

The Battle of

LEXINGTON

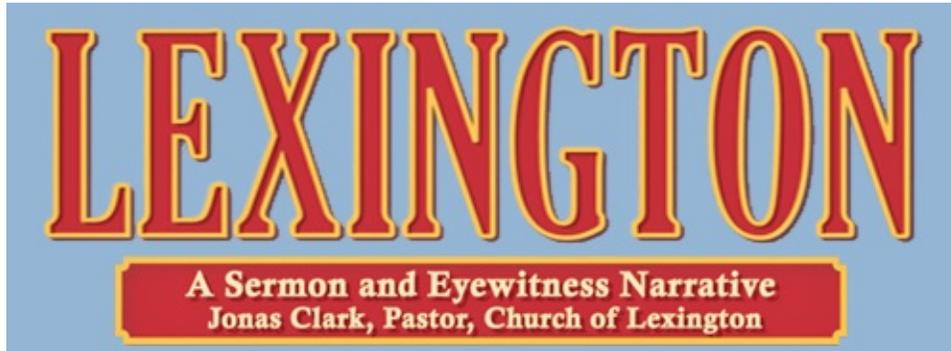
A Sermon and Eyewitness Narrative
Jonas Clark, Pastor, Church of Lexington



Originally Titled:

*The Fate of Blood-Thirsty Oppressors
and God's Tender Care of His Distressed People*

THE BATTLE OF LEXINGTON
A Sermon & Eyewitness Narrative
by Pastor Jonas Clark



Original Title:

*The Fate of Blood-thirsty Oppressors, and
GOD's Tender Care of His Distressed People, 1776*

Including poems

Paul Revere's Ride, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Lexington, Oliver Wendell Holmes

Lexington, John Greenleaf Whittier

Concord Hymn, Ralph Waldo Emerson

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The Rev. Christopher Hoops

*Founding Theology Editor, Nordskog Publishing
(1950–2008)*

As a student at San Bernardino Bible College, Chris Hoops began making missionary field trips to the Navajo and Hopi reservations, partnering with local missionaries. After graduation he was asked to teach Old Testament history and minor prophets at his alma mater (1976–1980).

In 1979, Hoops co-founded the Inland Christian Center Academy and served as principal and administrator. In 1980, he moved to Arizona for one year to help missionary friends teach Bible and theology to Navajo and Hopi students.

From 1981–1984 Hoops traveled around the country, lecturing on the need for home schooling, for teaching America's Christian History, and for recovering the contribution of Christianity to Western civilization. These activities led to his founding of American Heritage Christian Church (Camarillo, California), where from 1984–1991, he continued to hold seminars and conferences on those topics.

In 1994, Hoops founded Christ Reformed Church (Colville, Washington) and in 1999 he founded Emanuel Presbyterian Church of Colville and led them into joining the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In 2001 Hoops moved back to California and took a position at Monte Vista Christian School (Watsonville), teaching Bible to middle and high school students.

He and his wife, Gail, raised three children (a daughter and two sons) and then adopted three daughters in Roseville. Rev. Hoops was a leader in the Reformed Christian faith, founding Biblical-theological editor for Nordskog Publishing, and was first on the waiting list for his second liver transplant when the Lord took him home.



* * *

[Introduction](#)

The Battle of Lexington

Have you ever wondered who fired the “shot heard ’round the world” that fateful morning of April 19, 1775? Who were those brave men who stood against the best-trained army in the world? The following is Jonas Clark’s Sermon on the one-year anniversary, and his eyewitness narrative of those events.

None other but Jonas Clark could give such an accounting, for he was the pastor of those “embattled farmers” who stood their ground. Clark is herein giving an honest and accurate accounting of the Battle of Lexington. He is also giving testimony of the events of April 19 and answers the great question, “Who fired the first shot?”

There was no better-prepared place to inaugurate the first battle of the War for Independence than the little village of Lexington. For Pastor Clark “discussed from the pulpit the great questions at issue, and that powerful voice thundered forth the principles of personal, civil, and religious liberty, and the right of resistance, in tones as earnest and effective as it had the doctrines of salvation by the cross.” (J. T. Headley, *Heroes of Liberty: Chaplains and Clergy of the American Revolution*, 1861, 21.) “It was to the congregation, educated by such a man, that Providence allowed to be entrusted the momentous events of April 19, events which were to decide the fate of a continent—that of civil liberty the world over.” (Headley, 23)

Today, the Battle of Lexington is little spoken of, for as a nation we have forgotten our history. We have neglected the heroes of our freedom and liberty. But there was a time when this day was remembered and odes were written to commemorate the occasion. *Paul Revere’s Ride* and the *Concord Hymn* are two examples. ([See Appendix.](#))

Our history books no longer tell the true story of Lexington, so we must.

America is perishing for the need of preachers who apply God’s holy Word to

every area of life, including personal, civil, and religious liberty. The Church needs more pastors like Jonas Clark, a preacher who taught the great doctrines of salvation in Christ alone and the Biblical right to resistance, which gave his congregation courage to stand in the face of great odds. The Battle of Lexington should inspire every man, in all stations of life, to stand and make a difference.

— **The Rev. Christopher Hoops**, *Roseville, California*



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Publisher's Selection

Background of Pastor Jonas Clark

1755–1805



Colonial Militia Minuteman

The Rev. William Ware, Cambridge, MA, in the *Annals of the American Pulpit*, August 10, 1850, provided insights into the background of Rev. Jonas Clark. I have selected what I feel our readers should know concerning the unique and gifted pastor who was providentially set in Lexington for *just such a time as this*—the incidents which occurred on the green at Lexington that eventful day which led to the Declaration of Independence and the founding of a nation, one

nation under God.

Jonas Clark was born on Christmas day, marking his life in obedience to Jesus Christ. He had six sons and six daughters, all but four living at the time of his death. Four of his daughters married clergymen.

Rev. Clark graduated from Cambridge in 1752 and was ordained in Lexington three years later. In addition to being a fulltime clergyman, he was an industrious, hard-working farmer as well. He cultivated sixty acres of land, which he still owned at the end of his life.

As the pastor of the church at Lexington, he typically gave four sermons a week, written out and orally presented—nearly 2200 sermons in his lifetime. His preaching was vigorous in style, animated in manner, instructive in matter, and delivered with uncommon energy and zeal, with an agreeable and powerful voice. His sermons were rarely less than an hour, often more, and in theological opinions he was considered amongst the Trinitarians and Calvinists.

The spirit and temper of his life were just what the Gospel was designed to produce. He was a Christian in the highest and best sense of the term, shown to be such by a long and exemplary life and a faithful practice of the virtues he had preached to others. He was considered a patriot of the most ardent and decided character.

And at Lexington, he witnessed the first outbreak of the War for Independence. The Rev. William Ware wrote a little less than a hundred years later:

It can be regarded only as a singularly happy circumstance that, as Lexington was to be the place where resistance to the power of England was first to occur, and the great act of a declaration of war first to be made by the act of the people in the blood to be there shed, making the place forever famous in history, the minister of Lexington should have been a man of the principles, character, courage, and energy of Mr. Clark. It can be regarded he was eminently a man produced by the times—more than equal to them; rather a guide and leader. All his previous life, his preaching, his intercourse and conversation among his people had been

but a continued and most effectual preparation for the noble stand taken by his people on the morning of the 19th of April, 1775. The militia on the Common that morning were the same who filled the pews of the meetinghouse on the Sunday morning before, and the same who hung upon the rear of the retreating enemy in the forenoon and throughout the day. They were only carrying the preaching of many previous years into practice.

It would not be beyond the truth to assert that there was no person at that time and in that vicinity—not only no clergyman but no other person of whatever calling or profession, who took a firmer stand for the liberties of the country, or was more ready to perform the duties and endure the sacrifices of a patriot, than the minister of Lexington.

When the struggle actually commenced, the people were ready for it, thoroughly acquainted with the reasons on which the duty of resistance was founded, and prepared to discharge the duty at every hazard. No population within the compass of the Colonies were better prepared for the events of the 19th of April, than the people of Lexington; no people to whom the events of that day could more safely have been entrusted; none more worthy of the duties that fell to their lot; or who better deserved the honours which have followed the faithful performance of them. No single individual probably did so much to educate the people up to that point of intelligence, firmness, and courage, as their honoured and beloved pastor.

It was a heavy day to the pastor, who, on the retreat of the British, visiting the grounds directly under the windows of his church, found eight of his beloved parishioners lying dead, and many others wounded. Of the transactions of that morning and day, Jonas Clark drew up a narrative, included as part of his anniversary sermon, which we have republished in this book.

— **Gerald Christian Nordskog**, *Publisher*



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Facsimile: The Original Title Page

*The Fate of Blood-thirsty Oppressors, and GOD'S
tender Care of his distressed People.*

A
S E R M O N,

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.

These Things doth the LORD hate:—*A proud Look, a lying
Tongue, and Hands that shed innocent Blood.* Pro. vi. 16, 17.

—*Quod non male est scilicet 1776*

14679

Clarke, Jonas, 1730-1805.

The Fate of Blood-Thirsty Oppressors.

MASSACHUSETTS-STATE: BOSTON:

PRINTED BY POWARS AND WILLIS.
M,DCC,LXXVI.

SERMON

***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, BLOODSHED 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
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A Brief NARRATIVE of the principal
Transactions of that Day.

BY JONAS CLARK, A.M.

Pastor of the Church in Lexington
(1730–1805)

*Those Things doth the LORD hate:—A proud Look, a lying
Tongue, and Hands that shed innocent Blood. Prov. 6:16–17*

MASSACHUSETTS-STATE: Boston;
PRINTED BY POWARS AND WILLIS
1776

A SERMON

***The Fate of Blood-Thirsty Oppressors, and GOD's
Tender Care of His Distressed People.***

Joel 3:19, 20 & 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 forever, 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 as superintending the affairs of the universe and intimately concerned in whatever happens to mankind, both as nations and kingdoms, and as individuals.

Deeply to be impressed with a sense of the divine 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 acknowledgement of the hand of God in those distressing scenes of MURDER, BLOODSHED 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. (Joel 3:19–21; see also Psalm 137:7) *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, either in prediction or fulfillment. They are rather of use to foreshow 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. Paul 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.” (2

Peter 1:20) 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 of 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 immediately 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 who 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.” (Judges 2:14–15) Hence also the *Assyrian King* is expressly called “*the rod of GOD’s anger*,” for the correction of His people. (Isaiah 10:5) And thus *Egypt* and *Edom* in the prophecy before us, in committing violence upon the children of *Judah*, and in shedding of *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.*” (Micah 6:9)

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?” (Job 2:10) And “shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25) 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 [receive] the restoration of His favor 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 to 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.” (Isaiah 10:5–8, 11–12) 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 inequity, 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 slow 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 who 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 *bloodthirsty* 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 worth serious notice and attention.

First, God’s word and promise in which He assures His people that, notwithstanding the violence of their enemy against them and the distress and sorrow their oppressors may have caused them by shedding *innocent blood* among them, they shall never avail to overthrow or destroy them; but assuredly His people shall be redeemed, 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 depth of distress. For “God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent.” (Numbers 23:19; see also 1 Samuel 15:29)

“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 through 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.” (Psalm 89:30–34)

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.” (Acts 7:34) 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 passest 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, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.” (Isaiah 43:2–3a) 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 overruling 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." (Isaiah 63:9)

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 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.¹

The *united states of Holland* would not have been very easily induced to have opposed the power of *Spain*, when at 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.²

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 the absolute necessity of such resistance to prevent the total deprivation of all they held dear and sacred as *Freemen, 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 sought, 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 sought 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 *LORD* 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 different kinds, 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 divide or dishearten, and finally subject us to the will of a power not known to 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, under 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!³

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. This 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 vigor 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.

Add 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,⁴ 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 were 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*.⁵ 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 of the near approach of bloodshed and war.⁶

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.⁷

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 is called together to consult and prepare for whatever might be necessary, or in their power, for their own and common safety, though without the least design of commencing hostilities upon these avowed enemies and oppressors of their country. In the meantime, under cover of the darkness, a brigade of those instruments of violence and tyranny makes 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 light; and, more like murderers and cut-throats than the troops of a Christian king, without

provocation, without warning, when no war was proclaimed, they drew 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!⁸ 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.⁹

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 depend, and from Him and His grace 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 themselves 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 it 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 those 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.

AMEN

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