

A fourth lesson taught by history and observation is, that neither philosophy nor biblical interpretation have yet arrived at a perfect and unchangeable state.

Mathematics is the only science that can lay claim to infallibility, and even this admits of progress; so that new religious applications may arise from new researches. The other sciences range widely along the scale of probability and certainty in their conclusions. Many points in them all, and in some nearly every point, admit of further elucidation, such as may considerably modify their religious bearings. Let the history of philosophy, even in the exact sciences, and eminently in the psychological and moral, teach us how vain is the pretence that they can assume no new phase in relation to religion. How cautious, therefore, should the philosopher be, to distinguish between the settled and the changeable principles of science, before he pronounces any of them in collision with inspired truth!

On the other hand, however, let the theologian remember, that, though the principles of the Bible be infallible and unchangeable, not so is its interpretation. Passing by the wild rationalistic theory of accommodation in biblical hermeneutics, it is still true, that on many principles of their science exegetical writers are not agreed. The result is diversity of signification, when they interpret the word of God. Yet to avoid misapprehension, let me avow my conviction, that, so far as the essentials of salvation are concerned, the Bible is so plain a book, that no theories of interpretation, advocated by honest Christian men, can conceal these great truths. In fact, so prominently do they stand out in the Scriptures, that it needs no rules to make them intelligible, save what common sense and common honesty supply; and hence no sophistries of the interpreter can long conceal them from the