

excellencies, so some ancient men in Hebrew philology maintain ; by losing the unpointed text, for instance, though the wonder to most of us is how Hebrew was ever read without the points. Formerly Hebrew pronunciation was traditional, now it is scientific ; yet *Aleph* begins the alphabet still, and *Tau* ends it. Theology, within living memories, has lost the power to explain certain texts as they were once explained. She has to look at the Scriptures through improved spectacles ; travel, discovery, new power of critical judgment, all have affected her. And yet a consensus of even conservative opinion grants that, upon the whole, the gains are clear, the real losses but dimly perceived, and consisting of what is of decreasing value to those born into the world as it now is. To fail to recognize this is to be literally "behind the times," and in consequence to be so far short of the power to tell the Israel of to-day what ought to be done, in view of the truth as it now is. And, in matters to their personal taste, the most obstinate of theologians are free to acknowledge this. Witness it in those who favour the present advances in evangelical movements, modern missions home and foreign, new measures in moral reform ; how ready are they to fall in with what speeds the missionary to his field, the evangelist to his crowd, the visitor to her womanly work, and others to forms of labour among classes of the needy not named in the annals of the older world. But when something we do not altogether fancy, is proposed by men we do not altogether like, how ready are the most enlightened and catholic of us to confess to ourselves, if to none else, the wish that in some of its notions the world had remained about where it was when we were born !

And now, having made this generous allowance to the benefits of change, I can fairly claim the liberty to say, that there is nothing in reason or in history more demonstrably fallacious than this, that a change is necessarily a change for the better. *That is not so.* Vast is the difference between an innovation and a reform, between swelling and growth, between a novelty and a blessing, between what sets popular feeling aglow and what rectifies and purifies our common life.

At this point let me turn to the benefits of a course of theological study to those who are to be the guides of the people through the signs of theological unrest that the times are ever presenting to us. And one of the first is that by such a study they may be able to teach the people to discriminate between changes that are likely to be beneficial to the soul, hence to the life, and changes that are not likely so to be. Certain it is that change is not to be disposed of by ignoring it, nor by treating it superciliously ; nor by acting as if God had abandoned the world, and given up His government of it, because some phases in its life and culture for eternity take us by surprise. This is to be tripped headlong—a casualty easily avoided by a thoughtful investigation into the first principles of theology. Theology is the science of God ; it aims at a true knowledge of the true God, and its end is to impart this for the good of the people ; its motto is *Salus populi, suprema lex.* Very well, one of the first and grandest and most saving thoughts about God is that He is the Infinite and the Eternal Spirit, infinite in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth ; in a word, that He is the Absolute in life and love. Bring now the changing world under the impress of this thought of God. Here is one Being who is never surprised, never circumvented, never imposed upon, never baffled, never left to try experiments, never in doubt as to the issue of His plans, or to the efficiency of His rule over mankind. If there is not something in the knowledge of that God to give a man firmness and poise in a changing life, I despair of ever helping that man in a troublous time.

Again, as another thought in theology fitted to meet other demands of our life, this unchanging God has put within us certain unchanging attributes—reflections of His own. He has put a conscience in us—a thing an unholy God neither could nor would have done—by which we know with Him and within our own selves, what is right and what is wrong. And no