

# The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus

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## ORIGINAL.

### AGAINST PERSECUTION FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE.

*Converte gladium tuum in locum suum; omnes enim, qui acceperint gladium, gladio peribunt.* Matt. c. 26, v. 52.

*Put up the sword into its scabbard;* was the Saviour's injunction to his disciples, who had drawn the sword in his defence, and cut off the ear of Malchus, the High priest's servant, probably the most active in apprehending our Lord. *Put up the sword into the scabbard; for all they, who use the sword, shall perish by the sword.*

With the view of giving to his followers among his last and most striking injunctions the most important one of forbearance towards their enemies, even towards those actuated by the most deadly malice against them; but more particularly to impress upon their minds that they are not authorised by him to raise their arm of flesh in his defence; and murder or torment their fellow creatures on the pretext of maintaining his cause; and also, as he himself observed upon the occasion, that the prophecy concerning him might be fulfilled, which said that he should be reckoned among the wicked; thus designating those, who have recourse to the sword; with this view, I say, did he intimate to his disciple that he should provide himself with a sword and so far permitted him for once to use it, only that he might have the more solemn and public occasion of forbidding his followers the like use of it for ever; adding at the same time the example of rendering good for evil, which he had all along so forcibly inculcated by touching and restoring on the spot to Malchus the ear that had been cut off.

But the most direct object which he seems to have had in view in bringing about this mysterious incidence, was to prove that, however much, as he foresaw, they who might boast themselves his followers, should seek to establish, or uphold what they imagined to be his cause by violent measures; they not only had not his sanction for doing so; but that on the contrary, they were expressly forbidden by him ever to interpose in his behalf in so summary and cruel a manner; reminding such mistaken and presumptuous zealots that he needs not their aid to accomplish his ends; or, if he wanted aid, that he has the whole host of Heaven, more powerful assistants, at his call. *Thinkest thou,* said he to Peter, *that I cannot now ask my Father, and he will presently give me more than twelve legions of Angels?* On the very occasion alluded to he gave a convincing proof that, even in his mortal state, he required no human aid to defend him against his enemies, by sending his pursuers with a word of grace reeling to the ground. And is he now less

powerful and more dependant on our help in his immortal and glorified condition?

His disciples, in the excess of their zeal, besought him once to allow them, like Elias, to call down fire from heaven to consume his enemies: but he gave them to understand that his dispensation was one of mercy and not of justice; for that he was come to seek and to save; not to scatter and destroy.

He was styled by the prophets *the prince of peace* and, after *glory to God on high, peace on earth, and good will to man,* was sung by the angels at his nativity. Meekness was his favourite attribute, and the virtue he recommended most to his followers; indeed the one by which he said they should be chiefly distinguished from the rest of mankind.

This is the particularly marked character of the Messiah, as given in the prophecies; which describe him as one, *the bruised reed who would not break; and the smoking flax, who would not extinguish.* Is. 42, 3, *Who gave his back to the smiters; his cheeks to those who buffeted them; and who hid not his face from ignominy and spittle;* 50, 6. *Who when oppressed and afflicted, did not complain; but was led like a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers, opened not his mouth.* 53, 7. These, and a thousand other passages to the same effect, describe him as most distinguishable by the attribute of meekness; which shone forth most conspicuously in his conduct throughout the whole course of his life, but more particularly towards its close, and in the latest stage of his mortal existence. The last legacy he bequeathed to his disciples before leaving them, was *peace.* *My peace,* said he, *I leave you: my peace I give you, not such as the world giveth, a treacherous and hollow truce, the effect but of mutual precaution, accompanied always with distrust; but one the pure offspring of brotherly love, derived from its native source the love of God, our common father; both which he strongly inculcated; declaring that on these two depend the whole law and the prophets; that is, that on these two the whole duty of man hinges and turns; and assuring them that the main test of their being his disciples, is, that they love one another.* *By this,* says he, *they shall know that you are my disciples, that you love one another.* Nay, he bade them even forego their just and indubitable rights, rather than quarrel and litigate for them with one another. *You have heard said he, that it has been said, eye for eye; and tooth for tooth. But I say unto you, resist not evil. But, if any one should smite you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any one should sue you at law, and take from you your coat, let him have your cloak*

also. *You have heard it said, love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies. Bless those that curse you: do good to those that hate you: and pray for those that despightfully use you and persecute you: that you may be the children of your father who is in heaven, who makes his sun to rise on the wicked and the good, and sends down rain on the just and the unjust. Blessed are the merciful, says he, for they shall find mercy: Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.* Matt. 5. And in that short but all comprehensive prayer which he taught us, he desires us to ask for forgiveness of our offenses against God, only in as far as we ourselves forgive those of our fellow creatures, who have offended us. Matt. 6.

These divine maxims of meek forbearance towards all men, and of charity even to our enemies, were exemplified in himself to a supreme degree. He did not refuse even to Judas the kiss of peace, by which he was betrayed; but only meekly remonstrated with him for making of that symbol of love, a treacherous sign. *Friend, said he, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss? He prayed for his very murderers in the midst of all the torments he was enduring upon the cross; and pleaded earnestly with his heavenly father in their behalf; urging the only possible excuse that could be offered for them, their ignorance of the dreadful crime they were committing. Father, said he, forgive them; for they know not what they are doing.*

Now let us contrast this conduct and these maxims of our Saviour, with the behaviour and maxims of those, who, while boasting themselves his disciples, and acknowledging him to be their perfect model; and his doctrine the unerring rule of their lives; subject their fellow-creatures nevertheless to all kinds of unjust privations, cruel sufferings, and even to death; for daring to differ with them in any degree on points of faith, of which they choose to proclaim themselves, without offering any sure proof of their right to such pretension, the only inspired and infallible expounders; for if they own themselves fallible in what they so forcibly inculcate, their conduct is then not only unreasonable, but wantonly atrocious.

What a strange and deplorable inconsistency is this, to glory so in being Christians; and yet to act in direct opposition to what that title so necessarily implies! Nay, to make a merit to one's self in acting so; offering even as the proof of their being the true followers of Christ, the violation of his strictest injunction; of the very one by the observance of which he said we were to know and