

Importance of Doctrine

Doctrinal knowledge is the foundation of true religion. It is here asserted, not merely that doctrinal knowledge is of great importance in religion, that it enlightens, strengthens, and confirms the Christian in his duties and his hopes, but that it is the foundation of true religion, — that, without which the thing cannot exist, and all pretension to it is either delusion or hypocrisy. This will be sufficiently evident to every reader who candidly considers the following facts.

The duties of the Bible are founded upon its doctrines. What God has required his creatures to do, he has not arbitrarily required but required for good and sufficient reasons. These reasons are found in the doctrines which he has revealed.

The duty of loving God is founded upon the doctrine that he is supremely good. If he was not a good Being, it could not be the duty of creatures to love him. And if he was not the best of all beings, it could not be their duty to love him supremely.

The duty of repentance is founded upon the doctrine that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” If mankind are not sinners, they have nothing to repent of. And the question respecting the extent of their sinfulness, must obviously settle the question respecting the extent to which repentance is a duty.

The duty of faith in Christ depends upon the doctrine that he is the true Messiah. Unless he is, as he claims to be, the Son of God, unless he actually "made his soul an offering for sin," and unless "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him," it cannot be the duty of perishing sinners to trust in him as their Saviour.

The duty of submission to the will of God under trials, depends upon the doctrine that God governs the world in righteousness. If there is any event which takes place without his agency and in opposition to his wise and holy purposes, we cannot be under obligation to be reconciled to it. True submission to the will of God under trials, is nothing more or less than submission to these things, so far as the design and hand of God are in them.

It is generally agreed that prayer is a duty. But this cannot be a fact unless the doctrine of our dependence upon God is true. If there is any respect in which we are not dependent on God, in that respect it cannot be our duty to pray.

It is our duty to love our neighbor as ourselves, to love our enemies, to pray for them, and to do them all the good in our power. But all these duties are founded upon the doctrine of disinterested affection. If it is right, as some pretend, to make our own interest or pleasure the principal object of our regard, it cannot be duty to love others as ourselves. If, as is often asserted, mankind is incapable of exercising a disinterested affection, it cannot be their duty to

love their enemies; for it is impossible that a known enemy should be embraced by any other than a disinterested affection. (Written in 1832: Anonymous).