

It will be seen that we have departed from the punctuation in our Bibles, and have connected the clause—"the pillar and ground of the truth," not with "the church of the living God," but with "the great mystery of godliness." This is done for the following reasons:—

1st. THE CONSTRUCTION.—The figure—"pillar and ground"—comes too late, if the "house of God" be meant. It was complete when *house* was enunciated; afterwards, to go to its foundation or its support, would be to weaken and depress the image.

Again: interpreters have all found a difficulty in that construction, which connects this with the preceding clause. It is absolutely needful to supply two words, either "which is," or "who is." Some have adopted the latter course, and have referred the figure to Timothy himself,—according to an analogy supplied in the Epistle to the Galatians, in which certain of the Apostles are described as seeming to be pillars of the church which was in Jerusalem. Others have adopted the former course, and have read it—"the house of God, *which is* the church of the living God—*which is* the pillar and ground of the truth." But if a full stop be placed after "the living God," and a new sentence be commenced, no supplement is required—the text, as it stands, is perfect: this is always one argument in favor of a criticism, that it requires no addition to the text, or excision from it.

Still further: the conjunction "and" is copulative and not illative. It ill agrees with that abruptness which is required for the verse, if quite independent. If we are to suppose the succeeding sentiments utterly unforewarned, not only is the "and" redundant, but it injures the force of the passage. According to the rendering we have chosen, it retains its proper use, coupling the two parts of the sentence—"The pillar and ground of the

truth; and, incontrovertibly, great is the mystery of godliness." It is, of course, understood by all, that the arrangement of the sacred writings into sentences, verses, and chapters, has no claim to inspiration. That was the work of uninspired and fallible men, in which they have occasionally made mistakes.

2. THE ANALOGY OF FAITH.—The theological argument is as complete as is the literary. The analogy of corresponding truth in the word of God demands the alteration; for in what just sense is the church the pillar and ground of the truth? This gloss has been the root of a large portion of ecclesiastical error. Rome has laid hold of it, and named herself "the pillar and ground of the truth." And some of the assuming daughters of that mother have not been far behind her in the measure of their pretensions. It is true, we might, with all safety, deny the right of either mother or daughter to assume the designation or immunities of "*the church*," retaining the punctuation of the received text. This would be done by the denial that any of them possessed the attributes of an universal church. And this course is adopted by many who connect the figure with the previously mentioned church of God. But if, as in our judgment, the church be not referred to at all, the entire theory of ecclesiastical assumption, so far as it rests on this passage, is overturned.

Now, looking at the question as one of theology, it may be inquired, first, *what substratum is left for the church when she is made to upbear the truth?* On what does *she herself rest?* Is it not for the church to *receive* rather than to *sustain* the strength and purity of these holy verities? *Surely they ask no prop on earth.* And if they did, what could sustain their weight? They come from heaven; they breathe its spirit; they are invested with its glory; they are