

THE CATHOLIC.

QUOD SEMPER, QUOD UBIQUE, QUOD AB OMNIBUS. CREDITUM EST.—WHAT ALWAYS, AND EVERY WHERE, AND BY ALL IS BELIEVED.

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EDITOR.

A REFUTATION OF THE CHARGE OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION URGED AGAINST THE CATHOLIC RELIGION;

Being an abridgement of his fourth letter to a Prebendary; by the Right Rev. John Milner, D. D., F. S. A.

I HAVE had frequent opportunities of observing, that amongst the many foul caricatures of the religion of our ancestors held up to public view, that which exhibits it as a sanguinary system, supported by swords and muskets, and surrounded with racks, gibbets, and fires, is the one which has been chiefly successful in inflaming the minds of Englishmen with hatred against it and its professors: a hatred which they do not entertain for the unbaptized Quaker, or the antichristian Socinian, and which has sometimes led them into the extremities of cruelty, from the mere hatred of cruelty. Those who feel an interest or a pleasure in exciting this odium, are fully sensible of its fatal efficacy. Hence, they are never weary with ringing the changes on the names of John Huss, and Jerom of Prague, on the massacre of Paris, and especially on the fires of Smithfield. For the same uncharitable purpose, we find the lying *Acts and Monuments* of John Fox, with large wooden prints of men and women encompassed with faggots and flames, in every leaf of them, chained to the desks of many country-churches whilst abridgements of this inflammatory work are annually issued from the London presses, under the title of *The Book of Martyrs*. In the meantime, it is carefully concealed from the knowledge of the public, that Catholics have suffered persecution in this very country, to a much greater degree than they have inflicted it, and that even the various sects of Protestants have persecuted each other, on account of their religious differences, to the extremity of death.

In some circumstances it may be necessary, even for the sake of peace and conciliation, to enter upon that most odious of topics, *religious persecution*, and to detail particular instances of it; namely, when such statements contribute to a right understanding and balancing of accounts in this matter, amongst Christians of different communions, and thereby to the cutting away of one of the most virulent sources of religious animosity which subsist among them.

It is for this conciliatory purpose, and not for that of reproach or recrimination, that I shall enter more at large into this subject of persecution.

The adversaries of the Catholic profess to prove, that persecution is a tenet of their faith, from the fact of their having persecuted heretics in all parts of Europe from the decrees of councils, the declarations of popes, the establishment of tribunals, and the assertions of writers of the highest authority with them. I now undertake to furnish an answer on each one of these heads, after lamenting that it unavoidably requires more leisure and pains to refute calumnies, than it does to advance them.

In the first place, if the mere fact of Catholics having used violence against persons of a different communion, were a proof that persecution is a tenet of their faith, as you argue, this would clearly prove, that the same doctrine equally makes part of the creed of almost all denominations of Protestants. It cannot be effaced from the records of history, that wherever the Reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries became the triumphant party, not content with the free exercise of their own religion, they violently overturned that of their ancestors, and carried on the most severe and oppressive persecution against those who continued to adhere to it. This was the case in England, Scotland,* France,† Ireland,‡ Germany, the Low Countries, § Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Geneva, &c. though in different

* The reformation may be said to have begun in Scotland, by the assassination of Cardinal Beaton, in which Knox was a party, and to which Fox, in his *Acts and Monuments*, says, the murderers were instigated "by the spirit of God." In 1560, the parliament at one and at the same time, decreed the establishment of Calvinism, and the punishment of death against the ancient religion. "With such indecent haste," says Robertson, "did the very persons who had just escaped ecclesiastical tyranny proceed to imitate the example." Hist. of Scotl. See also the answer of the presbytery to the King and Council, in 1596, concerning the Catholic Exiles of Huntly, Errol, &c. viz. that "as they had been guilty of idolatry, a crime deserving of death, the civil power could not spare them."

† In France it is well known, that wherever the Huguenots carried their victorious arms against their sovereign they prohibited the exercise of the Catholic religion, slaughtered the priests and religious, burned the churches and convents, dug up the dead to make bullets of their leaden coffins, &c. See Maimbourg, Hist. Calvinism. Thuanus, Hist. l. xxxi. One of their own writers, Nic. Fronmentau, confesses, that in the single province of Dauphiny, they killed 256 priests and 112 monks or friars. Liv. de France. In these scenes, the famous Baron Des Adrets signalized his barbarity; forcing his Catholic prisoners to jump from the towers upon the pikes of his soldiers, and obliging his own children to wash their hands in the blood of Catholics.

‡ The penal laws were in general no less severely exercised against the Catholics of Ireland, though they constituted the body of the people, than they were against those of England. Dr. Curry has preserved (amongst a great many other sufferers in the same cause) the names of twenty-seven priests, or religious, who suffered death, on account of their religion, in the reign of Elizabeth. Hist. of Civil Wars of Ireland, vol. 1, p. 8. Spondanus and Pagni relate the horrid cruelties exercised by Sir W. Drury, on F. O'Hare, O. S. F. the Catholic archbishop of Cashel, who, falling into the hands of this sanguinary governor, in the year 1570, was first tortured, by his legs being immersed in jackboots, filled with quick-lime, water, &c. until they were burnt to the bone, in order to force him to take the oath of supremacy, and then with other circumstances of barbarity, executed at the gallows; having previously cited Drury to meet him at the tribunal of Christ within ten days, who accordingly died within that period, amidst the most excruciating pains. See in Bourk's *Hibernia Dominicana*, a much longer and a more detailed account of Irish sufferers, especially in Elizabeth's reign, on the score of religion. It was a usual thing to beat with stones the shorn heads of the clergy, till their brains gushed out. Others had needles thrust under their nails, or the nails themselves were torn off. Many were stretched on the rack, or pressed under weights. Others had their bowels torn open, which they were obliged to support with their hands, or their flesh torn with curry-combs.

§ Protestants speak with horror of the persecution in the Low Countries by the Duke of Alva, who is said to have delivered 18,000 heretics to the executioners. I heartily join in condemning and execrating the sanguinary vengeance of the Spanish governor and government, against their seditious subjects of the Calvinistical persuasion: but to form an adequate judgment in this case, it is proper to attend to the provocations which the former had received from the latter. Not to mention, then, the conspiracy of Carril, and Riot, to assassinate the Duke of Alva himself, at the monastery of Groonvelt, near Brussels, it is certain that one class of Reformers had endeavoured to erect the same fanatical and bloody kingdom in Holland, which John of Leyden actually established at Munster, crying out, that God had given up the country to them,

and with different degrees of violence, several sects of Protestants have, in many places and upon principle, persecuted each other to the extremities of exile, perpetual imprisonment and death.*

and that vengeance awaited all who would not join the n. It was an ordinary thing with them to assault the clergy in the discharge of their functions, and the air resounded with their cries, of *kill the priests, kill the monks, kill the magistrates*. These violences became more common as the Reformation extended itself wider. Wherever Vandermerk and Sonoi, both of them heat-rants to the Prince of Orange, carried their arms, they uniformly put to death in cold blood all the priests and religious they could lay their hands upon, as at Oudenard, Ruremond, Dort, Middlebourg, Delt, and Slogoven. See Hist. Ref. des Pays Bas. by the Protestant minister De Brandt, also Dr. Pattison in his *Jerusalem and Babel*, p. 385 &c. A late celebrated biographer, Felier, Dict. Hist. art. Toledo, says, that Vandermerk slaughtered more unoffending Catholic priests and peasants in the year 1572, than Alva executed Protestants during his whole government. He gives us, in the same passage, a copious extract from D'Abregé de l'Hist. de la Hollande, par Mons. Kerroux, in which this Protestant writer, who professes to write from judicial records still extant, draws a most frightful picture of the infernal barbarities of Sonoi, on the Catholic peasants of North Holland. He says that some of these, after undergoing the torments of scourges and the rack, were enveloped in sheets of linen that had been steeped in spirits of wine, which being inflamed, they were miserably scorched to death; that others, after being tortured with burning sulphur and torches in the tenderest parts of their bodies, were made to die for want of sleep, executioners being placed on guard over them to beat and torment them, with clubs and other weapons, whenever exhausted nature seemed ready to sink into forgetfulness; that several of them were fed with nothing but salt herrings, without a drop of water or any other liquid, until they expired with thirst; finally, that others were stung to death by wasps, or devoured alive by rats, which were confined in coffins with them. Amongst the cruelties there recounted, some are of so indecent a nature, that they will not bear repeating, and those which occur above are only mentioned, to induce Protestant writers to join with me in burying the odious names of Alva and Sonoi in equal oblivion.

* Amongst the more illustrious foreign Protestants, who suffered death by the violence of other Protestants, it is proper to mention the names of Servetus, Gentili, Felix Mans, Roman, Barneveldt, &c. not to mention Bo'ssee, Grotius, &c., who were banished, or otherwise persecuted, for their religious opinions. The following is a more circumstantial account of the persecution, which some Protestants have exercised upon others in this country, than is contained in the passage above quoted. In the reign of Edward VI, viz. in the year 1550, six anabaptists were condemned by Archbishop Cranmer, some of whom recanted and carried faggots, in sign of their having merited burning; and, one of them, a woman, Joan Knell, was actually burnt alive. The following year, George Paris was condemned, and suffered in the same manner.—See Stowe's *Annals*. During the reign of Elizabeth, in the year 1573, Peter Burchet, a gentleman of the Middle Temple, was examined on the score of heresy, by Edward Sands, Bishop of London, but recanted his opinions. In 1575, twenty-seven heretics were at one time, eleven at another, & five at a third, condemned for their errors, most of them by the same Protestant bishop. Of these, twenty were whipped and banished, others bore their faggots, and two of them, John Paterson and Henry Tarwort, were burnt to death in Smithfield. In 1583, John Leves, "for denying the godhead of Christ," says Stowe, was burnt at Norwich; at which place, also Francis Kett, M. A. suffered the same kind of death, for similar opinions, in 1579. Two years afterwards, William Hacket was hanged, for heresy, in Cheshide. Five others suffered death in this reign for being Brownists, viz. Thacker, Copping, Greenwood, Barrow, and Peary. The above particulars, may be seen in Stowe, Brandt, Limborch, Collier, Neale, &c. Under James I, Legat complained loudly of their sufferings, and particularly that four of their number, Leighton, Burton, Pryne, and Bastwick, were cropped of their ears and set in the pillory.—Limborch, Hist. of Inquis. Neale, &c. When the Presbyterians afterwards got the upper hand, they continued to put Catholics to death, and treated those of the former establishment with almost equal severity; at the same time appointing days of humiliation and fasting, to beg God's pardon for not being more intolerant.—See Neale's Hist. of Puritans, also Hist. of Churches of England and Scotland, vol. iii, &c. The editor of De Laune's *Plea for Nonconformists*, says, that this writer was one of 2,000 Protestant dissenters, who perished in prison in that single reign (viz. of Charles II), merely for dissenting from the Church.—Prof. p. 2. He adds, that one of their people