

The Justice and Necessity of the WAR with
our AMERICAN COLONIES Examined.

A

S E R M O N,

Preached at INVERESK, December 12. 1776,

B E I N G

The FAST-DAY appointed by the KING, on account of
The AMERICAN REBELLION.

By ALEXANDER CARLYLE, D.D.
Minister of Inveresk, and Almoner to his Majesty.

E D I N B U R G H :

Printed for J. MURRAY, London,
And J. DICKSON, Edinburgh.

M, DCC, LXXVII.

(PRICE ONE SHILLING.)

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THIS Sermon should have been published some time ago, in deference to the request of the hearers, had it not been for the author's reluctance to trouble the Public with his thoughts on a subject, that had so often employed much abler pens. He will be happy if his discourse shall contribute in the least to increase that great tide of national opinion, by which even Sovereigns and legislators must be carried along.

Mr Baron Maule

From

The Author

The justice and necessity of the WAR
with our AMERICAN COLONIES,
considered.

*Shall I yet again go out to battle against the
children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I
cease? Judges xx. 28.*

THESE words are taken from the history of that war which the children of Israel carried on against the tribe of Benjamin, on account of an enormous act of cruelty and injustice done to a private person of Israel, by the men of Gibeah, a town of Benjamin. Compensation for this injury was at first demanded; but it was refused with insolence. War ensued; and the Israelites were defeated in two great battles, with the loss of forty thousand men. They had consulted the Lord each time they had taken the field; but, for wise reasons, only known to himself, he fought not on their side. The children of Israel, afflicted and dismayed, and affraid that their sins were

the secret cause of their discomfiture, kept a solemn fast unto the Lord, 'and went up, 'and came unto the house of God, and wept, 'and there sat before the Lord, and fast- 'ed that day until even, and offered burnt- 'offerings, and peace-offerings before the 'Lord.' After this holy preparation, they a- gain inquired of the Lord, 'Shall I yet a- 'gain go out to battle against the chil- 'dren of Benjamin my brother, or shall 'I cease?' The plain conclusion from this conduct of the Israelites is, That na- tions must persevere with fortitude in a right- eous cause, and continue to apply to God by prayer, and all the duties of religion, if they hope for success in war.

On former occasions, similar to this, when we have been called upon, by our ~~present~~ Sovereign, to address the King of Kings, for a blessing upon his counsels and arms, it has been on account of foreign wars, in which the safety or honour of the nation or its allies, have necessarily engaged us on the clearest grounds; and there ^{was} no need of ex- plaining them to you. The very last war was undertaken on such grounds; for it was
in

in defence of our ancient colonies, (now in arms against their protectors), who were then in danger of being subdued by the enemies of the British empire. You may remember with what zeal and affection you espoused their cause, and what sincere and fervent prayers you repeatedly offered up to heaven in their behalf, touched with the sense of their calamities, and alarmed at their danger. How soon are things changed! and how great the change! Not long after the conclusion of that bloody and expensive war, in recent remembrance, while that generation still lives and flourishes which we saved from the foe, those ungrateful colonies, by their foul revolt, have forced us into the most unnatural and dangerous war against themselves. And, lest your minds, my brethren, should not be prepared to change as fast as theirs, lest the remains of your partial affection should make you shut your eyes to the justice and necessity of this war, I think it incumbent on me, as a proper exercise for this day, to shew you the grounds *on which we are gone out, and ought again to go out against the children of Benjamin,*

Benjamin, our brother, and should not cease, that your prayers for success to almighty God may be equally rational and fervent.

I shall, in the 1st place, endeavour to shew the justice and necessity of this war. And then,

2^{dly}, Point out our duty, in the present circumstances, to God and to our country.

In the 1st place, I am to shew the justice and necessity of this war.

But how shall I enter into so wide a field? or in what method shall I treat such a copious subject? The sketch I can, now give you of it, must of necessity be short: And I must trust to your previous knowledge, to fill up and supply my brief and imperfect delineation.

Let us examine the grounds of this revolt, and try if we can find them in ancient right, or in recent provocation; or, if these should fail, let us then see if expediency obliges, or the honour of the nation permits us, to yield to their demands.

The adventurers who first set out from Europe to the new discovered country of America, went all in search of the precious

cious metals. Our colonists engaged in their enterprizes with the same view; and, when they were disappointed, they changed their object for others more lucrative to themselves, and to the mother-country. Discontent with the various forms of government, civil or ecclesiastical, that prevailed in their turns at home, during the last century, led many afterwards to seek for more peaceful abodes in that distant region. But, whatever were the objects of the first settlers of our American dominions, separation from the government of Britain was none of them; for, to preserve their connection with their native land, they went all under charters granted by the sovereign of this country, with certain rights to the lands where they settled, and with the grant of certain powers defined by the charters, and to be administered in such manner as they prescribe. As corporations, they had rights given them to make bye-laws for themselves; and, as corporations derived from, and subsisting by higher authority, they continued subject to the controul of that authority. It is impossible, indeed,

indeed, to conceive any other idea of a corporation erected by charter, than that it should continue subject to the author of that charter.

And if they, for their own interest, anxiously preserved their connection with Britain, it was clearly her part to keep them in subjection and dependence. For what end did she send out colonies, but to benefit herself, to extend her commerce and her power, to increase industry and population, and advance her happiness and prosperity? Why should she have nourished and protected them in their infancy, supplied them with the necessaries of life, and the means of improvement, if she had not considered them as part of herself? Why should she have settled them once and again, when driven off by the natives, and encouraged and strengthened them at great expence of blood and of treasure, if not for her own common benefit and theirs? And why have the colonies, for almost two centuries, been such favourite objects of her legislation? Those who are acquainted with our body of laws,

laws, know well how great a part of it respects the colonies. Their affairs of government and commerce are so thoroughly incorporated with that code, that they could not be erased from it, without almost destroying the whole. This of itself sufficiently shews how much their interest and ours have been blended together, and strongly marks their dependence on the legislature of Great Britain.

On this subject, indeed, till of late years, there has been no dispute. The colonists acknowledged the authority of the King and parliament, and submitted to them on all occasions. In return for their obedience, they claimed the protection of the state, which was given them, with every mark of partiality and indulgence. And thus, with all the advantage of distant settlements for the improvement of their fortunes, they and their posterity remained denizens of Great Britain, with the power of returning when prompted by inclination or wealth, and of enjoying the most ample privileges of native subjects. Antient right then furnishes no ground for this revolt.

Let

Let us next see if it can be justified by recent provocation.

You all know, my brethren, the necessity of taxes for the support of the state. As we give up part of our natural liberty, and submit to be restrained by laws, that our persons and property may be safe from the criminal invasions of other men, we likewise yield part of our property to secure the rest: That is, to pay the necessary expence of government and the execution of the laws; to support the supreme magistrate and his judges and officers in suitable dignity, and to defray the expence of fleets and armies, for the common defence and protection of the whole. And, lest the covetous should withhold his share, the law forces it out of his hoard, that the rest of his fellow-citizens may not pay more than their just proportion. By the happy constitution of our country, these taxes are not arbitrary demands, but laid on by the representatives of the people, with the consent of the house of Lords and the Sovereign; so that no nation was ever so well secured against an oppressive or unequal taxation.

To

To make it compleat, every person within our wide extended empire should contribute according to his ability, otherwise the burden must fall unequally.

When the colonies were in their infant-state, struggling with difficulties and with enemies, they were not in a condition to contribute to the common charge. They needed bounties and rewards for their encouragement; and accordingly they received them from the parent-state. But afterwards, as their commerce and wealth increased, they were sometimes directly taxed, as well as the rest of the British dominions, and that as early as the times of Cromwell and Charles the Second, and down to the period immediately previous to the dispute. These taxes, indeed, were laid on with a sparing hand, because the colonies had but lately emerged from infant-weakness: But the authority of the acts of parliament was never disputed till now, and the taxes imposed by them were paid when demanded.

B

But,

To

But, if there had been no exercise of this right of the legislature, prior to our own days, the right must have remained entire, because it is essential to government, founded in justice and equity, and in the law of nature and nations. The supreme power of the state would, at any time, have been entitled to impose part of the public burden on our fellow-subjects in America, provided those impositions were just and fair. For I do not contend for passive obedience and non-resistance to supreme authority : But then the only just ground of resistance is the oppressive, tyrannical, or unconstitutional exercise of that authority. *

The

* The colonies pretended, at the beginning of the dispute, that it was unconstitutional to tax them, because they were not represented in parliament, and a new distinction was formed, in their behalf, between the right of legislation and that of taxation. Custom was sufficient to obviate these objections. All the arguments in support of them have, however, been again and again ably refuted, and particularly of late, in a sermon on allegiance, by Dr Campbell Principal of the Marischall College, Aberdeen. See also the rights of Great Britain asserted, and an Enquiry into the guilt of the war, &c. by Dr Roebuck.

The Americans, however, do not plead that they were taxed beyond their proportion or ability : They absolutely deny the right itself. This doctrine is entirely new, and is the undoubted offspring of their wealth and power. Let us trace the facts that apparently led them to take arms, as they rise in their order.

After a war, undertaken, as I have said, entirely on account of the colonies, which, though successful beyond our most sanguine wishes, was expensive to the enormous extent of near one hundred millions ; when, to lessen this grievous burden in a small degree, the state laid on them an inconsiderable tax, the amount of which was to be applied to their own internal government, they would not submit to it. Though they could neither justly complain of the quantity imposed, nor of the application of the tax, nor plead their inability to bear it ; for their trade and riches were greatly increased ; yet they wantonly refused payment ; and, without the least provocation, riotously destroyed the property of fair merchants, to a great amount, that happened to

be

be the subject of that taxation. Compensation was demanded for this great injury to private proprietors, and satisfaction for such a daring affront to the laws. Both were haughtily refused.

On the refusal of satisfaction for their violation of private property, and outrageous contempt of public authority, the legislature, equitable and steady, enacted laws to punish the offenders, and to enforce the authority of the state. As it was impossible to bring the guilty to justice in common form, it became necessary to punish the community that screened their crimes ; but the penalty was to cease the moment they delivered up the offenders, and made compensation. But the colonists made choice of the most violent part ; they obstructed the execution of these laws, and an armed force became necessary, as in other cases of resistance against law. They attack the troops in the execution of their duty : Then, conscious of the atrocious nature of their offence, or rather in the train of a concerted plan, they combine, from Dan to Beersheba, from one extremity of the land to another. Trusting to
their

their distance from the parent-state, and the strength they had acquired under its genial wings, they overturn the antient chartered governments, and erect new ones in their place. They inflame the ignorant multitude. By seduction, or by force, they arm every man. They oppress his Majesty's loyal subjects, and the best friends of the constitution, and drive them from their estates and possessions*. At last, after various subtile and artful professions, they pull off the mask; they declare themselves an independent republic, make war upon the parent-state, and implore the aid and protection of our antient foes, from whom we so lately delivered them.

Such is the recent provocation of which the colonics complain. Such rather are their pretences to justify the effects of their influence

* Their treatment of the episcopal clergy has been remarkably barbarous, and demonstrates that, to be Whigs with them, men must be of the highest republican and antimonarchical principles. The church of England supports the revolution on good grounds, and, in South Britain, is indisputably the firmest barrier against fanaticism, either in religion or politics.

lence and pride. They excite the few by the prospects of ambition : They intangle the many in the mazes of sophistry. They dignify their own unreasonable claims, lately propounded, by the name of sacred rights, though hostile to the constitution. The mildest execution of the laws, they hold to be tyranny, and just punishment, or self-defence, they exclaim against as the most barbarous murder. Though, in every respect, a part of our dominions, united to this government and subject to its laws, they assume the language of a separate and independent state, and thereupon form reasons for actually becoming one ; they rebel against lawful government, and, from the necessary consequences of their own conduct, they form arguments to justify rebellion. But these colours are employed only to impose on and deceive the giddy multitude, who are not to be driven to arms without either real or imaginary oppressions. The project is of a more antient date, coeval with the century itself, with the dawn of their wealth and prosperity ; and, when Canada yielded to the British arms, the long-wished for prospect at last arose on the cloudy imagination of the New-England fanatic, the flattering
 idea

idea of power and independency, and a glorious republic.

It is their ambition, then, that has led them into an unjust and unprovoked rebellion against the patent-state. Let us now inquire, what motives may be derived from expediency to engage us to yield to their claims, or how far we can honourably agree to them.

From the short representation I have given of the case, you will observe, that this is a war merely in defence of our established constitution and government, and the rights of the state. On our part, it took its rise from a legal attempt to enforce the laws, and preserve their authority. And, though the legislative powers, in abhorrence of civil dissention, were willing to depart from their just claims; yet their mild propositions were rejected with disdain: And we are now involved in a war, (how tedious, expensive, or bloody, God only knows), in defence of that constitution which was established by the wisdom, the courage, and fortitude of our forefathers, those venerable ancestors, who protected and cherished, with so much care, the first inhabitants

inhabitants of our plantations, and imparted to them that freedom which they had' so nobly acquired.

Under this government, we have lived with more security and happiness than any nation ever did. In their religion, all men have enjoyed an ample toleration; in their property, undisturbed security; and, in their persons, a liberty inviolate. Far superior to the republics of antiquity, the government of Britain has maintained the rights of human nature, with a happy equality: And, while the multitude has been an object of her most tender care, the avenues of laudable ambition have been opened wide to talents and merit of every kind. Not only have we lived equal, and safe, and free, under the government of laws interpreted with equity and administered with moderation, but, in consequence of this peculiar state, we have attained to the highest degree of national felicity, prosperity, and glory.

Shall we then suffer the best of governments to be shaken to its centre, to be invaded, to be dismembered, to be destroyed? No, surely; for, besides that the dignity of the

the

the state, makes it highly inexpedient to let rebellious subjects go unpunished, our valuable interests, and the security of that constitution which we hold so dear, call upon us to go out to battle against the children of Benjamin, our brother. You will observe, that every argument which is used in behalf of the revolted Americans, except what arises from their distance alone, applies equally to many other parts of the British empire; and the views of their adherents on this side the Atlantic extend, if not to the entire destruction of this happy government, at least to so new a model of it, as would not leave one stone upon another of the ancient and goodly fabric. Without upbraiding the colonists in this place, by observing, that the distance which they now alledge with so much arrogance against our interfering in their affairs, was not pleaded by us when of late they so humbly implored our protection, it is obvious, that, if the feet, because they are more distant, shall be suffered to withdraw their subjection from the head, soon will the hands and arms and every mem-

C

ber

ber of the body revolt, in their turn, against their guide and conductor.

But, say some, it is more expedient to yield even to their unreasonable claims, than to engage in a war so expensive, and so bloody, as this is likely to prove. The first counsels of prudence are not always wise, nor the first dictates of humanity always humane. Such counsellors do not consider, that, by one great exertion to re-establish the authority of the state, we shall save millions that would be lost in the violent disjunction of this mighty empire; that, by carrying on this great war with perseverance and fortitude, we shall prevent innumerable and endless wars that might ensue; and that it is as just and necessary to shed our blood now, in reducing our ungrateful children to a sense of their duty, as it was so lately to defend them against their foes.

Nor is it *our* interest alone that obliges us to reject their demands, but *their* interest also. Now, indeed, they are deluded by subtle leaders, ambitious of pre-eminence and power, who have known by what arts to inflame the people, even to madness: Yet they

they very lately confessed, that, under this government against which they revolt, they have been free and happy, and have grown to that height of wealth and population which, we say, has made them forget or despise all obligation, and aspire at independency. What region of the world indeed could boast of greater felicity? They enjoyed unbounded liberty of conscience, and civil liberty in perfection; they were governed by their own laws, that partake of the same liberal spirit with ours; they possessed a fertile country, and a flourishing trade; they paid next to no taxes*; and, in exchange for their subjection to the sovereignty of Britain, provincial animosity and rivalry was kept within bounds by her controlling power, and foreign hostility was warded off by her fleets and armies. In short, the state of mankind was so happy and so inviting in that distant region, that the mother-country was in danger of being depopulated by the passion with which men

were

* Not above the 50th part of what is paid by every person in Britain.

were seized to go, in quest of prosperity, to that fortunate and favourite clime. While we languished under a heavy debt, contracted on their behalf, they were flourishing in commerce, and increasing in numbers, from the happy effects of that war which cost us so dear: And the comparison with their state made ours seem the more grievous. And yet they at once darken the glory of this golden age by their own perversity: For, when we call upon them, in the fullness of their opulence, to pay a small proportion of the expence of government, they resist the law that imposes it, and fly to arms. The annals of mankind do not contain a more unprovoked or inexcusable revolt.

Let them not add falsehood to rebellion! Let them not say, that we are the aggressors! The British parliament had enacted laws that bound the colonies, from their first establishment. By their charters they were subjected to taxes, and they had been frequently taxed by acts of parliament. Was it a just ground of resistance to law, that we did not yield at once to their new request to be exempted from taxes? Was it

a foundation for a civil war, after we had put them in a prosperous state, that they were jealous lest we should one day lay heavier taxes upon them? This might have been the subject of proper representations, and of new plans offered to the state; but surely no just cause of war. For what government can give up the antient and established mode of raising a revenue, till a new and better method is substituted in its stead?

I said, that it was for *their* interest*, no less than ours, that we should reduce the plantations again under the legal government

* It has been often said in private conversation, That, whatever we may think as Britons, yet surely, were we Americans, we would think and act as they do; and I have often heard it rashly answered in the affirmative. I call it rashly; for, besides all the ties which ought to bind the people of that country to this state, from allegiance, affection, or gratitude, as the object of all government is the happiness of the people, a wise and good man would deliberate maturely, before he would agree to a change that might, in place of certain freedom and prosperity, introduce the most uncertain effects, perhaps slavery and the worst of all governments.

ment of Great Britain; for, besides the relief that may be justly expected by his Majesty's loyal and suffering subjects, who have been expelled in great numbers from their homes, and robbed of their property, who can foresee, supposing the revolted colonies to prove successful in their attempt to become independent of the parent state, under what form of government they may fall, into what divisions they may be broken, to what foreign yokes some of them may yield, or what species of despotism may arise among them? When the branches fall off from a mighty tree, not only are they deprived of the principle of life that made them flourish, but the bond that united them together is dissolved. But, on the supposition that they shall remain in union, in case of success, and form one great independent state, must not that state be the rival of Great Britain? and would she not soon subdue our remaining provinces on the continent, and make herself mistress of all our islands in the west Indies, whence we derive so much wealth and power? Would not all the arts follow the rising
 Empire,

Empire, and Britain be left a gloomy and desolate isle, to furnish new abodes for the Danes and Normans of a future age? May heaven avert so great a calamity! I love my country, I revere her constitution. No form of government ever diffused such equal happiness over the human race. And shall I see that sacred temple of liberty reduced to ruins, on the uncertain project of rearing an Utopia in a distant land? Religion and reason, as well as every feeling of a British heart, forbid me to behold such a prospect without grief and indignation. *If I forget thee, O! Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget its cunning: If I do not remember thee, Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.* Psal. cxxxi. 5. 6.

To yield to the unreasonable demands of our colonies, would be no less dishonourable, than it is highly inexpedient.

The prosperity of nations depends, under God, in a great measure, on the credit they maintain with their neighbours around them, on their reputation for wisdom and arms. Such as are ill able to defend themselves, if they have acquired wealth, are so much the
more

more a tempting prey to braver and more warlike nations. It is imprudent to rely entirely on the law of nations, or on the faith of treaties : To be safe, or to preserve peace, a people must be strong ; for a name in arms is the most formidable of all barriers. How must we sink, then, in the eyes of all Europe, if we suffer our laurels to be torn by our own degenerate and rebellious sons, whom we have long fostered with so much care ?

Twenty years are hardly elapsed, since (might we believe their loud supplications) they were in the utmost danger from their neighbouring colony of Canada. To have listened to them, one would have believed, that fifty thousand Canadians were enough to have driven no less than two millions of British Americans, that is, forty times their own number, from their abodes and possessions, from their cities and their havens, and overwhelmed them in the Atlantic ocean. On their alarms and complaints, we engaged in that most expensive war. They had not then roused their warlike spirit ; they reserved it for rebellion ; but retired behind the
shield

field of Britain; and it was owing to their unmanly countenance and feeble defence, that the enemy gained so much ground, as made it difficult to expel him. At length he was expelled from our dominions; and, to destroy the very root of fear in time coming, all the colonies of the enemy on that continent were subdued, and, at the peace, more important conquests were ceded, to retain the former as provinces to the parent-state. What return have we received for placing them in a state of perfect security? They have become proud, and turned against their deliverers. The indignant spirit of the nation must rise on the baseness of their conduct; and the recentness of the benefit heightens the guilt of their ingratitude*.

D

To

* It may be said, that gratitude is not a virtue to be expected from one nation to another: But that I deny; for, though it is not wise always to trust to the good faith of nations, because their governors may be perfidious, yet, without justice, and good faith, and gratitude, all the great societies of men would be no better than robbers or banditti. Besides, the Americans are not another nation, (on which supposition, there has been much false reasoning), but a part of Britain, united to it by every tie.

To ingratitude they have added the most false and insidious arts. At first they make the most ample declarations of duty and allegiance to the King: They profess the warmest desire of preserving their connection with this government: They disclaim all pretensions to independency: They affect to lay themselves at the foot of the throne, imploring deliverance from the thraldom of parliament: And, strange to tell, are desirous of submitting to the will of one man, in order to be freed from the government of laws. But, when our Sovereign, like a true friend of liberty, refers their complaints to the great council of the nation, his wisdom and virtue disgust their poisoned minds, and they spurn at that royal authority which they pretend to revere. They frame false and insidious addresses to the neighbouring colonies, whom, for their loyalty, they had just now treated with the utmost contempt. They even attempt to mislead the inhabitants of these islands. They endeavour to shake our allegiance to the King, and to destroy our reverence for the constitution. They try to pervert our understandings, to seduce our wills into revolt. They would convince us, that
despotism

despotism is established, while we feel that we are governed only by laws : And that we are a wretched nation of slaves, while we enjoy perfect freedom under the mildest administration. And, to crown all their insults on our understandings, they at last break out with their declaration of independency, their first and darling object, which they concealed so long under a cloud of grievances and fears. Turning their aversion and malice from the parliament on the King, they represent our mild and gracious Sovereign, who reveres the laws, and supports the constitution, as the most cruel, vindictive, and despotic tyrant.

But why need I enumerate their misdeeds ? After the most violent outrage on private property, the most haughty refusal of satisfaction when demanded, and the most daring resistance to the execution of the laws, they have resorted to open rebellion to justify their conduct. They are in arms against their country. They have mustered a force which they deem invincible : Their ships of war cover the ocean : Their hosts of armed men crowd the shore of the vast Atlantic.

They

They lift themselves up against that paternal arm which so long cherished and protected them : They would sheath the sword in those bowels from whence they sprung. Liberty was but a pretence, for they were always free ; independence was their aim. They complained of grievances that did not exist, and mustered up phantoms of ideal apprehensions, that, under the colours of past or present oppression, and jealousy of the future, they might raise such a power as would cancel those obligations they were unwilling to repay.

Who then can doubt for a moment on whom to lay the guilt of this war ? The faithful magistrate who stops his ear to the criminal's desire to escape from justice, or the kind parent who does not yield to the unreasonable demands of a froward child, may as well be accused as Great Britain on this occasion. The very name of Brethren, by which, with all the ties that it implies, we have so often been obtested to desist from this cruel and unnatural war, demonstrates the justice and necessity of it on our part, since it points out their connection with us, marks their dependence and obligations,

and

and aggravates the treachery and violence of their conduct. These unsteady measures with which they have upbraided us ; that lenity which they have construed into incapacity to govern ; that reluctance to punish, which they held to be weakness and fear ; now that, from seditious subjects, they have become open enemies, are so many incitements to us, to act with unanimity and vigor.

Let us, then, no longer hesitate, *Whether we shall go out to battle against the children of Benjamin our Brother, or shall cease.* The oracle of reason (and the sacred oracles support it) obliges us to conclude, that it is most expedient and honourable, as well as just and necessary for the state, our common parent, to bring back by force this favourite and froward child, made rebellious by indulgence, to a just sense of his duty, and to the happiness he so long enjoyed in his father's house.

I come now, in the *second* place, as I proposed, to point out our duty, in the present circumstances, to God and to our country.

And

And here, without question, we ought, in the first place, to confess and lament our sins, and to turn to God and our duty. For, though we cannot be accused of any guilt in respect of the immediate occasions or grounds of this war, yet, as they lie in the order of Providence, I am afraid we cannot clear ourselves of blame.

From the beginning of the world unto this day, sin has occasioned the downfall of nations and of kingdoms. Infidelity and irreligion, neglect of God and of his worship, and the most licentious morals, as they are intimately connected together, so have they generally preceded the declension and fall of states. And who can deny, that these *are the signs of the times* ? that these are the strong features of iniquity which mark the present age ?

If men retain sound principles, however much they may sometimes depart from them in practice, *being led away by temptation and the error of the wicked* ; yet there is hope that they may one day return to their duty, because a slumbering conscience may still awaken, and dying principles again revive.

But

But what can be expected, when there is a professed disbelief of all moral distinctions, when truth, and justice, and honesty, and the love of our country, and indeed every principle but daring ambition and vile self-interest. are ridiculed, despised, and exploded? While the inferior ranks of men are corrupted, by the desire of gain or pleasure, into fraud or profligacy of manners, the superior ranks fall sacrifices to luxury and effeminacy. Instead of the manly pursuits that would lead them to acquire such talents and qualities, as might enable them to adorn and defend their country, and strengthen her constitution, they waste their health and fortunes in everlasting gaming and voluptuousness, and in all the modes of living that debase or debilitate the mind, no less than the body. I speak only of the many; for, God be praised, we have still some in the higher ranks of life, who would do honour to the most virtuous age: We have still some, who, in spite of the infection of the times, think it glorious to lead or to join the fleets and armies of their country, and are now exposing their lives

in

in defence of that constitution, which, of old, was the nurse of patriots and heroes.

But, when we consider our sad degeneracy, upon the whole, must we not confess, that *we are a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers*, Isai. i. 4. &c. and may we not stand justly amazed to consider, *that even the God of all patience should have born with us so long, and suffered our profligate manners?* When we reflect on the high degree of prosperity and glory to which this nation was raised in the last war, by the hand of the God of battles, and consider our own dreadful ingratitude, by the sad abuse of our great and singular privileges; have we not just reason to fear that God is now saying to us, as he said formerly to the Jews, *Shall I not visit, for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*

What then can be more proper, on such a day as this, than to deprecate God's displeasure, and join in humble supplications to him, that he would be pleased to avert those dreadful judgments that hang over us, and which we have such just cause to fear may fall
upon

upon us! What can we do, but every one of us this day commence a thorough reformation of those particular vices and crimes, which, though small in our eyes, accumulate the mighty sum of national guilt? And let us join the holy prophets of Israel, who, on their solemn days of fasting and prayer, besought God to remove his judgments, and turn away his anger from them: And, particularly, let us join with the prophet Daniel, when he thus addresses the almighty, Dan. ix. 16. &c. *O! Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because, for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us, &c.*

I have mentioned in general that torrent of corruption which overwhelms this nation, and may be the cause (as it has been in other ages and regions of the world), why God should now visit us with sore calamities. But this observation applies to other nations as well as to us. Let us try if we can point out some particular grounds of fear, which are more peculiarly applicable to our own country, that we may lament and

correct them as far as we can. For, though the plans and conduct of providence are laid deep, and are carried on in silence and darkness, yet the moral causes that undermine the greatness of nations, may sometimes be traced. Allow me to mention a few that seem to me to have been immediately productive of our present danger.

The *1st* I shall mention is unbounded ambition, and national pride.

In the late war, which was undertaken in defence of the colonies, though we were at first unsuccessful; yet the spirit of the nation being roused at last, and well conducted, we were victorious in every quarter of the globe, and left not our enemies a single province or island that could be the subject of contest. When the negotiations for peace were entered upon, you may remember how difficult it was for his Majesty's prudent and moderate ministers to frame such a peace as would please the people; and, after it was made, there arose a storm of violence and clamour that has hardly subsided to this day. Nothing less would satisfy the national pride and ambition, than the retaining all the conquests their arms had made. Time and
experience

experience have shewn the truth of what some then boldly averred, that we kept by far too many of our conquests; enow indeed to threaten perpetual commotions, if not downfall to the state. To the retaining of Canada for the security of the Americans, it is entirely owing that they have become so insolent as to rebel against the parent-state. And, in so great and unwieldy an empire, we may expect convulsions every day.

The great object of a free state ought to be to perpetuate its liberty; and no temptation of wealth or of power should ever seduce such a state into a conduct that may prove fatal to its chief object. History proves, that great conquests have always been ruinous to free governments: And similar causes will operate similar effects to the end of the world. Such dominions are too unwieldy to be governed. If they consist of fertile regions, in climes favourable to human nature, they are in danger of depopulating the mother-country: If they are barren and inhospitable deserts, they are not worth the expence of retaining them.

Europe, for some centuries past, has been the most flourishing quarter of the world.

The

The governments of it, though various, have been balanced by each other ; and the people in general have been happy even under the most despotie forms it contains, because the views and conduct of princes have been moderated by their mutual jealousies. Was it for us, who had exclaimed so loudly against universal monarchy, and had laid out so much blood and treasure to oppose those ambitious powers, who, at different periods, were supposed to have conceived the idea, was it for us to extend our dominions from pole to pole, and to all the shores that are washed by the Indian and Atlantic oceans ? Was it wise in a free state to raise such a jealousy in other states, as would produce a combination against us, which might one day prove our ruin, whether we conquer or are conquered ? For, in the first case, we should certainly perish by our own corruption, as, in the second, by the power of the enemy.

To this cause is probably owing that weakness of government, which has been of late so much felt and complained of, and which no capacity seems hitherto able to
 repair.

repair. I mean, the machine of government itself, (not the administration of it), which has lost much of the spring and energy it had in former times ; witness the infamous abuse that has been suffered, the dangerous tumults that have passed unpunished, and the relaxation of the executive power, even in respect of crimes against itself. In vain has opposition, with her warning voice, and faction, with her clamorous tongue, ascribed this imbecillity to the hands who direct the machine ; for the chiefs of every party in the state have directed, in their turns, with no better success. And no wonder that it is so ; for the internal force that was sufficient to move those wheels of government, which so long guided these happy islands, and their ancient colonies, could not fail to prove too weak, when loaded with new conquests, distant as the extremities of the globe, and larger than all our former dominions. Such are the effects of unbounded pride and ambition : And such are the rebukes which the wise providence of God has contrived for the haughtiness of man.

In

In the 2^d place, Let me mention, as one of the more immediate causes of our present danger, that unbounded licentiousness, which, for a long time, has prevailed in writing and discourse.

The liberty of the press is indeed a most sacred right of British freedom; but, like all other privileges, it may be abused, and, and when it is, may be productive of the most pernicious consequences. No character has been sacred enough to be safe from the torrent of calumny and reproach, which, for some time past, has poured itself upon the public ear. The most private asylum of domestic peace has not been secure against that malignant poison that glides in every breath, and is scattered about on every page. The throne has been openly attacked; and not only have the measures of government been arraigned, as in former times, but the legislature itself has been ridiculed, traduced, and almost libelled in its own hearing. And what is the consequence of this vile licentiousness? Has the tongue of sedition, and the pen of faction proceeded to such outrage, that they are now no longer

longer believed? That may be true with respect to the characters of individuals; but we may rest assured, that the unbounded freedom which has been used has lessened the respect due to the Sovereign; has destroyed that reverence in which the legislature should be held; and, while it has overawed the magistrate in the execution of his office, it has, at the same time, impaired the dignity and weakened the force of the laws themselves. We may be certain, that this rampant licentiousness has overturned all ideas of subordination, which is the bond that holds men in society together, and prepared their minds to meet, without concern, if not to wish for, a revolution of government.

How can we otherwise account for the publications that have proceeded from men of gravity, of professedly good intentions, and of no mean talents *? With what other view, than to a revolution, have those elaborate treatises been composed; or what other can be the aim of their authors, who, amidst
pro-

* See the works of the Reverend Dr Price, and others.

professions of allegiance too, take so much pains to decry the present government of Britain, and to present us with an idea of something infinitely more perfect, which we are soon to see established in America, and which they seem to wish, and hope may likewise take place at home? But a republic of such unbounded extent, as that of America would prove, is an experiment that remains to be tried in the history of the world. We know that our ancestors tried it in vain, within far narrower limits. They, too, had great expectations of that perfection to which human government was going to arrive: They believed that a millennium, and the kingdom of the saints was at hand: But they were sadly deceived; for they found, in their stead, the iron sceptre of an usurper, supported by military force.

There is a line somewhere between the liberty of the press, and that licentiousness which would subvert the very government which supports the liberty of the press. When the times are calm, that line will be found out and applied.

Allow

Allow me to mention, as one other more immediate cause of the present danger, in the 3^d place, The murders, and rapines, and enormities that have been committed in various places of the British empire, and still remain unaccounted for, unpunished, and unarraigned.

Besides, that such instances of impunity to great crimes, demonstrate the weakness of the executive power, and tend to increase corruption, making men more daring and obstinate by their pernicious example, they likewise continue to cry to almighty God for vengeance: *For blood must have blood.* And who can say that the God of heaven is not now stretching out his arm to recompense those nations who have that guilt still hanging on their heads? The Indian tribes of America have almost entirely vanished, through the treachery or cruelty of the new possessors. Those very colonies, who plead so high for liberty, and alledge that they have taken up the sword only in its defence, under pretence of driving out the heathen, (a pretence in Christians no less impious than it is bloody,) by barbarous

F

policy,

policy, or by force, have almost wholly eradicated the ancient inhabitants of those regions; while they hold thousands and ten thousands of wretched Africans under a cruel bondage, from which the most painful death would be a joyful deliverance.

Can we believe, that deeds have been committed in another quarter of the globe, by natives of these islands, that will make the odious names of Cortes and Pizarro be forgotten, and stain the British annals to the latest posterity? In times of ignorance and bigotry, the minds of men have been known to run a career of enthusiastic fury that astonished themselves when they became cool; and stern war is an apology for the most atrocious actions. But, in a period enlightened like the present, in profound peace, amidst intercourses of mutual confidence, and the mild operations of commerce, to surpass all former ages in perfidious barbarity! Ah! Cursed thirst of gold! thou canst transform man, even when refined and civilized, into a furious beast of prey!

Nor can we, as a nation, clear ourselves of the guilt of these great crimes, if we have
suffered

suffered those under our controul to commit them with impunity: Or if, after making extensive conquests, we have robbed innocent and defenceless nations of the benefit and protection of their ancient governments, without establishing new ones in their stead: Thus leaving them an easy and a tempting prey to avarice and cruelty. *The bloody and deceitful man, the vengeance of God will surely overtake.*

But, in the midst of all our subjects of confession and sorrow and lamentation, whether of a private or public nature, and with a firm resolution to contribute all in our power to correct what is amiss, and to do our utmost for the national welfare, by carefully keeping every man of us *from his iniquity, now that the Host has gone forth against the enemy*, we shall do well also to turn our thoughts on the peculiar and reasonable blessings which the Almighty has poured down upon us, lest, if we should fail to mark them, or prove ungrateful for them, he may turn a deaf ear to our supplications for farther mercies.

Among

Among such peculiar and seasonable blessings, we are to rank the plentiful crop which he hath bestowed on us in all corners of the land ; insomuch, that we shall have no dependence on foreign nations, who might have taken advantage of our necessity. We ought also to mark, with gratitude, the providential opening of new channels of trade for all our manufactures, the demand for which has increased beyond our most sanguine expectations, just in the moment when the breach with the colonies might have occasioned a most dreadful calamity. Let us trace the over-ruling hand of heaven too, in the present peaceful disposition of our potent neighbours, who seem to attend more to the general interest of Europe, than to yield to the dictates of national rivalry and animosity. Let us likewise observe, with pleasure and thankfulness, the alacrity and courage of our soldiers in the cause of their country, after much insidious pains had been taken to make them cool and backward in the service. Let us, with the warmest gratitude and praise, mark the ardour and success with which they defend that antient government, which the pretended sons of liberty spurn

spurn at with contempt, whilst they fly before that manly spirit which is its genuine product; and let us return thanks and blessings to the Lord of Hosts, the God of battles, by whose inspiration alone heroes and patriots are formed, *who girdeth our loins to might, and teacheth our hands to war.*

It would be highly improper, it would be impious indeed, to apply the oracle of God in the present case, and to say, with prophetic authority, *Go up, for to morrow the Lord will deliver them into your hands.* No; this I may not venture to say. The event is in the womb of providence; and *the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,* for God often counteracts the probability of second causes. But this I will say, in opposition to the authors of feeble and timid counsels, that a righteous cause, and persevering valour, joined to a pious trust in the Almighty, give the best ground to hope for success in war.

In the wars usual in Europe, when rival nations have contended with each other, it has often been on points of small importance, and the parties have gained nothing

thing in the end by the contest, but the exercise of arms. In such wars the interests of mankind in general are safe. For that equal balance which has been maintained so long in the great European republic, does not admit of one nation's making large encroachments, or conquests, on another. But, in the present war, we are to retain, or lose forever, not our new provinces, that are hardly yet a part of the state, but our ancient colonies, that are coeval with our navigation and commerce, those great branches that are deeply engrafted into the commonwealth, which have grown with our growth, and cannot now be lopt off, without hazard that the tree shall thereby perish. An object of such importance requires national fortitude and perseverance.

As Christians, and as men, no doubt, we ought to wish and pray for peace. Every thing in the present case prompts us to such a prayer; but always with this condition understood, that it be equitable and safe. How far we may hope for a return of affection and allegiance from the present generation of colonists, who are now in actual rebellion

rebellion against the British government, I pretend not to say. God can turn the hearts of men as he pleases, in opposition to common rules. But one thing is clear and certain, that, as the sword should not be drawn against the subjects of the state, without the most urgent necessity, so should it not be sheathed without full security and submission on the part of the offenders; for a peace, on any other terms, would only prove a short and dangerous truce, to prepare them for a fresh revolt.

Fully employed in our own private occupations, far removed from the seat of war, and in perfect repose, we are apt to be indifferent to the interests of our country, and careless about that very government that gives us security and repose, till we are roused by such a call as this, to reflect on the blessings we enjoy. Let us feel the generous spirit of Britons, rising with just indignation against those degenerate and rebellious colonists, who would rob us of our glory, and destroy that sacred temple of the constitution, that can only secure their liberty and ours. And, as our patriotism
 should

should be roused, so should our loyalty; for, on this occasion, they must go hand in hand together. In times of peace and tranquility, the exercise of this duty is not always apparent, even in the most faithful subjects. They are not called upon to perform any act of fealty; and, being at a distance from the seat of government, the personal qualities, and even the royal dignity of the sovereign, seems to be forgotten. But, when disturbance or danger approach, those principles and affections that lay dormant, soon awaken with the alarm, and the most zealous loyalty appears in the conduct of every good citizen.

Let us now support the throne, for it is shaken! Let us unite in warm affection to our King, whose character, like the sun, shines the brighter for the spots with which faction and rebellion, for a while, have endeavoured to obscure it. And let us demonstrate our patriotism and loyalty, not by loud and empty professions, but by a meek and respectful spirit to those that are set over us, by our reverence for the laws,

laws, and thankfulness to heaven, that we are still under their government.

Above all, let us not suppress that war-like ardour for which we have ever been distinguished. Without magnanimity and valour, wealth and power are precarious, and wisdom and liberty but empty names. To be secure, we must be brave. All America is now in arms; shall we remain feeble and unwarlike? The plough and the loom must be left for a while, that we may not be obliged to abandon them for ever. For, if the Almighty does not interpose to subdue the minds of our domestic foes, or if we do not exert our native strength, in vain shall we think to conquer them by foreign hands. If we could, they might, perhaps, in future, learn to fear the severity of a master, but never again would they revere the authority of a parent.

Since, then, my brethren, to yield to the claims of America would be inexpedient and dishonourable; since the war is just and necessary, let us prosecute it with vigour, with cheerfulness and perseverance, till the rebellious children of our brother Benjamin find, that the same ardent national spirit
 G that

that could cherish, can also correct; and that the same powerful arm that stretched across the Atlantic to save, is not now so weak but it can punish. Thus shall we do all in our power to preserve to posterity a government, the most favourable to human nature that ever existed, and to prolong the period of light, and liberty, and happiness among mankind.

But, while we are of necessity at war with the children of Benjamin our brother, let us not forget the near relation they stand in to us; let us not entirely extinguish our affections to the child, because he is for the present froward and disobedient. Let us bend his will, but not subdue his spirit. Let us chastise him in kindness, *not slay him in anger*. Like good King David, when his son Absalom rebelled against him, *Let us give our captains and our mighty men a charge, that they deal gently with the young man*; and, when he returns to his duty, let us receive him with open arms. AMEN.