

We proceed to observe, that there has been a succession of martyrs in the christian church ; that in that succession those who professed Baptist principles hold a distinguished place ; and that these facts are instructive, consoling, and admonitory.

I. THERE HAS BEEN A SUCCESSION OF MARTYRS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

The Saviour foretold the persecution of his followers. "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you ; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake," Mat. xxiv. 9. "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service," John xvi. 2. The apostolic history presents a continuous fulfilment of the prediction. The preachers preached at the risk of liberty or life : and profession of Christianity in those days might cost a man his all. The disciples were warned that "through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom." They learned by painful experience that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12.

So it continued for nearly three centuries. On the one hand, governments claimed the right to prescribe modes of worship, and to punish neglect of established forms, accounting disobedience as a crime equal to sedition. On the other, christian men pleaded a higher law, to which all must bow, and which, in case of clashing of authorities, must ever be supreme. "We ought to obey God," they said, "rather than men," Acts. v. 29. Hence arose a perpetual conflict. Earthly rulers demanded soul-submission ; but the servants of Christ held that

"Consciences and souls were made  
To be the Lord's alone."

The horrors of those times cannot be described. Paganism put forth all its strength to crush the new religion. Magistrates and mobs withstood the missionaries ; now, the aid of the law was invoked—anon, popular vengeance was suffered to run riot without restraint. To whet the appetite for slaughter, Christians were charged with the perpetration of the most atrocious deeds, and denounced as unfit to live in civilised