ON MUTUAL TOLERANCE, AND ON THE ULTIMATE TEST OF TRUTH: OCCASIONED BY A RECENT PUBLICATION, ENTITLED "A BEACON TO THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS."

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"A BEACON TO THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS."

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"REMARKS ON CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION, AND ON THE FORMER ASCENDENCY AND PRESENT STATE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIGION."

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1835.

In Three Parts.

I.—OBSERVATIONS ON "THE BEACON," AND ON RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY.

II.—THE OBLIGATION OF FORBEARANCE, TOWARDS THOSE, WHOM WE CONCEIVE TO BE IN ERROR.

III.—THE ULTIMATE TEST OF TRUTH.

ON

MUTUAL TOLERANCE,

&c.

Part First.

OBSERVATIONS ON "THE BEACON," AND ON RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY.

THOUGH sectarian distinctions are necessary, and are conducive to very important purposes; yet, as regards individuals, and the real condition of the mind and character, nothing can well be a more superficial classification of mankind. There are those in the most opposite sects, who, in all proper estimation, are essentially alike; and, in the same sect, are those who are widely different; without, either in the one case or the other, any apprehension being entertained, that such is the fact. Men often think that they differ, when, in truth, they think alike; nor ought we to wonder at this, since, without knowing it, they differ from themselves.

Religious Societies are contrivances of peace: in order that, undistracted by mutual disputes, we may attend to our individual interests as beings who are responsible for themselves, and who are formed for discipline and improvement. These results are hardly possible to be realized, if we become involved in the endless perplexities of controversy.

Though I consider many parts of the volume which has given occasion to these pages, to contain mistaken views, and though there are many expressions which I greatly regret; yet I am far from entertaining a thought or a feeling, in regard to the author, inconsistent with the integrity of his motives; and, far indeed be it from me, to forget the deference which is due to that freedom of judgment, which is our common right; and which is, at once, a prerogative and a duty, assigned to us by the all-wise and merciful Creator.

Let it not be understood that I accuse the Author of *intending* to employ the exaggerations and perversions of Quakerism, as a means to assail the essential principles of the Society of Friends. But, his volume is so little guarded in these respects, that, on persons who are not very well informed on the

grounds of our religious principles, its effect will be nearly the same as if, in reality, such had been his deliberate intention. Any such intention, however, I do not believe he entertained. But it has become necessary, in consequence of the appearance of his work, to give an explanation that shall discriminate the one from the other.

"The Beacon" is an instance of what is a very common mode of proceeding in controversy, the confounding together the *abuse* of a system and its *use*, making the latter answerable for the former. And it omits to make those reservations in favour of the acknowledged principles of the Society, which were due to the important views of Christianity, with which they are connected; and due, also, to the interests of peace.

What is said on Quietism, in page 52, second edition,—however unintended, would have the appearance of being levelled against the Silent Worship of the Society of Friends. Yet there is a rational and scriptural Quietism, as well as an absurd one. If Molinos was a Quietist, so was Fenelon. But, on this position, that there is a rational Quietism, I appeal to higher authority; and it will not be said of the following expressions, that they