

DISCOURSE X.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION SHOULD  
NOT BE CONFOUNDED WITH HEATHENISM.

COLOSSIANS ii. 8, 9.

*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

The wise apostle assigns two reasons for the caution. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy." Why? Because philosophy doth not go on the same ground as Christianity. Philosophy is a body of wisdom made up of the speculations, and conjectures, and inferences of studious, learned men; but Christianity is a body of information reported to us by the express command of Almighty God.

This is the meaning of the expression, "After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ," that is Christianity. The apostle observes, that there is a perfection in the information given us by Jesus Christ, for he taught us only *facts*: but philosophy, which is the science of investigating the *nature* of facts, is on this very account uncertain, vain, and deceitful, when applied to the Christian religion. Reduce the subject to two parts, and they amount to this; the wisdom of the heathen schools was vain and deceitful, because it was not true; and the wisdom of modern schools, though true in itself, is deceitful when applied to Christianity...

To come to the point. Let us distinguish Christianity from the *philosophy* of it. By Christianity I mean the Christian religion. By the Christian religion I mean that set of facts, which Jesus Christ taught, and which are all recorded in the Gospel. Our notion is, that these facts are reported to us for the sake of the use to which we are able to apply them, and not laid down as philosophers lay down their speculations in the schools, for the sake of exercising the geniuses of young gentlemen to make improvements. This distinction between facts and their uses apart from the philosophy of them, is founded in nature: and it is the more credible, because it makes Christianity exactly like the world in which we live, and so gives it a character of divinity, showing that the maker of the world is the author of our holy religion.

(Seventeen Discourse on Several Texts of Scripture... by Robert Robinson, Boston: Published by Cummings, Hilliard, & Co., 1824, e-book, 177, 178, 179, 180, Paragraph Structure Modified)