
MR. *W E S T*'s

ARTILLERY ELECTION

S E R M O N.

1794

The Christian Soldier.

A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED BEFORE
THE
ANCIENT AND HONOURABLE
ARTILLERY COMPANY,
ON MONDAY, JUNE 2d, 1794;
BEING THE
ANNIVERSARY
OF THEIR
ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

BY SAMUEL WEST, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE SOUTH CHURCH IN BOSTON.

B O S T O N :
PRINTED BY MANNING AND LORING,
IN QUAKER LANE—MDCCXCIV.



A

S E R M O N.



TO describe the character of the good **SOLDIER**, as formed upon the principles and influenced by the spirit of Christianity, will perfectly suit the present occasion ; this, therefore, shall be attempted in the following Discourse, founded on those words of St. Paul, 2 *Timothy*, chapter ii. and the latter part of the second verse——

“ A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST.”

CHRISTIANITY has an excellent effect on the characters of men, in all the relations which they sustain in life. It renders them useful to society, as well as happy in themselves. It leads the soldier in particular to true glory in the path of virtue, and by giving him a just sense of his relation and obligations to his Maker, qualifies him for the service of his country.

It

It is highly pleasing to contemplate the benevolent design of the gospel institution. By subduing the passions of men, those sources of contention, and reforming the heart, this divine religion shall ultimately exclude war from the face of the earth ; and by diffusing universal charity, produce universal peace. But this great event can only be considered as the subject of prophecy, the accomplishment of which, though certain, is probably far distant in futurity.

It adds a grandeur to scripture prophecy, when we consider it as directing its eye through such long extended periods of time as astonish the minds of mortals ; though they sink to nothing in the sight of Him whose existence is eternal, and with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.

CHRISTIANITY is emphatically the work of God. Introduced and established by the exercise of miraculous powers, it made surprising progress, so long as it was supported and confirmed by *that* incontestible evidence of its divine original ; since which its prevalence has been very unequal, slow at the best, and on the whole extremely short of what its early success seemed to indicate. The re-appearance of its divine Author, attended with the same miraculous powers, an event plainly predicted, will go far towards effecting his gracious purpose. But nothing short of repeated appearances of this nature, or successive dispensations

penfations of Christianity, each more illuftrious than the preceding, can complete the great α -fign. When death fhall be fwallowed up in victory, tears fhall be wiped from all faces, a new heaven and a new earth fhall arife from the afhes of the old, and the world become a kingdom of righteoufnefs and peace.

As the progrefs of the feafons cannot, fo neither can the advancement of Christianity, be accelerated beyond the design of its Author. One part muft conform to another ; and it is as abfurd to expect general peace in the prefent ftate of human nature, as the fruits of fummer amid the frofts and fnows of winter. It is only by reftoring man to his primitive character, the moral image of his Maker, an event which we as confidently expect as the return of the feafons, that wars fhall ceafe to the ends of the earth.

IN the prefent ftate of mankind, with refpect to moral and religious improvement, war is neceffary upon the fame principle, and for the fame reafon, that the exercife of the fword of juftice is neceffary in the hand of the magiftrate. As the one vindicates the rights, and protects the lives of individuals, the other with equal reafon protects and vindicates the rights of nations.

NATIONAL pride, the eager thirft for property, and the equally eager luft of dominion, may produce fuch injuries and infults, as to excite rational refentment in the breasts of the moft difpaffionate, and render

der it a duty indispensable for a people to arm in defence of that inheritance which Heaven has bestowed upon them, and of which, it would be ignominious *tamely* to suffer men to deprive them. Whilst Christianity forbids every other species of war, it evidently enjoins that *self-defence* which is the first law of nature, and must be in force so long as we have an enemy to threaten, or an interest to defend. Our text implies, the consistency of war with the religion of Christ ; as we can hardly suppose the inspired author would have alluded to a calling which Christianity forbids, to illustrate the character of the Christian.

THE soldier, therefore, in the present state of society, is a profession as honourable as it is useful. He is, in the hand of Providence, and under the direction of the magistrate, the safety of his country, the protector of her honour and her interests. This useful character is highly adorned and rendered still more useful to society by the influence of Christianity, which, by enlisting men into the service, and forming them as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, qualifies them in the highest degree for the service of their country.

SELF-COMMAND—a true sense of honour—the love of glory—patriotism and courage, distinguish the good soldier ; and these are produced in the greatest perfection by an acquaintance with Christianity. The first lesson taught under the discipline of Christ is *self-command*,

command, a dispassionate attention to the voice of reason and truth ; choosing peace as the greatest good, and engaging in war only to ensure the blessings of peace. The soldier of the Prince of Peace formed by his religion, must be the son of peace ; he will never be the aggressor on the rights of others ; he wears on his breast, what ought to be the motto of every Christian, *Bear and forbear* ; he is not easily provoked, nor suffers resentment, that enemy of peace, lightly to enter his bosom ; he is not overcome of evil, but endeavours to overcome evil with good.

THERE is, however, a certain point, beyond which forbearance is folly, and yielding is madness ; this is the point of honour to which the Christian soldier carefully attends, and by which he governs his conduct.

WHATEVER the crooked policy of this world may have suggested to the contrary, the honour and rights of nations, as well as of individuals, are best vindicated on the generous maxims of the gospel : and resentment will be most successfully expressed, when justified by reason dignified with religion, and attended with the clearest evidence not only of justice, but even of forbearance towards the offending party. The Christian soldier draws his sword at the call of justice, in the cause of human happiness ; it is pursuing this cause with propriety, that constitutes the dignity and honour of his character.

HONOUR, as taught by Christianity, is indeed widely different from that which is founded on the capricious maxims of the world. The Christian soldier is the votary of *true* honour; he feels its worth; it warms his heart, and nerves his arm; he understands and obeys its dictates, while he feels the utmost contempt for its tawdry counterfeits.

HONOUR, alas! thou strangely prostituted name! how art thou degraded by being connected with characters and with actions, as detestable to humanity as they are inconsistent with reason and religion! How often is thy sacred name applied to a phantom engendered by the worst passions of the human heart, and cherished at the expense of human happiness! How art thou degraded when made to attend the bloody progress of him, who destroys thousands to gratify his own pride or lust of dominion; that his vile head may be adorned with a crown, and his name be transmitted to posterity as the conqueror of nations. How art thou degraded when called in to justify a barbarous custom of avenging personal injuries at the expense of life, in defiance of civil order, in the face of law, reason, conscience, and religion. The Christian soldier will vindicate thy rights, and teach mankind that honour and virtue are inseparable; that not he who enslaveth, much less who destroyeth, but the saviour and friend of man, who after the example of the Saviour of the world, exposeth or even layeth

layeth down his own life for the good of others, is the man of true honour ; that the dignity of private character is better asserted, by treating personal injuries with an indignant silence, or punishing the offender by making him feel your superior goodness, than by indulging a petulant resentment, the evidence of a little mind, or pursuing that revenge which is the effect of a vicious heart. “ He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”

THE hope of glory animates the Christian soldier ; but it is a glory founded on solid and rational principles, and not that empty, visionary thing which fascinates the hearts of the proud and the vain, but which vanishes when examined in the light of reason and religion.

THE great Author of the universe seeks his own glory in all that he does ; this is his undivided object in the creation and government of the world, in the mission of his Son, and the dispensation of his grace. But this glory results from the happiness produced, and shines with a lustre exactly proportioned to it. Here then we find a standard by which to estimate the dignity of all rational creatures. He who best improves the powers entrusted to him for promoting general good, obtains the prize ; and the greatest glory results from the greatest usefulness.

MAN is at best extremely limited in his capacity for doing good, and in his opportunities for the exercise of that capacity. Providence does, however, in some instances, after long intervals, and by an admirable concurrence of circumstances, exhibit the human character to great advantage, and with such improvement as to excite the admiration of the world.

How illustrious does the saviour of his country appear, and with what real glory adorned, who, having successfully drawn his sword to vindicate the insulted rights of a great nation ; the object obtained, presides over her counsels in peace, and directs them with such exquisite skill as to promote her domestic prosperity and happiness, and her foreign influence and honour. The glory of his country seems centred in him, and in connexion with his name will be immortal.

By far the greater part of mankind are, from the order of society or the allotments of providence, confined to a narrow sphere ; they are not, however, excluded from the prospect and pursuit of glory, the certain result of filling with propriety the place assigned us, and acting our part well in the world's great drama. The most obscure character has its connexions, and consequently its influence on society, which being directed in favour of virtue and human happiness, shall not lose its reward ; for however unnoticed such persons may pass down the stream of
time,

time, they are distinguished by Him whose eye seeth all things, and shall finally meet with the public applauses of their Redeemer and Judge.

No season is so quiet in this turbulent world, as to exclude the propriety of military preparation ; the best security for peace, is to be prepared for war. Too great a distinction between the civil and military characters is productive of evil. The wisdom of government should aim to unite both in the same persons ; that every citizen may consider himself as a soldier, and every soldier may remember that he is a citizen.

CHRISTIANITY will effect this genuine patriotism. To the Christian, the love of his country is domestic love enlarged. It destroys trifling distinctions, and while it embraces with warmth the interests of a particular nation, it is corrected by the love of human kind.

How despicable was the patriotism which taught the Grecian and Roman soldier to seek the aggrandisement of his own, at the expense and with the ruin of every other country. The Christian soldier views things on a more extended plan. The world is his country ; man his brother ; and nothing is considered as foreign to him, which relates to the good of the species ; when pursuing the interest of a part, he does not overlook the good of the *whole* ; when he unsheathes his sword, it is not to inflict misery on others,

others, but to defend the inheritance which God has given him ; the justice of his cause gives steadiness to his temper, and firmness to his arm, in the greatest dangers.

NATURE has invested death with terrors ; to pretend not to feel them, is a vain boast ; some stronger passion may stifle, nothing but religion can raise the soul above, the fears of death, or inspire a rational courage in the views of it.

It is madness, and not courage, to dare death without a hope beyond it. If this momentary life is to be our all, and existence to cease with our ceasing pulse, reason urges to protract it by every possible expedient ; for what can compensate for the loss of being ? How are the senseless ashes of the hero affected by the preservation or the ruin of his country ? both are to him perfectly indifferent.

HOWEVER the understanding may be dazzled by the false reasonings of those, who with an absurd zeal have abused the powers of eloquence, to weaken the evidence of a future state, candour on reflection will acknowledge, that it is weakening, if not destroying the great principle of morality, and the only solid support in the hour of danger.

As the prospect of immortality, so every thing relative to man rises or falls. Existence is hardly worth acknowledging, if confined to a transient, anxious
being

being of threescore years and ten. Connected with a future state, the great doctrine of the gospel, man holds a nobler rank in the scale of rational creatures, his interests become more important, and he feels a debt of gratitude to the Author of his being.

PERSUADED of, and looking forward to an happy immortality, man considers himself as a pupil educated here, for a more valuable inheritance hereafter. God is his instructor; nature and revelation, reason and conscience point out the lessons which he is to learn and practise; providence exercises the discipline by which they are enforced.

IN general, we are taught to place our hope in God, as our reconciled Father in Jesus Christ; to love him with our whole heart, and our neighbour as ourselves; to pursue true glory, by becoming workers together with God, in promoting, according to our abilities, the good of society, the order, virtue and happiness of mankind.

THE glory acquired in this way will be solid and lasting. It depends not on the page of history, nor on marble monuments. It may be said of such, their witness is in heaven, and their record is on high. It has no connexion with the opinion which the world may entertain of us; it is sufficient, that the Lord knoweth who are his. The good man is satisfied from himself, and rejoiceth in the prospects of that period, when the Captain of his salvation shall crown with

with unfading glory his good soldier, who in this state of trial has acted his part well, and been faithful unto death.

FORMAL, complimentary addressees we despise : You, Gentlemen, of this Ancient and Honourable Company, will excuse me from every thing of the kind ; and permit me to address you with that plainness and sincerity which peculiarly suit my profession and my age.

You see at once what must be the drift of our address, if connected with the preceding discourse. It is not to remind you that your Company is *ancient and honourable* ; that it has been an ornament to your country ; has furnished those who have done honour to the character of the soldier ; and that veterans, who have bled in the cause of their country, have inserted their names in your rolls. These things may be mentioned as excitements to emulation. Degeneracy is disgraceful. But our grand object is to convince you, Gentlemen, that to be good soldiers, you must be good men and good Christians ; that to be qualified to serve your country effectually, you must serve the Lord Christ ; and that unless this is the case, whatever names you may assume, whatever pomp you may exhibit, whatever patriotism or courage you may profess, it is all idle parade ; a kind of scenery, which may amuse and please for a time, but when the curtain drops, darkness and despair succeed.

THE

THE character of the good soldier and the good citizen are essentially the same ; religion is the basis of both. Piety is the parent of social and personal virtue ; these render men mutual blessings.

VICE dissolves the bonds of society ; weakens the force of law ; enflames and sets at liberty the unruly passions of men ; produces contention, confusion and misery. Religion the reverse ; strengthens the social bond ; gives energy to law ; restrains the passions ; produces order, peace, and public happiness. No government can be happy, no free government can long exist, unless its character is prevailingly virtuous.

THE good soldier must be a patriot ; he loves his country, and consults her interests ; but, how contemptible is that patriotism, which will not dispose a man to do the most essential, and perhaps the only thing he is capable of doing for the good of his country, that is, to be virtuous. We cannot all fill public, we may fill our private station, so as to render it a post of honour. If we are not called to show the good soldier in the field, we may do it to as good purpose at home, by opposing *vice*, our own and our country's greatest enemy.

YOU, Gentlemen, are considered as our first military corps ; your example will do much towards promoting a military spirit, giving it proper direction, and fixing the hitherto undescribable point of military honour. If you connect it with the dignity of

religion, and the amiable forms of social and private virtue, the effect will be happy ; and within the sphere of your influence, the good soldier, the man of honour, the good man, and the good Christian will be the same. May the God of armies bless you ! and may your institution flourish, till wars shall cease by the prevalence of the kingdom of the Redeemer. May you keep in view and steadily follow him ; obey his orders ; do his will ; and he will certainly lead you to *victory* and to *glory*.

THIS respectable auditory will indulge me with observing, that although we exclude politics from the desk any farther than as essentially connected with religion, we may be permitted on this occasion to express the gratitude we feel to Providence for that excellent form of government with which our country is favoured ; and for the happy effects we have derived from it for successive years ; nor do we consider some difference of opinion upon political subjects as an evil ; it leads to investigation, consequently to the discovery of truth. That free government is in real danger which meets with no opposition ; and a dead uniformity of opinion discovers such an apathy in the public mind as threatens the death of liberty.

THE only evil we discover here is a want of candour, where different opinions are abetted. Suppose our neighbour to be in an error, why should we impeach the heart for the errors of the head ? But alas !

where

where or whose is the error? Is it yours? or is it mine? Let each take his share of that weakness and liability to err, which is common to us all, and despise himself if he findeth the pride of his heart betraying him into an imaginary infallibility, or to think the worse of another, merely on account of his holding a different opinion.

LET us cultivate that charity which thinketh no evil, and which by cementing our hearts will prevent the ill effects arising from different political views. Our political hemisphere has been clouded, and we have been threatened with the calamity of foreign war; but we flatter ourselves, that the blessing of Heaven upon the prudent measures of our national government, will disperse the cloud, and that the blessings of peace will still be indulged to our favoured country; that her rising glory will answer the sanguine expectations and fervent prayers of her friends. But a nobler object should terminate our views; another and a better country beyond the grave. It has been purchased for, revealed to, and urged upon us by the most powerful motives. Let us embrace the animating hope, and under the influence of it steadily endeavour to act our parts well, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

F I N I S.