

THE
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ECCLESIASTICAL PROGRESS.

Can the Presbyterian Church make any Progress? In reply to this question, perhaps, some highly conservative Presbyterian of the old covenanter stock will be disposed to say, progress! aye, that it can, back to the faith and works of the martyred fathers—back to the obligations of the ancient covenants—back to the strict and pure discipline of the olden time—back to the massive preaching of the sixteenth century—back to the psalms of David as the only songs of the sanctuary. This crab-like progress all backward, from present doctrinal positions and church practices, would doubtless be agreeable to some—would fill the hearts of some venerable Gael or broad-browed lowland Scotchman with unwonted joy. But this is not what nineteenth century people call *progress*. They are prone to take, in large measures, the counsel of the Apostle and to forget “the things that are behind, looking forward to that which is before.” From past and present footstands—from well understood positions, on which the Presbyterian Church has fixed itself, and with which it has become historically identified—from these the modern thinker asks if it be possible to advance to something better? or if it be the best thing we can do to stand still where we are, as upon the whole the most eminent and outstretched position, to which in this imperfect world we can attain? These are the questions which we would like to consider and weigh; and regarding which we would like to come to some clear and practical conclusion.

Well, we think we hear some orthodox brother say, “You can’t mend the Confession of Faith; you can’t get anything better than this in any of your modern inventions.” This we reply is dangerous ground to tread upon; it is never safe to meddle with the foundations of a building, or of an ecclesiastical organization. Better in most cases let an old and even imperfect corner stone alone, than in the attempt to remove it and to supply a better, imperil the safety of the superstructure. In such remarks there is much truth; and without good cause it would certainly be a rash act, to call for, or to attempt a recon-