

"all the light of sacred story gathering round its head sublime."

In the worlds Greece and Rome represent at Christ's advent, we meet with a species of progress which was in many respects praiseworthy, but, in its bearing on the best interests of the world, of little practical value. It lacked continuity. It had not the moulding power of a life common to humanity. It was the progress of distinct nationalities—distinct as the billows, but *not* one as the ocean, and consequently not "still educing good and better thence, and better still in infinite progression." Otherwise has it fared with "the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." Here it has been one generation to another saying, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you," and that under the solemn consciousness that "none of us liveth unto himself." In our evangelical theology this progression is very clearly seen, as "in the earliest centuries we find the Church elaborating from the Scriptures, under the guidance of the Greek fathers, a doctrine of God and of the God-man which has since been the foundation of her theology in the strictest sense of that word. Next the Latin Church, through its deeper apprehension of the evils of the world and of the human heart, its greater feeling of the necessity of conversion, and the need of holiness to work out the doctrine of Scripture concerning sin and grace. Then followed at a vast interval the great doctrinal advance of the Reformation—the grand declaration of the evangelical mode of pardon and acceptance—that doctrine of justification by faith which now appears to shine so plainly in Paul's epistles." Whilst later still, the principle of missions to the heathen was formed by Carey and Williams, almost in our own day, as a living, moving power in the New Testament, though it lay there undiscovered for ages, and yet all the while an open secret.

Down through the long valley of the past comes God's voice, loud and clear, saying, with fresh emphasis, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they *go forward!*" Towards the going forward, however, a wise understanding of the times is a necessity. The day in which we live is remarkable for its progress in physical and moral science, in new discoveries and inventions. The spirit that is abroad

is a winged spirit, reaching to every department of human thought and research. In the theological world it has begotten a spirit which we may characterize as a spirit of *unrest*—a spirit which has taken possession generally, beginning perhaps exclusively with the real or self-constituted leaders of religious thought. It is nevertheless true, that the file as well as the rank find common work in examining, dissecting, analyzing, sapping and tearing in pieces the things that may be shaken, as a matter of course, "that the things which cannot be shaken may remain." To ignore this feature of the times, and not govern itself accordingly, would be highly criminal in "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Take, if you will, as a sample of the spirit in question, the utterances of certain representative men in the Church of Scotland, as embodied in the "Scotch Sermons" so recently published. We are informed by their authors that they were published expressly to indicate "the direction in which thought is moving." If the direction of the current is marked by the drift of the chips and straws that float on its surface, assuredly there is no mistaking the calamity in store for Scotland if such ideas and teaching should come into the ascendant. Then the Pantheist's God would be enthroned, and death-producing views of sin work sad havoc on men's lives; then would Christ, as the atoning Saviour and Redeemer of guilty man, be unspoken and unsung; the day of judgment, and man's accountability to God, subjects only referred to with bated breath; whilst the second death, and the pains of hell forever, would only be alluded to, to illustrate the credulity of a past age, and the more excellent advanced outpost of the present. Whilst on Scottish soil, let me remind you of the controversy that raged—and for that part that rages still, for "no slacker grows the fight"—between Professor Robertson Smith and the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. Professor Smith discovers, or thinks he discovers, "a discrepancy between the traditional view of the Pentateuch and the plain statements of the historical books, and the prophets, which is marked and fundamental," and he advances in its place another, according to his showing, representing the growing conviction of an overwhelming weight of the most earnest and