

the Sabbath instructions of a faithful minister? In regard to the logical relations of these principles to each other the theologian will have the advantage; he can better conceive them, perhaps, as a scheme or a system, and so far he is more scientific than the ordinary Christian. He has possession of the two factors of scientific theology, knowledge of the facts and knowledge of the logical connections; but as regards the former, the ordinary Bible student, bating his ignorance of scientific terminology, may be almost, if not quite, on a level with him. He does not stand to the theologian as the savage indolently eating the fruit which falls from his banana tree, or the ignorant rustic practising a rude husbandry stands to the scientific agriculturist and the botanist. The scientific knowledge of nature leads no doubt to inventions and improvements of great practical utility, but though science should have made no progress, we can use the things spread around us by the hand of nature, and thus sustain life with some measure of physical enjoyment. A like ignorance of the principles of the Bible would leave us without the blessings it offers—leave us unsaved. Those who are wont so sharply to distinguish between theology and a practical knowledge of religion very generally, we fear, commit the fatal error of confounding religion with duty, especially social duty, or with mere sentiment. But if the knowledge which saves is the knowledge of the Father and of the Son, a most intimate connection clearly exists between practical religion and theology. 2. Again, I argue the imperfection of the suggested analogy from the promise of the Holy Spirit to be ever with the Church as its teacher. This promise is found in passages such as the following: "But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have told you." "When the Comforter is come He shall testify of Me." "He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Accordingly it is said, "ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things." "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." (John xiv. 16, xv. 26, xvi. 14; 1 John ii. 20, 27). This last passage shows that the Spirit as teacher was not promised to the twelve only, though they in a special sense became partakers of His influences. The Spirit is to dwell in the Church, and in the hearts of all true believers, and to dwell there for ever. Thus is fulfilled what Jeremiah spake concerning the new dispensation: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, . . . and they shall teach no more, every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." It is thus insured that all believers shall correctly apprehend (so far at least as may be necessary to salvation and the integrity of the Christian life) the great facts and principles of the Christian faith. This, surely, is not straining the language quoted but is clearly keeping within its limits. The Holy Spirit is promised to all true disciples, not only to sanctify and comfort them, but to teach them concerning Christ and His kingdom. Such knowledge is imparted to them that no man can lead them fatally astray; they can distinguish between the "lie" and the "truth," and when Anti-Christ comes he cannot persuade them to embrace his error. Now, I do not understand that the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in all believers from the beginning is inconsistent with the supposition that Christian truth, even under His teaching, as by means of the progress of events, shall have additional light thrown upon it, so that the knowledge of the Church shall grow and increase, the depth and fulness of meaning which is in Scripture be more perfectly apprehended, and views and applications of truth at present attained become the possession of a Church ever approaching maturity in knowledge as in holiness, and preparing for the coming of the Lord. Such progress of the Church seems no more at variance with the promise of the Spirit than does the growth of the individual in knowledge under the Spirit's continual teaching, the study of the Word, and the discipline of Providence. For whilst the promise of the Spirit is made good to each and every believer from the beginning of his new life, so long as here he "grows in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Not reluctantly, but with deep and grateful joy, would we recognize the possibility—the certainty—of this advancement in knowledge. No new revelation will be vouchsafed, but the Spirit, communicated with increasing fulness, will enable the Church more perfectly to understand the revelation which we now have; and her knowledge—her theology—will become increasingly profound, comprehensive, and harmonious. Truths which at present many of us do little more than tolerate—since we cannot silence the testimony of Scripture to them—will be seen in such glorious relations to other truths that all hesitation in receiving them will be past. An increasing knowledge—the dawn of a brighter day—will bring together in the harmony of faith those whose diversities of views and of interpretations, strongly emphasized, have too much kept them apart. Nor is it incredible that the clearer light shed upon the whole contents of Scripture will lead to valuable apologetical results; and that the truth received with greater completeness (though the unholy mind can never love it) will more and more show itself a fortress impregnable all around. But we must correctly conceive the kind of progress in divine knowledge which we are permitted to anticipate, and the way in which it will be made. Any movement forward will be in the same line—so to speak—in which the Church has achieved the progress which marks the past. There will be no forsaking of this line for another. The Church will not inaugurate a new progressive era by altering her course, by going back from her attainments, by casting aside her theology received from the beginning. She will not lay the foundations of a new edifice, nor tear down the courses which have been securely built, but whatever additional stones she may find worthy to have a place in the structure will be laid on and incorporated in harmony with the design. Imperfections will be removed, additional buttresses supplied, a more perfect beauty added, but the noise

of demolition—of those who "break down the carved work with hammers and axes"—will not be heard. (Psalm lxxiv. 6). But many, it may be feared, who are most earnest in asserting the law of progress in theological science do really, under the name of progress, contemplate a process which must at least begin with demolition. They tell us that theology is not in harmony with the spirit of the age, and with the attainments made in other branches of knowledge and enquiry, and that it has, in fact, become totally indefensible in presence of the scientific and historical criticism by which it must now be tested. And this means not simply that the logical relations of doctrines to each other have been imperfectly understood or that the doctrines have not been completely developed and followed out to their legitimate consequences, but that many of these doctrines—even such as have been deemed most essential—have been wrongly conceived. The Church, we are told, is fundamentally in error as to her conceptions of justice in God; of our relations to Adam as the source of condemnation and depravity; of the substitution of Christ; of the atonement as an expiatory sacrifice; of regeneration as the supernatural implanting of a new life, in distinction from anything achieved by moral culture; of inspiration; while almost her entire eschatology is worthy of rejection. Now, clearly, if this is so we must begin *de novo*. We must lay the foundation of theological science anew, for theology has hardly any conception more primary than those here adverted to. If the views which will be offered in place of those now held, and which in substance have been held since theology first claimed to be a science—nay, since definitions of the Church's faith in single articles were framed—are correct views, the new theology cannot vindicate its introduction by any doctrine of progress. For it turns out that almost everything is wrong. The first thing is to clear the ground—to remove the antiquated and unsightly structure which stands in the way—that a beautiful modern house may be raised, with the prospect, we fear, that those who come after shall deal with our edifice as we judged it necessary to deal with that which we found in possession. It is sufficiently obvious that, in this way, no progress can be assured; but the thought I wish here to bring forward is, that the Spirit's presence in the Church, as its teacher, gives us the strongest reason for believing that on such important topics as those referred to, our theology cannot be far from truth. There are doubtless many subordinate theological topics as to which we cannot thus find guarantee in the Spirit's teaching—topics remote from the central vital truths—and which must seek their support (if their claim to a place in theology is to be made good) in a fair interpretation of scripture texts, or on grounds of necessary logical connection. We must not press unduly even so great a doctrine as that of the Spirit's teaching; but we can rejoice in the assurance which it gives that our theology has not misunderstood the leading doctrines of the inspired word. 3. The character of inscrutable mystery attaching to several of the great doctrines of the Bible suggests a limitation of theological enquiry which impairs the analogy between nature and revelation as fields of progressive discovery. No ground will here be taken in forgetfulness of what has been already said touching the clearness with which Scripture delivers its great message. But whilst we cannot miss the general purport of Scripture, whilst nothing can be plainer than its manifestation of the Gospel, undeniably it offers to our faith doctrines which are altogether mysterious, and which it is impossible that the human understanding should investigate. I may instance the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the action of the Spirit in regeneration and sanctification, and the Resurrection. In the apprehension or explanation of these doctrines we cannot proceed a hair's-breadth beyond the plain statement of the Bible. They relate to things entirely beyond the reach of inductive research or any kind of legitimate speculation. No study of human experience, or of our own mental operations—no science of any kind—can throw the least additional light upon them. We cannot obtain a deeper knowledge of them than was possessed by those who first carefully examined the Scripture statements regarding them. But these doctrines, it is obvious, are of the highest consequence in Christian theology—in revealed religion. They are so essential to it that their denial (the denial, indeed, of any one of them) would completely change its character. Not only are these doctrines of exceeding importance in themselves; they are so related to the whole system of Christian truth that every part of it is greatly affected by them. They are the pivots on which theology turns, the framework on which it is constructed. A theology which leaves out the mysteries cannot be the theology of the Bible. You may, indeed, reduce your conception of theology to that of a system of ethics, and explain the New Testament as did the old Unitarians. But it is now universally admitted, we suppose—admitted by the Unitarians themselves—that this is not fair treatment of the Scriptures. If our theology shall faithfully exhibit the teachings of the sacred volume, it must not only embrace but give great prominence to the mysteries, whether in theology proper, in soteriology, or in eschatology. These are the mountain ranges, on which the clouds ever rest, but how completely different the landscape if they are wanting, or their form changed. Now this important feature of theological science may be said, we think, to limit to a large degree the possibilities of its development. Theological science has restrictions imposed upon it to which the science of nature is not subject. It cannot get away from the mysteries—cannot leave them behind; and it cannot develop them. The area of progress is thus necessarily circumscribed. We do not, be it observed, take the ground of Mansel and others, that a science of theology (which would necessarily embrace the unconditioned as a factor) is impossible. We believe in the validity of theological science, and reject the notion that our knowledge of the divine is merely regulative and practical. We believe, too, in theological progress, within certain limits; but the mysteries of revealed religion, we cannot but think, unite with the considerations already presented in putting the science of theology, as regards progress, in a different category from the natural sciences. But is not the science of nature, it may be replied, placed under restrictions like to those referred to in connection with theology? Are there not in all sciences facts and principles in-

capable of investigation? Do not our researches soon bring us to a region in which all is mysterious, the origin of existence and the substratum of things? Do not the mysteries which soon environ us in every department of science correspond as to the matter in hand with the mysteries of theology? If, therefore, the presence of mystery does not forbid indefinite progress in other sciences, why should it in this one? The answer, I think, is this: the alleged mysteries of natural science do not properly belong to science. They are not found in its true province, but beneath it and above it. Science brings us face to face with them, but they are outside its jurisdiction, and when the scientist ventures to speculate regarding them he may not claim to be guided by scientific lights: he speaks as an ordinary man. These mysteries are no part of the subject matter of science. But in theology we have seen how entirely it is otherwise. Eliminate the mysteries, stop when you reach the mysteries, and you shall have a meagre theology and an unscriptural. We insist, therefore, that another important difference has been indicated between theological and other scientific enquiry. 2. Let us now endeavour to estimate the record of progress actually made in theological science. The history of dogma should, on such a theme, prove very instructive. The achievements of the past may not quite determine what is possible, but they will, doubtless, render valuable aid in any attempt to forecast the future. The enquiry here is not, of course, respecting Biblical scholarship, but respecting dogmatic theology. But since ignorant and extravagant statements are often made regarding the progress now made by textual criticism and the interpretation of Scripture, with the view of showing that we enjoy advantages for the construction of dogma much superior to those of past generations, it will not be aside from our purpose to glance at the facts of the case as to these departments of sacred learning. Now, the entire object and aim of Biblical criticism, it will be remembered, is to restore the text of Scripture as it was at the beginning. Could we reach the assurance that we had the *ipsissima verba* of the prophets and apostles, there would be nothing more for this science to do. Moreover, whilst the lists of various readings (in the New Testament amounting perhaps to 150,000) seem very formidable, and might easily suggest to the uninitiated a Scripture text too insecure to be confidently used in establishing doctrine, no competent authority ever dreamed of saying that the teachings of Scripture in doctrine or in morals were at any time rendered in any degree uncertain by the imperfections of the text. "Put your variations," says Bentley, "into the hands of a knave or a fool, and yet with the most sinistrous and absurd choice he shall not extinguish the light of any one chapter, nor so disguise Christianity but that every feature of it will still be the same." It is, however, matter of deep gratitude that by the persevering labours of many eminent scholars so much has been accomplished in the restoration of the text of the New Testament, for to the believer in inspiration every word and particle has its interest and value. But what remains for the textual critic to do can have still less effect upon the general complexion of the volume than what has been done already—still less bearing, if possible, upon its theology. As compared with other ancient writings the text was never in a bad condition; and theology, which has not suffered from its imperfections in the past, will not perceptibly gain from any future improvements of it. It may not be out of place to add to the testimony of Bentley (though it requires no confirmation) that of Dr. Schaff, the learned chairman of the American section of the Anglo-American Bible Revision Committee. (This revision, as we all know, extends to the original text as well as to the translation.) Having stated the principles on which the revision proceeds, Schaff writes as follows:—"If these principles are faithfully carried out (as they have been thus far), the people need not apprehend any dangerous innovations. No article of faith, no moral precept will be disturbed. . . . The revision will so nearly resemble the present version that the mass of readers and hearers will scarcely perceive the difference, while a careful comparison will show improvements in every chapter, and in almost every verse." With regard to the interpretation of Scripture the case is not much otherwise. It is undeniable that, at an early period of the Christian Church, a system of interpretation which might be expected to yield very precarious and fantastic results much prevailed; and yet I do not know that the theology, even of its chief promoters, was greatly affected by the allegorical system; for while they educed recondite meanings from Scripture these referred rather to moral and spiritual improvement than to dogma. But those who, in the early centuries, had greatest influence in shaping the theology and creeds of the Church were men who, like Augustine, proceeded upon exegetical principles on the whole very sound; the same which are at present recognized as the true principles. The leading reformers were learned, able, and clear-sighted exegetes, and this method was generally unobjectionable. Any improvement in exegesis since this time has resulted chiefly from a more accurate philology, and from the more intimate acquaintance with the antiquities and the topography of Bible lands which we now enjoy. There has been no revolution in hermeneutics—no new principle accepted which may affect the theological results of exposition. During the present century scores of the ablest scholars in Germany, England, and America have spent their lives in Scripture interpretations—men of all schools, orthodox and heterodox; but whilst many of the learned persons have not received what may be called the theology of the Church, I am not aware of any important variations of opinion among them as to the principles of exposition. For the mythical, moral, and other rationalistic systems of interpretation, so-called, are not properly systems of interpretation. They are methods by which, with a show of learning, we may accept or reject the teachings of Scripture according to our philosophy or our taste. The inventors and patrons of these systems do not profess simply to elicit the sense of Scripture—the meaning which it was intended to bear. The true method of interpretation, then, is well understood. There is a consensus regarding it, and there is not a book or verse, or word of Scripture to which it has not been carefully applied. We are far from