

SPCL

E

364

.5

M35

1808

274378

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
LIBRARY
BROCK UNIVERSITY

Cal 79285

SES 15472

SERMON.

THE QUESTION

WAR WITH GREAT BRITAIN,

EXAMINED UPON

MORAL AND CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES.

“AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL INQUIRED OF THE LORD, SAYING,
SHALL I GO OUT TO BATTLE AGAINST THE CHILDREN OF BENJA-
MIN, MY BROTHER?” JUDGES, XX. 27, 28.

BOSTON :
PRINTED BY SNELLING AND SIMONS:

.....
1808.

SEVERAL friends to whom this discourse has been communicated, have thought that it might be of some use, in the present *awful crisis* of our affairs; more especially to the RELIGIOUS PEOPLE of our country. It is therefore submitted, as it was first written, to the candid and serious attention of all who *fear God and love their country*. If any apology be requisite for its appearing anonymous, the words of one of our great and good men* are adopted. "Those who are in the habit of approving or condemning, more from regard to *persons* than to *things*, wish to know the author before they read a book. In the hope that these sheets may be *impartially* considered, the writer will not affix his name."

* "*Answer to War in Disguise*," attributed by those who have the best means of knowing, to His Excellency RUFUS KING, Esq.

SERMON,

JUDGES XX. 27, 28.

“ And the children of Israel inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go out to battle against the children of Benjamin, my brother ?”

IT was the character of one of the best men of New-England, that “ he never would act, without being first satisfied, that if he did, it would be right.”* If that was a good rule for all times, it must be indispensable in such a case as the sacred text brings up. A question of war is a subject awfully solemn ! surely every good man will choose to know what is right *here*, before he acts. And every considerate *people*, where the true God is known, will religiously ask counsel of Him, before they engage in this dreadful work ! see, in this chapter, all the children of Israel going up to the house of God, to inquire solemnly of Him, when such a question was before them. And had they, in the first place, done this in due manner, it is highly probable they would have escaped those great calamities they were made to feel ; and perhaps, might have had no war at all.

The object of this discourse is, to explain that inquiring of the Lord, which becomes a people’s duty, when a question of war is before them, and to offer some reasons which show the importance of such inquiry.

Under the first head, three things will deserve consideration : the object of such inquiry ; the way in which it is to be made, and the proper spirit and manner of it.

The great object of inquiry is, or should be, whether war, in such case, be right in the sight of God. If it is *not*, no considerations should ever persuade us to it. On the other hand, if it *is*, then it becomes an incumbent duty, and, as such, *must* be taken up. For the divine law, in this case, does not leave us to *our* discretion. The *standing* precept is, Thou shalt *not* kill ; and the only cases in which we *may*, are those in which we *must* ; that is, cases of clear necessity. Accordingly, the question here submitted is, *Shall* I go out to battle ? and the answer is decisive ; “ *Go.*” As elsewhere it is equally peremptory in the negative ; “ Thus saith the Lord, ye shall *not* go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel.”†

But the general question, “ Would it be right in the sight of God ?” must include more particulars than one. Whether going to war

* See the obituary notice of the venerable Dr. Sewall.

† 1 Kings, xii. 24.

would be doing justly *to those we are to war against*, is one point. If it would not, then certainly it would not be right in the sight of God, but a crime of high degree. For instance, it would be flagrantly unjust to make war without provocation. It would be unjust to go to war upon *slight* provocation. Because, by the supposition, the punishment you aim to inflict, is far greater than the crime. And if *great wrong* has been done to us, yet, if some aggression on our part has provoked it, it might still be unjust to go to war for it.

But there is another point of inquiry; viz. Whether going to war would be doing justice *to ourselves and to our children*?

If it would not, suppose it were not unjust to the adverse party, it could not be right in the sight of God. For instance, if, in all probability, it would plunge us into much greater evils than those which it aims to repel; or than would have been suffered without war; if, instead of redressing our grievances, it would greatly increase them; in short, if no equivalent were likely to be found for all we should suffer, nor any valuable purpose answered; in such case, engaging in war would be more than impolitic; it would be *immoral*. It would be a flagrant violation of a sacred trust; viz. *the guardianship* of our children and posterity committed to us by Heaven, and for which we are solemnly responsible; nay, it would be a kind of *suicide*; and if the law against murder forbids individuals to destroy themselves, it certainly regards as a high crime for a nation to sacrifice thousands of its people, without necessity clear as the day. Every thing, therefore, of this nature, as well as every thing belonging to the question of justice to our neighbour, must be a subject of solemn inquiry.

We come to consider in what way this inquiry must be made. No *immediate* answers from heaven are now to be expected by audible voice, by prophetick dreams, visions, or the like; no responses by Urim and Thummim; no priests, nor prophets, by whose simple declarations our duty is to be determined. No; but we have a **DIVINE RULE**, which marks for us a clear line of conduct in all great concerns, and every part of it approves itself to conscience. For instance, we have the golden rule our divine Master gave us, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so them."* According to this, we must maintain no points against others, which we could not think it would be right for others to maintain against us; and be sure to consider nothing as cause of war, which we must not confess would be such, if done by ourselves.

Again we have a command, which says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness:" that is, as an excellent good man and wise man used to comment upon it, pursue peace, though it seem to flee from you; and let nothing stop your pursuit, but what is *contrary* to holiness. If the first efforts prove ineffectual, follow on with redoubled exertions, while any hope remains.

Again, we are commanded, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."† For this, it seems, we must en-

* Matt. vii, 12.

† Rom. xii. 18.

terprife with all our faculties and with all our might ; and if the object can be honeftly and honourably obtained, then it *muft* be.

Coincident with this, is another command : “ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”* We are overcome when our paffions get the dominion, fo that fighting pleafes us better than honourable peace : And certainly, when we are fo paffionate that we will fight unneceffarily, under every difadvantage, and without hope. This fhould never be, if the greateft evil has been done to us ; and much lefs, if none but what we ourfelves have provoked. Inftead of this, full trial fhould be made, in every cafe, of that magnanimity, that moderation and liberality, which rarely fail to difarm a generous adverfary, as much as conquering him by the fword. If upon all trial, it fhould not have that effect, then it may be hoped, that gracious Heaven will fhew what muft be done in another way.

In fine ; “ Blessed are the peace makers,” fays our Divine Lord, “ for they fhall be called the children of God.” And who can thofe peace makers be, but fuch as follow the God of peace ; and his Son, the great Mediator between heaven and earth ; and can therefore condefcend, if they are the *only* party injured, to *feek* reconciliation, and go very great lengths for it, before they will give it over.

Such is the genius of the difpenfation we are under, and to which our own beft hopes are all to be afcribed. And if sentiments like thefe ought to prevail in our individual concerns, who would not fuppose that *nations* bearing the christian name, fhould likewise have refpect to them in their national tranfactions ; and are without excufe if they will rufh to war as haftily, and as paffionately, upon flight provocation, as uninformed barbarians have been wont to do ; or upon *great* provocation without firft making trial of all thofe honourable condefcenfion which the gospel precepts enjoin, and its great examples recommend ?†

The way therefore to inquire the mind of God, when a queftion of war is before us, is to ftudy the BIBLE ; and efpecially the genius of the GOSPEL OF PEACE. *Then*, apply its facred maxims and sentiments to our own cafe, viewed in all its circumftances and connexions. Let this be done with folemnity, as in the prefence of that Being, to whom nations, and each individual muft give account. This is the way to know whether going to war be our indifpenfable duty. I fay, *indifpenfable* duty, for the reafon given above, that the only cafe in which war is *permitted*, is, where neceffity is laid upon us, and we *muft* go to war. I fay indifpenfable duty, for another reafon. This is one of thofe cafes, where in order to act with a clear confcience, we muft be freed from all reafonable doubt. If in a capital trial, where any doubts remain, no verdict fhall be given that fhall take away life ;

* Rom. xii. 21.

† “ O fhame to man !—————
 —————Men only difagree,
 Of creatures rational, though under hope
 Of heav’nly grace, and God proclaiming peace ;
 Yet live in hatred, levy cruel wars,
 Wafte the earth.”

certainly there should be no decision at a venture, or without *clear necessity*, for destroying the lives of thousands.

But, inquiring of the Lord supposes, offering up *prayers* to Him, as well as studying his word. If, "in every thing," prayer be a bounden duty,* it certainly is in so great a concern as this. Plain as the rules are, we know, or should know, how liable we are to err, through frailty, from prepossession, or the want of a right spirit. God in his great goodness has therefore pointed out this way of addressing ourselves to Him, that we may understand our duty as it lies before us, and be preserved from whatever would mislead us, either as to the rule itself, or its application to the present case. We must *watch*, as well as pray, if we would inquire in the appointed order.† That is, be always on our guard against the various causes, and *occasions* of deception.

And thus we come to consider, the proper spirit and manner of this inquiry. Here I shall chiefly take up such hints as Israel's error in the first instance, and dear bought experience in the course of things, clearly point out to us.

1. We should ask counsel in an unbiassed and unreserved manner. We should come to it, with a mind as open as possible to conviction, and ready to submit ourselves to Heaven's direction, in *all points*. It was the error of Israel, that, before they came to ask counsel of the Lord, they had made up their minds. Very unhappily, the first notice of the *affair* which had happened, was given in a manner, just fitted to inflame their passions to the utmost: and it had the effect. In that inflamed state of mind, *without* a particular and solemn inquiry, either into the state of facts, or into the mind of God, they determined at once what to do. They would not even go to their tents, nor turn to their houses; but they would go off direct, and arrange themselves for war. In that threatening attitude they made their demands; as though it were not even intended that their brethren should comply.*. And when they came afterward to the house of the Lord to ask counsel, it is remarkable that they did not submit the *main question*, whether they *should* go up to battle; *that* they had determined *themselves*. The only question they left to their Maker, was, *who* shall go up *first*? To come to inquire of the Lord with a mind so predetermined, was a great impropriety. It was more; it was a great sin. And they were punished for it, until they learned to come in a better manner. After a dreadful overthrow, then they submitted the whole subject.

2. When we come with a question of war, it should be with great tenderness of mind, both in deference to the adverse party, and to the lives and interests of our own people.

Here likewise, Israel, hurried on by their passions, appear to have been strangely deficient. They seem not to have calculated upon any distress to be felt on their own part; and as to their brethren, against whom they were arming, they appear quite regardless how much *they* might suffer. But after a mortifying defeat; after losing twenty two

*See Phil. iv. 6.

† Matt. xxvi. 41.

|| See v. 9 to 13.

thousand men in the very first battle, in a dispute, which a little moderation, perhaps, might have settled without any bloodshed, they began to weep for themselves and their country ; to think what a dreadful calamity war was ; and whether they had not rushed too precipitately into such an unnatural contest as this, with a people of their own blood, their own language and manners, and their own religion. And *now* it is instructive to see how their stile is altered. At first it was, "*Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin ?*"* as though they were no more related to *them* than any other people. But now it is, " Shall I go again to battle against the children of Benjamin, *my brother ?*"†

If the war were ever so necessary, it was but proper they should feel in that manner. How distressing then should be the thought, to plunge into it without necessity ?

3. A trembling sense of dependence on the favour of Heaven, should never forsake us ; and certainly not when a question of war is before us. Whether in such an undertaking the Lord of Hosts would be with us, or whether he would only frown upon it, are interesting questions. And it is madness to put them out of sight ; whether we are plainly feeble and unprepared, or whether our prospects, in a human view, are highly flattering. It was Israel's great error to be so confident of victory, because they could bring such an army into the field. There was probably so much the less of looking up for Divine aid, and so much the less of trembling for those sins which exposed them to humiliating disappointment. And see how distressingly their self-confidence was punished. In the two first actions, though in comparison with their enemy they were nearly in the proportion of fifteen to one, their superior numbers did little more than to swell the number of their slain ; and before they *began* to have any success, they had lost forty thousand men. So dangerous is it, as well as improper, to trust in an arm of flesh, and forget our dependence on the Sovereign Power !

4. Inquiring of the Lord on the subject of war, should be with sincere mourning for those sins, by which the blessings of peace have been forfeited, and throwing ourselves upon mercy in the appointed way. When Israel came first to inquire about war, nothing appeared of mourning for their sins, or imploring mercy, on that account. And war seems to be sent upon them for a punishment of such impenitence, and for their great declensions ; especially the idolatry which was now tolerated in the land, though according to their law, it should have been a first object of reform. At their second inquiry, there seems to be a mourning of some sort ; but without those accompaniments, which were required in such case. Therefore they still met with sore rebuke. But the third time there was deep mourning, and fasting, and the offering of burnt sacrifices, and peace-offerings ; and so they inquired of the Lord, through the mediation of the High Priest. And now the God of Israel had respect to his

own appointments, and an answer of peace was given to them. Shall *we* be found waiting on the Lord in like manner, with deep humiliation ; with affectionate supplication for pardon and peace, and a due reference to the *Great* High Priest and his atoning sacrifice ?

We now come to the second general head ; the importance of such inquiring of the Lord in every such case.

It is a plain duty, " In all thy ways acknowledge him."* Certainly then, in all such *great* concerns. It is an honour due to the Sovereign of the world. If the eyes of servants should look to the hand of their master, and the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress,† much more should every eye to *His* directing hand, to whom above all, it is our business to approve ourselves.

In *this* case nothing *can* be right which the Master does not approve. The great question, therefore, ought to be " What is right in the sight of God ?" This question all good men will choose to bring to *Him*. And a proper *test of integrity*, or of aiming to do right in all things, is a desire to know the mind of God, that we may do it ; a continual asking counsel of him, and an unreserved submitting of all our conduct to His direction : that is, to the direction of his word and spirit.

To inquire of the Lord is as plainly a great privilege, as a great duty. How forcible are those words of the Prophet, " O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."* In this view he prays to be corrected, that is, to be set right. And who does not want this mercy ? We should be miserable, if we might not ask it. How wretched, if in *great* concerns, we had no such liberty ! On the other side, the encouragement to seek heavenly direction is inestimable. " If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."† How ample, and how gracious is this ! And if it reaches *all men*, it extends to nations. Pious rulers and heads of nations had, indeed, in all preceding ages, believed in similar promises, and found it not in vain to call their people together, to ask heavenly direction, upon great occasions. Witness Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, and others. The inference is obvious, that *we* are the more inexcusable, if we do not, both individually and collectively, avail ourselves of this high privilege. And we are the more *exposed*, if it be neglected. Who indeed can hope to prosper, that do not ask divine direction, and give themselves up to it ?

It should be observed, that drawing near to God, and religiously referring ourselves to his direction, are among the best means to make us *feel* what is right, and free us from the influence of every blinding passion. O if we could feel continually the impressions of his divine purity, his impartial eye, his holy and good word, how would it purify our sentiments. And how much better should we judge, than by consulting our own feelings, and the spirit of the world ! The best

* Prov. iii. 4.

† Ps. cxxiii.

* Jer. x. 23.

† Jam i. 5.

men, from age to age, have found the benefit of often retiring to *this* sanctuary, and thousands beside have found a strong check upon what was wrong in their spirits or inclinations.

On the whole, the different successes Israel met with, *before* their inquiring of the Lord in due manner, and *after* it, is instead of a thousand arguments to confirm its importance. On the one side, we see a blessing; on the other side, dishonour and disappointment. In every case where this great duty is neglected, both princes and people will follow their own headlong passions; they will plunge into war where there is no necessity; and they will bend and submit, where they ought to have stood firm. Or, if they sometimes happen to do right, it will not be in obedience to the Divine pleasure, but to their own; and who, in that case, is to bless and reward them? in short, it would be improper to expect to see wisdom, or consistency, true honour or a blessing, where they are not even asked for.

Our subject, on a review, leads us to inquire seriously, What have been *our* habits, with respect to asking counsel of God in all great concerns: and, in particular, whether we have been duly awake to this great duty, since the question of war has been moved in these United States. To suppose that *any* persons have been sufficiently awake to this duty, and to the whole way and manner of it, is to suppose a great deal. Yet numbers, we ought to believe, have felt this as a great concern, acted upon it as such, and carried it with them among their first wishes, that the Sovereign of the world, notwithstanding our ill-deservings, would vouchsafe to manifest his pleasure, both to the government and the people of this nation; and that his pleasure thus manifested, might be religiously respected. Others, I am afraid, in various parts of the land, have been too much absorbed in contemplations merely political, and too indifferent to the main question, What is the will of God upon this awful occasion, and what measures will best accord with his holy directions? How many have made up their minds, without religiously and dispassionately consulting the *Holy Oracle*, it is not my province to determine. One thing is certain, that the alarm which went forth in the first instance, was too much adapted, like that in Israel's case, to awake our passions, and induce a committing of ourselves, before we were sufficiently informed.

Another thing is certain, that this nation, called by the name of christian, has not yet been led, according to former usage on great occasions, to petition the Supreme Power, that an honourable tranquillity may be continued to these states, or to submit to Him the question, Whether we *must* go out to battle against our brother? And I believe it may be said, without enthusiasm, that we have been left so much the more to our own wisdom, and our own counsels. I am afraid, indeed, that the name of *brother*, has been very much dropped, as in the case of Israel against Benjamin, and all those tender arguments thrown out of sight, which would make it seem dreadful to stain our hands with English blood. If this be the case any where, or in any measure, let me pray my countrymen to correct themselves in this, before they go a step further, and certainly before they ultimately decide

the great question before them, and candidly to consider, whether such a bias must not have proceeded from something wrong at bottom, and something which Heaven may think proper to cure by fore calamity, as in that case, unless it be seasonably put away.

While passion reigns, we are not prepared even to consult the oracle in due manner, or to act our parts rightly in the course of things, if it should appear that we ought to take up arms. How unprepared then, with such passions, to take up our duty, if the voice of Heaven should command us to go and make peace ?

May the grace of Heaven prepare us to come with unbiassed minds, and submit the whole question of war ; whether it would be right in the sight of God ; whether it would agree with the golden rule of Christ, and with all the sacred maxims and precepts of the gospel ; whether, in short, in the view of Infinite Rectitude, it would agree both with justice to our neighbour, and justice to ourselves and our children ; whether it be so necessary that we cannot keep a good conscience without it.

But in order to understand our duty, it is not only necessary to study the sacred oracles with great care, and prayerful application ; but to consider with as much accuracy as possible, the state of facts, and impartially compare them with the sacred rule, that we may see how it applies.

Suppose then, we should *now* spend a few moments, in reviewing and pondering in its principal circumstances, the case which we have to bring and submit, to the arbiter of nations.*

It is known to all, that the immediate occasion of the alarm throughout these states, was an attack on the 22d of June last, by a British frigate on a publick armed ship of the United States, (by which several of our people were killed, and a number more wounded,) and a taking away by force from *our* ship, several of the men on board. All this was proclaimed and published throughout the Union ; and produced (as every one would suppose) a strong sensation ; stronger indeed, than would have been felt, had the whole case been stated. You were told of the attack, but not of the irritations which preceded, or the question that brought it on. Indeed it was announced as an "enormity committed without provocation." And I am very sorry that it was so announced !

You are told of the assailants taking away the men ; but not that they took them as of right under their command ; not that they took them as so many deserters from the British service, and known on all hands, to be such ; not that they took them in *this* way, because their applications in a civil way, though often repeated, had been as often refused.

It was announced as a finishing circumstance to mark the character of this action, that "it had been previously ascertained, that the men demanded were native Americans ;" when the fact

* It has not been thought necessary to load this publication with documents. The facts here stated have been again and again before the publick, and stand uncontradicted.

is, that nothing was ascertained by regular inquiry, till some time after ; when the fact is, that the men *demand*ed, and for the recovery of whom the attack was made, were all native Britons ; and of all who were *taken off*, only a *part* were native Americans ; and you should have been apprised that *they* were men who had voluntarily enlisted into the British service, and had deserted ; whom, therefore, by our laws, we had no right to retain, when demanded by their officers. These were the facts, relative to the proclaimed attack. And whatever would have been its character, if made without provocation, all must acknowledge that the circumstances which brought it on, went far to reduce its *enormity*, if not wholly to change its complexion. The principle lately set up in America, of covering all British subjects, who should come under our flag, not excepting mutineers and deserters, together with the subsequent practice, of inveigling and enlisting British seamen, had produced a serious effect. It threatened the annihilation of the British maritime power. It threatened in particular to defeat the intention for which the British Squadron now in our seas, was sent out ; and to give their enemy an escape. The British were losing their men every day, and the answer of our officers, and of administration itself to respectful applications for those men, left no hope of redress. *Their* officers, quite recently have given up to ours, British men who had deserted *our* service ; and we, who now denied their respectful applications, had lately given up deserters from the French, though demanded in a coarse way. All this the officers of Britain knew and felt before they made their last demand of their men on board our ship ; and meeting with an ultimate refusal, they did, as our Prebels or Decaturs would have done ; took by force such deserters as they found there.

Taking all these facts and circumstances into view, we should have found it difficult to consider this *attack* as sufficient cause of war, if the government of Britain had authorised it. In such a state of things, as the venerable Bishop of Asaph in 1774, said upon another occasion, " We ought to have expected the strongest marks of resentment, and to have been prepared to forgive them."

But as the case was, this attack was the act of individuals, and not of the government ; therefore, the many invectives on this occasion, against the British nation, and against their government, should have been spared. These certainly had no tendency to promote justice, or to prevent a rupture. And whether our putting ourselves, like Israel, in such a hostile attitude, and proclaiming hostility against the whole British navy, before making our demands of reparation, was clearly necessary, or whether any principle of true honour required it, deserves a serious thought. What would have been lost, in point of dignity or wisdom, had we, without assuming such an air of defiance, chosen to rely upon it, that the government of Britain, on a simple representation of the case, would do all that was proper ? If we had chosen, I say, to rely upon it, till the contrary should appear ?

It is certainly a strong proof of the magnanimity of that government, and its sincere disposition to maintain peace, that it has, under

circumstances so forbidding, disapproved the attack on the Chesapeake ; recalled the officer who ordered it ; appointed a special minister of peace to come over and settle this sad affair, on terms of amity, and, by publick proclamation, to all intents given it in orders, that no such act shall be done hereafter, be the provocation what it may, without a representation first made to the government.

Such being the state of things, the Chesapeake dispute seems now in a train to be finished, IF WE ARE PACIFICK ON OUR PART. And the question of war now appears reduced to one single point ; shall we make war with our brethren, because, by the Proclamation abovementioned, they claim their own men, because they demand their assistance when in extreme want of it, and forbid their withdrawing themselves without permission ? Is this that case of clear necessity, in which we, as in duty bound, must fly to arms ? What, to interfere between a government, and its subjects, and prescribe the rules by which both the one and the other shall be governed ! To encourage desertion, at this critical moment, which requires every man in that service to be at his post ! To fill our country with runaways, and our ships with foreigners, instead of our own people ! Excellent privilege !

Suppose then we go to war for it, have we a probable hope, that we shall obtain and establish it ? No. After the destruction of all our commerce, after a most costly sacrifice of treasure and of blood ; the most probable result is, that we shall sue for peace, and yield the very point for which we contend. But suppose, for a moment, that we obtain it ; what is it worth ? Nothing. No, it is a great deal worse. We have filled our country and depraved our government with the refuse of Europe. We have discouraged and depressed our own native citizens ; and thrown by degrees, the defence of all that is dear to us, into their hands that do not naturally feel for it ; and who, in case of war against their native connexions, would desert again ? And are these the precious advantages we are going to buy at such a price ?

But WOULD SUCH A CONTEST BE RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF HEAVEN ? This is the great question, would it agree with the golden rule, of doing *to others*, as we could soberly wish that they should do to us ? We do not intend that the flag of any nation shall cover deserters from *us*. We are in the habit of reclaiming them from whoever have given them shelter ; our brave officers are honoured for doing this, and doing it *with spirit*, when they cannot effect it otherwise. And the immortal Nelson had too great a soul, to consider this as a crime. Great Britain has no idea of protecting deserters from *us*, but gives them up ; and we give deserters up, to all nations, except Britain. If we mean to refuse this, why not declare war against the other nations of Europe, whose laws, in this point, are substantially the same with hers ? And why shall Great Britain be the only nation we contest this point with ? *Is this maintaining our neutrality*, in the honest and honourable manner in which we should maintain it ? Nay, in what way could we so effectually take sides with one of

the belligerents against the other, as by contending for such a principle, at this awful crisis?

Can it possibly be just *to ourselves* and to our children, to plunge into such calamity for so poor an object, suppose it were a lawful one? Can it possibly be excusable to encounter such calamity in an unrighteous cause? A greater injury cannot be done to a nation, than that of involving it in an unjust war, suppose it were successful. It demoralizes a people to an amazing degree: and *that* is enslaving them in the worst sense of the word; *unless they can have the virtue to awake and assert their sacred rights*. A question of war is far different from a mere political question. It is *a case of conscience*, where every man who is to act, should know what he is going about. It is against our principles to compel men into religion, in any form which their consciences cannot approve: and shall we compel them into horrid guilt? Shall we compel them to shed blood, where they in their consciences believe, that their Master in Heaven forbids it? How shall we ever, in such a cause, lift up our eyes for Heaven's protection? And what will become of a cause which we cannot ask God to prosper?

War has been called an *appeal to Heaven*. And when we can, with full confidence, make the appeal, like David, and ask to be prospered according to our righteousness, and the cleanness of our hands,* what strength and animation it gives us!

When the illustrious Washington, at an early stage of our revolutionary contest, committed the cause in that solemn manner. "May that God whom you have invoked, judge between us and you,"† how our hearts glowed that we had such a cause to commit! And do we believe that that best of men, if he were now present, would speak with the same confidence in a cause of *sheltering runaways*? Or do we believe that his virtuous soul would shrink back from it?

I have hinted the importance of coming *with clean hands* into the court of Heaven, if we mean to make our appeal there. And are we sure that we are not the aggressors in this controversy? Are we sure that only a common courtesy and equity on our part, would not have prevented it all? If we are not sure, how must that thought embitter every moment of the contest, even if we were to go on triumphantly! What must it then, if every thing should go against us? And *since* this act of individuals was committed, have we certainly done all that was proper, to prevent a national rupture? Are we sure that Great Britain has not far *outdone* us in pacifick dispositions? How then have we complied with the rule we are under, "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men?" If without full confidence in all these points, we cannot arm ourselves against *any* nation, but with conscious guilt, shall we in these circumstances go to war with our own kindred, with a people of our own religion? Infidelity, I know, may despise this argument, but men of christian sentiments will feel how eminently unnatural it is, that two christian nations, trained up in gospel sentiments, set up for lights to the world, apparent-

* Psalm xviii. 24.

† See his letter to Gen. Gage, in July, 1775.

ly destined by Providence to spread this divine religion through the earth, and who, at this moment, are doing more for that purpose than all people in the world beside, *should*, without the most imperious and irresistible necessity, be seen contending in hostile array, "*which should do the other most harm ;*" and thus become a stumbling block, instead of a proper example, to pagans and barbarians !

If still there are those who wish to inflame us against those brethren, by the unpleasant things of former years ; let our own better sentiments, even in times of highest irritation and greatest danger, furnish the answer. Our declaration of Independence in 1776, was in this stile : "Henceforth we shall regard them (i. e. the people of Great Britain,) as we do other nations, enemies in war, in peace friends." How inconsistent is it, therefore, now to call up those sufferings from Britain, which should have been long ago buried in oblivion ! Let our treaty of peace and amity with which we closed the war, furnish an answer ; unless we were hypocrites. Let that Independence answer, which, by the favour of Heaven, we obtained ; and which our brethren of Britain were, at least, as cordial in establishing, as our own allies were. In fine, let the memorable proposition brought forward in Massachusetts, at an early period after the establishment of *our* peace, recal us from every sentiment unworthy of the same people. The proposition was to this effect, that an address might go from our federal government to the courts of Europe, praying that some mode might be consulted for the settlement of national controversies, so that war, in every case, might be prevented. Whatever may be thought of the practicability of such a proposition, it will at least, be a pleasing monument of the spirit of those times, when a rare constellation of wise and virtuous patriots, enlightened and adorned the councils of this republic.

And be it remembered, that if after this, we shall ever be consenting in a war, not clearly just, and clearly indispensable, the spirit of 1775, the spirit of 1783, the spirit of the best times, of this and every other nation, will rise in judgment against us.

FINIS.







3 9157 0000754 5

Spcl

169276

E

364
-5

BROCK UNIVERSITY

ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO

M35

1808



LIBRARY

FOR USE IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS ONLY,

