

diligent study of the metaphysical and ethical works of Aristotle, rather than of the Gospel. So much was this felt, that Pope Gregory the Ninth issued, in 1228, a letter to the University of Paris, warning its teachers against the presumptuous and false use of philosophy in matters of faith. He complained, probably not without reason, of the forced interpretations, whereby it was attempted to bring the declarations of the Holy Scriptures into harmony with the doctrines of such philosophers as had never known the true God.

Some centuries afterwards, when at the time of the Reformation our ancestors emerged out of the darkness and speculation of the preceding period, it was not wonderful if the great leaders of the movement came out of the universities with much of the mystic theology cleaving to them. Neither should it be thought incredible, that when the Bible was made the basis of religious doctrine, the mystic modes of interpretation should still be applied to some of the abstruse truths. This was done, and very soon means were taken to stereotype, in creeds and confessions of faith, the views of divine truth thus taken, which had the effect of holding mind stationary. It could not go back, so neither could it avail itself of greater light and go forward.

Ministers were bound, by ordination vows, to accept and teach the doctrines which their ancestors conceived to be taught in the Bible. All independent interpretation of the word of God, not according to these standards, was denounced as *heresy*. And to this day, a man who shall dare, in the light of the nineteenth century, to question the narrow, mystic interpretation put on the Scriptures in a darker day, is looked upon with suspicion, and even the title deeds of church property have been so fixed as to hold the occupants to the views conceived aforetime to be orthodox, thus virtually deciding in advance what we shall believe, and what interpretation we shall put on the word of God. Surely our pious ancestors believed that they were the wise men; but they determined that wisdom should not die with them; they sealed their notions with the character of "orthodox," and handed them down to us.

What would be said of scientific men, if they had, in the sixteenth century, handed down a creed of orthodox truths, to be in all after ages believed, with respect to Geology, Chemistry, Mechanics, and Agriculture? And what would be thought if the very deeds of the schools and colleges, where these things were taught, were made to contain clauses confining the property to those, who should in future time believe the same as was taught by the professors of philosophy when these sciences were in their infancy? Would not this have fettered human thought? Would it not have very much impeded scientific progress?

Yet this is precisely the condition of religion to-day. The standards of orthodoxy have been fixed two or three hundred years ago. "Yes," men say, "The case is not parallel; Bible truth was the same three centuries ago, it cannot change." We reply, so was scientific truth the same. Our fathers no more discovered all that is true in revelation, than they did all that is true in science. God's word is truth, it shall stand. It has not been always understood, nor correctly inter-