

so it is that many men have sat under the sound of the gospel (as they call it) for forty years, that cannot expound one chapter in the whole New Testament. And yet these same Christians would think it just to prosecute by civil law that teacher who would keep their sons four or five years at English grammar or arithmetic, and receive their money, and yet not one of their sons able to expound one rule in syntax or arithmetic. They pay the parson—they are of maturer minds than their children, and they have been longer under his tuition, and yet they will excuse both the parson and themselves for knowing just as little, if not less, of the New Testament, than their striplings know of grammar or arithmetic.

C. Then you will reduce the Christian doctrine to a level with common arithmetic, and you suppose that christianity can be taught just as easily as arithmetic.

E. You profess to be a Calvinist, if I mistake not; and do you not suppose that a disciple is as capable of being taught christianity as arithmetic, provided he is "a subject of divine grace." and you know that otherwise he would not be a disciple on the Calvinistic hypothesis. But upon either the Calvinistic or Arminian hypothesis, a disciple of Christ can be taught the Christian religion in a proper course of education as soon as he can be taught any human science.

C. And so you suppose there is nothing more grand, sublime, deep, or unsearchable in the Christian religion, than in a human science, such as arithmetic?


E. That does not follow from my assertion. There are many things incomprehensible and sublime in various sciences; but a person is said to understand and to be able to teach them, who is not able to comprehend and explain every topic connected therewith. Many persons can teach arithmetic very well who do not understand one proposition of Euclid's ratios.

C. But it is only when the Spirit of God accompanies the preacher's words that the people learn; and that Spirit is not at the command of the preachers.

E. I know of no passage in the New or Old Testament that says that the Spirit of God accompanies any of our preachers' words. Besides, the disciples are the sons of God, and have the Spirit of Christ, and are therefore every way qualified to learn, under a proper teacher, according to your own hypothesis. But, sir, they can never be taught the christian religion in the way of sermonizing. Public speeches may be very useful on many occasions; but to teach a church the doctrine of Christ, and to cause them to understand the Holy Scriptures, and to enjoy them, requires a course essentially different from either hearing sermons or learning the catechism.

C. I wish to resume sundry topics in the commencement of our interview, but will have to postpone it for the present. Adieu.

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 One of the fathers of the church in Virginia, preached on a certain occasion, a Sermon on Christian Experience. One of his hearers went to him, and asked him how long it took him to compose that sermon. The preacher replied gravely, "ABOUT TWENTY YEARS."