

that their religious system was a special revelation of God, of which no evidence exists, which they never claimed; or to assume that the nature of true religion is such as to exempt it from the working of all ordinary laws governing the growth and development of mental and moral truth. Can any valid reason be given why we should conclude that the process of growth as applied to religious conceptions, which had been continuous up to a certain point, stopped? Why stop with Jonathan Edwards the younger, any more than with Grotius or Anselm? If Calvin were right in criticising the soteriology of Augustine, why may not Dr. Taylor have been right in criticising the soteriology of Calvin?

Surely the wise ground for the friends of Divine truth, even for those who are most attached to what they conceive to be the faith once delivered to the saints in its original integrity, is not to deny the possibility of progress in the interpretation of the ways of God to man, and to denounce as "heretics," and "unsound," all who seek a better voice to the real intent of Scripture by substituting formulae, more or less new, for those which have been for substance approved among the later generations of orthodox believers; but it is rather to apply to them and to their work that inspired test which will at once determine its value, and settle whether it be of God, or whether they speak from themselves. Grant that there are errors, and wild and wayward teachers. The same apostle who warned the people of God that "many false prophets are gone out into the world," and who charged them "believe not every spirit," was careful also to imply the fact that among the many false there would be some true, and in this view to command the saints to "prove the spirits, whether they are of God." When, then, one brother arises on this side, and another on that, to offer what he conceives to be an "improvement" in theology, the true course must be to meet him neither with suspicion nor inculcation, but to invite all such to measure themselves by that ancient rule "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." They have the right to speak. Others have equal right to hear and to judge. And "let all that ye do be done in love."

When new views are advanced, it is common

for the lovers of ancient ways to plead that there is danger, because there can be found no logical stopping-place this side of the grossest error. All stands on a sliding scale, and if the ancient orthodoxy of the Assembly's Catechism be departed from, and any concession whatever be made to this spirit of theological "improvement," their contention—at least their fear—is, that no sufficient reason can be given for making a stand again this side of absolute, if not unlimited, license. This forgets two things. It forgets, first, that the Assembly's Catechism, and the system of which it is the outgrowth and expression, was itself a theological novelty and "improvement," and, as such, was dreaded and deplored by the ultra-conservatives of the time; and it forgets that the standard of supreme appeal must always be the Word of God, illumined by His spirit, so that nothing can rightly claim our fealty which its truest interpretation supercedes, even though it may have been as life itself to the Church of Christ in its less enlightened experience.

To make the matter practical, here is orthodoxy surrounded on every hand by Unitarianism, Universalism and Nothingarianism, shading off into bare rationalism and naked infidelity; yet all parties claim to be "Evangelical" (sometimes those which seem the emptiest souls making the loudest claim). What can you do to save yourself if you move by a hair's breadth from the old mooring? We answer: You can test yourself and test them by that supreme authority whose judgment is always final. There is a point beyond which liberalism in Christianity cannot go, and claim its distinctive ground. That point we conceive to lie in the question of guilt and forgiveness. Is there such a thing as a sin which, as Paul says, is "*exceeding* sinful?" Does it require forgiveness? Is that forgiveness to be earned by man, or freely given by God? If the latter, is it granted because man asks it? by the stimulus of suffering? the allurements of good example? or is it the absolute gift of God for Christ's sake? These questions, honestly answered, settle the whole matter. He who holds and teaches that sin is merely mis-creation, mis-adjustment, misfortune—moral movement misplaced—and who, in consistence with that view, claims that a kind-hearted Father never can be "hard" upon his own offspring thus pitiably situated,