

*The Necessity and Advantage of Religious
Principles in the Soldiery.*

A

MILITARY SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE

Sir GEORGE SAVILE'S

REGIMENT OF

YORKSHIRE MILITIA,

And a Company of the

Royal Regiment of ARTILLERY,

A T

FORNHAM CAMP,

AUGUST the 2d, 1778.

By THO: BATEMAN, A. M.

Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of GORDON,

Vicar of WHAPLODE, LINCOLNSHIRE, &c.

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Sir GEORGE SAVILE, Bart.

MEMBER of PARLIAMENT

For the County of YORK,

And COLONEL of the First Battalion of the
WEST-RIDING YORKSHIRE MILITIA,

THE following Discourse is most
humbly inscribed as a Testimony of
Respect for his great and good Character ;
And in Gratitude for the many Civilities
he has been pleased to confer upon

His Most Obliged

And Most Obedient

Humble Servant,

FORNHAM CAMP,

Sept. the 1st, 1778.

THO: BATEMAN.

A

MILITARY SERMON.

2 CHRON. xv. 1, 2.

And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded.—And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin,—The Lord is with you while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you;—but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

THE Jews are frequently, in Holy Scripture, styled God's peculiar people, from the singular Dispensation which he was pleased to manifest in their Favour, and by which, through a long Series
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of Ages, he distinguished them from every other Nation in the World. And in the most interesting and important *Æra* of their History, this whole People may be viewed for many generations,—solely in a military light,—from the time of their Emancipation from *Ægyptian* Bondage, till their final Settlement in the promised Land.

During all this long Period, they were in a state of perpetual Warfare,—and each of their Chief Governors—whether Prophets—Judges or Kings, may be considered as a General at the head of his Army. The Land of Canaan, which God had promised them for a perpetual Inheritance, was possessed by Nations much more populous, and consequently more powerful than their own, all of which they were not only to subdue, but totally to extirpate, previous to their enjoyment of it;—and in the many and great Empires which, in their march to it, they were to pass through, they were frequently engaged with the Inhabitants upon as unequal Terms.

In

In the Execution of their various Expeditions, and the Accomplishment of their Enterprises, the Lord was pleased to manifest himself;—and reveal his will to this his People: and on all occasions to render them sensible, That their Prosperity and Success were solely owing to his Favour and Protection: And the Conditions upon which they were promised these Blessings, he himself expressly declared,—were—A perfect Obedience to all his Laws, and a punctual Performance of all his Commands.

When Joshua, upon the Death of Moses, succeeded him in the command of the Army of the Israelites, the first Command which he himself received from the Lord, was, “Observe to do according to all the Law which Moses my Servant commanded thee;”—“For then,” says he, “thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good Success.”

The Objects of this Command, consisted chiefly in a firm Belief of his Being and Pro-

vidence; and a diligent Discharge of all those religious Services and Ceremonies which he had appointed.—And whilst their Kings and the Captains of their Hosts retained a due regard to the Deity, and their Duty to him, in themselves; and zealously endeavoured to promote the same Principles and Practices in their Soldiers and Servants, they subdued their Adversaries,—they triumphed over their Enemies; and their Arms and their Enterprizes were every where crowned with Glory and Conquest.

But they no longer received such Honour in the Sight of men, than by their religious Behaviour they thereby entitled themselves to the favour of God.—For a Reverse of Conduct was ever attended with an equal Reverse of Fortune; and God's Purposes in this respect were as explicitly declared, as they were particularly performed.—Innumerable Instances are obvious in their History, of the fatal consequences of the former:—Their Armies routed and their Mighty Hosts overcome;—their People taken Prisoners in Battle;—their
Country

Country made desolate or laid under Tribute;—and frequently visited with Plagues, with Pestilences, Famines, and Earthquakes.

But all these national Calamities and Distresses, were ever accompanied with God's public Declarations, that, how apt soever they might be to ascribe these Evils to human Means or secondary Causes,—they were certainly brought upon them by his Providence, in consequence of their Crimes—for disobeying his Laws and disregarding his Commands,

It would be unnecessary to support or illustrate this by Examples from Holy Scripture;—the old Testament abounds with them, and almost every Page will produce a Proof of what has been here asserted. Through the whole Jewish History, and that peculiar Providence which the Almighty manifested towards them, there is no Command more positive,—no Promise more plain, nor more particularly performed than this :—That whilst they diligently served and obeyed the Lord their God,—their Land, in the Days of Peace, should flow
with

with Plenty ;—and in the Time of War, Victory and Conquest should attend their Arms, and they should triumph over all their Enemies.—Thus what God gave in charge to his servant Moses, to declare to his People, was to be held as a standing Law to them and to their Posterity for ever ; “ And it shall come
 “ to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto
 “ the Voice of the Lord thy God, to observe
 “ and to do all his Commandments, which I
 “ command thee this Day, that the Lord thy
 “ God will set thee on high above all Nations
 “ of the Earth. And all these Blessings shall
 “ come upon thee and overtake thee, if thou
 “ shalt hearken unto the Lord thy God.”

And after particularly enumerating those great and manifold Blessings which they should thus enjoy, He concludes with this Declaration,
 “ The Lord shall establish thee an Holy Peo-
 “ ple unto himself, as he hath sworn unto
 “ thee, if thou shalt keep the Commandments
 “ of the Lord thy God and walk in his Ways.
 “ And all the People of the Earth shall see that
 “ thou

“ thou art called by the Name of the Lord ;—
“ and they shall be afraid of thee.”

But though God was pleased to promise all these Blessings to his People whilst they continued obedient to his Laws, and worshipped and served him as he had commanded ;— yet these Promises are immediately followed by as severe Threatenings and dreadful Denunciations of divine Wrath and Vengeance, in consequence of their neglecting or disregarding these religious Duties :—For thus the sacred Historian proceeds,—“ But it shall come to
“ pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the
“ Voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to
“ do all these Statutes which I command thee
“ this Day, that all these Curses shall come
“ upon thee. The Lord shall send upon thee
“ Cursing, Vexation, and Rebuke, in all
“ that thou settest thine hand unto, for to do,
“ until thou be destroyed and until thou perish
“ quickly ; because of the wickedness of thy
“ doings whereby thou hast forsaken me.”

And

And not to produce any other, we have a signal Instance of the Accomplishment both of the divine Promises and Threatenings, in the Person to whom the Admonition, contained in the Words of the Text, is particularly addressed. For in the following Chapter we are told, That at that Time Hanani the Seer came to Afa King of Judah, and said unto him, “ Because thou hast relied on the King
 “ of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy
 “ God, therefore is the Host of the King of
 “ Syria escaped out of thine Hand. Were not
 “ the Ethiopians and the Lubims an huge
 “ Host, with very many Chariots and Horse-
 “ men?—Yet because thou didst rely on the
 “ Lord, he delivered them into thine hand.
 “ For the Eyes of the Lord run to and fro
 “ throughout the whole Earth; to shew him-
 “ self strong in the behalf of them whose Heart
 “ is perfect towards him.”

Such were the Flows and Ebbs of Fortune which God's peculiar People experienced, in consequence of their Obedience or Disobedience to his Commands,

Nor

Not was this Dispensation of Providence peculiar to them: If from Sacred History we appeal to Prophane, we shall every where find the same Causes operating to the same End, and producing the same Effects. But it would be unnecessary upon this occasion, and in a discourse of this kind impossible, to pursue the Enquiry through the long Period down to our own,—and produce the Examples which *might* thence be all along produced, in confirmation of this Truth. Let it then be sufficient here to observe, that such Kingdoms and States, as have been most illustrious for their Achievements in Arms and their Success in War, have ever rendered themselves most so, at those particular Periods, and under those Commanders, in which a due regard to the Principles of their Religion was most conspicuous. And, on the contrary, whenever these were neglected and set at nought,—and in their stead, Examples of dissolute Principles—Debauchery of Morals, and Relaxation of Discipline took place, their evil influence soon became universal, and affected their whole Armies—the whole Crasis,—from the Crown of the head to the Sole of the

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foot was rendered effeminate—enervated, and so utterly enfeebled in the faculties of the mind, as well as those of the Body, as to become incapable either of planning or executing the least Enterprize of Importance; And after thus becoming an equal Disgrace to themselves and their Country, both became an easy Prey to the Victorious Arms of their more virtuous Enemies.

As a remarkable Instance of the former I need here only just to mention, that the severest Overthrow and the greatest Slaughter the Roman Army ever suffered, is by all their Historians ascribed to their Generals having impiously omitted the accustomed Sacrifices to the Gods.—And from the many happy Examples, with which the History of our own Country furnishes us of the latter, it will be sufficient to remind you, of that of the greatest General this—or, perhaps, any other Country ever produced,—and who, by his Wisdom and Valour, raised the Reputation of this Nation to a height of Glory unequalled in the Annals of any other;—and who was so regular and
exact

exact in his Devotions, that, even in the Mornings of his most memorable Victories, he never omitted this Duty to his God,—and assigned as his reason for it,—That whenever he should become ashamed to pray, he ought to become afraid to fight.

The Almighty then having been thus graciously pleased to make the Fate and Fortune of the most illustrious Kingdoms and States, at their most dangerous and difficult Periods, to depend—so far at least as they were concerned in either,—on the Virtuous or Vicious Conduct of their Armies—it must have occurred to all before whom I am now speaking, how much depends upon the Example of all those who hold a Military Command, and how incumbent it is upon them on all occasions, to shew and set forth good Ones.—It may be sufficient therefore here to be reminded how much, and how often, the Public Character of a particular Regiment, has been owing to the Private Character of its Officers.

But though the Examples of Officers may go far, and do much with their Soldiers, they should ever be considered as Aids only to those Principles,—not the Principles themselves by which their own Behaviour ought to be governed.—The Religious Principles here recommended are more universal in their Nature, and of stronger Obligation,—they extend to all Ranks of men—to all Circumstances and Occasions of Life,—and there are many which no other can reach or have any Influence over. To these however the common Soldier is frequently exposed, much more than his Superiours. For though unexceptionable in his Behaviour as such,—though perfect in the Knowledge of his Duty, and equally so in the Performance of all the particular Parts of it—so much so as never to have fallen under Military Censure or Punishment, yet many are the opportunities he shall daily meet with, and perhaps strong Temptations along with them, of committing Crimes, or indulging himself in Vices for which he is not accountable to his Officer.

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Leave him in such cases without all Principles of Religion, you leave him without all restraint where he stands in need of the most—and expose him to the greatest Danger where he is the least guarded against it—yet where— if he falls, the Character of his Regiment may fall along with his own—there being many instances where the notorious Delinquency of such an individual hath involved his whole Corps in at least a Temporary Infamy and Disgrace.

Every Private Soldier, therefore, would do well to set a proper Value upon himself and his Behaviour, and consider of how much consequence the latter is, exclusive of his Military Capacity, or a Man and a Member of civil Society—not only to himself and his own Honour, but likewise to that of his Superiours and Fellow Soldiers.

The best—the only security for this—are those religious Principles, under whose Influence it is his own Duty, as a Man and a Christian, ever to regulate and rule his Behaviour

viour—and though not accountable to his Officers either for his Regard or Disregard of them, he will hereafter find himself so to a much Superiour Being,—and who has infinitely greater Power to reward him for the one, and punish him for the other, to all Eternity.

Let not this be understood as if spoken in behalf either of the ostentatious Ravings of many modern Enthusiasts on the one hand,—or of as many moping and melancholy Fanatics on the other—which some Fools, but more Knaves, have often assumed for private and pecuniary—but oftener for worse Purposes.—Beshrew the Preacher who would recommend the least Tincture of either, as requisite in the Military Character—who would send the whole Soldiery together upon a Religious Knight Errantry—and prescribe to the superior Officers to become Knights of the woeful Figure—to the inferiour—according to their respective Ranks—to become proportionably more dismal.

If these are the Forms of Religion—they are the worst it can put on—and which, alas, too often are without any of the Power of it at all. For pure Religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, requires no such Ostentatious Aids—puts on no such glaring Appearances.

Let the Forms of Religion, therefore, be assumed no oftener, nor no more than the Forms of it are requisite—as instrumental parts only to influence the mind to something better—and then the Power of Religion will, in its proper Time, bring forth its proper Fruits.

That man's Courage who is ever boasting of it—is always suspected. 'Tis the same in Religion—they each have their Counterfeits—but the true, in either Case—will only shew itself in due Season and on proper Occasions—where in the former it can be brought into Action to some pious End, and exerted in the latter to some good Purpose.

From

From this View then, and upon these Principles of God's Dealings and Dispensations— not only towards his own peculiar People,— but with every other Nation, we may have the firmest Hope and the surest Confidence that, by following their good Example, you also will be entitled to the same Manifestations of divine Favour. For in the Language of the Royal Psalmist, “ Verily there is a reward for
 “ the Righteous; doubtless there is a God
 “ that judgeth the Earth.”

Under the full Conviction of this important Truth, and with the perpetual Sense and Influence of it upon your minds,—whilst you gallantly go forth in the Service of your King and of your Country,—their righteous Cause— when thus defended by the Sword of the Lord and of Gideon, will ever prosper in your Hands.

