

**THE
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD
SUBJECTIVELY CONSIDERED**

THE
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD,

SUBJECTIVELY CONSIDERED.

BEING

THE SECOND PART OF THEOLOGY

CONSIDERED

AS A SCIENCE OF POSITIVE TRUTH,

BOTH INDUCTIVE AND DEDUCTIVE.

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NON SINE LUCE.

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TO

ALL WHO FERVENTLY DESIRE LIFE AFTER DEATH,

THIS TRIBUTE OF SYMPATHY AND LOVE

IS OFFERED

IN THE NAME OF THE SAVIOUR OF SINNERS,

WHO HAS ABOLISHED DEATH,

AND BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT THROUGH THAT GOSPEL,

WHICH IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION

TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH.

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A FEW PRELIMINARY WORDS.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY; PROGRESS, TRUE CONCEPTION, SCIENTIFIC STATEMENT.

DURING the first seven centuries of the Christian Church, the attention of Theologians, so far as we can judge, seems to have been directed chiefly to the establishment of the claims of Christianity as the true religion of God, and to the establishment within the Church itself of the fundamental truths of that religion. By the end of that period, and after innumerable conflicts, the doctrine of the Church everywhere, seems to have been fully settled and confirmed by the decisions of general councils, concerning God and concerning Christ; and in the West, at least, settled also, very generally concerning man. But these—God, Man, and the Godman, are the grand elements of the science of Theology; and when they were settled in the faith of the Church, that science ought immediately to have risen, and, resting upon divine truth, to have passed steadily and rapidly to its perfect state. Instead of this, we have in the Western Church a period of eight centuries during which scholasticism in its rise and predominance is the most conspicuous manifestation of thought, down to the outburst of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The Schoolmen interpreting the religion of Jesus by the Philosophy of Aristotle, as their predecessors of the Alexandrian school had interpreted it by the Philosophy of Plato; added, it may be allowed, to the stock of inquiry and speculation, much that deserved the consideration of posterity; but they added almost nothing to Theology, considered as the science of the knowledge of God unto salvation, whether as to its conception, the method of its proper treatment, or its practical development. Considered from the point of view of Reformed Christianity, scholasticism was a complete failure.

In this state of things that great awakening occurred, which we call the Reformation; which was connected with the past by so many streams, which combined in one movement so many powerful influences, which delivered to the future the seeds of so much that was glorious. It was an awakening of the Church of God to the spirit of its primeval and only true life; and it manifested itself in the reception and love of divine truth,

and by consequence in true faith and true holiness. The scientific treatment of Divine truth, therefore, followed the movement of the Reformation, more closely than it had followed the movement of the first planting of Christianity. In the Latin Church, the spirit and the method which had predominated during so many centuries of fatal error remained, and still remain; for to have shaken them off would have been to share in the revolt which emancipated the Reformers, the dread of which gave so strange an aspect to Ancient Theology, and exercised such fatal influence upon the speculations of the Schoolmen. In the bosom of the Reformation a division in the conception and treatment of Theology as a science, manifested itself from the beginning and has continued. In Protestantism, these diverse conceptions have been called, accurately enough, the one material, the other formal: the one grounding everything in a particular aspect of Divine Truth—the doctrine of Justification by Faith, for example; the other grounding everything in the sum of the whole truth revealed by God. The former conception, however true in particular, is altogether too narrow, altogether incomplete, as the conception of a science so vast. The latter conception—that of the Reformed strictly so called—was just. From it, the Reformed Theology ought to have developed itself, firmly and at once. The Church had not only recovered the position she occupied at the end of the seventh century—but had taken a great step in advance.

That the Reformed Theology did not adequately avail itself of its great position, nothing can prove more clearly than that after three centuries, the first attempt—that of Calvin—retains its supremacy. Augustine, even with his strange conception of the Papal Church, finds no name to match him—till Calvin. And Calvin's great work—which I had no small share in restoring to general circulation—though it is arbitrary in its method, and though abstract, practical, and controversial Theology, truth objective, subjective, and relative, are mingled confusedly throughout it; has no rival amidst the hundreds which have followed it. I attribute this failure of the Reformed Theology to develop itself completely as a perfect science, to the imperfect conceptions which these very defects signalize. It failed to conceive adequately what that science is, which is the sum of all revealed truth. It failed necessarily after that failure, to conceive adequately the method responsive to the true conception of that grandest of the sciences. It failed necessarily after these two failures, of adequate breadth of spiritual insight into the divine proportion of that truth, which was itself the very substance of the whole science of Theology. Whoever is willing to survey with candour, the whole field of scientific Theology, abstract, practical and controversial—Latin, Lutheran, and Reformed—since the Reformation was firmly established and its first fruits gathered; will see small cause to be satisfied that the Critical, Speculative,