

*THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE
NEW REFORMATION.*

It is sufficiently obvious that neither literally nor figuratively was the last word said on matters theological in either the sixteenth or seventeenth century. It is obvious literally, because of the perennial stream of theological eloquence and literature. It is also pretty generally accepted that the standards and symbols adopted by the Reformers are not the final expression of man's religious thought and feeling. Hence it is not strange that from time to time suggestions are made that the teaching of Luther and Calvin needs to be supplemented or superseded; or that some divine or poet or essayist or novel-writer should undertake to supply this need, and propose to inaugurate a New Reformation. These claims and suggestions should be met in the reverent and earnest spirit of the apostle, who bids us "prove all things." True, the world has known many false Christs, but this will be no sufficient excuse for rejecting the true Messiah.

Without discussing any particular scheme for a New Reformation, it may be useful to consider why and through what influence a new departure is to be looked for; and also to emphasize a few of the special contributions to a fuller understanding of Divine truth which may be found in a renewed study of the Old Testament.

Paul speaks of Christ as "all and in all," and in equiva-

lent terms of God; and one of our own poets also writes, a little less boldly :

“—is He not all but thou, that hast power to feel ‘I am I’?”

Hence all additions to knowledge increase our knowledge of God; whenever the mind of man makes great conquests from the realm of the unknown, we have to ask, How do these new discoveries modify our idea of God? Nearly two thousand years ago there was given to men the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and for centuries men pondered the great problem, What has this life taught us concerning God? Their final, solemn answer, from which the Church has never since swerved, might be expressed in Christ's own words: “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” The essential feature of the Reformation was the recovery of the knowledge of Jesus, and the practical Teutonic mind gave the same answer in different terms: faith in Christ meant reconciliation to God. Before we inquire what promise of new truth may lie before us, we must recognise that we have neither a new Christ to proclaim to the world, nor a forgotten Christ to recall to men's memory. It is not likely that any New Reformation can rank with the great spiritual revolutions of the first and sixteenth centuries. And yet its significance must be great. During the last century nature has told man her secrets almost too rapidly for him to receive them. The secrets of forgotten empires, the mysteries of infinite space, and the worlds of infinitesimal life have been laid bare before him. He has learnt how the earth grew, and thinks he has discovered the genealogy of life from the lowest organism up to man. He knows the history of literature, and has found out how to gather from imperfect records a better knowledge of the thoughts of men than they had themselves. He has learnt much practically in steam, electricity, engineering. He has

created new political systems and enunciated great principles of social life. And as regards the individual, man has penetrated into his own mind, and seen the order and method of its working. True, it has not all been gain; the sculpture of Greece, the architecture of the Middle Ages remind us that we have paid no mean price for our achievements. Moreover man in the nineteenth century, overwhelmed with his own intellectual achievements, blinded with excess of light, bewildered by multitudinous voices of science, falters out in weariness and despair that he knows nothing, and calls himself an agnostic.

But success and failure, loss and gain, triumph and despair must have much to teach us about God.

Tennyson says :

“The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills, and the plains—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns ?”

In all our added knowledge of sun, moon, and stars, have we not gained a fuller and clearer vision of God? Origen says: “The works of Divine Providence and the plan of this whole world are, as it were, rays of the nature of God.” We have learnt much of “the plan of the whole world”; therefore for us God shines with multiplied and brighter rays. Justin Martyr says: “Whatever things were rightly said amongst men are the property of us Christians.” Many things have been rightly said in these latter days of which “we Christians” have not yet taken possession; there is a great inheritance waiting for us, when we have faith and courage enough to claim it.

Connected with these great movements of thought and action, there are minor changes which exercise a most important influence over the *form* of our religious expressions. The force of language varies, continuously and extensively; no word has exactly the same meaning to any two individuals; generations separated by centuries attach

very different meanings to the same words and phrases. This is especially the case with religious phraseology, so that it needs months of patient study to learn what the Nicene Creed or the Westminster Confession meant to the people to whom they were first given. These changes of religious formulæ are connected with the progress of science, by our habit of expressing religious thought in terms of the popular science and philosophy of our day. Hence periods of rapid growth necessitate a re-formation of our theological statements, on account of the direct and indirect effects of progress upon language.

There is a point of view from which the application of these principles to the Old Testament is extremely simple. Science, criticism, and history are invoked to destroy its religious significance ; and it is suggested that, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, the New Reformation will consist in liberating religion from its ideas and phraseology. There is a certain shade of orthodoxy half inclined to accept this position. We have all heard of the Russian traveller, who was driving over the steppes, and found himself pursued by wolves ; to detain them and check their pursuit he detached first one and then another of his team, and while the wolves devoured the horses that were left behind, he was able with the remainder to reach a place of safety. Some imagine that a similar process might have its advantages in the case of the Bible. Timid souls have thought they might reconcile themselves to the loss of the Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes as a sort of ransom for the rest of the Bible. But now it is clear that the critics' appetites will not be satisfied with such trifles, and there are those who fancy that if the Old Testament were abandoned to these voracious wolves, we might be allowed to enjoy the New Testament in peace, at any rate in our lifetime. But the process of sacrificing horses to facilitate an escape soon reaches its limits ; and to sacrifice the Old

Testament to maintain the New is more like taking off one wheel to lighten the cart. It scarcely needs more than a casual glance at Westcott and Hort's text of the New Testament to see that the New is completely saturated with the ideas and phrases of the Old; the more carefully the New Testament is studied, the more fully do we perceive that in both words and thoughts its writers breathe the spiritual atmosphere of the Old Testament and its allied literature. The gospel without the law and the prophets would be like a house without a foundation.

Purely negative criticism is always misleading. There was a misguided king of Judah, who could find no better use for a roll of prophecy than to slice it up with a pen-knife, and throw the pieces in the fire. He is often set forth as a prototype of the modern critic, and the latter is solemnly reminded of the monarch's untimely end: somewhat unfairly, for there is a large constructive element in modern criticism. But the times are difficult for constructive work. It is hard to get earnest attention to serious theological thought; there is little leisure for it; little leisure also for the spiritual experience through which men learn to know God and interpret Him to others.

"Tis an ill cure
For life's worst ills, to have no time to feel them."

And the same principle extends to all the experiences of life; it is not well "to have no time to feel them."

The tide of scientific discovery still flows apace, the treasure and burden of human knowledge multiply; its religious significance is not likely to be properly estimated till there is some pause or ebb in the tide. We scarcely care to think out what evolution teaches us about God till we know the ultimate form and limits of the doctrine, and how it may be interpreted and modified by subsequent

scientific theories. Thus, while we feel that, as the magi of the first century brought their gold and frankincense and myrrh to the cradle of Christ, so the wise men of the nineteenth sometimes unconsciously are bringing their gifts to His throne; while we look confidently for the appearance of new spiritual forces and the worthy continuance of the apostolic succession of the prophets of God,—we may also recognise that possibly the time of the new departure is not yet, and that one of our duties in the present is to enlarge our knowledge and understanding, and to tighten our grasp of the Divine truth we already possess. Only those who have clearly grasped the large permanent positive element in ancient spiritual teaching are likely to lead us into fuller light. Reformations do not come from the Sadducees.

Let us therefore turn to a few specimens of great truths which find their *chief* expression in the Old Testament, and will necessarily be important factors in any restatement of Christian truth. It is not, of course, possible to avoid the influence of modern ways of thinking; it is not desirable. We may say of the Bible, turning the phrase of an old hymn against its meaning, after the manner of some modern hymnals,—

“It gives a light to every age,
And borrows light from—*all*.”

And yet these will be the same truths that have age after age been most powerful factors in religious thought. Forms and formulæ have come and gone in quick succession, but the underlying substance of truth has remained.

Incidentally the Old Testament renders us great service as a battleground of controversy. All the difficulties—uncertainty of text, canon, versions, date, authorship, inspiration, historical accuracy—exist alike in the Old and New Testaments. Many of these uncertainties were

known and recognised by the apostles, and yet they found no difficulty in making free and full use of the Old Testament. A study of their attitude towards their Scriptures might greatly help us; and Old Testament controversy affords us opportunities of establishing principles which will be most important in discussing the New.

Again, the Old Testament is the most conspicuous monument of the permanence of spiritual truth and experience. The New Testament is the account of an experiment in its early stages; the Old Testament traces religious ideas through centuries; the New Testament shows us the elastic power and life of the same truths clothing themselves with new energy, and going forward with fresh impetus. The history of Christianity is largely occupied with the influence of the truths taught by prophet and psalmist. We ourselves find help and comfort in the stories of patriarchs and kings, in the inspired utterances which sustained and encouraged the Israelite nearly 3,000 years ago.

The practical value of these facts may be shown by a homely illustration. Some time ago *Punch*, I think, drew for us a picture like this. John Bull was starving in the midst of plenty; he is seated at a well-furnished breakfast table, but he reads that there is alum in the bread, chalk in the milk, chicory in the coffee, turnips in the marmalade, and that his Wiltshire bacon comes from America. For a moment he thinks he must await the result of the latest scientific analysis before he begins breakfast. This is an apt picture of the state of mind of some people to-day: there never was such a wealth of spiritual food, and yet there is scarcely a book or a preacher unsuspect of heresy. Even as to the Bible, they hear that the law of Moses was written by Ezra, and other unsettling statements; and are also inclined to wait for the results of analysis. But John Bull, in his difficulty, would reflect that he had often break-

fasted with a considerable balance of advantage on similar fare to that before him. While anxious to do all that analysis could teach him to improve his diet, he might still manage to breakfast off his old food. When we remember how long the old spiritual food has fed the lives of the saints, we may be sure it still has a practical use for us.

Calvin says: "We must found the authority of the Scriptures on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. . . . They begin truly to touch us when they are sealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Being then illuminated by His power, we believe, not on our own judgment, nor on the judgment of others, that the Scriptures are from God. . . . I say nothing but that which every believer experiences in himself." We are prepared to receive "the inner witness of the Holy Spirit" by the knowledge that, through thousands of years, the Scriptures have touched and been sealed to countless hearts. Nothing is inspired to the individual except that which touches and moves him; and a man as yet untouched may be led up to this true recognition of inspiration by learning how widely the Scriptures have touched and moved others. The Old Testament and its history form a large and essential part of the testimony to the permanent power of religious ideas.

Again, the fullest and most forcible expression of certain aspects of the personal and spiritual relationship of the individual to God is found in the Old Testament. As a matter of precept and exposition, it would be difficult to say whether psalmist and prophet, or evangelist and apostle set forth this relationship more clearly. But example is more than precept. It is true that the most transcendent example of the life of Divine fellowship is given by the New Testament with a fulness beyond any similar life history in the Old; and, further, that another great spiritual personality, that of Paul, is also more vividly depicted than

any Old Testament saint. But there is a certain limitation and drawback to the New Testament examples of the spiritual life. Practically the necessary emphasis laid on the deity of Christ hinders men from a sympathetic appreciation of His humanity, and lessens the influence of His example. So too the fisherman, the tent-maker, and the tax-gatherer do not think of Peter, Paul, and Matthew as examples to them in their secular calling, but probably see in them the prototypes of some of their acquaintance who have given up fishing and tent-making, and entered a theological college with a view to devoting themselves to the work of the ministry. There is more priestcraft in this view of the New Testament than in all the ritual of the Old. Much may be done to alter this; but for the communion of man with God, as man and not as religious teacher, we need to turn to the Old Testament. There the heroes of sacred story are not merely prophets and priests: they are patriarchs, shepherds, kings, like Abraham, Job, David, and Saul; queens, like Esther; slaves and statesmen, like Joseph and Nehemiah; simple women, like Ruth and Naomi. Divine guidance and grace are sought and given as to the choice of a home or a wife, the birth of children, the gathering and spending of worldly gear, the organization and government of the State, home and foreign politics; all the varied interests of life are depicted as consecrated and inspired. Abraham's life is purely secular, and yet he is the friend of God. He sacrifices as the father of the family and the head of the tribe, by a priesthood which is the prototype of the priesthood of the individual to-day. There is no hint of any religious teaching on his part. His anxieties are for his wife and family at home, for their maintenance in hard times, for his son's marriage. As a man of substance, he has delicate and difficult relations with his nephew Lot, arising out of their common property. In

all this he seeks, and receives, and trusts a Divine help and guidance: "and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Whether as an ideal or as a history, this life of close personal relationship with God underlay and inspired the religious life of Israel and its magnificent development of truth. When the lesson it taught had been obscured by the stress laid on an elaborate system of ritual, when Paul sought to re-establish the doctrine that the true life consisted in the direct relationship of the individual soul to God, he also turned back to the life of Abraham for his one crucial instance. If we seek to emphasize the same truth, to combat the idea that the spiritual life is the special concern of the religious teacher, or has specially to do with acts of worship, apart from practical life, we find our best and most numerous examples in the Old Testament.

Because the Old Testament occupies itself largely with secular persons and pursuits, it is constantly interested in national life, and not only illustrates for us the fellowship of the individual with God, but also the dependence of the nation upon its heavenly King. In the New Testament there are allusions, principles, precepts, dealing with the life of the subject and the citizen; but Christianity began its mission at a time when there was little national life within its reach, and the special circumstances of its origin deprived the apostles of any practical interest in Jewish national aspirations. This isolation saved Christianity from being hampered by local and transient conditions; it served to abstract spiritual ideas, and exhibit them to us in clear outline, much as a map omits mountains that rivers and boundaries may be the more conspicuous. But the comparative silence of the New Testament as to public life has been made the excuse for much shirking of duty; spiritual life and public spirit have been held to be inconsistent, and a daily newspaper has been supposed to unfit its readers for

the study of the Bible. The fullest refutation of this error lies in the fact that the Old Testament is endorsed by the New. Paul can afford to pass over the subject of national righteousness somewhat lightly, because it was clearly and manifestly set forth by Isaiah and Jeremiah. One of the most prominent ideas of the Old Testament is the mutual devotion of Jehovah and His people, involving the consecration of the whole life of the nation, political and social, as well as religious. The sacred books include the civil and criminal law, the practical wisdom, the philosophic speculations of Israel, as well as its more directly religious writings. Similarly the religious leaders, prophets, and priests do not confine themselves to spiritual matters; it is through them, through the spiritually minded of the community, that God influences national politics, and not merely by a mysterious and inscrutable providence, which releases God's servants from any responsibility in such matters. In the New Testament national feeling breathes in Christ's lament over Jerusalem, and in Paul's wish that he might be accursed for his fellow countrymen. Even today, when the Jews are a people scattered over the face of the earth, without city or temple, priest or altar, their daily service is instinct with the same national feeling; their prayer is that God may build the temple and establish the throne of David speedily, in their days. They appeal to Him on behalf of His peculiar people, that He, the keeper of Israel, the one nation of God, may preserve the remnant of Israel, who daily proclaim the doctrine of the Divine unity. There is one God and one chosen people.

We are often called upon to consider the narrowness of the special claim of Israel to Divine favour. It has all the defects of a selfish negation. Foreigners might be inclined to class it with the insular exclusiveness of the English. But while we criticise what is negative, let us remember that the positive aspect is absolutely true. Israel's ideas

as to God's relation to the Gentiles were imperfect, but Israel did not in any way over-rate the care of God for her national welfare and righteousness, or her duty to Him as a community.

It was also true in Israel that for many individuals Jehovah was the God of the nation rather than of the individual; it is true, more or less, in every religious community. But in the case of the men who taught most earnestly the Divine mission of the chosen people, Jehovah was emphatically, in their own personal experience, the God of the individual as well as of the State. According to the wisdom of this world, the interests of individuals, of nations, of humanity are antagonistic; but in the higher wisdom it is not so, the individual life is not destroyed by family affection, nor the home by patriotism, nor the nation by the enthusiasm of humanity. Each narrower affection is the basis of the wider feeling, and God is the God alike of the race, the nation, and the individual. The Old Testament shows us side by side intense spiritual life of the individual soul and national devotion to God.

We are hampered and burdened on all sides by cruelty and wrong, which are serenely tolerated because they cannot be brought home to individuals; we urgently need a sense of collective responsibility, a national conscience, a recognition of the fact that the nation will have to answer to God for the individual, and the individual for the nation. A powerful inspiration for this large sense of duty may be found in the Old Testament. The Puritans drank deeply of this spirit, and it has been made a reproach to them; but the Old Testament, not only supplied them with an excuse for narrowness and cruelty, but also gave them an incentive to high-minded patriotism. The ancient prophets drank in the fresh, strong atmosphere of a vigorous national life, and claimed it for God; they left their claim as an example and a stimulus to all true patriots of every

age and country. They recognised too that it was by the remnant, the holy seed, that a nation was to be won for God; convinced and earnest minorities may take fresh courage from the exulting confidence of Hebrew prophets, and believe that the sword of the Spirit in the hands of an elect few is more mighty than the indifference or hostility of the many.

The fulness of the Old Testament treatment of life, its manifold interests, the variety of its subjects and heroes, also suggest to us that there is a certain brightness, certain notes of triumph and exultation, that find their best expression in the Old Testament, and are more likely to be found in the New if we read it in the light of the Old. Buchanan, in one of his poems, speaks of Christ as "that pale rainbow circling Palestine"; the phrase is indeed one that no student of Christ's character should have used, but it very well expresses the impression made by the New Testament apart from the Old. This is partly due to the circumstances of the times, and partly to preoccupation with special aspects of the religious life.

A cloudy sky does not necessarily argue a feeble sun, but yet it makes the day gloomy. The skies were overcast when the Sun of righteousness arose; light of any kind was a marvel, a manifest evidence of His presence; it was not strange that the light was gray. It was a dead world to which He came; the East had been dead for centuries. The Greek kingdom of Syria and the Parthian empire beyond the Euphrates were a poor substitute for the manifold variety and energy of ancient Semitic life. For the Western world generally the empire meant peace, civilization, and commerce, but not life. The peoples had bought peace and order at the price of political liberty and national life, and were not yet sure that they had secured these expensive luxuries. The much lauded age of the Antonines had not yet come, and at the best there is little

inspiration about the names of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero.

When we turn to Christ's own people, the prospect is even more gloomy. Stanley speaks of Antipater as "the man destined to inaugurate for the Jewish nation the last phase of its existence." It seems a kind of historic irony, ghastly and depressing, that placed the sceptre of Israel in these critical years in the hands of a family of Edomite adventurers. There was neither pride, satisfaction, nor comfort for the Jews, either in the Herods or in Pilate, Festus, and Felix, who succeeded them. Moreover the controversies and ambitions of scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees, the casuistry of the rabbis, and the fanaticism of the Zealots, cannot have contributed much to the cheerfulness of life in the first century A.D. The ever-deepening horror and gloom of the years that preceded the fall of Jerusalem are familiar to all. Ruin in prospect or in realization cast its shadow over the whole period of the New Testament, and the book is the work of Jewish Christians and those in close sympathy with them. Their hearts were heavy with the burden of national calamity; the separation between themselves and the Jews only added to their sorrows; as brave and earnest men, they would feel deeply alienation from their kinsmen in the hour of danger. They themselves lived in the realization of Israel's supreme hope, and it filled them with anguish that Israel itself rejected the Messiah. This constantly recurring thought fills the Epistle to the Romans with infinite pathos; not all the grandeur of the gospel and its universality can comfort Paul for "his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh"; their rejection of Christ is a problem beyond human solution, to be referred to the unfathomable mysteries of Providence; he clings with passionate hope to the ultimate salvation of Israel. And Paul was not the most Judaistic of the Jewish Christians.

In addition to the misfortunes of Israel, the Christians had special troubles of their own. Paul wrote epistles in prison, John the Apocalypse in exile, and their later writings belong to a period when the tide of triumph had for a time been checked, and earnest Christians had to struggle against the depressing influences of reaction. It was very natural that early Christians should think of Christ's Spirit as the Divine Comforter. The translation of *παράκλητος* as "comforter" marks the impression made by the New Testament; and even now some think that Christianity consists mainly in the cheerful endurance of suffering, and allow others to think of their faith as gloomy and subdued. At the sunrise of Christianity the sky was dark; and some seem to think that, when the clouds break, we should draw down the blinds, lest there should be too much illumination. Our most emphatic warning against such mistakes is in the Old Testament.

For these Hebrew Scriptures are not the literature of a unique period, but of a long history; again and again its sky was overcast, but there were many days when the sun shone brightly all day long. It tells of the tranquil life of Isaac, the noble serenity of Abraham, the splendour and triumphs of the best days of David and Solomon. There are strains of exultation that celebrate the time "when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion." Many psalms, many chapters of the prophets, remind us that there are times when, in the grace of God, His people may be glad without effort or afterthought. Are we to believe that this brightness of rich and varied life, this free and childlike gladness, have passed away as inferior and carnal attributes of a worn-out dispensation? To think so would greatly dishonour Christ. They are rather among the many gifts and blessings which He has renewed and secured to us. Men often turn to Greece for an inspiration of light and gladness, and there are tints and tones which Greece alone

can give; but Israel's story is painted in even richer colours, and strikes more thrilling notes. Christian life is grievously impoverished when this source of inspiration is neglected.

There is one element of the brightness of the Old Testament which calls for special consideration—the spirit of indomitable hope which breathes through its pages. The Old Testament looks forward, Christianity looks backward. Whatever may be thought of the conscious and deliberate Messianic intention of individual passages, the Messianic spirit and hope pervade the whole Old Testament. The glories of the past are the guarantee of a yet more glorious future, each fresh experience is made the basis of a new and confident expectation. The patient and often deferred hopes of the patriarchs are directed to the Promised Land; but Israel does not rest in the fulfilment of this promise. For the prophets there is still and always a future full of Divine promise. The vision is manifold, according to variety of circumstance and temperament, but the substance is always the same: God will manifest Himself more fully both in judgment and in mercy. Slowly the vision forms itself of a human Saviour, the medium of a Divine salvation; and this is the burden of many a prophetic utterance. Each prophet presses into the service of his Divine message all that history has recorded, all that experience or imagination can suggest. No one dreams that he is to be limited by any literal interpretation of the exact words of his predecessor; each takes up the glorious tradition of hope derived from the fathers, finds new words and new music for the old theme, and hands it on to his successor. Israel's days of triumph provide suggestions of outline and colouring of yet brighter days to come. Israel's ruin and anguish only heighten the picture by their contrast. In many respects the later Jews showed themselves unable to grasp the great ideas of their own Scriptures; some aspects indeed of

the Messianic hope completely possessed the Jewish mind; an elect few rose to the heights of ancient prophetic vision. When we see what those few accomplished, when we try to imagine what might have been if the faith of Israel had been as broad and spiritual as it was deep-rooted and intense, we are tempted to think that their unbelief has been the infinite loss of the world; and yet "there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." As it was, the Old Testament handed on its mighty hope and influence and inspiration, and herein Christianity found the impetus and momentum that sent it like an overwhelming tide through the world.

Nor was Christianity unfaithful to this ancient spirit of hope. Christ and His apostles strike the same key-note of forward outlook and expectation. They did not rest in the splendid achievements of the early days of the Church; they called on Christians to look forward from the incarnation and passion and resurrection to newer and fuller manifestations of the power and grace of God. They marked their sense of the importance of what was yet to come when they spoke of the second coming, thus indicating future events that might rank with the first coming; what had been was neither end nor climax of God's dealings with men.

But in the later Isaiah and in the New Testament the tide of spiritual truth touches high-water mark. These greatest revelations are only understood and appreciated through long and painful efforts, after many pauses and retreats. So it is with the renewed hope which the New Testament sets before us. All the vain and weary talk about the second coming illustrates the danger of ignoring the connexion of the Old and New Testament. Seen in the light of ancient prophecy, with its rapid changes and developments, its acknowledged audacity of imagery, the utterances about the second coming breathe all that marvel-

lous passion of triumphant hope which the New Testament receives from the Old. But the dull brains of Western fanatics have only seen in it a truth allied to the more hopeless mysteries of Daniel and the Apocalypse, and have made it the occasion for endless and futile sums in elementary arithmetic. We must, of course, recognise in it a large element of mystery; yet we may grasp the idea that, as the New Testament fulfils the promise of the Old, so it introduces a new promise of its own; in this confidence we may look forward to any New Reformation, whether it come soon or late. We may study the future in the interests of the past; it is only by looking to the future that we can hope to understand the past; it is only by making fresh advances that we can secure what is already gained. And yet in a craven spirit men only ask of the future, that it should not interfere with the cherished gifts they have received from the past; for them the future is only the destroyer of the past, the spoiler of their ancient spiritual possessions. People speak of Christianity as a fortress, whose outworks are falling into the enemy's hands, and it is hoped that their surrender may preserve the citadel. They express their determination to "hold the fort"; but that is a small part of our warfare. We are called upon to go forward, conquering and to conquer. But if we do not trust the future, we are sure to find it the enemy of our faith. Let us therefore rather look to the future for a fuller and clearer knowledge of God, than dread that it will bring the loss of the knowledge we have. Old and New Testaments, old and new reformations, can but be links in the eternal chain of the purposes of God.

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