

fear the entering wedge of the state-church system, knowing that system to be inconsistent with scripture and hostile to freedom and piety.

III. The facts which have been now adduced are instructive, consoling, and admonitory.

1. They are *instructive*.

The history of martyrdom affords striking illustration of the teachings of scripture respecting human depravity. It is the most melancholy chapter in the annals of our race. We are prepared to hear of the ravages of war; the passion for mutual destruction has raged in all lands, from time immemorial. But who could have expected that professing christians would vex and murder one another on account of religious differences—or that for shades of opinion and varieties of worship men would be despoiled of their freedom? Surely this is a mournful commentary on the inspired announcement. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

Again; we learn the folly and iniquity of the state-church system. Uniformity is the aim; compulsion, the means; defeat and disgrace the result. The system cannot be sustained without the adoption of measures which are at variance with the spirit of Christianity. Free thought is crushed by the iron hand of power. God’s people are deprived of their liberties. A nation of formalists may be trained by this system, but spiritual religion withers under it.

Once more: We are reminded of the necessity of adherence to the laws of Christ. The history of martyrdom is a continual protest against deviation from them. Those witnesses for the truth died in defence of the original faith and practice. But to what lengths of departure men had gone before they could venture on deeds of persecution! It might seem a small thing to superadd a significant ceremony to the simple ritual of the gospel; but when men had begun to invent and improve, (as they vainly imagined), love of pomp and power urged them on, and so one abuse led to another till the aspect of outward