SERMON.

THE QUESTION

OF

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 BENJAMIN, MY BROTHER?" JUDGES, XX. 27, 28.

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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.

“\textit{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 indispenfable 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 faith 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 fight 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 flight 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 to 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.
terprie with all our faculties and with all our might; and if the
object can be honestly and honourably obtained, then it must be.

Coincident with this, is another command: "Be not overcome of
evil, but overcome evil with good."* We are overcome when our
passions get the dominion, so that fighting pleases us better than hon-
ourable peace: And certainly, when we are so passionate that we
will fight unneceffarily, under every disadvantage, and without hope.
This should never be, if the greatest evil has been done to us; and
much less, if none but what we ourselves have provoked. In-
stead of this, full trial should be made, in every case, of that magnan-
imity, that moderation and liberality, which rarely fail to disarm a generous
adversary, as much as conquering him by the sword. If upon all
trial, it should not have that effect, then it may be hoped, that gra-
cious Heaven will show what must be done in another way.

In fine; "Blessed are the peace makers," says our Divine Lord,
"for they shall be called the children of God." And who can those
peace makers be, but such 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 seek reconciliation,
and go very great lengths for it, before they will give it over.

Such is the genius of the dispensation we are under, and to which
our own best hopes are all to be ascribed. And if sentiments like
these ought to prevail in our individual concerns, who would not sup-
pose that nations bearing the Christian name, should likewise have re-
spect to them in their national transactions; and are without excuse
if they will rush to war as hastily, and as passionately, upon slight
provocation, as uninformed barbarians have been wont to do; or upon
great provocation without first making trial of all those honourable
condefcension which the gospel precepts enjoin, and its great exam-
plies recommend?†

The way therefore to inquire the mind of God, when a question of
war is before us, is to study the Bible; and especially the genius of
the Gospel of Peace. Then, apply its sacred maxims and sentiments to our own case, viewed in all its circumstances and connexions.
Let this be done with solemnity, as in the presence of that Being, to
whom nations, and each individual must give account. This is the
way to know whether going to war be our indispensalble duty. I say,
indispensable duty, for the reason given above, that the only case in
which war is permitted, is, where necessity is laid upon us, and we must
go to war. I say indispensable duty, for another reason. This is
one of those cases, where in order to act with a clear conscience, we
must be freed from all reasonable doubt. If in a capital trial, where
any doubts remain, no verdict shall be given that shall take away life;

* Rom. xii. 21.
† "Oh shame to man! — Men only disagree,
of creatures rational, though under hope
Of heav'nly grace, and God proclaiming peace;
Yet live in hatred, levy cruel wars,
Wasting the earth." Milton.
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 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 preferred 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 unfrequented 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, whom 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 different 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 state 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 forfake 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

* v. 12.
† v. 23.
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

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* Prov. iix. 4. † Ps. cxxii. * Jer. x. 29. † 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 success 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 constancy, 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 cafe, 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 christians, has not yet been led, according to former usage on great occasions, to petition the Supreme Power, that an honourable tranquility 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 unbiased 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 public, and stand uncontradicted.
is, that nothing was ascertained by regular inquiry, till sometime after; when the fact is, that the men demanded, 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 deferted; 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 deferters, 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 anifter of our officers, and of administration itself to respectful applications for these men, left no hope of redress. Their officers, quite recently have given up to ours, British men who had deferted our service; and we, who now denied their respectful applications, had lately given up deferters 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 Prebles or Decatars would have done; took by force such deferters 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 authorized 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 queftion 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 affittance 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 defertion, 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 defectors 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 defectors from us, but gives them up; and we give defectors 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 cleanliness 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 courtely 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 eminenty 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 style: "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, recall 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.