

who understood not this controversy, were staggered about the lawfulness of infant baptism, after reading such pamphlets, it is not to be wondered at. Many members of the church of England expressed a strong desire to see the arguments in favour of infant baptism stated; and as no other person seemed willing to undertake it, the task devolved on me. I am sensible that the subject might have easily fallen into better hands.—However, those who are candid will readily accept any well-meant attempt to serve the cause of truth, even altho' it may not be so well executed as they could wish. I was actuated by a sense of duty; and a consciousness that I have sincerely endeavoured to discharge it, will sufficiently countervail any objections that may be made to my performance, or to my engaging in this controversy.

Altho' it was none of my business to return a professed answer to Dr. Gill, and his name is not once mentioned in the following *Essay*: Yet the reader will please to observe, that every argument against infant baptism in his *Reply*, so far as I can recollect, that deserves notice, is among others here refuted. I mentioned not his name, nor that of any other Anabaptist writer, on purpose to avoid all personal reflections and contests. I wrote against principles and arguments, such as they were, not against persons.

From principle, as well as disposition, I am an avowed enemy to every species of persecution—especially persecution for conscience sake. This latter is to be sure one of the blackest bonds that ever infested the earth. Too long and too often have its bloody banners been displayed in the christian world. Too frequently have the followers of the holy Jesus crouded under them—armed with mutual hatred, rage and violence against each other; when they should live and love like brethren, as their divine master hath commanded. Christianity indeed, has often had reason to blush for her children in this respect—Blessed be God, the rights of conscience are better understood now than formerly. However the present age may be marked by a degeneracy of manners, yet a spirit of tolerance and moderation seems to prevail in most denominations of christians. And may that spirit prevail more and more daily, until persecution be totally banished hence to its native hell. But to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, provided it be done with decency, candour and charity, is so far from being persecution, that it is an absolute duty. These rules I have not knowingly transgressed; and I truly declare that I feel no emotions, but those of pity, charity and benevolence to Anabaptists. It is my desire to live in brotherly love and good fellowship with them. I did not write against them, but for the members of that community to which I belong; and to guard those, whom providence has in part committed to my care, from what I apprehend to be a dangerous error.

Since the first rise of the controversy about infant baptism, soon after