

place, unless the peculiar doctrines and principles of Christianity are understood by the hearer. If real instruction is to be given it must commence at the point where present knowledge ends. That young lady's minister assumed a higher degree of knowledge than she actually possessed.—We must lay the foundation if we would provide for the security of the superstructure. I am convinced that much of the infidelity, rationalism, and scepticism of our age is in a great measure attributable to defective public instruction, defective because not sufficiently elementary and expository. There is far too much vague, mere moral, exhortatory preaching addressed to the feelings, and far too little clear distinctive Scripture teaching. The loose gospelling, vague and negative theology of all churches has taught the world the first principles of infidelity, by suppressing, spiritualizing and explaining away all the express teaching and positive theology of the Bible—thus sceptics have been emboldened to carry out these principles which the church has sanctioned to their fullest development in the absolute denial of every truth which distinguishes Christianity from all human systems of religion. Primitive Christian practice consisted in *obeying from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered*. Modern religious practice consists in believing what we please, and doing what we like.

The people, who seldom study theology or their Bibles, are left in comparative ignorance of the first principles of Christianity. Texts are selected as mottoes, but the mind of the Spirit in the context, is not sought after, or the primary application of the language as a whole is not elucidated; hence in the midst of religious privileges there is a deplorable lack of Scripture knowledge and intermittent excitement instead of instruction in righteousness. In order to ascertain what distinguishes Christianity from all human systems of religion, we must seek instruction from the infallible authority of Scripture. Without this acknowledged standard of truth there can be no first principles, no foundation to build arguments upon, no premises to draw conclusions from. All religious truths must be tested, not by their mere uniformity and agreement with ethical theories, but with the Scriptures. Conformity with God's

word is the only infallible test of truth in doctrine or practice. The question respecting all moral and religious subjects is not their abstract truthfulness and reasonableness, but this—are they Scriptural? However conclusively and inductively we may reason upon the subject of religion, if our principles or premises are taken from other authority than the Bible, our conclusions are unsound and worthless. A series of propositions, results and conclusions may be logically true and consistent with each other, and yet false; so all systems of religion which do not derive their principles from the Bible, however harmonious and consistent with their own laws, are unsound and worthless. Theology has added no new truth to Christianity but a vast amount of error. Christianity is the religion of the Bible, therefore the distinctive principles and genius of Christianity must be learned from the Bible. We must believe all things in the Bible and prove all things from the Bible. Few have taken their first impressions of religion from the Bible, hence such ignorance and difference of opinion among professing Christians.

The religious instruction generally given to young persons is based upon rational rather than Scriptural principles. Christian parents teach their children natural, not evangelical religion; they are afraid to trust God with His own truth. The doctrines of grace cannot be understood by the child, therefore they are not to be taught. Pelagianism and Socinianism are taught because, perhaps, being better suited to human nature they find a readier reception in the young mind. But the religion of God, communicated to the soul is a supernatural act, and the same Almighty energy is alike displayed in the impartation of this principle to the mind of the parent as of the child. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.—Except ye receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ye cannot enter therein.* Had our Lord revealed to Nicodemus when a youth, the mystery of the new birth, perhaps instead of doubtfully asking *how can these things be*, he would have believed and said, like little Samuel, *“speak Lord for thy servant heareth.”* In order to adapt religious instruction to the comprehension of the young, mere natural religion