

atonement. If you do not find them there, it is evident that you do not go to the Scriptures in a right spirit, and therefore you cannot be recognized by us as Christians." But what sort of liberty is this? We are perfectly at liberty, nay, it is our duty, to study the Scriptures for ourselves; but unless we find in them just what you find, then we are not entitled to the Christian name. You put into our hands, perhaps, the Westminster Catechism, and tell us to study the Bible, but tell us that, unless we find the Catechism in the Bible, we do not read the Bible right. Which is the master here, the Catechism or the Bible? The doctrines of the Catechism are enthroned as the doctrines of Christianity. Nothing is allowed to modify or repeal them. But if the Bible does not teach just those doctrines, then it is no Bible to us. We may accept every word in the New Testament, and say we believe them. "But how do you believe them?" is the question. "Do you believe them in the sense of the Westminster Catechism? If not, you do not believe them right, and cannot be recognized as Christians by us." What is this but to give the Westminster divines authority over the Bible, and while professing the profoundest reverence for it, to bind it down by their peculiar metaphysical opinions, as able men have sometimes got possession of the person of their sovereign, and with every outward mark of homage, have constrained him to affix his signature and seal to their decrees, and thus employed his very name and authority to annul or pervert his commands.

We have a right to study the Scriptures for ourselves, and to abide, in perfect simplicity and good faith, by the result of our investigations. But the moment we erect our views into a standard of faith to be proposed and enforced as a test of the faith of others, that moment we raise our own authority, or the authority of human councils, above the authority of Christ; we usurp a power which he never granted to any man or association of men,