

PROGRESS IN THEOLOGY.*

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THEOLOGY is a progressive science. The knowledge of God which the antediluvians had was alphabetic compared with the understanding of the Divine nature which Abraham had. It is the common faith of evangelical believers that God made man "perfect in knowledge." But this knowledge extended only to the understanding of what is right. Adam was no more a philosophical theologian than he was a sculptor, painter or poet. If Adam and Eve heard Jehovah tell the serpent, the seed of the woman "shall bruise thy head," that seems all they could have known of what has followed in the course, conquests and kingdom of redemption through Christ. When the Lord revealed to Abraham an index idea of the covenant of grace, granting him a glimpse of the Lamb of God suffering as a substitute for the sons of men, that was a vast advance in theologic knowledge over anything the antediluvians knew. But the theology of Moses was much deeper, broader and better built than that of Abraham. For the eye of Moses was so opened upon the purposes and plans of Jehovah's providence and love, that Christ the Lord Himself said later, of Moses, "He wrote of me." The patriarchs, judges and their contemporaries may have had faith in the fact of the resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked; but, if they had, history of their opinion we have not, our first distinct intimation of this doctrine having come from David and Daniel. Bending over the open grave and burying in it, may be, his best beloved, we hear poor Job of a previous age asking, "If a man die shall he live again?" But when Daniel was putting the finishing strokes upon his prophetic picture of the end of earthly things, he drew with a vigorous dash this thrilling declaration: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt." That discloses to us a sweeping progress in the theological knowledge of the after life, which Job appears to have known nearly nothing of that could give him conviction or comfort.

Reviewing the writings of the prophets of Israel and Judah, and down to John, who spread out as *The Revelation* the splendid certainties and suggestions of the coming triumphs of the Redeemer's kingdom—reviewing these, we discover that the sacred science received enlargements at every additional touch of the inspiring Holy Spirit upon the minds and eyes of those seers who portrayed the mission and passion of the Messiah. The science of theology, as it concerns the method of human redemption, is more fully developed in the writings of Isaiah than in the writings of Moses, as spiritual truth is more abundant in the Gospel of St. John than in the book of Ecclesiastes. In short, theology, as a science, made steady progress all through the Old Testament period.

Between Malachi and the manger-born Child there were four hundred years, in which nothing new appears to have been learned; and much that

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