferred them on us.

With respect to the children of Israel, this may be very plainly inferred, from what is laid to their charge, in the text. They sinned, because *they remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their ene-*

mies on every side. The repeated interpositions of God, in their favour, brought them under as *many obligations* to him; and these obligations, being disregarded, enhanced their criminality. They were a people, on whom peculiar privileges were bestowed, and by abusing these privileges, they did more to provoke God, than even the idolatrous nations around them. After bearing with them the appointed time, in his holy anger, God cut them off; and to this very day, they are monuments of his awful displeasure. And since their punishment is declared, by divine authority, to be an *ensample* for us, we may know that a similar fate and portion will overtake us, if we remember not the Lord our God, who hath so often redeemed us from our enemies.

WE are under obligation to distinguish ourselves, by *honouring* and *glorifying* God, as much as He distinguishes us, by *mercies* and *privileges*. This is agreeable to the oracle of truth, and to the general opinion of men. That an increase of *privileges* is followed by an increase of *obligation*, is an idea which is clearly advanced by our Saviour, in Luke 12. 48.—“*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*” Here the Saviour illustrates a *weighty, solemn truth*, by adverting to the common opinion and practice of men. *To whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* Thus men *feel*, and thus they *practice*. How, then, can they expect any thing else, but, that God will deal in the same way.

with *them*? How unreasonable, how inconsistent, to harbour a thought, that the Judge of all the earth will deviate from this rule! If men would suffer their thoughts to run in this channel, they would see that every privilege, and every mercy received, increases their obligations to God.

WE have been taking a review of the interpositions of God in our favour, and we have found them to be truly great;—but, it is another and a serious inquiry. What *returns* ought we to make? *What shalt we render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards us?* External advantages, without hearts to apply them to a right use, will make neither a people, nor a person happy. Those places, which enjoyed great light and privileges in the days of Christ, were represented as being brought under great obligations; and, on account of their impenitence and unbelief, were assured by him, that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for them. The only way to prevent its being more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment; than for us, will be to remember the Lord our God. It will be proper for us, in this place, particularly to consider how we are to remember him.

1. WE ought to remember the Lord our God, in turning to him, by a *real repentance*.

THAT we have often sinned against God is a truth as obvious, as that we have lived under his government. One thing, on which we may rely is, that we shall never have any *proper sense*

of God, while we do not feel our need of *repentance*. That *godly sorrow* for sin, which was so much the subject of the preaching of Christ and his Apostles, is always implied, when God is really acknowledged by fallen men. As soon as the character of an infinitely perfect and holy God comes into view, we must unavoidably be ashamed of *ourselves*. In making this observation, I am countenanced by the experience and language of Job. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* § How trifling, therefore, it will be for us, as individuals, or as a nation, to acknowledge God with *impenitent hearts*! The Jews did as much as this. They often drew nigh unto God with their mouth, and honoured him with their lips, while their heart was far from him. This was acknowledged to them; * but, it had not the least influence, in rescuing them from the awful judgments of God. Let, therefore, one and all understand, that we are under the strongest obligations to remember that God, who hath so often delivered us from our enemies, and that he will be remembered to no good purpose with *impenitent hearts*.

2. **THEY**, who are led by mercies to remember God, will be excited to offer to him *praises* and *thanksgivings*.

To recount the mercies of God, and to call to mind the past dealings of his holy providence has been the practice of those who feared

§ Job 42. 5, 6. * Matt. 15. 8.

God in every age of the world. How often did Moses dwell upon the astonishing interpositions of God, in behalf of the people, whom he conducted to the land of Canaan? To this subject how frequently did he call up the attention of *Israel*? His practice was also followed by Joshua, and all the succeeding leaders in Israel, who feared the Lord. To induce the people to remember God, they would mention his wonderful dealings with them, as a nation, and labour to impress a *sense* of them upon their minds.

WHAT we call *Providence* was to David a most instructive book;—a book in which he appeared continually to study. Scarcely can we turn to a Psalm, in which he does not particularly acknowledge the benefits he derived from this source. Language, similar to the following, is interspersed throughout his writings—“O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Thou, who hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again from the depths of the earth. My lips shall greatly rejoice, when I sing unto thee: and my soul which thou hast redeemed.” A remembrance of God, in his providences, excited, in the heart of this good man, praises and thanksgivings. It appears, as if he could not say enough to persuade others to praise the Lord, at the remembrance of his works. “O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.” How animating are his words in the 124th

Psalm, where he was celebrating the glorious deliverance of his people, Israel——“*If it had not been the Lord, who was on our side, now may Israel say: If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us. Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our souls. Then the proud waters had gone over our souls. Blessed is the Lord, who hath not given us a prey to their teeth.*” Such were the lively views entertained, by David, of God’s mercies, manifested in his providence; though the people of Israel, as a body, were stupid and ungrateful. As a people, *we* appear to manifest the same ingratitude, the same backwardness to remember God, and to praise his holy name. By persisting in a line of conduct, similar to that of the children of Israel, we have every reason to expect we shall fall into a similar condemnation. Nothing but the great depths of divine mercy have hitherto spared us. From the rebellious, this mercy will ere long be withholden, and, without cherishing a *heart-felt* sense of divine benefits, we shall sink. The Lord our God is certainly not remembered by us, so long as we have no hearts to praise him for his goodness.

3. THEY, who are led by mercies to remember God, delight in his worship, both in his *house*, and in the *family*.

To be where they may hear of God and join in his worship, is their *meat* and *drink*. Social prayer is one of the appointed ways for a

people to acknowledge God. This duty may be performed by all bodies of people, whether great or small; and there is the same general reason, why *families* should acknowledge the mercies of God, received in that connection, and with joint voice and heart, carry their sorrows to the Throne of Grace, that *towns* or any *larger body* of people should do the same. How dark must be the prospect among that people, where the public worship of God is generally neglected! How melancholy, also, must be the situation of that *family*, in which his worship is not maintained—in which his holy name, in a social manner, is never invoked! All *such people* and all *such families* exhibit that kind of evidence of their not remembering the Lord their God, which they will find particularly noticed in the sacred scriptures. Oh, how will divine fury be poured out upon that people, who know not God, and upon those families which call not on his name!—To flatter ourselves, that God is remembered for his goodness, so long as he is not sought unto by *prayer*, is bolstering ourselves up with all our ingratitude, with all our pollution and vileness. I proceed to show,

III. THAT the holy anger and righteous displeasure of God may be provoked, by the manner in which we treat those men, who have been used, as *instruments of procuring and continuing* our blessings.

AMONG the Israelites, a succession of men was raised up, who distinguished themselves, as eminent deliverers to that people. Moses, Joshs

ua and Gideon were among the first. From the history of this people it is evident, that the Lord was always provoked, when they manifested ungrateful conduct towards these men, who had been used as instruments of good to them. Awful was the display of divine wrath, when Korah, Dathan and Abiram stirred up a mutiny in Israel, and presumed boldly to speak against the administration of Moses.* That these men, and their adherents, had no sense of the *past favours of the Lord*, was made exceedingly manifest, by their *proudly* rising up against the very person, who had led them, by the hand, through a *series* of the most *pressing dangers*. A sin, of this nature, is laid to the charge of Israel in the text. "*Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.*" Gideon, though he had failings, as well as all men in the flesh, was used as an instrument of great good to Israel, under their oppressions. That people manifested the ungrateful feelings of their hearts to him, by their manner of treating his family, and it was provoking to God. They lightly esteemed not only the *Author* of the mercies they received, but the *instrument*, by whom they were procured. This is a specimen of the ingratitude of men.

A most distinguished deliverer has been raised up for the people of this land. He has made sacrifices for the good of this people, which are enough deeply to affect their hearts, if they were susceptible of impressions of gratitude,

* Numb. 16.

equal to the favours done. For more than twenty years, he has been at the helm of our national affairs, first, as the leader, and General of our armies, and since, as the President of these United States ; and he has been enabled, under God, to conduct us, amidst the storms and convulsions of the times, to the haven of unparalleled prosperity.

BUT now we are crowned with national happiness, our amazing ingratitude bursts forth to light :—our amazing ingratitude, not only to the Supreme Ruler of nations, but, to that man, who has been the instrument of so much good to us. Even his kindness, as an *instrument*, is by some not remembered. Who could have thought, that the character of WASHINGTON, of whose integrity, wisdom and patriotism, we seemingly have had all *possible proof*, would ever have been called in question, by the people of America ? Why is it, that the present *happy and flourishing* state of our country is not viewed, as pleading more *powerfully* in his behalf, and as affording convincing evidence of the wisdom of his administration ? But, such is the uncertainty of human affairs. We are treading in the same path, which has been trodden by other nations before us. It has always appeared, that there was no confidence to be put in man. Of the same melancholy truth we are exhibiting new proof.

MAY our distinguished deliverer, now he is about to retire from public life, be thoroughly convinced, that *it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man*. Impressed with this truth, he will have consolation, which the world can neither give, nor take away.

MAY the Lord forgive the ingratitude of this people, and have mercy on us, by causing the place of Washington to be supplied with a citizen, who shall have regard to the glory of the Supreme, and the good of this great people, and who may be instrumental of continuing and increasing our national felicity.

THE thoughts suggested on this subject naturally lead us, as a *town*, to review past favours, and to feel the obligations we are under to *remember the Lord our God*.

IN connection with national blessings, of which we, as a small part of the Nation, have been allowed to partake, many *local* privileges and blessings demand the grateful feelings of our hearts. In this place, we have enjoyed general health through the last season, and for several months past, it has been a time of unusual health. The earth has yielded us such increase; as that a competent supply of food for man and beast is, this day, to be acknowledged. God's holy word, his sabbaths, the preaching of the Gospel and divine ordinances, are yet continued to us, as monuments of his mercy. Here we are, my brethren, in the midst of blessings, *temporal and spiritual*. *O! let us give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name, and make known his deeds among the people.*

THOUGH surrounded with the blessings of heaven, let us not forget, that the rod of God's holy anger is *visible*—that it is stretched over us, and calls for our attention. He with-holds the rain from heaven, he dries up the streams, he keeps back the springs, and causes many families to experience distress. This ought to lead us to *humility*, and to awaken in us a sense of our *dependence*. From what we now experience, we may form some faint conceptions of the distress, which a general drought upon the earth would occasion.—But; how much *more* to be dreaded than this, is a *spiritual drought*! With all our advantages to know what most concerns us, why are we not *sensible* of this, and excited to pray for the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit? Without these are shed down upon us, and our *children*, we and they may have prosperity; in *this world*, only to be made *more wretched*, in *that which is to come*.

LET us offer a tribute of praise to God; that we have opportunity, at the call of our rulers, to unite with our fellow-citizens of this Commonwealth, in acknowledging divine mercies. Let us not act a part so inconsistent, as to convert this day of *recounting the mercies of the Lord*, this day of *thanksgiving*, into a day of carnal mirth and amusement.

God grant, that we may all, of every age, be excited to remember the Author of our mercies, and to praise his holy name. AMEN.