

T S.

P R E F A C E.

THE celebrated lord FAULSLAND has observed,—"That there should be as little bitterness in a treatise of controversy, as in a love-letter." It were indeed much to be wished, that in all religious controversies at least, bitterness, malice and misrepresentation were laid aside. Truth stands not in need of such expedients to support it. They would only disgrace it, were they to appear on its side, and prejudices people against it. When the mind is calm and dispassionate, then only it is in a proper state to investigate, perceive and embrace truth. Harsh Language irritates and provokes, and utterly unfits the mind for any of these. Besides, acrimony and reviling are directly opposite to the christian temper---are very unbecoming the followers of the meek Jesus, and the advocates of his cause. And yet alas! how often do we see men indulge themselves in these without restraint, and contend in the most *unchristian* manner about the truths of Christianity.

In the following *Essay*, I have studiously endeavoured to avoid every thing that had the appearance of harshness, or even of unkindness; and if any thing in the heat of argumentation hath inadvertently dropt from my pen, that looks like either, I do here retract it. To *reason*, not to *rail*, was my design. I was confident of the goodness of the cause I had undertaken---that there were arguments in abundance to support it, and that nothing was wanting but to *present* it in a proper light. I bear no ill-will to Anabaptists. On the contrary, I have much personal esteem for several of them with whom I am acquainted; and think there are many pious, sincere christians among them, altho' they are in an error as to infant baptism.

Anabaptists think they have a right to vindicate their principles; and accordingly, are very industrious in supporting them from the press, the pulpit and in conversation. Certainly then, they cannot blame others for defending themselves and their principles; especially against such attacks as would unchurch them, and leave them neither ministry nor ordinance; but would make them to be no more than a parcel of unbaptized heathens.

Indeed the zeal of Anabaptists to propagate their principles occasioned the writing of this *Essay*. Tho', by the way, I cannot reconcile their zeal for dipping with the low estimation in which they seem to hold baptism itself. So much earnestness for a particular mode of baptizing, and dipping is no more, I am apprehensive will be apt to draw the attention of too many from the inward part or thing signified in that sacrament, and fix it only on the outward visible sign or form in baptism. Several of Dr. Gill's pamphlets against infant baptism are distributed about. A large impression of his *Reply to Mr. Clarke and Mr. Bestwick*, has been printed off in this city, and circulated here and elsewhere. If some well-meaning people,

who

PREFACE.