

DISCOURSE;

DELIVERED

BY THE PARTICULAR DESIRE

OF

The Military Society

IN SANDBORNTON,

AUGUST 19th, 1794.

BY JOSEPH WOODMAN, A.M.

PASTOR OF A CHURCH HERE.

— AND HE THAT HATH NO SWORD,
 LET HIM SELL HIS GARMENT, AND
 BUY ONE. JESUS CHRIST.

FROM THE MIRROR PRESS OF
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Printed for the Military Society.

A DISCOURSE.

NEHEMIAH, 4th CHAP. 18th VERSE.

EVERY ONE HAD HIS SWORD GIRDED BY HIS SIDE

In the Sandbornton Military Society
August 19th, 1794.

VOTED,

THAT Major NATHAN TAYLOR, Cap
JOHN LANE and Lieut. DAVID PHILBRICK
be a Committee, to present the Reverend
WOODMAN with the Thanks of the Society
for his ingenious Discourse delivered this
before them, and request a copy of the
for the Press.
PETER SANDBORN, Clerk

CIVIL government is founded in the weakness,
the mutual wants and dependance of mankind ;
wars and fightings originate from those lusts,
which war in their members.— War is a sore calamity
It is one of the severest judgments, with which
righteous God, hath visited a wicked world.— It
brings distress, devastation and ruin, wherever it
comes.

Ever since Nimrod, that mighty hunter, laid the
foundation of Monarchy, and raised himself (prob-
ably by violence, rapine and blood) to power and ar-
bitrary rule ; ambitious and cruel tyrants, in succe-
ssion, to satiate their pride and thirst of power,
drenched the world with blood, and spread des-
olation and misery, through wide extended nations
and kingdoms.— Should we take a retrospective view
of those scenes of blood and carnage—of desolation
and misery, which tyrants have presented in every
age, humanity would shudder, the tender feelings of
souls would be harrowed up, and we should drop
an involuntary tear, over depopulated realms.—
When, for a moment, paint in imagination ; armies
arrayed—the glittering spear—the roaring cannon—
the ground spread with carnage—garments rolled in blood
and doleful groans—the heart-piercing shrieks of
wounded and dying—cities wrapt in flames—
and consternation pervading all ages, ranks and

sexes—decrepid age, and innocent infancy, falling
 beneath the relentless sword of the murderous ruffian
 —whole countries depopulated, and mighty empires
 tottering to their foundations.—

Such are the dreadful, desolating effects of war.
 Yet, war in some cases, and under certain circum-
 stances, is warrantable—is necessary—is the effect
 of benevolence.—War merely defensive, is just : offend-
 ing war is exceedingly wicked and cruel ; and the
 blood shed, will cry for vengeance, upon the guilty
 head of the aggressor. When one nation invades
 the rights of another,—attempts are made to wrest their
 property, and their liberties from them, by violence
 and lawless power ; it is then warrantable, for the
 nation, after remonstrance made, and conciliatory
 measures tried without effect, to take up arms in
 their own defence, and in this solemn manner, to appeal
 to heaven, to judge between them, and their oppres-
 sors.—This is not only just ; but it is the proper
 exercise of love and benevolence.—Love to righte-
 ousness—Love to liberty,—to the rights and happi-
 ness of mankind.—Such was the situation of these
 United States, at the commencement of the late glo-
 rious revolution—our rights were invaded—arbitrary
 laws were passed by the Court of Britain—crue-
 lly attempts were made to enforce them, and to subject
 us to the iron yoke of oppression—our ports
 blockaded—our towns garrisoned—the blood of
 our citizens spilt, by the slaves of Despotism.—We
 remonstrated—we humbly petitioned—every com-
 mon sense, every patriotic measure was tried in vain.—At
 length, the spirit of liberty was roused.—Recourse was
 taken to arms—the solemn appeal was made to Heaven,
 and he who loveth righteousness, and hateth
 violence, and oppression, fraud and injustice, espoused
 our righteous cause.

And while the other
 nations of the earth, are either struggling for their
 liberties ; or groaning under the galling yoke of op-
 pression, and at the will of cruel tyrants, shedding
 their blood, like water, in fruitless attempts, to extir-
 pate sacred liberty from the earth ; we, my friends
 and fellow citizens, this day, enjoy the sweets of civil
 and religious liberty—of independence and peace, the
 glorious fruits of our heroic exertions, crowned with
 the distinguishing smiles of heaven.—May millions
 unborn share those inestimable blessings !—May
 America ever remain an asylum for the oppressed, in
 all parts of the world !—But let us not indulge secu-
 rity. Our liberties may yet be lost through supine-
 ness and inattention ; or wrested from us by the pow-
 erful arm of oppression and tyranny. Such is the
 insatiable spirit of pride and ambition ; so insatiable are
 the lusts of tyrants, that they only wait the favoura-
 ble opportunity, which promises them success, to in-
 vade our rights. We have lately seen insults offered
 to our flag—Spoilations made upon our commerce,
 our frontiers invaded.—It is, therefore, of the
 highest importance, that we should guard our liber-
 ties with a watchful, jealous eye, and be always pre-
 pared to defend them, with the same heroic, undaunt-
 ed spirit, with which, they were at first obtained.—
 The preservation, or loss of our liberties, fellow citi-
 zens, depends, under God, wholly upon ourselves.—
 Tyrants, who grudge us, this sweet boon of heaven,
 will see us prepared, and determined to vindicate our
 rights, they will be afraid to invade them. To be
 prepared for war, is the best mean, to preserve peace.
 Therefore, the wisdom of all States, to be at all
 times prepared to repel lawless invasion, and to pro-
 tect their lives, liberties and property.

each other: They, who wrought on the wall, all carried weapons of defence, which would not be a hindrance to them in their work. For the builders every one had his sword girded by his side, and he builded. They held themselves in constant preparation for defence, and to repel the invasions of their enemies, whenever they should be made.

The present occasion, and the passage which have chosen, as the subject of our discourse, will justify me in making some brief observations upon the propriety and necessity of a nation holding themselves in a prepared state of defence, and to repel the invasions of their enemies.—I presume, it will be needless to take up time to prove that defensive war is lawful. I know of none, professed Quakers, and a few ignorant, or superstitious enthusiasts, excepted, who have any scruples respecting the matter.* [For the note 15th page.] Self-preservation is the first principle and law of nature. Every man has an unquestionable right to defend himself against a secret robber, assassin: Yea, it is his incumbent duty, if in his power. Men are not to seek personal, private revenge. The constitutions and laws of every country prescribe methods of redress for common injuries, between man and man: But in such desperate cases of necessity those referred to, the law of self-preservation, commands which requires me to protect my own person warrants me to defend myself, although it be at the expense of his life, who makes a lawless attempt on my own.—For I am evidently under greater obligations to preserve my own life, than the life of another. And when one nation unjustly invades the rights of another, and is deaf to remonstrance, it is then no alternative left, but either tamely to surrender our liberties, our property, and our lives

the will of cruel oppressors; or to appeal to arms, and repel force by force, and thus refer it to the God of armies, the righteous and sovereign disposer of events, to judge between us and them.

What name shall we give those sordid souls, who weakly tamely surrender their liberties, their wives, their children, their houses, and even their lives to the will of a cruel tyrant, when the means of defence were within their power, and vigorous exertion might preserve them? Would they possess the spirit of men? Would they exercise the spirit of pure Christianity—the spirit of love and benevolence? Surely no.—What name shall we give them, did I ask?—Good old Jacob long since gave them a name, *Isachar* is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens: And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute. Was it necessary to multiply arguments, in proof that a defensive war is just, I might observe, that the scriptures approve it, and denounce a curse against those, who through selfishness, or cowardice, would not exert themselves in defence of their rights, in the cause of liberty, of mankind, and the cause of God. Curse ye Moab, (said the angel of the Lord) curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. And, saith the prophet, cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.—I might adduce the examples of the greatest saints, and patriarchs, recorded in scripture. Abraham, the father of the faithful, armed his trained servants, born in his house, and rescued his brother Lot from the hands of those, who carried him captive. David,

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the man after God's own heart, was a man of war. Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah, were saviours to their country, and delivered their brethren out of the hands of those who oppressed them. But I forbear—and proceed to observe, That as defensive war is just, so it is necessary that a nation should constantly hold themselves in a respectable state of defence, in actual readiness to repel any invasion that may be made upon them. This will render them respectable, and formidable in the eyes of their enemies. It will render the prospect of success less probable, and consequently, dishearten and deter them from the attempt. The respectable state of defence into which Nehemiah put himself and people, immediately disheartened, and deterred their enemies from attempting the enterprise, which they had formed of destroying them, and causing the work to cease. Ambitious princes have a thirst for power—to extend their dominions—to increase their revenues—and raise themselves to greatness, and glory. Nothing, but actual preparation for war, can secure a people against their oppressive and cruel designs. When a nation falls into security, and inattention to their public interests, and consequently into a weak, defenceless state; this presents a temptation to ambitious princes, and they fall an easy prey to their invading armies. Thus the security, and defenceless situation of the people of Laish afforded a temptation to the ambitious, enterprising Danites, to invade them, to smite them with the sword, and to possess their land; and they were an easy conquest. See Judges 18th chap. This idea might be further illustrated by adducing many instances from profane history, were it necessary: But those few observations may suffice to show, that it is the policy, in any nation, to keep themselves in a respectable

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state of defence, and of actual preparation for war. This affords the only certain mean of security, and has the most probable tendency to preserve honorable and permanent peace. The wealth of a nation is no security, unless it be improved as a mean of defence: But rather affords a temptation to the lawless sons of violence and plunder. Neither the numbers, nor any internal resources of a nation, will afford protection, unless that nation be in a situation to call them forth. The faith of treaties, is but little to be depended upon, any further than they who made them think it for their interest to keep their faith. So long, therefore, as pride and ambition reign in the hearts, and govern the views of courts and princes, wisdom, and true policy, will dictate to every nation the propriety and necessity of being in a respectable state of defence, and preparation for war, as the surest way of preserving honorable peace.

From this view of things, it may be expected, that the enlightened, patriotic citizens of these United States, will approve, and cheerfully promote the measures which the general government has taken, to put the nation into a respectable state of defence, and preparation for war. The peculiar situation of these states, in respect to the belligerent powers of Europe—the great events which are there taking place—the depredations upon our commerce—the invasion of our frontiers by the British, render those measures especially wise and necessary at this time.— We now enjoy the blessings of liberty and peace. Let us not indulge security. We may be deprived of them. Let us always be in readiness to defend them. By our ingratitude and wickedness, we have forfeited those blessings into the hands of God; but not into the hands of men. He may justly punish our

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our ingratitude, by permitting the wicked, ambitious and oppressive unjustly to invade our rights. By unfeigned repentance, and vigorous exertion, we may yet preserve them. Whether war or peace is before us, is to us uncertain: perhaps it may, in a great measure, depend upon the issue of the present war in Europe. If the combined despots should succeed in subjugating the French Republic, and again placing a Monarch on the throne: they may then bend their united force against us, with a design to exterminate sacred liberty from the earth. God grant that all devices against the rights and liberties of mankind, may be turned into foolisness! that violence may no more be heard within our gates! that war and destruction within our borders! but that righteousness and peace may be the stability of our times! and that America may be a great and wise, a free, happy and happy nation, till states and empires shall be no more!—But it is time to adopt my discourse, to the particular occasion, upon which we are convened.

The military characters present, more especially the military society in this town, will permit me to address them, in the language of open freedom and frankness, as it is by their particular desire that the present discourse is delivered. Upon the skill, fidelity, and exertion of gentlemen of your profession, the security of our liberties, under God, greatly depends. You are appointed to train and command the militia. Your exertions will greatly contribute to their discipline, order and ready equipment for war. And a well disciplined militia, is the surest defence of a nation. The faithful discharge of your duty will require wisdom, patience and fortitude. Your task will be arduous. Paths of honour, are usually paths of labour and danger.—The military character, has

ever been respectable—It has never been thought degrading to those the most eminent for knowledge and piety. Abraham trained his own servants to war. David, the man after God's own heart, commanded the armies of Israel, and bade them teach Judah the use of the bow.

Gentlemen of the Military Society,

If I have been rightly informed, the express purposes of your institution are mutual assistance, in the discharge of the duties of your respective offices: and also the encouragement and promotion of decency, order and virtue, and the suppression of vice, profaneness, and immorality of every kind. This design is truly commendable. A constitution of wise and virtuous laws and regulations, strictly adhered to, will ensure it success. Vice and profaneness, tho' too commonly found among those of the military profession, are really inconsistent with the dignity of every character. They are inconsistent with the character of the gentleman, the man of honor, the patriot, the soldier, as well as of the christian. Virtue and religion, give dignity and lustre to every character. Let me propose for your imitation, the piety of a Nehemiah, governor of Judea—the virtues of a Washington, commander of the armies, and president of confederate America—Above all, the perfect example of the captain of the host of the Lord; the Great Captain of Salvation. Virtue and religion will secure you respect from the wise and good—they will afford you peace and serenity amidst the various vicissitudes of life—peace in death—and secure you immortal honors, and never fading laurels beyond the grave.

It will not be expected, that I should be particular in pointing out the duties of your offices—You are sensible, it is not in the line of my profession—Permit me just to observe, that there are two ways, in which you may greatly contribute to the preservation of our liberties.

1. By properly training and disciplining those under your command—by instructing them in the manoeuvres, and arts of war; and seeing that they are always equipt according to law. Thus you will be in a state of defence—your swords girded by your sides. 2. By using your influence, for the election of suitable and well qualified persons, to offices in civil government. Our liberties may be lost through weak and wicked counsels, as well as through want of vigorous exertions in defence of them. There appears to be surprising stupidity, and inattention, in the generality of people respecting this matter. Ever give your suffrages for, and use your influence in favor of those men, who are known and established friends to the rights and liberties of mankind.

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mankind. Men of wisdom and integrity, men understanding in the times, men fearing God, and hating covetousness, — The unprincipled libertine, and those ' whose souls have been tried ' in the days of adversity, and found wanting, are not worthy your confidence. Be wise, be virtuous benevolent and brave, and you will secure the approbation of your own consciences, and the esteem of all good men; above all, the acceptance of your Judge, to whom you must give an account of the improvement, which you have made of the talents committed to your trust.

Let me remind you, and this whole assembly, that you have more formidable enemies to guard against, than the combined hosts of all the despots upon earth. You have more important liberties to secure, than temporal, civil liberty: Even the glorious liberty of the sons of God. " For you wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places — Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand, stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: Above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer, and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." Thus you will be arrayed in complete, christian armour. Inlist yourselves under the banner of the great Captain of Salvation. Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life. And for your encouragement, there are immortal thrones and crowns prepared for those, who overcome in the warfare. " To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." And in connexion with his own salvation, let each one seek the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom in general; and the liberty and peace, the prosperity and happiness of this nation in particular. Let each one use his influence for the suppression of vice and immorality, and for the encouragement of virtue and religion. " Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Let us press for the speedy accomplishment of those predictions, which relate to the glorious and blessed state of the Church and world in the latter

latter day. We have reason to hope from the great events which are taking place in the world, that God, in his providence, is preparing the way for the fulfilment of them. That he is about to consume the man of sin, with the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming. The coming of Christ in the flesh, and the setting up of his gospel kingdom in the world, were predicted by great shakings among the nations. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: Saith God by the prophet. And when Christ shall come in the more extensive spread, and powerful influence of his gospel in the latter days, we have reason to expect that this event will be ushered in by great commotions, tumults, and revolutions among the nations of the earth. By terrible things in righteousness, the God of Salvation oftentimes answers the prayers of his church and people. It is necessary that the rubbish of ignorance, error, idolatry, and superstition, should be removed, in order that the glorious temple of truth and liberty, righteousness and love, may be erected. And may we not indulge a hope, that the present commotions in Europe, are preparatory to this glorious event. The house of Bourbon, and the house of Austria, have been the principal supports of the Popish hierarchy. Those two powers are now engaged against each other; and it is not uncommon for God to make use of his enemies, as a scourge to punish and destroy one another; and the involuntary instruments of accomplishing the glorious designs of his love and grace, in the present commotions of Europe. Time will unfold the designs of Providence. To conclude, Let all the friends of truth, liberty, and the rights of men — all benevolent, and pious minds unite, in fervent supplications to the great Disposer of events, that the glorious and blessed era may speedily commence, when the nations shall learn no more; but shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. When the glorious Prince of Peace, shall take to himself, his great power, and shall reign the universal prevalence of truth, righteousness, liberty, and peace, among the nations of the earth. Even so the Lord Jesus; come quickly. AMEN.

I am not insensible, that there are some, who appear to be under the influence of a certain kind of zeal in religion, who have scruples concerning the lawfulness, even of defensive war. They view it as inconsistent with the great law of love, and the true spirit of christianity. I apprehend, that upon proper attention to the subject, this objection

ion will immediately vanish : For if defensive war be now in-
 consistent with the great law of love, it always was so ; for moral pre-
 cepts immutable in their nature and obligation ; and hence, upon the
 hypothesis of the objector, Abraham, Gideon, Samson, Jephthah, Darius,
 and most of the Patriarchs and Saints, recorded in scripture, lived in
 the exercise of a spirit, which was totally inconsistent with the great
 law of love, and the true spirit of christianity ; consequently could not
 be men, nor go to heaven. Moreover, love will dispose us to a
 conduct, which is conducive to the general good ; the vindication
 of civil and religious rights and liberties, is for the general good—
 the happiness of mankind ; when, therefore, war becomes necessary in
 defence of these, it is then the proper exercise and fruit of love—
 Love to the general good—to the rights and liberties, and consequently to
 the happiness of mankind. It is further objected, that Christ hath pro-
 hibited his disciples the use of the sword. *M. 26 c. 52 v.* Put up
 thy sword into his place ; for all they that take the sword, shall
 perish with the sword. Hence, they argue, that to engage in war, is, in
 such cases, unbecoming the character of the disciples of Christ, and in-
 consistent with the spirit of the gospel. **REPLY**—This text prohibits offe-
 nsive ; but fully justifies defensive war. By attending to the pass-
 age, and the occasion upon which it was spoken, we shall readily see, that
 Peter had made an unseasonable and unwarrantable use of the sword.
 He had drawn it, without any warrant, merely of his own will,
 with too great appearance of rashness, and private revenge—He
 drew it against those who came with authority from the Jewish
 hierarchy, the chief priests and elders of the people, the powers
 which then were : Peter was in this case the aggressor. This seems to be
 applied in the reason assigned for the command ; For they that take
 the sword, shall perish with the sword. They who take the sword
 as aggressors ; and according to the established constitution of things,
 the usual course of events, they shall perish with the sword—either
 with the sword of the civil magistrate ; or with the sword of war.
 Those who use violence, often fall by violence ; and when nations are the
 aggressors, the sword of war, is the only sword of public justice,
 in that case, can be made use of, to punish them, for their oppres-
 sion and violence. In this view, all, which this text prohibits, is
 the sword in an offensive manner : But it justifies a defensive
 use of it, in the hand of the civil magistrate, whether individuals,
 or nations are the aggressors.