

as a human invention which enslaves the mind. Like every other branch of knowledge, religion has its general principles; and, viewing these as a revelation of the divine will sufficient for the direction of man, they must, as one whole, constitute a system of instruction. In every part of the works of the Deity, systematic arrangements are displayed; and the clergyman who does not perceive them in his word, occupies a station in the church for which he is ill qualified. Like the uncertain sound of the trumpet which produces no preparation for the battle, his crude conceptions prove neither a foundation of faith nor an incentive to duty.

But let me, farther, remind you, that the grand object of your studies, is not merely system, but a system of truth. In no scientific arrangement of principles, is truth so necessary as in systematic religion. Religion involves in it the honour of the Deity and the best interests of men; and these are promoted, only where its truths are known and believed. As about to be the messengers of the God of truth for the accomplishment of these valuable ends, you must, therefore, take care that you do not become the propagators of falsehood. This is the more requisite, because upon this continent there is a considerable disposition to overlook the importance of religious truth, and to reduce religion itself to mere feeling and conduct. Many imagine, that, if a person be what is usually denominated a good man, it matters not what he believes. This opinion, I trust, none of you will ever adopt. It degrades the dignity of human nature, and dishonours the Divinity. Feeling and action man has in common with the inferior creation; but intelligence is the glory of his nature; and he only is a good man whom principle conducts to the discharge of duty. Then he resembles that Being whose wisdom is refulgent in all his works.

In connexion with these remarks, it may be also observed, that public instructors in the church ought to possess a uniformity of religious views. I do not mean that every clergyman should have the same extent of intelligence, attach the same significance to every part of scripture, and invariably elicit from the words of inspiration the same deductions. In these respects diversity is unavoidable. But religion, as a system, has leading principles, which constitute the basis of human improvement and happiness; and, consequently he that would rear his structure must know its basis. Error cannot promote those ends for which truth is designed. Besides, clergymen do not sustain the character of men groping in the dark if haply they may perceive; they are the light of the world, the guides of a church which can have only one faith; and therefore, the yea of one ought never to be met by the nay of another.