

the difficulty disappears. The Hebrew word for "snare" חֶבֶל and for "travail" חֶבֶל are identical; that is, their consonants are the same, and there were no vowels in those days. If, therefore, our Lord spoke in the language of Palestine, and used this word (חֶבֶל), which *might* mean *either* "as a snare" or "as travail," then may not St. Luke have translated it in the former way, and St. Paul in the latter?

One of the puzzling, however trifling, differences between St. Matthew and St. Mark, Professor Marshall would get rid of in the same way. St. Matthew (x. 10) gives the words of our Lord, "Provide no gold, nor silver, . . . nor shoes, nor a staff (μηδὲ ῥάβδον);" St. Mark (vi. 8), "He charged them that they should carry nothing for the journey, *except* a staff (εἰ μὴ ῥάβδον)." In the language of Palestine in Christ's day, "nor" would be וְאִי and "except" לֹא־, differing in the single initial letter, which Professor Marshall thinks may, through illegibility or some other cause, have been misread, and so mistranslated. But which would be the correct form, he does not say.

The Authorized Version has a remarkable way of getting over this difference. They translate Matt. x. 10, "nor yet *staves*," and in the margin give, "Greek, *a staff*." That is to say, their text has the word in the singular (as all the MSS., with one or two very inferior exceptions, have), but they translate it by the plural. Their purpose is, of course, to remove the seeming discrepancy between the two accounts. Alford's explanation is well known. He says: "They were not to procure *expressly for this journey* even a staff; they were to take with them their usual staff only."

*The Church Times* gives the following recipe for "extempore preaching": "Lay the foundation by getting up *Pearson on the Creed* thoroughly, and writing out an analysis like that of Dr. Mill, on blank leaves in your Bible. Make notes of the ten volumes of Isaac Williams, crabbed but full of meat. Analyze the sermons of Bull, Sherlock, Barrow, Melvill, Liddon, Wordsworth, and Trench. And when you want to preach in a hurry, try Dean Burgon's first and second series, which you will find ready to hand."

## Progressive Christian Theology.

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR MARSHALL RANGLES.

CHRISTIAN theology, the orderly or scientific presentation of Christian doctrine, though often despised like the Lord to whom it relates, is, and must remain, the queen of sciences. Its themes are the sublimest, its facts the most stupendous, its basal truths the most authoritative, and the bearing of its teaching on the weal of mankind the mightiest and most enduring. In him who studies it *con amore*, it excites intense interest. With Luther it ranked first: not because he was a cold theologian devoid of æsthetic taste and emotion; for next to it in his favour was music, and his thoughts were mostly aglow with sensibility. Many of far less capacity than he have found delight in the same science. There have been periods when, in general estimation, it was the loftiest plane of thought, and that on which the giant intellects of the time put forth their full power. Nowadays, the shallowest orator or journalist feels safe in pointing at it a stale gibe. Its obsolescence and uselessness are taken for granted; or it is challenged to produce its *raison d'être*, or commanded to reshape itself in harmony with modern advancement, which is sometimes an euphemistic mode of advising it to commit suicide. Even when diluted to the extent of Unitarianism or to "natural religion," it

is still too much for some complainers. "Advanced thought," says Dr. Martineau, "like dress and manners, is not without its fashions and its fops; and many a scientific sciolist who would bear himself *comme il faut* towards such questionable deceivers as 'Final Causes,' now thinks it necessary to have his fling at 'Paley and the Bridgewater Treatises.'"

I do not propose to perform the easy but needless task of showing that theology is indestructible so long as the human intellect retains its present constitution and its sense of relation to God and the future world: in truth, more indestructible than politics, natural science, or art. Comte's impotent sentence of death alike on metaphysics and theology is contrary to the evidence of history, and nullified by our laws of thought and our spiritual instincts. In the human mind metaphysics and theology are ineradicable and interdependent. Dr. Martineau tells us of an eminent English positivist who, on hearing a letter read which reported that Professor Fiske, a fellow-unbeliever, "found in the psychical evolution of man an intimation of individual immortality," exclaimed, "What! John Fiske say that? Well; it only proves, what I have always maintained, that you cannot make the

slightest concession to metaphysics without ending in a theology" (*A Study of Religion*, I. vii.). If theology go, so too must religion and ethics; for it is the guide of both.

The contention for pre-eminence of one branch of theology above the rest, as the biblical, the dogmatic (or as some prefer to call it the thetic, because it lays down propositions), the systematic, the speculative, or the historical, seems to assume that they are mutually antagonistic, and to proceed too much on the principle that "there is nothing like leather;" the advocate of each being so enamoured of it as to undervalue the rest, somewhat as a physicist may decry all sciences but his own. To a clearer perception these forms of theology are complementary and co-operative, as are the quarrying, hewing, planning, and building by which the edifice is produced. The great wave of expository zeal which continues to rise, beneficial as it is, will accomplish only an incomplete work unless accompanied or followed by the skill of the systematizer. "Christian doctrine has not simply to proceed upon a productive method, but rather upon a reproductive; and that, too, in no merely empirical and reflective manner, but in one that erects (constructively) and progresses. The enlightened Christian spirit . . . has to bring its religious knowledge to systematic verification and development" (Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine*, i. 168).

Theology may well feel itself in a strait between the impatience of some with its conservatism, and the warnings of others against any "forward movement." A large volume of *Essays towards a new Theology* is but one of many signs of a desire for theological change.

By progress, of course, improvement is intended in the doctrines generally accepted as Christian, and that chiefly among Protestant Churches: not the theology simply of a few individuals. "The doctrine of an age," remarks Archer Butler, "cannot well rise above the level of its average instructors."

1. *What, then, is progress, false and true?* What one hails as progress excites the aversion of another as retrogradation. How degenerate Reformation theology was in the eyes of the papacy and the Council of Trent. What a different thing is "Tractarian" teaching to the high Anglican and to the Evangelical. How shocked was the Calvinism of Scotland at the doctrines of the Evangelical Union led by James Morrison. Much of the present-day theology, which prides itself on its superior breadth of view, is regarded by many as perilously lax. The advent of "Moderate Calvinism" was heresy to the older type of Calvinists. American and European Presbyterianism under such leaders as the Hodges, teaching the salvation of all who die in infancy, is,

in the esteem of many, a great improvement, while others declare it recreant alike to the Westminster Standards and the New Testament. According to Professor Briggs (*Whither?*), and his school, to teach that many infants, and most, if not all the heathen, besides a great proportion of the rest of mankind, die unsaved, and that believers die without being wholly cleansed from sin, thus as much as possible contracting the work of salvation in this world in order to make it the more necessary to provide a *post-mortem* probation in which all shall be restored, is progressive theology; while to such as Professor E. D. Morris (*Is There Salvation after Death?*), and an immense number who agree with him, that teaching is novel, unscriptural, and out of harmony with the mediatorial scheme in which the only probation is the present life for those who hear the gospel and for the peoples beyond. One thinks he is pushing theology forward when he preaches a stoical theory of virtue, and another when he holds forth a kind of spiritualized Epicureanism; while a third condemns them both as heathenism, and claims that Christian ethics includes whatever is good in either, together with a basis of repentance, faith, and love towards God in Christ. Nevertheless, in other respects, there may be a general consensus in favour of some developments as real improvements.

It is not enough that there be *change*—for that may be either for better or worse; and change for the sake of change, though it gratify an Athenian craving for "some new thing," is more likely to be for worse than better. It has been said, "To be perfect is to have changed often." The converse, to have changed often is to be perfect, is very wide of the truth; and the proposition itself needs qualification, lest it suggest that the perfection is in proportion to the change. A proposition is not made true or false by its oldness, but to have borne the test of a long time is a presumptive recommendation of it as true.

Change is to be deprecated especially when it involves *loss of fundamental truth*. The divine authority of Scripture as the embodiment of essential Christian doctrine must be taken for granted, whatever may be our mistaken reading of it. No advancement is progress which supersedes it. It is "the faith once delivered to the saints," "the form of sound words," "all the counsel of God," from which believers are not to be "carried away." It bears the divine stamp of finality and completeness. To remove it is removal of the foundation stones, for which no additions to the superstructure can compensate. When, therefore, great thinkers like Kant or T. H. Green seek to make Christianity more acceptable by leaving out its supernatural bases, the result is not Christian theology; and the feat is but a clever leap-back-

ward. This fault accounts for some of our "half Christianities."

The majority of Christians would probably say the Bible plainly teaches the Trinity, the proper Deity, Incarnation, and Redeeming work of Christ, the Personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit, Justification by Faith, Sanctification by the Spirit, and future Rewards and Punishments. So far as this summary is Scriptural, no theological departure from it, however ingenious or captivating, can be for the better. Whether it be to simplify our creed in order to make it acceptable to a greater number, to fall in with the fashion of the day, or to escape the trouble of maintaining the truth, it is a distinct loss to Christian theology. We have to guard against being misled by fine names. "Freedom of faith" has become a misnomer for renunciation of faith; "breadth" for negation; "comprehension" for indefiniteness; "reconstruction" for destruction; "advancement" for retrogression; "generous theology" for accommodation of doctrine to our liking. There are doctrines which "cannot be moved" so long as the Scriptures are our supreme source and standard.

Theology may suffer by the *addition of false doctrine* or gain by *development of the true*. The history of Christendom, from patristic times to the Council of Trent, abounds with evidence of the tendency to pass off the merely human as divine. But the Church of Rome has not been the only offender. Development of doctrine in post-apostolic ages is quite a different process from that of revelation in the Old and New Testaments with its divine warrant. It does not follow, however, that after the cessation of apostolic prophecy, Christian theology, under the ordinary help of the Spirit, could go no further. The outworks of apologetics have grown continually stronger. New inferences from old doctrine have been justly drawn. By research, comparison, induction, and deduction, clearer and fuller views have been attained. In return for honest study, the Scriptures unfold more and more of their meaning. False ideas and inconclusive arguments get weeded out of our systems. The grounds of our faith become more apparent. Our setting of ascertained truths becomes more scientific. Distinction, definition, perspicuity, proportion, congruity, replace obscurity, confusion, and inconsequential argumentation. And all this may be without loss of any cardinal verity of Scripture. Indeed one criterion of essential Christian doctrine is its homogeneity and natural relation of the parts to each other—*e.g.* redemption implies sin; responsibility freedom; justification by faith stands or falls with atonement and grace; the mediatorial scheme implies the divinity of Christ; and it might be shown how all the cardinal doctrines dovetail in one system of truth. Consequently alien doctrines

are the more easily detected by their unfitness for a place in the system.

The preacher would not be justified in substituting philosophic prelections for fresh, vigorous, direct gospel sermons; but he is all the better qualified for his task if his own mind clearly grasps the various doctrines he has to teach, in their harmony, their natural order, and their systematic completeness. This must enable him the more simply and effectively to present his message to the common people, bringing out of his treasury "things new and old." Better the truth badly put than error well put; better still the truth presented in the best form.

True progress then, while faithful to the immutable verities of Holy Scripture, may comprise an improved apprehension and statement of them, with expanding views of their logical consequences and practical bearing, unfolding, by the aid of all available knowledge and culture, their unity, beauty, authority, and power for good.

Very different is this from that "tradition," which claims for the Church of Rome hereditary power from Christ and the apostles to discover, under the Holy Spirit, new dogmas of divine authority, and the right to enforce them on the universal Church. And quite as different is it from the later theory of "development" propounded by Cardinal Newman, and refuted by Archer Butler, according to which the Church of Rome inherits a divine right, under the safeguard of infallibility, to determine new dogmas not contained in the Bible: "the mind of the Church working out dogmas from feelings;" improving on the teaching of Scripture by contemplating early Christian doctrine and by the working of subtle emotion thereupon, which dogmas, in due time, receive the infallible endorsement. Apart from its variance with the New Testament, and from other fatal objections, such growth, whether on the theory of Dr. Newman or the older one of "tradition," is condemned by its fruits. What are the dogmas so developed? Purgatory, prayers for the dead, worship of the virgin and saints, transubstantiation, five extra sacraments, a peculiar view of original sin, the immaculate conception, and the like. Legitimate development is either an extended knowledge of the doctrines contained in the Scriptures by reasoning from them, or by attaining a clearer and fuller conception of them, as on the modes and subjects of baptism, or Sabbath observance; or else a contribution from natural theology, as in arguments for man's immortality or the existence of God. But the additional dogmas, just mentioned, are neither; they have no basis of evidence in either Scripture or nature.

2. *Advantages.* True progress is a thing not to be dreaded or denounced, but welcomed. If we

lack some advantages enjoyed by those whose lot fell early in the Christian era, we have some compensation in the advancement of theology as the result of sifting study and increased knowledge. Had the theology of to-day then prevailed, it would have made impossible the horrors of the Inquisition, and many mediæval oppressions and vices done under the Christian name. The way of salvation and the duty of Christians to each other and to the world are better understood. The Bible is to us richer in meaning than to our fathers. Goethe's dying prayer for "more light" is being continually answered.

A widespread revival of the best theology would be a great promoter of spiritual life. If it be a true observation that the Scotch, at least in the last generation, on leaving their native soil to rub against untried influences, were more tenacious of their religion than other nationalities, it was probably in part because the masses beyond the Tweed were better grounded in the theology of their religion. It may be theology has suffered from unattractive methods of presentation. It is quite as capable, however, as natural science of interesting private Christians. If Christian teachers would multiply their Bible classes, and therein set forth the winning aspects of Christian doctrine, fostering a keen interest in its study, great spiritual gain would accrue to the Churches. Progressive theology tends to progressive religious experience. The earnest Methodist preaching of "repentance, faith, and holiness" roused many to seek and realize these blessings. The doctrines of the Reformation and of the Puritan divines led to higher religious character, just as certainly as "Tractarian" theology led many to sacerdotal bondage.

3. *Causes.* If space permitted, it would be interesting to trace out, at some length, the chief *causes* and *occasions* of advancement and retrogradation.

(1) The principle of *evolution* holds here as elsewhere. It is well known that mediæval, and even modern, theology have been greatly influenced by Greek philosophy. The theology of our day bears marks also of Bacon's inductive method, and Locke's sensationalism. It has been indented by the blows of English Deism and German Rationalism, as may be seen in the cold moralistic teaching of Tillotson's school, and the timid attitude of many orthodox divines on the Continent. But, on the other hand, there have been seasons of great forward strides, either in the recovery of lapsed doctrine or clearer and fuller exposition of the known. With the sixteenth century came floods of light which found work for a host of theologians. Methodism was a *renaissance* of saving doctrine immediately uplifting the moral tone of England. Amid the many

struggles of the past, there has been something of the "survival of the fittest," and a gain on the whole.

(2) Much is due to the accumulation of profound theological literature. In no branch of study have greater minds been engaged. Origen, Augustine, Anselm, Melancthon, Calvin, Bishop Butler, Hooker, Howe, Baxter, Pearson, Jeremy Taylor, Stillingfleet, Edwards, Chalmers, R. Watson, are but a few of the more prominent in a great succession whose works we inherit.

(3) One of the most immediate occasions of growth is *controversy*. In Christian doctrine, as in nature, an active mind naturally tends to gather new ideas, or to systematize its gathered thoughts. But often it is roused to its greatest efforts by the *stimulus* of opposition. Thus theology is often made freer from dross and otherwise improved by being hammered between orthodoxy and heterodoxy — "fashioning it into shape by opposite strokes." The various stages of Docetic, and still more of Arian, controversy put orthodoxy on its metal, inciting it to investigate, maintain, and formulate with greater precision, of which we have the results in the three Creeds. The conflicts of the sixteenth century were especially prolific of confessions and able bodies of divinity. Thus it has come to pass that on the Person of Christ and the Trinity, theology was crystallized into scientific form about the fourth century; on the Atonement, in Anselm's time about the close of the tenth century; and on Justification in the sixteenth. Scriptural theology grew more definite, stalwart, and stable by wrestling with its foes. Nor need we doubt that the war now waging against Inspiration, vicarious Atonement, and future Punishment will issue in a firmer grip of these truths by the Christian Church.

(4) No doubt the *freedom of thought* won by the Reformation gave a considerable impetus to earnest study of Christian doctrine, though some of the old fetters long remained. All the Protestant Churches were slow to understand full liberty of conscience. Nevertheless, the progress of the last three hundred and fifty years on the subject of liberty itself, and, under its protection, on other subjects has been very great. It has been truly said that in the Middle Ages science was dominated by theology, and theology by popery. Now science and theology are both free in most Protestant nations. Let us see to it that neither shall dominate the other. They are sisters having the same divine parentage.

To cast off error is progress as real as to acquire fuller views of truth. Until after the construction of the Westminster Standards almost every Church believed its own ecclesiastical form of government was exclusively enjoined in the New Testament. Hence its supposed duty to persecute all

others. Now that theory of divine right many have abandoned with great advantage to all concerned; and greater still would be the advantage if the Episcopalians would follow suit. Much likewise has been gained by the emergence of Protestant communities from the notion that they were bound to be intolerant to fellow-citizens who denied their respective creeds—an emancipation attained all too late, though it was but a return to primitive Christianity. The Protestantism which could permit the burning of Servetus was marred by the spirit of intolerance inherited from popery; but how vast the distance from that state of things to the present.

(5) It is a mistaken view which blames all *Creeds* as necessarily inimical to progress. The penalties and anathemas attached thereto, their enforcement on disapproving consciences, and the errors too often enfolded in them have proved barriers to progress; but so far as they are condensed, succinct summaries of New Testament doctrine, and bases of union and ministerial function for the official teachers of a Christian community they may be highly valuable. A well-considered creed helps us to avoid misunderstanding confusion and self-contradiction. It notifies outsiders of our tenets, and simplifies matters among members of the same body. The New Testament clearly requires some certain doctrines to be believed by every Christian; but it does not require him to subscribe to a doctrinal formula as a condition of Church membership. The case of a teacher is widely different. The Church which provides him with audience, building, pulpit desk, or chair, which supports him and certifies him as its teacher to the people, has a right to an avowal by him of his sincere belief in what he is employed to teach, and to an undertaking that, while under these conditions, he will teach what he is engaged to teach and nothing contrary thereto, he being free to seek his opportunity elsewhere should his convictions seriously diverge from the doctrinal standards established by that Church and accepted by himself.

This is precisely the case of the Wesleyan Methodists, whose sole theological standards are the doctrines of Scripture as taught in John Wesley's first fifty-three Sermons and Notes on the New Testament. Private members are not required to subscribe any doctrine, though if any member abused his position for opposing these standards he would be justly liable to discipline.

(6) An important factor not to be overlooked is a great wave of *humanitarian* influence extending, at least, from the Reformation to the present day, and still moving on; not of unmixed truth and blessing, but very potent and largely beneficent. It is apparent in the great reaction from the extreme views associated with the names of Augustine and Calvin. Melancthon soon found

reason to moderate his monergism in favour of synergism. Another stage was reached when Amyraut and Baxter introduced "Moderate Calvinism;" and another in the movement of Arminius and the Remonstrants, which the assemblies of Dort and Westminster were unable to stem. Wesley and Fletcher gave a new momentum to the same tendency; but in their hands it avoided the rationalistic leanings of Grotius, Limborch, and other Arminians, keeping more closely to the vicarious atonement and the "doctrines of grace;" hence called "Evangelical Arminianism." A further point was touched by James Morrison and the Evangelical Union of Scotland. Many signs of movement in the same direction have been recently observable in the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregational Churches in both the Old and the New World, and also in the Reformed Church on the continent of Europe. A connection might be traced between it and the struggle a few years ago of the Congregational Union with the "Leicester Conference" party, and the still more recent controversy on the "Down Grade;" not to mention proposals just now before some Churches to modify their doctrinal standards.

Evidence is not wanting of the tendency of this force, as it has become increasingly associated with the rationalistic spirit, to impel the Churches yet further from the original extreme to an opposite and worse, in which human sentiment would presume to sit in judgment on revealed doctrine, and reject whatever was disagreeable to human feeling. Can we doubt its influence in the present antagonism of many to the doctrines of the evil and punishment of sin, depravity of man, necessity of atonement, non-meritorious character of good works, and the supreme authority of Scripture? As to the Anglican Episcopal Church, its Thirty-nine Articles and three Creeds have not prevented its being extensively affected by the same cause. From time to time this tendency has been checked by healthy reaction, as when the "Moderatism" of Scotch, and the Unitarianism of English and Irish Presbyterianism yielded to more evangelical doctrine; and again, when the Methodist revival sent refreshing streams of evangelism into the Anglican Church. Let us hope these oscillations may soon leave the Churches in the happy medium of saving truth.

(7) In the course of theology much depends on the *subsidiary knowledge* available, and the *facilities* for theological study. In the present day these are unprecedented. I refer not only to the new light and evidence continually coming by fulfilment of prophecy, but to more natural helps. The results of Oriental exploration of ancient ruins and monuments, the increased acquaintance with the languages of the original Scriptures and cognate tongues, the advancement of Biblical criticism, the

side lights thrown on Scripture by geology and other branches of science, the growth of textual criticism, the improvement of translations and versions, the development of the science of "Introduction," and the able and extensive theological discussions of our time make an epoch in the theological history. Unquestionably many unwarrantable uses against the truth are made of the new materials; but in the long-run this marvellous activity and these increased resources must tell powerfully on the side of Bible truth. Theologians are much engaged just now in producing works on particular subjects; almost inevitably that will be followed by endeavours to systematize the manifold results. The main conclusions of such "higher critics" as Kuenen and Wellhausen may well be rejected as illogical; but certainly criticism is a power with which theology must reckon, and from which it may derive great help.

(8) Among the forces of the age is a commendable longing for *union* of various Christian communities. Every now and then comes the cry for comprehension. But even for that boon there is a price we cannot afford to pay. One chief difficulty is the diversity of beliefs. Hence an irreducible minimum of theology is suggested as the basis of union. Practical minds see that on this principle they would give up the least who believe the least. It would simply be an approach to their position by surrender of beliefs on the part of those who believed more. The former have little or nothing to give up as objectionable to the latter. Or if the question were between two bodies each having many positive but opposite doctrines the difficulty would be still greater, as *both* parties would be called upon to make what they believed to be great sacrifices. A universal creed uniting Calvinists and Arminians, Sacramentarians and Puritans, Evangelicals and Latitudinarians, High, Low, and Broad Churchmen, not to mention other classes, is not yet within the range of practical affairs. The awkwardness of "the historic episcopate" in the four terms of "Home Reunion" put forward by the Pan-Anglican Conference illustrates the difficulty. The modern instances of organic union

of Churches had little, if any, difficulty in the way of doctrine — *e.g.* the United Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, Presbyterian reunions in England and in the United States, the Free Methodist Churches in England, the Methodist bodies of Canada, and the amalgamation of Irish Primitive Wesleyans with the Wesleyan Methodists. In other cases it could not be accomplished without much theological assimilation or reduction. But until organic union becomes feasible on fair and satisfactory terms to all concerned why should not the Churches cultivate earnestly the better union of Christian brotherliness and co-operation, presenting to the world that proof of common discipleship which the Master desiderated more than oneness of organization? "By this shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." And why should not the various Churches, holding the cardinal doctrines of the gospel, increase their aggregate power for good, and evince their fellowship by provincial or ecumenical assemblies for counsel, devotion, and concerted action?

As to the future of Christian theology much depends on the fidelity of its adherents, and especially of its teachers; and not a little on the spirituality of both. It must have its fair share of attention, which is very large. Notwithstanding certain unfriendly elements in the present theological conflict, there is reason to believe that unless those who are set for the defence of the truth prove recreant, the old evangelical theology will greatly profit by the manifold increase of general knowledge and culture, and will emerge purer and stronger than ever, and fraught with richer blessing for mankind. Perish its revealed doctrines cannot, seeing they are in charge of the Lord of might in whom "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Nor will the human mind, as at present constituted, refrain from seeking to give them all the advantage of scientific order and expression. True to the divine rule of faith, and ready for every step of real progress, theology may be expected to play a great part in the future conquest of the world by Christianity.

## The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF FIRST CORINTHIANS.

I COR. VII. 29-31.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is shortened, that henceforth both those that have wives may be as though they had none; and those that weep, as though they wept not; and those that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and those that buy, as

though they possessed not; and those that use the world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away" (R.V.).

### LITERATURE.

- Annot (W.), *Roots and Fruits*, p. 112.  
 Beecher (H. W.), *Sermons* (Low, 1870), p. 244.  
 Bickersteth (E.), *Condensed Notes*, p. 514.