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BY

ALEXANDER V. G. ALLEN

PROFESSOR IN THE EPISCOPAL THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
IN CAMBRIDGE



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These Lectures

READ BEFORE THE DIVINITY SCHOOL OF YALE

UNIVERSITY, IN MARCH, 1894

ARE DEDICATED TO

ELIZABETH KENT ALLEN

† OCTOBER 14, 1892

IN GRATEFUL AND SACRED

AND EVERLASTING REMEMBRANCE



QUONIAM APUD TE EST
FONS VITÆ; ET IN LUMINE
TUO VIDEBIMUS LUMEN



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RELIGIOUS PROGRESS.

Nihil sub sole novum, nec valet quisquam dicere: Ecce hoc recens est. ECCLES. i. 10.

Haec dicit Dominus: State super vias et videte et interrogate de semitis antiquis, quae sit via bona et ambulate in ea. JER. vi. 16.

Et dixit qui sedebat in throno: Ecce nova facio omnia. REV. xxi. 5.

RELIGIOUS PROGRESS.

I.

In the Experience of the Individual.

I.



ENTLEMEN : I should like to express to you the pleasure it gives me to be here, how it is at once a privilege and an honor to stand before you in this ancient institution. More than any other college or university, Yale has been the nursing-mother of great theologians. There is, first of all, Jonathan Edwards, who deserves the rank which has been assigned him by his admirers, as one of the greatest as well as one of the best of the sons of men, to whose theology full justice has not yet been done, to which we may yet return for inspiration and guidance

when we are able to shut our eyes, as we may properly do, to his Inferno, for it was but the negative side of his thought, by means of which, and in comparison with which, his lofty conceptions of God and man stand out in strong relief. There is Dr. Samuel Hopkins, with his seemingly hard message of disinterested submission, which, when rightly understood, bears high testimony to the divine dignity and capacity of human nature, to his own nobility of character as well. Dr. Emmons was the author of a most extraordinary theology, a system of sheer unqualified pantheism, in which the intensity of a tropical sun, shining in the noonday, threatened to extinguish with its intense heat and brilliancy all lower forms of life, —a theology preached with a living fire which still burns in his sermons, a man who surely ought to come up again for a rehearing. Dr. Dwight was more moderate and less eccentric, developing a theological system in his sermons before the

students, upon which in those trying times men could rest and build. There was Dr. Taylor, who led the way out of the difficulties which then beset the doctrine of original sin. Dr. Bushnell had a creative mind of a high order, striking out a path of his own, an innovator, indeed, turning the mind of the churches into new directions, in order that they might escape the wearisome confusion bred by the old controversies, and yet aware also that the full significance of the old doctrines had not been measured. If he did not always solve the issues which he raised, yet he never failed to shed light upon them, revealing by his personal disclosure of his own religious need the positive directions which theology must take. And one other, also, deserves to be mentioned in the same honored list, the late Elisha Mulford, who aimed to combine the old with the new in living relationship, to whom the Nicene Creed repeated the last and highest utterance of the New Theology, who was true

to his Puritan antecedents when he saw in the Nation the Republic of God.

These men, all of them, and each in his own way, labored for the advancement of theology as a science. Whatever we may think of their work, or whether we think of it at all, they were possessed by one common conviction, that the knowledge of God, the most elemental and fundamental of all knowledge, was capable of growth; that theology as a science admitted of improvement and expansion. In speaking to you on the subject of religious progress, I am not out of harmony with this long and honored descent of your own divines.

When I was invited to deliver these lectures, I was reminded by Dr. Fisher that Phillips Brooks had been in the habit of coming here to address you. I cannot hope to find you as he would have done, and yet I have the assurance that the thought I seek to express would have met his approval. He believed in progress with an earnestness of conviction which

few men can rival, — it might almost be called an article of his creed. Out of his many expressions on the subject, let me quote these two characteristic utterances :

“It would be intolerable to us, if we could not trace tendencies in our life. If everything stood still, or if things moved only in a circle, it would be a dreadful thing to live. But we rejoice in life, because it seems to be carrying us somewhere, because its darkness seems to be rolling on towards light, and even its pain to be moving onward to a hidden joy. We bear with incompleteness, because of the completion which is prophesied and hoped for.”

“Christianity is one and everlasting. Its work of salvation for man’s soul is the same blessed work forever. But its relation to the world’s life at large must be forever changing with the changes of that world’s needs and seekings. The larger applications of Christianity must of necessity be readjusted, and in their readjustments, its power may be temporarily obscured or unrecognized as it passes into new forms of exhibition.”

In his devotion to progress as a principle, necessary to the symmetry and completeness of our spiritual consciousness, Phillips Brooks was a child of his age. For if there is one conviction, or any one word, which more than another is characteristic of the nineteenth century, it is progress. It was not the custom of other ages to talk of progress as we do to-day, as if it were the motive and the test of life, to be applied to all our institutions and usages whether in church or state. In other ages and even down to the close of the last century, the past was for the most part regarded as greater than the present, as if in the nature of the case, the fathers knew more or had done greater things than their degenerate descendants. They carried a heavier spear or wore a larger armor than their children. The problems which the great thinkers of distant ages had been unable to solve, it was presumption for their posterity to attempt to solve. All this has been changed and even re-

versed by our conception of progress. It is as though we had crossed some invisible line, by which our outlook upon the world had been modified. Our faces are now set as if we would explore a territory hitherto unknown, or sound some greater depth in the mystery of existence. There has been something in the air, or in the souls of men, in this modern day, a jubilation and expectation, as if we had at last learned how to live, as if it were in our power to bring in the millennial age; as if all things were now possible to him that believed.

The word progress is one of those great words, summaries of a people's philosophy, which we use the more freely just because we take it for granted and do not think to define it. Its power as a word is all the greater because its meaning is vague or indeterminable; indeed, in its vagueness consists its power. In the days when transcendentalism was in vogue in New England, its disciples were fond of asking for

a definition of life, but the strange unintelligible jargon of the many ambitious answers showed that the expression was indefinable. So it is with progress ; or to adopt the words of St. Augustine which he used concerning the knowledge of God, we know what it is, if we are not asked to tell what it is, but if we are asked to tell what it is we do not know what it is. But we believe in it even though we are at a loss to define it, and our best reason for our belief is that we do believe. We sometimes argue that if one will take in the long range of the centuries, or compare our own time with the world of the Middle Ages, there is evidence enough of the progress of humanity. But this evidence appeals only to scholars and students of history, even if it were wholly satisfactory ; while the conviction of progress is a great popular belief or enthusiasm, which has not been caught from scholars, nor been generated by any elaborate retrospect or comparison. It is rather because we are look-

ing forward to some higher attainment than the present, that we believe in progress, because we are stirred by some divine unrest, or have had vouchsafed to us some vision, or as if some special revelation of the things which need to be done, which can be done, for the perfecting of the life of man. Whatever may be the true ground of our conviction, it has come about that the world's life and progress are almost one in their meaning, they are used interchangeably as if they were synonyms. If we have learned from the past, we have also learned from our own experience, that ideals cannot be destroyed, that they have a tendency to persist and enforce their claim, a tendency to fulfillment even though we never witness their full realization.

Tennyson still remains, after all, the most representative voice of this conviction, so that his words lose nothing by their familiarity. It is the argument from the indestructibility of the ideal, which evokes enthusiasm : —

“Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping
something new:

That which they have done but earnest of the things that
they shall do:

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that
should be.”

The poet was impressed by the circumstance that change — change in itself and almost for its own sake — is the evidence that we are in motion toward some greater good ; that the old order requires to be changed if it would stand the test of progress, whether in its institutions, its doctrine, creed, or cultus, civil or social arrangements. It is like a journey where we know that we are advancing to our goal, because the scene is always changing, each moment disclosing something new. If the scene remained the same or were repeated at intervals, we should infer that we were standing still or moving in a circle. Whether the change means anything better in the immediate present, or whether it is an improvement in itself, is not the

question. The point is that we accept the change because it is change, and because of the larger trust in some distant good which beckons us onward, as if this faith were the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

If we have any misgivings about the reality beneath the change, the same poet has expressed them for us. There were moments in his experience when order festered and things seemed out of joint. He became tired of modern civilization, till he even longed for quiet and rest in some spot which no intellectual or scientific activity could penetrate, where commerce was unknown, — the low range of savage existence. He saw that the increase of knowledge was not followed by the increase of true wisdom, which still lingered in the rear; he feared that the individual might wither, for the sacrifice of his interests was threatened by this mighty movement, which only contemplated the good of the whole. It might be that

the steamship, the railway — the thoughts that shake mankind — were not, after all, contributing to true happiness. But out of this skepticism or depression he rallied in the name of progress, and as the heir of all the ages : —

“Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward
let us range.

Let the great world spin forever down the ringing
grooves of change.

Through the *shadow of the globe*, we sweep into the
younger day :

Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.”

There were sensitive souls in the early years of this century who felt the chill as they passed through the shadow of the globe, when, to the ardent emotions bred by the passionate belief in human perfectibility, there succeeded a collapse of hope. Wordsworth was one of those who, having shared in the thrilling expectancy of the hour, experienced the sad mood of the reaction, and yet without yielding his faith in progress. In his mature years, at the age of forty, he spoke of “the heart-cheer-

ing belief in the perpetual progress of the species towards a point of unattainable perfection." When we seek for the grounds of his conviction, it appears as if a first principle, or as some intuitive idea, for which no evidence is forthcoming, in which one ought to trust, despite all appearances to the contrary. "Let us allow and believe," so he writes in 1809, "that there is a progress in the species towards an unattainable perfection, or, whether this be so or not, that it is a necessity of a good and greatly gifted nature to believe it." He meets the objections which he felt, and the skepticism in his own soul, by dwelling on the thought that progress is not necessarily constant, either in virtue or intellectual qualities, or in the most valuable indispensable department of knowledge. "The progress of the species is not like a Roman road which goes straight to its goal, but rather like a winding river, frequently forced to turn backward in order to overcome obstacles which cannot be

directly eluded, but always moving with an additional impulse, conquering in secret great difficulties, and, whether we can trace it or not, gaining strength every hour for the accomplishment of its destiny.”

The faith of Wordsworth in human progress possesses the greater significance because he lived through an age of depression and of reaction engendered by the failure of the French Revolution, when, despite all that tended to doubt and discouragement, he maintained his faith unshaken. He lived to see that faith become the inspiring motive in every department of human activity. I will not even attempt to enumerate the rich and varied results of progress which go to make our modern civilization in the political or social or industrial order, the improvements in methods of education, the discoveries of science, the new branches of inquiry which are so full of promise for the future, — all of which make the nineteenth century the most memorable, because the most pro-

gressive age in the world's history. Nor in these later years has there been any relaxation of effort in order to the abolition of old abuses or the bringing in of better ways; but rather as time has advanced has the conviction spread and deepened that still greater changes are needed, to which the race of man is equal, to which it is pledged and consecrated by its faith in progress. Hence we labor, as if all sin and suffering and evil could be overcome and banished if only right methods could be made to prevail. There has been so much encouragement in what has been accomplished that many begin to feel as if we were on the threshold of still greater discoveries; that as yet only the basis has been laid for some higher civilization, of whose beneficence we can form no adequate conception.

II.

But the popular belief in progress does not go unchallenged. There are grave doubts as to its reality, misgivings, deep questionings in the minds of those who seek to analyze the constituents of the problem of human life. There are many who turn away in weariness from the noisy declamation which magnifies in grandiloquent words the progress of the age, who doubt whether every change is an improvement, who recognize that our complicated civilization involves greater evils than the simpler forms of earlier ages, who discern dark portents in the future, from which they see no means of escape. There are others who have had to fight their way through the pessimism of Schopenhauer, and, if they have escaped his conclusion, yet feel the soreness of the struggle through which they have passed, so that their optimism, their hope for the future of mankind, is more sober and subdued.

The speculative difficulties which embarrass thoughtful minds as they reflect on the nature of progress come to a focus, as it were, in the sphere of religion; for theology alone professes to enlighten us on the whence and the whither, to reveal with authority the laws which ought to govern conduct, and to initiate us into the methods by which humanity shall fulfill its calling. But the picture which the religious world presents is not altogether clear or encouraging. Does the Church gain an increasing light into the nature of God and his relations to men? Does it prosecute its work with increasing success? How far does the cultivation of morality and holy character, and the spirit of brotherly love keep pace with the advances of material civilization? Do erroneous views and superstitions tend to disappear? And if unity is the badge of a well-established science, how far does theology merit recognition as a science, in view of the wide variety of opinion in the religious world?

To questions like these different answers will be returned. However hopeful may be our attitude, yet as we scan the horizon in search of evidence for religious progress, we are forced to confess that there is much which seems to contradict our hope. The old errors still exist and show no traces of weakness, but, on the contrary, they seem to have taken a new lease of life. In some respects a retrograde tendency appears, as in the reversion, in our own day, to theories of Christian certitude or defences of the faith, which learning and scholarship unite in rejecting as untenable. Even religious persecution has not wholly passed away, and though its forms may have changed, yet the religious conflicts of the present, the ostracism of good men for heresy, still remind us of an age which we had fondly thought to have disappeared, never to return.

It was this feature of the religious world which led Macaulay to deny that any prog-

ress could be traced in religious history. The familiar essay in which he gave utterance to this conviction was written in 1840, not far from the time when Tennyson wrote his "Locksley Hall." Macaulay had been browsing over Ranke's "History of the Popes" till his mind was so powerfully impressed with the long duration of the papacy, and not only with its duration but with its dominion, which seemed to him still unshaken, that he was led to utter the depressing prophecy which has afforded such comfort to our Roman Catholic brethren, — that their Church might be destined to witness the end of all other forms of Christian organization: "She may exist in undiminished vigor when some traveler from New Zealand shall in the midst of a vast solitude take his stand upon London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's."

Macaulay did not form this opinion without some evidence, or at least some show of reasoning. He pointed out that there

are branches of knowledge with respect to which the law of the human mind is progress. In mathematics, and in the experimental sciences, what was once acquired could not again be lost, for people, as he remarks, do not react against established scientific theorems, such as Harvey's doctrine of the circulation of the blood. But 'with regard to religion, the case, he says, is different. Socrates knew as much of natural theology as Paley, and was just as well circumstanced for knowing all that was to be known; in the Book of Job, they talked with as much skill about the problems of life as they do to-day. Revealed religion also, he thought, no more than natural religion, could be called a progressive science. A Christian of the fifth century, with a Bible in his hands, other things being equal, is on a par with a Christian of our own day; the discoveries of civilization have no bearing whatever on religious doctrines; there was Sir Thomas More, who went back to the

belief in transubstantiation, when all the world was rejecting it, and he was a man of eminent talent ; no learning or sagacity affords security against the greatest errors on religious subjects ; Bayle and Chillingworth became Roman Catholics from sincere conviction ; and the great Dr. Johnson was a believer in miracles and apparitions. "For these reasons," he exclaims, "we have ceased to wonder at any vagaries of superstition. . . . During the last seven centuries the public mind of Europe has made constant progress in almost every department of secular knowledge. But in religion we can trace no constant progress. The ecclesiastical history of that long period is the history of movement to and fro."

The judgment of Macaulay, even if superficial or erroneous, like so many other conclusions which he reached, has still a representative character. Numerous illustrations could be adduced in our own experience to confirm the line of argu-

ment which he adopted. The nineteenth century abounds in these instances of reversion to old errors, to what were supposed to be extinct beliefs. The old heresies have a singular way of reappearing, so that there is hardly any religious conviction of the past which does not still find credence. One often hears among the clergy the same melancholy conclusion that progress is not the law of the religious world. Isolated as they too generally are from the world of thought, preoccupied supremely with the practical interests of their profession, hearing at a distance the confused rumbling of a world's commotion, they come wearily to the conclusion that the old errors obey a certain law of periodicity, the old heresies are doomed ever and anon to reappear, as though we were treading in an endless circle.

And again, Macaulay was right, to a certain extent, in feeling that there was some difference between the spheres of religion and of material civilization, so that the

same law did not prevail alike in both. He did not see wherein the difference lay, but rather blindly assumed that because religion did not follow the method of progress in the natural sciences, therefore the law of progress did not apply to religious knowledge. Many others have drawn the same conclusion from the same premises. The brilliant results achieved in the positive sciences, the firm step, the forward movement from one point in advance to another, the security of attainment beyond the power of modification by personal taste or preferences, — these things afford a striking contrast to the religious situation, which, to the gaze from without, resembles a seething confusion of contradictory opinions, where no opinion is in the nature of the case absurd, and all opinions are alike lacking in the authority of demonstrated truth.

In speaking to you on the subject of religious progress, I have no theory to advocate, nor am I so presumptuous as to think

of demonstrating the existence of any law or method under whose uniform operation the phenomena of religion are included. There are many attempts at a philosophy of history, each of which may have its peculiar merits, contributing something to our knowledge of the ways of the Spirit in the life of humanity, while yet no one of them nor all taken together are adequate to the solution of the mysterious problem of the spiritual life. I do not intend to add another to these many efforts to explain the genesis of religion, or the method of its growth, but shall be content with the more modest task of calling attention to certain demonstrated tendencies in religious thought or experience, which may throw some light on the situation of the religious world, when they are viewed together as parts of a larger whole. In this first lecture I propose to treat the subject of religious progress in its relations to the individual man, to trace the ruling ideas or motives in accordance with

which men act in the present as they have in the past, — methods with whose workings we ourselves are familiar, for we, too, have followed them in our own religious development. In my second lecture I shall consider the subject of religious progress as it appears in the organized forms of Christianity, in the Christian Church considered as a whole, where other methods prevail, where the individual contradictions are merged in a larger unity, the orchestra, as it were, of the religious life of humanity where dissonance contributes to a richer, more universal harmony.

III.

In the life of the individual there are three distinct tendencies, whose action, whether separately or in combination, enters into the vital movements of religious thought and experience. We may call them tendencies, forces, attitudes, or motives, — the name is unimportant if we can get some clear conception of their nature

and operation. They take their origin as so many different answers to the supreme problem in religion, — how is the past related to the present ; how is the old truth by which men have lived in the past related to the new truth which calls for allegiance in the present ?

The first of these tendencies to which I ask your attention is the impulse, everywhere and at all times manifest, to reject the old belief or practice in order to the reception of some new truth. There is a certain order of minds upon which truth, when revealed, seizes with irresistible force, impelling them, if they would realize its possession, to reject with vehemence their former belief, as if the rejection of the old were indispensable to the acceptance of the new. The process of appropriating the new idea seems to require, as if by some necessary law of the working of the human mind, this bitter antagonism to one's earlier attitude, as if the old neutralized or contradicted the new conviction, as if the

old must therefore be utterly false, — a delusion from which one must be emancipated at any cost. It becomes a duty to distinguish sharply between the old and the new, while the attempt to reconcile them seems like a weakness if not a sin. Like the pearl of great price, when a man becomes aware of its existence, he must sell all that he has in order to secure it. Only in this way, when the soul, as it were, is swept clean and free from its former occupants, can the new spirit enter in and take possession. Otherwise no footing could be gained for the new conception; it would perish in the monotony of intellectual dullness which sees no differences, or is incapable of drawing distinctions.

Those who are acted upon in this way by the contact of new truth may become the world's reformers; they are the stuff out of which martyrs are made; they would gladly go to the stake for their convictions. They are not confused by seeing more than one side of a question, — that weak-

ness which palsies so many souls for action. They are often vigorous and powerful spirits burning with the fires of zeal, attracting followers, becoming founders of new sects, and making the world different from what they found it.

Such is the motive in the familiar process which we call the storm and stress in the intellectual and spiritual experience of young men, — the motive by which they come to the knowledge of themselves, or enter upon their new inheritance. There is a moment when what they have been taught or have received in youth is called in question; when they can see only the contrast and opposition between the dead tradition of their earlier years and the living freedom which the new conviction offers. The same motive is revealed, also, in the first instinct of a converted man, leading him to renounce not only what was evil in his old life, but all its associations as well, however innocent, to the end that he may become a new man in Christ

Jesus. Nowhere is this more effectively illustrated than in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," where Christian sets forth on his memorable journey, leaving his home, his wife and children, — his whole world, — behind him, as the indispensable condition of attaining a new life. It was in this mood that so many in the ancient church condemned and rejected with abhorrence the old heathen world, — its art, its literature, its philosophy, as well as its immoral and vicious customs, — as if all alike were totally corrupted, or like salt which had lost its savor. For this reason St. Augustine was led, after his conversion, to assert the doctrine of the total depravity of human nature, in order to make more emphatic the vital difference between the natural man and the soul which has been renewed by divine grace; and again, to make his sweeping condemnation of all heathen virtues, as if but splendid vices.

It is a peculiarity of religious controversies that they magnify distinctions and

exaggerate differences, to the ultimate advantage, it may be, of the truth, but in the immediate moment causing great confusion, while each of the combating parties proclaims the attitude of the other to be false. The late Dr. Pusey, referring to the teaching of his eminent contemporary, Mr. Maurice, declared that they worshiped different Gods. In the bitterness of the strife between Calvinist and Arminian in the last century, the Calvinistic deity was proclaimed to be identical with the Arminian devil, while to the Calvinist it seemed better that the throne of the universe should be vacant than that it should be occupied by such a pitiful nonentity as the Arminians worshiped.

In the greater revolutionary epochs of history, or in moments when the transitions of life are most apparent, in those days of the Lord which the prophet declared were not days to be prayed for or desired, those men assume the leadership who have broken most violently with the

old and corrupt order ; who will make no compromise, but insist on the divine judgment in the destruction of the ancient usage or institution. Such was Luther, though but for a short moment in his career ; such was Calvin with his implacable hatred against Rome ; such was also Knox, the most radical of all the reformers, who held that "the Church of Rome was not merely corrupt, but was abandoned to evil ; it was not the church of God but the church of the devil, and must be wiped off the face of the earth." To these reformers, in that great hour, despite their intolerance and their iconoclasm, the world is owing, as it also acknowledges, a great obligation ; for without them the step could not have been taken by which humanity advanced into freedom and light. In these instances, and others which might be given, there is a revelation of the workings of the human soul, and therefore of the manifestation of God in history. He taketh away the old that he may bring in the new.

This method of religious progress which invokes reaction as its agent in the individual, or inspires a revolution, when adopted on a larger scale, must be recognized as one of the constituent elements of religious history ; but, taken by itself as the only agent of reform, it has grave deficiencies. It is a violent method of gaining a hearing or a reception for new truth, or of eliminating the evils and abuses of custom grown hard by age and precedent. When successful, it forces the church to compromises and readjustments ; when it fails it is stigmatized as heresy ; for heresy, if a definition of the word be possible, is identified with the passionate advocacy of some hitherto unknown or unappreciated aspect of the truth, generally coupled with a denial of that prevailing view which seems to stand in the way of its acceptance. But heresy has had its place and function within the church. It would be no unprofitable chapter in the history of Christian doctrine, which should consider

the heresies by themselves in the contributions they have made to the fuller development of Christian truth. In our own age, we may admit our indebtedness to heresy for the original advocacy of the great principle that the Bible is to be regarded as literature, as written by men of like passions as we are, though the affirmation was needlessly attended by the denial of its inspiration or revelation. It was heresy which first asserted the competence and authority of the human reason, while the principle of church authority was rejected as having no relation to the reason. It has advocated the sanctity of human nature, the perfect humanity of Christ, and the doctrine of the divine unity, but with the indignant denial of original sin and the truth of the incarnation and the doctrine of the Trinity. In order to gain a hearing for the conviction that there is truth in other religions than the Christian, heresy has been willing to deny that Christianity was the absolute religion. It has forced

the religious world to recognize the value of scientific methods and results, but with the corresponding negation of any validity in theology as a science. If evolution were true, the doctrine of creation was false.

In all these cases there have been violent commotions which have convulsed the religious world. And, indeed, this method of progress seems to imply that the sphere of religion must of necessity be a theatre of constant agitation and conflict, just as war has hitherto been regarded as a necessary accompaniment of an expanding civilization. Is there, then, no other way of religious progress by which the readjustments that the time demands may be more quietly accomplished, some method by which the individual may grow into the larger truth without the indignant renunciation of the old faith?

IV.

There is another theory concerning progress, according to which it is conceived as a uniform movement forward and upward, so that each age prepares the way for that which follows; that which comes later in time being for that very reason higher, truer, more complete than that which preceded it. At no point in the process should any violent break with the past be allowed, for the old should grow evenly and naturally into the new. There was not only a relative truth in ancient institutions and doctrines, but when they are superseded it is because they have ministered to their own displacement, because their spirit has passed over into the later and larger institution, which conserving the essence of the old adjusts it to the new environment. Nor can the old be superseded until it has done its work, yielding up its vital truth to its successor.

Such was Pascal's doctrine of the colos-

sal man, which I venture to give in his own words, familiar as they are, and often quoted:—

“The whole succession of human beings throughout the whole course of ages must be regarded as a single individual man, continually living and continually learning. And that shows how unwarranted is the deference we yield to the philosophers of antiquity. For as old age is that which is most distant from infancy, it must be manifest to all that old age in the universal man should not be sought in the times near his birth but in the times most distant from it. Those whom we call the ancients are really those who lived in the youth of the world and the true infancy of man; and as we have added the experiences of the ages between us and them to what they knew, it is only in ourselves that is to be found that antiquity which we venerate in others.”

Such has been the theory which has underlain the study of history since the days of Schleiermacher. Indeed, it may be said to have given birth to the modern

historical method, which is distinguished from earlier methods by its attempt to penetrate into the inner meaning of events or doctrines, with the sole purpose of reaching the truth which they embodied, and of exhibiting this truth in its organic relation to human progress. For after the crude controversies of the last century, the vision began to dawn upon far-seeing minds that some definite purpose ran through human affairs; that, instead of moving blindly to and fro, humanity was acting as if under the guidance of an intelligent will to the accomplishment of some vast beneficent end; that enough was discernible to indicate such an increasing purpose, though the goal might be still remote and hidden from view. This is the doctrine of development which, on its religious side, assumes with Lessing that God is educating the human race just as children are trained by tutors and governors, or by the experience and observation of life. We may connect this doc-

trine with the words of Christ, which He spoke of the Spirit, — He shall lead you into all truth. “If that Spirit,” said Bishop Thirlwall, “by which every man spoke of old is forever a living and present Spirit, its later lessons may well transcend its earlier.”

It is well to remember that this doctrine of development had been announced and had become the working principle of historical investigation long before it was applied by Darwin to the physical order. Perhaps, also, it is better to retain the word development as standing for the law of progress in humanity; since the word evolution may carry ideas which are true of the order of outward nature, but which do not apply to the spiritual world.

It would seem as if a doctrine of progress like this, at once so rational, so elevating, so practical, would find universal acceptance, becoming a law to the individual for self-cultivation, as well as to statesmen or reformers, who are called to

guide the destinies of a people. As an historical method, it has redeemed and justified the course of the ages behind us ; it has not only enabled the past to live again so that we may understand and appropriate its truth, but it has pointed out, also, its deficiencies, and shown how they may be supplemented or corrected. The study of the past may give direction for the future, affording us a chart by which we may guide our movement over the otherwise trackless ocean of human existence. When we know how the race of man has traveled before us, we know something of the route to be followed as well as of that to be avoided. Instead of breaking with the past by revolution, or by violent reactions, we have the order of beautiful and symmetrical growth. Culture and the slow but sure process of education will become powerful agencies for promoting true reform. In the light of the growing truth, whatever is irrational, or superstitious, or false, would be doomed to fade away and disappear.

At this point, however, we confront one of the most perplexing anomalies in human experience. While it may be that in the normal moods of human society a gradual progress by culture and education is the true method to be followed, so that the old shall grow into the new without the evils which wait upon revolution or commotion, yet not only has this method not prevailed in the past, but there have been crises in history when its application would have been impossible. There is one man to whom we invariably revert when we think of a great opportunity which was lost for gradual reform. Erasmus, who stood for this principle in the age of the Reformation, deprecated a religious revolution as an incalculable injury to the cause of human progress, and sought to avert it by doing all in his power to enlighten the world of his time, in the hope that evils and abuses would quietly disappear, while the general order of the church would remain. But when Luther

arose, the star of Erasmus went down. If Erasmus could have had his way, there would have been no break with the mediæval church, and, as some regard it, the sin of schism would have been prevented. There are many scholars who take this view; indeed, it has almost come to be known as the scholarly attitude toward the Reformation.

In the words of Clough in his "Amours de Voyage":—

Luther, they say, was unwise: like a half-taught German, he could not
See that the old follies were passing most tranquilly out
of remembrance;—
Leo the Tenth was employing all efforts to clear out
abuses—
Jupiter, Juno, and Venus, Fine Arts and Fine Letters,
the Poets,
Scholars and Sculptors and Painters were quietly clearing
away the
Martyrs and Virgins and Saints, or, at any rate, Thomas
Aquinas;—
He must forsooth make a fuss and distend his huge
Wittenberg lungs, and
Bring back theology once yet again in a flood upon Europe:—

Lo, you, for forty days from the windows of heaven it
fell; —
Waters prevail on the earth yet more for a hundred and
fifty;
Are they abating at last? The doves that are sent to
explore are
Wearily fain to return at the best with a leaflet of
promise, —
Fain to return as they went to the wandering wave-tost
vessel,
Fain to reënter the roof which covers the clean and the
unclean.
Luther, they say, was unwise; he didn't see how things
were going.

This opinion of scholars, which regards it as a mistake that Luther, and not Erasmus, should have led the Reformation, is rather an inference from a certain theory of progress than a conclusion based upon the full knowledge of things as they are. I am inclined to hazard the statement that no one familiar with all that preceded or followed the protest of Luther, no one acquainted with the history of the age of the Renaissance and of the Catholic or Counter-Reformation, can come to any

other conclusion than that Luther was divinely called and impelled to his task. Even had there been no Luther, there was Henry VIII. and the national movement in England, which alone would have been sufficient to arouse the Inquisition or to generate a Loyola ; in a word to give Spain the opportunity which she coveted. In this view your own distinguished teacher of church history concurs, whose book on the Reformation entitles him to speak with authority. We may and we must hold to the doctrine that religious reforms are better accomplished by the gradual process of education and enlightenment ; but we must admit that there come moments in history when this method does not avail, — the birth-hour of great institutions which are to remould the fortunes of society. Fortunately, these crises are exceptional and rare ; only these two, clearly demonstrated to be such, — the age of the Protestant Reformation, and the age of the coming of Christ, of which the words were

spoken, "I am not come to send peace on earth, but a sword," and "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

The conception of progress, as an even or uniform development by means of culture or enlightenment, encounters other obstacles than those afforded by the anomalies of history. It is a conception peculiarly liable to be misunderstood, often, indeed, so greatly perverted as to become untrue.

It is misinterpreted when it is so construed as to teach that every change is a direct advance, so that what is latest in time is for that reason superior to what has gone before. Wordsworth's illustration needs to be kept in view that the stream often turns backward in its course in order to escape some obstacle which hinders its direct movement. History is full of instances of this reversion of the current. There may be cases where it does not return to its normal path until after the generations have passed away.

A recent writer in a valuable book on the growth of the spirit of Christianity makes the ancient church of the first five centuries correspond to the period of the childhood of the faith, the Middle Ages to its youth, the Reformation to its mature manhood. But in reality the Middle Ages was in most important aspects so far inferior to the ancient church, in what concerns civilization or intellectual culture or theological insight, that it sat devoutly at the feet of the earlier age, as its blind, submissive pupil. The Protestant Reformation did not at once issue in the happy results which had been anticipated, but on the contrary so great were the evils attending its course that we can hardly wonder many should have reverted fondly to the age before Luther arose as a more favorable moment to the higher interests of life. Undoubtedly, when we take the long survey of the centuries the advance is clear; but to demonstrate it at every stage of the movement is not possible.

And again, the comparison of Pascal which makes the life of humanity as a whole follow the stages of growth in the individual from childhood through youth to maturity, valuable as are the elements of truth it may contain, is often so misinterpreted as to neutralize its meaning. What is the meaning of those words of St. Paul, "When I became a man I put away childish things"? Surely not that every belief or institution which had its rise in the early stages of the history of the race is for that reason discredited, and its rejection demanded by the later age which has entered upon the inheritance of manhood. It is a popular fallacy, with which any true doctrine of progress must contend, that if a belief or practice can be traced to a remote origin, or the stages of its growth be shown, it ought no longer to commend itself to the present enlightened age. So a recent writer has remarked that "To see the process of the formation of a doctrine is already to behold its dissolution." An

eminent preacher not long ago gave as his reason for ceasing to administer the Lord's Supper that it went back for its rude beginnings to the savage custom of feeding on the flesh or drinking the blood of an enemy slain in war.

The lamentable result of these misapplications of a great principle is to leave the spirit no rest or sure foundations. For nothing can be permanently attained so long as the primary obligation is to be always looking out for something new. Hardly have we reached a position in which our feet may securely stand when we are called on to renounce it, if we would not be denounced as laggards, traitors to the principle of progress. No validity must be recognized in what has been accomplished lest it should interfere with the new light which may break in on us from some unexpected quarter. All things must remain in a fluid state, the chaos of a perpetual becoming. History vanishes in a panorama of dissolving views. If there

is to be a creed at all, it must be revised each day, as we rise in the morning, in order to be in harmony with our latest mood, the last new book, the most recent scientific discovery. Hence the present is no more our own than the past, and we sail into the misty future without chart or compass.

v.

There is a third conception of the nature of true progress which makes it consist in a constant struggle to regain or adhere to that which is old, which assumes, as its ruling idea, that the new is false; only that which can be shown to be old is true. To seek for new truth is to endanger the basis of the religious life or the foundations of religious certitude.

Such an attitude often deserves to be condemned as a blind conservatism, opposed to real progress, the refuge only of those who rest on custom and do not wish to be disturbed, the bulwark of religious indifference on the one hand or of a timid

and skeptical but persecuting ecclesiasticism on the other. "Since we are unable," said the pagan Cecilius, in the apology of Minucius Felix, "to know anything of that world which is above the senses, since philosophy has still to search for the secret of things, that which we had better do is to hold by the Gods of the fathers." In the same fashion, according to the Koran, the advocates of the old idolatries of Arabia answered the new prophet: "We have found our fathers practicing this worship and we are guided by their steps." To Mohammed in his disappointment Allah gave reassurance, — it had always been so; no prophet had ever been sent who had not met the same reply. Nor had the reply come from the poor and ignorant but from the wealthier classes; — "We have sent no warner unto any city but the inhabitants thereof who lived in affluence said, 'Verily we believe not that with which ye are sent.'"

It is also characteristic of this attitude

that while it rejects every change as an innovation, and regards every innovation as evil, because endangering the truth which should be unchangeable, yet it is not incapable of receiving new truth ; only, when it does so it immediately proceeds to call it old, to assert that it has always been an integral part of the immutable heritage. It has devious ways of incorporating the new with the old leaven, while also it may turn and rend those who are so unfortunate as to be its heralds.

The principle which lies beneath this attitude toward progress is that divine revelation has once for all imparted the full truth by which men may live ; that, therefore, the highest duty, the most solemn obligation, is to hand it on unchanged, unimpaired, from generation to generation. It is also assumed that there is an evil and downward tendency in human nature, whose effect is to pervert the truth by overlaying it with additions, corrupting it by complications, till at last it

becomes so obscured as to need a reclamation in its original simplicity. The philosophy of history, to minds in this condition, is summed up in the necessity for a series of prophets, who appear at intervals as they are needed, whose function is always to announce the old truth which was from the beginning. Such was the rude philosophy of Mohammedanism. The prophet of Islam had not been sent to announce new truth, but to clear away the obstructions, the many dogmas of the Christian Church, which prevented the old truth from being clearly discerned. He freely admitted the credentials of the Hebrew prophets who had preceded him; he had no fault to find with the teaching of Christ,—that in itself was true, but it had been overlaid, complicated by the false teaching of apostles, or the definitions of councils, till it was no longer capable of being understood or obeyed, and must therefore be reasserted in its first purity and with a deeper emphasis. All the

prophets, according to Mohammed, when rightly interpreted, had proclaimed the same immutable truth, by the recognition, indeed, of which, they were known to have a prophetic calling.

How often have we heard this view presented in Christian circles, as if the only explanation needed for the complex phenomena of religious history, that each successive dispensation or epoch ends in failure because of the fatal activity of human error. God makes his covenant with Adam only to be defeated by human wickedness. He renews his covenant with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses, but each successive mission of the divine love is defeated by the growing evil, until at last He comes to the rescue, when things are at their worst, in the mission of his Son. There are those to-day who seem to make it an act of obligation to believe that the Christian dispensation is already doomed to failure, the faith is to grow cold and almost disappear from the earth

in order to the preparation for the second coming of the Son of Man.

Principles may be true, though we may greatly differ as to their application. We shall readily admit, I think, this tendency to deterioration which waits upon all religious institutions. In their first proclamation religious motives are spontaneous and free, more pure, more rational, than in their later history, when they are apt to degenerate into a hard literalism, supported by tradition rather than by reason, corrupted by cant, bolstered up by verbal commentators; so that they who would escape their dark shadow must needs go back in the interest of truth and freedom to their first proclamation.

There is a deep root of truth, also, in the demand for the unchangeable, the immutable, as the final word in religion. We cry out for the eternal which changes not, as the last resort of our being, as when we are wearied with speculation which calls all things in question; when we are tired

of incessant change, which masquerades under the name of progress; when we become hopeless after long gazing into a blank and empty future. In the crises of our being we fall back upon those undefined, mysterious instincts, postulates of our nature which are most simple, most universal, whose traces go back to the remotest ages. Even in the social order this motive may act most powerfully, as in the utterances of Burke in his "Vindication of Natural Society" against the leaders of the French Revolution: "It is the lapse of time which constitutes the most solid of all claims, not only to property, but to that which secures property — the State; the world would go to pieces if the practice of all moral duties and the foundations of society rested upon having their claims made clear and demonstrated to every individual." So, also, in the ecclesiastical order, St. Augustine, in his great work on the "City of God," characterizes the earthly city as affected by

change, mutation, and decay ; while the city of God is the one and the same unchangeable purpose which runs through human history from its first beginning.

It was under the influence of this mood that Bossuet wrote his "Variations of Protestantism," assuming as axiom that truth has but a single aspect, that simplicity and unchangeableness are the marks by which it is known. But the Latin Church, which has accepted his method as conclusive, has no monopoly of this conviction. The same feeling led Richard Baxter, the most sturdy of Protestants, towards the close of a life passed in agitation and controversy, to put his faith in those simple, unchanging truths regarding which men are more generally agreed, and to deem those principles as more uncertain about which there was greater difference of opinion.

We get an illustration of the same mood in the burial service of the English Church, which long since ceased to express the passing changes of religious experience or

aspiration, which offers comfort by reminding us of the common lot, repeating the sad wail of humanity over the common fate.

England's great poet, when he took his leave of a sorrowing people, turned to Shakespeare for comfort, as if he found support in the veriest commonplaces, the reflections which come without effort to all alike, the oldest, simplest utterances of natural religion : —

“Fear no more the heat of the Sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages,
Thou thine earthly task hast done,
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages.”

Mr. Matthew Arnold, the prophet of change and reform, sought the final consolation in the permanence of nature : —

“But let me be,
While all around in silence lies,
Moved to the window near, and see
Once more before my dying eyes,
“Bathed in the sacred dews of morn,
The wide aerial landscape spread,
The world which was ere I was born,
The world which lasts when I am dead.”

The words of Scripture occur to us in this connection, of which a beautiful instance is the 90th Psalm, — the prayer of Moses, the man of God, where the trust in God's immutability is the deepest current of the soul : —

“ Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.”

From the influence of this deep instinct in our nature, which in the midst of change calls for that which is permanent, few can claim to be exempt. The reactionary ecclesiastic, declaring that variation is the badge of error, while sameness is the mark of the truth, is not so far away, as to the principle at issue, from a religious agitator like Theodore Parker, who began his career as a reformer with his sermon on the “Transient and the Permanent in Religion.” That which is old, that which powerfully affected our early years, may at any moment reassert its control, until

under its dissolving charm the accretions of our middle age, the nice distinctions of controversy, the differences which were magnified till they assumed a vital importance, — these all fade away into insignificance or nothingness. The late French historian, M. Renan, who renounced Christianity for the scientific interpretation of life, seems to have had this distrust of himself. When he reached the age of sixty he proposed to stereotype his thought, putting on record those opinions formed and held in his best moments, before disease or age had weakened his powers.

According to the theory of progress to which I first alluded, it is the differences, the distinctions which are important, and to these even what claims to be permanent must, if necessary, be sacrificed. But here the differences and distinctions are of no avail; it is the old, the common, the unchangeable, which is to be desired, wherein lies also the basis of certitude. In opposition to those who assert the value

of theological distinctions, or who would justify religious differences, finding in these very differences some essential utterance of the divine revelation, the position is assumed that all religious systems are true where they agree, all alike untrue or doubtful where they differ. "Somehow it has come to be taken for granted," said the late Mr. Maurice, "among scholars as well as in the popular literature of the day, that the various theological characteristics of the religions of the world must yield and disappear; that when they are gone there will survive something of a very general character, some great ideas of what is good and beautiful, some excellent maxims of life, which may very well assimilate, if they be not actually the same, with the essential principles contained in all other religions, and which will also, it is hoped, abide forever."

VI.

It has been my endeavor to present these divergent and contradictory theories of religious progress in an impartial manner, and as fairly as if I were an advocate of each; while, at the same time, I have stated the objections to each one of them, the perversion into which each may degenerate, as any sincere opponent might do. But I have not found it possible to make myself an advocate of any one of them to the exclusion or condemnation of the others. To my mind they appear as alike legitimate, as having been justified by the experience of history, while, also, they have ministered to evil results when pushed too far, or when any one of them has been enforced to the rejection of the others. If the effect of my statement is to produce a hopeless sense of complexity and confusion, so that life or progress seems like a process in which no law of unity could prevail, does not real life or

progress, as we actually know it in the world around us, produce the same impression? Not only do we everywhere perceive these varying motives in operation, but they have subtle ways of combining, of modifying each other, of shading off into each other, till it is hard to distinguish them, and men may even pass from the influence of one motive to that of its opposite, as from reaction to conservatism, without being aware of any violent wrench in their experience. Indeed, when we come to analyze our own consciousness, or to define the methods by which our own development has been attained, are we not baffled by the lack of consistency which is revealed, the contradictions which we are unable to harmonize?

It is because these conflicting motives may all unite in the experience of one individual that we know they stand somehow related to unity, as if necessary elements in one organic process. We grow by means of these antagonisms within us,

so that a life in subordination to one of these motives alone becomes shallow, or one-sided and incomplete. A man who has not detected within himself the presence of these contradictory forces has missed the larger interpretation of life, and can neither understand himself nor the world around him. While we are aiming at consistency, as if it were an intellectual or moral ideal, we may only be reducing our personality to a smaller stature. On the one hand, a man may feel that he must always abide by the violent reactions of his youth against the teaching of his fathers; and if he succeeds in maintaining this attitude, we speak of him as a man who has not grown, though others may admire him for his consistency. And on the other hand, one may react against the teaching of his childhood; but when years have passed away be able to recognize in it a new meaning and a deeper value, reconciling without difficulty the new truth which he has reached with the


old truth which he once thought he had abandoned forever. Thenceforth, he may have learned that there is a higher mode of human development, and strive always to hold the old and the new in vital organic relationship.

In this first lecture I have been dealing with my subject mainly from the point of view of the individual man. The motives which I have traced first began to operate powerfully in the age of the Reformation, when what we call individualism first appeared as one of the forces of history. The period of the Middle Ages knew little or nothing of the inward personal conflict which marks the modern world, nor did it have that exuberant variety of religious faiths which has since grown up. Authority, or the sense of solidarity, kept the individual in subjection, making impossible the full expression of the content of the human soul. It is a common complaint to-day, that individualism has gone too far, to the neglect of the opposite factor, the

truth which is held by the whole family of humanity, in solidarity. In my second lecture I propose to treat of religious progress as manifested in the larger organic body which we call the Church, whose life may be more unconscious, not subject to the possibility of self-direction as is the individual, — a life which goes deeper than theories and has the power of reconciling the conflicts of the schools.

II.

Religious Progress in the Organic Life of the Church.

ENTLEMEN : In my first lecture, I dwelt upon three forces or tendencies which are closely related to religious progress. We may discern their agency in those periods of the Church's history when great adjustments are in process whose end is the enlargement of the life of humanity. We see them clearly in the ancient Church, when Christianity was adjusting itself to Jewish religion on the one hand, or to the civilization of the Græco-Roman world on the other. Again in the Protestant Reformation some of the Reformers were bent on discarding every trace or relic of the age that was going out, rebuilding the ecclesiastical fabric from the foundation with new material; others would have compromised

between the old and the new, retaining as much as possible of the old form, but animating it with a new spirit ; but the Church of Rome could find no other principle of guidance than to reject everything which the Reformers demanded simply because they wanted it, surrounding the tenets of the Middle Ages with a brazen wall, so that henceforth it would be impossible to touch the doctrines of the Church with the destructive hand of change. And once more, these same motives have appeared as vital forces in our own age, which is one of restless movement caused by many and diverse influences, the final outcome of which we are as yet unable to determine.

Let me recapitulate these various tendencies once more. There are those who maintain that a retrograde evil tendency inheres in all human effort, in human thought and speculation, which obscures or makes void the truth ; that in order to hold firmly to the divine revelation we are

continually called to remove these accretions and complications of human perversity. Truth is simple and error is complex; truth is always and everywhere the same, while error stands condemned by its variations; truth must always be sought in the past rather than the present age, and that which is new cannot be true. On the other hand stands the reformer with his new truth, which, as he claims, is in antagonism to the old belief, and necessarily involves the destruction of the old institution; the aim of progress is to get rid of the old as the obstacle which prevents the regeneration of the world, as if in order to the reception of Him who declares, "Behold, I make all things new." And then there are those who would mediate between these contradictions, who feel competent to throw light on the situation or give direction for the course to be followed. The past is not wholly wrong, nor is the new complete in itself. There is a gradual advance from the old to the new.

Let revolution at all hazards be avoided as destructive of true progress. Culture will bring about the desired end; the process of education is slow but sure, and will remove the evil. The law of progress is here conceived as a regular and even advance, a movement forward, — always forward and upward, — just as the law of growth in the sphere of organic life in the external world. If it is not so, or has not been so in the world of human affairs, it ought to be so; the business of the thinker, or of him who would be the leader, is to make human progress conform to its divine law.

But now we all feel, I think, that no one of these attitudes, nor all of them taken together, quite describe the actual situation as we know it. In the light of history, or of our own experience, there is something wanting to them, there are potencies at work of which these theories contain no hint. In the processes of actual life, there is some larger utterance of

the voice of the Spirit in man which does not greatly care for speculation, but asks chiefly for the super-essential bread upon which the soul may feed ; there is a reconciling power in life which builds the institution under which we live, without regard to intellectual consistency, and to this end makes compromises or bridges the abysses and contradictions of human philosophies. In the light of this great reality of human life as it is in this world, the theories which I have described, when rigidly held, assume a doctrinaire aspect, as if properties of the schools, but not the supreme motive of an organic spiritual order. They enter, indeed, into the process of life, but not as theories to be consistently maintained, rather as if allowed to contribute their quota, as they are able, to the great result.

I.

Let me ask you to go back for a moment to the ancient Catholic Church for an illustration of what I may call the larger way of the spirit of life as contrasted with individual motives of self-development, or theories about what the need of the world requires. There is a distinct advantage in reverting to this distant time, for there the picture is complete, and we can also view it dispassionately, unmoved by the sympathies or the prejudices of the present hour. By the Catholic Church, I mean the Church of the early centuries which called itself catholic, as in the creeds. It was not the same as the Apostolic Church, or that of the generations which immediately followed, but it succeeded that Church, and, as it were, displaced it. It is not the same as the Roman Church, for that did not appear equipped for its peculiar work until much later, until the Catholic Church had ful-

filled its task and passed over into other forms. Nor do I appeal to the Catholic Church, as an ideal for our own age. It long ago disappeared, superseded by other phases of Christianity. But in its own day it accomplished a great mission, and many of its solutions of religious problems we still retain as a valuable part of our spiritual heritage.

In this ancient Church was solved the conflict between Peter and Paul, between the apostle to the Jews and the apostle to the Gentiles. No doubt the contradiction or antagonism between them has been greatly exaggerated, as by the Tübingen school; but all will admit that the antagonism did exist to a certain extent, that the original twelve apostles showed no inclination to break with Judaism, but rather regarded Christianity as if its continuation or completion. They still continued to worship in the temple, maintaining amicable relations with the Jewish Church in Jerusalem. St. Paul, on the other hand,

in his earlier years, at least, broke violently and completely with Judaism, affirming that it had been superseded by the faith in Christ, teaching as in the Epistle to the Galatians, that any one who would possess the spirit of Christ must be emancipated from obedience to the ceremonial law, the beggarly elements, as he called them, of bondage to Jewish formalism.

The issue raised by St. Paul was taken up by the schools of the second century, in the great speculative inquiry, how Judaism was related to the Christian Church. Three different answers were given to the question. In the first place, it was maintained by Marcion, one of the most influential men of his time, that Christianity and Judaism had nothing whatever in common. Christianity was something new, unknown before, with no preparation for its advent, an abrupt revelation, as it were, from the heavens. So vast was the difference between the two religions, so vital the distinction between Gospel and Law,

between mercy and justice, that they could not have had a common author. If the one came from a good deity, the other must have come from an imperfect, if not an evil deity. So far did Marcion carry his repugnance to Judaism, that he rejected the Old Testament, and in forming a Canon of the New Testament, he retained only the Epistles of St. Paul, together with the Gospel according to St. Luke, as written by one of Paul's disciples. Nor was Marcion alone in this estimate of Jewish scriptures and ceremonial. The unknown author of the important Epistle to Diognetus held a similar view, as also the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, both of which treatises were highly esteemed and are included among the writings known as the "Apostolic Fathers." If this judgment about Judaism had prevailed, the two religions would have been severed and the Old Testament have been lost to the Christian Church.

On the other hand were the represen-

tatives of what is known as the Pseudo-Clementine school, in whose writings Peter rather than Paul is regarded as the apostle of genuine Christianity, and according to which there is not only no opposition between Christianity and Judaism but there is no difference between them, — the two religions are identical. In the attitude of this school we have an illustration of the conviction that the substance of religious truth does not vary with time, that religion is founded in the immutability of the divine will. If what the decree of Jehovah had once ordained were to be rejected, the basis of all religious faith would be removed. The ingenuity of these writings known as the Clementines is displayed in a fantastic way in working over the contents of the two religions, eliminating from them that which is distinctive of each, until the desired identity can be established in the common residuum which is left, — the one true religion which was from the beginning. Be-

tween this school and that of Marcion there was bitter antagonism, which it did not seem possible to overcome.

There was a third attitude for whose representative we may take Basileides, one of the Gnostic philosophers, who aimed to look deeply into the religious wants of his age. In his spirit he was almost a modern, for he had caught the idea of uniform law pervading all ranks and stages of the creation. All things, according to his philosophy, were developing from beneath upward, in one vast ascending movement. Christianity, as he believed, was the absolute or perfect religion, but the religions which had preceded it were not in opposition to it as the false to the true, but rather imperfect revelations, serving the purpose of an earlier stage of development and preparing the way for the highest truth. His idea was a true one, but his application of it was unfortunate, — a sort of speculative exposition of religious history to meet the exigencies of his theory.

According to his system, a deity who was ignorant and of low degree had reigned over the world from the time of Adam until Moses ; then had appeared a higher deity who proclaimed the Mosaic Law ; and at last the highest God had spoken in the revelation brought by Christ.

Each of these three attitudes contained a truth ; but each was inadequate, and all alike were rejected by the Catholic Church, which was also exercised by the same problem, and determined it by the power of a living faith. Peter and Paul were there recognized as having a common authority and as joint founders of the Church. In this reconciliation, or compromise as it is called, no effort was made to harmonize Law and Gospel, but both were sanctioned as making up the new faith, and the recognition of a difference between them gradually faded away. What the true relation was between Judaism and Christianity, or the relative authority of Jewish and Christian scriptures, the Church did not determine

then, nor has it been determined to this day. But in the retention of the Old Testament by the Catholic Church we may see the working of the principle that Christianity is old, going back, as the Pseudo-Clementines held, to the Patriarchs, even to Adam ; there is the recognition of the permanent, unchanging truth which was from the beginning.

If, however, the Church, by accepting the Old Testament as having the authority of Scripture, seemed to commit itself to the position that the divine will is unalterable, that what God has once decreed forever remains binding on the conscience, yet also it did justice to the principle for which Marcion contended, — that Christianity brought to the world a change, something that was new. It regarded the Jewish scriptures, indeed, as containing a divine revelation ; but, then, what innovations it approved, what contradiction of the teaching of those scriptures, till their authority might almost seem to be set at naught!

One of the mightiest innovations which was sanctioned — a revolution it might be called — was in changing the name of Deity, by which also was expressed, better than Marcion had done, the wide difference between the old religion and the new. In the Old Testament Jehovah had been the name by which God had declared his will to be known ; in the new dispensation the name of God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And another change wrought by the Catholic Church under the consciousness of a divine warrant, as if God were again speaking from the heavens, was the abolition of the Jewish Sabbath and the substitution for it of the Christian Sunday. Whatever appropriations from Jewish ceremonial the Church may have afterwards adopted, as in her sacerdotal institutions, there was henceforth no danger that the Church would revert to Judaism, or that the gulf which separated the religions would be overcome.

But in the vast sweep of the living forces

of the time, we can also discern another motive, — the Church acted upon the principle that the old prepares the way for the new. Tertullian almost anticipated that theory of progress by which the lower gives birth to the higher in accordance with some uniform order or law. The age of the Father prepares the way for the dispensation of the Son, and this in turn yields to the age of the Holy Spirit, — childhood, youth, and manhood, that, said Tertullian, is the philosophy of the world's spiritual history. Hence, in accordance with this principle, he and others of his time began to search in the Old Testament for traces of the preparation for the advent of Christ. There is nothing more impressive and beautiful in the history of religious thought than the way in which the early Catholic Church proceeded to make the conquest of another religion, appropriating its sacred books and yet maintaining itself in its distinction and superiority as the conqueror over the conquered. It fairly

honeycombed the Jewish scriptures with the Christian interpretation. The Jehovah of the Old Testament was resolved into the Christ of the new age, so that Christ appeared as speaking there on every page, in every chapter, and every leading event; every prominent personage, every devout experience or aspiration, as in the Psalter, or every utterance of hope, as in the prophets, became a type, a forerunner, a prophecy of Christ.

We may be sometimes tempted, in the light of modern Biblical criticism, to smile contemptuously at the headings of the chapters, as in the old English Bibles, which see Christ in the Canticles, where it was never meant that He should be, or in so many other places where the allegorical interpretation misses the historic fact. The "higher criticism" is right in maintaining how indispensable it is that we should trace clearly the human element, the actual historical circumstance, and not lose it by merging it in some unreal or

fanciful recognition of the divine. But the higher criticism can never destroy that power of faith, which sees life as an organic whole, where that which has been and that which is point away from themselves to some mystic meaning in events, which we cannot understand or measure at the moment, — suggestions that we are always moving about in worlds not realized.

II.

The method by which the Catholic Church of the early centuries dealt with the antagonisms in its bosom, while it may not furnish a law of religious progress, does yet point to a principle always to be discerned in operation, wherever we may turn in the religious world. That principle is the acceptance of contradictions whether they can be intellectually reconciled or not; the tacit approval of both sides in a controversy, rather than the enforcement of some *via media* between them; as though truth did not lie, as has

been fondly supposed, midway between two extremes, but was rather constituted by the union of opposite propositions as together combining in a living whole. The doctrine of the *via media* has never been a working principle in theology. Just as any one may recall in his own experience what it is to have a leading or primary sympathy with one side of a controversy, and at the same time a certain subordinate sympathy with the other, so in the larger collective life of the Church, the final result of a long controversy has been the sanction practically extended to both parties, neither of which, compete afterwards as they may, can ever attain exclusive supremacy. As regards the doctrine of the Person of Christ, so long and angrily discussed in the ancient Church, the final verdict of the Christian consciousness maintains the apparently contradictory conclusion that He is one and the same with the Father, while yet distinct from and different from the Father ; or in regard

to the operation of divine grace in human salvation, debated so bitterly between Augustine and Pelagius, the Church has practically settled down in the conviction, that the work is of God and also of man. No *via media*, however subtly constructed or nicely balanced, possesses such living power of reconciliation and harmony as this union of conflicting and opposite truths.

It is a lesson which we are slow to learn, that opposites are closely, even vitally related; that hostile attitudes which seem irreconcilable may both be true. Our own experience or the experience of history may reveal to us the ease, the naturalness of the transition from one extreme to another. It would almost seem as if, in the sphere of religion, each attitude was seeking its opposite in order to supplement its own deficiency. The Roman Catholic Church, which dreads secularism as its greatest foe, is nearer to it in its own essential principle than it imagines, as if

one of its functions was to prepare its members for graduation into the larger world. The late Blanco White is an illustration of the process by which a gifted spirit, having exhausted all that Rome can give, seeks to complete its life by traveling till it can go no further in the opposite direction. He experimented at first with Newman's *via media* of Anglicanism, then he tasted the cool rationalism of Whately, then moved on to Unitarianism, which he finally left for what seemed like a barren and dreary waste, — the open world in its separation from the Church, where a man must make a religion, if he is to have one at all, out of devotion to purely secular interests. On the other hand, the late Dr. Brownson traveled in the opposite direction from a world disorganized as it seemed to him, from the transcendentalism which divinizes an imperfect humanity, till he finally reached an ultramontaniam so extreme and destructive as to go beyond the Vatican or the leaders of the Society

of Jesus. It is a striking circumstance which has often been noted, that while John Henry Newman went to Rome, his brother Francis, whose mind was of a similar type, passed over to what is called infidelity, to what, however, was as sacred to him as ecclesiasticism was to his brother. The saintly George Herbert of Bemerton, who idealized every accident, as it were, in the faith and worship of the Church of England, had his counterpart in his brother Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who became a pioneer of natural religion or the deism of the eighteenth century. The connection is so close between these apparently hostile attitudes that it is sometimes hard to detect the difference in principle which separates them. To secularize the divine is the policy of Rome ; to divinize the secular is the motive of its most extreme antagonist. But if one is true, so also is the other. The reconciliation lies in adopting both ; then they modify each other, with the result of a larger, completer truth.

Among the Protestant churches the same tendency is apparent. There is constant moving to and fro, and in search of some attitude which is in flat contradiction to the principle of the denomination which is abandoned. Mr. Gladstone has lately made an effort to show that most of those who deserted the Church of England for the Roman communion, at the time of the Tractarian controversy, such as Newman and Manning, Wilberforce and Faber, came originally of Low Church or evangelical antecedents, exchanging the familiar formula of "no priest, no sacrifice, no altar," for the blindest devotion to priesthood and hierarchy. Congregationalists or Presbyterians when they enter the Episcopal Church are apt to become the most uncompromising High Churchmen. The descendant of the Quaker makes the most devoted of Ritualists. The Methodist who abandons his fold, who previously had found his chief social excitement or happiness in the Church, looks with a more kindly eye

on the amusements of society which he had been taught to denounce as evil. The difference is not so great between the Universalist who denies the existence of a place of endless punishment and his opponent who affirms such a belief as if almost essential to salvation. For so easy is it to change one's belief on this subject, that the affirmation or the denial may stand for methods of religious training, so that if a man cannot serve God and obey his law under the incentive of love, he turns back to the incentive of fear. No one who has experienced the process of conversion, by which a revolution is wrought in the soul from sin to holiness, from the love of self to the love of God, can ever fail to be profoundly grateful ; and yet happy also is he who has never known the necessity of conversion, but has grown under Christian nurture into the divine love, and who cannot point to the time when he did not feel as if he were the child of God.

In some of the controversies which have

convulsed and divided the religious world time may be needed, and the long lapses of time, before the issue is clear. Then it may be revealed that there was an element of truth in the cause which was defeated, which for ages had lain under the ban of condemnation. The heretic Nestorius was deposed and excommunicated because he denounced the favorite designation of Mary as the "Mother of God" (*θεοτόκος*). When a thousand years had passed away and the theologians of the Reformation came to their task, they unanimously rejected the word from their confessions of faith; the Church of England, also, omitted the word in her Articles of Religion, and it was dropped silently and without a protest from her liturgy and other ritual offices, where formerly it had been of frequent occurrence. What is known as Nestorianism separated the human from the divine, in order to the preservation of the human, lest it should be absorbed and lost in the divine; overlooking the

truth in the attitude of Cyril, who saw the divine and the human in such close conjunction that they seemed to him to be but one. If we lose the human by merging it in the divine, as is the tendency of ecclesiasticism, we are forced to seek it again by separating and distinguishing between them. Such may be called the purpose of the higher criticism in our own day, which vindicates the place and importance of the human element in Scripture; the same essential issue about which Cyril and Nestorius were contending in the fifth century. This is the controversy of the Christian ages from which it seems as if we never should escape. In the early Church it turned upon the person of Christ, in the Middle Ages upon the Eucharist, in the Protestant world upon the Bible. If we cannot escape the controversy, at least we can escape the shameful method by which it was pursued in ancient times, by recognizing, with the fathers of the great council of Chalcedon, that the

attitudes which the controversy generates are vitally related to each other; that it only needs to bring them together, contradictory as they may seem, in order to the completed truth, — Christ is both human and divine; the Eucharist remains composed of bread and wine, and is yet veritably the body and the blood of Christ; the Bible is literature like any other book, and yet it is also the word of God. These things are not to be confused or mixed or confounded, but also are not to be separated or divided.

Every religious movement has its negative side, consisting in opposition to tenets which seem to contradict its own, and by resistance to which it gains impetus and momentum for its career. But when the new movement has run its race, only the positive truth which it has advocated remains, and this in some mysterious way coalesces with its contradiction.

Most of the mischief of religious controversy springs from the desire and de-

termination to impute to one's opponent positions which he does not hold, or to draw inferences from his principles, insisting that he shall be held responsible for them, even though he declares that he does not teach them. We say that he ought to accept them; that he is bound logically to do so; that they are necessary deductions from his system; that the tendency of his teaching is in these directions; and then we denounce and condemn him for that which he disowns. It was in this way that Augustine filled out for Pelagius the gaps in his scheme which he thought necessary to do, in order to make Pelagius's teaching consistent and complete; and Pelagius, in his turn, drew inferences from the Augustinian theology about which Augustine would have preferred to maintain a discreet silence. Neither Augustine nor Calvin was anxious to make prominent the doctrine of the reprobation of wicked to damnation, but preferred to dwell on the more attractive, more rational tenet of

the elect to salvation, as subjects of the divine choice and approbation ; substituting for the obnoxious word reprobation, the milder, euphemistic term preterition. It was their opponents who were bent on forcing them out of their reserve, pushing them into what seemed the consistent sequence of their attitude, and then holding it up before the world for execration. And the same remark would apply to almost every theological contention which has embittered the Church's experience.

It seemed strange and inexplicable to Macaulay that a man of such rare intelligence as Sir Thomas More should have gone back to the doctrine of transubstantiation, which the wisdom of his age was almost unanimous in rejecting. But it must also be remembered that Sir Thomas More had gone further than his contemporaries, in presenting, in his "Utopia," the baldest deism as the ideal religion in a perfectly organized community, according to which men worshiped as they pleased,

or did not worship; where a complicated religious system was unknown; where no external authority interfered with individual freedom. But he became alarmed when he witnessed the excesses of the Reformation, whose destructive tendency seemed to threaten the safeguards of religion and morality. He reacted as we say; he went back and took up again the old authority which he had been on the point of discarding, accepting all which it enjoined; whether any particular tenet agreed with his reason was a matter of no importance.

We reach here a point of view from which Macaulay's stricture, to which I alluded in my first lecture, loses its force. There is nothing incompatible in such a circumstance with a true conception of religious progress. Macaulay thought of progress as following the same law in the spiritual world as in the natural world, an even and regular advance, knowing no reactions, discarding the old with every for-

ward step. He did not recognize that contradictions might be related to progress; that opposite attitudes might each hold something of essential truth which the other lacked. But his inference is a plausible one, and its wide prevalence as a popular judgment may teach us that there is yet something to be done in the argument with Rome before we can come to a common understanding. The late Frederick Robertson, the inimitable preacher, but also a profound thinker, was convinced that the true method in religious controversy, and especially with Rome, was to seek for reconciliation, not in *via media*, as Newman fondly thought, but in the exploiting of contradictions, in order to the truth contained in them, rather than the error. He illustrated his method in a remarkable sermon on the Glory of the Virgin Mother. In a suggestive paragraph he also pointed out other instances, among them, the famous doctrine of transubstantiation, where the

application of the same mode of treatment might show that this tenacious dogma of the Middle Ages, which no negative argument has been able to overthrow, was not incompatible with the theory of Zwingli, which makes the Sacrament a memorial of the body and the blood of Christ. The error in this ancient doctrine is not that a miracle has been wrought to the eye of faith, by which the common sustenance of physical life has been transmuted into the bread of immortality, but that the priest has the power of working the miracle by an incantation. Rather was the transmutation accomplished once for all by the life of the incarnate Word, — a great act which sufficed so that it need not as well as cannot be repeated; an act which the faith of the worshiper discerns anew in every sacrament, while the office of the ritual is to call attention, as by a memorial, to the original Word by whom the transformation was once wrought and forever.

It is because men hold some inadequate

theory of progress, or do not discern the various and conflicting elements, which are the conditions of true progress, that we so often hear the charge of dishonesty alleged against those who combine the new truth with the old faith. For they combine them as though it were a simple duty; the most natural, the most admirable thing to do. They are amazed when some radical reformer, of the type of Marcion in the ancient Church, or some ecclesiastical reactionary confronts them with the contradiction of which they are guilty, or insinuates their intellectual insincerity, calling upon them in the name of common honesty, either to renounce the old creed, or else abandon the new truth.¹ There are many to whom such advice is congenial as the only method by which

¹ "If we wish," says Rothe, "to pray in unison with our Christian forefathers, we must use the same words that they did; for they cannot understand our peculiar mode of speech, while we are very well able to understand theirs." The remark might be easily extended in its application to cover the use of the ancient creeds.

they can grasp or retain the new discovery. But such has not been the method of the Church at large in the long range of its history; it has not been the process of actual life, dealing with realities at the heart of things and setting lightly by theories which control the schools.

I do not know of any better illustration than the case of St. Augustine, whose teaching was certainly new, a daring innovation, but which the Church in the West pronounced to be old, as if held from the beginning. You remember that Vincen- tius of Lerins sought to rid the Church of Augustine's obnoxious teaching regarding original sin and predestination by coining that wonderful motto, which attracts us while it also repels, — the test, as he called it, of catholic truth, — "that which has always and everywhere and by all been received;" or in the familiar Latin, *Quod semper, ubique et ab omnibus, creditum sit*. In the second part of his treatise he showed that, judged by this test, Augus-

tine's teaching lacked the seal of truth. The Church accepted the test which Vincentius laid down, — it was so exquisitely put that she could not forget it, — but she approved of Augustine also, and gave to him an equal place with his elders. All this was done, to be sure, in a most uncritical age; but in such moments instincts may have sway whose expression is in harmony with the deepest endowment of our humanity.

Judged by the criticism of the understanding, the motto of Vincentius is only an instance of vicious reasoning in a circle, as Sir George Cornwall Lewis has shown in his work on "Authority in Matters of Opinion." The motto asserts, as he remarks, "that a certain doctrine is true because it was held at all times and in all places and by all. But when it is found that it was not held by a certain sect at a certain time and place, it is answered that they are not to be considered because they are not a part of the Catholic Church ;

but when it is inquired why they are not a part of the true Church, the answer is because they do not hold the doctrine in question." The criticism is certainly a just one, to be commended to partisans of the authority of the past who think to stay the wheels of progress by throwing this canon which consecrates immobility athwart its path. But when the *Quod semper* may be so interpreted as to admit of change and innovation, we have an instance of the power of life to reconcile the insuperable antagonism.

Herein lay the power of the Roman Church in the age of its ascendancy. No contradictions, however radical, were then too great for her to solve. She accepted the monastery, with its innate opposition to the historic episcopate; the conflicting ideals of administration and prophecy, of solidarity and individualism, marriage and celibacy, poverty and wealth, the world and the rejection of the world. But at last there was bred a contradiction to

which she was not equal, — justification by faith in conflict with hierarchical institutionalism, and then her power collapsed, her dominion was gone. Macaulay was wrong again, misled by the hallucination of a name, when he thought that the great Church, whose long and proud career invoked his admiration, was still in existence. The papacy had fallen when Luther refused to recant at the Diet of Worms, or when Henry VIII. set free the suppressed force of nationality, and England became a nation. The papacy fell, only the Bishop of Rome remained; nor will the day come for which he waits and sighs, until he can accept the contradiction between authority and freedom.

If I may be allowed a reference to the Episcopal Church, with whose inner working I am more familiar, there is a contradiction embedded in her formularies, where, in the Ordinal for the Priesthood, the presbyter takes the vow to preach nothing which he is not convinced, or

inwardly persuaded, is true ; and, on the other hand, to set forth the doctrine as this church hath received the same. Private judgment and church authority here confront each other with an equal sanction. Their reconciliation is found in ways which criticism might distrust. There are those who can understand and follow church authority ; there are those who can appreciate the value of private judgment ; they often fail to appreciate each other ; but in the mysterious alembic of life the contradiction tends to disappear ; private judgment makes church authority, — the doctrine as this church hath received the same, rational and intelligible, while church authority deepens and enlarges the range of private judgment.

Churches are strong and best fulfill their mission, not in proportion as they maintain a narrow consistency, but rather in so far as they are capable of embracing opposite attitudes and contrasted views of truth. Controversy may be bad, but stagnation is

worse. The Church which we look for in the coming age of Christian unity must embrace greater contradictions than any church that now exists is willing to receive. Let me enumerate some of them as I close this part of my discussion: — the sovereignty of God and the freedom of the will; total depravity and the divinity of human nature; the unity of God and the triune distinctions in the Godhead; gnosticism and agnosticism; the humanity of Christ and his incarnate deity; the freedom of the Christian man and the authority of the Church; individualism and solidarity; reason and faith; science and theology; the miracle and the uniformity of law; culture and piety; the authority of the Bible as the Word of God, with absolute freedom of Biblical criticism; the gift of administration as in the historic episcopate, but the gift of prophecy as the highest sanction of the ministerial commission; the apostolic succession, but also the direct and immediate call which knows only the succession of

the Holy Spirit, — these, and others which it would be tiresome to mention, are antagonisms whose blending in organic relationship by the mysterious power of life or progress will lead us into the fuller truth for which we wait.

If it seems to any that in all this there is no practical rule of guidance for the individual in the formation of religious opinions, or that the result would be disastrous to any religious sect which sought to maintain so large and open-minded hospitality to conflicting aspects of the truth, — to these objections, which are not without their force, it may still be replied that there are organic influences in the religious sphere which tell upon us all alike, upon individuals and upon sects ; which may act without our knowledge or even against our will ; which no self-direction, however determined or clear its aim, or ecclesiastical policy, however exclusive, can ever entirely evade. To harmonize the working of such a law with theories of self-culture or the

varying ecclesiastical policies may be difficult, if not impossible. But, at least, the lessons of history, the experience of the Church, our own individual experience as well, may teach us, and comfort us by teaching, that opposing aspects of truth do not neutralize or destroy each other. The reformers who speak so confidently about this or that phase of ecclesiastical thought or practice as destined soon to disappear, may be, and probably in most cases are, too sanguine. But, on the other hand, no attitude of religious belief can abide wholly unchanged after the serious challenge of controversy which asserts its opposite. Its modification, but also its fulfillment in some larger scheme of things, is sure.

III.

The remaining point to which I wish to ask your attention is this: that all movements in the Christian Church or in Christian history, which we call progressive, have had a backward look, as if the new

truth for which we hunger came to us by the revelation of the past, so that progress might be almost identified with an ever deeper penetration into the old truth and its richer appropriation.

If I illustrate this proposition by the teaching of St. Paul, it is not that I am seeking to commit the sacred authority of Scripture to some theorizing of my own ; but, because, if ever a writer had a distinctly conceived philosophy of history, it was the great apostle to the Gentiles. When he was controverting the Jews, as in his Epistle to the Galatians, his mind traveled backward to a greater man, and a greater age, than Moses or the giving of the Law, — to Abraham, who was the Father of the Faithful, because he lived by faith ; to whom the promise was given before he was circumcised, and to whom, and not to Moses, was the further promise that in him, not one people only but all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The universality of the earlier age is here con-

trasted with the particularism, the narrow exclusivism of the later age. That type of religion known as Judaism, which claimed Moses as its authority and had culminated in ceremonialism, appeared to St. Paul, even at its best, as a passing episode in the religious training of man. It seemed so irrational in the light of faith in Christ, that he almost wonders how God should have tolerated it. The larger universal attitude which Abraham represented must have been superseded by the unspiritual and legal Judaism, in consequence of the hardness of men's hearts. If even so, it had served a purpose in the divine economy as a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ ; yet now that its task was done, there must be a return to the larger faith of Abraham, which was at the same time an advance into the liberty, wherewith Christ had made men free. So also, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, following the method of St. Paul, rejects the priesthood of Aaron, and goes back to a still

more distant age for the type of a higher, more universal priesthood; Christ had been made a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, that mysterious priest-king of a remote past, whose glory it was, that, unlike the Aaronic priesthood, he was without father or mother, his genealogy or his succession unknown, who had neither beginning nor end of days, but, like the Son of God, a priest continually.

In the history of the Church, the designation of the Middle Ages implies a period intervening between a greater past and a greater future; a waiting period until the past should be restored, and its ruling ideas which had been sacrificed for some immediate purpose should be regained. When we reach the Renaissance, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, what we know as progress, what is generally admitted to be progress, began to work so powerfully as to change the face and modify the character of civilization. But the Renaissance, as the name suggests,

was at almost every point a return to an earlier age, before the Middle Ages began. The leaders of the movement had their faces set toward the past, until they brought back a higher world, which was also a lost and buried world until resurrected from antiquity. Kings and princes made their appeal to the older Roman law, before the Canon law had been framed, in order that by the restoration of its authority they might be freed from papal interference, or from the tyranny of the Holy Roman Empire. Scholars also went back, the Humanists, as we call them, to the classical writers of ancient Greece and Rome, in order to regain the old outlook upon life, of whom Petrarch is the type; they studied Cicero and Vergil and Homer, as if divine guides who spoke by revelation. To restore the ancient literature became the supreme motive of the Renaissance, in which princes and ecclesiastics combined with scholars, creating an enthusiasm for a by-gone age by

which their own age threatened to be submerged. If Aristotle had been the teacher of the Middle Ages, Plato now furnished the inspiration toward movement in another direction, till almost every change, every revolution in thought or in institutions, may be traced to his influence. Science was reborn by the appeal to Plato, and when Plato lived again, Aristotle, the genuine Aristotle, followed Plato as in the ancient days. The art, also, of the age of the Renaissance, sought its models in ancient art, imitating and reproducing until the lost faculty was restored, a new creative art, with a motive of its own.

The Protestant Reformation could not have been without this return to the past, for the religious and moral awakening was but the completion of the process of rehabilitating a distant age. The revival of the study of Greek led to the study of the New Testament, so that the life of Christ and the writings of St. Paul were read in

the original tongue and became once more living words to living men. The avowed purpose of the Reformers was not to create anew, but to restore the old. They sought their authority, their precedents, in the ancient Church, before the papacy arose. Such was Luther, who found his mission in advocating a lost or forgotten truth, not in asserting a new truth, though he made it new by the vigor of its reclamation. So Calvin brought back again one phase of Augustine's teaching which the Middle Ages had practically rejected. In the early Church also did both Calvin and Luther seek their warrant for the changes they introduced in the ecclesiastical order, or in the rites of worship. The ideal of reform in the Church of England was the constitution and worship of the Church in the age of Constantine. The sacred cause of nationality, which inspired the states of Europe to break away from the fold of the Holy Empire, was fed by the reading of the Old Testament,

which is most truly regarded as the story of the life of a nation, called of God, and educated by Him for its task. We can best understand Savonarola as appearing in the rôle of a Hebrew prophet reproducing the old prophetic burden, as if a new message for his beloved city.

These movements of religious reform, which all alike appealed to the teaching of the past, which justified themselves as restorations and not as new creations, which, as it were, identified the reason with the voice of antiquity, — these movements which threatened to carry with them the world of the time, at last woke up the Roman Church from its bewildered and helpless daze. We sometimes speak of Loyola as if he had remade the Latin Church into something unlike its true, original self. But in reality what he did was to reassert with a clearer intuition the original mission of Latin Christianity, putting the Church again on its early footing when it began its career in Western Eu-

rope. If he made innovations, it was in the interest of keeping the Church to the original motive from which it had departed, seduced by the glamour of the Renaissance.

There were other voices in the sixteenth century, as those of the Zwickau prophets, who hinted at new revelations communicated afresh in the soul of the prophet, not to be found in the pages of the book ; but these voices were drowned in the unanimous acclaim which invoked the old as its authority. Servetus perished because he refused to walk in the light of his age, and mistook the tendency which was restoring the old, as if it sought to create anew by the aid of the individual reason. And now from the sixteenth century to our own day, the same principle has been avowed in those religious movements which have contributed to religious progress ; however much they may have differed in aim or result they illustrate a tendency to reproduce, or they appeal to the past for

their sanction. I cannot mention all; let me select a few of the most important.

What was known as the Deistic Movement in the last century may seem to us, as it did to the Christian apologists then, a destructive movement, rejecting almost every Christian truth, reducing religion to a few essential principles, God and immortality and the necessity of virtue, what is called natural religion. But the leaders of the movement felt the charm of this same motive, and they, too, professed to be restoring Christianity to its original simplicity. Christ, they said, had added nothing to the religion of nature; He came to confirm it, reproclaiming it with a deeper force and insight; — “Christianity was as old as the creation.” Or take the movement led by Wesley in opposition to Deism, whose effect was to overcome its negative, chilling influence by diffusing the glowing atmosphere of an enthusiastic, religious life. He, too, disclaimed that he was an innovator bringing new truth to

his age. More than most men he was in bondage to the principle that the higher truth must be recalled from the older world. He began his career with reviving usages that had declined in the Church of England. Then he went back to a period in the early Church when the love-feast still survived, and sought through its restoration to secure that peculiar quality of the religious life when Christians were bound together in the intimate ties of brotherly friendship and love. Although Wesley must be regarded as one of the most striking figures in modern religious history, he was essentially a prophet with the old burden, reviving doctrines which, it was commonly supposed, had been buried in oblivion, never again to trouble the churches. One innovation he made in the ecclesiastical order, a most startling innovation from the point of view of the Church of England, when as a presbyter of that church he created bishops for his followers in America. But he grounded his action

on what he thought an ancient precedent, drawn from his reading of a once famous book, — Lord King's "Enquiry into the Constitution and Discipline of the Primitive Church."

But of all these religious appeals to the authority of the past, none has exceeded the Tractarian Movement in the scope and intensity of its purpose to restore what it was pleased to call catholic antiquity, in its doctrine and discipline and ritual. If it has seemed to us strange and unaccountable that such a movement should have been possible in the nineteenth century, yet it will not appear quite so exceptional in its character if we associate it with other movements in the Church, such as the Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which not only resembled the work of Pusey and Newman in its aim to reproduce an older and forgotten world, but resembled it still more closely in the enthusiasm, and even passionate devotion, with which it pursued its mission.

It is no part of my task to compare these movements with each other, or to sit in judgment upon them, in order to determine the value of the restorations they have accomplished. In them all, alike, the evil has been mingled with the good, and no one of them is complete in itself apart from the others. But they are components of a vast organic process, which, if it is to be interpreted aright, must be contemplated as a living whole. Differ as they may, or contradictory as they may seem, they have a common likeness; at least, they serve to confirm the proposition which I advanced, that religious progress seems to have had a backward gaze, as if the new truth were locked in the embrace of a world which is dead. It may be with religion as with the animal or vegetable creations, where old species may become extinct, but within the range of human observation there has not been witnessed the evolution of a single type which is actually new, how-

ever great may be the modification of the old. It has been a supreme characteristic of our own age, and more particularly in Germany, since the impetus given to theology by Schleiermacher, that it has studied religious history with such thoroughness and devotion as to make the past live again before us, till it has almost become a part of our own experience. We have learned to speak of the Christian consciousness as the authority or ground of certitude for our faith, and it must be because this consciousness may be read and interpreted more clearly in the past than in the multifarious and confused utterances of our own time, that we turn to it in order to understand our own place and position in history. And again, it is the peculiar quality of religious truth, as compared with scientific truth, that it has its ground in the heart as well as in the intellect; and, therefore, however inadequate may be deemed the intellectual formulas of past ages, in which it was endeavored

to translate into language the aspirations and needs of the soul, we must continue to study the old formulas as attesting the immortal convictions of the soul. To condemn or reject those formulas in wholesale fashion, as not entitled to our respect or attention, would be like cutting off from the tree the bough on which we are sitting, — the negation of that consciousness which is our highest spiritual confidence. How can we continue to have faith in the utterances of the human soul to-day, if the utterance of the past has no enduring validity? It might almost seem as if an age like ours, given over to critical analysis, and even morbid introspection, may even be at a disadvantage, so far as religious truth is concerned, compared with the spontaneity of the ages before us, when intellectual activity did not check or embarrass the spiritual life.

My treatment of this vast subject would be even more fragmentary than it is, if I did not insist, however briefly, upon one

point before I conclude it. Every reversion to the past, every movement which has aimed to reproduce some feature of an older life whether in doctrine, discipline, or worship, has never brought back again exactly that for which it went in search or sought to restore. It has been found as impossible accurately to imitate or reproduce in the religious sphere as it has been in art or literature or philosophy ; and we must be content to admire or reverence the old ideals without being able wholly to appropriate them, just as we find inspiration in studying the old monuments in art or sculpture or architecture or literature. But just as modern art may be greater as it has drunk deep at the original fountain, by study and admiration of the old masters, so is the religious life of the Church deepened and expanded and enriched by the appeal to the past, by the effort to restore it, even if vain and impossible.

At this point we touch the deep mystery of our existence, that unknown, undefinable

element which constitutes life or progress, the inner, unexplored range of our being which calls for change, and incessantly repeats the call, in order to meet some exigency, some imperative, unsatisfied need of the soul. This inward dissatisfaction with the present attainment which begets incessant change must have its source in Him who made us as we are, in whom also we live and move and have our being. We may have discovered in what we know as the law of evolution a hint that some similar law may prevail in the spiritual world ; but this is as a voice out of the darkness compared to what history reveals as already known regarding the higher life of man, — that it is a movement forward as if toward completion, a development of germs into the flower, a persistency of ideals, begetting commotion and unrest in order to their fulfillment.

We may not be able to discern the goal which the movement of progress seeks, or it may be defined in different ways.

To the eye of the Hebrew prophets, the vision expanded, till they saw the knowledge of the Lord cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, the time when men shall no longer call upon one another to know the Lord, for all shall know Him from the least unto the greatest. The same strain has been taken up by Christian seers, foretelling an age when the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Others, in less hopeful mood, have seen the world as reserved chiefly for the elect, as if the world-process would have its consummation in the preservation of the faith even unto the end ; as if it would be enough for the fulfillment of the divine promise, a sufficient justification of divine wisdom, if the generation of God's children should never be wanting to hand on the torch of divine light and love, by which the darkness of this world is illuminated. St. Paul embraced both the lesser and the larger hope ; for if he endured, as he tells

us, all things for the sake of the elect, he declares also that we shall all come by the knowledge of the Son of God unto the stature of the perfect man, the measure of the stature of the perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

More than ever to-day does the sense of some impending change in the world's order haunt us with its unknown possibilities. What is now becoming a current phrase, "the end of the century," is charged with our fears and hopes as we leave another age behind us to enter upon a new era in history. For it may be that the twentieth century will differ from the nineteenth century, as that in turn has differed from the century which preceded it. Just as we have sneered at the eighteenth century, making it a butt of reproach in theology or in literature, the coming age may sneer at our favorite assumptions, our shibboleths, the watchword so often used but never analyzed or defined. Or on the other hand it may be that the next century will follow out our

purpose to its completion, as that great age of reforms, the sixteenth century, reduced to practice the issues and the hopes of the long years that went before. Will the world become tired at last of incessant change and threatened revolution, and for a while demand rest or the immobility of conservatism as if to clear its vision or recruit its energies, or will it gird itself anew for greater changes and a longer stride in advance? As to these things no one is wise enough to prophesy. Just at present a favorite topic with our students and foremost thinkers is to sound the depths of pessimism so powerfully urged by Leopardi, Schopenhauer, Von Hartmann, or Heine, because only an optimism which has measured the full extent of the dark negation can stand the test. We must know the worst that can be said, if we would still retain our faith in a higher future for humanity.

I have dwelt upon what many may regard as an unprogressive and even sinister

aspect of the Church's life, that tendency to plunge into the past, as if it would escape thereby the reality of the present. To me this tendency has seemed rather, as if the baptism of each new generation into the waters of life, and therefore the ground of hope and assurance. I have not attempted to define progress, but rather accepted it as the new word of our own day, which carries in it this special revelation of the Spirit, that life must consist in activity and change, directed by some unseen purpose, whose end, however, which as Wordsworth said it is our duty to believe, is the unattainable perfection of man. The Church progresses because it is always living down more deeply into the past, bringing together in living unity, more and more, by the compromises of real life, the contradictions which have hitherto distracted or weakened its energies.

IV.

In my first lecture I dwelt upon those

motives or theories of progress which are followed by individuals as rules of self-conscious guidance in the search for religious truth. These motives also contribute to the larger collective life of the Church, and by such gifts of truth and insight the Church expands its life. There have been cases where the fuller truth has been first discerned and enforced by the individual before it was taken up by the Church and incorporated into its institutions, its creed, or ritual. As it has happened before, it may yet happen again, that some heaven-born man will appear in whom the universal experience can be more clearly read than in the organic institution, whose mission it will be to lead the Church into fuller truth. When the truth attained by individual revelation has received the sanction of the Church it gains a new significance, and is disclosed as an integral part of the insight and experience of humanity. The universal Church which thus grows from age to age through the

confluence of many individual contributions as well as by the silent aggregation of elements whose origin cannot be traced, which has also a mysterious life and a method of its own for the acquirement of truth, — this universal Church is larger than the individual, and demands of him that he should enter this wider field of religious thought and experience as if it were his own heritage, to be made increasingly his own by the power of private judgment, but his own, nevertheless, while he is still unable to appreciate the richness of his possession.

And in order that the individual may appropriate his own, he only needs to be alive in himself, full of faith in God and man. Then it will dawn upon him that the history of the Church in all its diverse movements is but his own enlarged biography. The individual must come to the knowledge of himself, not merely through his own experience but through the knowledge of what others than himself, and in

other ages than his own, have thought and done and suffered. "If we were more alive," said the late Mr. Maurice, "more alive and more interested in all the things that are passing around us, in all that we and other men have to do and suffer, the history of past times would be infinitely more clear to us. At any rate, that is the way we must get to know anything about it." This process of enlarging one's own view, or enriching one's own experience by the life and thought of the past, is inexhaustible. We may sometimes fear that a limit must come to the wealth which can be brought us by the interpretation of the past, as if there would be nothing to do for those who come after us but to repeat the process in dreary repetition. But the interest of life is not in the things that happen, but in the men who are alive and able to see. To the ever new man, the old world will be forever new. Common and familiar things will shine with a new light. As there may be no limit to

the wonders of scientific discovery, so the relations which may exist between the world and the soul of the man who is ever growing in faith and spiritual imagination are practically without limit, and so the everlasting interest of life, the perpetual progress of humanity, is sure.

Even now there has begun another return to the past, the return to Christ Himself for which all previous movements have been preparing the way. Each successive revival of Church life, which has drawn inspiration by reverting to the earlier ages of Christian history, has been forcing us back to Him in whom they took their origin. How many efforts to retell the story of his life have been made in our own generation, while the conviction grows that it has not yet been told, that the "Life of Christ" must always remain to be written. In this lies our hope that Christ is beginning to live in the modern Church as He has not yet lived since He first walked the earth in human form. In the power of his

life, we may trust that the religious differences which now distinguish will no longer divide or separate us. Our theological differences we may still cherish as an inheritance from the past, or as so many diverse means by which differing personalities grasp and retain the central, common truth. When we discern the true value of our differences, while we shall hold them more firmly, we shall also more easily subordinate them to the higher virtue of Christian charity. In this way the unity of the Church, which has not to be anew created but which really exists already, may find what is also sorely needed, some common mode of manifestation to the world.

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