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S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE SCOTCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

AT QUEBEC,

THE 1st. FEBRUARY 1804.

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PREACHED IN THE  
SCOTCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AT QUEBEC,

ON WEDNESDAY THE 1<sup>st</sup>. FEBRUARY, 1804,

BEING

THE DAY APPOINTED BY PROCLAMATION FOR A  
GENERAL FAST.

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*BY THE REV<sup>d</sup>. ALEX<sup>r</sup>. SPARK.*

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QUEBEC:

Printed and Sold by JOHN NEILSON; NO 3, Mountain-street.

1804.

#### ERRATA.

*Page 6 line 4, for devi-vices, read devic s.*

*Page 7 line 15, for perferve, read perverfe.*

*Page 11 line 19, for delived, read delivered.*

*Page 12 line 14, for cmmon, read common.*

*Page 13 line 10, for condescend upon, read mention.*

*Page 15 line 9, for blessing, read blessings.*

*Page 17 line 12, for Chrifians, read Chriftians.*

## TO THE PUBLIC.

THE following discourse, which is sent to the Prefs at the request of a few Friends, who heard it delivered, having been intended only for the Pulpit, is not recommended to the Public by any ornaments of composition. But the candid reader will know how to make allowance for the difference of style, generally admitted, between spoken and written language; and it is presumed that, to

fuch as are feriously interested in the subject, the composition will be a matter of inferior confideration. For the Sentiments which it contains, no apology is offered.

## S E R M O N.

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ECCLESIASTES VII. 14.

*In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider : God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.*

HAD mankind sufficient confidence in the governing power and wisdom of Providence, we should not see them so much elated by prosperity as they sometimes are, not so apt to complain of adversity. Sensible of their own dependence, they would ascribe the whole to God, who judgeth and ruleth all with infinite goodness: They would rejoice in his dominion, and meekly submit to his will.

“ IT is not in man that walketh to direct his  
 A 4 “ steps,”



“ steps,” or to shape his own fortune in the world. “ The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.” There is an invifible agency in Providence, which over-ruleth the devivices of the wife, and the enterprifes of the mighty.

IT is not left in the power of men, by their own wifdom or exertions, to fecure to themfelves profperity, nor to avoid the ftroke of adverfity; neither can they judge before hand, when they fhall enjoy the one, or fuffer the other; but God fendeth the one or the other, when, and in what proportion it feems good unto him. As expreffed in the Text, “ He hath fet the one over againft “ the other;”—he mixeth them together, or balanceth the one with the other, in human life; “ to the end that man fhould find nothing af- “ ter him;”—that we might feel our dependance on his providence, and know that it is from him, that both our profperity and adverfity come.

AT the fame time, we are not to imagine that Divine Providence ever acts without a fufficient  
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cause, in what it either sends, or denies us. “As  
 “ the bird by wandering, and as the swallow by  
 “ flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.”  
 When we are visited with adversity, it is, in the  
 general plan of providence, intended to serve some  
 wise and good end. It is meant to try our vir-  
 tues, to correct our errors, or to punish our  
 crimes; while it may also, perhaps, serve some o-  
 ther purpose more secret and remote, of which we  
 cannot now judge.

THERE is no Truth more certain than this,  
 that God doth not willingly afflict his creatures.  
 Judgment is his strange work, and he delight-  
 eth to have mercy, and to forgive. But it is the  
 evil and perverse nature in mankind, which re-  
 quires this severity. “Because they regard not  
 “ the work of the Lord, neither consider the  
 “ operation of his hands;—because they are wise  
 “ in their own eyes, and prudent in their own  
 “ sight;—justify the wicked for reward, and take  
 “ away the righteousness of the righteous from  
 “ him;” because “they walk after the sight of  
 “ their own eyes, and the desires of their own  
 “ hearts,”

“ hearts,” and neglect the duty which they owe to their maker;—“ for all this, his anger is not “ turned away, but his hand is stretched out “ still.”—

WHEN he seeth fit to send us prosperity, it is his gracious intention that we should piously and thankfully enjoy it. But when he finds it necessary to visit us with adversity, this ought to call us to more serious reflection;—to make us think wherefore he contendeth with us. “ In the day “ of prosperity be joyful,” saith Solomon, “ but “ in the day of adversity consider.”—In the day of prosperity, we are to be joyful in the Lord, and thankful to him for what we possess: not to be “ lifted up above measure,” with our success, as if it were effected by our own power or wisdom; but to “ joy in the God of our Salvation,” and to “ join trembling with our mirth.” In the day of adversity, on the other hand, we are to *consider* wherefore it is sent upon us;—to humble ourselves before God, and wherein we have gone a stray, to “ return unto him with purpose of heart,” if happily his anger may be turned away from us.

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To day, Christians, we are called upon, by public authority, to attend upon this sacred duty. Being, in the righteous dispensation of providence, visited with the calamity of war, and beholding “ the judgments of God” gone abroad “ in the earth,” we are called upon to humble ourselves before that Sovereign Power, which “ ruleth in the kingdoms of men,”—to confess our manifold sins, which have incurred his displeasure, beseeching him that he may be graciously pleased to avert the punishment they have justly deserved.

AT the present momentous crisis, which, on account of the dangers it brings to view, and the miseries unavoidably attendant on war, may justly be called a “ day of adversity,” it is proper for us to *consider*, 1<sup>st</sup>, The danger, which threatens us as a Nation: 2<sup>ly</sup>, How much we have deserved to be visited with adversity, on account of our sins: And 3<sup>ly</sup>, what conduct we ought now to pursue, in order to give us hopes of safety and deliverance.

NOTWITHSTANDING the confidence we may justly place in the equity of Providence, that the counsels  
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of the wicked shall not finally prevail,—it is proper that we should “hear the rod, and who hath appointed it;” that we should be sensible of the evil, which we suffer, regarding it as a warning sent from God, to make us reflect upon our ways, and amend our doings.

HAPPY, beyond example, in an excellent Constitution of Government,—happy in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, and in the security of our persons and property, under the protection of equitable Laws, a wise administration, and a Prince, who may truly be called the Father of his People; possessing national advantages superior, perhaps, to what any people ever enjoyed before,—at the present moment, we behold all these advantages suspended on the hazard of war.

A turbulent and ambitious Foe, apparently raised up by providence as a scourge to the present age, stung with envy and jealousy of that degree of national prosperity, which Heaven hath hitherto vouchsafed unto us, employs all his art and energy to deprive us of these inestimable blessings. The  
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avowed object of those by whom the war is fomented, is to overturn all regular Government. Their aim is especially directed against the vitals of the British Constitution; and it would appear, as if nothing less could satiate their pride and ambition, than the subversion of the Throne.

WHAT son—or what subject of that happy and highly favoured Nation, can bear the thought of the rude attempt! Shall they who have so long experienced the happiness of a Constitution, which is justly regarded as the most glorious monument of human wisdom,—shall the sons of those Statesmen and Heroes, by whose labours and blood it was raised and cemented;—shall they live to see the venerable Fabric humbled in the dust? Shall the work and wisdom of ages become the sport of a visionary Upstart? May Heaven avert the direful calamity! The times in which we live are strange and eventful; but we piously trust that Providence hath not yet delivered us over to this degree of degradation.

BUT should the threatened invasion of Britain be attempted, admitting that the Enemy fail of success,  
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(as there is ground to hope must be the case), what carnage and devastation have we not to apprehend? How many lives must be sacrificed in the contest? How many widows and orphans left to misery and want?—Sad effects of lawless ambition!

REMOVED as we are, in this remote corner of the world, from the present scene of war, and from the immediate consequence of the dangers, which threaten our Mother Country, our feelings ought, notwithstanding, to be the same as if we were there present. We are equally interested in the event of the war; our safety depends on hers; and we cannot but sympathize with those, who may be exposed to suffer in the common cause.

NEITHER is it the fate of our own country alone we have to regard in this contest. The cause in which Great Britain is now engaged, is the cause of humanity, and of the world in general: All nations are interested in her success. Were the designs of the Enemy to succeed, we might expect to see universal anarchy, or despotism, overspread the world, and the scenes of Gothic barbarism again realized:

realized: we might expect to see the rights of Nations, and of individuals disregarded, religion discountenanced, and infidelity set on high. The present war is not merely what most others have been, a dispute concerning a right to certain extent of territory. It is a contest between civil order and confusion; between liberty and tyranny; between piety and infidelity. In short, it involves whatever ought to be most dear to us, as men and as christians.

WE cannot condescend upon any of those, who have shown themselves real partisans of that revolutionary Spirit, which now disturbs the world, who have not clearly manifested their sentiments respecting religion,—that, in their hearts, they pay no regard to it. From the Character of the men, we may therefore judge of the order of things, which they would attempt to establish, should they attain (what their ambition leads them to expect) universal empire.

Thus apprised of the danger, which threatens our national Interests, and the happiness of mankind in general, it is proper that we *consider,*  
2dly,



2dly, How justly we have deserved to be visited with *Adversity*, on account of our sins.

“ WHEN the judgments of God are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world” ought to “ learn righteousness.” We ought thoroughly to examine our ways, and to humble ourselves, in the sight of the Lord, on account of our sins, if happily his judgments may be removed, and the threatening clouds dispersed.

THE cause of national calamities is generally to be ascribed to national sins. This is the sentence of the Lord respecting the kingdom of David, as expressed in the 89th Psalm, 30th verse: “ If his Children forsake my law, and walk not “ in my judgments; if they break my statutes, “ and keep not my commandments; then will I “ visit their transgressions with the rod, and their “ iniquities with stripes.”——Let it not be our confidence that the enemy is more unrighteous, and more deserving of punishment than we. It is the way of God, in the course of his providence, frequently to make use of the more wicked, as the  
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rod of his anger, to punish the Sins of those, whom he means afterwards to deliver. Thus was Pharoah, and thus were the Chaldæans, of old, greater sinners than the Israelites whom they oppressed.

HAVING been long favoured by Heaven, with national blessings and prosperity, above all other nations of the Earth, it becomes us to *consider* how we have improved those blessing. Have we been sufficiently thankful for them? Have we valued them as we ought? or have we adopted the proper means of preserving them? Has there, in every part of the British Dominions, appeared, among all ranks, that love of order and justice,—that subordination, and prompt obedience to the Laws, which are requisite to give energy and effect to the whole system of Government? Has there been that union among ourselves, which constitutes the strength of a Nation, and, under God, is the best security against all enemies? Have all those, who have enjoyed the blessings, which Heaven hath long vouchsafed to the subjects of the British Government, appeared duly sensible of their

happiness? Or have not unreasonable complaints sometimes been heard, and even plots and factions formed against legal authority?—All these are matters of serious consideration.—Faction and disloyalty among ourselves, not only diminish our national strength, but also encourage our enemies with the hopes of profiting by our disunion, and are, therefore, to be regarded as one cause, which may have accelerated the calamities of war.

THOUGH we have not to accuse ourselves personally with any acts of disloyalty, it is yet matter of deep sorrow and regret, that such practices should have existed, in any part of the dominions to which we belong: And it becomes us, on this day of humiliation, to acknowledge and bewail them before God, as sins chargeable upon the nation, which have justly incurred the Divine displeasure.

IT behoves us also to *consider* how we have improved the benefits of the Christian religion. We have the Scriptures translated into our mother tongue; and every one has free access to that fountain of Divine knowledge. We enjoy the pri-

privilege of public worship, and of the other ordinances of the Gospel, together with every necessary assistance in the knowledge of our duty. What fruit have all these benefits produced among us? This question comes home to every man's conscience.—Can we say that we have acted up to the spirit of the Christian Law, as far as we knew it, or might have known it? Or have we not to charge ourselves with very great deficiency in this respect? We have to confess and lament before God, that there still exist, among us, many sinful practices, “ which ought not once to be named among Christians.”

NOTWITHSTANDING the light of the Gospel, which we have so long enjoyed, and every aid for our instruction, it cannot be denied but that a spirit of infidelity is still to be found among us;—that some appear hardened in sin, and callous to all the admonitions of the Gospel;—careless and unconcerned as to what regards religion; unawed by the prospects of Futurity, or the terrors of Divine wrath.

ON the other hand, we may find persons, who,

with the name of God in their mouths, and with every external appearance of sanctity, will circumvent or defraud their neighbour, and in private practise the grossest immoralities: men “ who profess to know God, but in works deny him, “ being abominable, and disobedient, and unto “ every good work reprobate.”

BUT where is to be found that purity of mind and manners, which the Gospel requires? That integrity, and cordial love of goodness? That philanthropy and brotherly love? Where is that unanimity and concord, which ought to distinguish the disciples of Christ? Where is that unaffected piety, which, without courting the notice of men, enters into the recesses of the soul, and purifies the heart and the conscience? Where is that pure and manly zeal, which is “ according to knowledge?”—Not a zeal for trifles, or for matters of doubtful opinion, which produceth strife, “ rather than Godly edifying;”—but a zeal for “ the Faith once delivered unto the Saints;”—that Faith, “ which worketh by love,” and which tends to promote union, virtue, and happiness? Though  
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we certainly may boast of many Characters, eminent both for piety and virtue; yet these fruits of true religion are far from being so general as they ought.

IN matters of religion, as well as in politics, a spirit of innovation appears to have gone abroad in the world, which under pretence of rectifying abuses, labours to subvert all established order; and it is matter of regret that this spirit has met with too much countenance and encouragement. Christians ought to know that there is nothing new to be expected in religion. But if any man would distinguish himself as a disciple of Christ, let it be by his works. In as far as he shews himself to be a good Subject of the State, a sincere Friend, a good Neighbour, upright, charitable, and of a holy and virtuous life,—so far we may give him credit for the rectitude of his principles; for, “the tree is known by its fruit;”—so far we may honour and esteem him, as one who liveth under the power of Religion. But a mere profession, without a corresponding conduct, is of no avail.

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LET us now, 3dly, *consider* what conduct we ought to pursue, in this time of danger and calamity, in order to give us ground to hope for safety and deliverance.

FIRST, and principally, being duly sensible of the error of our ways,—how much we have provoked God, by our sins,—it becomes us to return unto him, by true repentance and amendment;—to walk in his fear,—to set his Law before our eyes,—and to cleanse ourselves from our iniquities. The best ground of security we can have, for the continuance of the blessings we enjoy, is to improve them, according to the intention of him, who bestoweth them upon us.

WHEN God, of old, brought up the Israelites out of Egypt, “and gave them the lands of the “Heathen,” it was in order “that they might “obey his statutes, and keep his laws” But, when they afterwards forsook his law, and corrupted his worship with the idolatry of the nations, which had been before them in the Land, “he was turned to be their enemy,” as saith the  
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Prophet, “ and he fought against them:—He delivered their strength into captivity, and their glory into the Enemy’s hand.” Yet when they returned, and called upon him, in their trouble, “ he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry. He remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.”

THOUGH we, in like manner, have sinned against him, and have not duly improved his benefits,—yet if we return unto him, with all our hearts, before the judgment shall have gone forth against us, there is ground to hope in his mercy, that he will yet deliver us, as in times past. If by our repentance and amendment, we make God our Friend, we need not fear all that can rise up against us. “ The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us.”

LET us banish and discountenance all faction and discord; and with heart and hand, unite in the common cause of our Country. The eyes,  
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and the expectations of all people are turned towards Great Britain. They behold, with admiration, the arduous contest she sustains; and which, we trust, under the guidance of Providence, she will be enabled to bring to a fortunate issue. “The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.”—“A righteous man falling down before the wicked, is a troubled fountain, and a corrupt stream.” When wicked men are exalted to dignity and power, the fountain of justice is corrupted, and the order of society destroyed.—But this is a state of things, which cannot be permanent. There are means in the hand of Providence to correct all abuses of this kind; and it is found, in experience, that “The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the hope of the hypocrite but for a moment.”

If the contest in which Britain is now engaged be arduous, it is also honourable, and glorious. Never did any nation act a part more eminent on the Theatre of the world, or more important to mankind, than that, which Providence hath, at this time, assigned to her. In midst of the astonish-  
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ed nations, she stands forth before the haughty Foe, as the champion of religion and virtue, and the avenger of injured humanity. She appears the sole Power, which possesses strength and courage, to check the progress of that disorganizing spirit, which threatened to overspread the world, and to fill it with confusion and misery.

NEVER, surely, was a war more necessary than that in which we are now engaged, or more honourable to the supporters of it. Let us not, then, complain of the temporary hardships, which it may occasion; nor of its continuance, should it be unavoidably protracted. But let us patiently wait, until the hand of Providence interpose, to establish peace and order, on a solid foundation.

IN the mean time, knowing that it is "righteousness which exalteth a Nation," and that "sin is the reproach," and must finally prove the ruin, "of any people," let it be the care of every one of us, in our several departments of life, to promote and encourage order and virtue, by our influence and example. Both in our public and private

concerns, let the law of God be the rule of our conduct, and let vice of every kind be more and more discountenanced.

IF we are really persuaded, of what the scripture teacheth us, that "the battle is the Lord's," that he exalteth or depresseth nations, as seemeth good in his sight, and that their own sinfulness is that which accelerateth his judgements; hence we may also perceive, that every wicked man, however strong his professions of patriotism may be, must be regarded as an enemy to his country.

FINALLY: Whatever reports we may have heard of the hostile preparations of the enemy, let us be exhorted to trust in the protection of Heaven, and to fear no evil. "Say to them that are of a fearful heart be strong, fear not, behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense, he will come and save you." If we be not wanting in our duty to God, or in the proper application of the means, which he hath put in our power, we can have no reason to be apprehensive as to the final issue of the contest.

WISDOM

“ WISDOM is better than weapons of war,” saith Solomon, “ but one finner destroyeth much good.” This observation we may see verified in the general course of Providence. One person vested with power, who rushes forward to gratify his ambition, without regard to justice or moderation, may, indeed “ destroy much good,” and for a time occasion much distress and trouble in the world. But his career is of short duration ; and all his “ weapons “ of war,” are finally found insufficient to support him, against the steady perseverance of those, who are guided by wisdom and virtue.

Now, unto the Lord our God, who alone hath power to save and to destroy, be glory and dominion, henceforth and forevermore. AMEN.

F I N I S.