

24

Mr. Chillingworth's Judgment
OF THE
RELIGION
OF
PROTESTANTS.
OF
SCRIPTURE
THE
Only Rule.
OF
DIFFERENCES
AMONG
PROTESTANTS.
OF
USING FORCE
IN
Matters of Religion, &c.

WITH A
Preface to the Reader, giving the Reason of Pub-
lishing these Passages.

L O N D O N,
Printed for Francis Smith, at the Elephant and Castle in Cornhil, near
the Royal Exchange. 1680: 2. July.

TO THE READER.

HE that is arrived at such a degree of wickedness, that his Principles will allow him to equivocate in the most solemn Asseverations, and to put on any person or shape for the carrying on his Designs, has thereby a great advantage over the common people, who being more honest and simple, can scarce think it possible, that men, professing God and Religion, should admit of principles and practices so diametrically contrary: and men that are prepossessed with prejudices of envy, ill-will, or the like, against their Neighbours, do readily embrace those mens suggestions against these, how false and groundless soever they be. Hence it is, that our Popish Enemies having no other way to save themselves from the Demerits of their Hellish Plots, do very indauntiously by Pamphlets and otherwise labour to beget and encrease enmity among dissenting Protestants, And they so far prevail, that notwithstanding the destruction designed by them against Protestants, yet some have greater enmity and bitterness towards those that differ from them either in lesser points of Religion, or in sentiments about civil Matters, than against the Papists themselves. Which may be perceived, not only in common converse, but even in the Pulpit it self: whence I must confess, I have sometimes heard (though not in my own Parish) discourses so full of rancor and bitterness against dissenting Protestants, that I could not but greatly bewail the ill tendencies thereof, and at the same time was glad my Children and Servants were not there, that they might not learn by such Rhetorical Inveictives to malign their Neighbours, instead of loving their Enemies, as Christ has commanded.

These men pretending great zeal for the Government and Church of England (as those Members of the last long Parliament also did, who were expelled thence for being Papists) will difficultly allow any other but such as themselves to be at all Protestants. Wherefore I thought it would be of service to Protestantism, or Reformed Christianity, to mind my Country-men of the Judgment of the Learned and Judicious Mr. Chillingworth concerning the Religion of Protestants, the Differences among them, the use of Force and Compulsion in Religion, private judgment of Conscience, in dissent from publick, and some other matters controverted between Protestants and Papists, which I have collected out of his Book, Intituled, The Religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation: and which I hope will be of the greater prevalency with some, not only for the great strength of reason and judgment found therein: but moreover, for that Mr. Chillingworth had himself been once of the Roman Church, and had therefore experience as well as judgment to guide him in these matters. He wrote also in the year 1637, which was before the following unnatural War. He was not only of the Church of England himself, which he defended against the Papists: but his Book had the approbation of the then Vice-Chancellor, and both the Kings and Margret Professors of Divinity in the University of Oxon. the very chief men in Office there. Their Approbation take in their own words, Englished for the sake of those that know not Latine.

Let this Book be committed to the Press, the Title whereof is, *The Religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation*. In which there is nothing contrary to good manners, to the Doctrine and Discipline asserted in the Church of England.

Rich. Bayley, Vice-Chanc. Oxon.

I have read over this Book, the Title of which is, *The Religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation*. In which I find nothing contrary to the Doctrine and Discipline of the English Church; but very many things which notably illustrate the Orthodox Faith, and do acutely, clearly and modestly dissipate the contrary Glosses:

Jo. Prideaux, S.T. P. Regius Oxon.

I Samuel Fell, publick Professor of Theology in the University of Oxford, and Ordinary Lecturer of Lady Margaret, Countess of Richmond, have read over the Book, the Title of which is, *The Religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation*: In which I find nothing contrary to the Doctrine or Discipline of the Church of England; or to good manners, but many things strongly and modestly discussed against the adversaries of our Church, and the Catholic Truth, which he happily defends. Dated Oct. 14. anno 1637.

Samuel Fell.

This Book was Dedicated by Mr. Will. Chillingworth to his Majesty, Charles I. and is generally approved by Learned Protestants, as the ablest Defence of the Protestants Cause against the Papists, that is anywhere extant. There was another Edition of this Book, Licensed by G. Stradling, ann. 1663, Chaplain to the then Arch-Bishop of Cant. in these words Englished:

I have read over this Book, the Title of which, *The Religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation*: also nine Sermons lately added: In all which I find nothing contrary to the Doctrine or Discipline of the Church of England; but that it may be Printed with the greatest profit of all men.

I have transcribed these testimonies for the sake of those that crack, The Church of England, The Church of England, They are the only Protestants, &c. By which it appears, that they do not understand the Religion of Protestants, or else for sinister ends conceal their knowledge.

I am persuaded, that these Collections may give occasion to some, that have not, to read the Book, and to others to be more moderate in their Censures of Dissenting Protestants. It would be very happy for us all, if we put in practice faithfully his advice, which tends so much to love and peace, that it would contribute much both to our present weal and eternal happiness.

Mr.

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Mr. Chillingworth's Judgment

OF THE

RELIGION

OF

Protestants, etc.

Of the Religion of Protestants.

CHap. 6. Nom. 56. Know then, Sir, that when I say the Religion of Protestants is in prudence to be preferred before yours: as on the other side I do not understand by your Religion the Doctrine of Bellarmine, or Baronius, or any other private man amongst you, nor the Doctrine of the Sorbon, or of the Jesuits, or of the Dominicans, or of any other particular Company amongst you, but that wherein you all agree, or profess to agree, *The Doctrine of the Council of Trent*: so accordingly on the other side, by *The Religion of Protestants*, I do not understand the Doctrine of Luther, or Calvin, or Melancthon, nor the Confession of Augusta or Geneva, nor the Catechism of Heidelberg, nor the Articles of the Church of England, no, nor the Harmony of Protestant Confessions; but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater Harmony, as a perfect Rule of their Faith and Actions; that is, the BIBLE, the BIBLE, I say the BIBLE only is the Religion of Protestants! Whatsoever else they believe besides it, and the plain irrefragable, indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold it as a matter of Opinion, but not as a matter of Faith and Religion; neither can they with coherence to their own grounds believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical Presumption. I, for my part, after a long (and as I utterly believe and hope) impartial search of the true way to eternal happiness, do profess plainly, that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot, but upon this Rock only. I see plainly and with mine own eyes, that there are Popes against Popes, Councils against Councils, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a Consent of Fathers of one Age against

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againſt the Church of another Age ; Traditive Interpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there are few or none to be found : No Tradition but only of Scripture can drive it ſelf from the Fountain, but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in, in ſuch an Age after Chriſt, or that in ſuch an Age it was not in. In a word, there is no ſufficient certainty but of the Scripture only, for any conſidering man to build upon. This therefore, and this only, I have reaſon to believe ; this I will profeſs, according to this I will live, and for this, if there be occaſion, I will not only willingly, but even gladly loſe my life, though I ſhould be ſorry that Chriſtians ſhould take it from me. Propoſe me any thing out of this book, and require whether I believe it or no, and ſeem it never ſo incomprehenſible to humane reaſon, I will ſubſcribe it with hand and heart, as knowing no demonſtration can be ſtronger than this, *God hath ſaid ſo, therefore it is true.* In other things I will take no mans liberty of Judgment from him, neither ſhall any man take mine from me ; I will think no man the worſe man or the worſe Chriſtian ; I will love no man the leſs for differing in opinion from me ; and what meaſure I mete to others, I expect from them again : I am fully aſſured that God does not, and therefore that men ought not to require any more of any man than this, To believe the Scriptures to be God's Word, to endeavour to find the true ſence of it, and to live according to it.

N. 57. This is the Religion which I have choſen after a long deliberation, and I am verily perſwaded that I have choſen wiſely, much more wiſely than if I had guided my ſelf according to your Churches Authority ; for the Scripture being all true, I am ſecured by believing nothing elſe, that I ſhall believe no falſhood as matter of Faith : And if I miſtake the ſence of Scripture, and ſo fall into error, yet I am ſecure from any danger thereby, if but your grounds be true ; becauſe endeavouring to find the true ſence of Scripture, I cannot but hold my error without pertinacy, and be ready to forſake it, when a more true and a more probable ſence ſhall appear unto me : And then all neceſſary truth being, as I have proved, plainly ſet down in Scripture, I am certain by believing Scripture, to believe all neceſſary truth ; and he that does ſo, if his Life be answerable to his Faith, how is it poſſible he ſhould fail of Salvation ?

Scripture the only Rule whereby to judge of Controverſies ?

Chap. 2. N. 11. — To ſpeak properly (as men ſhould ſpeak when they write of Controverſies in Religion) the Scripture is not a Judge of Controverſies, but a *Rule only*, and the *only Rule for Chriſtians to judge them by* : Every man is to judge for himſelf with the judgment of Diſcretion, and to chuſe either his Religion firſt, and then his Church as we ſay ; or as you, his Church firſt, and then his Religion. But by the content of both ſides, every man is to judge and chuſe ; and the Rule whereby he is to direct his choice, if he be a natural man, is Reaſon ; if he be already a Chriſtian, Scripture, which we ſay is the Rule to judge all Controverſies by, yet not all ſimply, but all the Controverſies of Chriſtians, of thoſe that are already agreed upon this firſt Principle, that the Scripture is the Word of God. But that there is any man, or any company of men, appointed to be Judge for all men, that we deny ; and that I believe you will never prove.

Every man to Judge for himſelf in matters of Religion.

Chap. 2. N. 16. In Civil and Criminal Cauſes, the Parties have for the moſt part ſo much intereſt, and very often ſo little honeſty, that they will not ſub-

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mit to a Law though never ſo plain, if it be againſt them ; or will not ſee it to be againſt them, though it be ſo never ſo plainly : Whereas if men were honeſt, and the Law were plain and extended to all caſes, there would be little need of Judges. Now in matters of Religion, when the Queſtion is, Whether every man be a fit Judge and Chuiſer for himſelf, we ſuppoſe men honeſt, and ſuch as underſtand the difference between a Moment and Eternity ; and ſuch men, we conceive, will think it highly concerns them to be of the true Religion, but nothing at all that this or that Religion ſhould be the true : And then we ſuppoſe that all the neceſſary points of Religion are plain and eaſie, and conſequently every man in his Cauſe to be a competent Judge for himſelf, becauſe it concerns himſelf to judge right as much as Eternal Happineſs is worth, and if through his own default he judge amiſs, he alone ſhall ſuffer for it.

Ch. 3. N. 81. — If they [Men] would be themſelves, and be content that others ſhould be, in the choice of their Religion, the Servants of God and not of men ; if they would allow, that the way to Heaven is no narrower now than Chriſt left it, this Yoke no heavier than he made it ; that the belief of no more difficulties is required now to Salvation, than was in the Primitive Church ; that no Error is in it ſelf deſtructive and excluſive from Salvation now, which was not then ; if inſtead of being zealous Papifts, earneſt Calvinifts, rigid Lutherans, they would become themſelves, and be content that others ſhould be plain and honeſt Chriſtians ; if all men would believe the Scripture, and freeing themſelves from prejudice and paſſion, would ſincerely endeavour to find the true ſence of it, and live according to it, and require no more of others but to do ſo, not denying their Communion to any that do ſo, would ſo order their publick ſervice of God, that all which do ſo may without ſcruple or hypocriſie, or proteſtation againſt any part of it, joy with them in it ; who does not ſee that (ſeeing as we ſuppoſe here, and ſhall prove hereafter) all neceſſary Truths are plainly and evidently ſet down in Scripture ; there would of neceſſity be among all men, in all things neceſſary, unity of Opinion ? And notwithstanding any other differences that are or could be, Unity of Communion, and Charity, and mutual Toleration ; by which means all Schiſm and Hereſie would be baniſhed the world, and thoſe wretched contentions which now rend and tear in pieces not the Coat, but the members and bowels of Chriſt, with mutual Pride and Tyranny, and Curſing, Killing, and Damning, would ſain make mortal, ſhould ſpeedily receive a moſt bleſſed Cataſtrophe. But of this hereafter, when we ſhall come to the Queſtion of Schiſm, wherein I perſwade my ſelf that I ſhall plainly ſhew, that the moſt vehement Accuſers are the greateſt Offenders, and that they are indeed at this time the greateſt Schiſmaticks, who make the way to Heaven narrower, the Yoke of Chriſt heavier, the differences of faith greater, the conditions of Eccleſiaſtical Government harder and ſtricter, than they were made at the beginning by Chriſt and his Apoſtles ; they who talk of Unity and aim at Tyranny, and will have peace with none but with their Slaves and Vaſſals.

Pref. N. 30. — For what one Concluſion is there in the whole Fabrick of my Diſcourſe, that is not naturally deducible out of this one Principle, *That all things neceſſary to Salvation are evidently contained in the Scriptures* ? Or what one Concluſion almoſt of importance is there in your Book, which is not by this one clearly confutable ? Grant this, and it will preſently follow in oppoſition to your firſt Concluſion, and the Argument of your firſt Chapter, That amongſt men of different Opinions, touching the obſcure and controverted Queſtions of Religion, ſuch as may with probability be diſputed on both ſides, (and ſuch are the diſputes of Proteſtants) good men and Lovers of Truth of all ſides may be ſaved, becauſe all neceſſary things being ſuppoſed evident

concerning them, with men so qualified, there will be no difference; there being no more certain sign that a point is not evident, than that honest and understanding and indifferent men, and such as give themselves liberty of Judgment, after a mature consideration of the matter, differ about it.

Of Disagreeing Protestants.

Ans. to Pref. N. 26. 1. The most disagreeing Protestants that are, yet thus far agree, that these Books of Scripture which were never doubted of in the Church, are the undoubted Word of God, and a perfect Rule of Faith. 2. That the sense of them which God intended, whatsoever it is, is certainly true; so that they believe implicitly even those very truths against which they err; and why an implicit faith in Christ and his Word, should not suffice as well as an implicit faith in your Church, I have desired to be resolved by many of your side, but never could. 3. That they are to use their best endeavours to believe the Scripture in true sense, and to live according to it. This if they perform (as I hope many on all sides do) truly and sincerely, it is impossible but that they should believe aright in all things necessary to Salvation; that is, in all those things that pertain to the Covenant between God and Man in Christ; for so much is not only plainly but frequently contained in Scripture and believing aright the Covenant, if they for their parts perform the condition required of them, which is sincere obedience, why should they not expect that God will perform his promise and give them Salvation? For as for other things which lye without the Covenant, and are therefore less necessary, if by reason of the seeming Conflict which is oftentimes between Scripture, Reason, and Authority on the one side, and Scripture, Reason, and Authority on the other, if by reason of the variety of Tempers, Abilities, Educations, and unavoidable Prejudices, whereby mens Understandings are variously formed and fashioned, they do embrace several opinions whereof some must be erroneous; to say that God will damn them for such errors, who are Lovers of him, and Lovers of Truth, is to rob man of his Comfort, and God of his Goodness, it is to make man desperate, and God a Tyrant.

Ib. N. 27. That it is sufficient for any mans Salvation that he believe the Scripture, that he endeavour to believe it in the true sense of it as far as concerns his duty; and that he conform his life unto it either by Obedience or Repentance: He that does so, (and all Protestants, according to the *Distinction* of their Religion, should do so) may be secured that he cannot err fundamentally, so that notwithstanding their differences and your presumption, *the same Heaven may receive them all.*

Ib. N. 29. Who can find fault with him [*De potter*] for saying; If through want of means of Instruction, Incapacity, invincible or probable Ignorance, a man dye in error, he may be saved: But if he be negligent in seeking truth, unwilling to find it, either doth or will not see it, or might see it and will not, that his case is dangerous and without repentance desperate.

Ch. 1. N. 11. Methinks with much more reason and much more charity, you must suppose that many of these Controversies which are now disputed among Christians (all which profess themselves Lovers of Christ, and truly desirous to know his will and do it) are either *not decidable* by that means which God hath provided, and so not necessary to be decided; or if they be, yet *not so plainly and evidently*, as to oblige men to hold one way: Or lastly, if decidable, and evidently decided, yet you may hope that the erring party, by reason of some Veil before their eyes, *some excusable ignorance or unavoidable prejudice* does not see the question to be decided against him; and so opposes

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not that which he doth know to be the word of God, but only that which you know to be so, and which he might know, were he void of prejudice: which is a fault, I confess, but a fault which is incident even to good and honest Men very often; and not of such a Gigantick Disposition as you make it, to flie directly upon God Almighty, and to give him the Lye to his Face.

Of the Necessity of a Visible Judge in Controversies of Religion, as well as in Civil Matters.

Ch. 1. N. 17. — In Civil Controversies we are obliged only to external passive obedience, and not to an internal and active. We are bound to obey the Sentence of the Judge, or not to resist it, but not always to believe it just. But in matters of Religion such a Judge is required whom we should be obliged to believe to have judged right, so that in Civil Controversies every honest and understanding Man is fit to be a Judge, but in Religion none but he that is infallible.

5. In Civil Causes there is means and power, when the Judge has decreed to compel men to obey his Sentence: otherwise I believe Laws alone would be to as much purpose for the ending of Differences, as Laws and Judges both. But all the power in the World is neither fit to convince, nor able to compel a Man's Conscience to consent to any thing; worldly terror may prevail so far as to make Men profess a Religion which they believe not, (such men I mean who know not that there is a Heaven provided for Martyrs, and a Hell for those that dissemble such Truths as are necessary to be professed) but to force either any man to believe what he believes not, or any honest man to dissemble what he does believe (if God commands him to profess it) or to profess what he does not believe, all the powers in the world are too weak, with all the powers of Hell to assist them.

7. In Civil Matters it is impossible *Titus* should hold the Land in question, and *Sempronius* too; and therefore either the Plaintiff must injure the Defendant by disquieting his Possession, or the Defendant wrong the Plaintiff, by keeping his Right from him. But in Controversies of Religion the case is otherwise, I may hold my opinion, and do you no wrong, and you yours, and do me none. Nay, we may both of us hold our opinion, and yet do our selves no harm, provided the difference be not touching any thing necessary to Salvation, and that we love truth so well, as to be diligent to inform our Conscience, and constant in following it.

Concerning Errors Damnable or not Damnable.

Ch. 3. N. 52. I answer that these Differences between Protestants concerning Errors damnable, and not damnable: Truths fundamental and not fundamental may be easily reconciled; for either the Error they speak of, may be *purely and simply involuntary*, or it may be in respect of the *cause of it voluntarily*: If the cause of it be some voluntary and unavoidable fault, the error is it self sinful, and consequently in its own nature damnable; as if by negligence in seeking the Truth, by unwillingness to find it, by pride, by obstinacy, by desiring that Religion should be true which suits best with my ends, by fear of mens ill opinion, or any other worldly fear, or any worldly hope, I betray my self to any error contrary to any divine revealed Truth, that error may be justly stiled a Sin, and consequently of it self to such an one damnable; but if I be guilty of none of these faults, but be desirous to know the truth, and diligent in seeking it, and advise not at all with flesh and blood a-

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about the choice of my Opinions, but only with God and that Reason that he hath given me: If I be thus qualified, and yet through humane infirmity fall into error, that error cannot be damnable. Again, the Party erring may be conceived either to dye with Contrition, for all his Sins known and unknown, or without it: If he dye without it, this error in it self is damnable, will be likewise so unto him; if he dye with Contrition (as his error can be no impediment but he may) his error, though in it self damnable, to him, according to your Doctrine, will not prove so.

Of using Force in matters of Religion.

Ch. 5. N. 96. But they endeavour to force the Society whereof they were parts, to be healed and reformed as they were, and if it refused, they did, when they had power, drive them away, even their Superiors both Spiritual and Temporal, as is notorious. The proofs hereof are wanting, and therefore I might defer my Answer until they were produced, yet take this before hand: If they did so, then herein, in my opinion, they did amiss; for I have learnt from the ancient Fathers of the Church, that Nothing is more against Religion, than to force Religion; and of St. Paul, The Weapons of the Christian Warfare are not Carnal; And great Reason: For humane violence may make men counterfeit, but cannot make them believe, and is therefore fit for nothing, but to breed Form without and Atheism within. Besides, if this means of bringing men to embrace any Religion were generally used, (as if it may be justly used in any place, by those that have power and think they have truth, certainly they cannot with reason deny, but that it may be used in every place, by those that have power as well as they, and think they have truth as well as they) what could follow but the maintenance perhaps of Truth, but perhaps only of the profession of it in one place, and the oppression of it in a hundred? what will follow from it but the preservation peradventure of Unity; but peradventure only of Uniformity in particular States and Churches; but the immortalizing the greater and more lamentable Divisions of Christendom and the World? And therefore what can follow from it, but perhaps in the judgment of carnal Policy, the temporal Benefit and Tranquillity of Temporal States and Kingdoms, but the infinite prejudice, if not the dissolution of the Kingdom of Christ? And therefore it well becomes them who have their Portions in this life, who serve no higher State than that of *England*, or *Spain*, or *France*, nor this neither any further than they may serve themselves by it; who think of no other happiness but the preservation of their own Fortunes and Tranquillity in this World; who think of no other means to preserve States but humane Power and Machiavilian Policy, and believe no other Creed but this, *Regi aut Civitati Imperium habenti nihil injustum quod utile*? Such men as these it may become to maintain by worldly power and violence, their State, Instrument, Religion; for if all be vain and false (as in their judgment it is) the present whatsoever is better than any, because it is already settled. An alteration of it may draw with it change of States, and the change of State the subversion of their Fortune; but they that are indeed Servants and Lovers of Christ, of Truth, of the Church, and of Mankind, ought with all courage, to oppose themselves against it as a common enemy of all these. They that know there is a King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, by whose Will and Pleasure Kings and Kingdoms stand and fall; they know that to no King or State any thing can be profitable which is unjust, and that nothing can be more evidently unjust, than to force weak men by the Profession of a Religion which they believe not, to lose their own Eternal Happiness out of a vain and need less fear, lest they may possibly

possibly disturb their temporal quietness, there being no danger to any State from any mans Opinion, unless it be such an Opinion by which disobedience to Authority or Impiety is taught or Licensed; which sort I confess may justly be punished as well as other faults; or unless this sanguinary Doctrine be joynted with it, That it is lawful for him by humane violence to enforce others to it.

Chap. 4. N. 16. This presumptuous imposing of the Senses of men upon the words of God, the special senses of men upon the general words of God, and laying them upon mens Consciences together under the equal penalty of Death and Damnation. This vain Conceit that we can speak of the things of God better than the words of God; this deifying our own interpretations, and Tyrannous enforcing them upon others; this restraining of the word of God, from that Latitude and Generality, and the Understandings of men from that liberty, wherein Christ and the Apostles left them; this persuasion is no singularity of mine, but the Doctrine which I have learned from Divines of great Learning and Judgment. Let the Reader be pleased to peruse the seventh Book of *Acont. de Strat. Satane*, and *Zaneb*. his last Oration delivered by him after the composing of the discord between him and *Amervachius*, and he shall confess as much is, and hath been the only Fountain of all the Schisms of the Church, and that which makes them immortal: The common Inceaduary of Christendom, and that which (as I said before) tears in pieces not the Coat but the Bowels and Members of Christ; *Ridentè Turca, nec dolente Judæo*, take away these Walls of Separation, and all will quickly be one. Take away this *Persecuting, Burning, Cursing, Damning of men* for not subscribing to the words of men, as the words of God, require of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no man Master but him only; let those leave claiming Infallibility, that have no Title to it, and let them that in their Words disclaim it, disclaim it likewise in their Actions. In a word, take away Tyranny which is the Devils Instrument to support Errors, and Superstitions, and Impieties, in the several parts of the world, which could not otherwise long withstand the power of Truth.

Ifay take away Tyranny, and restore Christians to their just and full liberty of Captivating their Understanding to Scripture only, and as Rivers, when they have a free passage, run all to the Ocean, so it may well be hoped by Gods blessing, that universal Liberty thus moderated, may quickly reduce Christendom to Truth and Unity. These thoughts of Peace (I am persuaded) may come from the God of Peace, and to his Blessing I recommend them.

FINIS.