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The Christian Soldier.

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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 :
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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 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 illustrious than the preceding, can complete the great d-sign. When death shall be swallowed up in victory, tears shall be wiped from all faces, a new heaven and a new earth shall arise from the ashes of the old, and the world become a kingdom of righteousness and peace.

As the progress of the seasons cannot, so neither can the advancement of Christianity, be accelerated beyond the design of its Author. One part must conform to another; and it is as absurd to expect general peace in the present state of human nature, as the fruits of summer amid the frosts and snows of winter. It is only by restoring man to his primitive character, the moral image of his Maker, an event which we as confidently expect as the return of the seasons, that wars shall cease to the ends of the earth.

In the present state of mankind, with respect to moral and religious improvement, war is necessary upon the same principle, and for the same reason, that the exercise of the sword of justice is necessary in the hand of the magistrate. As the one vindicates the rights, and protects the lives of individuals, the other with equal reason protects and vindicates the rights of nations.

NATIONAL pride, the eager thirst for property, and the equally eager lust of dominion, may produce such injuries and insults, as to excite rational resentment in the breasts of the most dispassionate, 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.

