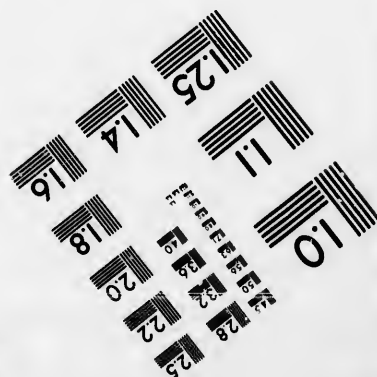
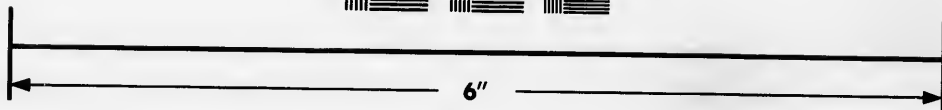
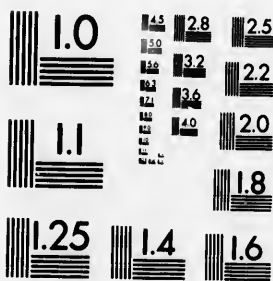


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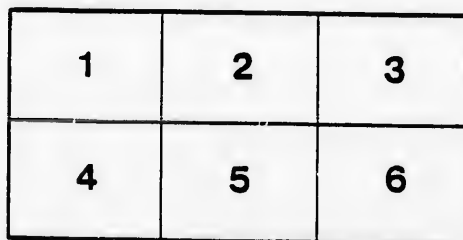
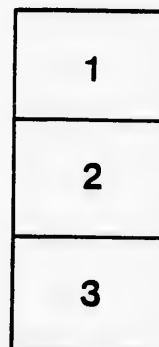
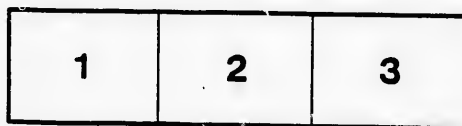
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REASONS FOR JOY AND PRAISE.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED APRIL 6, 1815;

BEING THE

DAY OF GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

FOR

PEACE

WITH THE UNITED STATES:

IN THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

ST. PETER'S STREET,

MONTREAL.

BY THE REV. ROBERT EASTON.

MONTREAL:

PRINTED BY NAHUM MOWER.

.....
1815.

THE Printing of the following Sermon, is in compliance with the urgency of Friendship among several of the Author's respected hearers ; and he is not without hopes that its imperfections will not entirely obstruct its usefulness.

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JOB 34—29.

"When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only."

THE efficient agency of God in all events is visible to every discerning eye, and should be acknowledged to the praise of his infinite perfections. According to the plan of his government, alternate prosperity and adversity diversify the lot of mankind. A state of quietness and a state of trouble, as represented in the text, are both of them the work of the Lord, through the operation of natural causes; in the case both of private persons, and public bodies. By the former, opportunity is afforded for the free exercise of industrious and regular habits: and by the latter, a relaxation of virtue, and those ill humours, which breed in the calm and sunshine of human life, are happily corrected.

We are met this day to celebrate with the voice of thanksgiving the return of peace to our country. Peace and quietness are highly acceptable ; after the experience, which many of our people have had, of the deprivations, uncertainties, alarms and wounded feelings attendant on war. Our joy on this occasion is greatly heightened by reflecting, that the sword is also sheathed in every part of Europe. Those passions, which had embroiled the civilized world so generally, have at length reached the bounds assigned them by that supreme Lord, who " sits on the circle of the earth," commanding universal obedience to his will. Human cupidity, however armed with power, and set off with plausible pretex^ts, is incapable of annoying the world, without permission from God's over-ruling providence : and its most eccentric and violent motions must instantly stop, when he gives the orders.

Whilst we confess, with shame and sorrow, our share in those sins, which procure his permission of public calamities : let us attend to the pleasant duty of this day, sending up the incense of unfeigned gratitude from our hearts

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to the same Almighty Ruler, for his late merciful interposition, in behalf of oppressed and suffering humanity. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth. Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be axalted in the earth."

In the circumstances of this country from the commencement to the conclusion of the late struggle with our neighbours, if we are at all attentive to the hand of God, we must perceive many reasons for exulting in him, as a just and merciful sovereign. By his goodness we were kept from being the aggressors in the war. He gave to many parts of Canada a singular run of commercial prosperity, as a balance to those evils, which other places had to suffer. He has, with striking justice, compleatly frustrated the designs of the common enemy : And granted peace, before the war could assume all that terror, which might have been expected from its continuance.

L. The inhabitants of this country have reason to rejoice that, however deserving they have

been of heaven's judgments, the guilt of blood, during the infliction of these judgments, does not lie at their doors : for they were not the aggressors in relation to the United States. Canada did nothing to provoke hostilities. Nor was there any thing new, oppressive and unnecessary in the measures of Great-Britain, to justify the effusion of human blood.

When we consider the very critical time, and hasty manner of declaring war, together with the sudden disappearance of all its ostensible causes in the negotiations for peace ; the suspicion is unavoidable that the authors of this tragic-comedy were actuated with motives, which they durst not avow, and that patriotism had less share in their conduct than blind devotion to the despot of France. Whatever were the principles, from which they acted ; or however they may answer to God and their country for the ruinous consequences, which have followed their schemes : one thing is consoling to our minds, that the miseries of the war are not imputable to those, who took up arms with reluctance, merely to defend their British character and rights.

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If our enemies calculated on tame submission from an idea that the British provinces were ripe for revolt, the event has shewn that the calculation was of a piece with the rest of their policy. Never were there a people more highly favored in a civil respect, than the Canadians ; nor less disposed to barter the solid advantages of British protection, for the doubtful blessings of democratic liberty. If the States had any thing of good to give us, we held that good before, in a higher degree, and upon a much surer foundation. This aggravates the guilt of invading our territory ; which can be viewed in no better light, than as a rude attempt to force a contented child out of the fostering arms of an indulgent parent.

God certainly was just in hiding his face, and leaving us in darkness and trouble : but blessed be his name that the sufferings of the war were, neither the fruits of disaffection to the government, under which we are placed ; nor the punishment of original machinations against the repose of our neighbours.

II. Appreciating, as we do, the advantages of an intimate connexion with Great-Britain,

we are called upon to return the most cordial thanks to the Almighty for crowning our wishes, our arms, and the goodness of our cause with success: "They are turned back, and brought to confusion, who devised our hurt." Our possessions remain as they were. The dominant party in the States have drawn a blank, after impoverishing their country to gain a prize. They have lost their aim in every respect; after drenching the earth, and crimsoning the floods, with the blood of their fellow creatures. Ah! what presumption! What murderous folly, to attempt, against all the admonitions of providence, to brake the strong arm of Britain, to cut off the essential sources of her prosperity and defence! The result has proclaimed the rashness of the attempt, and consigns the names of the projectors to the contempt of posterity.

Let us glance at the means under God, by which the Canadas have been preserved entire; notwithstanding every effort, in the power of political delusion, to alienate and subdue them. This was owing to disunion abroad, unanimity at home, and the active perseverance of those,

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It would appear that a great proportion of the American people condemned the principle of the war, and withheld their support. Nor was it in the power of congress to coerce their obedience, or reduce them to inactivity. This opposition was certainly favorable, by crippling the enemy, and embarrassing all his operations.

Another powerful cause, which contributed to the integrity of the provinces, was the universal attachment of the inhabitants to their government, laws, and institutions. They have held up an example of patriotism, seldom equalled, never surpassed. Their forwardness in Lower Canada to fly to the standard of their country in the hour of danger, was the salvation of Montreal at different times from the threatened incursions of invading armies. The same magnanimous spirit did wonders in our sister province. There we behold it in a state of arduous conflict with the enemy. It refused to yield. But what scenes of carnage, and even of melancholy desolation, were produced by this obstinacy of patriotism ; supported by the skill and discipline of British troops. But

let us spare the feelings of humanity, by turning away our eyes from such scenes of horror. We cannot rejoice in human miseries. Even the pleasure of victory is stifled by painful recollections.

There is one thing, however, in which we do well to rejoice, that our arms by sea and land, though not successful in every instance, have yet preserved our liberties, and conquered peace. Let us look to the King of nations, as the great author of our success, as having "disappointed the devices of the crafty; so that their hands could not perform their enterprise."

III. In this review of the war, it cannot escape our notice, and ought not to be passed over in silence, being a matter of peculiar obligation to the Almighty, that the province of Lower Canada has not only been exempted in a great measure from the scourge of war; but actually blessed with an uncommon degree of prosperity. The noise of the warrior has been scarcely heard within these limits. The work of destruction has rather exercised our sympathy for distant sufferers, than tried our own

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courage and fortitude. Trade and commerce have flourished more, than they were ever known to do at any former period ; raising many of our citizens above want ; and enabling others of them, by an influx of wealth, to command the embellishments, as well as the comforts of life. The general experience of my hearers bears testimony to the truth of this observation.

In such circumstances, my friend can you be unmindful of him, who "giveth power to get wealth," who hath "covered you with his feathers," in times of general distress ; guarding you against injury, from "the terror by night, and the arrow that flyeth by day, from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day?" You may well ask, what better are we, than others of our fellow subjects, who have not had the same advantages? In shewing you so much indulgence, God expects that his bounty will return to him, in the warm effusions, and upright services of devout and grateful hearts. If you withhold this tribute ; if, instead of applying your preserved lives and encreased substance to wise and right-

teous purposes, you abuse these favors of the Almighty ; he may be provoked to hide his face, and leave you to read your ingratitude in some direful punishment.

IV. By the return of peace, we are furnished with a reason for joy and praise, in the many blessings, which that lovely stranger brings in along with her. Privations, miseries, and alarms, flee before her face. Inward composure, external quietness, regular industry, and a competent portion of the good things of life, compose her train,

The soldier, released from the arduous duties of his profession, puts off his armour ; returns home to reap the laurels of his valor, in the bosom of his family, and in the enjoyment of his friends. The prisoner of war obtains and feels the happiness of a discharge from his honorable bondage. The harassed citizen looks to his home as his sanctuary, where no sacrilegious foot dare now enter to disturb his repose. The useful arts, which the demon of war trampled under foot, revive in those places, where they were prostrated. Industry in all its branches, promises suitable returns ; without being

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any longer discouraged, by a dread of the hand of rapine, or of those uncertainties, which belong to a deranged state of society. As commercial enterprize is the great source of national activity and wealth, it is pleasant to think that it is now unshakled, and no longer confined to corners ; but widely extended for the good of the world, in consequence of a free intercourse with almost all nations.

Such are the blessings of peace, among which we may justly rank, what is not the least valuable in the eyes of a good man, the liberty, which it gives, of attending to religious ordinances, and performing every domestic and relative duty, without distraction or alarm. In a time of war, if men are not actually engaged in it, their minds, at least, are full of anxiety. Their fears and hopes are all alive to the chances of the war. Though such judgments of God should rather enliven than depress religious attentions ; yet it will be found that many, whilst they contemplate these judgments without much feeling of them, are too liable to put off serious things to a more convenient season, or to sink them in a multiplicity of other cares,

Peace, therefore, is favorable to religion and morality, in so far as it sweeps off a variety of distracting cares and amusing subjects; and so leaves the mind more at liberty to attend to its spiritual and eternal concerns.

You see, then, how much we are indebted to that over-ruling providence in human affairs, which has preserved the honor of our country unstained, during the late war, which has "carried headlong the counsel of the froward" and restored to us the inestimable blessings of a settled order of things. "Praise the Lord O Jerusalem; praise thy God O Zion; for he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat."

In addition to some hints, already given, for the improvement of our highly favored situation; I shall employ the remainder of this discourse, in placing before your view several particulars, which are closely connected with private and public happiness.

1. Endeavour to maintain that loyalty and obedience to the laws, which have tended so

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much to the preservation of our country. Let it not be said that we give up in a time of peace, what we would not surrender to the promises and threats of an enemy in the time of war. Cherish the same loyal sentiments, and preserve the same high sense of your civil privileges which already belong to your character. Still consider political union, as the bulwark of your safety and independence. Beware of any new doctrine in politics ; lest it comes, as a thief, to steal away your treasure, and rob you of the honor to which you have attained. Indulge no ill-humour against individuals, which may prejudice you against the public good. "If it is possible as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Let love, without variance or dissimulation, pervade the circles of your christian fellowship, of your domestic and civil relations. Those, who were your public enemies, consider now as your friends ; banishing all remains of jealousy and hate, which may yet rankle in your breasts, as inconsistent with the return of amity and friendly relations.

2. Guard against luxury and corporeal excesses, which are too apt to accompany external

peace, and poison the blessings of prosperity. Peace has its dangers as well as war. Jeshurun, living at his ease, and having plenty to eat and drink, became vain and profligate : he "waxed fat and kicked : then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation." Selfishness, pride, and dissipation, are the very worst diseases, which can seize the members of a community. When they become general in a state ; they wither its beauty, consume its strength, and hasten its downfall.

The love of country, therefore, cannot shew itself to greater advantage than in a regular attention to virtuous conduct. Humility, moderation and industry are not unbecoming virtues in the most exalted stations and the most affluent circumstances. "Happy are the people, that are in such a case." The Lord will give them rest from war ; or, if they are again visited with that awful dispensation, he will again "save them from the power of the sword." Recollect that public virtue is public happiness. And never let the syren voice of unlawful pleasures, never let the deceitful charms of vice,

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carry off your hearts from those duties, which, in general practice, form the strength and glory of a nation.

3. As christianity is both the purest source, and the surest guard of public manners ; so I would recommend the faith and practice of it, as essentially important. It is a lamentable fact that many, who have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, know little of his doctrines ; and discover no concern to be acquainted with them : the consequence is, that such persons are peculiarly liable to fall into the snares of temptation, partly through ignorance, and partly through a contempt of moral danger. The wisdom of God is certainly greater than the wisdom of men. And the only plan, which he sanctions, as effectual for the right formation of human character, is that, of an enlarged knowledge, and a steadfast belief of the gospel. Accordingly those, who know the truth and feel the power of godliness, are said to be " created again in Christ Jesus unto good works." They prove the excellence of their education in the school of Christ, by the purity and good-

ness of their lives; or by a constant endeavour to discharge their obligations to God and society. It is impossible it can be otherwise, when the gracious promises, laws, and institutions of God, are properly known, and received; because the direct tendency of all these is, to purify the heart from the love of moral evil, to bring every species of duty into action, and thus to prepare the soul of man for a state of glorious perfection, beyond death and the grave.

I beseech you, then, to study your Bible, to make yourselves familiar with the word of God; especially with those parts of it, which exhibit the peculiar doctrines of divine grace, and the various duties of the christian life. Having acquired just notions on these interesting subjects; shew, that you prefer the peace of your own minds, and an honourable conduct to every other consideration, by yielding in no instance your persuasions of truth, and convictions of right and wrong. "Buy the truth and sell it not. Continue in the things, which you have learnt, and of which you have been assured." By being enabled to act in this wise

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Lastly, Convinced of the value of christianity, as the most efficient means of advancing the moral welfare of the children of men, let us recommend it to all, over whom we have any influence; lamenting the state of those countries, where its principles are unknown; and assisting other christians to enlighten their darkness, and to reform their character. A time of peace is favorable for this end. And a recent experience of the evils of war should make us the more zealous, in promoting the peaceable kingdom of Jesus Christ. We have seen the end of one dismal night, in which the comet of war darted its baneful influence through the incumbent shades. When the empire of reason and religion, or the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost shall be universally established, which is the ultimate object of Providence; there will be no night in that new order of things. The glory of the Lord shall shine without the intervention of darkness.

A doubt can hardly be entertained of the general diffusion of christianity, and at a period not far distant. It is foretold of Messiah, that he "shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Yea all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." Such promises are both numerous and explicit. We cannot suppose that the God of truth hath forgotten these promises, or that his arm cannot reach the object of his wishes. That spirit of zeal, which now pervades the religious world, is an evidence of his unchangeable fidelity. Nor can we forbear to hope that it is also a prelude to the promised time, when all the families of the earth shall be blessed in the seed of Abraham. When we see the sacred scriptures translating into all languages, and the gift of them accompanied, in many places, with the erection of schools, and the ordinances of exhortation and worship; we behold something, like the hand of Providence, giving to Christ, "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." These considerations, should induce all, who value the

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gospel, to exert themselves for its diffusion through the earth. Religious blessings are not, like other benefits, lessened to those who hold them, by increasing the number of holders. Like the light of heaven, they are free to all, and may be enjoyed by all, without loss to individuals : The extension of them, therefore, becomes a proof of the value, which we put upon them ; whilst it is one of the greatest luxuries to a benevolent mind. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive how any man can hold back from a work of benevolence in which thousands are engaged, in a consistency with christian character, or with a professed desire of being eminently useful to his fellow creatures.

My Brethren, I do not intend by these remarks to reflect upon you as if you had discovered any indifference with regard to the progress of religion ; no, you have done well in every former appeal to your christian generosity. I only plead for your perseverance and for an increase of your efforts in the best of all employments, that of diffusing through the earth the knowledge of the true God and of

Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. I only mean to say, "let us not be weary in well-doing; for we shall reap, if we faint not."

I shall finish this discourse, by suggesting one solemn argument, which should of itself enforce attention to all the objects above enumerated, as belonging to the improvement of the many blessings, which we at present enjoy. We are not our own masters. We are accountable to the Most High for our time, our talents, and enjoyments. We must all stand before the bar of God, "who will render to every man according to his deeds. To them, who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory honor and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath." Such a prospect as this, and so near of being realized, is certainly calculated, if any thing be, to rouse all the energies of christian faith and hope; and to bring the most thoughtless to serious reflection. My brethren, "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;" and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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