

and prosperous congregations,—and of the injury, above all, to the cause of Presbyterianism and to religion itself, which have resulted from our secession,—and a movement, it seems to be argued, attended with such results, could not at first have been necessary, and cannot now be deserving of support.

This objection can have no weight with any who acknowledge the paramount authority of principle in religious matters, however difficult it may be to take with those who judge of everything in the light of mere worldly expediency. It proceeds upon the assumption, that we are warranted to make expediency, or rather our own narrow and limited views of what is expedient, the rule in determining the path of duty, and that we may at once decide that a cause cannot be of God, if only angry passions, and strife, and division, and such like evils seem to follow in its train. A more dangerous error cannot be fallen into, or one more fitted to pervert the judgment, to debauch the conscience and to induce that state of mind in which men contrive, without difficulty, to persuade themselves, that self-interest and duty, gain and godliness, always lie on the same side. Where God has given us positive commands as to the path of duty, or pointed out principles by which we are to hold, and whose practical application is simple and obvious, we are not at liberty to judge of what is right, or to regulate our conduct, by a reference to consequences; we are bound simply to do our duty, and leave consequences to God. The obloquy which has been attempted to be cast upon those who have avowed and acted upon this Scriptural doctrine, only proves the unsound and unscriptural views by which some of our opponents have been influenced. When our Lord forewarned his disciples of the results which would follow the preaching of the Gospel, you remember the striking picture of *evil consequences* as well as good which he drew:—

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.

“For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

“And a man’s foes *shall be* they of his own household.”—MAT. X. 34, 35, 36.

But, because angry passions, and strife, and division were thus to attend the work on which these disciples were sent forth, did he allow them to suppose, that they were to determine, by the likelihood or unlikelihood of these evils being produced, *when* it was expedient for them to preach the Gospel, or did he intend that they should decide, when such evils followed, that the course which they were pursuing was not approved of God? Was not one of the very objects for which he forewarned them of these evils, that they might not shrink from the duty which he had assigned them, even when these evils threatened most alarmingly to follow, and might not be staggered, when the formal Pharisee, and the silken votary of pleasure, and the self-in-