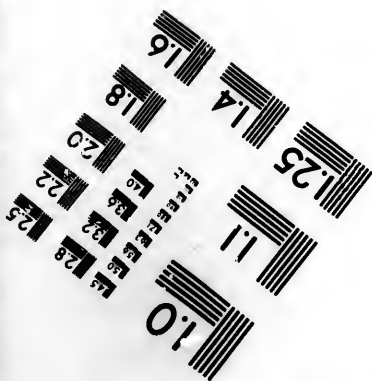
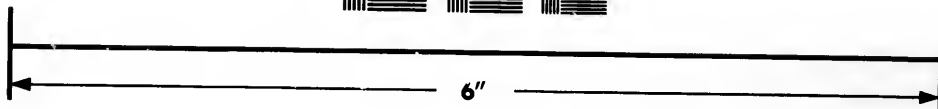
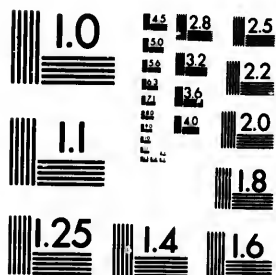


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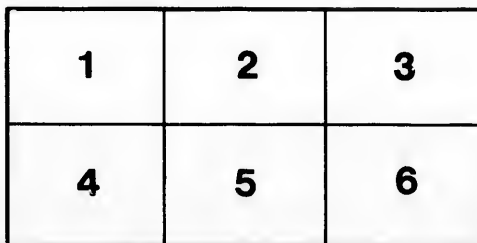
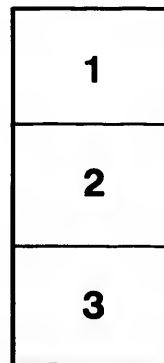
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A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE SCOTCH CHURCH, IN THE CITY OF QUEBEC,

ON THURSDAY THE 21st APRIL, 1814,

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A

GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

BY THE REV^D. ALEX^R. SPARK, D. D.

—
PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE AUDIENCE.
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QUEBEC:

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S E R M O N.

PSAL. 30. 1. I will extol Thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my Foes to rejoice over me.

THIS Psalm is generally understood to have been composed by David, to be sung in an assembly of his Friends, when he first entered his house at Jerusalem, after the unnatural rebellion, which had been excited by his son Absalom. But however this may be, it is plain from the tenour of it, that he had recently been in great danger and apprehension, occasioned by the power and malice of his enemies; and that through the favour of God, he had been, in a great measure, relieved from that apprehension. He acknowledgeth that before, when all things went well with him, he had not been sufficiently thankful to that kind Providence, from which his blessings came, being too confident in his own strength; and therefore, that God had justly afflicted him, to make him feel his weakness, and to bring him back to a sense of his duty. "In my prosperity," saith he, "I said I shall never be moved.—Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. I cried unto Thee, O Lord: and unto the Lord I made my supplication.—Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me. Lord be Thou my helper. Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness: To the end that my glory may sing praise unto Thee, and not be silent: O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto Thee forever."

After the example of this pious Prince, who invited his Friends and faithful Subjects, to give thanks to God for the success, which, by the favour of Providence, had recently been obtained over his Enemies,—we are, this day, assembled, on a like occasion, and invited to the like pious duty.

In the discharge of this duty, let us reflect;—1. How proper and becoming it is that we should cherish, in our minds, a true and sincere gratitude to God, for the blessings which we enjoy; and for the dangers, which, by the favour of his Providence, we escape.—2. What special cause we have for gratitude, at this present time, in a national view.—And, 3. What are the proper expressions of such Gratitude; or what effects are reasonably to be expected from it, where it doth actually exist.

To satisfy us of the obligation of Gratitude, in general, for favours received, we need only appeal to the common sentiments and feelings of mankind. No moral obligation is more generally felt and acknowledged than this. However some men have been inclined to palliate, or excuse many other crimes and immoralities, I know not that any serious attempt has ever been made to excuse ingratitude. No infidel—no sceptic, however wild, extravagant, and unreasonable their positions have been, respecting the grounds of moral obligation in general, hath ever attempted to deny this Law of our moral nature, that we owe Gratitude to those from whom we receive gratuitous benefits.

There is a proverbial maxim of the ancients, which shows in what light they regarded the crime of ingratitude, and in fact, expresses the general sentiment of mankind respecting it. It is to this effect; “If you say that a man is ungrateful, you have said every thing.”* The meaning is, you need say nothing more, to show that such

* Si ingratum dixeris, omnia dixeris.

such a person is of a base and despicable character. This maxim is also well founded; for, reasoning merely from the nature of things, or *a-priori* as it is called, we may be satisfied that no virtue can thrive in the ungrateful heart; while the same fact is also confirmed, by the experience of life. The ungrateful man is unjust, as well as ungenerous. His heart is destitute of that tender moral sensibility, which is the animating soul of every virtue. The dutiful son is he, who bears upon his mind a grateful sense of that parental tenderness and affection, which watched over his infant years. The good and loyal subjects are those, who duly estimate the national blessings, which they enjoy, and feel grateful to their Prince and Rulers, by whose kindness and care, they are secured to them. And in a word, in every sphere and department of life, those only who feel a sentiment of gratitude towards their benefactors, can be expected rightly to discharge their social duties.

Let this principle then,—this moral obligation, be applied to the relation, which we bear to the Supreme Being. We are his children,—his offspring,—his moral subjects. “In him we live, and move, and have our being.” If then Gratitude be due to our fellow-men, for the favours which we receive from them, and that, as we have seen, by an obligation universally acknowledged,—how much greater is our obligation to Gratitude towards God? The same principle here applies, and the same kind of obligation exists, but still stronger than that between man and man, in proportion as the benefits, which we receive from God, are greater than those, which man can bestow.

God is the original source, from which all our benefits come; even those of which our fellow-men may be the immediate instruments. If we have tender parents, just rulers, faithful friends, obliging neighbours, even these are to be regarded among the favours of Providence, and ultimately

ultimately referred to the kindness of our Heavenly Father, who over-ruleth all things, according to the counsel of his will, and assigns us our lot and portion in the world. "The lot is cast into the lap," as saith Solomon, "but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."

Have you been successful in the world, and acquired wealth and honour? Perhaps you are ready to say that this is only the fruit of your own talents and industry. Having been afflicted with some dangerous disease, and again restored to health; perhaps you ascribe your recovery altogether to necessary care, and the application of proper remedies. Hath your Country been delivered from the menaces and insults of a powerful and sanguinary Foe? Perhaps, for the cause of this happy event, you look not beyond the wisdom of your counsels, and the bravery of your troops;—that is to say, in regard to all the benefits, which you receive, and all the fortunate events, which happen to you,—you raise your view no higher than the visible and secondary causes.

It will be confessed, indeed, that according to that state of being, in which we are now placed, these means are requisite to bring about the desired ends. Worldly prosperity is not to be expected without talents and industry: To remove diseases, proper remedies must be applied: and to preserve national honour and independence, in a contest with a powerful enemy, requires both wisdom in the Cabinet, and bravery in the Field. It will farther be confessed that those, who have these or similar ends in view, and neglect the means, not only act inconsistently with the order of Providence, but may also be said, in the language of Scripture, to "tempt the Lord," by expecting that he is to bring about events, contrary to the Law of Nature, and to the connexion, which he hath established between causes and effects.

But, all this being granted, it is no less true, that he,
who

who confines his regard to these visible causes alone, entertains but a very incorrect and partial idea of the subject. By the eye of Faith, or even by the eye of Reason, we may perceive a Power and Agency superior to all these causes ;—a Power, which superintends, rules, and gives effect to, these causes themselves.

The Husbandman, who cultivates the earth, when he hath tilled and manured a field, and sown in it what he judges to be good seed, in so doing, hath used the means necessary to give him a reasonable hope of a crop, in the season ; and he is perfectly aware that without the use of these means, no crop could be expected. What the husbandman doth, in this instance, is, however, far from being all that is requisite for that result, which he expects. To produce the desired effect, there must be a certain exciting quality in the ground, suited to the germinating power of the seed : There must be the kindly influences of the Sky, and many other concurring causes, of which he hath no knowledge, and over which he hath no power. It is also certain, that if any one of these occult qualities, or necessary concurring causes be wanting, his hopes must be disappointed, and his labour vain.

So in like manner, in all the affairs of men, besides the visible means, which are subject to our control, and which it is our duty to employ, there are various circumstances of time and place,—various secret operative causes,—cause, which we can neither foresee nor comprehend, which may aid, or frustrate our endeavours, so as either to promote our intention, or to disappoint our hope. “ Except the Lord build the house,” saith the Psalmist, “ they labour in vain that build it : Except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain.”—

Even those actions and events, which appear to depend upon the free agency of man, are still, notwithstanding, under the empire, and subject to the control of Providence.

dence. Though man be a free agent, forcibly impelled neither to good nor evil ; and though the passions, with which his mind is endowed, by the hand of his creator, have their effects, as sure and determinate, as any quality of natural things, according to their strength, or the degrees, in which they are possessed ; yet God rules and combines those passions, by his Providence,—opposes them to each other,—excites or controls them, by motives or circumstances, in such a manner, that, without violence to the will, they produce the effects, which his wisdom designs. As in the natural world, he makes the winds his messengers, and the flames of fire his agents ; so in like manner, in the moral world, he makes even the wrath of man to serve him ; so that the whole order of Nature is moved by his counsel ; and all the parts thereof being subject to his control, do whatsoever he commandeth, upon the face of the whole earth. Whatever happens, even in the manner of what we call a contingent event,—whatever takes place according to a Law of Nature, or is attached as a consequence to certain kinds of actions,—all these things do truly and ultimately depend upon the will and design of the Supreme Being, and the operation of his Divine Power.

Here, then, we may perceive the true ground of our Gratitude to God, for all the good things, which we possess, and for all the fortunate events of our lives. He is the great and original cause of all. To him, therefore, our highest Gratitude is due. Hence it is that we are exhorted by the Apostle, Eph. 5. 19, to “ Give thanks always, for all things, unto God.”

Before we quit this branch of the subject, it may be proper to subjoin one brief remark, respecting the nature of this virtue of Gratitude, as distinguished from several other virtuous qualities of the mind, and duties of life. While the practice of several other virtues, such as patience, forgiveness, repentance, selfdenial, and others,

is often attended with a degree of pain and difficulty,—the exercise of Gratitude, on the contrary, is attended with no difficulty, but with a high degree of pleasure. It produces a pleasing sensation, in the mind, when exercised only towards our fellow-men; but when directed towards the Supreme Being, the great Fountain of all Good, with a due sense of his benefits, it exalts the soul to rapture.

We now proceed to the second thing proposed in the method, namely, to advert to the special cause, which we have for Gratitude to God, at this present time, in a national view.

The great and special cause, which we have for national Gratitude, at this present time, to the great Ruler of Nations, is the same which was the ground of the Psalmist's Gratitude, as expressed in the Text, namely, because "He hath not made our Foes to rejoice over us."

It would be superfluous to describe to you the nature of the war, in which Great Britain hath, for several years, been engaged—the danger, which at first appeared to threaten her,—or the recent events, so favourable to the cause of order and justice, which have checked the progress of lawless ambition, and frustrated the designs of the enemy. So great and imposing is the object,—so vast the consequences of the contest, that the eyes of all men have long been turned towards them, with the utmost anxiety and solicitude. The fate of the world appeared to be at stake, involving the happiness or misery of each individual. Of that, therefore, in which all men are so deeply interested, and which hath so long, and so closely engaged their attention, it is not to be supposed that any can now require to be informed.

It is common, and it is natural, for men to imagine the difficulties, which they themselves have to encounter, among the greatest that men generally suffer; and to regard the extraordinary events of their own times, as great-

ter and more important than those, which any former age hath witnessed. But making all the allowance that can be deemed requisite for this natural bias or partiality of judgment, still we shall be forced to admit that no age, in the annals of civilized society, hath been characterized by events of greater magnitude or interest, than the present.

Without now adverting to the origin of the evil, or to its predisposing causes,—we have beheld a great and powerful nation, having first renounced their allegiance to their Prince, and to their Maker,—having assumed the character of Regicides and Infidels,—and after being given up, for a time, to all the horrors of Anarchy, Misrule, and Murder; at last, submitting to the despotic will of a cruel and ambitious Tyrant,—a Man peculiarly formed for mischief, being possessed of uncommon intellectual abilities, guided by no moral principle.

The consequences, as might have been expected, have been dreadful and alarming, in the extreme. The whole strength and resources of the nation were now employed to gratify the boundless ambition of one man, who appeared to aim at nothing less than universal empire. Hence, in defiance of the Law of Nations, and the dictates of natural Justice, peaceable unoffending States and Kingdoms were, on various pretences, attacked, subdued, and forced to join the grand conspiracy against the rights of humanity, and the peace of the world. The ancient venerable structure of political order was thrown down, ancient governments destroyed, and thrones overturned. New Kingdoms were set up, and their thrones filled by some of the family or adherents of the grand Despot. Not satisfied with giving Laws to those who had become his subjects, or to the States which had been subdued by his Arms, this extraordinary man pretended to an authority even over independent Kingdoms and Empires, to compel them to adopt his views, and aid his nefarious schemes of aggression, plunder and bloodshed.

It was the fate of Great Britain, from the commencement

ment of this man's usurped dominion, to be the peculiar object of his implacable hatred. To effect her downfall, there is no sacrifice, that he was not prepared to make. After having made various attempts, without success, by secret intrigue, and by open violence, he finally thought of drying up the sources of her wealth, by shutting up the channels of her commerce. This great scheme was to be the death warrant of the British Constitution, and to secure universal empire, to this new unprincipled Power, which affected to be the Arbiter of nations.

But here, we behold interposed, the hand of a just and avenging Providence. We see the wicked caught in the snare, which he himself had spread. To adopt the language of the Psalmist, (Psal. 7, 14), "Behold he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch, which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate."

As this great project contrived by the Destroyer of Nations, could not be carried into effect, without the concurrence of the Northern Powers of Europe, who had not yet agreed to bend to the will of the Despot; the proposal, or request was, in consequence, sent to them, in form of a mandatè. Being rejected, the commencement of hostilities was the immediate consequence. The haughty spirit of the Tyrant could not bear a refusal, even to an unjust demand, and from persons independent of his authority. With a mind bent on revenge, devastation and death, at the head of a powerful army, he entered the territories of those Powers, who had had virtue and courage enough to reject his unrighteous demand. By the just judgment of Heaven, defeat and ruin were the rewards of his temerity. In consequence of this expedition, his character and views becoming more generally known, and the terror of his name being abated, the nations which had before sub-

mitted to his yoke, have withdrawn their aid and alliance. Being shocked by the magnitude of his crimes, and the alarming effects of his restless ambition, they have joined themselves to the powerful alliance, which is now formed against him. He hath been obliged to trace backward the steps; by which he had advanced in the career of victory, —to descend from the towering height of his ambition. Instead of carrying destruction into other States, subverting their Laws and Constitutions,—deposing and creating kings,—he is made to tremble for the safety of his own throne. “This is the doing of the Lord;” and it demands the affectionate gratitude of all the Friends of order, justice, peace and virtue. After a dark night of terror, suspense and alarm, we now behold a bright and cheering dawn of hope. In attempting our destruction, this implacable enemy hath brought ruin upon himself: The evil, which he had prepared for us, hath fallen upon his own head. Let us, therefore, adopt the language of the Psalmist, in the Text, saying, “We will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast lifted “us up, and hast not made our Foes to rejoice over us.”

As a minor consideration, but still very important to us, in this part of the British Empire, we cannot avoid turning our regard, also, on the present occasion, to the war lately declared, by the Government of the neighbouring States, and chiefly directed against these Provinces. Here, also, we shall find cause for Gratitude to the Supreme Ruler of Nations, that our enemies have not been permitted to “rejoice over us.”

Men of observation were fully convinced, several years prior to the declaration of war, to which we now allude, that a perfect understanding existed between the Cabinet of St. Cloud and that of the United-States; though the latter constantly denied it. Truth, however, though it may be withheld or obscured, for a time, by artful management, generally breaks forth at last; and with this additional advantage in its favour, that it stamps shame and disgrace upon

on those, who attempted to misrepresent, or conceal it. This substantial Truth,—this mighty secret of the American Cabinet, hath transpired through a channel, which they were not aware of, and in a manner which, it is presumed, they least of all suspected. The fallen Despot himself, their venerated pattern and secret ally, virtually admits this fact, (though perhaps inadvertently), in a Speech addressed to his Senate, after the late defeat of his armies.

It is to be observed that, when war was declared by the Government of the United-States, the great *ostensible* subject of complaint was certain Orders in Council, issued by the Government of the United Kingdom which were said to affect the maritime rights of neutral Powers. But very soon after the declaration in question, it was found that these Orders had been repealed; and official information of their repeal was sent to the President of the United States; in hopes, that as the principal cause alleged for the declaration of war was removed, hostilities, in consequence, might cease. But now, it clearly appeared that the *ostensible* cause of the war, was not its *real* cause. It was now evident that this measure had been adopted, and was to be persisted in, through a motive, which could not be avowed. It requires, however, no uncommon sagacity, at the present moment, to discover that motive. The mighty expedition, already mentioned, which was to punish the northern Powers,—to force them to join the grand conspiracy, and to adopt the scheme projected for the destruction of England, was now beginning to move and operate. A diversion was, therefore, wanted in favour of this expedition, —something that might attract the attention of England, and withdraw a part of her force from the scene of operations in Europe. To form this diversion, and thus to second the views of the Ruler of France, was undoubtedly the real motive, which induced the Government of the neighbouring States to become our enemies, and to carry war into this remote corner of the British dominions. This

Power

Power lately risen up against us, is, therefore, a Horn of the Beast, (if we may be allowed the metaphor)—a limb of the great Body of Iniquity. But thanks to Providence, as the vitals are now seriously wounded, it is to be hoped that the members cannot long retain their strength. In all the attempts at invasion, which the agents in this warfare have hitherto made, they have met with defeat and disappointment, the proper rewards of aggression. Let us hope, for their own sakes, as well as ours, that they may, at last, be brought to a better mind ;—that they may reflect on the guilt of persevering in an unrighteous war,—and on the ruinous consequence of the connexion, which they have secretly formed, with the most profligate Power on earth. Let us hope that they will, at last, be persuaded of the truth of this maxim of the wisest of Kings, that it is “Righteousness, which exalteth a Nation.”

It is our peculiar happiness, for which we cannot be too grateful to the Supreme Disposer of events, that the character of the nation to which we belong, is not less eminent for justice, than for valour. It is to this cause, under Providence, that we are to ascribe our national blessings,—the success of our Arms,—the loyalty and unanimity, which prevail among all ranks, of people at home,—and the confidence placed in us, by foreign States. Thus it is, to adopt the words of Solomon, that “The Throne is established in righteousness.”

These then are some of the things, which, in a national view, ought to bear upon our minds, on this day, as subjects of Gratitude: First, and above all, that the cause, in which we are engaged, is the cause of justice and humanity ;—that the Arms of our Country are employed, not only to repel aggression, but also to preserve the order of civilized society,—to secure the natural rights of mankind,—and to restore the blessings of peace to the afflicted nations of the earth.—In the second place, that according to the righteousness of the cause, and the integrity

tegrity of the views, with which Great Britain entered into the contest, so also hath been the success attending her steady perseverance. The justice of the cause is, in fact, that which hath gained it so many friends, and hath finally formed that powerful alliance, which hath crushed the power of the Oppressor.

While we call these things to mind, let us also reflect on what we endeavoured to show, in the former part of this discourse, namely, that the whole is ultimately to be ascribed to the over-ruling Providence of God. Various visible means, and secondary causes, may, no doubt, be assigned for every event, to which we here refer. But, we have seen that there is a power superior to those means,—a power, which superintends and rules those causes themselves. It is to this power, therefore,—this supreme superintending Providence, that our highest praise and gratitude are due.

It was humbly proposed, in the *last* place, to inquire what are the proper expressions of Gratitude to God, for national blessings; or what effects are reasonably to be expected from it, where it doth actually exist.

On this part of the subject, it cannot be requisite to say much. To do the will of God, or to obey his Law, is, in all cases, the best expression of gratitude, for the benefits which we receive from his hands. The duty in which we are this day engaged, as a public acknowledgment of Divine Favour, is also an expression of gratitude, highly proper and becoming: But, at the same time, it is not to be regarded as the most important effect to be expected from a due sense of the Divine benefits. It is rather only subservient and preparatory to a higher branch of the duty. That part of the duty is, to examine our ways and our doings; and wherein we are conscious of having heretofore violated the Divine Law, or dishonoured God, by our conduct, to repent and amend. “If ye love me,” said our

our Saviour, "keep my commandments." The same rule will apply in the present case. If we acknowledge the goodness of God towards us, and profess gratitude for the benefits which he hath bestowed upon us, let us obey his will.

Perhaps the danger with which we were threatened, was sent upon us, as a punishment for sins committed, or a warning against those into which we were ready to fall. Have we then, by the favour of Providence, been defended against this danger, and in a great measure, relieved from the apprehension of it? Let us apply to ourselves the admonition, which our blessed Lord addressed to a man, whom he cured of a bodily infirmity: Let us "go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto us." Let us reflect that the goodness and forbearance of God towards us, are meant to lead us to repentance. But if, unhappily, they should not have that effect;—if instead of being duly influenced by the generous motive of gratitude, we should increase in pride, and become hardened in sin, ascribing our prosperous success solely to our own power or skill, we shall have strong reason to apprehend that "a worse thing may come unto us;"—that we shall be delivered up to a severer dispensation, to reap the fruit of our own doings.

Nations, like private persons, have their characters; and, according to their characters, so are they also dealt with by Providence. This rule is more certain and uniform, in the case of nations, than of individuals. As it is abundantly evident that no people will exist as a nation, or be subject to national punishments, in a future state of existence, hence the awards of justice, in respect of nations, must be expected to be complete and perfect, in the present life; a dispensation which doth not apply to individuals. We are not, however, to look for this complete retribution, in the course of one age or generation. The arm of justice may be long suspended over a guilty people; and national crimes, committed in one generation, may

may be visited in another. Though individuals die; the nation still lives, and is liable, as a nation, to be punished for crimes committed, in any previous period of its existence. Were we qualified to judge, with certainty, of the faults and punishments of a nation, considered purely in that capacity, through the whole period of their existence, from their origin to their extinction, there is not a doubt but that we should find the retribution to be equitable and complete,—national crimes of every kind, visited with adequate national punishments.

Every man, therefore, who professes to love his Country, if he would act consistently, ought not only to abstain from vice himself, but also, to the utmost of his power, to discountenance and suppress it, wherever it appears. As the aggregate of the nation is made up of individuals, hence the vices of individuals have a certain influence on the national character; and, contrary to what a late sceptical writer* hath endeavoured to maintain, we do not hesitate to assert, that even private vices are public and national *injuries*. Whatever disqualifies a person for being useful to the community, such as intemperance and sensuality; whatever disturbs the peace of families,—destroys mutual confidence, or interrupts social order; whatever tends to foster idleness,—to discourage industry, or to produce irregularity of any kind; whatever promotes a mode or fashion of living, too remote from the simplicity of nature, in consequence of which men ruin their fortunes by extravagance, destroy their own peace, impair the health of their bodies and the faculties of their minds;—all these things do obviously diminish the strength and resources of the nation.

Finally, and in a word: As we value the national blessings which we enjoy, and expect that God may be graciously

* Mandeville, in his Fable of the Bees, endeavours to establish this absurd and dangerous doctrine, that "private vices are public benefits."

iously pleased to continue them with us, and not to suffer our " Foes to rejoice over us," let us be exhorted to " live soberly, righteously, and Godly, in the world." He, who is the best Christian, is also the best Subject of the State. Let us banish from among us all profaneness and immorality. Avoiding all cause of strife and contention, let us endeavour to promote unanimity and concord. If we cannot be perfectly united in opinion, on every point, let us, at least, be united in charity and good will.

Now unto God the Sovereign Ruler of Nations, and Protector of the Just, be glory and dominion, henceforth, and forevermore.

A M E N.

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