

and, that your present deportment will be applauded on that day in which every man's work will be tried by fire.

BUT the disputes of christians are not merely unbecoming ; they are really injurious. Wherever there is strife in the church, there must be disregard of divine authority, and dishonour done to the gospel of peace. Besides, it destroys the communion of christians, and interrupts the progress of religion in the world. When dissension occurs, it must then be an enquiry of prudence, will the gain of quarrelling counterbalance the loss ? and this point properly weighed, would often, I believe, suggest the propriety of leaving off strife before it be meddled with, and prove an excellent preservative of congregational peace. The price is great ; the purchase ought to be valuable. If it do not tend to the honour of God and the prosperity of the church, to unite more closely the friends of religion, to promote godliness and recommend it to the world ; certainly it ought not to disquiet, and much less to divide, those who are living in the peaceful fellowship of the gospel.

It may be observed to you farther, that persons disputing ought to be very jealous of their own judgment respecting the subject of debate. That strife which will receive the approbation of the God of peace, must be supported by very weighty reasons indeed ; and let us all remember, that his decisions do not always accord with the views of those who are quarrelling. What such persons conceive to be of vast importance, God may very lightly esteem. Offences sink deep into the human mind, and the oftener they are considered they encrease in magnitude ; till at last the mind, absorbed by its feelings, mistakes the greatness of its uneasiness, for the ground of its offence.

BUT this is not the only mistake. In proportion to the uneasiness of the mind, those things