

11.  
*From whence come Wars?*

An Enquiry into the Origin, with a View of  
the Progress and Effects, of War.

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE  
CHURCH OF GOVAN,  
ON THE  
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BY THE REVEREND  
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FROM WHENCE COME WARS.

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AN ENQUIRY INTO THE ORIGIN,

WITH A VIEW OF THE

PROGRESS AND EFFECT

O F W A R.

JAMES IV. 1, 2, 3.

*From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

**W**AR is so hideous and detestable, that when any serious person sees, or hears of its existence and its operations, he finds it natural to enquire into its origin, and to put to himself, and to the contending parties, if he hath access to them, such a question as you have in the text, From whence come wars?—From whence come wars and fightings among you? and, upon a slight enquiry, he is satisfied, that so foul and ruinous a thing must be derived from some very polluted source: *Come they not,*—come not wars hence, even from your lusts that war in your members.

There are several sorts of contention, each of which may be called a war.—If a man is vicious, or but half virtuous, there is often a war within his bosom; his appetites and unruly desires strive against his reason. If one who hath not yet learned virtue, will, in an hour of thoughtfulness, look to what is a transacting within him, he may perceive tumult, fighting, confusion; one insatiable lust is sometimes engaged against another; his avarice, for instance, against his pride; at times each of them fights against conscience, that deputy of God in the soul, and too often with a fatal success: he may be sensible of their keenness, their onset, and the victory they obtain on that interior field; he may even feel the wounds they have given, and observe the scars that remain. *Fleshly lusts war against the soul.*

In private life, after society hath taken place, when the more powerful seizes on the property, assaults the person, or invades the life of his weaker neighbour, then there is a broil, a contention, a private war in the neighbourhood; and then a foundation is laid for an action at law: this too is a sort of war, and like other wars, it exhausts, it gives pain, and the issue of it is uncertain. The poor injured person feels great pain, whilst he is in anxiety about a decision, on which perhaps his very subsistence doth depend. And be he ever so grievously and palpably injured, he cannot be sure of meeting with redress, especially if he is very poor, or in very low life. Society is corrupted, and courts

of justice are corrupted in proportion. The weak is borne down and disappointed, or, if in the issue he gains his cause, yet by the great expence, and protracting of the cause, perhaps for many years, he would not have been half so great a loser had he never moved for any redress at all.

Great and wonderful is the influence of the opulent upon their neighbours in common life; as great is their influence upon the judges in our law-courts. Let me therefore, by the way, hint at an important advice, and I sincerely wish that there may be few, or none of you, who shall ever have any need of it—Thou hast been injured—thy friends are sensible that the injury is glaring and deep—thou art provoked—thy spirits are high—thy hopes are sanguine—thou thinkest it a sure point that thou will easily obtain legal redress—fallacious hope! Alas! thou art too poor to bear the expence of a process at law; thou art too little known; thou hast no member of the court to push forward thy cause. If thou contendest with some great person, thou mayst lay thy account before hand that respect will be shewn to the man with the gold-ring and the gay clothing, the man who hath riches, who hath liberality of soul to furnish out a copious and splendid entertainment to the judges; believe me, and for once follow my advice—adventure not on a process which will certainly be expensive, which, in all probability, will be tedious, and however clear thou mayest think it, its issue is extremely doubtful, thou will be borne

down and disappointed:—or, suppose that by some odd and favourable chance thou shouldst succeed, yet it is fifty to one, that, upon the whole, thou wilt be a loser. Check that lust which stimulates thee to take the field in this sort of war. Leave off the contention before it be meddled with.—Agree with thine adversary by the way, rather than embark in a contention that will be expensive and tedious, and the issue of it precarious. Sooth thine adversary, accept of his terms, or submit the difference to the first stranger thou meetest with; if he be a man of sense and common honesty, the less knowledge he hath of our law, his decision will probably be the more consistent with material justice. A process at law, in most of our courts, is like trying one's fortune at a state-lottery. A wise man who hath made one trial, will hardly ever venture to make a second.

I presume the text would justify me though, in this discourse, I should confine myself to that interior war, that torture which an unrenewed man feels, which even when his lusts are kept from bursting out in flagrant acts of intemperance, injustice, or violence, yet they burn within him as red coals covered up with ashes: or, should I speak only of that other war, going to law, which I have just now mentioned. But there is another dreadful contention, which is more properly, and also more commonly, called war, namely, public solemn war, that is, either when two independent states arm themselves for mutual destruction; or civil war, that is,

when two different parts of the same empire are unfortunately at variance, and go to war with each other: It is in reference to one or other, or both of these last-mentioned wars, that I design this discourse: and this, I think, is to act with propriety on a day when we are assembled, by lawful authority, to confess our sins, to implore the pardon of them; and to pray that God would give success in that war wherein we have already been long engaged; and preserve us against the violent hostilities of France, and the unprovoked attacks of that strong and perfidious power.

From the text, it is manifest, that there were wars among those to whom St. James addresses this epistle; and of these wars their lusts were indisputably the cause. That there are wars among Christians now, is a mournful fact, of which we need not take long time to investigate the cause: Lusts produced wars formerly, and the same, or similar effects, do now also spring from the same or from similar causes: *From whence come wars and fighting among you? come they not hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?*

In this discourse I intend to do the following things.

I. I will mention some of these lusts from which wars and fightings take their rise.

II. I will next shew a little more particularly, why it is that lust, or the gratification of lust, is the origin and cause of war.

III. I will take some notice of the misery of those nations that are engaged in war.

IV. I will next shew, which seems to be intimated in the text, that it is strange that Christians, who have so much reason to live in peace, should wage war against each other.

V. I will then mention some rules and limitations, which have been agreed upon to mitigate the ills of war.—And in the last place,

VI. I will mention, and mostly from the text, a few reasons, why a people who have some religion, or at least appear to be serious, may continue long involved in distress, and even in the calamities of war itself.

I intend to speak plainly, and to be short on each of these particulars, which, as I apprehend, are all founded in the text.

I. I will mention some of these lusts from which wars and fightings take their rise.—And the first I mention is, the lust of carnal pleasure. This, if I mistake not, is strictly and properly called lust in the stile of scripture, and in common conversation. This particular lust is as dangerous as it is impetuous, if it be not restrained and directed by reason, and by laws human and divine. And it appears evidently, from scripture, from the most ancient history, and even from fable, that this lust hath been the unhappy cause of bloodshed, of massacres, and of tedious wars.—Another lust I mention, which hath been the cause of wars, is the violent desire of being rich. This lust, as it occasions broils and contentions in private life, so, in like man-

ner, it kindles up the flames of war among the princes of this world. Many of them think, and some of them have been heard to say, "Why should such a prince enjoy a greater revenue than I have? the territories from which he draws the most of it lies contiguous to my dominions; a part of it belonged to one of my predecessors. The foreign commerce which he appropriates to his subjects, and which enables them to pay him such immense customs and taxes, ought, in natural justice, to be laid open to my subjects also. Let us arm, and do ourselves justice by a just and necessary war." Nay, it hath happened in our own times, that three princes in Europe, did, from avarice, agree to seize upon a great part of a neighbouring kingdom, which, by the efforts or the terror of their armies, they divided among themselves. A third lust, from which wars arise, is ambition or pride. This lust is, I believe, in the estimation of the world, accounted less mean and contemptible than the base pursuit of riches, or the wild desire of sensual pleasure, but it is certainly as pernicious. If we attentively examine the history of past times, we will see that princes have often raised war from the lust of worldly glory, from an unbridled desire to enlarge their dominions, and to see the neighbouring kings brought into subjection, and bowing down before them: or, from a lust of glory as criminal, namely, to enslave their own subjects, so that they shall not dare to think of resisting their arbitrary will, or even to mutter or complain



of the grievous oppression which they suffer. These lusts, which I have so briefly mentioned, are the same which St. John enumerates, after advising us not to love the world. 'Love not, he says, the world, neither the things that are in the world; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world.'\* Lust, in general, is the cause of war. To some one or other of the disorderly appetites I have named, the rise of every war may be traced. I will however mention, as a particular cause of war, the passion of revenge, which is, you know, the child of pride. This lust, I doubt not, hath sometimes been the cause of wars and fightings. A nation, from its ill success in war, or from dread of being swallowed up, or overwhelmed by some formidable neighbour, hath been perhaps forced to submit to terms which it thinks unreasonable and unjust. It keeps itself quiet for perhaps a long time. Like a bull in the forest, it collects all its strength, and from this thirst of revenge, renews the war, with a view to wipe off the affront it had received, and regain the advantage it had lost.—I may add that sometimes wicked ministers of state engage their master in a war merely to screen themselves from condign punishment; to divert or stifle the clamour of an injured people against their covetous and bungling administration, they wilfully involve the nation in all the miseries of war: this, this alas!

\* 1 John ii. 15, 16.

hath often been done. I might perhaps mention many other particular causes from which wars and fightings come; some of them too shameful to be named: but every war is derived, as I have said, from some of the general sources already spoken of. *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?*—Come they not from your criminal lust after sensual pleasure,—or from a greedy desire of riches, of possessing yourselves of that which is the property of your neighbour? or from an ambitious desire to appear in splendor, to be admired for the extent and value of your possessions, to have great power, and to see those who are now your equals reduced to the necessity of bowing and cringing before you?—Or do not wars and fightings among you arise from a restless implacable temper? from a spirit of revenge? from an abiding resentment of some perhaps real, perhaps very slight or imaginary affront, or injury, which you fancy you have sustained?—or from the artifices of some mean-spirited and covetous minister, who, when the cry of an impoverished and abused people grows loud against him, for his blundering and inglorious administration, adds to all his other crimes, that of involving the nation in lasting misery, that he may keep his lucrative place, and stave off, for a while, that disgrace and punishment which he richly deserves.—I will next shew a little more particularly,

II. How, and why it is that lusts, or the gra-

tification of lusts, is the origin and cause of war. And this is the case, because it commonly happens, that, by the illicit gratification of lusts, some of the sacred rights of mankind are violated: then the injured person acquires a right to compel the injurious to make him reparation. When the injurer refuses to do this, and by force maintains and defends the injustice he hath done, and the injured also strives with all his might that justice may be done him, then it is manifest that wars and fightings must arise: this is the case between the individuals of mankind in a state of natural liberty, and between kingdoms after political society hath been constituted.

There are indeed certain claims, called imperfect rights, which, though they be violated, yet the injured party cannot, by any law, compel the fulfilment of them by force. If I, from compassion, assist a poor man, even by considerable sums of money, to emerge out of his distressed condition into opulence and ease, I have no right to force him to restore to me what I had freely and voluntarily bestowed to relieve him: let him afterwards become fifty times richer than ever I was, and let me be reduced to ever so poor circumstances; I have no title to make any such demand upon him; no title to commence any action at law upon that head: it is indeed highly fit and equitable that such restitution should be made: and it is manifest that in assisting and relieving the miserable consists the noblest exercise of virtue: and in making chearful and proper returns for such beneficence consists the vir-

tue of gratitude: the man who violates these imperfect rights is himself a very bad man: he is relieved by the generosity of others, but he hath not the heart to make any return; his example tends to harden the heart of the opulent, and cause them shut their ears against the cries of the miserable. God and conscience require that suitable returns should be made for good offices that have been done; — but these returns cannot be forced; and if they should be forced, they would cease to be virtue.

But it is quite otherwise with respect to the rights which are called perfect; the right which a man hath to his property, to his life, to defend the life of a parent, to protect his innocent family, to defend the honour of a sister, of a daughter, or a wife. Whensoever any one offers to injure him in any of these particulars, he hath right to repel the injury by force; and if the injury be already done, he hath right to compel the injurious party to make compleat reparation, or to make him suffer a condign punishment for his crime.

All that I have said concerning the behaviour of individuals to one another, is equally true when applied to kingdoms: if a kingdom, or the sovereign of a kingdom, sees a neighbouring kingdom, or an infant-state, in danger of being unjustly crushed and overwhelmed by a formidable power, and generously, and even at great expence, interposeth to defend and protect that weak or infant-state; and by his noble efforts not only defends it, but in fact exalts it to opu-

lence and grandeur, he doth not, however, acquire any right to demand or exact by force any return, any pay, or tax for this voluntary kindness.

But when any king or state seizes on the property of another state, the injured, as I have said, have an undisputed right to demand reparation, and to effectuate it by open force: without this right, and the proper exercise of it, human society could not subsist: and it is from the violation of some sacred and perfect right that every just and lawful war doth arise: one would therefore be inclined to think, that only one of the parties at war can be justly charged with being the author of the war, namely he who committed the first injury: he is the aggressor; he gratified his criminal desires, he violated the sacred rights of others: from whence then come the subsequent wars and fightings but from him; he hath first done wrong, and next he maintains and defends, by force, what he hath done: but quarrels would not last long if the wrong were only on one side; and in fact it often happens, that soon after the war begins, it becomes difficult to say which of the belligerent parties is the most injurious, and deserves the greatest blame: but it for ever happens, that, in the course and progress of the war, both the parties are wretched and miserable. I will, therefore, in the next place,

III. Take some notice of the misery of those nations which are engaged in war. In war, misery is the lot of the weakest party, and the

strongest is commonly miserable also: the weaker party, or the people whose country hath become the theatre of the war, are surely miserable.—In their most fertile territories, the armies of the enemy are encamped; the officers are lodged in their best towns; the sick, the aged, are dragged from their beds; the rich are driven from their houses to make way for the ease of the rapacious hostile soldiers; the corn which the harmless industrious peasant had laid up to feed his children, the clothes he had got to cover them, are greedily seized upon: his sheep and cattle are driven from the pastures, the keepers who attempted to convey them quietly to a hiding place, are called thieves, and massacred, and left dead upon the spot: one province is overrun, one city is conquered after another—the inhabitants are cooped up in narrow bounds—famine pursues them—the furious enemy overtakes them—a siege is formed—a battle is struck—nothing is to be seen but sights of woe.—‘ If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword; if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine.’\*—Many thousands are killed on each side—“ dying groans are heard—limbs are seen flying in the air—there is smoke, noise, confusion; trampling to death under the horses feet—flight, pursuit, victory—fields strewed with carcases, left for food to dogs, and wolves, and birds of prey,—plundering, stripping, ravishing, burning, and destroying.”—Methinks I see the widow

\* Jeremiah xiv. 18.

running, staggering on the slippery, bloody field, amidst the mangled corpses of the dead and dying, and, struck with the sight of her expiring husband, she stops, she grasps him in her arms; a fight, a hold, which renders her more wretched than if the pangs of death itself had taken hold of her: she is bereaved, she is left desolate, she sees that by the loss of the parent the children are helpless—this is misery—and yet, perhaps, cruelty proceeds so far, that a war of distress and desolation is pursued; houses, villages, cities are burned to the ground—corn, large granaries of corn, if it cannot be taken away, is destroyed by fire—to the men no quarter is given, and even women and children are starved, or barbarously put to death—Thus it is, that in war the weaker side is miserable: and it commonly happens, that, in the course of the war, or, at least, in the issue of it, the stronger is miserable also; they are miserable and in pain by every disappointment, if the vigour of the other party is at times visibly renewed; or if there be circumstances which seem to make it probable that the half-vanquished shall entirely elude the vengeance of those who prematurely boasted of victory.—And sometimes courage and a manly fury returns into the souls of those who were damped, who were near to despair, and almost overcome—they are emboldened, because they fight in the cause of their country, they fight in defence of liberty—they determine that they shall oblige the conqueror to purchase victory at a costly rate—or, perhaps, like the Dutch, when unjustly

invaded by the combined fleets and armies of France and England, they resolve to emigrate to a distant land—or, like those on an extensive continent, who, having failed of success, elude the rage of the conquerors, and disappoint their aim, by leaving their possessions, and going far backwards to form new settlements in the desert,—or, in an unjustifiable and highly criminal desperation, they, like the citizens of Saguntum, burn their own houses over their heads.—And sometimes also it happens, that, by a vigorous, a desperate and successful courage, they are able to chase out of the country that very army which for a long time was like to conquer them.—Thus in war the weaker side are miserable, and the stronger are so also.—The prince, the leaders, may by luxury be hardened against the sense of pain; but the people, the bulk of the people, are wretched. They are over-burdened with taxes,—the country is depopulated—the tillers of the land and the useful artificers are comprehended, are pressed, are dragged from their necessary and innocent occupations, and forced to carry on the war whether they think it righteous or sinful. The wife, the little child, runs often to the door and looks for the husband, the parent, whom, alas! they shall never see again. Here too the soldiers are just as miserable, as those of the weaker party: their toil is as severe—their beds are as hard—their sleep as precarious—and their food as coarse and as scanty:—if they retain any sense of humanity, they must be shocked at those acts of cruelty which they are hounded out to



commit, and if they have been the instruments of committing them, they must be stung with remorse. The kingdom in striving to be victorious at an enormous expence, which it can ill bear, reduces itself to poverty and ruin,—and if at length it succeeds, those in the upper rank, may, for a while, enjoy a brutal and inglorious ease, whilst they wallow in luxury and debauchery, devouring that which, by the fortune of the war, hath fallen into their fangs; but when that is devoured, they commonly, like hungry dogs, fall to work again, and worry, and bite, and devour one another. In short, if a state hath been victorious, and hath conquered an extensive territory, it is but hastening the faster to its own downfall: either the subjects, great and small, will become absolute slaves under a despotic master, or else the empire, being too extensive, consisting of too many provinces, must crumble again into parts; parts amongst which all the horrible injustice, and all the horrible ills of war, are like to be acted over again, and suffered anew. I will next shew,

IV. What seems to be intimated in the text, that it is strange that Christians, who have so much reason to live in peace, should wage war against each other. *From whence come wars and fightings among you?* Among you who are the disciples of Christ, the disciples of the Prince of Peace.

And most certainly, if people in every condition of life would imbibe the spirit of the gospel, there would be few or no broils and con-

tentions in private life, few or no actions at law, because there would be no occasion given for any such contention. And if great men, the princes of this world, and their ministers, learned and practised the doctrine of Christ, there would be no wars between nation and nation.

The first lesson which Christ prescribes to be learned in his school, and learned by every one of his followers, is this, ‘ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.’ If this great lesson is learned, and put in practice—if the lusts, the criminal desires, and impetuous appetites, which I have mentioned, are mortified; no injury will be done, and of course, there will not be any cause of war: then men would ‘ beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks—nation would not lift up the sword against nation, neither would they learn war any more—God’s people would dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places:’ then the prophecy concerning the peaceful state of things in the days of the Messiah would be literally fulfilled; the fierce and the mild, ‘ the wolf and the lamb would feed together, the leopard would lye down with the kid; the lion would eat straw like the bullock; none of them would hurt nor destroy.’

In the holy Scriptures many strong reasons are suggested to prevail on men to repress every angry passion, to persuade them to do justly, to cultivate the kind affections, and cherish the spirit of benevolence and friendship. All men

are formed and upheld by the same God; he is their common father—‘ he hath made of one ‘ blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the ‘ face of the earth’—they are brethren—whensoever any one is tempted, by whatever lust or passion to injure another, he should think he hears the man of God crying in his ears, ‘ Why smitest ‘ thou thy fellow? Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ‘ ye harm one to another?’

If princes, before they commit any atrocious and striking act of public injustice; if lawgivers, before they rashly enact any law which seems to establish dreadful slavery and unlimited oppression, would take time to consider what alarm, what discontent, what rage and fury may be excited by such hasty and violent measures; what wars and fightings may happen in consequence of them, what battles may be fought, what blood may be shed; cities razed, and flourishing kingdoms laid desolate, would not a sense of justice operate on their minds; would not compassion for the many thousands or millions whom they are going to throw into unmerited distress, check them in their furious career, and stop them from the execution of their criminal purposes? Would not fear of kindling the flames of war in their own country, and of seeing their own innocent subjects in distress and misery, produce the same salutary effect?

But, alas! princes and great men, who in their palaces live in luxury and at ease, are but little sensible of the misery which accompanies war: nay, even those in common life are not half

enough apprized of its horror.—For as soon as we are capable to attend to any thing, we hear, we read, of war and the barbarous arts of destruction—with these arts we become familiar by degrees—we seldom examine how horrible they are, because what we know of them we learn at an age when the mind receives ideas implicitly, admires any thing that appears great, and also retains the impressions that are early made upon it. Hence it is, that if a person in low life, to gratify his avarice, way-lays and murders another, we shudder at such cruelty; but if a statesman, to gratify his pride, his ambition, or lust of domination, forms a plan, in the executing of which, a million of innocent people shall by the sword be hurried into eternity, we applaud the daring greatness of his spirit: the first is, with great justice, condemned to an infamous death, and dragged to a gibbet; the last, though infinitely more criminal, is gazed upon by a slavish and stupid people, and perhaps gets himself possessed of half the riches of a kingdom.

Eternal glory, of which the gospel gives us the view and the hope—the fallacious nature of sensual pleasure—the small accession of delight that springs from opulence or large possessions—the vanity of ambition or worldly glory, might, if thought upon, restrain Christians from thoughts of injustice, and thereby cut off all necessity of private fightings, and of public wars.—Let me add, that it is very seldom that a prince or a kingdom gains any thing at all, either

money or territory, even by a successful war. *They lust and have not, they kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain.* On either side, let the war be ever so keenly entered into, let the principal subjects be all afloat, and grasping at the executive power from the sovereign's hands; let them levy many regiments at an enormous expence; let it be supposed that the war hath cost the lives of millions of brave men, and millions also of treasure; and that in the dreary course of many tedious campaigns, many of the enemies being killed, and their treasure also exhausted, the war, on one side, is in so far crowned with success. Let it be further supposed, that each of the parties hath conquered, from its opposite, some town, or some barren island, or equally barren territory; yet, in the conclusion, it commonly happens that all things are agreed to be restored and settled on the same footing they were when the war began. Look at the treaties of peace that have been made in Europe for above a hundred years past, and you will find that this, or something nearly like this, is a preliminary article in the treaty, "The high belligerent or contracting parties agree, that whatever any of them has conquered from the other, in the course of the war, shall be faithfully restored, and that every thing shall remain for ever in that same state in which it was when the war broke out." Ridiculous! Why then did the war break out at all? What is now become of the elevated hopes, the loud boasting, and the proud expectations of thorough success? The mountain was in travail,

was in hard labour, was uttering mighty groans, and not so much as one contemptible reptile is produced. Why then, after so many instances of successful war, why venture to repeat the dangerous trial? This view of war is so evidently ridiculous, that, many years ago, I have heard some able and enlightened people maintain, that the time would soon come when the princes of Europe and their ministers, however weak and ignorant they may be supposed to be, (and weak and ignorant, it is said, many of them are, to a very amazing degree,) will so clearly perceive their interest, that they will finish all their differences by arbitration, or some other quiet means, without any longer entering into war: a state of things, which, I fear, is rather to be wished, than to be hoped for. Hitherto, it would seem that the rulers of kingdoms do often kindle up the flames of war, without knowing why, without having any special reason to do so. A long and bloody war was not long ago carried on between Great Britain and France, and, upon a retrospective view of it, politicians and historians are, it seems, at a loss to tell what was the cause of it. Aukward children when they meet on the street, or in the field, they, perhaps, for a little look angrily at one another—then one of them reaches his neighbour a blow—which is soon returned—each of the two is joined by his friends—the clamour rises on the green—hats fly off—the hair is pulled—faces are scratched—heads perhaps are broken, and coats and shirts are torn—in a while they grow weary of giving

and receiving blows, and, leaving off the fray, they agree to live in peace. Kings and ministers of state are just big grown up children; they are like the children I speak of, with this particular and unhappy difference, that instead of fighting out the needless quarrels they have raised, be-taking themselves to places of shelter, they hound out their innocent subjects to battle; and involve the nation they mis-govern, in bloodshed and expence; and perhaps, by levies, and by heavy taxes, first weaken it, and then gradually reduce it to absolute poverty, to utter ruin and contempt. The next thing I proposed was,

V. To mention some of those rules which have been agreed upon to mitigate some of the ills of war. *From whence come wars and fightings among you?* Among you, Christians. If you cannot prevent war altogether, is it not in your power to soften its rigour and ferocity, at least in some degree.

Whensoever a war, even a lawful war, hath commenced, there are many unjust and cruel things done; done from immemorial practice, some of which, perhaps, cannot be avoided:— In war, it is usual to consider the prince and his subjects as making only one person, and of course to conclude that whatever injury the prince hath done, the subjects may be justly punished for it; and from this fiction, the injured fall upon the subjects of the injurious prince by sea and land, and either kill them, or strip them of all they have: this is, at present, and hath long been, for aught I know, the universal practice; and

yet it appears to be unjust. Have we not been struck with a sense of this injustice, on seeing French merchants carried prisoners along our streets, who, having acquired a fortune in the Indies, and knowing nothing of any hostility between France and England, were returning peaceably home, and were, on the open seas, fallen upon by our privateers, and robbed of every farthing they had got? And, I believe, the humane, among the French, are struck in the same manner when they see, carried into their prisons, any British merchants, who had been captured and robbed by the privateers of France.—It is just that the injurer, and not the innocent should suffer. Would it not be right, and agreeable to what nature dictates, that kings, or their ministers, should fight it out, and, in their own persons, finish the war which they have provoked? Should they not feel and speak the noble sentiments and language of king David, when, for a particular offence of his, a great plague was to come upon his innocent subjects: Here, I think, David expresses a strong and a proper sense of justice; here, the generosity of his soul appears as illustrious as it doth in any other prayer, or psalm, or speech, or in any action of his life. David said unto God, ‘ Is it not I, ‘ even I it is that have sinned, and done evil ‘ indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they ‘ done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my ‘ God, be on me, and on my father’s house; ‘ but not on thy people, that they should be



'plagued.'\* So delicate a sense of justice is surely rare.

But I am to speak of the rules, the restrictions, which, in all ages, have been agreed upon to moderate the fury of parties at war, and which Christians ought surely to observe: for even that nation, which, by its injustice, hath excited against itself a just war, doth still retain rights which it would be high injustice to violate.

In war, the aim of the injured nation ought to be no more but to compel the injurious to agree to reasonable terms of peace; that is, to make due reparation, and give assurance that it will not, as before, violate the laws of justice. This is the lawful aim in war, and it ought to be prosecuted with as little bloodshed, as little destruction, as possible. Nothing should be done that tends merely to exasperate, to make the breach wider, and to lengthen out the contest; nothing should be done but that which hath some tendency to bring the war to an end. Incurfions into the interior parts of the enemies country, burning villages, driving cattle, when not absolutely necessary to subsist the army, robbing and killing the unarmed and defenceless peasants, in their separate dwellings and plantations—is unjust and cruel; it is an irritating, a paultry, and pilfering way of making war.

The fortune of the war may alter, and a cutting remembrance of such needless and unavailing acts of barbarity may provoke a dreadful re-

\* 1 Chron. xxi. 17.

taliation and revenge. ' Gideon said to Zeba  
' and Zalmunna, the two princes of Midian,  
' What manner of men were they whom ye slew  
' at Tabor? and they answered, As thou art, so  
' were they, each one resembled the children of  
' a king. And he said, They were my brethren;  
' as the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive,  
' I would not slay you—And Gideon arose and  
' slew them.'†

To make war in the way I have mentioned is condemned by the law of nations. And all nations have, I think, agreed that the person of an ambassador is not to be violated,—nor hostages slain, unless it be for some crime of their own, after they had become hostages—nor soldiers fired upon, after they have thrown down their arms, and begged for quarter—nor the wounded slaughtered upon the field—nor prisoners killed or barbarously used—nor the sword drawn against old men or children—nor women ravished or killed—these, and other rules and restrictions, have been agreed to by all civilized nations, and they tend to mitigate the horror of war to a very considerable degree.—It hath been maintained, that, from the genius and gentle spirit of Christianity, war is now made with more mildness than it was in antient times. Perhaps in most Christian countries it is generally so, and I am sorry that this mildness of modern manners in war is not universal.—I think of Mexico and Peru, where, by professed Christians, many millions of harmless people were savagely butchered

† Judges viii. 18, 19.

above two hundred years ago; many lesser instances of the same kind might be mentioned; but I would fain think, that the mournful narrative, that, within these few years, four or five millions of innocent people in Indostan were starved and destroyed by the rigour and rapacity of the English, is not sufficiently authenticated. It must however be confessed, that the manner in which war is carried on now is very different from that of the antients; the antients, instead of killing those they conquered, did often carry the conquered along with them into their own country. When David was absent from Ziklag, the Amalekites invaded the country, invaded Ziklag, and smote it, and burnt it with fire, and took the women captives that were therein: 'They slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way' † When the Israelites conspired against the king of Assyria, and refused to pay him tribute, 'the king of Assyria,' after a siege of three years, 'took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. ‡ And when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah, he carried the inhabitants captive to Babylon, having, so far as I remember, slain but a few.

In one word, it is naturally just to make war by open violence, as far as it is necessary to obtain our right, or to distress the enemy, so as he shall consent to just terms: but such violence

† 1 Sam. xxx. 1, 2.      ‡ 2 Kings xvii. 3, 6.

and cruelty as is not naturally subservient to this purpose, or without which we could obtain our right as effectually, and at no greater expence to ourselves, is unjust, and detestable in the sight of God and man. In order to end so horrible a thing as war, I think I may say further, that if, in the course of the war, the leaders of the one contending party find that their armies are weaker, and their resources fewer, than those of the other, they ought to controul their pride, and submit, with as good a grace as possible, to the stronger: this is surely a less evil than that they should, by their obstinacy, bring extermination upon their country. Civil liberty is precious, but life is still more so. Why will ye die, says the prophet Jeremiah to the king of Judah—  
 ‘ Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the  
 ‘ sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence,  
 ‘ as the Lord hath spoken against the nation that  
 ‘ will not serve the king of Babylon?’\* And whatever some of the haughty Romans have boasted to the contrary, I think it manifest that Cato and Scipio ought to have submitted to Cesar, rather than (as they did) put a violent end to their lives: for that unnatural and unjustifiable step they are censured by the more judicious of even the Heathen writers. It is every man’s duty to preserve his life, though, by the vicissitudes of the world, he may see himself obliged to become the subject or the servant of a new master. Self-preservation is his indispensable duty; he owes it to God, to his country,

\* Jeremiah xxvii. 13.

and to himself: and God may, in his good time, restore him to liberty.

And here I cannot but regret, that, in this unhappy contest between Great Britain and its Colonies, some persons have been invidiously misrepresented as entertaining opinions too favourable to the cause of the Americans. In a contest of this sort, it is impossible but that the opinions of thinking people must be different; and mere opinion, especially of those in the lower walks in life, can have no effect at all upon the issue of the dispute: but I honestly declare that though, as I think, these Colonists were treated with too much harshness formerly, it is my opinion they would now act the wise part, would they frankly submit to the terms that have been offered them by the Parliament of Britain: this would be wiser than to continue the war, and thereby bring ruin on their country; this would be a safer and wiser measure than that, being seduced by the fallacious promise of assistance, they should fling themselves into the arms of France; that connexion is unnatural: They would be much more happy connected, as formerly, with the generous English, with those who are of the same language, the same religion, the same blood with themselves, though they should not yet obtain independence. Ah! is there not some patriot, or some illustrious band of patriots, who shall try, and try with success, to renew this kindred connexion? who shall wisely, and for the relief and happiness of the two contending parties, bring about this so much desired re-

concilement and peace? O peace! thou first of human blessings, how desirable art thou? Peace! peace at home, and peace with our kinsmen and brethren at a great distance! Blessed be the man that brings us thee, who shall put a stop to levies, to depopulation abroad and at home; who shall command the bloody sword to be put into the scabbard, and the noisy machines of war to be still; who shall bid the Americans disband their armies, bid them subdue and cultivate their unimproved, but naturally fertile and widely extended territories; teach them to apply with industry to every sort of manufactures, and to pursue commerce at large with the Asiatic and European nations; who shall teach them the arts of peace, to promote population, and by establishing equal laws, and a generous system of liberty, to render their country an asylum to the many thousands who are, alas! at this day, borne down and impolitically oppressed in Europe. And who shall, at the same time, call home the British armies and fleets to protect this fair, this exhausted, and ill-defended island against the unprovoked attempts of France, and even to strike, in self-defence, a merited blow against that menacing and faithless power. Who doth not pray that Heaven may, as formerly, raise up such a patriot? Who doth not wish to see so happy a turn of our affairs?

VI. I proceed to the last thing, namely, to mention, and mostly from the text, some reasons why a people, even though they have some religion, or at least appear to be serious, may con-

tinue long involved in distress, and even in the calamities of war itself. *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

It appears, from many instances in scripture, that individuals, who seek God, may, for a long time, be held in worldly distress, whilst they wait that God will rescue them. This, you know, was the case with Job, and with the Psalmist also. The prayer, the expostulation of the righteous at such a time is, ‘ Save me, O God, ‘ for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink ‘ in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am ‘ come into deep waters, where the floods over- ‘ flow me. I am weary of my crying, my ‘ throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for ‘ my God.\* Will the Lord cast off for ever? ‘ and will he be favourable no more? Is his ‘ mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise ‘ fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be ‘ gracious?† The church and people of God may be long in distress also. Thus the Israelites were for a long time borne down and oppressed in Egypt. ‘ They sighed by reason of the bon- ‘ dage, and they cried; and their cry came up ‘ unto God, by reason of the bondage.‡ So al- so the same people, in their long captivity, ‘ By ‘ the rivers of Babylon, say they, there we sat ‘ down, yea, we wept when we remembered ‘ Zion. We hanged our harps upon the wil-

\* Psal. lxxix. 1, 2, 3. † Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. ‡ Exod. ii. 23.

‘ lows, in the midst thereof.’ §—Why a sober and seemingly virtuous individual is sometimes long in pain or in adversity, or why in war, for instance, those who contend for the interest of liberty, of virtue, of the public good, of the human species, are often unsuccessful, is among these secret things which belong unto God. Why Cesar was victorious at Pharsalia; why Octavius and Antony prevailed against Cassius and the amiable Brutus, on the plains of Philippi; why God, in his providence, hath suffered the Mahometans to enthral so fair and so great a part of the antient world; why the Popish powers have so long and so much succeeded in trampling down the Protestants, and checking the progress of the Reformation—these, and many things of the like kind, are the mysterious ways of Heaven—‘ the ways of that God, who ‘ giveth not account of any of his matters.’—In private life ‘ the tabernacles of robbers prosper;’ and in public, those societies or nations which to us seem to be the most sober, and innocent, and deserving, are disappointed of success, and are made to groan under a heavy burden of distress.

But, my brethren, we are, perhaps, very often and very widely mistaken in the estimate we make of the comparative merit of individuals or of societies. Most certainly the ways of God are right, and religion, if it restrain its votaries from daring crimes which might elevate them at once to worldly greatness, is the way to pass through the world with security and ease; and



yet it must be confessed that the church and people of God may sometimes be long in adversity: of this dispensation of Providence we are able to perceive many of the wise reasons, though we be too blind to see them all.

In general, God leaves his people long in trouble to alarm their consciences, to check them in their wild career, and force them to think of the eternal world: a constant course of prosperity is extremely dangerous; men enchanted with the pleasures of the present world, seldom think of God, or of the world to come. Whilst they suffer affliction, they think on the causes of their suffering, and from the fear of greater sufferings in the life to come, they are, by the grace of God, led to repentance. It is therefore from his wisdom, and his loving kindness, that God afflicts men. And if a nation or society hath become corrupted and luxurious, it hath great need of being visited with the temporal judgments of God. The people may be awakened, and may repent sincerely; and for a while some stop may be put to the operation of these causes which produce national ruin.—But I should rather speak in particular, of being kept long in these calamities which accompany a state of war.

And, first, it may be said that God keeps a people long in these calamities, to raise and keep alive in them a habitual dislike of war, and a strong aversion to begin any particular war, though, at first view, and when it is slightly considered, it may appear to be just. War is so

horrible in its aspect, and so desolating in its progress, that it is not to be gone into from a sudden fit of passion; but after long, and calm, and serious deliberation—after every method to procure, to *buy peace*, hath been tried—and tried in vain: and it should not be begun on account of any transient or frivolous act of injustice: nor should it be begun at all, unless the prince who begins it is rich, and strong, and powerful, and is in a manner certain of success: indeed Providence oftentimes confounds the proud and mighty, raises the spirits and encreases the strength of the weak; and *the battle is not always to the strong*. Even this consideration will render a cautious prince, or a wise minister, slow to enter into war. One would think that princes, rather than drench the nations in blood, should meet and finish their senseless differences by friendly conference—or compromise them by arbitration—or by casting lots—or even, as I hinted before, finish them by single combat; which last, however wrong it is in private quarrels, is surely a far less evil than to thin the human species by a desolating war, which the rulers have, from arrogance and a spirit of domination, hastened to commence.—Indeed, if the subjects have foolishly approved of the rash steps of their rulers, and have even loudly encouraged them by fomenting their arrogance, and publicly calling upon them to enter into and to continue in *coercive*, violent, and sanguinary measures, offering to spend their *lives and fortunes* in the war, it seems but just in Providence that they should be made to suffer

for a long time the calamities of the war.—Alas! it is commonly the grandees of a country, who, for selfish ends, do thus slavishly beat time with the rash measures of their rulers, and the bulk of the people are made to suffer.—A war may be in some sort just, and yet it may be very imprudent and inexpedient to enter into it.

2. A people who have religion, who fast and pray for success, may continue long to bear the calamities of war, because they employ unjust measures in the prosecution of it. A person who is assaulted by another on the street, hath a just claim against that other in a court of law; but if he hath furiously turned upon the man who assaulted him, and beaten him with ten times more severity than he was beaten himself, his claim for redress becomes weaker, at least, than it would otherwise have been.—To obtain success, to be delivered from the calamities of war, it becomes a people to examine whether the measures they pursue in conducting the war be agreeable to the will of God or not. *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not.*

It is strange that any people should expect or dare to pray for success, whilst the end they aim at is wrong, and the conduct they pursue obviously criminal. Can a thief, can a robber, who is eager to enrich himself by the spoils of the industrious, can he expect that, while he perpetrates his crimes, God will hide him behind a thick cloud, so that he shall not be detected?

Can the murderer pray in earnest that God may assist him to perpetrate an assassination? Or, in this debauched age, can the adulterer or the adulterers look up to God and pray, and expect to succeed in their vile assignations and amorous intrigues?

Whilst we fast and pray for success in this tedious and lamentable war, let us, let our rulers and commanders, examine whether there be not some unjustifiable steps which we have taken already? Hath no unnecessary theft, or pillage, or plunder, or robbery, been committed? Hath no act of shocking and barbarous cruelty been done? Hath no army, or part of an army, been killed after they had surrendered, had thrown down their arms? Have none of the wounded been slaughtered on the field of battle; or have none of them been left to perish in their wounds, without being carried to hospitals, or any-wise taken care of? Hath no furious officer, hardened by bloodshed, been hounded out, at the head of a group of savages, to burn the houses, and ruin the crops of the quiet and innocent planters? Or hath such an officer been applauded and rewarded for having begun a horrid *war of distress*? Have no villages, no towns, no cities, been wantonly burned, when they might have been preserved? If none of these things have been done, we have, no doubt, the better reason to hope for more success than we have yet met with: but if any of such enormously criminal measures have been pursued, need we wonder that though we fast, the war is prolonged, and

that God hath not yet given us the success which we pray for. *Ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not.* I next observe from the text,

3. That a people may be long held in distress, though they fast and ask for relief, because they ask amiss. *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* This is the character which the Spirit of God gives of those to whom this letter is addressed; and I wish it may not also be the character of many who are called by lawful authority to humble themselves as on this fast day.

We have fasted several times before.—We have prayed for success, and that this inglorious war might soon come to an end: but hitherto things continue just as they were: it is well if our condition be not worse than when we commenced the war: ‘We looked for judgment, ‘but behold oppression; for righteousness, but ‘behold a cry.’ Still ‘we look for righteousness, ‘but there is none; for salvation, but it is far ‘off.’ One year of this tiresome war, a second, a third, a fourth, hath gone over our heads, and another year of it is begun. ‘The harvest is ‘past, the summer is ended, and we are not ‘saved.’ May not this be a presumption that Heaven is displeased with our aim, and by repeatedly counter-working our efforts, intimates to us that abundance of blood is shed already.—I sincerely wish, that the fomenters of this war, on both sides of the Atlantic, may be of this mind. I remember that when Otho, in his con-

test against Vitellius for the Roman empire, had lost a battle, but had still great resources, and, in the opinion of his friends, great cause to hope for success, he choosed at once to take the desperate step of a Roman death, rather than to be the occasion of any more bloodshed of the Romans his fellow-citizens! Or at least is not the great length of this war, which at first was expected to be easily finished in one short campaign, a presumption that, in their professions to fast and to repent, the inhabitants of the land have not been sincere. ‘ Will ye steal, and murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely by the name of God;’ and even by your laws, give encouragement to a false, a blasphemous, and idolatrous religion,—‘ Will ye plead for Baal? \* —‘ Will ye burn incense to Baal?’ †—and yet come to this place—and, hanging down the head like a bulrush, pray for success in this woeful war, in which the nation hath been so long engaged, and by which it is so miserably exhausted? First repent of your sins, and then you will be better prepared to *ask*, and may the rather hope to *obtain*.

It is possible there may be in high life some persons who are strangely corrupted; but I hope there is not one of you who wishes for success that you may lay hold on the revenue and the spoil of a foreign land, to be consumed upon your lusts: and if in this land there be really some persons so far debased as to wish for success in the war, that so they may get more gold

\* Judges vi. 31.

† Jeremiah vii. 9.

and silver to consume in luxury, high living, drunkenness and gluttony, or in gaming, lewdness, and expensive debauchery, grown up to a scandalous height, unheard of till this present age.—If there be others who covet greater riches, that they may with a heavier hand bear down and oppress their dependents abroad and at home.—If there be a still higher, a ministerial party, who, by a revenue squeezed from America, mean to create new offices, new posts, new pensions, greater bribes, in order (and by the means of Popery too) to establish and ascertain a system of despotic power which shall be firm and lasting, like that in France, in Spain, and in other Popish kingdoms.—If all, or if any of these dangerous points be in view—we need not wonder that a wise and gracious God hath not yet granted a success which would be grievous to the people abroad, and, in its issue, lamentably hurtful to most of those at home. Whenever the Plebeians in antient Rome raised a loud cry against the oppression and heavy burdens which they were compelled to bear, the Patricians, in order to silence these cries, trumped up a story about some injury that had been done to the state, and the necessity of a foreign war, to which war they hounded out the poor abased people.—And in all ages it hath been usual for rulers to pursue wars and conquests abroad, that they might the more effectually enslave their subjects at home. And without all question riches from abroad, or greater riches

in whatever way they come, enable the prince to oppress and enslave his subjects.

I just add, that we of this nation are perhaps hitherto held in the miseries of war, because, though we fast, we look not up to God for deliverance: we consider not that war is, in a special manner, an appeal to Heaven. By a sudden panic, by a storm at land, or by a turn of the wind at sea, God can make the war issue as he pleases: we presume on our own strength—we proudly expect to force success by the arm of flesh—we have been long disappointed—but we complain of our Generals and our Admirals, and attend not to *the signs of the times*,—to the operation and course of the providence of God.—Our hearts are not right with God: we fast and we pray: *we ask, but do not obtain, because we ask amiss*: not considering that victory, even in the justest war, is not to be prayed for, but with submission to the will of God; leaving it entirely to his infinite wisdom whether he will grant our petitions or not.

And after all, who knows that though henceforth our plans should be wisely laid, though our Generals should display ever so good conduct, and our soldiers exert ever so much courage, yet we may at length find it to be the determination of God that we must part with that superiority, which we have exercised so long over the extensive, the far distant Western World, now become populous: if this matter, like the revolt of the ten tribes,\* is from God, 'the coun-

\* 1 Kings xii. 24.



‘fel of the Lord ſhall ſtand, and who are we that  
 ‘we ſhould fight againſt him. The Moſt High  
 ‘divideth to the nations their inheritance: God  
 ‘changeth the times and the ſeaſons.’

I muſt mention another ſort of war, which I forgot to take notice of at the beginning of this diſcourſe, I mean, wrangling about abſtruſe points, and metaphyſical opinions: to that ſort of wars and fightings it is likely St. James had a view in the text; for the epiſtle is directed to the twelve tribes that were ſcattered abroad; and many of the Jews, even after they were converted to Chriſtianity, were, it ſeems, eager enough to enter into metaphyſical diſputes: indeed, for many centuries backward, ſuch diſputes had agitated the minds of ſpeculative men, and ſome of the tenets, formerly diſputed about, did very early become ſubjects of contention among Chriſtians. By one party, a point was keenly affirmed, and by another party it was keenly denied: the debate continued, and the contention grew warm; and this hath been the caſe in almoſt every age downward to the preſent time; for when the ſaw of contention is often drawn backwards and forwards, it is apt to grow hot in the hands of thoſe who draw it: hence ſo many proceſſes againſt tenets and doctrines, ſome of them perhaps very innocent, others of them perfectly unintelligible: hence ſo many controversies in ſchool-divinity, ſo much rage, ſo much fury, which hath often led to perſecution, to war, and to bloodſhed: this is the war of narrow-minded theologians; it riſes a-

mong them, it is conducted and foughten by them: and this, like other wars, springs from the lusts of men: it comes not from the calm love of truth; nor can it be said that they are the most enlightened in the knowledge of the truth, who commence prosecutions about doctrines or opinions. It is commonly the dull who are the ring-leaders, and the dull also who are the followers in this sort of war: in these the lust of pride is often very prevalent: they have formed a set of speculative opinions, and they cannot bear that others should differ from them; for this were to call their understanding in question. — Or, this war springs from the lust of covetousness and ambition. — Some person is like to be preferred to a lucrative and honourable place—his character must be blown—a report must be circulated that he is deeply tinctured with heterodox principles—a process of heresy must be raised against him, that so he may be rejected, and that his accuser, or some one of his accuser's friends, may step into the place.—But to investigate the origin, to mark the progress, to shew the folly, the wickedness, and the dreadful effects of this theological war, would require a long discourse. I conclude this fast-sermon with repeating the text, and some of the spiritual exhortations which the Apostle subjoins to it.

‘ From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not,

‘ because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not,  
‘ because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it  
‘ upon your lusts. Ye adulterers, and adulte-  
‘ resses, know ye not that the friendship of the  
‘ world is enmity with God? whosoever there-  
‘ fore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy  
‘ of God.—God resisteth the proud, but giveth  
‘ grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves  
‘ therefore to God.—Draw nigh to God, and  
‘ he will draw nigh to you: cleanse your hands,  
‘ ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-  
‘ minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep:  
‘ let your laughter be turned to mourning, and  
‘ your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in  
‘ the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.’

T H E E N D.