

Hideous persecution of the Methodists.

The democratic party not contented with waging a war of intolerance against their political adversaries, have commenced an attack upon a christian sect of people, in consequence of one of their clergy having held forth at a camp meeting these doctrines which peculiarly distinguish that church.

The circumstances were as follows, viz. In August 1818, a camp meeting of the Methodist Society, was held in Washington county, Md. and the Rev. Jacob Gruber, in the positive performance of his duty, preached a sermon in which he spoke much on the subject of slavery from the scriptural text, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people"—for the sentiments contained in this sermon, which were proved by his council on the trial to be strictly conformable to the fundamental doctrines of his church, Mr. Gruber was arrested upon information, and gave bail for his appearance at Washington county Court—A bill was found against him for "*feloniously counselling, conspiring and attempting with certain negroes to raise an insurrection and rebellion in the state.*" Mr. Gruber finding it impossible to procure a fair trial in the highly democratic county of Washington, removed the case to Frederick county, where he obtained the services of Messrs. Roger B. Tawny, Robert N. Martin and ——— Pigman as council in his defence. Mr. Gruber was clearly acquitted by the jury, and is restored to the wishes of his friends, the aching hearts of his society, and to the pursuit of his holy functions.

Can any thing more strongly mark the sentiments of intolerance and oppression which characterise any people than this? In Washington county, democracy is uncontrolled, it has no fear, no check, it triumphs in its strength and riots in its power. An humble preacher of the gospel is almost torn from the pulpit, because he proclaims the doctrines of a christian Church, and of that church he was an appointed minister. Mr. Gruber was not a finely educated man, and may perhaps have delivered himself with a degree of bluntness and frankness that the delicate sensibility and refined taste of Democracy might loath—but yet his doctrines may not on that account have been less correct, his zeal less sincere, or his exemption from wicked designs less—The subject on which he treated was in policy a delicate one, but in duty it was a serious one—what right had the people of Washington to arraign the doctrines of the Methodist Church long since promulged, or to attempt to stifle their utterance in the mouth of one of their preachers? The liberty of conscience, the right of opinion and the freedom of speech, are guarded and assured to every man by the strongest injunctions of constitutional law—For the abuse of these golden privileges with intent to do wrong, every man is amenable, but to suppose that a minister of the Methodist Society, in the performance of his holy duties as a preacher, on a great occasion like a camp meeting, would feloniously attempt a conspiracy of the worst sort against the laws of the state and the lives of the people, is giving a latitude to

credulity, that no experience, no reason could warrant, and can only be ascribed to a furious attempt at the exercise of power, which has grown intolerant for the want of controul. Democracy is a sort of aboriginal state in politics which requires a little of the checks and balances that experience impose—the minds which are congenial with democracy, or which acquire a congeniality by adopting it for personal advancement, become intolerant in spirit, ferocious in power, impatient of controul—these are the seeds of disorganization and revolution, and to these the history of the world proves that democracy tends—The people are the only legitimate source of power, they alone ought to govern by their agents selected by themselves, but the people should take care in selecting those agents, not to confide too implicitly in the popularity of titles or in the loudness of professions—Titles are at best but empty things, and professions are as deceptive as a summer cloud.

In addition to this we understand that in the Missouri Territory, now expecting to be made a state by the next Congress, and, which was alone excluded the last upon a division in Congress, upon the question of slavery, there have been the most high handed attempts against the Methodist Society, that have for ages been manifested towards any religious denomination of people—We have not seen the account, but we are assured that in the Missouri Territory (highly democratic, almost to a man) that the Methodist camp meetings have been put down and dispersed by force and power, because of the doctrines they hold upon the subject of slavery.

Now, when we consider these things calmly, it forces a conviction upon the mind, that these men who hold such popular political names, and such popular political doctrines will when a little older in power feel less restraint than heretofore, and that "feeling power they will forget right." We are not of the Methodist Church, and therefore cannot be supposed to act or to speak from personal motives or sectarian feelings; but being of another denomination of christians, we feel alarmed at the attempts we see made against one sect; for in the persecution of them, we may read a probable attempt at all others; such bold and angry designs by a predominant set of men ought to alarm all christendom; at such sights all christendom ought to be in armour—not appealing to the weapons of steel or of iron, but to fight the fight of faith, with hearts of fortitude and devotion, with tongues unawed, with minds intent upon a holy cause. We would not rob such men of life, or of liberty, but we would strip them of power, we would make the adder as harmless as the dove.

Not only on these things unjust and wrong in themselves, but they have the worst tendency in society; they tend to unchristianize, they are the seedlings of implacable discord, volcanoes of the most destructive matter. That man must have nearly approached to christian purity who can without emotion or without a murmur see his own minister, of the gospel dragged with contumely before a court and arraigned as a criminal for avowing the tenets of his church—Events like these must give rise to jealousies, to anger & to revenge—they are calculated to sharpen those passions, that society is interested in subduing, and to produce religious conflicts as fierce as those of politics. Let those then who have brought about these things answer to it, when the fiery zeal of religious proselytism and martyrdom shall rage. There is nothing more combustible than religious zeal; nothing more deadly rancorous than religious contests. Intolerance is sure to produce the first, and persecution never fails to breed the last.

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