

DAMNABLE HERESIES DEFINED, &c.

1, PETER, ii. 1.

There shall be false Teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them ;—

THE gospel is a complete system of doctrines and duties. It teaches what we ought to believe, and what we ought to do. The use of faith is to promote a right temper and practice.

Some plead, that if we live as we ought, it is indifferent what we believe. But the truth is, no man will live as he ought, if his faith be grossly corrupt. They who put away a good conscience, are such as make ship-wreck of faith.

It is not indeed every speculative error, that destroys the faith or vitiates the life. But there are some great and leading truths, which we cannot relinquish without forfeiting our own salvation, nor oppose without endangering the salvation of others. St. Peter speaks of certain false teachers, who by embracing and propagating damnable heresies bring on themselves swift destruction, and seduce many to follow their pernicious ways. These are they, who deny the Lord, that bought them.

St. Jude in his epistles, speaks of the same deceivers. When he wrote to Christians concerning the common salvation, he exhorted them to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints: What this faith was he shews by its opposites. "There are certain men, who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

It has often been enquired, what are those errors in religion, which may be called *fatal*. Every sectary is disposed to conceive the sentiments, which discriminate his sect from others, to be essential, and every deviation from them to be damnable. Hence he admits to his communion none but those, who adopt his peculiarities; and such as do adopt them, he considers as sincere converts and true Christians,