

false impression ; the more readily will he understand what is human imagination, and what inspiration, and the more willingly will he wait patiently for the command before speaking even though conscious of an impatience on the part of the assembly to hear.

The evidence that the command given to minister is a true one will be found in a deep solemnity of spirit, under which a sweetly peaceful feeling covers the mind and satisfies its longings without desiring the approval of man, and in the audience addressed by the solemn covering overspreading all, leading into a quiet introversion to examine and digest the testimony given.

JOHN J. CORNELL.

THE PAST AND THE PROGRESS OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS.

I have chosen this subject, not as a curiosity-hunter, to search out strange old notions and display them here for our entertainment, but to see if there is not some fact in the experience of the past which will be profitable to us to-day in our efforts to get at a better conception of religion, and to work out that conception in our lives.

Here we stand at the close of the 19th century, with the accumulated experience of 5,000 years of human history at our back ; and what have we gained ? "Of course, in a thousand different ways in temporal things, there is no comparison between our condition to-day, and the condition of men at that far-off time. But what have we gained with regard to religious thought ? What new ideas have we found that are profitable, and what old ideas have we abandoned that are unprofitable ?

In the most ancient writings we find that men knew of this principle within, which points out the path for human feet to tread. We are still following the same guide. Then let me ask again—what have we gained ? It seems to me that we have gained entirely in the old and unprofitable ideas which we have abandoned. And if I may be

pardoned for encroaching a little on the subject that is to follow mine, I would say that I firmly believe that the progress of religious ideas in the future will continue to consist in the abandonment of the old and unprofitable.

And here arises what may seem to be a serious question of distinction between the profitable and the unprofitable. But I assure you there need be no question or doubt.

I think I can answer this best by reading an article of mine which appeared in the *Intelligencer* about two years ago, relative to a sermon in that paper by R. Heber Newton, in which he gives advice to a "doubt-benighted young man." It is as follows :

"The sum and substance of Heber Newton's advice to the doubt-benighted young man is to stop worrying about what you don't know, and to do what you do know. The closing of the sermon is beautiful, simple and practical ; and is good Quakerism ; but it stops at the most important point, and leaves the most important question unanswered—which is, 'Why should the young man feel doubt-benighted when he knows duty, and can spell out Righteousness, Purity, Goodness, Justice, and Truth,' and can translate these terms of the soul into life ?"

What did Jesus of Nazareth know, or do, or teach, more than that ? What is there to know more than that, and why should anyone who knows that feel doubt-benighted ?

I believe this doubt arises almost exclusively concerning theological speculations and inventions, which are altogether rejected by many who are sincere, wise, and good. And I believe it is because children are impressively taught in their earlier years to accept these things as truth, and to rely for salvation in some mysterious way, on a belief in them, that so many thoughtful minds are brought to this period of painful, perilous, doubt. I believe it is altogether unnecessary and wrong to teach children such things in such a way, that when they arrive at years of