

distinguish his followers : and holding themselves forth to our astonished reason as his more faithful imitators; just in proportion as they resemble him the less.

But our wonder at such inconsistency will cease, if we look a little beyond the mere surface of things; and consider, not the plausibly pretended, but the real motives for such conduct : which, however carefully kept out of sight, by the hoodwinking influence of interested sophistry and prejudice ; are nevertheless quite obvious to the attentive and impartial observer. To such it will soon appear that all this unauthorised strife about religion, which has proved such a source of misery to mankind for so many ages ; so far from originating in a pure and disinterested zeal for the glory of God ; is the genuine offspring of worldly pride, and of our sinful attachment to the honours and enjoyments of this life ; which we could wish either to make all our own, or retain when made ; claiming over and above, contrary to the Saviour's declarations, the exclusive monopoly and rightful enjoyment of the good things of the life to come.—In other words, our self-conceit resents it as an insult offered to our better supposed understanding, when any one dares to call in question the soundness of its decisions : and they again, whose temporal prosperity, call it *LIVINGS*, if you choose, depends upon the general adoption of certain modes of faith ; or upon their continuance, when once established ; are instigated on to this unholy, though pretended Christian warfare ; some with the hope of snatching, others with the hope of retaining, *the accursed thing, the Mammon of iniquity* ; till in the contest not only the Christian, but the man himself is lost in the remorseless savage ; the blood-thirsty and murder-boasting fanatic ; than whom there is not in nature a monster more deadly and untameable. It was to such that our Saviour alluded, when he foretold his Disciples that *the time would come when those even who killed them would think they were thus doing a service to God*.

Presumptuous worms ! He never required your exerted strength to rear ; nor your arm of flesh to prop and uphold his immortal structure, and imperishable fabric. Will experience never convince you that your forbidden interference in such a way ; your persecuting efforts ; your crafty and unprincipled endeavours ; only tend to mar his gracious purpose ; and impede, if possible, his merciful design ? That your furious zeal is the greatest obstacle to the far and wide dissemination of his holy doctrine ; which nothing but his own supporting omnipotence could make it overcome ? That infidelity has nothing so plausible to oppose to the adoption of his gospel truths, as the appalling atrocities committed by you in its blasphemingly pretended support ? That you thus make his holy name be reviled, and his divine revelation scouted by the ignorant, profane and profligate unbeliever ; making that gospel of peace and universal love appear to such an endless source of discord and contention ; and, instead of a blessing, which it were, if well observed ; as a curse and calamity to mankind ? Alas ! it is from false friends within the

fold, and not from openly avowed enemies without, that all this mischief proceeds. It is but of our own making. *perditio tua eate, Israel*. It was Achan in the camp, by coveting and retaining the accursed spoil, not the foe from without, who brought discomfiture and destruction upon the people of God.

How different from this was the conduct of the primitive Christians ! So far from contending with one another for the possession and enjoyment of the good things of this world ; they were seen cheerfully giving up all they possessed, in order the more freely to attend to their main concern, the salvation of their souls, by the diligent practice of their Christian duties : following in this the counsel of our Lord, addressed to all those who aspire after perfection ; and remembering how he checked on the eve of his passion, the ambitious rivalry of his Apostles ; as he had done before that of the sons of Zebedee. These were the real champions of Christianity, trained in the school of self-denial and mortification to the bloody conflict of martyrdom ; and to victory ; not, like the heathens, by desperately fighting ; but, like their lord, by patiently dying.

But no sooner was the Saviour's religion established every where on the ruins of idolatry ; and worldly honours and emoluments began to be heaped profusely on its pastors ; than the sinful propensity of human weakness appeared gradually mixing itself up, and contriving to blend, nay finally to identify itself with its most sacred and sanctifying institutions.

At first the pride of inventing new theories on the mysterious truths, and of getting them adopted by the community, gave rise to dissention and strife among the believers ; prompting each party to use every art and subterfuge in argument, and often physical force and compulsion, towards establishing or preserving established any where, its own favorite hypothesis. These differences in opinion, at first merely speculative ; & others, extending even to practice, subsequently invented by the too fertile imaginations of those, who found it their interest to hatch and propagate such innovations ; were used by their authors and abettors, not as the means of elucidating the truth, though craftily represented as such ; or as new discovered certainties ; but as those only of exalting themselves in the estimation of the public : of discrediting and undermining their hitherto venerated antagonists ; and of getting themselves finally substituted in their room, and put in full possession of their enviable and much coveted *livings* and preferments. The fear of losing on the one side, and the hope of gaining on the other, not the sufferings, toils and worldly privations, which the Saviour said were the portion of his followers but the temporal dignities and emoluments, which had been so unsparingly allotted to the pastors of the church ; these, I say, are the main cause of all this long lasting struggle and contention. The strife is all about the re-partition of the *loaves and fishes* ; which, were the same earthly authority that placed them there, to remove, or reduce, as it may ; we should soon see the desperate quarrel ended ;

and on this score something like social harmony restored. *It is impossible*, our Saviour says, *to serve God and mammon*. But here we find that in order to serve only *Mammon* : one must affect to be serving *God*. Still, I repeat it, could you, without the risk of being bitten in the attempt, only remove the bone of contention ; you would soon see the snarlers agree among themselves.

Here then you have at once unveiled before you the whole secret of religious persecution. It proceeds not from God. It is altogether worldly. *But ye are not of this world* ; said Christ to his followers ; as *I am not of this world* : for where I go, there is your home prepared for you in the kingdom of my heavenly father ; that where I am, there you may be also. There alone are all the dignities, there are all the treasures and enjoyments, which the christian, as such, is allowed to covet. The objects of his hope are placed beyond the grave, objects, which no earthly vicissitudes can deprive him of since they are laid up for him, where neither rust corrodes ; nor moth consumes ; nor thieves break through and steal ; and, where his treasure is there his heart is also. He strives not for the things that perish but for those that endure to life everlasting. He considers himself as no citizen of this world ; and therefore as having no rights here below to contend for. He views his present life as a short pilgrimage, and accounts himself but a passing traveller in a foreign land, always looking forward with anxious expectancy to the happy moment of his departure hence ; and exulting by anticipation in the promised enjoyment of that never ending bliss, for which alone he was created ; and which awaits him for certain in the world to come. Such is the faithful follower of Christ, in whom alone is seen displayed in its ever amiable light the genuine spirit of christianity ; a spirit that not only doth no evil, but that even thinketh none ; and whose earnest wish and constant endeavour, is to do good to all.

It was not such a gentle and benevolent spirit as this, that ever stirred up such hateful jars among those proclaiming themselves disciples of the redeemer. It was never this heavenly spirit of peace but a most opposite one, that invested the preacher of peace ; the bearer of glad tidings to all ; the meek exhorter to universal benevolence and brotherly love ; in a word, the commissioned apostle of the ever meek and merciful Messiah ; with the rigid and inexorable office either of inquisitor or of high commissioner in the days of our Elizabeth that furnished him with all his torturing implements. the chain, the scourge, the scavenger, the joint-rendering rack, the gibbet and blazing pile, to torture, mangle and consume his dissenting brother, whom his divine master died to save.

Neither is it this holy spirit that still keeps alive in our otherwise happy country these religious feuds which distract so the community :—that prompts the privileged few, who rest all their claim for such preference on the fallible decision of man, and his political statutes, to treat the many as aliens in their own native land ; excluding them for doctrinal differences, though equally loyal and