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A Biblical Worldview To Win The Future

A SERMON PREACHED AT LEXINGTON JONAS CLARKE, A.M. 1776

This sermon was preached by Jonas Clarke on the one year anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

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The fate of Blood-thirsty Oppressors, and GOD'S
Tender Care of his distressed People.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT LEXINGTON,

April 19, 1776.

To commemorate the MURDER, BLOOD-SHED and Commencement of Hostilities, between Great-Britain and America, in that Town, by a Brigade of Troops of George III, under Command of Lieutenant-Colonel SMITH, on the Nineteenth of April, 1775.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A BRIEF NARRATIVE of the principal Transactions of that Day.

By JONAS CLARK, A. M.
PASTOR of the CHURCH IN LEXINGTON.

The fate of blood-thirsty oppressors, and GOD's care of his distressed people.

J O E L, III. 19, 20, and 21.

EGYPT shall be a desolation, and EDOM shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed INNOCENT BLOOD in their land. But JUDAH shall dwell for ever, and JERUSALEM from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed; for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

Next to the acknowledgement of the existence of a Deity, there is no one principle of greater importance in religion, than a realizing belief of the divine government and providence, to realize that God is Governor among the nations, that his government is wise and just, and that all our times and changes are in his hands, and at his disposal, will have the happiest tendency to excite the most grateful acknowledgements of his goodness in prosperity, the most cordial resignation to his paternal discipline in adversity, and the most placid composure and equanimity of mind in all the changing scenes of life. Inspired with this divine principle, we shall contemplate, with grateful wonder and delight, the goodness of God in prosperous events, and devoutly acknowledge and adore his sovereign hand in days of darkness and perplexity, and when the greatest difficulties press. This will be a source of comfort and support under private afflictions and trials, and this shall encourage our hope in God and trust in his name, under public calamities and judgments.—Yea, however dark and mysterious the ways of providence may appear; yet nothing shall overwhelm the mind, or destroy the trust and hope of those, that realize the government of heaven,—that realize, that an all wise God is seated on the throne, and that all things are well appointed for his chosen people,—for them that fear him.

This principle and these sentiments therefore, being of so great use and importance in religion, under the various dispensations of providence, one great design of the present discourse, is to rouse and excite us to a religious acknowledgment of the hand of God, in those distressing scenes of MURDER, BLOOD-SHED and WAR, we are met to commemorate, upon this solemn occasion.

The passage before us, it is humbly conceived, is well suited to confirm our faith, to excite our trust, and encourage our hope, under such awful dispensations, as it points out the method of God's government and the course of his providence towards the enemies and oppressors of his people, and the fate of those that shed innocent blood; and at the same time, represents his peculiar care of his church and chosen, and the assurance they have, when under oppression, of restoration and establishment,—and that God himself will plead their cause and both cleanse and avenge their innocent blood. "Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed INNOCENT BLOOD in their land. But Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood, that I have not cleansed; for the LORD dwelleth in Zion."

It is not necessary to enquire as to the immediate occasion, or literal fulfillment of the prophecy before us, with respect to the particular nations, or kingdoms here mentioned. It is sufficient to our present purpose to observe, that Egypt was early noted, in scripture history, for oppressing God's people, and causing them to serve with cruel bondage. Edom also is mentioned as guilty of violence towards them, and expressing a most embittered hatred and revenge against them; and from the expressions in the text, it is natural to suppose, that there had been some, if not many instances of their shedding innocent blood in their land. Israel, God's chosen people, had often suffered violence, from both these states: So that we have good reason to suppose, that both Egypt and Edom, in the language of scripture prophecy, in the text and other passages, may intend not Egypt or Edom only, but (proverbially) in a more general sense, enemies, persecutors or oppressors of God's people, who violated their rights and liberties, religious and civil, and by the sword of persecution or oppression, shed innocent blood in their land.

Prophecies, especially those that are, or may be, of general use to the people of God, are but seldom literal, ei-

ther in prediction or fulfillment. They are rather of use to foreshew great and interesting events, as taking place in the world, in such time and manner, and upon such persons, societies, nations, or kingdoms, as shall display the justice and equity of divine government, and the peculiar care which Heaven takes of the church and people of God, for their correction, instruction, preservation or establishment. Agreeably St. Peter speaks strongly for this method of explaining and improving scripture prophecies, where he says expressly, that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” It is therefore, rational to suppose, that though prophecies may have special or immediate reference to particular persons, societies, nations or kingdoms, and to events in which they may be immediately interested; yet they may be fitly considered as having a further and more important interpretation, which may be of general use for the direction and edification of God’s church and people, in all ages, to the end. In this general sense, therefore, you will permit me to consider the prophecy in the passage before us: and thus understood, it is easy to see several things suggested in it, worthy our most serious attention and religious improvement, upon such an occasion as this.

In the first place, it is admitted, that for wise purposes, a just God may permit powerful enemies, or oppressors, to injure, do violence unto and distress his people, and to carry their measures of violence and oppression to such lengths among them, as to strike at their life and “shed innocent blood in their land.”

As God is the Sovereign of the world, and exercises his government for the glory of his name, in the good of the whole, so he hath a paternal concern for the special benefit and improvement of his church and people. All creatures are his servants: and God accomplisheth his designs and carries his counsels to effect, by what means and instruments he pleases. It is with him alone, ‘who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working,’ to bring good out of evil. When God designs the reproof and correction of his people, he can exercise this holy discipline in various ways and by various means, as shall best answer the purposes of his government. This holy discipline is accordingly exercised, sometimes by the immediate hand of providence: as in wasting sickness, parching drought, awful and desolating earthquakes, or other judgments, which are immediately from God himself. Or this may be done more mediately, by the instrumentality of his creatures; and even the wicked, and those that love the wages of unrighteousness, that delight in oppression, waste and spoil, or thirst for innocent blood, may be improved as the rod in his hand to correct, or punish the sins of his people. With this view the oppressor is permitted to injure, insult, oppress and lay waste in a land; and to carry his measures to the shedding of innocent blood. With the same design does a sovereign God give the enemy a commission, in war, with fire and sword, to distress and destroy.

In such public calamities, it is true, it often comes to pass, that as individuals, the innocent are involved and suffer with the guilty; and sometimes the innocent alone. But however unjust, or cruel the oppressor, and those that thirst for blood may be, in contriving and carrying into execution their wicked, oppressive, or bloody designs, they are no other than instruments in providence and the rod in the hand of the great Governor of the world, for the reproof and correction of his people. These things happen not by accident, or chance, but by the direction, or permission of that God, who is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works. When Israel sinned and did evil in the sight of the LORD, it is said, “the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, and they were greatly distressed.” Hence also the Assyrian King is expressly called “the rod of God’s anger,” for the correction of his people. And thus Egypt and Edom, in the prophecy before us, in committing violence upon the children of Judah and in shedding innocent blood in their land, are held up to view as the rod in God’s hand, for the correction, reproof and instruction of his people. Agreeably, this is the language of a just and faithful God, in such dispensations, “hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.”

It matters not, therefore, who are the immediate instruments of violence and oppression, or by whose hands

the blood of innocent persons is shed, or their substance wasted and habitations destroyed; nor yet from what motives, or views such acts of oppression and cruelty are perpetrated, with respect to the religious improvement, that God expects us, or any people, to make of such heavy dispensations. “Tis God, and his hand—’tis God and his providence, which we are first of all concerned to notice, acknowledge and improve. However unjust our sufferings may be from man; yet, when we realize the hand of God, the great and wise Governor of the world, as concerned herein, silence and submission is our indispensable duty, and no murmur, or complaint ought ever to be heard, but with reverence and humility it becomes us to bow before the LORD, and adoring his sovereignty, ascribe righteousness to our God. Neither the insults of oppressors, nor the flames of our once delightful habitations, nor even the innocent blood of our brethren slain, should move to a murmuring word or an angry thought, against God, his government, or providence.—“Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”—And “shall not the Judge of all the earth do right!” The more grievously we are smitten, the more deeply we are affected, the more carefully should we endeavour to realize our dependence upon God, the more religiously acknowledge his hand, and the more earnestly return to him that smites. This is the lesson of instruction, which God expects we should learn, by such bitter dispensations, and this the improvement he looks for, in us and his people, in order to the restoration of his favour and our redemption from enemies and oppressors, who threaten to lay waste and destroy. May these things, then, be deeply impressed on each of our hearts.—But I pass.

Secondly, To observe the fate of oppressors, and the sentence of heaven against those that do violence to God’s people and shed innocent blood in their land. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.

However just it may be in God to correct his people, and whatever right is ascribed to him of improving the wicked, as the rod in his hand to correct, or the sword to punish them; yet this alters not the nature of their oppressive designs, neither does it abate their guilt, or alleviate their crime, in these measures of injustice, violence or cruelty, by which the people of God are distressed.

Thus God speaks of the Assyrian king, a prince noted in history for his avarice and ambition, cruelty and oppression, (and in him, of the Assyrian state, whose character was included in that of its king) saying—“O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him to an hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the LORD hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.” And so it came to pass: For this power, that with such a mighty hand, and for so long a time, oppressed God’s people and other nations, in God’s due time, felt the weight of the iron yoke, and received double for all the injustice, oppression and cruelty it had exercised towards others.

In this, and many other circumstances, with which history abounds, it is easy to see the fate of the enemies of God’s people and oppressors of mankind.—But we need not go from the text, for satisfaction in this matter. In the words of the prophecy before us, we have the sentence of heaven against the oppressors of God’s people and the doom of those common enemies of mankind, pronounced, and the reason thereof assigned, in the clearest terms. Egypt shall be a desolation, Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.

The LORD is a God, that loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, in whatever shape, or character it appears. Injustice, oppression and violence (much less the shedding of innocent blood) shall not pass unnoticed, by

the just Governor of the world. Sooner, or later, a just recompence will be made upon such workers of iniquity.—Yea, though hand join in hand, in measures of oppression and violence, against God’s people; and though their avarice, ambition, and lawless thirst for power and domination, may carry them on, ‘till their steps shall be marked with innocent blood; yet certain it is, they shall not, finally, go unpunished. For a time, indeed, and but for a time, such workers of unrighteousness, such destroyers of mankind may practice and prosper; but ‘vengeance flow, is vengeance sure.’ Their ways are marked before God. Their punishment and destruction are sealed in his presence: And the time is hastening, when destruction, without remedy, shall be their portion.

The truth of these sentiments hath often been verified in providence, and the proudest princes and the most powerful states have been taught, by severe, by fatal experience, that desolation from the LORD awaits the impiety of those, that do violence to his people and ‘shed innocent blood in their land.’

Here then we may see the light in which that people, or nation, are to be considered, that walk in the ways of oppression, and that thirst for and shed innocent blood. Here we may also see the ruin to which they are hastening, the awful judgments that await them, and the great reason they have to fear the sentence of heaven, denounced against them, in the prophecy before us, and its literal fulfillment upon them. Which naturally leads in the last place.

Thirdly, To observe, in the prophecy before us, the peculiar care God takes of his church and people, and the assurance they have, even when actually suffering violence and under the cruel hand of oppression, of redemption, restoration and establishment; and that God himself will plead their cause, and both cleanse and avenge their innocent blood. Nothing can be more directly expressive of this sentiment, or a firmer ground of assurance, for the confirmation of the faith and hope of God’s chosen people in the belief of it, than the promise and prophecy, concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the text. While Egypt and Edom, while the enemies and oppressors of God’s people, are doomed to that desolation, they so justly deserve, the strongest assurances are given, “that Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I, saith God, will cleanse their blood, that I have not cleansed: For the Lord dwelleth in Zion.” The words are plain, and need no comment. They speak the language of scripture, fact and experience, for the confirmation of the faith and hope of God’s church and chosen, in days of perplexity and darkness, and when actually under the injustice, violence and cruelty of inveterate enemies, or blood thirsty oppressors.

Here are two things, for the inducement and confirmation of the faith and hope of God’s church and people, in such times of darkness and distress, which are well worthy serious notice and attention.

First, God’s word and promise, in which he assures his people, that notwithstanding the violence of their enemies against them, and the distress and sorrow their oppressors may have caused them, by shedding innocent blood among them; yet they shall never avail to overthrow, or destroy them; but they shall assuredly be redeemed and delivered out of their hands, and restored and established, as his church and people, in a flourishing state.

And then, secondly, To leave no doubt upon their minds, as to the fulfillment of this blessed promise, a gracious God condescends to explain himself in the clearest terms possible, and to satisfy them, that nothing should fail of all that he had promised, he assures them that he would take the work into his own hands, and see to the accomplishment of it himself; that thus it might appear to them and to the world of mankind, that the Lord was with them and dwelt in the midst of them. “Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation: For I will cleanse their blood, that I have not cleansed; for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.”—Words well suited to cheer and comfort the sinking spirits of God’s afflicted, oppressed people: and

words which might rouse the faith, and give a spring to the hope of the most feeble and faint-hearted, among God's people, in the depths of distress. For 'God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. —'Hath he promised, and shall he not perform?—Hath he spoken, and shall he not bring it to pass?'—

Blood is said to be cleansed, or avenged, when justice hath taken place, and the murderer is punished. God may be said to cleanse the innocent blood, which may have been shed among his people, by the sword of oppressors, or enemies, when in providence he undertakes for them, avenges their blood upon them that slew them, and reduces them to reason or ruin.

The sword is an appeal to heaven,—when therefore, the arms of a people are eventually successful, or by the immediate interposition of providence, their enemies and oppressors are subdued or destroyed.—When a people are reinstated in peace, upon equitable terms, and established in the enjoyment of all their just rights and liberties, both civil and sacred: then may it be said, that the Lord hath cleansed their innocent blood, and then will it be manifestly evident, that their God is with them and dwelleth in the midst of them.

Now of this God hath given his people the strongest assurances, in the prophecy before us: and these assurances are confirmed by the word of God, to his people, throughout the sacred scriptures. So that, though for their sins and the multitude of their transgressions, a righteous God may justly afflict and correct his people, by the hand of oppressors, and permit their most important rights to be violated, their substance destroyed, their habitations to be laid waste, or even the innocent blood of their brethren to be wantonly shed in their land; yet still he is their God, in the midst of them, and will readily appear for their help, when they return from their evil ways, acknowledge his hand and implore his mercy and assistance. This holy discipline is no more than what God hath given his people to expect, as a reproof of their declensions, and as a means of bringing them to a sense of their dependence upon him. Such dispensations, are so far from being an evidence, that God hath forsaken his people, given them up, or forgotten to be gracious, that they are rather to be considered as demonstrations of his paternal care and faithfulness towards them. Agreeably, in his covenant with his servant David and his house, this method of conduct is expressly stipulated, as a token of his special care and faithfulness, and of the remembrance of the covenant he had made. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments:—Then will I visit their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

In such visitations, God evidently intends the best good of his people; not their destruction, but their reformation: and if they see his hand, humble themselves under it and seek him aright, God will not fail to remember his covenant and his promises for them, and in his due time appear, in his power and glory, for their relief.—Yea the bowels of his mercy will be moved at their distresses, and his language will be the same as unto his people of old, when under the Egyptian yoke, they were caused to serve with cruel bondage—"I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them." And to encourage his saints and people, to trust on his name and hope in his mercy, a gracious God hath most explicitly promised them his presence, direction and assistance, in all their distresses, be they ever so numerous, ever so great. His language is merciful, condescending and endearing—especially when by the prophet Isaiah, he says to his afflicted people—"When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, and the holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." From these passages of sacred writ, it appears, that as God in infinite wisdom, sees fit to exercise his people with trials and afflictions; and sometimes to call them to pass through the depths of adversity: so

he hath provided for their support and given them the greatest reason to hope for his presence and assistance, and the strongest assurances, that they shall be carried through all, and in the end rejoice in God, as the holy One of Israel, their SAVIOUR.—In short, nothing can be more expressive of God's care of his people in distress, and of the solid ground they have to hope for redemption and salvation, in his way and time, which are always the best.

We may add, that further to confirm our faith and encourage our hope, in those blessed assurances of God's presence with his people, even in their heaviest trials and greatest perplexities, we might safely appeal to the experience of his chosen, in every age, from the beginning to the present time. This will show how easy it is, with an infinitely wise God, to bring good out of evil, and by the over-ruling hand of Providence, to cause the councils and measures of persecutors and oppressors, to hasten the redemption and establishment of the injured and oppressed, as well as to bring upon themselves, that confusion and desolation they so justly deserve.—And this will also prove, how truly applicable the words of the prophet are, to God's chosen people in their distresses in every age, when speaking of the large experience Israel had had, of the tender love and faithful care of a merciful God exercised towards them, he says, that, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: In his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

Nothing is more evident from history and experience, than God's care of his people, and the wisdom of his providence, in causing the violence and oppression of their enemies, to operate for their advantage, and promote their more speedy deliverance. This appears too plain, from various instances, to admit of dispute.

The children of Israel would not have been, so early, persuaded to have left the gardens of Egypt or the fertile fields of the land of Goshen, and in the face of every danger, attempted to free themselves from the Egyptian yoke, had not their burdens been increased to an unreasonable degree, by the violence and cruelty of those that oppressed them, in that house of bondage. And Pharaoh and his armies would never have met with that disgraceful defeat, and awful destruction, which overtook them in the red sea, had they not been infatuated to pursue their measures of oppression and violence, even after it was evident that their cause was desperate, and that God was against them.

Christendom would never have been roused, from that state of ignorance, and darkness, and slavery it was in—the protestant league would never have entered into with such firmness and resolution, to shake off the papal yoke, and redeem both church and state from the hierarchy of Rome, had not the enormities and violence of that power, by which they had been so long oppressed, rose to an intolerable height, and put them upon the expedient.

The united states of Holland would not have been very easily induced, to have opposed the power of Spain, when the meridian of its strength and glory, much less to have attempted independence of that kingdom, had they not been effectually convinced, by a long series of injuries and oppression, and numberless violations of their most sacred rights, that there was no other remedy.

Britons would never have resisted their kings, and flown to arms, in defence of their invaluable rights and liberties, had they not felt the weight of the iron rod of oppression and tyranny, and seen their danger and absolute necessity of such resistance to prevent the total deprivation, of all they held dear and sacred, as Free-men, Christians and a free People.— Charles would not have lost his kingdom, and finally his life upon the Scaffold, by the hand of the executioner; nor James been obliged, in disgrace, to quit his throne and abdicate the government of the kingdom, had it not been for their own violent counsels and measures, to oppress and

enslave the people, whom they were called to govern and protect.

Our fathers would never have forsook their native land, delightful habitations and fair possessions, and in the face of almost every danger and distress, sought a safe retreat, for the enjoyment of religious and civil liberty, among savage beasts and more savage men in the inhospitable wilds of America; had they not been drove from thence, by the violence and cruelty of persecutors and oppressors, in church and state. The hierarchy of the church, by which they looked upon the rights of conscience infringed, and the arbitrary measures of the state, by which they esteemed their civil liberties abridged, if not grossly violated, rather than any views of worldly gain (as hath been enviously hinted by some) were the principal causes of their emigration, and the hope and expectation of deliverance therefrom, gave the spring to the hazardous undertaking.

And when heaven so far smiled upon their enterprise, as to give them footing in the land; and when, after numerous hardships and dangers, toils and distresses, they had secured a possession for themselves and posterity, and obtained a confirmation of those civil and religious liberties they had fought; still retaining a filial affection towards their native country, they seemed to have nothing more at heart than that Americans might be happy, in the enjoyment of their just rights and liberties, as men and Christians, under the protection of Britain; and that Britain might be flourishing and glorious, in receiving the profits of the labour, trade and industry of Americans: And that the connection of America with Britain, and her dependence, in this way, upon the Parent state, might have been preserved inviolate to the end of time.—And it may be added, that there is no just ground to suppose, that it would have ever entered the heart of Americans, to have desired a dissolution of so happy a connection with the Mother-Country, or to have fought independence of Britain, had they not been urged, and even forced upon such an expedient, by measures of oppression and violence, and the shedding of innocent blood.

But, alas!—Ill-judged counsels!—Ill-fated measures of Britain, and the British administration, with respect to America, have broken in upon the pleasing scene, and fatally destroyed the happy prospects of both Britain and America!

At the close of the last war, we arrived at that happy period, to which our ancestors looked, with earnest expectation as the utmost of their wishes, as the answer of their prayers, and the reward of all their toils and sufferings. The savages were subdued, those restless neighbours, the French were subjected, and this wide extended continent seemed to be given us for a possession: And we were ready to say, 'there was none to make us afraid.'—But how uncertain the most blooming prospects?—How vain—how disappointing the most rational, as well as raised expectations, in this imperfect state?—Scarcely emerged from the dangers and fatigues of a long and distressing war, we are unexpectedly involved in perplexities and anxieties of a different kind, which by degrees have increased, 'till they are become more serious, dangerous and distressing, than any ever yet felt, by God's people, in this once happy land.

Through the crafty insinuations, false representations and diabolical counsels, of the enemies of God's people and the common rights of mankind, in America and Britain, acts of oppression are made by the Parliament of England, in which we are not represented, which deeply affect our most valuable privileges. In open violation of our chartered rights, these acts of unrighteousness and oppression, are attempted to be carried into execution, in these colonies. After various threats of coercive measures, a military force is sent to enforce them. An innocent, loyal people are distressed, and every art, which wit or malice could invent, is used to flatter or fright, to divine or dishearten, and finally subject us to the will of a power, not known in our charters, or even in the British constitution itself. And as one of the natural consequences of standing armies being stationed in populous cities, for such execrable purposes, many of the inhabitants of Boston are insulted. At length, un-

der pretence of ill treatment, the streets of that once flourishing city, are stained with the innocent blood of a number of our brethren, wantonly or cruelly slain, by those sons of oppression and violence!

Upon the high resentments of the people, in consequence of this horrid outrage and violence, there was, for a short time, a pause in their measures.—For a moment the oppressors themselves seemed to be struck with the horrid effects of their own iniquitous proceedings, and stand aghast at the sight of the innocent blood they had shed! Perhaps they were not, at that time, so thoroughly hardened in sin as they have proved themselves since!—But this pause seemed to be, not to repent of their evil deeds, but rather to collect themselves, and devise some measures more effectual: For so far from giving over the execrable design, the plan of oppression is renewed. New acts are passed to distress and enslave us. The lust of domination appears no longer in disguise, but with open face—The starving Port-Bill comes forth—Gage arrives with his forces by sea and land, to carry it into execution, with vigour and severity.—And to complete the scene, and at once, to make thorough work of oppression and tyranny, immediately follow the Bills, that subvert the constitution, vacate our charter, abridge us of the right of trial by juries of the vicinity, in divers specified capital cases, and expose us to be seized, contrary to the laws of the land, and carried to England to be tried for our lives!—As also the Bill for establishing the popish religion in Canada, contrary to the faith of the crown and the statutes of the kingdom.

And to these things, the people are treated, in various instances, with indignity, severity and even cruelty. And, notwithstanding every possible expression of a peaceful disposition, in this people, consistent with a determined resolution and Christian firmness, in defence of their rights and liberties, which they held dearer than life, their property is frequently and violently seized, and even their persons and lives are threatened. The inhabitants of Salem are threatened with the sword, for peacefully meeting to consult upon matters of importance to themselves and the public, as they had an undoubted right to do, by the standing laws of the colony. A number of the most respectable inhabitants of that town, were arrested and threatened with imprisonment, by General Gage's order, for calling the inhabitants together, at the meeting aforesaid. The province stores of powder, which are deposited at Medford were also clandestinely seized, by a large detachment of the troops, and conveyed with all possible dispatch, to Boston; as were, at the same time, also, some field-pieces at Cambridge. Entrenchments are thrown up, by Gage's army, and the town of Boston becomes a garrison, and the inhabitants become prisoners, at the pleasure of the troops. And notwithstanding Gage's repeated professions, of having no design against the lives, or liberties, of the people, every thing hath the appearance of hostile intentions, and the near approach of blood shed and war.

Many inhabitants both of the town and country, are daily abused and insulted, by the troops. The devotion of God's people, in their worshipping assemblies, is frequently interrupted, and marks of the utmost contempt are cast upon religion itself. Bodies of troops from time to time march into the country, with a view (as was supposed) to alarm, terrify, or awe the inhabitants to a submission. On the Sabbath, a day held sacred to God and religion, by Christians, while God's people were in his house, engaged in devotion and the instituted services of religion, a detachment of these instruments of tyranny and oppression, clandestinely landed at Marblehead, and making a quick march to Salem, attempt to seize upon some cannon and other military stores deposited there to be ready for use, if wanted upon any important emergency:—But, happily, they are disappointed in their designs, by the spirit and resolution of the inhabitants, who speedily collected upon that alarming occasion.

At length, on the night of the eighteenth of April, 1775, the alarm is given of the hostile designs of the troops. The militia of this town are called together, to consult and prepare for whatever might be necessary, or in their power, for their own, and the common safety; though without the least design of commencing hostilities, upon these avowed enemies and oppressors of their country. In the mean time, under cover of the darkness, a bri-

gade of these instruments of violence and tyranny, make their approach, and with a quick and silent march, on the morning of the nineteenth, they enter this town. And this is the place where the fatal scene begins!—They approach with the morning’s light; and more like murders and cut-throats, than the troops of a Christian king, without provocation, without warning, when no war was proclaimed, they draw the sword of violence, upon the inhabitants of this town, and with a cruelty and barbarity, which would have made the most hardened savage blush, they shed INNOCENT BLOOD!—But, O my GOD!—How shall I speak!—or how describe the distress, the horror of that awful morn, that gloomy day!—Yonder field can witness the innocent blood of our brethren slain!—And from thence does their blood cry unto God for vengeance from the ground!—There the tender father bled, and there the beloved son!—There the hoary head, and there the blooming youth!—And there the man in his full strength, with the man of years!—They bleed—they die, not by the sword of an open enemy (with whom war is proclaimed) in the field of battle; but by the hand of those that delight in spoil, and lurk privily that they may shed innocent blood!—But they bleed, they die, not in their own cause only; but in the cause of this whole people—in the cause of God, their country and posterity.—And they have not bled, they shall not bleed in vain.—Surely there is one that avengeth, and that will plead the cause of the injured and oppressed; and in his own way and time, will both cleanse and avenge their innocent blood.—And the names of Munroe, Parker, and others, that fell victims to the rage of blood-thirsty oppressors, on that gloomy morning, shall be had in grateful remembrance, by the people of this land, and transmitted to posterity, with honour and respect, throughout all generations.

But who shall comfort the distressed relatives,—the mourning widows, the fatherless children, the weeping parents, or the afflicted friends?—May the consolations of that God, who hath hitherto supported them, be still their support!—Upon him may they still derive all needed supplies, in things spiritual and temporal; and yet more and more experience the faithfulness and truth, the mercy and goodness, of the God of all comfort.

May those that were wounded, and have since experienced the tender mercy of that God, “who woundeth, and healeth, and bindeth up.” Be deeply impressed with a sense of his distinguishing goodness, that their lives were spared, while others were taken; and be persuaded, more entirely than ever, to devote them to God, his service and glory.

May all in this place, still carefully remember, notice and improve this awful dispensation.—Particularly, it concerns, not only those whose substance hath been plundered, and whose habitations have been burnt, by these lawless invaders; but also all, in general, diligently and seriously to enquire, wherefore it is, that a righteous God is contending with us, by the fire and sword of the oppressor:—And wherefore it is, that this awful scene, of blood-shed and war, was opened in this place. May we still humble ourselves before God, under a sense of the terrible things, which in righteousness he hath done in the midst of us. May we also be deeply impressed, with a most grateful sense of the goodness of God, in that so much mercy was remembered in judgment; that so few were found among the wounded and slain, and so few habitations were consumed by the fire of the enemy, when so many were spared, that were equally exposed. And may this day be remembered, to the glory of God, and our own instruction and improvement, so long as we live.

But this is not by us alone, that this day is to be noticed.—This ever memorable day is full of importance to all around—to this whole land and nation; and big with the fate of Great Britain and America.—From this remarkable day will an important era begin for both America and Britain. And from the nineteenth of April, 1775, we may venture to predict, will be dated, in future history, THE LIBERTY or SLAVERY of the AMERICAN WORLD, according as a sovereign God shall see fit to smile, or frown upon the interesting cause, in which we are engaged.

How far the prophecy before us, may be applicable, upon this solemn occasion, and with what degree of truth, or probability, it may be predicted, in consequence of the present unjust and unnatural war, “that Great-Britain shall be a desolation, and England be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of America, because they have shed INNOCENT BLOOD in their land: But America shall dwell forever, and this people from generation to generation. And the LORD himself will cleanse their blood, that he hath not already cleansed.”—How far (I say) this prophecy may be applicable, in the present interesting contest, and how far it may be accomplished in the issue thereof, God only knows, and time only can discover.—But of this we are certain, if we “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God upon us, we shall be exalted, in his due time:” and if we rightly improve his dealings, “accept the punishment of our sins” and religiously trust in his name, we shall see his salvation.

From what hath already happened, in the rise and progress, and even unto the present state of this most interesting conflict, we have the greatest reason to hope for an happy issue, in the end. Though with fire and sword, our enemies and oppressors have endeavoured to lay waste and destroy, and though they have begun and carried on the war, so far as their power could enable them, with more than savage cruelty and barbarity; yet, through the peculiar favour of heaven, they have not been able to carry their designs to effect; yea, in most of their enterprises, they have been greatly disappointed.—Not to say defeated and disgraced.—Instead of awing the people into submission, by these measures of violence and cruelty, with which they commenced hostilities against us, as they undoubtedly expected, their spirits have been roused and awakened thereby, beyond what any other means could have ever effected: and with a union and firmness, exceeding the most sanguine expectations, they have armed to defend themselves and their country, and to revenge the injuries received and the innocent blood of their brethren slain. And a merciful God, in various instances, hath crowned our arms with success and victory. Not only the acquisitions at the westward, and the progress of our army in Canada, but the preservation and defense of this colony; and above all, the unexpected evacuation of the town of Boston, which, at such immense cost, they had fortified, and had so long in their possession—and their destroying the works of their own hands, which with so much labour and expense, they had erected; bespeak the special favour of heaven, to this injured and oppressed people; and appear to be happy omens of those further successes, which are necessary to complete our deliverance, and render this land a quiet habitation.

May that God, who is a God of righteousness and salvation, still appear for us, go forth with our armies, tread down our enemies, and cleanse and avenge our innocent blood. And may we be prepared, by a general repentance and thorough reformation, for his gracious and powerful interposition in our behalf; and then may we see the displays of his power and glory for our salvation. Which God of his infinite mercy grant, for his mercy’s sake in Christ Jesus.

A M E N.

A NARRATIVE, &c.

As it was not confident with the limits of a single discourse, to give a full account of the particulars of this most savage and murderous affair; the following plain and faithful narrative of facts, as they appeared to us in this place, may be matter of satisfaction.

On the evening of the eighteenth of April, 1775, we received two messages; the first verbal, the other by express, in writing, from the committee of safety, who were then sitting in the westerly part of Cambridge, directed to the Honorable JOHN HANCOCK, Esq; (who, with the Honorable SAMUEL ADAMS, Esq; was then providentially with us) informing, “that eight or nine officers of the king’s troops were seen, just before

night, passing the road towards Lexington, in a musing, contemplative posture; and it was suspected they were out upon some evil design.”

As both these gentlemen had been frequently and even publicly, threatened, by the enemies of this people, both in England and America, with the vengeance of the British administration:—And as Mr. Hancock in particular had been, more than once, personally insulted, by some officers of the troops, in Boston; it was not without some just grounds supposed, that under cover of the darkness, sudden arrest, if not assassination might be attempted, by these instruments of tyranny!

To prevent any thing of this kind, ten or twelve men were immediately collected, in arms, to guard my house, through the night.

In the mean time, said officers passed through this town, on the road towards Concord: It was therefore thought expedient to watch their motions, and if possible make some discovery of their intentions. Accordingly, about 10 o'clock in the evening, three men, on horses, were dispatched for this purpose. As they were peaceably passing the road towards Concord, in the borders of Lincoln, they were suddenly stopped by said officers, who rode up to them, and putting pistols to their breasts and seizing their horses bridles, swore, if they stirred another step, they should be all dead men!—The officers detained them several hours, as prisoners, examined, searched, abused and insulted them; and in their hasty return (supposing themselves discovered) they left them in Lexington.—Said officers also took into custody, abused and threatened with their lives several other persons; some of whom they met peaceably passing on the road, others even at the doors of their dwellings, without the least provocation, on the part of the inhabitants, or so much as a question asked by them.

Between the hours of twelve and one, on the morning of the NINETEENTH OF APRIL, we received intelligence, by express, from the Honorable JOSEPH WARREN Esq; at Boston, “that a large body of the king’s troops (supposed to be a brigade of about 12 or 1500) were embarked in boats from Boston, and gone over to land on Lechmere’s-Point (so called) in Cambridge: And that it was shrewdly suspected, that they were ordered to seize and destroy the stores, belonging to the colony, then deposited at Concord,” in consequence of General Gage’s unjustifiable seizure of the provincial magazine of powder at Medford, and other colony stores in several other places.

Upon this intelligence, as also upon information of the conduct of the officers as above-mentioned, the militia of this town were alarmed, and ordered to meet on the usual place of parade; not with any design of commencing hostilities upon the king’s troops, but to consult what might be done for our own and the people’s safety: And also to be ready for whatever service providence might call us out to, upon this alarming occasion, in case overt-acts of violence, or open hostilities should be committed by this mercenary band of armed and blood-thirsty oppressors.

About the same time, two persons were sent express to Cambridge, if possible, to gain intelligence of the motions of the troops, and what rout they took.

The militia met according to order; and waited the return of the messengers, that they might order their measures as occasion should require. Between 3 and 4 o'clock, one of the expresses returned, informing, that there was no appearance of the troops, on the roads, either from Cambridge or Charlestown; and that it was supposed that the movements in the army the evening before, were only a feint to alarm the people. Upon this, therefore, the militia company were dismissed for the present, but with orders to be within call of the drum,—waiting the return of the other messenger, who was expected in about an hour, or sooner, if any dis-

covery should be made of the motions of the troops.—But he was prevented by their silent and sudden arrival at the place where he was, waiting for intelligence. So that, after all this precaution, we had no notice of their approach, ‘till the brigade was actually in the town, and upon a quick march within about a mile and a quarter of the meeting house and place of parade.

However, the commanding officer thought best to call the company together,—not with any design of opposing so superior a force, much less of commencing hostilities; but only with a view to determine what to do, when and where to meet, and to dismiss and disperse.

Accordingly, about half an hour after four o’clock, alarm guns were fired, and the drums beat to arms; and the militia were collecting together.—Some, to the number of about 50, or 60, or possibly more, were on the parade, others were coming towards it.—In the mean time, the troops, having thus stolen a march upon us, and to prevent any intelligence of their approach, having seized and held prisoners several persons whom they met unarmed upon the road, seemed to come determined for MURDER and BLOODSHED; and that whether provoked to it, or not!—When within about half a quarter of a mile of the meeting-house, they halted, and the command was given to prime and load; which being done, they marched on ‘till they came up to the east end of said meeting-house, in sight of our militia (collecting as aforesaid) who were about 12, or 13 rods distant.—Immediately upon their appearing so suddenly, and so nigh, Capt. Parker, who commanded the militia company, ordered the men to disperse, and take care of themselves; and not to fire.—Upon this, our men dispersed;—but, many of them, not so speedily as they might have done, not having the most distant idea of such brutal barbarity and more than savage CRUELTY, from the troops of a British KING, as they immediately experienced!—For, no sooner did they come in sight of our company, but one of them, supposed to be an officer of rank, was heard to say to the troops, “Damn them; we will have them!”—Upon which the troops shouted aloud, huzzad, and rushed furiously towards our men.—About the same time, three officers (supposed to be Col. Smith, Major Pitcairn and another officer) advanced, on horse back, to the front of the body, and coming within 5 or 6 rods of the militia, one of them cried out, “ye villains, ye Rebels, disperse; Damn you, disperse!”—or words to this effect. One of them (whether the same, or not, is not easily determined) said, “Lay down your arms; Damn you, why don’t you lay down your arms!”—The second of these officers, about this time, fired a pistol towards the militia, as they were dispersing.—The foremost, who was within a few yards of our men, brandishing his sword, and then pointing towards them, with a loud voice said, to the troops, “Fire!—By God, fire!”—which was instantly followed by a discharge of arms from the said troops, succeeded by a very heavy and close fire upon our party, dispersing, so long as any of them were within reach.— Eight were left dead upon the ground! Ten were wounded.—The rest of the company, through divine goodness, were (to a miracle) preserved unhurt in this murderous action!—

As to the question, ‘Who fired first?’—if it can be a question with any; we may observe, that though General Gage hath been pleased to tell the world, in his account of this savage transaction, “that the troops were fired upon by the rebels out of the meeting-house, and the neighbouring houses, as well as by those that were in the field; and that the troops only returned the fire, and passed on their way to Concord;”—yet nothing can be more certain than the contrary, and nothing more false, weak, or wicked, than such a representation.

To say nothing of the absurdity of the supposition, ‘that 50, 60, or even 70 men, should, in the open field, commence hostilities with 12, or 1500, of the best troops of Britain, nor of the known determination of this small party of Americans, upon no consideration whatever, to begin the scene of blood —A cloud of witnesses, whose veracity cannot be justly disputed, upon oath have declared, in the most express and positive terms, ‘that the British troops fired first: —And I think, we may safely add, without the least reason or provocation.— Nor was there opportunity given, for our men to have saved themselves, either by laying down their arms, or

dispersing, as directed, had they been disposed to; as the command to fire upon them was given almost at the same instant, that they were ordered, by the British officers, to disperse, to lay down their arms, &c.

In short, so far from firing first upon the king's troops; upon the most careful enquiry, it appears, that but very few of our people fired at all; and even they did not fire till after being fired upon by the troops, they were wounded themselves, or saw others killed, or wounded by them, and looked upon it next to impossible for them to escape.

As to any firing from the meeting-house, as Gage represents; it is certain, that there were but four men in the meeting-house when the troops came up: and they were then getting some ammunition, from the town stock, and had not so much as loaded their guns (except one, who never discharged it) when the troops fired upon the militia. And as to the neighbouring houses, it is equally certain, that there was no firing from them, unless, after the dispersion of our men, some, who had fled to them for shelter, might fire from them upon the troops.

One circumstance more, before the brigade quitted Lexington, I beg leave to mention, as what may give a further specimen of the spirit and character, of the officers and men, of this body of troops.—After the militia company were dispersed and the firing ceased, the troops drew up and formed, in a body on the common, fired a volley and gave three huzzas, by way of triumph, and as expressive of the joy of VICTORY and glory of CONQUEST!—Of this transaction, I was a witness, having, at that time, a fair view of their motions, and being at the distance of not more than 70 or 80 rods from them.

Whether this step was honorary to the detachment, or agreeable to the rules of war—or how far it was expressive of bravery, heroism and true military glory, for 800 disciplined troops of Great-Britain, without notice or provocation, to fall upon 60, or 70, undisciplined Americans, who neither opposed nor molested them, and murder some and disperse the rest, and then to give the shout and make the triumph of victory, is not for me to determine; but must be submitted to the impartial world to judge.—That “there is a God with whom is the power, and the glory, and the victory,” is certain: but whether he will set his seal to the triumph, made upon this most peculiar occasion, by following it with further successes, and finally giving up this people into the hands of those, that have thus cruelly commenced hostilities against them, must be left to time to discover.—But to return from this digression, if it may be called a digression. Having thus vanquished the party in Lexington, the troops marched on for Concord, to execute their orders, in destroying the stores belonging to the colony, deposited there—They met with no interruption in their march to Concord.—But by some means or other, the people of Concord had notice of their approach and designs, and were alarmed about break of day; and collecting as soon, and as many as possible, improved the time they had before the troops came upon them, to the best advantage, both for concealing and securing as many of the public stores as they could, and in preparing for defence.—By the stop of the troops at Lexington, many thousands were saved to the colony, and they were, in a great measure, frustrated in their design.

When the troops made their approach to the easterly part of the town, the provincials of Concord and some neighbouring towns, were collected and collecting in an advantageous post, on a hill, a little distance from the meeting-house, north of the road, to the number of about 150, or 200: but finding the troops to be more than three times as many, they wisely retreated, first to a hill about 80 rods further north, and then over the north-bridge (so called) about a mile from the town: and there they waited the coming of the militia of the towns adjacent, to their assistance.

In the mean time, the British detachment marched into the center of the town. A party of about 200, was ordered to take possession of said bridge, other parties were dispatched to various parts of the town, in search

of public stores, while the remainder were employed in seizing and destroying, whatever they could find in the town-house, and other places, where stores had been lodged.—But before they had accomplished their design, they were interrupted by a discharge of arms, at said bridge.

It seems, that of the party above-mentioned, as ordered to take possession of the bridge, one half were marched on about two miles, in search of stores, at Col. Barret's and that part of the town: while the other half, consisting of towards 100 men, under Capt. Lawrie, were left to guard the bridge. The provincials, who were in sight of the bridge, observing the troops attempting to take up the planks of said bridge, thought it necessary to dislodge them, and gain possession of the bridge.—They accordingly marched, but with express orders not to fire, unless first fired upon by the king's troops. Upon their approach towards the bridge, Capt. Lawrie's party fired upon them, killed Capt. Davis and another man dead upon the spot, and wounded several others. Upon this our militia rushed on, with a spirit becoming free-born Americans, returned fire upon the enemy, killed 2, wounded several and drove them from the bridge, and pursued them towards the town, 'till they were covered by a reinforcement from the main body. The provincials then took post on a hill, at some distance, north of the town: and as their numbers were continually increasing, they were preparing to give the troops a proper discharge, on their departure from the town.

In the mean time, the king's troops collected; and having dressed their wounded, destroyed what stores they could find, and insulted and plundered a number of the inhabitants, prepared for a retreat.

“While at Concord, the troops disabled two 24 pounders; destroyed their 2 carriages, and seven wheels for the same, with their limbers. Sixteen wheels for brass 3 pounders, and 2 carriages with limber and wheels for two 4 pounders. They threw into the river, wells, &c. about 500 weight of ball: and stove about 60 barrels of flour; but not having time to perfect their work, one half of the flour was afterwards saved.”

The troops began a hasty retreat about the middle of the day: and were no sooner out of the town, but they began to meet the effects of the just resentments of this injured people. The provincials fired upon them from various quarters, and pursued them (though without any military order) with a firmness and intrepidity, beyond what could have been expected, on the first onset, and in such a day of confusion and distress!—The fire was returned, for a time, with great fury, by the troops as they retreated, though (through divine goodness) with but little execution.—This scene continued, with but little intermission, till they returned to Lexington; when it was evident, that, having lost numbers in killed, wounded, and prisoners that fell into our hands, they began to be, not only fatigued, but greatly disheartened. And it is supposed they must have soon surrendered at discretion, had they not been reinforced.—But Lord Percy's arrival with another brigade, of about 1000 men, and 2 field pieces, about half a mile from Lexington meeting-house, towards Cambridge, gave them a seasonable respite.

The coming of the reinforcement, with the canon, (which our people were not so well acquainted with then, as they have been since) put the provincials also to a pause, for a time.—But no sooner were the king's troops in motion, but our men renewed the pursuit with equal, and even greater ardor and intrepidity than before, and the firing on both sides continued, with but little intermission, to the close of the day, when the troops entered Charlestown, where the provincials could not follow them, without exposing the worthy inhabitants of that truly patriotic town, to their rage and revenge.—That night and the next day, they were conveyed in boats, over Charles-River to Boston, glad to secure themselves, under the cover of the shipping, and by strengthening and perfecting the fortifications, at every part, against the further attacks of a justly incensed people, who, upon intelligence of the murderous transactions of this fatal day, were collecting in arms, round the town, in great numbers, and from every quarter.

In the retreat of the king's troops from Concord to Lexington, they ravaged and plundered, as they had opportunity, more or less, in most of the houses that were upon the road.—But after they were joined by Piercy's brigade, in Lexington, it seemed as if all the little remains of humanity had left them; and rage and revenge had taken the reins, and knew no bounds!—Clothing, furniture, provisions, goods, plundered, broken, carried off, or destroyed!—Buildings (especially dwelling houses) abused, defaced, battered, shattered and almost ruined!—And as if this had not been enough, numbers of them doomed to the flames!—Three dwelling houses, two shops and a barn, were laid in ashes in Lexington! —Many others were set on fire, in this town, in Cambridge, &c. and must have shared the same fate, had not the close pursuit of the provincials prevented, and the flames been seasonably quenched!—Add to all this; the unarmed, the aged and infirm, who were unable to flee are inhumanly stabbed and murdered in their habitations!—Yea, even women in child-bed, with their helpless babes in their arms, do not escape the horrid alternative, of being either cruelly murdered in their beds, burnt in their habitations, or turned into the streets to perish with cold, nakedness and distress! —But I forbear—words are too insignificant to express, the horrid barbarities of that distressing day!

Our loss, in the several actions of that day, was 49 killed, 34 wounded and 5 missing, who were taken prisoners, and have since been exchanged. The enemy's loss, according to the best accounts, in killed, wounded and missing, about 300.

As the war was thus began with savage cruelty, in the aggressors; so it has been carried on with the same temper and spirit, by the enemy in but too many instances. Witness the wanton cruelty, discovered in burning Charlestown, Norfolk, Falmouth, &c. But as events which have taken place since the ever memorable nineteenth of April, 1775, do not properly come within the compass of this narrative, they must be left for some abler pen to relate.

FINIS.