

The Blessedness of PEACE-MAKERS represented; and the Danger of PERSECUTION considered;

IN TWO
SERMONS,

On *Mat. v. 9.*

PREACH'D at PHILADELPHIA, the 3d *We*
in *May*, 1759, before the Reverend the SYNOD, of
New-York and Philadelphia,

B Y

GILBERT TENNENT, A.M.

Ephes. iv. 3. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Luke ix. 55. 56. Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

Quæ domus tam stabilis, quæ tam firma civitas est quæ non odiis, atque disidiis funditus possit everti. Cicero.

Quicquid ad multitudinem versat, antipathiam continet, quicquid vero ad unitatem rendit, sympathiam habet. Scaliger.

Quid tam gravibus infectamini Christum Bellis? numquid regiam sibi vendicans potestatem, terrarum orbem totam legionibus infestissimis occupavit, et pacatas ab exordio nationes alias delevit ac sustulit, alias sibi parere cervicibus compulit subjugatis? Arnob.

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SERMON I.

MATTHEW V. 9.

Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of GOD.

 T is an evidence of the degeneracy o human nature, that persons of narrow minds and divisive practices, are applauded by any ; but in the judgment of our Lord, the *Peacemakers* are blessed, for they shall be called the children of GOD.

IN these words are two parts, first, a *duty* enjoin'd, *peacemaking*, and second, *arguments* to inforce it annexed, viz. the *blessing* of CHRIST, and *being called* the *children* of GOD. These parts of the text, I purpose to explain and improve.

I. THE *peace* here intended is that between man and man, as appears from the 23. and 24. verses of this chapter, where the phrase is explained in the following manner, *therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembrest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift, first be reconcil'd to thy brother,*

brother, and then come and offer thy gift; the expression being indefinite, doubtless extends to all the connections of mankind, in families, church and state; *peacemakers* therefore are such who are themselves quiet and peaceable, who sincerely love peace and earnestly endeavour in obedience to God, and regard to man to promote it, wherever their influence reaches, thro' the general series of their behaviour, by the use of all lawful means.

SUCH as duly consider the value of peace to society, must needs have a high esteem of it, which naturally tends to excite proportional desire and labour; but without divine influence, we neither have an affecting view of things, or an ability to act with right principles and designs: a few peaceable moods and kind offices cannot constitute a Peacemaker, for this includes the governing temper of the soul and general course of the conduct, these and nothing transient, evidence the state of the mind, and determine the character.

THE extent of this duty is universal, *if it be possible*, saith the Apostle, *as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men*; not only with such as are of our profession and sentiments, but with all others that retain the human species, and if, thro' their default, our labours for peace prove abortive, nevertheless we shall not miss a gracious reward, which is not connected with the success (that is out of our power) but with our disposition and endeavour. * Yet when these are crown'd with success, it is a tree of life! †

BUT tho' we are earnestly to prosecute peace, yet not so far as to barter truth and holiness to obtain it, no! *we must buy the truth and not sell it, we must follow peace with all men, and holiness*; that is so far as is consistent with

* Isaiah. lxix. 4. 5.

† Prov. xiii. 12.

with holiness, and no farther ; we should rather die than deny the least truth, but there is a wide difference between our love to it and our imposing of it as a term of communion upon others ; the former is our duty, and the latter our sin. *

It must be confess'd it is no easy matter to procure or preserve peace among mankind, for by our fatal apostacy we have lost that pure light, supream love to God, and sincere regard to man, which we enjoy'd in our primitive state ; and in place thereof are under the governing power of darkness, enmity against God and man, and immoderate self love : so that we neither know our duty in a right manner, or are willing to do it, but have a strong proneness to the contrary : nothing less than supernatural light and almighty power can subdue these evils in us, and qualify us to perform acceptably the duty enjoyn'd in our text. Yea even after a change is wrought what infants are many in grace, *they are carnal and walk as men, while there is envying, strife, and divisions among them, while one saith he is of Paul and another he is of Apollos ; who is Paul and who is Apollos ? †*

THE means tending to peace are either negative or positive, of the first kind are these following, viz. rashjudging, unscriptural terms of communion, and uncharitable divisions ; and

1st. WE should with great care avoid *rashjudging*, which, on insufficient grounds, condemns the states and actions of others : this practice is as sinful in itself as unfriendly to the peace of society, and therefore is strictly prohibited and severely censur'd by God himself, as an invasion of his province, a despising of our brother, and

* Rom. xiv. 1.

† 1 Cor. iii. 3. 4. 5.

and an anticipation of the general judgment ; *who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? why dost thou set at nought thy brother ? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST ; he that judgeth his brother, judgeth the law ;* i. e. accuseth it of imperfection by condemning persons not for violating its precepts but his own additions ; *judge not* says our LORD *lest ye be judged ;* i. e. lest ye provoke others to recriminate and load you with invective ; he may certainly expect to be judged without mercy who hath shewed no mercy ; the most un sullied innocence, the most eminent and generous goodness, are not secure from the censure of this malignant impiety, which presumes to ascribe a series of good actions, without the least shadow of reason, to a bad cause and design ; thus the invidious *Pharisees* ascribed the miraculous works of our LORD to the power of the Devil, and represented the Saviour of sinners notwithstanding all his beneficent actions, as a rebel against the State.

2d. IN order to procure and preserve peace, the *officers of churches* should beware of *adding* on any pretext whatsoever, *new terms of communion* of their own devising, to those which the head of the church has fixed ; for hereby his authority will be confronted and the church torn into innumerable parts, we have but *one Lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy*. It is the business and duty of church officers, to explain and obey the laws he has given, but they should not step into the legislator's chair. Now that the *terms of stated communion* appointed by our LORD, are *essentials* in doctrine worship, and discipline, together with a regular life, is evident, as I conceive, from the following places of scripture, duly considered and compared, i. e. the 14 chapter of the Epistle of *Paul* to the *Romans* throughout, is full to his purpose ; here we are enjoyn'd to *receive the weak,*
but

but not to doubtful disputations, and to avoid judging and despising them. Now by the *weak*, it is plain from the series of the context, that the Apostle means such persons who tho' found in the main points of faith, and serious, hold some circumstantial or lesser errors, viz. that under the gospel all are obliged to abstain from meats forbidden by the Jewish law, and to keep their ceremonial Sabbaths: these the strong or more orthodox part of the church, are nevertheless obliged to receive to communion; this precept is enforced by divers arguments, such as that they were sincere, and *accepted of GOD*, and that the *substance of religion* did not consist in these things, but in *peace, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost*; *he that in these things serveth CHRIST*, says the Apostle, *is acceptable to GOD, and approved of men: let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another; for meats destroy not the work of GOD*; i. e. do not break the peace of the church, and mar thy brother's edification, by uncharitable contentions and divisions about small and circumstantial matters; *if you have faith, about these things, have it to yourselves, dont impose your sentiments upon others, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.* Rom. xv. 1. 7. *we then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please ourselves; wherefore receive one another as CHRIST also received us to the glory of GOD.* "By the *infirmities of the weak*, we are to understand their ignorance, frowardness, and censoriousness, he speaks not of heresies and manifest enormities but of such errors in doctrine and life, which proceed from ignorance and common infirmity; with these we should bear, as we do with sick persons in their waywardness;" * in this manner, we should *forbear one another in love* (Ephes. 4. 2.)

ON the other hand we are enjoined to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints; to hold fast the form of sound words, and to reject HERETICKS after the first and second admonition; ** and such as forsake the truth as it is in JESUS, broach false doctrines in weighty and momentuous points, and break the peace of the church; as care should be taken to preserve and propagate the fundamental truths of religion, without which I see not how rational charity and comfortable communion can be preserved, or any prospect opened for promoting the power and practice of holiness: † so likewise the *unity of the church* should be regarded, and some *mercy* exercised towards those who are sound in the main points of faith, but mistake in some lesser things; now how can both be consistently preformed, and the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace preserved, without observing *essentials as terms of communion*? this is a *medium* between the dangerous extremes of a criminal laxness, whereby foundation principles are betrayed, and rigorous severity, whereby pious and useful persons are rejected, and the church's unity broke: truly religious persons are of different capacities, educations, and advances in religion, and therefore will think differently about smaller points, and be conscience bound respecting them; if therefore no *forbearance*, it is to be used, the church must be always broken in pieces! for we cannot with safety counteract our own consciences, or follow implicitly any master but CHRIST; seeing the various points of truth that compose the christian system, are of very different degrees of importance and influence, as they are remote from or near to the foundation. Is that *zeal* according to knowledge, which is equal in degree for them all? or can any church make that truth a term of communion, which CHRIST has not made, without claiming a power superior to his, viz. of rejecting those whom he commands us to receive? the absurdity and impiety

ty of which I need not enlarge upon; if we cannot believe and love lesser points of truth, without imposing them upon others, then how could the Apostle *Paul* believe the extent of christian liberty, and yet will to receive the weak that denied it? Our LORD reprov'd the disproportioned zeal of the *Pharisees*, for *tytbing mint, anise and cummin*, while they omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith, i. e. justice, charity and fidelity; they strain'd at a gnat but swallow'd a camel: * with pretence of superior strictness, they charged the Saviour of sinners, with want of due respect to the traditions of the elders, and to the Sabbath day, because he eat with unwashen hands, and cured The sick on sacred time; who in return directed them to go and learn what that meant, that God would have mercy rather than sacrifice † i. e. when a lesser duty interferes with a greater, the lesser is to be omitted: the offering of gifts, or acts of external worship must give place to brotherly love and compassion; which are of the last importance to society, and accepted by the Redeemer as a kindness done to himself.

3d. ANOTHER hindrance to peace which should be with equal care avoided is *uncharitable divisions*, or *schisms* in the church of God; as peace is the bond of unity, so is unity of peace: tho' the body mystical hath some parts which are reckoned less honourable, yet there should be no schism in it: one part should not say to the other, *I have no need of thee*. Our LORD bore with many errors and weaknesses in his *Disciples*, and the *Apostles* neither separated themselves, nor allowed of separation from the churches of *Corinth*, *Galatia*, *Ephesus*, *Smyrna*, *Sardis*, and *Laodoea*; tho' corrupted with odious crimes and errors: those therefore that are least for unity and peace, are least like God and least for him; they really oppose the accomplishment of CHRIST's prayer, and prediction, that *his people may be one as he and the father are*

one; † that as there is but one Shepherd, so there should be but one fold. * Uncharitable divisions where no sinful term of communion is imposed, are contrary to the nature, word, and work of God, which are unity, love and peace: as well as to the ordinances of God, baptism and the LORD's supper, which are designed to represent the union of the body mystical, and to be a bond of obligation on us to preserve it. By one spirit saith the Apostle we are baptised into one body and tho' we are many, we are all partakers of one bread; as tearing a part of the natural body mars its beauty, comfort and strength, and tends to destroy it entirely! so the same fatal effects have schisms in the church of CHRIST! for as our LORD observes, a house divid d against itself cannot stand. And therefore the Apostle with vehemence, intreats the Corinthians, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that there should be no schisms amongst them. || Valuable persons are not like to be of so much use to reclaim a declining church, when separated from it, as in a state of union, because of the mutual prejudices which these breaches occasion, and the division of the people's zeal and attention, from the great things of experimental and practical religion. Alas! what multitudes are prejudiced against christianity altogether, by the numerous schisms of the church of CHRIST, and their carnal contentions, whereby they labour to ruin one another's reputations, provoke mutually not to love, but wrath, and practically confine christianity to their several parties, as tho' CHRIST was divided, or had many bodies! Why should a perfection in knowlege (or principles) more than in practice be insisted on in order to communion, seeing both are unattainable in this life? Is any branch of the visible church infallible in its decisions about small and comparatively doubtful points? if not, then why should any express such a zeal and confidence about them, as seem to suppose it?

4th. PRIDE should be avoided as the grand *make bate*; this

this blows up peace in families, church, and state; it sets men on striving who shall be greatest, and makes them impatient of contradiction, assuming and positive; the proud man's opinion even in doubtful matters must pass for undoubted truth, and his will must be a law, else he is displeas'd. He that overvalues himself, of consequence undervalues others, and so provokes them to slight him in return; and hence the truth of *Solomon's* observation is evident, that *he who is of a proud spirit stireth up strife*, it was this which induced *Diotrephes* to *love pre-eminence, to cast the brethren out of the church, and prote against them with malicious words*; § by this others were excited to *speak perverse things to draw Disciples after them*, and so enlarge their sect. † Yet this evil so abounds among mankind, that 'tis hard to find a retreat from its violence: so various and vehement are the contenders, and so plausible their pretences, that an honest and peaceable man may be at a loss which to shun, or which to follow: as *Tully* speaks of *Pompey* and *Cæsar*, “*quem fugiam nescio? quem sequar nescio?*”

BUT POSITIVELY.

1st. In order to procure and preserve peace among men, it is necessary to be *just* and honest in our dealings with them, *justice* in its own nature, and by common consent, is the guardian of peace; but its contrary is the source of numberless debates and calamities; to avoid all appearances of which, we should not insist rigorously upon small and doubtful points of right, for as such a proceeding shews no tenderness of conscience, or regard to their interest, they are hereby induc'd to conclude we are hypocrites and their *enemies*, and so commence ours: Whereas a merciful recession in such cases, tends to excite their favourable sentiments of us, and sincere affection towards us; and hence we are commanded rather to suffer wrong, i. e. in small and doubtful matters, *than to go to law*. ||

2d, WE should be *cloathed with humility*, and *think soberly of ourselves, as we ought to think*; this disposition of mind will incline us to bear contradiction with patience, prevent our striving for pre-eminence, and make us contented when others are preferred before us; a humble mind is pleased with a low state; if we learn this *lesson* of CHRIST, we shall find *rest* to our souls, amidst all the disquietudes of the present life; this will make us modest and self-diffident, and incline us to prefer others before ourselves in love; as well as to give them all that honour that is their due, in their several places and relations; all which strongly tend to conciliate peace!

3d. WE should *love our brethren with a pure heart fervently*; this will incline us to cover their infirmities, and to live at peace with them; *love endureth all things*: if we love our brethren more, we shall be willing to bear more with them; and to provoke them less: Love is the bond that unites men safely and comfortably in society, and hatred the source of that violence which rends and dissolves it; we cannot easily hate those we love, nor can we long agree with those we hate: Surely none have or can wrong us, so much as we have done ourselves, for its worse to be made evil, than called so; worse to endanger our salvation, than to suffer in our estate: these things we have done to ourselves, and yet are little moved, while trifles in comparison, done to us by others, excite the keenest resentment. What can be the cause of this partial conduct, but an excess of love to ourselves, and a defect therein to others; contrary to that evangelical precept, which enjoins us to *love our neighbours as ourselves*, and to *walk in love, as Christ also has loved us*. As *love is the fulfilment of the law*, so it is the *scope* of the *gospel* in all its parts, nor are there wanting excellencies in all mankind, either

natural, moral, or religious, which should invite our respect, these we should be eager to discover to this noble end.

4th. IN order to procure and preserve peace, it is exceeding necessary to be candid and *charitable* in our *thoughts* of others sentiments, speeches, and actions, and to put the most favourable interpretation on them that they can reasonably bear. *Charity*, as the apostle Paul observes, *thinks no evil*, i. e. is not suspicious of others, without strong presumptions or apparent evidence, and even in that case ascribes their failures to the mildest causes, such as ignorance, mistake, and human infirmity, rather than malicious design: this is the treatment that every man desires for himself, and therefore should shew to others. When our Lord told his disciples, that one of them would betray him, every one suspected not the traitor but himself, *Lord is it I?* but the contrary practice, viz, easily believing evils of others, aggravating of them, and ascribing them to the worst of causes and designs, is the fruit of murderous hatred, and tends to banish peace from the earth!

5th. WE should treat all men with *courtesy and gentleness*, *the law of kindness should be in our lips*, *the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated*. Put them in mind says the Apostle to Titus, *to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness to all men; by long forbearing a prince is persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone*: But reviling is like the piercings of a sword, which aggravates the wound it pretends to heal; it is not only a violation of peace, but a dishonourable waging of war, like shooting arrows dipt in poison! an inhuman practice which rather aims at the ruin than the reformation of those we dislike. The *Arch-angel*, when contend-

ing with the Devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, for he knew he was no match for *Satan* at that base business!

6th. WE should also be *kind in action*; which, in its general course, is the index of the thoughts, and speaks louder than words; our Lord enjoyns us to *blesse them that curse us, and do good to these that despitefully use us, that we may be the children of our father which is in heaven; who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good*: By this godlike method, we shall *do more than others, and overcome evil with good*. Nothing, besides the grace of GOD, has such power to remove prejudices, and melt the most obdurate hearts into kindness and peace; especially when these friendly offices are attended with a free forgiveness of former offences, which is enjoined by the highest authority, and made the pre-requisite to our obtaining pardon from GOD: *put on bowels of mercy and kindness, forgiving one another, as God has, for Christ's sake forgiven you; if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly father forgive yours*.

It is likewise necessary to *mind our own business*, and to beware of encroaching on the provinces of others, *let no man suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as a busy body, or bishop † in other men's matters*, while men keep within their proper spheres, order and harmony are preserved; but the contrary, like elements out of their own orb, produces confusion and misery!

WE should also be careful to maintain that *order of government*, which is appointed by the Almighty, without which peace and comfort cannot be expected in society, as *rulers* should avoid encroaching upon the rights of these they preside over, || so the *people* should

should make conscience of their duty to their superiors in office. *

I MAY add, that the friends of peace should *shun disputes*, especially about *small matters*, that are remote from the life of religion; for these, like prickly brambles, scratch those that handle them, and yield no favourable fruit. *Avoid* saith the apostle, *foolish questions and genealogies; || charge them, before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit.* † Tho' disputing is in itself lawful, and sometimes necessary to defend the truth, yet through the corruption of human nature, it is seldom so managed, as to answer a valuable end; instead of a calm enquiry after truth, it usually degenerates into personal invectives, which are of no service to clear up the point in debate. *He therefore that meddles with controversy, that don't concern him, is like one who takes a dog by the ears:* and he who in the management of it don't *speake the truth in love,* pleads rather for his own honour than truth. There have been so many disputes about little things, and those so ill managed, that the more important duties of love and peace have been thereby much impaired! It is an argument of a proud and weak mind, to be hasty and dogmatical in speaking about things that are doubtful, for hereby we overshoot ourselves, and are in danger of being obliged either to retract our mistake, or defend what is indefensible. It is a reproach to pretend to know what we do not, and to have a confidence disproportioned to the evidence of things; this temper and behaviour are as opposite to peace, as to reason and good manners.

IN a word, if we would procure peace where it is not, and preserve it where it is, we must avoid *evil speaking* of others needlessly in *their absence*, and listening to those that

* Heb. xiii. 17. || Tit. iii. 9. † 11 Tim. ii. 14.

that do; though the preventing of important injury to ourselves or others, may sometimes make it a duty to blame the absent, yet this extraordinary case is no apology for *backbiting and slandering*. If we have any thing to say against our brother, we should inform him of it in private, in a humble friendly manner, which has a tendency to promote his reformation, but any other method is like to make him worse, by inflaming his prejudices and resentments; Solomon truly observes, that *a whisperer separates chief friends*, on the contrary we should cast water on the fire of contention, by concealing with the mantle of love, all the sins of others, which we are not obliged to discover in order to answer a valuable end; and make all the apologies for their mistakes, which charity suggests, and reason admits. In particular we should pray *for the peace of Jerusalem*, and that we may be able to promote and preserve it by the use of all proper measures, in the mean time *lamenting the corruption* of our whole nature, *believing in Jesus*, and imploring, for his sake, pardoning and renewing grace, without which we are not like to love as brethren; I may add, that acquaintance with church history, is of great use to prevent or heal divisions and debates!-----

HAVING spoken of the duty enjoined, *peace-making*, I proceed to consider the motives mentioned by our LORD to enforce it, the

1st. OF which is, that *such are blessed*, ' for they have
 ' the satisfaction of enjoying themselves, by keeping
 ' peace, and of being truly serviceable to others, by
 ' disposing them to peace; they are working together
 ' with CHRIST, who came into the world to slay all
 ' enmities, and to proclaim peace. Though peace-
 ' making be sometimes a thankless office, and 'tis the

‘ lot of him that parts a fray, to have blows on both
 ‘ sides, yet it is a good office, and we must be forward
 ‘ in it.’* Tho’ misguided saints may censure peace-
 makers for a time, and the wicked world may curse
 them, and cast out their names as evil, yet the King
 of the Church and Lord of the universe, justifies them,
 approves of their conduct, and blesses them, authori-
 tatively, universally, and eternally; yea and they shall
 be blessed; *it is God that justifies, who is he that condemns?*
if God be for us, who shall be against us?

2d. *They shall be called the children of God;* ‘it will be
 ‘ an evidence to themselves that they are so, God will
 ‘ own them as such, and herein they will resemble him;
 ‘ he is *the God of peace*, the *Son of God* is the *prince of*
 ‘ *peace*, and the *spirit of adoption* is a *spirit of peace.*’
 Since God has declared himself reconcilable to us, he
 will not own those for his children that are implacable
 in their enmity to one another; for if *blessed are the*
peace-makers, then wo to the peace-breakers. Now by
 this it appears, that CHRIST never intended to have
 his religion propagated by fire and sword, or penal
 laws, or to own bigotry and intemperate zeal as the
 marks of his disciples; the children of this world love
 to fish in troubled waters, but the children of God are
 the *peace-makers*, the quiet of the land: as such are
 like God, so they are beloved by him, and shall have
 the portion of children, grace for grace in this life,
 and distinguished glory in the next; they shall have
 guidance and support, and all necessary comfort here,
 and an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance hereaf-
 ter, which fades not away. Amen.

B

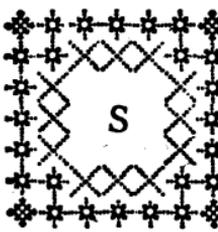
* Vid. Henry in Loc.



SERMON II.

MATTHEW V. 9.

Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

 **EEING** according to the ancient and just maxim, that contrary's set in opposition, illustrate each other, in order to cast light upon the labouring subject, let us take a transient view of persecution strictly and properly so called, in contrast with peacemaking; here observe that persecution may be said to be two fold, viz. of the church, and of the state; the former consists in the execution of spiritual penalties, on the account of religion, without a scriptural foundation; and the latter in the execution of temporal, such as fines, imprisonment, confiscation of goods, bodily pains, and death; it is the latter of these that I have especially in view at present, and beg leave to assert, that it is contrary to scripture, reason, and antiquity, John xviii. 36.

In particular what can be supposed more contrary to peace, than the principle and practice of *persecution* or indeavours to force uniformity in matters purely religious, by methods of external violence, such as fines, imprisonment, confiscation of goods, banishment, bodi-

ly pains and death? here permit me to observe, that *persecution* is contrary to *scripture*, *reason*, and *antiquity*. and

1st. IT is contrary to *scripture*. When the disciples of JESUS, *James* and *John*, applied to their LORD for leave to command fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, for not receiving their master, instead of complying with their motion, though it directly concerned himself, he turned and rebuked them, and said, *ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives but to save them*. Here the matter is brought to a trial, a great offence is committed against our Saviour himself, and yet he would not suffer it to be revenged by force: hereby our compassionate, and dear Redeemer manifests his abhorrence of persecuting violent, methods, in matters purely religious, that do not directly affect the peace and safety of the state; and signifies that they were signs of a bad temper of mind, and contrary to the design of his coming into the world; (see Luke ix. 54. 55. and elsewhere.) agreeable hereto our LORD peremptorily declares, that his kingdom is not of this world, (John xviii. 36.) i. e. is not earthly, over mens bodies and estates, but spiritual over their hearts and minds; and therefore is to be promoted and propagated by spiritual means only, which are suited to its nature and design, it needs not secular force to establish it, nor does it interfere with the prerogatives of princes, or properties of their subjects: the *foundation* and *scepter* of this kingdom is *divine truth*, by this and not the civil sword, the Redeemer conquers his enemies and governs his people, hereby he makes them willing subjects, and draws them, not as beasts by force, but *with the cords of a man*, reason and argument, and *with bonds of love*, (Psalm xlv. 4. Hosea xi. 4.) the King of Zion girds on his spiritual sword, and rides prosperously because

of *truth*: this he came to bear *witness* to, not by fury and violence, but by patient suffering: (John xviii. 36 37.) and should not *those that say they abide in him, walk even as he walked?* Should not the same mind be in them, which was in him? (1 John ii. 6. Philip ii. 3: 5.) The use of FORCE tends to CONFOUND the KINGDOM of CHRIST with the kingdoms of this world, to change its sp̄iritual NATURE, and make it carnal and political: but *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal though mighty through God, to the pulling down the strong holds of sin and Satan; and bringing every thought to the obedience of Christ.* (2 Corinthians x. 4. 5.) Farther our LORD positively commands us, that *all things, whatsoever we would that men should do to us, we should do so to them:* and that because, *this is the law and the prophets.* (Matthew vii. 12.) i. e. the sum of the second table of the law, which requireth justice and charity, and of the first, which is thereby supposed as the foundation, and the substance of what is written by the prophets in relation thereto. * The beauty, reasonableness, and righteoulness of this immutable maxim of natural equity, divers of the Pagans discerned and highly esteemed; particularly *Alexander Severus*, the Roman emperor, had it written on the walls of his closet, often quoted it in judgment, honoured CHRIST and favoured the christians for the sake of it. Now persecution is absolutely inconsistent with this golden rule of justice, for who that has the sober exercise of reason, would desire such treatment in his own case?

2d. PERSECUTION is contrary to REASON, seeing *Religion is a reasonable service;* (Romans xii. 1.) founded on argument, a matter of choice: (Joshua xxiv. 15. Psalm cx. 3.) proceeding from *love* as its *principle* (2 Corinthians v. 14. Galatians v. 6) enjoining and recommending *love* by its *pre. epts* and *examples*, (Ephesians

* Romans xiv. 23. He that doubteth, is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.

fians v. 1. 2.) and directed to *love* as its scope: (1 Timothy i. 5.) *Seeing love, that works no ill to his neighbour, is the fulfilling of the law,* (Romans xiii. 10.) *the bond of perfectness,* (Collosians iii. 14.) *greater than faith and hope,* (1 Corinthians xiii. 13.) The use of external FORCE, instead of befriending this RELIGION, really opposes its *principle, spirit, and end,* by manifesting murderous *hatred* against our *brother*; (1 John iii. 15.) it excites them to hate us in return, and betrays the want of proper arguments to engage our esteem and affection. In this manner PERSECUTION disgraces the religion of JESUS, and tends to destroy it entirely. As love is the incentive to love, so is hatred to its contrary; both which actions speak with the loudest voice, and give the strongest evidence; *the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy.* (James iii. 17.) *but if ye have bitter envying, and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth; this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish;* (James iii. 14. 15.) *certainly, the wrath of man, worketh not the righteousness of God.* (James i. 20. 21.) Seeing we must answer to Jehovah for our conduct, and others cannot screen us from his resentment, is it not rational that we should *examine and judge* for ourselves, and *call no man father on the earth,* in this respect? and do not the sacred Scriptures enjoin these things upon us? (John v. 39. 1 Corinthians x. 15. Matthew xxiii. 9.) Now can it be with reason imagined, that almighty God commands us to do thus, and yet in the mean time gives authority to any to punish or kill us for doing it, and for complying with our own judgment in matters purely religious, after the best enquiry we can make, or judgment we can form respecting the meaning of his word? no surely! for if this be the case, JEHOVAH commands contradictions, and

his word is a snare; if we do not examine it, and judge for ourselves, we sin; if we do, and through fear of men, act contrary to our judgment and *conscience we are damned*; and if we do not act contrary to our consciences in some instances we are punished or killed. But these consequences are absurd, blasphemous, and impossible; and therefore the persecuting principle from which they proceed is false. Is not killing people for GOD'S sake, and all pains and punishments tending hereto, the *abomination* of the church of Rome, *that makes desolate*? Memorable are these words of our LORD to his disciples, (John xvi. 2. 3.) *yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think he doth God service, but these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the father, or me.* Hereby our LORD shews the vanity of pretending to promote religion by persecution, and that however zealous and conscientious any are therein, it proceeds from ignorance of the Father and the Son; either absolute or comparative, they that have a considerable degree of acquaintance with CHRIST, must needs know, that he rules by truth and love, and not by fire and sword: So that persecuting principles and practice, instead of being a sign of eminence in *religion* as some pretend, either prove a total want of it, or at least great weakness in it.

Is it decent or consistent for *Protestants*, who blame the *church* of Rome for their *cruelty* and *bloodshed*, to imitate this Mother of *Harlots* in her murderous wickedness, by propagating her bloody principles? if external FORCE be necessary to promote RELIGION, it will necessarily follow, that the Popish IMPLICIT FAITH is sound doctrine, that KNOWLEDGE is dangerous, and IGNORANCE the mother of devotion: because the less knowledge we have, the more easily we can

submit *blindfold*, to an *absolute authority*: but when any do so in matters purely religious, they admit and obey another KING in CHRIST'S *kingdom*; and so commence REBELS against his supream authority; who is the only LORD, LAWGIVER, and MASTER of his people, by preferring others before him, and setting up their authority in opposition to his. (James iv. 12. Matthew xxiii. 10.) Hereby the formal reason, or chief excellency of religious obedience, viz. a supreme regard to CHRIST'S kingly power and commanding pleasure, is destroyed; and consequently we cease to be the servants of GOD, and become the servants of men, from whom we must look for our reward, (Galatians i. 10. Matthew vi. 2.)

IF external FORCE be necessary to promote RELIGION, then grievous *pains* and DEATH itself, are necessary to be inflicted for this purpose; because the least degree of punishment naturally leads to, and necessarily includes the greatest, not only by reason of the different degrees of heinousness, attending different errors in principle and conduct, but especially on account of the encreasing aggravations of *persisting* long therein; which is ever called by impostors, an *obstinate* and *rebellious opposition* to authority, and therefore must be punished in proportion, gradually, till it issues in *death*: Besides it should be considered that more or less in the *degree* does not vary the *kind*: If the lowest degree of temporal punishment be proper and necessary, on the account of religion; the highest must be so, when the circumstances of the case require it; and if the highest be bad, so by a necessary consequence is the lowest, for the *general kind* includes all *degrees*.

FROM what has been said we may reasonably conclude, that according to the *persecuting plan*, the Span-
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hish *Inquisition* is the *perfection* of *christianity*; or in other words, the most pious, worthy, and effectual method of promoting it that has been yet discovered: O horrible! but I forbear lest *humanity* itself should be shocked, and its tender resentments too much moved, at the sight of a *scene* of such monstrous *barbarities*, as are a *reproach* to the human species, a *scandal* to the name of man! And proceed to enquire, what can the iron argument of *force* convince the mind of, but the weakness of that religion, which needs such measures to support it; and the cruelty of those that use them. It may indeed promote ignorance, falsehood, hypocrisy, and slavery, as among the *Spaniards* and *Portuguese*; all which are detestable, and directly contrary to the precepts and genius of the religion of *Jesus*, who commands us *to search for knowledge as for hid treasures*, (Proverbs ii. 3. 4.) *to speak the truth in love*, (Ephesians iv. 15) *to be Israelites indeed in whom is no guile*, (John i. 47.) *to stand fast in the liberty wherewith he has made us free*, and *to beware of being the servants of men*, (Galatians v. i. 1 Corinthians vii. 23.) In a word a *claim* of *power* to *persecute*, really justifies all the *bloodshed* of the *church* of *Rome*, manifestly tends to rob us of all our religious *liberty* at a stroke, and to promote the entire *ruin* of the *human race*, seeing the various states and communities, of which it is composed, whether *Protestant*, *Papal*, or *Pagan*, have, as such, the same *authority*, and there is no infallible *judge* on either side to determine the points in dispute. Farther, seeing it is iniquitous to oppress our fellow creatures, for what is right; are not fallible persons *who know but in part*, in danger of committing this iniquity, when they persecute their *brethren*, even for matters of doubtful *speculation*? is it not absurd, yea peculiarly so, for those who say they are infallible in principle to persecute others on the supposition of their being infalli-

ble, or in other words, certainly right? and yet complain of others, as guilty of *scandalum magnatum*, who persecute them in their turn; as if they could be both fallible and infallible at the same time, and in respect of the same things, and had a *monopoly* of persecuting authority, a right to abuse all others that differ from them, but in the mean time that no body can touch them without great iniquity: O no! they are *noli me, tangere, fallible infalibilities*: but before we can believe this extraordinary claim, they must produce their *char-ter*, the want of which *bigotry*, or red hot zeal for a party of their own cast, and confident *assertions* cannot supply. What *woes* did our Lord denounce upon the *Pharisees*, that *sect* of *separatists* among the *Jews*, who *trusted they were righteous, and despised others, saying stand off, for I am holier than thou*: they pretended great *veneration* for *dead saints*, by building and garnishing their tombs, and professing that had they lived then they would not have been necessary to their *blood*: while, in the mean time, they persecuted *living saints*. For this the LORD JESUS pronounces a woe upon them, calls them *a generation of vipers*, and threatens them with the *damnation of hell*, * (Matthew xxiii. 29. 34.) But the most convincing and consistent way of clearing ourselves from any accession by imitation, to the shedding the *blood* of the *martyrs* of *Jesus*, and of manifesting our abhorrence of the persecution of deceased saints, is not to magnify to the *stars*, by partial *panegyrics*, the sufferings of some of our own *party* and *nation*; while *millions* of as *brave* and *noble souls*, of an *elder date*, long before the names that now divide the protestants were known, who drank as deep as they of the bitter *cup*, are ignobly passed by in profound *silence*: but by unlimited proportional *love* and *kindness* to all, of every *party*

* Nor is it a hard task for hypocrites to commend the truly pious that are dead or distant, because as the proverb is, *mortuus non mordet.*

party and nation, and especially to those that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity: though many of them differ from us in sentiment, whom we should not forbid to cast out devils, because they dont follow us; for none that do miracles in Christ's name, can lightly speak evil of him, and such as are not against him, are for him. (Matthew ix. 38. 40.) and by opposing the principles and practice of persecution, in the present time universally, as well as disapproving of it as extensively in the past: seeing every man, considered as a man, has as good a right to religious liberty as another, it is as bad for us to persecute others, of a different denomination, as for them to persecute us.

AND seeing, as was before observed, the lowest degree of punishment on a religious account, includes the highest; it is therefore a deceitful artifice of persecutors to go about the bush, and abuse mankind with pretences to moderation, as if they did not dream of death at all in the matter; O no! they only want to exercise some pious and wholesome severities, and then come to a period: whereas the nature of their sanguinary scheme, in case the supposed criminal persists, cannot admit of any mercy or any period, short of blood and death, without the absurdity of oversetting itself: and do not innumerable and awful facts irrefragably prove, that death is the tendency and fruit thereof? this persecutors themselves, who are men of intelligence, may easily upon deliberate enquiry discern; which if they do, and yet deny or disguise, in order to gull simple souls who are apt to believe every fair word, and induce them to swallow their pernicious scheme; a scheme that beheld without a mask in its natural deformity and dangerous consequences, would shock them, and make them sick at the swallowing of this CAMEL. I say if any use this method, they act a very hypocritical and base part; see

Job xiii. 7. *will you speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him.*

AND it is as hypocritical as irrational, to pretend we dont like *severities*, and are not guilty of them, because we do not inflict them ourselves immediately; though in the mean time, we believe it is the duty of others, of a different station, to do this cruel *drudgery* for us, and at our motion; are discontented with them, and *murmur* against them, as *lukewarm* in the cause of God, the cause of *truth*, and of *religion* when they do it not: i. e. because they have either more *sense*, more *humanity*, or more *religion* than ourselves, all our pious *pretences* about *truth* and *reformation* notwithstanding; the *Papists* tell us, that their *church* is a *merciful church*, and sheds no *blood*; but who can believe them, or how can they believe themselves? while they hold the *principles*, that *HERETICS* *sho'd be put to DEATH*, and while they convict men of *heresy*, and deliver them up to the secular power, for that purpose; though with a *Judas* like *compliment*, asking that mercy may be shewn them, that is (as the event proves) that they may be burnt; O hearts harder than adamant, lost to all sense of candor and humanity! thus the *adulteress* after her beastly iniquity, *wipeth her mouth, and saith I have done no wickedness*; (Proverbs xxx. 20.) thus *Pilate*, after consenting to the *murder* of our *Lord*, *washed his hands before the multitude, and said I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it*; (Matthew xxvii. 24.) but how vain, hypocritical, and hateful are these *shams*; seeing it is a *dictate* of *reason* and *maxim* in *law*, that *consenters, are agents*; we may therefore with *justice*, apply to all such, the words of God himself by the prophet *Jeremiah*, ii. 22. *for though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much sope, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD!*

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OUR LORD enjoins his disciples, (Matthew xvi. 6.) to take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees; that is, of their censorious, schismatical, and immoral persecuting doctrine, which has effects upon men's minds, like those of leaven upon dough; puffs them up with pride of their own attainments, sours them with prejudices against their brethren, and has because of its agreeableness to the enmity, pride, and sloth of human nature, in its present state, a tendency to spread far and wide. Our LORD and his apostles did not think it proper to keep pace with those masters of ceremonies and canonical obedience; who regarded shew more than substance, the form more than the power, and the means more than the end; who instead of preferring great things to small, preferred small to great, (Matthew xxiii. 24.) and gloried in a religion consisting chiefly in ill-nature and formalities. Hence it is that these men had the assurance to arraign and condemn the most perfect example of unfulfilled innocence, of disinterested and consummate goodness and holiness, in the life of our Saviour, that ever the creation saw. With great pretence and shew of order, orthodoxy, and piety, and with equal prejudice they censured our LORD as erroneous, lax, and impious, because he did not observe to their mind, the traditions of their fathers, which they were as zealous for, as Saul before conviction, eat without washing his hands, freely conversed with publicans and sinners, and did not conform to their ceremonious observance of the Sabbath-Day; and perceiving that his miraculous works put honour on his person, and gave weight and influence to his ministry, both which made them uneasy: in order to remove these effects, they scandalize the cause,* and maliciously ascribe some of the most glorious and beneficent works that

* It is a just maxim in philosophy that when the cause is removed the effect ceases: *sublata causa tolluntur*, this the Pharisees understood well.

that ever the sun beheld, to the most base and malignant spirit, the *Devil*, the *prince of Devils*; as if *Belzebub* had forgot his implacable and native *spite* against the *human race*, and by some strange and sudden metamorphosis, had commenced their kindest friend and most liberal benefactor; O the degeneracy of human nature! O the infatuating power of envy, after which the spirit of apostate transgressors lusts! if the Pharisees had ascribed their opposition of the works of CHRIST, to a devil in themselves, ENVY (probably) influenced by Satan and self, they would have told the *truth*. Some of their *cavils* against our LORD were plausible and *specious*, but it is not all gold that glistens, though the doctrines of *truth* and *holiness* may be strangely darkened by artful sophisters, through their false colourings; yet *wisdom will be justified by her children*, it is to be hoped they will see through the disguise.

OUR LORD in his own *defence*, against the aforesaid *pretexts*, observes, that they made the *commandment of God of none effect through their traditions*, (Mark vii. 13.) for all their high pretences to *truth*, as if they were the only keepers of that *cabinet* they held such *errors*, as destroyed the end of all truth, namely *holiness*, (John xvii. 17.) by cancelling the *rule* of it, the *law* of God: where this is not, the apostle *Paul* assures us, *there is no transgression*, (Romans iv. 15.) or *sin, which is a transgression of the law*, as the apostle *John* declares, (1 John iii. 4.) and of consequence no *holiness*, which must be a *conformity* to the *law*, because it is the contrary of *sin*. *Nothing* can neither be conformed to, or transgressed; and thus it appears, that instead of high advances in religion, they destroyed its *substance* and *scope*, by making *void* the *moral law*! Farther, our LORD in his *defence* observes, that he *conversed* with *publicans* and *sinners* not as a *companion* but as a *physician*, (Matthew

ix. 12.) advises them to *learn what that means, that the almighty would have mercy*, rather than sacrifice; (Matthew ix. 12. 13.) and reasons with them, *that if he cast out devils, by the prince of devils, the kingdom of Satan would be divided against itself, and of consequence destroyed, but that if by the spirit of God, he cast out devils, the kingdom of God in its power, was come among them*, which it would be exceeding sinful and dangerous to oppose; (Matthew xii. 24. 33.) the *sum of our LORD's argument* is this, that seeing the *support of the devils kingdom*, like that of other kingdoms, and states, depends upon the *union and harmony of its rulers and subjects*, which the needless use of force has a tendency to mar and interrupt, it is therefore absurd to imagine that so wise a spirit as Satan is, (in the matters that concern his dominion) should be guilty of it, in forcibly casting out inferior demons. How weak soever some professors of christianity are in imagining that the kingdom of CHRIST will be promoted by needless contentions, divisions, and force, Satan has more sagacity than to think so of his own, and more regard to it, than to act on such a silly plan, which is as contrary to the just maxims of government as it is to common sense! But in addition to the *suffrage of scripture and reason*, give me leave to observe, that the antient fathers have declared, in strong terms, against all methods of FORCE, in the propagation of religion. "Tertulian saith, it is not the business of religion to force religion." Laetantius observes, that there is no need of force, because religion cannot be forced. It is the property of sincere religion, saith Athanasius, not to force but to persuade. * The God of the universe saith Hilarie, does not need a forced obedience, nor require a constrained confession

* This eminent man was called by many of the fathers, *Adamas Ecclesie*, the adamant of the church, because of his firm adherence to the doctrine of the trinity, in a time of grievous persecution by the heretical Arians.

“ confession. It is more equitable to persuade than
 “ *compel*, and more decent for us, saith *Gregory Nazianzen*. The christian religion saith *Arnobius* is content
 “ with its own *strength*, and rests on the foundation
 “ of *truth*.”

Religion is one thing, and human *society* is another; the former is *spiritual*, and the latter *temporal*, and therefore spiritual means are suited in nature to the one, and temporal to the other: the end of *religious society* is *eternal happiness*, but the end of *civil* is the *peace* and *safety* of the *state*; these ends being different, the means conducing to them must be so likewise; it is no matter to the state, whether its laws be obeyed freely or not, if they be but obeyed, it is enough; now such a kind of obedience may be effected by the fear of punishment and death; but the latter proceeding from love and choice, cannot be forced by outward violence, and therefore any attempt of this kind is sinful and vain.

BUT PERSECUTORS plead in their vindication, the severities of the Jewish oeconomy, not considering that that *state* was a *Theocracy*, *God* was their *king* in a *civil sense*; their *judicial* or *civil laws* were peculiar to themselves, suited to the present circumstances of their nation, and in some instances impracticable by others. *Idolatry* being made *capital* by a fundamental *maxim* of their *political constitution*, was *rebellion* against their *king*, and *treason* against their *state*, and consequently was *as such punished*: Now to suppose that their example obliges other nations, who are not in their extraordinary circumstances, to do as they did, or justify them in it, is unreasonable and absurd. Doctor *Leland* in answer to *Chubb's* objection, against the justice of the *Jewish law* of putting *idolaters* to *death*, justly observes, “ that it is no ways inconsistent with *God's* universal

“ care and providence towards mankind; to make ex-
 “ traordinary discoveries of his will to particular per-
 “ sons, or to a people,---and to establish a constitution
 “ among them, the fundamental principle of which,
 “ is the acknowledgment and adoration of the one
 “ living and true God, in opposition to all idolatry;---
 “ and to make this the principal condition, on which
 “ the national privileges and benefits are suspended,
 “ in which case whosoever was guilty of idolatry in
 “ that peculiar constitution, was justly obnoxious to
 “ the penalties inflicted upon the enemies and subvert-
 “ ers of the community.” But where did ever *Jeho-*
vab form such a *civil constitution* but among the *Jews*?
 and where is the justice of executing its capital and pe-
 nal *sanction*, where the constitution itself does not exist?
 Can idolatry be rebellion against God considered as the
 king of a nation, (in a civil sense) where he is not
 king (in said sense?) Or has any nation power to make
 it what it is not, or authority to punish it for what it is
 not? the former is as impossible as the latter is unjust.
 Or can a proper *authority* be derived without God, and
 against reason? no certainly! Now when a proper *au-*
thority is wanting, and there is a difference in import-
 ant circumstances, how unreasonable and unrighteous
 is the *imitation*? the church is not now blended with
 the commonwealth, is not in a state of *childhood*, *bond-*
age, and *terror*, not under the *elements* of the world,
 (Galatians iv. 1. 3.) not under the *law* of a *carnal com-*
mandment, (Hebrews vii. 16.) not under *carnal ordi-*
nances imposed till the time of reformation; (Hebrews
 ix, 10.) but under a *mild* and *gentle dispensation*.
 (Hebrews xii. 18.) We are not come to the mount that
 might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto
 blackness, darkness, and tempest, which made even
 a Moses quake; but to mount *Zion*, and to the *blood* of
sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of

Abel: Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden light, (Matthew xi. 30.) he has *redeemed his people that were under the law, under bondage;* and given them the *Adoption of sons,* and the *spirit of adoption,* so that *they are no more servants, but sons.* (Galatians iv. 5. 7.) He has given them *religious liberty,* and commands them to *stand fast* in it, and *not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.* (Galatians v. 1.) And hence it appears that the *inflicting temporal penalties on account of religion, even materially* (though not formally, or considered as such) instead of promoting the *reformation of the gospel church, judaizes her, robs her of her liberty and comfort, makes her carnal, brings her back to a state of infancy, bondage, and terror,* from all which a good God has graciously delivered her. Why then do any *tempt God by putting a yoke upon the necks of the disciples of Christ, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear;* (Acts xv. 10.) and why do they boast of *bondage and carnality* as if it were a glorious thing for *spiritual persons to become carnal, for men to become infants, and christians to turn Jews?* as if the proper method to make *progress in religion* was to go *backward* as far and as fast as we can? From such an odd *ill-natured reformation,* the church of CHRIST has reason to pray to be delivered: nor would its fondest *voraries* like well the close *application* of their own severe *doctrine* to themselves, but perhaps make as loud an outcry as their neighbours. If any of us or of our pious *predecessors,* have had the misfortune to be mistaken in any point of *truth or duty,* seeing we as *protestants,* profess that we are *fallible and imperfect,* and that we ought to grow in *divine knowledge;* if a gracious God should discover to us the well meant *mistake,* I hope none of us for the sake of self *consistency* in what is wrong, *bigotry* to a party, the name of *orthodoxy,* or false respect to our worthy (though imperfect) *predecessors,* are determined to remain as *ignorant* as we are,

determined to resist the light, and not move a hairs breadth from our juvenile *raw* notions, but to go through thick and thin to the death, though against the remonstrances of *scripture* and *reason*; which is as inconsistent with our profession, as dangerous, papal, and brutish. To boast of this, and be afraid of the contrary, is to glory in our shame, and to be ashamed of our glory.

THE religious *liberty* we now enjoy, under the mild and auspicious *reign* of our gracious *sovereign*, is a very precious *privilege* which should inspire our minds with the most grateful ardent sentiments and thanksgivings to God and man, for their benignity and goodness; instead of ill-natured disloyal murmurings against the state, for their justice and kindness, because others of different religious sentiments and denominations, who have as men, as good a right to liberty as we, enjoy it in common with us. O lamentable narrowness of soul! which is as uncomfortable to us as criminal in itself, and unfriendly to others. Were our minds possessed with just *views* of things, and our hearts with a due degree of sincere *affection* to our *brethren*, we would rejoice in their joy, and feel ourselves happy in their *happiness*; and in this generous and truly noble *temper* of mind, the spirit of true religion much consists. (Romans xii. 15. Romans xiv. 17.)

BUT because of the native *horror* and *deformity* that sit on the face of *persecuting principles*, when viewed without a *mask*, therefore the promoters of them, † with more *art* than *honesty*, either deny or disguise the *charge*: but for such, who when religious *liberty* is enjoyed by all, * are industriously labouring to spread the pernicious *principle* of *promoting religion*, considered

† At least some of them.

* In the British dominions.

as such, by external force, to pretend to clear themselves of the guilt of *persecution*, or labour to elude the charge by the dint of ambiguity and *sophistry*, is as vain as to attempt to make the same thing to differ essentially from itself, or to wash an *Ethiopian* white.

THE glorious *success* of the *gospel* during the first three centuries, in conquering multitudes to the faith of CHRIST, was not owing to *narrow terms* of *communion*, or *coercive measures*; but under God to the *holiness*, *brotherly love*, and *patience* of its *preachers* and *professors*. *Tertullian* speaks of their *numbers* in his *apology*, in the following terms, “ we have filled up all your
“ places, your towns, islands, forts, council-houses,
“ camps, palace, senate, market-house, we have left
“ the temples only to you.” * *Justin martyr*, once a famous Pagan *philosopher*, acknowledges “ that he was
“ induced to embrace christianity, by beholding the
“ patient sufferings of the *martyrs*.” And in his *apology* hath these words, respecting the gracious *change* that the religion of JESUS wrought upon them; “ former-
“ ly says he, we delighted in *debauchery*; now we love
“ nothing but *purity*. We *hated* one another; but now
“ we *pray* for our *enemies*, and endeavour to *convert*
“ our *persecutors*, that they may live according to the
“ *precepts* of *Christ*.” To the same effect speaks *Athenagoras* in his *apology*, whose words for the sake of brevity I omit. These *apologies*, my brethren, were offered to the *Roman Emperors*; and are the most authentick *vouchers*, of the reality of the *facts* to which they relate, that we can now have from the *christians*; to which I might add the testimony even of *Pagan enemies*, did the time admit. So conspicuous was *brotherly love* among the primitive christians, that the heathens were astonished at it, and said, *see how the christians love*
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* The Pagan idolaters places of worship.

one another! and so exemplary were their *lives*, that even *Julian*, the *apostate*, commends them to the imitation of the *Pagans*. (†)

THE Arabian impostor *Mahomet*, ingloriously spread his *religion* by FORCE, by the SWORD; but the aforesaid prodigious SPREAD of christianity through the Roman empire, amongst all ranks and orders of men had the civil sword drawn against it, and all sorts of temporal disadvantages and discouragements to grapple with, during the dismal series of PAGAN PERSECUTIONS; all which it surmounted, not by political *stratagem*, or external force, but by *prayers* and *tears*, which are the arms of the church of CHRIST; by *humility* and *holiness*; by *love* to their persecutors, as well as to each other; by an extraordinary *willingness* to suffer any kind of *torture* for CHRIST'S sake, and a *patient* enduring of them. In the aforesaid solemn series, many thousands of christians were slain, divers of whom were persons of eminent *dignity* and *endowments*, natural, acquired, and gracious; who with astonishing *firmness* and *bravery* of mind, triumphed over the most cruel torments, their Pagan persecutors could invent and inflict; and thus their *blood* became the seed of the church, by which it grew and flourished; which is a powerful argument of the *excellency* and *divine authority* of *christianity*, which without the *divine interposure* and concurrence, would have been long ago *extinguished*, by the combined *policy* and *force* of *earth* and *hell*. The truth is, the blessed religion of the meek and lowly *Jesus*, has been indeed promoted, by *enduring persecution*, but never by *insisting* it. The *disciples* of *Christ* should bear the cross, but where are they enjoined to lay a cross upon others?

LET

† In his letter to Arsfarius, "but O! whether are fervent love to the brethren, and substantial holiness fled away in the present times?"

LET *Pbarifects, Pagans, Arians, Turks, Papiſts* and others of the ſame *ſtamp*, influenced by the ſame anti-chriſtian ſpirit, pride themſelves in *cruelty* and *blood*; boalt of their zeal in *knocking people on the head for God's ſake*, and *cramming their faith down their throats*: but let the ſincere followers of the meek lamb of God, glory as the *primitive chriſtians* did, only in the *croſs of Chriſt*! But here *juſtice* commands a *pause*, and conſtrains me to *confess*, to the equal honour of the *Turks*, and ſcandal of the *chriſtian name*, that the *little finger* of ſome *profeſſors* of the latter, has been *heavier* than the *loins* of the former. The *Turks* allow ſome *liberty of conſcience*, to thoſe that are of different *professions* and *principles* from themſelves; but the *Papiſts* will allow no *liberty*, will ſhew no *mercy* to thoſe that *differ* from them in *principle*; but like ſome *proteſtants* that profeſs great zeal for religion, look upon *TOLERATION* to be a great *GRIEVANCE*, and perſiſt in their *unballowed zeal* and *bloody tenets* about *traditions, ceremonies, and other ſmall affairs* (comparatively) from age to age, without *wavering*. Tell it not in *Gath*, *publish it not in the ſtreets of Aſkelon*, leaſt the *daughters of the Philiſtines rejoice*, the *daughters of the uncircumciſed triumph*! by ſuch barbarous *ſeverities*, the *beauty of Iſrael is ſlain in the high places*: Worthy, pious, and *uſeful* perſons to the community, and what is ſtill more, the *loving ſpirit of chriſtianity* are *murdered*, and one important *argument* of its *divine authority* baſely *buried*, by the rigid *profeſſors* of it; as if the *chriſtian religion* was a *ſcheme* of *ordid SLAVERY*, unworthy of *GOD* to *impoſe*, and of *men* to *embrace*; the very *reverse* of the *law of nature*, and *humanity*; but *GOD forbid*! the *religion of Jeſus* rightly underſtood, is a *real, a valuable friend* to the *law of nature*, to *liberty*, and *ſociety*, and has explained and enforced them with greater *clearneſs, argument, and pathos*, than ever any other *inſtitution* did; and therefore is

worthy

worthy of all acceptance, by every intelligent being, who impartially examines its evidence, and duly considers its nature and design. Such are its excellencies, harmony, and advantages to mankind in all valuable respects, spiritual and temporal, personal and social, that it stands in no need of the beggarly assistance of external force to promote it. It is true, force is a weighty argument. Ay but it is to sense not to reason : though it is as heavy as lead to the former, it is as light as a feather to the latter ; and therefore in one word, *the persecuting scheme* is more fit for furies than men of any tenderness and benevolence to execute ; and more fit for asses meanly to couch to, than men of any enquiry and resolution.

But were there no examples of violence among the christians long since ? I am sorry I cannot do so much honour to christianity, as to answer in the negative. The truth is, after the three first centuries, that golden age of the Church expired ; when *Constantine* the great, the emperor of the *Romans*, became a christian, and with the richest profusion, and kindest intention, generously advanced the christian Bishops to great wealth and dignity ; divers of them became unchristian, yea, in some degree, antichristian and inhuman : they degenerated from the primitive simplicity, humility, meekness, disinterested holiness, and brotherly love of their pious predecessors ; which were their beauty and their strength ; and sunk into the selfish, ambitious, and invidious spirit of the world, and the god of it, who was a murderer from the beginning, and fell by his boundless arrogance from the height of dignity and happiness, into the depths of woe. being intoxicated with grandeur and affluence, and thirsting after dominion, they under the specious, ~~But~~ ~~sole~~ pretexes of zeal for truth, order, and government, were guilty of such carnal contentions, and that even about trifles ;

guilty of such unfocial rudeness, and inhuman severities, as made them instead of a comfort, a terror and torment to each other, a reproach to themselves, an offence and derision to their enemies, a scandal to their (professed) master, and a great obstruction to the progress of his religion among mankind; concerning which, one as justly as wilyly observes, that religion produced riches, but the daughter devoured the mother, *Religio peperit divitias, sed filia devoravit matrem. Quis talia fando, temperet a lacrymis!* Who, whose heart is not harder than adamant, can refrain from tears, on so melancholy an occasion, so sable a scene! alas for the native enmity of apostate mankind, against each other, the real but disguised source of all unfriendly contentions, schisms, and persecutions! how deep is the depravity of human nature, and how strong its proneness, ungratefully to abuse to God's dishonour, its own and others' prejudice, that prosperity and power it courts, and to deny to others the liberty it desires, as well as to complain of what itself inflicts! how awfully do grandeur and affluence eclipse, for a time, the graces of the saints, (in general) through their mismanagement and corruption, as well as destroy fools eternally? (Isaiah lvii. 17. Proverbs i. 32.) and hence our LORD assures us, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, (Matthew xix. 24.) had this been spoken of the poor, it would have been easily and generally believed, and earnestly attended to; but as it opposes a favourite passion, few seem to believe or regard it. If we judge of men's sentiments and dispositions by their speech and conduct, or as our LORD expresses it, of the tree by its fruits, (Matthew xii. 33.) how difficult is it, to hold a full cup even? The timber that without injury endures the storms of winter, sometimes warps in the gentle heat of summer. Ah how is the gold become dim, and the

the most fine gold changed? *How is the glory departed from Israel?* may not the sons of violence of Infidel tribes, with too much justice now upbraid many of the professed followers of the meek, the lowly, the loving Lord Jesus, and say, *art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? how art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning? how art thou cast down to the ground, that didst weaken the nations!* (Isaiah xiv. 10. 12.) The principles of candor, of justice, and a sincere regard to the churches of the Protestants, induce me to make this farther apology, for their entertaining persecuting principles in the beginning of the reformation, viz. that their attention was otherways diverted by a multiplicity of important labours, and that science did but then begin to dawn; and farther that these pious men had a mistaken notion of the Jewish constitution, (which was a Theocracy that no other nation ever had) and imagined without foundation, that it gave the magistracy authority to punish erroneous persons; propagat religion by the civil sword; this is a melancholy blemish on the reformation from Popery, which brought great guilt, inconsistency, and absurdity upon the Protestant body; Romans ii. i. *Wherefore thou art inexcusable O man, whoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest dost the same things.*

I speak this of my Protestant fathers and brethren, with much sorrow of heart, and with many tears. It is in vain for any particular party of the Protestants to deny the charge; the confessions of faith of all the national churches, which put a sword in the magistrate's hand to punish error, and compel a uniformity in religion by temporal pains and penalties, together with their acting upon this plan, as appears by divers awful facts, prove the charge. *O that my head were waters and my eyes*

a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people. (Jeremiah xxxi. 8)

THE truth is, the first reformers did many things well; they made a noble stand against many important awful errors of the church of Rome, such as idolatry, dependence on works in the articles of justification, and against divers superstitious and ridiculous ceremonies either of their own invention, or which they borrowed from their Pagan neighbours, whom they as meanly as inconsistently aped herein, though under the specious umbrage of christian names.

THE reformers deserve commendation, for the great service they have done to religion, by their bold and gallant opposition to the aforesaid abominations, and others of the like kind, though enforced by all the artillery of the church, in conjunction with the more formidable sword of the state; and for their carrying on the reformation so far as they did; and we have great reason to bless God while we live for the good they have done, and for their desires that the reformation might be carried on still farther. They did not set up themselves as an absolute standard. If any of their posterity have made this wicked use of them and their labour, they are to blame for this, and not the first reformers.

BUT it is notwithstanding matter of fact, that these worthy men have failed in some things of great importance, especially in these, viz. that they did not oppose persecution root and branch wherever, whenever, or by whomsoever it is inflicted, whether Papist or Protestant, Jew, Turk, or Pagan; whether by the church or state, or by both in conjunction; and likewise that they divided among themselves, and made their churches separate parties by inclosures of their

their own invention, or by making terms of communion that CHRIST never made; whereby the body of CHRIST is rent in pieces, and several parties are set in opposition to each other, who labour to promote their carnal factions, in the carnal way of hatred, variance, strife, backbiting, and slander; by which the interests of the grand enemy are promoted instead of the Mediators kingdom.

HERRIN we may, as in a glass, behold the imperfections of our forefathers, and the folly of making them the absolute standards of our faith and practice, or the *plus ultra* of our religion, as some bigots would have us; but, GOD forbid. No, CHRIST is our master, and the Bible, the Bible is our rule! Let us, Sirs, follow them so far as they followed CHRIST, but no farther; let us value and imitate their excellencies, but in the mean time pity and avoid their blemishes. As we should think *soberly of ourselves, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith*; (Romans xii. 3.) so we should of others; let us *learn not to think of men above what is written, that no man be puffed up for one against another*; (1 Corinthians iv. 6.) *My brethren have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons*, (James ii. 1.) We have no master but CHRIST, nor should we own any other, for *curst is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord*, (Jeremiah xvii. 5.) *Wo to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take council but not of me, and that cover with a covering but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin, that go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharoah, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt, therefore shall the strength of Pharoah be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion*. (Isaiah xxx, 1. 2. 3. 11. Chronicles xvi. 7.)

The IMPROVEMENT remains.

ARE Peacemakers blessed, and shall they be called the children of God? then by the law of contraries, we may learn, that such are in a dangerous situation who promote contention and division, who, instead of healing breaches, widen them, and make new rents in the church of God, instead of covering the sins of their brethren, needlessly expose and aggravate them, and perhaps add groundless charges to them, which have a tendency to mar their usefulness and promote recrimination and confusion; what contracted and distracted views of things must such persons have, who prefer small things to great, minute points in sentiment to brotherly love, and to the peace and union of Christ's kingdom! who pretend to promote the good of the church, by that which directly tends to her entire ruin; I mean unnecessary divisions; if we bite and devour one another, we may expect to be consumed one of another. Church purity in respect of doctrine and the power of piety are no doubt desirable and amiable, and ought to be promoted and preserved, but how? not by methods of our devising, but by the use of such only as divine wisdom has prescribed; a long tract of time has fully proved, that human contrivances in matters of religion, however well intended, have not answered their design. Let us therefore stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. When the zealous, but narrow minded, and over forward disciples wanted to pluck up the tares, our Saviour forbid them, lest they should do injury to the wheat, and ordered that both should be suffered to grow together till the harvest, (Matthew xiii. 28. 30.) Can church *dividers* with reason expect the approbation of Christ, or to be accounted the children of God, who disobey his authority, and contradict his example? No: we are

on the contrary enjoined to mark those that cause divisions and to avoid them, *for they that are such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple!* (Romans xvi. 17.) for all their pretences to superior piety and orthodoxy, such as promote *envying, strife and divisions are carnal, and walk as men*; men destitute of the principles of true goodness, such as glory in their parties and factions, and say they are of Paul or of Apollos, are carnal, *who is Paul and who is Apollos?* (1 Corinthians iii. 3. 5.)

AND when such seperatists not only (practically) forbid those that cast out devils, because they dont follow them, dont incline to be of their party; but are grieved that others enjoy the liberty they themselves desire and possess, and want to have the civil sword drawn against them; when with the disciples they would have fire to come from heaven to consume them, they greatly heighten their crimson impiety, by adding murder to schism! but let them hear at their peril, the command and reproof of the great master of the church on this occasion; (Mark ix. 38. 39.) *And John answered him saying, we saw one casting out devils in thy name and he followeth not us, and we forbid him because he followeth not us; but Jesus said, forbid him not; for there is no man that shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me; for he that is not against us is on our part.* See also Luke ix. 52. 56. *And he sent messengers before his face, and they entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him: and they did not receive him because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem; and when his disciples, James and John, saw this; they said, Lord wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did; but he turned and rebuked them, and said ye know not*

what

what manner of spirit ye are of, for the son of man is not come to destroy mens lives but to save them, Blessed Jesus how healing and merciful art thou! how different is thy spirit from the temper of many who profess a relation to thee!

If there be no design of propagating persecuting principles, why is the present toleration of the state in religious matters complained of by some sectarians? a toleration which is agreeable to national churches, who through mercy grow more and more moderate, and divers among them, through increase of light, abhor persecution in every form. This mildness which is so agreeable to the temper of Christ himself, and the genius of his religion, seperatists with equal ignorance, injustice and barbarity call lukewarmness in the cause of God, as if zeal consisted in malice and murder, and the kingdom of God had changed natures with that of the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth!

If there be no design of propagating persecuting principles, why is the form of covenanting by oath adopted under the gospel, in a time of religious liberty, and urged upon societies without the concurrence of the state; while in the mean time, the whole New Testament is overlooked, and the practice of the christian church in the three first centuries past in silence?

Is not an Antimonian or Moravian faith, or rather sinful presumption, consisting in a persuasion of our right to Christ and his benefits before our union to him, as dangerous to the souls of men, as the principles of bigotry and persecution are prejudicial to the peace and union of the church of Christ, and to that loyalty and gratitude we owe to our gracious sovereign, and

the *British* state, for our present important *privileges*? from such a *pretended reformation*, may the Lord deliver us: *my soul come not into their secret, mine honour be thou not united!*

BUT on the contrary, how *pleasant* is it for *brethren* to dwell together in *unity and peace!* this is like the precious ointment on the head of *Aaron*, that ran down to the skirts of his garments, and diffused around an aromatick fragrance! this is gentle, refreshing and fructifying, as the dew of *Herman* on the mountains of *Zion*, where God commands the blessing, *even life for evermore!* as union among the members of the *natural body*, is the foundation of their sympathy with, and care for each other, and likewise of their mutual *nourishment, growth, strength, comfort, beauty, and usefulness;* so is the union of *love, peace, and external fellowship,* in the church of *Christ;* by this it is a comfort to its friends and a terror to its enemies: in this situation *how goodly are thy tents O Jacob, and thy tabernacles O Israel, who is this that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.* But the want of this, makes her the grief of her friends, and the scorn of her foes!

THE truth is, a loving and pacifick temper breathes the very spirit and genius of the religion of *Jesus*, is the distinguishing badge of his disciples, and an eminent branch of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. This, this by its gentle violence, its attractive charms, will do more to conquer the most obstinate prejudices, and spread vital goodness, than the highest flights of Pharisaical severity and unhallowed zeal about *gnats, mint, annis, and cumin.* The great things of religion, the weightier matters of the law, wherein we are happily agreed, should suffice to maintain mutual

respect, and be an enduring band of affection and union among us. Seeing these lesser differences do not exclude persons from *the love of our common Lord*, they should not from ours. Let us therefore receive one another as Christ received us. Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule; let us mind the same thing; and if in any thing we be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

My reverend *fathers* and *bretbren*, permit me to excite you to bless God for the *union* we are at present favoured with, as a religious society; and to intreat you to endeavour *pro virili*, to keep it in the bond of peace, by the sincere and steady use of the means before mentioned; in this way we shall act becoming the *character* of the *ministers* of the *gospel of peace*, and may expect our master's *blessing*, and to be *acknowledged* and *rewarded*, as the genuine children of the God of peace. God is not the author of *confusion*, but of *peace*, in all the churches of the saints, and to this be bath called us. Let us therefore, whatever others do, follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith we may edify one another. Let us seek peace, and ensure it. As peace cannot be obtained, where it is lost, without much labour and pains; so neither can it be preserved without them. We are all, both in respect of knowledge and practice, imperfect creatures. We see but in part, and in many things offend all. We are encompassed with many enemies and temptations, and converse with such who are imperfect like ourselves; and therefore without watchfulness, humility, candour, charity, condescension and forbearance, we can neither do good in society, or get good by it. The *accuser of the bretbren*, is continually labouring to puff us up with *pride* as to ourselves, and leaven us with *prejudice* against them, on account of their infirmities and mistakes, real or imaginary, that he may cause new *schisms*, which

is his *master plot*, to wound the Redeemer's honour and interest. O what need then have we to be constantly upon our *guard*, to have our eye often upon our own *foes*, and to *cry* frequently to God to direct and assist us in the whole of our *duty*, that we may'nt be suffered to give a *wrong touch* to his *Ark*, or *decline* in pure and fervent *love* to our *brethren*!

But while we shew lenity and forbearance to such as mistake in small and doubtful matters, let us in the mean time beware that we *betray* not *foundations* and important *principles*, for if so, our *peace* will be a *confederacy* against truth, or a *detestable neutrality* and *take-warmness* in the cause of God. Let us therefore maintain a constant *testimony*, especially against the corrupt and dangerous *tenets* of the *Socinians*, *Arians*, *Armenians* and *Antinomians*, by an inviolate adherence to that excellent *system* of divine truths contained in the *Westminster confession* of faith and *catechism*, which we have adopted as the confession of our faith, and for which we have reason to bless God to our latest breath. It is awful and lamentable to see the contrary extremes that obtain in our days, while some make not only the smallest points of truth, but even doubtful facts of profane history, terms of their communion; others pretend that to believe the divine authority of the holy Scriptures, and that Christ is the son of God and Saviour of the world, are sufficient to communion; while they in the mean time strenuously oppose the most important verities, such as the *doctrine* of the *Trinity*, the *Godhead* and *satisfaction* of *Christ*, *original sin*, *justification* by faith alone, through the *imputed righteousness* of *Christ* and *regeneration*, by the supernatural agency of the *holy spirit*. But what comfort or benefit can be expected in such a *chaos of confusion*, which blends *Papists* and *Protestants*, *Socinians*, *Arians*, *Armenians* and

and Antinomians, &c. in one *heterogeneous body*, in one promiscuous croud, although they be divided in sentiment, even in regard to the *object of worship*, and *foundations of hope*. Is there any reason to expect that the *religion of Jesus* will be propagated in its purity and power, when its *grand peculiars* are rejected, and polish'd *Paganism* put in its place? No, surely. And is it reasonable to expect that the *church* will be reformed or edified by a *presumptuous faith*, together with the aforesaid *schismatical narrowness*, in respect to the terms of communion, which much resembles that of the *Pharisees* and *Donatists*; a narrowness which rejects the far greater part of Christ's body mystical, confines his visible kingdom to a *nut-shell*, and forbids *our joining*, even occasionally, *with all that every where call on the name of the Lord Jesus in sincerity*, contrary to *scripture*, *reason*, the *apostles creed*, and our excellent *confession of faith*, which speaks with equal beauty and catholicism on this head. Certainly that scheme, which unnecessarily divides the church, tends to destroy it. On this view of things, our zeal should awake; but let it be directed by *knowledge*, and tempered with *humility*. *Let us be valiant for the truth*; and to this end, let us *speak in love*, and exercise *mercy* in connection with *fidelity*. *Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect; be of good comfort; be of one mind; live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Amen.* ||

|| See the subjects of *peace* more largely handled in my *Irenicum*.

G A P 64

F I N I S.