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THE SALVATION ARMY.

THE profound interest now taken in the Salvation Army is easily accounted for. Among the questions that have during the past few years continually been discussed in our religious papers and meetings, a foremost place has been given to such as these :—How can the masses be reached? Is the pulpit losing its power? What is the meaning of the absence of such a large part of our population from our Church services? Why is there so much preaching and working, with such a small measure of real success? And lo, while others are discussing, here comes forward at once a body claiming to possess the longed-for power, offering itself as the truest successor of Christ and His apostles, and boldly assuring us that with its spirit and its methods, the conversion of the world is but a question of time. No wonder that Christian men of every name stand still to examine and to ask what is the real significance of this strange phenomenon.

The question is as difficult as it is important. Men who belong to the same school of theology differ widely in their judgment; for while men like Lord Shaftesbury, Mr. S. Blackwood, and Rev. Mr. Bickersteth, have spoken severely in condemnation, we have found in a single number of the *War Cry* strong expressions of commendation from Earl Cairns, Mrs. Josephine Butler, and the successor of Mr. Pennefather at St. Jude's Mildmay, the Rev. Mr. Hawkins.

The difficulty has consisted chiefly in deciding what are the essential characteristics of the Army and its work. In many respects its methods are not new. It has much in common with what has been in use in different sections of the Church. What is the vital principle in which its power consists, and without which it would sink to the level of any other body of workers? Is it the military organisation? Or is it the predominance of the emotional element? Is it the doctrine it teaches, or the methods it employs? Or is it a power higher than all these that has given it its wonderful success?

In giving an account of the impression received from the meetings I attended during a recent visit to England, I think I ought to place this in the foreground, *It is evident that the Army thoroughly believes in the power and presence of the Holy Ghost in its midst.*

Symposium.

PROGRESS IN THEOLOGY.

No. II.

TO a question of this kind no intelligent answer can be given without establishing a common understanding as to the terms used: that is, as to the proper answers to the questions,—What is meant here by theology? In what sense is theology a science? And, What is here meant by progress in theology?

It has been many times proved that, as these terms are currently used, there is a sense in which no man can deny that theology is progressive without proving himself ignorant, and another sense in which no man can affirm that theology is progressive without proving himself heretical—*i.e.*, without putting himself into opposition to the essential assumptions of evangelical Christianity.

In the *first* place, theology may very properly be taken as signifying the sum total of all that men of any age or nation may at any time know of God. This includes all that knowledge of His character, purposes, and works which at any time may be brought to us, or achieved by us through the lights and the experience furnished by nature, as well as that knowledge which may be afforded us by means of any special supernatural revelation of Himself or of His will, that God may choose to make. It is plain that natural religion must ever furnish the basis of revealed religion, not merely in the recognition and reception of the revelation, but also as the logical condition of any knowledge, whatever it be, that revelation may furnish. At all times, the knowledge of God which any people may have gathered from His works and from the experience of their race, must form the setting within which the contents of all supernatural disclosures are exhibited. It is in Creation and Providence that God manifests His perfections in the dimensions of space and time. It is in self-consciousness that our elementary ideas of spirit, of personality, of causal efficiency, of moral agency, of ideal order, emerge. It is by the light of consciousness thrown on nature that we see God. Hence, as we know more of man and of nature, and of the history of both, we must know more of God, and these views must give perspective, and depth, and height, and tone to all that any special, supernatural, self-unfolding can disclose.

This knowledge of God, alike quantitative and qualitative, we gratefully acknowledge to have been always progressing from the first, now in separate national streams, now in the great currents of history, in which all these streams are confluent. It has never advanced more rapidly, nor opened more grandly than in our own age. Witness what

vistas are opened to us, alike by physical and by historical science, in the depths of infinite duration and of infinite space, which the theist sees filled with the activities of God, without break of continuity, revealing an order and a method which is one of the most intimate forms of self-revelation possible. The Psalmist and Paul were alike supernaturally inspired, when they affirmed that "the heavens declare the glory of God," and that "His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made," yet neither of them had his eyes opened to the actual telescopic heavens, nor to the endless cycles of the cosmical and geologic record, nor to the amazing involutions of that intellectual method articulated throughout all the processes of nature which, in these latter days, science has made patent to us all. We have lost nothing of the old Jewish view of Jehovah as extramundane, and governing the physical and moral world from His transcendent throne, while we have gained the complementary view of Him as immanent, everywhere active and manifesting himself in nature, as well in its molecules as in its worlds. The metaphysical eternal and infinite are alone commensurate with God, as He is in Himself; but the indefinitely illimitable and endless, manifested in the present universe and its traceable history, are visible to man, and their contents demonstrate the perfections of God in actual exercise in proportions otherwise inaccessible to created thought.

Hence, also, the Christian revelation itself, delivered to us through a special supernatural providence, has nevertheless come to us through a historical process, which is embraced as an inseparable fact in the larger providence that presides over the whole universe in all ages. Consequently differences of perspective, growing out of differently apprehended proportions and relations, will affect our views of the Christian revelation in its setting in the general history of the universe, in proportion as our own general horizon widens, as the purposes of God are more and more unfolded, and as prophecy passes into history.

If, then, the term "theology" signifies the sum total of the knowledge of God which we possess at any period, we must gratefully acknowledge that this must be for ever indefinitely advancing—alike, with our own intellectual advancement, and with our ever increasing familiarity with His works and ways.

But by "Christian Theology" we generally intend to signify only the matter of a supernatural revelation which God made of His person and will to mankind in ancient time, and the whole of which He has caused to be committed to writing by inspired men. In the delivery of this revelation from the beginning to the end, there was a progress, a continual unfolding of doctrine and purpose, so that the many writings produced by various authors in different languages through nearly two millenniums of time, constitute one organic whole. God came into history in a very special manner,—by supernatural acting and teaching, revealing with ever-increasing fulness and clearness His attributes, His

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methods, and His will. Admitting, then, that in the whole process of the delivery of the matter of Christian theology, there was progress up to the close of the Inspired Canon, the question remains whether there has not been a similar progress since that time, either in the communication of new truth, or in the apprehension and expression of the truth which the Canon conveys.

As to the first point,—the possible progress in the delivery of new truths since the closure of the New Testament Canon, different opinions have been expressed. Professor Seeley in his late work, "Natural Religion," holds that the principle of successive and continuous revelation is of the essence of the Jewish Christian religion; that the spirit of prophecy, so vigorous in the Old Testament, and present—although in less proportion—in the New, is essentially the spirit of development; that the great defect in modern Christianity is the arrest of this continuous movement towards new truth, and perpetual re-adjustment with the spirit of the age. Cardinal Newman, with an infinitely different ultimate intention, also insists that the constitution and laws of the human mind, and the relations of truth, necessitate the constant modification of all ideas in the direction of either development or corruption, and gives seven tests of true development which determine the genuineness of all Christian doctrine in all its stages. The Papal Church maintains that the original apostolic deposit of Christian doctrine, written and unwritten, contained the entire sum of all Christian truth intended for the Church through its entire history, these genuine contents to be defined by the organs of the extant Church—*i.e.*, by the common consent of bishops, or the Pope's decree *ex cathedra*. Hence the rule of faith as well as the actual faith of the Papal Church is progressing with the successive contributions of Councils and Papal Bulls. Quakers and Mystics hold the general inspiration of all believers who obediently follow the inward light and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The various disciples of Schleiermacher hold, with various qualifications, that the theanthropic life of Christ is propagated to successive generations of men through His body, the Church, giving rise to a new and endlessly progressive development of the religious consciousness of Christian men; that this religious consciousness is the fountain of dogmatic knowledge; and that theology, or the scientific apprehension of religion, "unfolds for the understanding the present posture of the Church with her faith and life, and exhibits always the latest self-consciousness, or in other words, the religious spirit of the age."

The essential principles of Protestantism, however, must limit this debate in the pages of *The Catholic Presbyterian*. We assume, as granted, the postulate "That God, who formerly 'at sundry times, and in divers manners' has revealed Himself, and declared His will unto His Church, has afterward, for the better preserving and propagating of His truth, committed the same wholly unto writing," so that "the whole counsel of God concerning things necessary for His own glory and

man's salvation, faith and life, is contained in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence to be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing is at any time to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or by traditions of men."

The second point of the double question above propounded, therefore now recurs :—Is theology progressive, when that term stands for the intellectual apprehension and co-ordination of the contents of the Christian Scriptures, considered as the only, and as the infallible and divinely authoritative rule of faith and practice for the present life? Thus broadly stated, all parties will doubtless unite in giving an affirmative answer. There has never been and, please God, there never will be any complete or final cessation of this progress. And no age has reaped more of the results of this progress than our own. Witness the comparatively new discipline of theological encyclopedia, which has only now become possible through the relative maturity of each special department of Biblical and historical study. Witness in detail the criticism of the text, the perfection which has been reached in the theory and the art of exegesis, the exhibition of the complete historical setting and correlation of each of the sacred writings, the exhibition of the theological contents of each writing separately, and of the Biblical genesis, through the successive writings, of each doctrine ; and following this, witness the history of the growth of the Christian Church in all its forms and ages, and of the thought of the Church as appropriating the doctrinal contents of Scripture, and as expressing it in creeds, dogmatic and polemic treatises, in liturgies and hymns. The actual progress of history is throwing a constantly increasing light on prophecy. The vicissitudes of the Church, the varying relations of the Church to the thought and life of successive ages of the world, and of the various sects to each other, and the progress of missions, are continually throwing light backwards as well as forwards upon some of the general relations of the Divine plan. Hence, often in these latter days, as the old Puritan, John Robinson, had foretold, there has broken out anew a great light from the Word of God, illuminating the path of His faithful people in the ordained progress of Christian civilisation. This, however, relates not so much to doctrine as to practice, not so much to moral principles in the abstract as to the more and more perfect conception of duties growing out of relations, of public as well as private morality, in the ever widening applications of the old unchangeable principles of Christian purity and love.

But when men respectively assert and deny that theology is a progressive science, the subject in debate is not all Biblical knowledge, but specifically that body of revealed doctrine which sets forth the character and purpose and work of God as moral Governor and Saviour and as Judge of men, and the nature and relation and destiny of man as a sinner, and his experience, duties, privileges, and destiny as a believer.

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Admitting this statement of the subject-matter in debate, two questions remain : *First*, Is the science which embraces this body of revealed truth capable, like the natural sciences, of indefinite development in all directions ? This we answer at once, and with decision, in the negative. The matter of all the natural sciences is reached by the activities of the human intellect in experiment and speculation, and is capable of indefinite penetration and comprehension in every direction. But, by concession, the contents of the entire body of Biblical doctrine are given by Divine revelation, and capable of human apprehension only so far forth as that revelation extends, and even when apprehended, capable of comprehension to a much more limited extent. All revealed truths are *mysteries*, and all Scriptural mysteries are revealed for practical and not for speculative ends, and all mysteries so revealed must remain to a great degree *mysterious*—that is, refractory to all scientific treatment.

The purpose of the Christian revelation is obviously not to excite speculation, nor to gratify intellectual interest, but purely to exhibit for practical purposes, the methods of God's procedure in the past, the present, and the future, in the work of saving men, and the duties and privileges of men corresponding thereto. It follows that the communication must in the main be plain, so as to effect its end from the first, since this great practical end cannot be fulfilled in any generation of men, except in so far as the essential facts and principles of faith and obedience are known to them. The doctrines of Christianity are just the Divine teaching designed to regulate faith, and through faith, religious experience and conduct. To this end, the teaching as a whole must be known from the first, and must remain essentially unchanged to the end.

Christian theology is nevertheless properly called a science, although the sense of that word must be limited by the nature of its subject-matter. Science, according to Van Oosterzee, is well grounded and well ordered knowledge. It is obvious that the testimony of God to all the teaching of His own Word is the most secure foundation on which knowledge can be grounded. All the separate affirmations and disclosures of the Word, moreover, are to be classified, and their mutual elements adjusted with each other, and with all other related human knowledge. Even the most partially revealed mysteries take their place in the entire system of revealed truth within or on the horizon of the ever-widening circle of universal truth. Besides this, the elements of this well ordered system of revealed doctrine are ascertained by a process of exegesis which has its roots in all history, and its relations to the whole encyclopedia of the sciences. We affirm, therefore, with decision, that theology, viewed as the science confined to the dogmatic system taught in the Scriptures, which is the basis of the practical living faith of the people of God, is, although a true science, not indefinitely progressive.

The *second* question now recurs : Admitting that the essential doctrines of the Christian revelation must have been known from the first in a

degree sufficient for the accomplishment, in the case of individuals, of the practical ends for which they were revealed, and admitting that they rest upon the immediate testimony of God, and not upon the conclusions of human reason, and that they embrace mysteries that can never be thoroughly comprehended in this life by the intellect of man ; yet, has there not been from the beginning, and have we not reason to expect that there will be to the end a constant progress in the apprehension by the Church in its successive stages, of the precise meaning, the mutual relations, and the abounding fulness of the Scripture teaching as a whole, and on each special topic ?

In answer to this we, of course, admit, that such a progress has been very conspicuous in certain periods of the past history of the Church, and that its possibility in the future cannot be absolutely denied. The entire history of theology is a proof of the truth admitted. Yet the position taken by conservative theologians in this debate, is that the doctrines of the Christian system have long before the present age, in the respective eras of controversy in which they were debated, reached their final form, beyond which no essential progress is to be reasonably expected in this life.

We must here signalise a distinction between the progress of theological construction and that of theological exhibition and illustration. The first relates rather to the substance of the several doctrines and their relations, and is comparatively simple, and essentially a process of exegesis and then of induction and of definition. The second relates chiefly to the form in which the doctrines are set forth, and the perspective in which they are exhibited in relation to each other and to all related human knowledge. Of course it is not contended by rational men that any existent formula defining Christian doctrine, or any institute of theology, or method of constructing the system of Christian doctrines, is incapable of improvement. Neither do we despair of progress being attained in innumerable particulars and in indefinite degrees in the definition and illustration of Christian doctrine in detail, and in the construction of the system which embraces them all. But we affirm, that theories are not to be confounded with doctrines, nor systems of theology with public creeds and confessions of faith. The speculations of theologians always go beyond their public creeds, and their tendency is often to speak and write as if they knew more than God has revealed. Our specific contention in this article is, that the great mass of Christian doctrines, in the form in which they have been settled by past controversy, accredited by the spiritually living and biblically instructed Church, and as at present constituting the common faith of evangelical Christendom, is not to be altered either by substitution of other doctrines, or by any significant modifications, before the Second Coming of Christ. We heartily appropriate, in our own sense, the words of the Rev. Newman Smyth, one of the most gospel-minded as well as one of the brightest advocates of pro-

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gress in theology, in the sense of adapting it to the lights and spirit of the present age: "Christianity has shown wonderful power of breaking up its own crusts" (the non-biblical accumulations of rationalising dogmatists). "They are breaking up now. The primal Christian faiths are not departing. Never fear that they shall be swept away." The difference between our use of this sentence and his is doubtless largely one of emphasis. He emphasises the breaking up of the "crusts,"—we, the abiding of the "primal faiths," which, with us, includes the body of evangelical doctrine as above defined.

In proof of our position we argue:—

1st. The fact that the Church, at different times in the past, has made great progress in the induction and definition of the several Christian doctrines, raises no valid presumption that an equal or any considerable progress of a like nature is to be expected in the future. We have already seen that the contents of revelation, alike because of the mysteries they embrace, and because of the purely practical purpose for which the revelation has been given, and because of the limited area of fact which the contents of Scripture throw open to inductive study, do not afford the material for a science like those called natural, which are indefinitely progressing. Progress confessedly must be made in the interpretation of the Inspired Word, and in the comparison and induction of its various teachings according to the analogy of the faith, until these truths are brought into that practical relation to the mind of the Church to accomplish which they were revealed. It is presumable that this work will be accomplished with respect to different doctrines at different times, that the most essential points shall be overtaken first in order, that successful attempts at systematising will come last of all, and that the whole work will be for the most part accomplished at an early period, relatively to the general diffusion of Christianity over the whole world. This construction of Christian doctrine is not an end in itself, but a means prerequisite to the practical work of the Church, and therefore should be accomplished for the most part before the general putting forth of its activities as a world-conquering force. But when these doctrines are once so far defined as to secure general acceptance and to enter into the experience and life of the living Church, it is presumable that they will remain essentially the same in matter and form to the end. It should be remembered also that all the great divisions of Christian truth have had, at successive periods, the sanctified intelligence of whole communities and ages of pre-eminent religious activity centred upon them, and ages also, unlike the present, when the mass of educated and active mind was directed to religious subjects, and when the most illustrious individuals of their respective centuries led the high debate. After each one of these successive periods, the doctrines respectively considered passed with essential unanimity into the life, mind, and heart, and into the creeds, liturgies, hymns, and religious literature of the entire living Church of

all lands and have so remained unto the present. The admitted fact that this work was done, and by common consent well done, in theological ages, is no evidence that it was then only half done, or that it must be improved in an age characteristically naturalistic and mundane.

2nd. The fact that great progress has been made during the present age in the critical determination of the sacred text, and in the science and art of exegesis, and especially in historical reconstruction, affords no presumption that there must follow a corresponding change in our knowledge of the teaching of the Word as far as the great evangelical doctrines are concerned. The doctrinal results of this great literary advancement have already been ascertained. The greatest scholars proclaim that no change made or liable to be made in the sacred text, will necessitate the qualification of a single article of faith. Professedly orthodox Presbyterians, like Robertson Smith, are among the most radical of critics. Unitarians, like Dr. Ezra Abbott, are among the most conservative of learned critics. The most learned and able and independent German commentators draw out from the sacred texts the old doctrines. The most original of German dogmaticians, while they reject the old doctrines under the category of dogmatics, frankly restate them under the category of Biblical theology. The Rev. George E. Ellis, D.D., at a meeting of the Unitarian Club in Boston in November last, bore this explicit testimony:—"Fifty years of study, thought, and reading given largely to the Bible and to the literature which peculiarly relates to it, have brought me to this conclusion, that the book, taken with the especial Divine quality claimed for it and so extensively assigned to it, as inspired and infallible as a whole and in all its contents, is an orthodox book. It yields what is called the orthodox creed." Among the motives urging to change in theology, the facts regarding the Biblical text and its obvious sense, certainly have no part.

3rd. The fact that our age has witnessed so great an advance in all departments of natural knowledge and such signal improvement in civilisation and in the amelioration of the moral sentiments and social condition of mankind, raises no valid presumption that the spirit of the age is qualified to enable the Church to modify for the better her old reading of the plain teaching of the Inspired Word. Paul insists that the truths of revelation are not truths of reason, but that they rest upon immediate Divine authority. The specific duty God requires us to perform is to receive implicitly the testimony He has given of His Son. Men are sinners. God is an infinitely holy and righteous moral Governor. Therefore the fact, the method, and conditions of salvation, and the destiny alike of saints and sinners, can be known to us only through an explicit declaration of the sovereign will of God in the matter. How else can they be ascertained? Besides, Paul assures us that in this sphere, the natural mind of man is at enmity with God

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and cannot know the things which are only spiritually discerned. The sinner is not qualified to judge of the estimate which an infinitely holy God takes of sin, nor of his own guilt, nor of the conditions essential to his deliverance. Unregenerate judgments can have no place in settling such questions. But the world and the age, as distinct from the living Body of Christ, are as unregenerate as ever. The spirit of the world or of the age is the spirit of the natural mind, at enmity with God. Hence the wisdom of the world is, as of old, foolishness with God. It was because the world by wisdom knew not God, that He has given us a revelation of His will which rests upon sheer authority. From this there can be no appeal. And the attempt to interpret this revelation by the repudiated spirit of the age, which it was given to supersede, is as foolish as it is profane.

It is true that an unction is promised to believers, and that this spiritual illumination assists them in interpreting Scripture aright. But this has been the common endowment of the living Church in all ages. Its results are given in the common faith and life of the Church of the past. It is certainly illogical to plead the peculiar Christian consciousness of any one age, on the basis of the promised unction, in behalf of intuitions and of sentiments alike unsupported by the inspired text, and without accord with the general testimony of that historic Church which the Spirit has been teaching and leading for two thousand years.

Take, for example, the urgently questioned points as to a future probation and as to the endless suffering of the lost. It is evident that the absolute gratuitousness of the salvation of men through Christ is established alike by Scripture and by universal Christian consciousness. If of grace, then of sovereign discretion, and if of sovereign discretion, we are dependent upon the plain words of God alone for all knowledge as to the conditions of pardon, the extent and nature and period of individual probation under the Gospel, and as to the nature, extent, and duration of the punishment of the unredeemed. The presumption is a million to one that the entire historic Church, as a body to whom the unction was promised, has not uniformly erred in one direction in misreading these words written expressly for their instruction. And besides this, the conditions of the successful reading being the presence of a child-like spirit, the presumptions are manifold against these words being read more successfully in an intellectually proud, critical, self-conscious age, than in all the more simple and believing ages that are past.

It is not intended to affirm the normal authority of the Christian consciousness of the past against the genuine testimony of the Christian consciousness of the future. But we argue that the Christian consciousness of the past is known, while that of the future is problematical. And that since that of the past has been to so vast an extent uniform, and since it has been confirmed by such glorious fruits, it is presumably Biblical, and to be found at last permanent.

The same is true when we pass from the consideration of the bearing upon Christian doctrine of "the spirit of the age" to that of its philosophical and scientific theories. The attempt to adjust the doctrinal conceptions of Christians to prevalent modes and tendencies of thought in the philosophical and scientific theories of the day is evidently premature and must be unsuccessful. If either the science of Darwin or the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, or both, be absolutely true, then Christianity must be a transcended stage of evolution, and of no practical concern to men of the future. If these systems are to be modified, as unquestionably they must be in incalculable degrees and directions, then it is impossible to anticipate those modifications even in the matter of the philosophy or of the science in themselves. How much more must it be impossible to anticipate the nature and extent of the bearings of the theories, so modified, upon the contents of a supernatural revelation, designed to effect its practical work anterior to and irrespective of any or all forms of human speculation? The whole history of attempted adjustments is an experience of failure, from the age of Gnostic and Neo-Platonic speculation, to these days dominated by the speculations of Kant or of Darwin. These "adjustments" are among the "crusts" which the genius of Christianity must continue to break away. We cite the uniform experience of the past to warn against attempted progress in this direction.

The same is also true when the question relates to the most effective defence of historical Christianity and its affiliated doctrines in this critical and sceptical age. Prof. Henry B. Smith, the most philosophical theologian America has produced, closed his last work* with this definite judgment: "One thing is certain—that infidel science will rout everything excepting thorough-going Christian orthodoxy. All the flabby theories, and molluscos formations, and the intermediate purgatories of speculation will go by the board. The fight will be between a stiff thorough-going orthodoxy and a stiff thorough-going infidelity. It will be, *e.g.*, Augustine or Comte, Athanasius or Hegel, Luther or Schopenhauer, J. S. Mill or John Calvin. Arianism gets the fire from both sides; so does Arminianism; so does Universalism." And so will all compromisers and minimizers to the end.

4th. We deny that, as a matter of fact, any such progress has been made in any capital doctrine of Christianity, since the period of its first definition in a form in which it was generally accepted and assimilated by the living Church. The real apprehension, by the living Church, of the doctrines of the Trinity and of the person of Christ, has not been appreciably changed from the age of the Councils of Nice and of Chalcedon. The doctrines of grace are now apprehended by evangelical Christians as they were by St. Augustine, although the "crusts" of his virtual Romanism have been cast aside. The doctrines of the

* "Lectures on Apologetics," by Rev. Henry B. Smith, D.D., LL.D., edited by Wm. S. Karr, D.D., Professor, Hartford Theological Seminary. New York, 1882.

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atonement and of justification by faith still retain their Reformation form in the modern Church, as distinguished from the Schools. We claim that the only valid test of improvement in theology is general reception and assimilation into the faith and life of the living Church, and spontaneous expression in its religious literature, its hymns and prayers. But, as a matter of fact, the old creeds stand just where they did at first in the faith and life of the Church. The "improvements" have often been local, and of transient use in breaking away the crusts, in letting on side-lights, and in emphasising secondary aspects of truth too often overlooked. But these improvements are in general simply inferences from the philosophy of the day, and hence are discredited with the ceaseless revolutions of that philosophy, and pass away and are forgotten. None of them have given birth to a new and living creed, or left their mark upon the hymn-books, the prayer-books, or the practical life of the Church. We doubt the new improvements, because their predecessors have not stood the test of time and experience. Where are their martyrs? Where their missions? Where their revivals? Where the evidence that they have entered into the life of a Christian people and obtained the witness of the Holy Ghost? Along the whole front of the mission battle-line at home and abroad, whenever a Wesley or a Moody rises to call national Churches to a new life, in the new hymns which sound like trumpet-blasts through the lands, the same old doctrines in their old forms are heard.

5th. All the so-called improvements in theology, as far as known to us, fall under either one of two classes; they are either substitutions of different and inconsistent principles in the place of the old, which are definitely discarded, or new and more or less disproportionate emphasising of subordinate views of truth, which are included, though perhaps sometimes overlooked, in the teaching of the Church.

It is evident that all improvement in the first of these methods is absolutely impossible. Progress, to be valid, must of necessity continue through all its stages true to the original principle which it professes to develop. Substitution of new facts and methods and principles of Divine action, in place of those originally accepted by the living Church, will be revolution, but not progress. If the past conception entertained by the Church regarding the essential elements of Christianity be false, then Christianity is a failure and not from God. To substitute essentially new views of central doctrines of Christianity, is to publish another Gospel. In case the past was true, the new is false. In case the past was false, the new is totally destitute of all historic foundation.

This principle rules out many proposed improvements. Protestants turn the line of the Roman Catholic theology by demonstrating that their peculiar doctrines, as a whole and severally,—(1) are not taught in Scripture; (2) are inconsistent with the primitive faith, and with the living experience of the people of God in all ages. The doctrines

of the Schools may perish, but the doctrinal basis of the faith of the living Church of all ages must be true. That doctrine has the witness of the Spirit and the seal of faith, which is a "full assurance of understanding," as well as a "full assurance of hope," resting on the testimony of God, and has been summoning through the centuries a great cloud of witnesses, heroes of Christian work and suffering in life and in death.

6th. But the illusion which has chiefly generated the conviction that essential progress is being now made in the interpretation and definition of the vital elements of the Church creed, arises from a failure to realise the fact that the real Church creed is always comprehensive of all heresies or half truths. Heresy means choice, hence selection of one particular element or aspect of the truth as a distinguishing principle,—hence sect or division. Its very essence is a proclivity to fractional, partial, special views of truth. It exhibits itself as well in the disproportionate emphasis of some element of the whole truth at the expense of the rest, as in the absolute denial of any truth in the supposed interest of others. On the other hand, the real abiding orthodoxy of the whole Church, in distinction from the passing fashions of the Schools, is essentially all-comprehensive. It maintains its integrity by taking in all the various aspects and relations of the whole Biblical doctrine, and by giving each the relative position and emphasis which its nature and relations require. Heresy seeks simplicity, and secures it by cutting the knots of difficult problems, and by sacrificing inconvenient strands of truth. True orthodoxy accepts and conserves, in opposition to all rationalistic impulse, the entire organism of truth as God has given it, and as the living people of God have assimilated it. We are perfectly willing to abandon, to the invidious category of "Orthodoxism," all ignorant, bigoted, self-styled orthodoxy which confounds the doctrine with its formula, its essence with its accidents, and which magnifies any one element of truth, even its noblest keystone, at the expense of denying any of its complementary parts. Nevertheless we cannot agree to acknowledge, as an example of genuine progress in theology, any mere repudiation of technical terms, nor any vague mode of setting forth revealed truth in the place of a more logical one, nor any cry over some (always recognised, but perhaps not sufficiently emphasised) subordinate aspect of the truth, as a great discovery, or even as the very soul of the Gospel itself.

Illustrations of this assertion are furnished through the entire course of Christian history. The tri-personality of one God was the problem. One party, afterwards known as Sabellians, unduly emphasised the Divine unity at the expense of the personal distinctions. Another, because they unduly emphasised the personal distinctions, were called Tri-theists. Arians and semi-Arians laid disproportionate stress upon the difference and subordination of the Son relatively to the Father. Again, the person of Christ was the problem. One party, in order to bring the doctrine within the grasp of the human reason, denied the

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Divinity ; another, in the same interest, denied the reality of the humanity ; another pressed the unity to the obliteration of the distinction of natures ; another pressed the distinction of natures to the virtual dissolution of the unity of person. Subsequently the Lutherans held to the virtual deification of the humanity, and modern German theologians teach the virtual humanisation of the Deity. Again, the relation of Christ's sacrificial death to the salvation of His people was the problem. One party emphasised its effect in ransoming God's people from the power of Satan ; another, the moral influence effected by the exhibition of that miracle of holy love upon the hearts of sinners ; another, its influence as a sin-detering example upon the public mind of the moral universe ; another, its effect as a satisfaction to the whole nature of God, which view, if considered at all, must be recognised as central to all the rest. And these last take various views as to the nature of that God-satisfying effect, some directing chief attention to the physical suffering, and others to the mental and moral attitude and experience of Christ. Again, the relation of God to the universe is the problem. One party deistically insists that God lives apart from the world, and only acts down upon it from without ; another that He is immanent within the world, and that He works continuously, not by sudden disconnected steps, but by ceaseless growth in every centre, and along all lines of natural law. In all these problems without exception, the law-abiding faith of the Christian Church holds all these tendencies in the balance of the full-orbed system.

The zeal for improving theology often leads to much good in the way of breaking up the scholastic crusts, and in recalling to general recognition secondary aspects of the truth, hitherto too much neglected by the Church as a whole. But the success of these movements is generally local and transient. The passion for progress for its own sake is necessarily fatal to its own results as far as these are positive. Thus in succession the advocates of theological specialities go over the whole ground, and emphasising in turn all elements of the truth, help to keep the Church herself more orthodox by keeping her more fully and more continuously awake to all the contents of her God-given heritage. He only is a heretic who denies, or practically ignores, essential truth. He only is fully orthodox who finds a place in his creed for all the elements of the one God-given truth, as far as these vast out-reaching mysteries are revealed in the Word. The only progress in Christian doctrine which we believe to be now possible, lies in the way of a constant emphasising of all these elements, and of a constant reintegration of each and all into their place in the whole body of faith.

7th. Another occasion of specious and delusive "improvements in theology," is a habit becoming increasingly prevalent of dwelling upon certain isolated and peculiar texts (as 1 Pet. iii. 18-20, and Rev. xx. 1-10), and then proceeding to explain the clear by the dark, and the general drift of Scripture by the apparent indication of

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the single passage. Exegesis and Biblical theology are essential. It is not surprising, however alarming, that a re-action against the dominance of scholastic methods in time past should have led to a prevalent neglect of systematic theology in the present. But if the whole Bible be the Word of God, no matter in what sections, nor by what historical processes, it may have been delivered, His mind therein expressed must be interpreted by the old common sense methods. The dark must be interpreted by the clear ; the single passage by its connections with the course of thought ; the singular passage by the general drift not only of its immediate context, but by the analogy of the entire body of teaching of the Word of God. The two disciplines are complementary and essential to each other. Systematic theology without exegesis is utterly destitute of material, and of all trustworthy basis. While just as certainly exegesis without the guidance, which systematic theology alone can furnish to the analogy of the entire teaching of God's Word, and to the relations of doctrine to doctrine, is simple material without law, movement without rationally determined direction.

The reader will, it is hoped, have clearly observed that the writer has conducted this argument with reference to the fact, which he asserts, that theology in the sense of the sum of the saving doctrines common to the Reformation and to the modern Evangelical Churches, will not make progress in the future. He especially wishes it to be understood, that he has not considered even incidentally or remotely the question whether the Confession of Faith, or the other doctrinal symbols of any Church, should be modified. The mere possibility of improvement in view of ideal standards might be admitted in any case, while in every case he would insist upon the impropriety of such an attempt under actual or probable historic conditions.

A. A. HODGE.

[The next paper in this series will be by Rev. Newman Smyth, D.D., New Haven, Connecticut, author of "Old Faiths in a New Light."]

Notes of the Day.

OUR JUBILEE NUMBER.—This is the fiftieth number of *The Catholic Presbyterian*. We desire to mark the event by the only jubilant feeling that the case admits of—thankfulness that month after month, for so long a time, the great brotherhood of Presbyterian Churches have been able to meet on our platform, and that, even where difference of opinion has been expressed, no strife has arisen, and no bitter words have been uttered. The sight which refreshed so many hearts at Edinburgh in 1877, and again at Philadelphia in 1880, has been exhibited virtually in the monthly issue of this journal from 1st