



Presbyterian Hist. Society



THE
DIFFERENCES

AMONG

PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY

NO VALID OBJECTION TO RECEIVING IT.

A

Sermon,

BY THE

PASTOR OF A CHURCH

IN

SOUTH CAROLINA.



PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.



CHARLESTON, S. C.

PRINTED BY GOULD AND RILEY, 112 CHURCH-STREET.

A Sermon, &c.

EPHESIANS IV. 3.

ENDEAVOUR TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE.

IF the desire of salvation were proportioned to our need of it, the practice of rebutting objections to the principal doctrines of Christianity would be a small part of ministerial duty. But, unhappily, this is far from being the case. If the Gospel teacher is sometimes occupied in answering the momentous inquiry, "*What must I do to be saved?*"—or in removing the honest doubts of the timid Christian—or in tendering encouragement to the weak—or in proffering consolation to the afflicted—he is still oftener required, in one form or other, to meet the cavils of practical deism. The task is both a difficult and a melancholy one: For the simple reason, that a large proportion of these cavils arise rather from the heart than the understanding; and are used as a covert from the arrows of conviction. To ensure success, therefore, in the attempt to destroy them, it is not enough to apply the arguments of reason, or the force of scriptural truth to the subject. The conscience is to be reached; a sense of guilt and danger experienced. Until this is effected, the objector will only change the place of his refuge; he will presume in his security still. There the same part may be played again; and the same issue expected. The caviller may be pursued from one entrenchment to

another, until he has reached the confines of eternity : where the conflict changes its nature, and conscience claims the prerogative of umpire.

These remarks are not intended, exclusively, for those doctrinal speculations which are designed to flatter the prejudices and passions ; or for those numerous errors which are openly avowed, as an apology for discarding the very essence of Christianity. They will be found to bear on many of those more common objections which are tendered every day where the Gospel is preached ; and are cherished as excuses for neglecting its fundamental precepts.

Satisfied, however, as we may be, that these evils lie, for the most part, beyond the reach of reasoning, it is not the less a duty to endeavour to obviate them. One important object of the Gospel ministry is to take away every pretext of the sinner : to reduce him to the future necessity of confessing, that the obstacles to his salvation lay in himself, and not in the scheme of redemption. Whether the humble instrument of that ministry is able to effect so important a purpose or not, the nature of his office require a prayerful attempt.

Among the objections to which we refer, are those which arise from the following language of the Apostle—“*keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace : There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.*” If such be the harmony which exists among the principles of Christianity, how are we to account for the discrepancies which prevail among its professors ? Whence that mutual prejudice which is often found in the different sects ? and even with those members of the visible church, who in other respects, exhibit a pious and exemplary life ? Do not these things prove that the precepts of the Gospel are left unfixed—susceptible of a variety of construc-

tions? And does not that weaken, if not destroy, my obligations to embrace them? These are inquiries of many, who, when pressed by our solicitations to accept the tender of salvation—instead of examining the word of God itself, screen themselves behind the mischiefs which they most unfairly charge upon it. It is not our present design to answer all the particulars of these questions. We shall call your attention to a few remarks, which may tend to shew that the excuses derived from this source betray a want of candor, or a criminal ignorance of the subject in which the destiny of the soul is involved.

I. That all sects who assume the title of Christian are not right, is an affirmation which it is scarcely worth our while to substantiate. Some few of them are as opposite in their principles to those of the remainder, as the systems of Paganism are to that of the Gospel. It is a matter admitted by those who deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, as well as by those who worship him, that one of them must be idolaters. And as the light which “has come into the world” is fully sufficient to guide us into the way of truth—and as we shall be judged hereafter by that light, whether we seek or discard it—these two opposite parties are to stand or fall by themselves. Now, why God has not provided for an evil so serious as this unhappy misconception, rather than suffer it to exist among those who profess to call on his name, is a question to which we offer a few words of reply.

1. The existence of moral evil is evidently a part of the Divine plans; unless it could be proved that the government of the Creator is not universal. With the question of its origin we have nothing to do; it were needless to go beyond the field of our own hearts to find it. Of the ultimate effects of evil, and the manner

in which they shall be produced, it is not for us to judge. But to utter our complaints from the limited view which is often taken of the subject, is as unwise as it presumptuous. We should extend our reflections, as far as possible, to the whole of the immense plan of Jehovah, instead of confining them to its diminutive parts. We should contemplate the universe in its vastness. We should pass from the material, to the moral and intellectual world. We should conclude by analogy, from the wonderful harmony which prevails in the former, that the latter is as wisely ordered. We can suffer no such survey to effect our sense of a solemn responsibility, if we believe the revelation which God has left in our hands. And it is foolish to waste our time in groping for causes which we can never reach, and which the Eternal has not thought proper to reveal.

God's permission of evil is not only evident from its existence, but he has declared it in the Scriptures himself. The same truth may be applied to the mischievous doctrines, which spring up in the body of his visible church. The predictions on this subject are as plain as those which related to the Jews. Take one or two instances. "*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily, shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways,*"* &c. "*Now the spirit speaketh*

* 2 PET ii. 1. It will avail us but little to pique ourselves on the discovery that the subjects of these prophecies were in times that are past. It becomes us to inquire how far the point of the prediction corresponds with present appearances. Is there not a sect of religion—I will not say of *Christianity*—who have "*privily*" introduced doctrines at variance with all that the Evangelical church holds dear? Part of whose scheme has been to lead their proselytes gradually, from a semblance of piety, to smaller discrepancies—pretended perplexities—doubts—and finally to a bold renunciation of the very articles on which our salvation is hinged? Who, with a spirit of accommodation,

expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."*

The whole amount of the Creator's design in thus suffering heresies to distract his church, he has not seen fit to communicate. It is enough for us to know that *the Judge of all the earth will do right.* The very existence

resembling the finesse of a Jesuit, can adapt themselves equally to the orthodox, the wavering, and the infidel? Whose liberality may well be a matter of boast to themselves: and whose charity may well embrace the whole world, while it demands so little as its terms of salvation; and, with such unconcern, pairs down the rigorous precepts of Jesus Christ, to fit the desires of fallen, and self-indulgent man?

The last sentence reminds the writer of the mode of illustrating the precepts of the Saviour adopted by the author of the "*Manchester Cross-Street Lectures*;" viz. by recurring to the proverbial expressions of the day, and proving that these Divine instructions were taken from Pagan apophthegms. This is literally the amount of his expositions. Mr. Grundy is not alone in this mode of illustration; nor is he the author of this catholicon for our fears. Both Tindal and Voltaire pursued the track before him. Would it not be charity to hope that his object is a better one than theirs?

There is one remarkable circumstance in this affair which is worthy of notice. That while Jesus Christ is supposed to have borrowed certain expressions from certain eminent writers, after they had become popular sayings, some of these very writers, to whom the sayings are originally ascribed, really flourished at the end of the first century and at the beginning of the second. This is a careless anachronism.

The method of construction in question, would eventually take off every restraint from the conscience, and render the duties which Messiah termed so difficult, of easy performance. In the article of regeneration for instance, we might give the following examples, which are more appropriate than any which the writer has seen adduced by Socinian or Freethinker. Cicero, has, *PALLINGENESIAN nostram*, alluding to a circumstance of his own life, (Ad. Atticum lib. vi. Epist. vi.) Plato, alluding to the inward man, observes that it is rendered strong and powerful by him who inculcates doing good. (De Repub. lib. x. Tom. ii.) See also Proclus in Platon. Theol. lib. v. cap. xviii. On the doctrine of the *Strait Gate and Narrow Way*, we might have our apprehensions removed by comparing a similar idea in Aristotle; (Ethic. lib. ii. cap. 6.)—Xenophon, Mem. lib. ii. cap. 1. and even in Hesiod, and the Tab. Cebetis, and by observing their notions of moral virtue.

But enough of this approximation of the Gospel to Pagan philosophy. It were well to compare the terms "*privity*," and "*departing from the faith*," with what some of us have seen every day, in what is called, by its advocates; "*a liberal and digested system.*"

of these heresies, instead of being an objection, is rendered necessary to establish the Divine authority of that volume which has forewarned us of their appearance. And instead of shewing that the doctrines of the Gospel are susceptible of more than one fair construction, it proves a harmony and unity, through these important predictions: And thus establishes the faith of every honest inquirer; while it affords a subject of serious alarm, to those who have the temerity to build their hope on the counsels of men, rather than on the word of Messiah.

2. That heresies, however, are productive of benefit to the church is obvious from the following considerations.

First. The visible church consists of a mixture of chaff and wheat. This is so often intimated by Jesus Christ, that it must be familiar to every reader of the Bible. If it be denied, the first and second epistle to the Corinthians are wholly unintelligible. No minister of the Gospel, who entertains what we deem a just sense of evangelical piety, can expect the whole of his spiritual charge to correspond with his desires. It would be a singular flock in which neither a Judas, nor an Alexander, nor a Hymenæus is found: In which there are not those who deceive others, as well as those who deceive themselves. Now the tendency of false doctrines is to *winnow the chaff from the wheat*. It is plain that those who had professed to accept the terms of the Gospel, and who had never fully understood, or cordially embraced them, would be mortified and harassed whenever they were discussed. This is the effect which the Saviour ascribes to the principles of his teaching, on the natural heart. In such a case as this, any false doctrine, which lays less restraint on the passions and feelings, is eagerly embraced as a refuge from anxiety, and an excuse to the conscience. A

separation takes place accordingly. If it had been otherwise, the example of such a man would have produced a pernicious effect upon the body to which he belonged: if not by positive acts, at least by coldness and indifference. Let it not be imagined that these are conclusions of the speaker: All this has been asserted before by the Apostle of the Gentiles, in one of his letters to a church distracted by these very evils. "*For there must be also heresies among you*"—why? he answers the question himself—"that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." The same dispensation of God, in suffering this mischief, exists in the instance before us, as in that solemn example of his judgment upon those who prefer falsehood to the truth, recorded in 2 Thess. ii. 7—12. His government extends, in all its particulars, as well to the individual despisers, or perverters of his word, as to the general good of the body of Christ.

Secondly. Heresies are to the church of God what afflictions are to the Christian. They not only lead to an ultimate purification, but they call faith, and all its attendant graces, into exercise. They superinduce a spirit of prayer.* They invite a more severe scrutiny

* How remarkably has this been exemplified, in a few late instances, in two of our northern States! where the encroachments of the most dangerous errors had awakened the more pious to a spirit of earnest supplication: and the great Head of the Church answered their desires by the refreshings of his grace. This is a weapon which the humblest Christian may use against the attacks of a disguised infidelity.

The writer does not deny that there are occasions on which it may be necessary to meet the enemy of evangelical truth, on his own ground. As far as the question depends on the arguments of reason or Scripture, it has been successfully handled by the orthodox writers of the past and present day. But he is persuaded that the only effectual mode of extirpating religious error, will be found in the prayers of the pious, and the faithful preaching of the word. Jesus Christ will take care of his own Church, if we adopt the means which he has prescribed.

Woe unto that minister who is able to say—"My preaching hath never offended *any!*" "He hath kept back" the "counsel" of his God. He hath

into the Scriptures. They cause a more strict self-examination. They tend more completely to establish our hope in the Redeemer. This is the legitimate effect upon every Christian.

Every influence to which we may be exposed in this probationary life, will do us good or harm, according to the temper of mind in which it finds us. It is so with every dispensation of Heaven. Thus the Atheist argues the doctrine of chance from the events of life, or the operations of nature. His temper of mind perverts the evidence of wisdom into that of folly. And equally easy is it for those who desire a reason for discarding the Gospel, to find it. In a similar manner, false doctrines *try* the hearts of men. So do the immoralities of those who profess Christianity. Were these things not in existence, there would be less to test our dispositions, or prove our sincerity. And until this is in some measure effected, grace will never be given. If our faith is not to encounter, in all respects, the same kind of trial with that of the primitive Christians, it will have to conflict with some other, perhaps equally formidable, because more insidious.

II. The second question before us relates to those minor differences which constitute the variety of sects. The following reasons will perhaps render the assertion plausible that this is no valid objection to embracing the Gospel.

I. No system of religion could have been devised which all would understand alike, while human nature remains as it is. Those doctrines indeed, which are essential to practice, and necessary to salvation, are

avoided the reproach, which the Saviour predicted should fall on the faithful shepherd, from the lips of the carnal. But he has purchased his peace at the expense of the purity of his church. And who shall cleanse his garments from the blood of immortal souls, whom the want of his testimony encouraged to ruin?

rendered so plain that “the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.” An error here might be fatal; for the reason already assigned that it proceeds from an aversion to the truth. But the smaller discrepancies are unavoidable. Our minds are differently constituted from one another. Intellectual gifts depend upon a chain of circumstances, whose links are intimately connected; and which reaches back to the first moment of creation. To have rendered these gifts in every respect the same, would be to change the order of nature, and to make it necessary that men should not descend from one another. It would be to give the same climate, the same food, the same education, to every individual of our race. For it cannot be denied that each of these has more or less influence in moulding and maturing the intellect. Nay, it would be necessary that the earth be every where the same. Its hills and vallies, its light and heat, and even its productions. All this would render both ourselves, and our earth, radically different from what we are. It would alter the relation which this earth bears to the other parts of the universal plan of Jehovah. In a word, it would require a new creation. This must be the case, whether an universal agreement takes place in the way described, or by constraining our wills, and depriving us of moral agency—and consequently, accountability. The demand, therefore, that there be an agreement in every particular to prove the harmonizing effects of the Gospel, is inordinate.

2. Man is never removed, while in a state of society, from the influence of others' views. Nor is he always in circumstances to judge of the accuracy of those views. Nor is he free from the bias of particular impressions arising from early inculcated principles. Let us be grateful to God, that, since the minor doctrines

and forms of worship are so often hereditary, they are not matters of life and death. It would be as absurd to imagine that the essence of Christianity is affected by these varieties, as to discard the doctrine of gravitation, or any other admitted principle of natural philosophy, because there is a diversity in the theories which are intended to account for it.

3. After all this, it is to be expected that the word of God would have anticipated these variations. It *has* done so. While a living faith in Jesus Christ—a change of heart—and a progressive sanctification, are the unalterable conditions of salvation—and are so strenuously insisted on, in such a variety of forms, by every inspired writer or messenger of God—varieties of opinion in smaller matters are brought to our notice. In the 14th of Romans we find an affectionate exhortation of the apostle, urging tenderness and charity in relation to some differences of opinion in that church, which much resemble the distinctions that exist between several of the present sects of Christianity; and yet the whole matter is left to the conscience. In the 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13, 14, you have a beautiful illustration of the truth we are inculcating. The foundation on which those who have hope shall build, is Jesus Christ: *the gold and silver and precious stones* are the substantial truths of Christianity. *The wood, hay and stubble* are the inventions of man. The former would stand the ordeal. The latter would perish. What is the consequence? Does the builder perish with his work? No: the foundation is still secure—“*he shall suffer loss; but himself shall be saved.*” The evil existed in the Apostle’s time. It was detrimental; but not fatal. It might produce *individual* injury, as would the smallest deviation from the truth; but God would make it beneficial on the whole. We may rest assured, brethren,

that if these minor matters were of great moment, our Creator would have left them as plainly detailed as the great doctrines of salvation.

4. We have just said, that God would make these differences beneficial upon the whole. Their result is the variety of sects. That variety tends, by a mutual striving, to the general extension of Christianity. The Eternal makes use of varied means to promote his cause and his glory. That predilection for our own views, and notions, which all of us are disposed to retain—that disposition to engraft them on the minds of others, which exists in proportion to the ardour with which we embrace them—are rendered instruments of dispersing the vital savour of Christianity. Now it is of no consequence as it respects the ultimate issue, in some of such cases, how far the motives of the party zealot were pure—God have mercy on him if they were not!—they may still be overruled for the good of the church. Hear the apostle again: “*Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely—But the other of love. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*”

III. Our third question relates to the mutual animosities which are said often to exist between the members of the different sects. Part of the answer which we give it, is equally applicable to the prejudices which are seen prevailing between any of the professors of religion of the same sect. It is a question which every sincere Christian will touch with feeling. It involves that awful charge, that we are sometimes stumbling-blocks in the way of others. We have heard it from the worldling, as he pointed to our coldness in

a cause which demands all the ardour of an affectionate heart—as he saw the line, which the Saviour drew between his disciples and the world, deliberately destroyed by a spirit of accommodation which is treason against Heaven—as he fed his hopes of safety on the comparison he institutes—and triumphantly exclaims, “there is no visible difference between that professor and myself!” If the smile of infernal malice be ever suffered to play over the frailties of man, such a spectacle as this were its fittest subject—when Messiah’s professed people fling open the gates of destruction. We may not indulge in these reflections. They would lead us to a point of feeling whence it would be hard to return. With a drooping head, we will plead guilty to the charge of the objector. We will let penitence plead for us against the sentence of condemnation that falls from the lips of man. We are saved from despair while “*we have an advocate with the Father.*”

All this however, does not concern the objector’s cavils. As in a former case, he still demands too much. He requires that the Gospel render the subject of grace entirely sinless—that it subdue every feeling of depravity—that it make him invulnerable to the assaults of temptation—unsusceptible of prejudice—in a word, that it transform him into the character on earth, which he is destined to be in Heaven. But this is a scheme of the objector’s. The Saviour never promised such effects from the Gospel he left. On the contrary, Scripture represents man as fallible in every one of its portraits from Abraham to Peter. It only engages, that as far as it is the rule of our lives, we shall be delivered from the influence of corruption. It expressly describes the degrees of sanctification. And while it specifies certain sins as perfectly incompatible with the existence of grace in the heart—such as

malice, or an unforgiving temper, and others—it still represents the struggle of the Christian with evils, under which he sometimes haplessly falls. Even the disciple whom Jesus loved, hath said—“*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*”

Further. The objection presumes that all who profess to accept the terms of the Gospel are sincere. But some of the most alarming considerations which the Saviour has presented, are given to guard us against the dangers of hypocrisy. That many shall cry, “Lord, Lord,” with the confident tone of an acquaintance and friend, to whom the answer shall be—depart—“I never knew you” is a warning, that ought to sift the heart of every Christian—and check this cavil of the objector. He that can follow the humbled child of God, from the scene of a fall—to the spot where human eye may not reach him—He who hears the sigh that strikes no human ear—who discovers the struggle that seems to rend every chord of the heart once attuned to praise—who listens to the plea for mercy, accompanied with the sob of sorrow—and marks a growing resolution against the treachery of sin—*He* alone can tell whether we are insulting Heaven with a daring mockery of service. Until this prerogative is ours, let us avoid the presumption and folly of charging the mischiefs of self-deceit and falsehood upon sincerity and truth. The last text quoted from the Apostle Paul is proof enough, even if we had no other, that a zeal may be manifested in the support of religious views, from a motive worthy of hypocrisy only—“contention,” “envy,” or “strife.”

We have no hesitation, however, as we have said before, in granting that the evils complained of exist—apart from a false profession. We will own that the

frailty of human nature, may lead the Christian, like partizans in any other matter, to attach an undue importance to trifles. We will acknowledge that a natural repugnance to having others differ from him—which is an effect of unsubdued pride—may lead him into temptation and even into sin. We confess that a difference in intellectual light, which some have over others, may lead them in judging from themselves, to suspect their brethren of a defect of candour, and perhaps most uncharitably to accuse them of the fault. We will own many of the consequences which flow from all this. Still we are obliged to maintain that the sectarian prejudices in question do not arise from any thing in the nature of this doctrinal difference, but from the conduct of those engaged on the occasion. And the question might, therefore, be changed in form, and stand thus—“Why does not Christianity render us perfect?” which we have answered already.

After all, there is a more brief and conclusive mode of answering this cavil:—The value of the Gospel is not diminished by the conduct of its professors. Its excellence is unaltered. Our need of it continues. And let the objector remember—that if but ten souls in this our fallen world—nay, if not *one*—accepted the proffer of salvation, which it continues to hold out—its solemn declarations will remain invariably true, while their Almighty maker lives—that he that is born again shall enter the kingdom of Heaven—he that is not renewed by the influence of the Spirit—shall be damned.

Suffer us to close the subject with a few important inferences, from different parts of it.

1. Let us learn from these considerations to cherish a feeling of tenderness and charity towards the different sects of Christianity. Liable as we all are to error, •

there is not a sect on earth which in all its distinctive peculiarities is perfectly right. And God in his mercy, then, save us from that exclusive disposition which forbids the privileges of the church to those of a different name. Which stands at the head of the festival of love, and arrogantly exclaims to all of another persuasion—"We will not meet the Redeemer with you!"

If the form of any church bears a nearer resemblance to that of the Apostles than any other, as far as the New Testament, and the remnants of antiquity will enable us to judge—it is yours. But the disposition which would make its boast in such a matter as this, is generally a loser in more important concerns. It is the record of history, and it has fallen within the scope of your own observation—that any church which has arrogated much to itself from such pretensions as these, declines in piety and zeal. Its members too easily mistake the shadow for the substance: and build the foundation of their hopes, on forms which may, at best, be of human invention; and which if they were divine, would not abate a single jot the sentence of everlasting sorrow that shall fall on the lost. Strange infatuation! Melancholy proof, how weak a shelter dismisses the fears of the worlding! Unhappy demonstration of a moral blindness, which mistakes the most unressembling substitute for the truth itself! A spirit of affectionate charity is the only antidote for the evil. The church that relinquishes it may boast of whatever privilege it pleases—*Jesus Christ* is testimony against it.

2. The precepts and injunctions of the Saviour are given to us as individuals. They could be given in no other way. And common as may be the practice of imagining the weight of responsibility to be divided among the mass, it is unreasonable and foolish. The same awful accountability rests with every, or any

individual of us, as if Jehovah had condescended to address his language to such alone. The thousands, then, who err, or the thousands who perish, will neither palliate our guilt by their example, nor diminish our sufferings, should we perish together. We are dealing with a God who will not alter the severe sanctions of his law for the sake of the whole creation of his hands : Of whom it is said that he will “ wipe the wicked from off the earth, as one wipeth dust from off a garment.”

3. The objection to embracing the terms of the Gospel on account of the conduct of its professors—or on account of the diversity of sects—or the corruptions which prevail—is not only against analogy in every thing else—not only frivolous in itself—not only a mere excuse for a choice of evil, but it is found to contain, essentially, an accusation against the Most High himself. It is a bold insinuation of the weakness of his revelation. It is a proud pretence that you are able to do without the power of that revelation. Ah, dear brethren, let us be cautious what excuses we make ; they may contain implications against the majesty of Heaven, at which we may, by and by, gaze with horror. We should shudder at the idea of presenting any of them before the bar of the Eternal. And yet—though we mean them only to trifle with now—they go before us to him—they will, most assuredly, meet us again *there*.

4. *Lastly*. Religious error, where it touches the essential doctrines of grace—as it is the offspring of the *heart*, rather than the head—as it perverts the assertions of the Almighty—or, at least, arises from a determinate and wilful blindness—is a source of the most imminent danger.

It is of little consequence that you profess to be supported by the suffrage of some who may be eminent in this world's wisdom. Until it is discovered that

literature prepares the heart to receive the truths of the Gospel—until the Gospel has ceased to address itself to the affections—until that humbling truth is blotted from record, “*the world by wisdom knew not God*”—until the reasonings of an inspired Apostle are proved to be false—and we are nearer to Heaven in proportion to our intellectual light—if the whole mass of the learned were opposed to evangelical doctrines, it would not furnish the least plausible hope in your favour. They that published this doctrine after its Divine author—save one—had no claims to literary distinction. It is true they were assisted by inspiration. But so were not thousands of the unenlightened Heathen, who received, and felt, and adored “the wisdom and power of the Cross.” They had no other aid to assist them to comprehend these mysteries, and to apply their efficacy to the wants of the soul, than was within the reach of the philosophers of the day; who found these things too mortifying to pride—too severe on the passions; and who too much resemble those self-called philosophers that shrink from the light, and compound a creed of the religion of nature and the less mortifying maxims of revelation. While the word of God is so plain—how presumptuous is the hope which is erected on this foundation! While that word is declared to be the law by which we shall be judged, how infatuated is the conduct of that man, who believes according to his wishes, and has the hardihood to suppose that he will be judged according to his belief. Ah, what tampering with the assertions of Jehovah! What daring pretension to scale the heavens despite of the thunders of his law! We pray you, let us learn the truth of God for ourselves. Let us make it our friend. It would be a terrible enemy. And the day is coming, when it will be avenged on its perverters—whose “*refuge of lies*” shall be swept away forever.



