

ТОМАС ДЕ КВИНСИ

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Thomas De Quincey Theological Essays and Other Papers — Volume 1

ON CHRISTIANITY, AS AN ORGAN OF POLITICAL MOVEMENT

[1846.]

FORCES, which are illimitable in their compass of effect, are often, for the same reason, obscure and untraceable in the steps of their movement. Growth, for instance, animal or vegetable, what eye can arrest its eternal increments? The hour-hand of a watch, who can detect the separate fluxions of its advance? Judging by the past, and the change which is registered between that and the present, we know that it must be awake; judging by the immediate appearances, we should say that it was always asleep. Gravitation, again, that works without holiday for ever, and searches every corner of the universe, what intellect can follow it to its fountains? And yet, shyer than gravitation, less to be counted than the fluxions of sun-dials, stealthier than the

growth of a forest, are the footsteps of Christianity amongst the political workings of man. Nothing, that the heart of man values, is so secret; nothing is so potent.

It is *because* Christianity works so secretly, that it works so potently; it is *because* Christianity burrows and hides itself, that it towers above the clouds; and hence partly it is that its working comes to be misapprehended, or even lost out of sight. It is dark to eyes touched with the films of human frailty: but it is 'dark with excessive bright.' [Footnote: 'Dark with excessive bright.' *Paradise Lost*. Book III.] Hence it has happened sometimes that minds of the highest order have entered into enmity with the Christian faith, have arraigned it as a curse to man, and have fought against it even upon Christian impulses, (impulses of benignity that could not have had a birth except in Christianity.) All comes from the labyrinthine intricacy in which the *social* action of Christianity involves itself to the eye of a contemporary. Simplicity the most absolute is reconcilable with intricacy the most elaborate. The weather—how simple would appear the laws of its oscillations, if we stood at their centre! and yet, because we do *not*, to this hour the weather is a mystery. Human health—how transparent is its economy under ordinary circumstances! abstinence and cleanliness, labor and rest, these simple laws, observed in just proportions, laws that may be engrossed upon a finger nail, are sufficient, on the whole, to maintain the equilibrium of pleasurable existence. Yet, if once that equilibrium is disturbed, where is the science oftentimes

deep enough to rectify the unfathomable watch-work? Even the simplicities of planetary motions do not escape distortion: nor is it easy to be convinced that the distortion is in the eye which beholds, not in the object beheld. Let a planet be wheeling with heavenly science, upon arches of divine geometry: suddenly, to us, it shall appear unaccountably retrograde; flying when none pursues; and unweaving its own work. Let this planet in its utmost elongations travel out of sight, and for *us* its course will become incoherent: because *our* sight is feeble, the beautiful curve of the planet shall be dislocated into segments, by a parenthesis of darkness; because our earth is in no true centre, the disorder of parallax shall trouble the laws of light; and, because we ourselves are wandering, the heavens shall seem fickle.

Exactly in the predicament of such a planet is Christianity: its motions are intermingled with other motions; crossed and thwarted, eclipsed and disguised, by counter-motions in man himself, and by disturbances that man cannot overrule. Upon lines that are direct, upon curves that are circuitous, Christianity is advancing for ever; but from our imperfect vision, or from our imperfect opportunities for applying even such a vision, we cannot trace it continuously. We lose it, we regain it; we see it doubtfully, we see it interruptedly; we see it in collision, we see it in combination; in collision with darkness that confounds, in combination with cross lights that perplex. And this in part is irremediable; so that no finite intellect will ever retrace the total curve upon which Christianity has moved, any more than eyes

that are incarnate will ever see God.

But part of this difficulty in unweaving the maze, has its source in a misconception of the original machinery by which Christianity moved, and of the initial principle which constituted its differential power. In books, at least, I have observed one capital blunder upon the relations which Christianity bears to Paganism: and out of that one mistake, grows a liability to others, upon the possible relations of Christianity to the total drama of this world. I will endeavor to explain my views. And the reader, who takes any interest in the subject, will not need to fear that the explanation should prove tedious; for the mere want of space, will put me under a coercion to move rapidly over the ground; I cannot be diffuse; and, as regards quality, he will find in this paper little of what is scattered over the surface of books.

I begin with this question:—What do people mean in a Christian land by the word '*religion*?' My purpose is not to propound any metaphysical problem; I wish only, in the plainest possible sense, to ask, and to have an answer, upon this one point—how much is understood by that obscure term,* '*religion*,' when used by a Christian? Only I am punctilious upon one demand, viz., that the answer shall be comprehensive. We are apt in such cases to answer elliptically, omitting, because silently presuming as understood between us, whatever *seems* obvious. To prevent *that*, we will suppose the question to be proposed by an emissary from some remote planet,—who, knowing as yet absolutely nothing of us and our intellectual differences,

must insist (as *I* insist) upon absolute precision, so that nothing essential shall be wanting, and nothing shall be redundant.

*[Footnote: '*That obscure term;*'—i. e. not obscure as regards the use of the term, or its present value, but as regards its original *genesis*, or what in civil law is called the *deductio*. Under what angle, under what aspect, or relation, to the field which it concerns did the term *religion* originally come forward? The general field, overlooked by religion, is the ground which lies between the spirit of man and the supernatural world. At present, under the humblest conception of religion, the human spirit is supposed to be interested in such a field by the conscience and the nobler affections, But I suspect that originally these great faculties were absolutely excluded from the point of view. Probably the relation between spiritual *terrors* and man's power of propitiation, was the problem to which the word *religion* formed the answer. Religion meant apparently, in the infancies of the various idolatries, that *latreia*, or service of sycophantic fear, by which, as the most approved method of approach, man was able to conciliate the favor, or to buy off the malice of supernatural powers. In all Pagan nations, it is probable that religion would, an the whole, be a degrading influence; although I see, even for such nations, two cases, at the least, where the uses of a religion would be indispensable; viz. for the sanction of *oaths*, and as a channel for gratitude not pointing to a human object. If so, the answer is easy: religion *was* degrading: but heavier degradations would have arisen from

irreligion. The noblest of all idolatrous peoples, viz. the Romans, have left deeply scored in their very use of their word *religio*, their testimony to the degradation wrought by any religion that Paganism could yield. Rarely indeed is this word employed, by a Latin author, in speaking of an individual, without more or less of sneer. Reading that word, in a Latin book, we all try it and ring it, as a petty shopkeeper rings a half-crown, before we venture to receive it as offered in good faith and loyalty. Even the Greeks are nearly in the same ἀπορία, when they wish to speak of religiosity in a spirit of serious praise. Some circuitous form, commending the correctness of a man, περι τα θεια, *in respect of divine things*, becomes requisite; for all the direct terms, expressing the religious temper, are preoccupied by a taint of scorn. The word ὀσιος, means *pious*,—not as regards the gods, but as regards the dead; and even εἰσεβης, though not used sneeringly, is a world short of our word 'religious.' This condition of language we need not wonder at: the language of life must naturally receive, as in a mirror, the realities of life. Difficult it is to maintain a just equipoise in any moral habits, but in none so much as in habits of religious demeanor under a Pagan [that is, a degrading] religion. To be a coward, is base: to be a sycophant, is base: but to be a sycophant in the service of cowardice, is the perfection of baseness: and yet this was the brief analysis of a devotee amongst the ancient Romans. Now, considering that the word *religion* is originally Roman, [probably from the Etruscan,] it seems probable that it presented the idea of religion under

some one of its bad aspects. Coleridge must quite have forgotten this Paganism of the word, when he suggested as a plausible idea, that originally it had presented religion under the aspect of a coercion or restraint. Morality having been viewed as the prime restraint or obligation resting upon man, then Coleridge thought that religion might have been viewed as a *religatio*, a reiterated restraint, or secondary obligation. This is ingenious, but it will not do. It is cracked in the ring. Perhaps as many as three objections might be mustered to such a derivation: but the last of the three is conclusive. The ancients never *did* view morality as a mode of obligation: I affirm this peremptorily; and with the more emphasis, because there are great consequences suspended upon that question.]

What, then, is religion? Decomposed into its elements, as they are found in Christianity, how many *powers* for acting on the heart of man, does, by possibility, this great agency include? According to my own view, four.[Footnote: there are *six*, in one sense, of religion: viz. 5_thly_, corresponding moral affections; 6_thly_, a suitable life. But this applies to religion as *subjectively possessed* by a man, not to religion as *objectively contemplated*.] I will state them, and number them.

1st. A form of worship, a *cultus*.

2dly. An idea of God; and (pointing the analysis to Christianity in particular) an idea not purified merely from ancient pollutions, but recast and absolutely born again.

3dly. An idea of the relation which man occupies to God: and

of this idea also, when Christianity is the religion concerned, it must be said, that it is so entirely remodelled, as in no respect to resemble any element in any other religion. Thus far we are reminded of the poet's expression, 'Pure religion *breathing* household laws;' that is, not *teaching* such laws, not formally *prescribing* a new economy of life, so much as *inspiring* it indirectly through a new atmosphere surrounding all objects with new attributes. But there is also in Christianity,

4thly. A *doctrinal* part, a part directly and explicitly occupied with *teaching*; and this divides into two great sections, α , A system of ethics so absolutely new as to be untranslatable[Footnote: This is not generally perceived. On the contrary, people are ready to say, 'Why, so far from it, the very earliest language in which the Gospels appeared, excepting only St. Matthew's, was the Greek.' Yes, reader; but *what* Greek? Had not the Greeks been, for a long time, colonizing Syria under princes of Grecian blood,—had not the Greek language (as a *lingua Hellenistica*) become steeped in Hebrew ideas,—no door of communication could have been opened between the new world of Christian feeling, and the old world so deaf to its music. Here, therefore, we may observe two preparations made secretly by Providence for receiving Christianity and clearing the road before it; first, the diffusion of the Greek language through the whole civilized world ($\eta\ \omicron\iota\chi\omicron\nu\mu\epsilon\gamma\eta$) some time before Christ, by which means the Evangelists found wings, as it were, for flying abroad through the kingdoms of the earth; secondly, the

Hebraizing of this language, by which means the Evangelists found a new material made plastic and obedient to these new ideas, which they had to build with, and which they had to build upon.] into either of the classical languages; and, β, A system of mysteries; as, for instance, the mystery of the Trinity, of the Divine Incarnation, of the Atonement, of the Resurrection, and others.

Here are great elements; and now let me ask, how many of these are found in the Heathen religion of Greece and Rome? This is an important question; it being my object to show that no religion but the Christian, and precisely through some one or two of its *differential* elements, could have been an organ of political movement.

Most divines who anywhere glance at this question, are here found in, what seems to me, the deepest of errors. Great theologians are they, and eminent philosophers, who have presumed that (as a matter of course) all religions, however false, are introductory to some scheme of morality, however imperfect. They grant you that the morality is oftentimes unsound; but still, they think that some morality there must have been, or else for what purpose was the religion? This I pronounce error.

All the moral theories of antiquity were utterly disjoined from religion. But this fallacy of a dogmatic or doctrinal part in Paganism is born out of Anachronism. It is the anachronism of unconsciously reflecting back upon the ancient religions of darkness, and as if essential to *all* religions, features that

never were suspected as possible, until they had been revealed in Christianity.[Footnote: Once for all, to save the trouble of continual repetitions, understand Judaism to be commemorated jointly with Christianity; the dark root together with the golden fruitage; whenever the nature of the case does not presume a contradistinction of the one to the other.] Religion, in the eye of a Pagan, had no more relation to morals, than it had to ship-building or trigonometry. But, then, why was religion honored amongst Pagans? How did it ever arise? What was its object? Object! it *had* no object; if by this you mean ulterior object. Pagan religion arose in no motive, but in an impulse. Pagan religion aimed at no distant prize ahead: it fled from a danger immediately behind. The gods of the Pagans were wicked natures; but they were natures to be feared, and to be propitiated; for they were fierce, and they were moody, and (as regarded man who had no wings) they were powerful. Once accredited as facts, the Pagan gods could not be regarded as other than terrific facts; and thus it was, that in terror, blind terror, as against power in the hands of divine wickedness, arose the ancient religions of Paganism. Because the gods were wicked, man was religious; because Olympus was cruel, earth trembled; because the divine beings were the most lawless of Thugs, the human being became the most abject of sycophants.

Had the religions of Paganism arisen teleologically; that is, with a view to certain purposes, to certain final causes ahead; had they grown out of *forward*-looking views, contemplating,

for instance, the furthering of civilization, or contemplating some interests in a world beyond the present, there would probably have arisen, concurrently, a section in all such religions, dedicated to positive instruction. There would have been a *doctrinal* part. There might have been interwoven with the ritual or worship, a system of economics, or a code of civil prudence, or a code of health, or a theory of morals, or even a secret revelation of mysterious relations between man and the Deity: all which existed in Judaism. But, as the case stood, this was impossible. The gods were mere odious facts, like scorpions or rattlesnakes, having no moral aspects whatever; public nuisances; and bearing no relation to man but that of capricious tyrants. First arising upon a basis of terror, these gods never subsequently enlarged that basis; nor sought to enlarge it. All antiquity contains no hint of a possibility that *love* could arise, as by any ray mingling with the sentiments in a human creature towards a Divine one; not even sycophants ever pretended to *love* the gods.

Under this original peculiarity of Paganism, there arose two consequences, which I will mark by the Greek letters α and β . The latter I will notice in its order, first calling the reader's attention to the consequence marked α , which is this:—In the full and profoundest sense of the word *believe*, the pagans could not be said to believe in *any* gods: but, in the ordinary sense, they did, and do, and must believe, in *all* gods. As this proposition will startle some readers, and is yet closely involved in the main truth which I am now pressing, viz. the meaning and

effect of a simple *cultus*, as distinguished from a high doctrinal religion, let us seek an illustration from our Indian empire. The Christian missionaries from home, when first opening their views to Hindoos, describe themselves as laboring to prove that Christianity is a true religion, and as either asserting, or leaving it to be inferred, that, on that assumption, the Hindoo religion is a false one. But the poor Hindoo never dreamed of doubting that the Christian was a true religion; nor will he at all infer, from your religion being true, that his own must be false. Both are true, he thinks: all religions are true; all gods are true gods; and all are *equally* true. Neither can he understand what you mean by a false religion, or how a religion *could* be false; and he is perfectly right. Wherever religions consist only of a worship, as the Hindoo religion does, there can be no competition amongst them as to truth. *That* would be an absurdity, not less nor other than it would be for a Prussian to denounce the Austrian emperor, or an Austrian to denounce the Prussian king, as a false sovereign. False! *How* false? In what sense false? Surely not as non-existing. But at least, (the reader will reply,) if the religions contradict each other, one of them *must* be false. Yes; but *that* is impossible. Two religions cannot contradict each other, where both contain only a *cultus*: they could come into collision only by means of a doctrinal, or directly affirmative part, like those of Christianity and Mahometanism. But this part is what no idolatrous religion ever had, or will have. The reader must not understand me to mean that, merely as a compromise of courtesy, two professors

of different idolatries would agree to recognise each other. Not at all. The truth of one does not imply the falsehood of the other. Both are true as *facts*: neither can be false, in any higher sense, because neither makes any pretence to truth doctrinal.

This distinction between a religion having merely a worship, and a religion having also a body of doctrinal truth, is familiar to the Mahometans; and they convey the distinction by a very appropriate expression. Those majestic religions, (as they esteem them,) which rise above the mere pomps and tympanies of ceremonial worship, they denominate '*religions of the book.*' There are, of such religions, three, viz., Judaism, Christianity, and Islamism. The first builds upon the Law and the Prophets; or, perhaps, sufficiently upon the Pentateuch; the second upon the Gospel; the last upon the Koran. No other religion can be said to rest upon a book; or to need a book; or even to admit of a book. For we must not be duped by the case where a lawgiver attempts to connect his own human institutes with the venerable sanctions of a national religion, or the case where a learned antiquary unfolds historically the record of a vast mythology. Heaps of such cases, (both law and mythological records,) survive in the Sanscrit, and in other pagan languages. But these are books which build upon the religion, not books upon which the religion is built. If a religion consists only of a ceremonial worship, in that case there can be no opening for a book; because the forms and details publish themselves daily, in the celebration of the worship, and are traditionally preserved, from age to age, without

dependence on a book. But, if a religion has a doctrine, this implies a revelation or message from Heaven, which cannot, in any other way, secure the transmission of this message to future generations, than by causing it to be registered in a book. A book, therefore, will be convertible with a doctrinal religion:—no book, no doctrine; and, again, no doctrine, no book.

Upon these principles, we may understand that second consequence (marked β) which has perplexed many men, viz., why it is that the Hindoos, in our own times; but, equally, why it is that the Greek and Roman idolaters of antiquity, never proselytized; no, nor could have viewed such an attempt as rational. Naturally, if a religion is doctrinal, any truth which it possesses, as a secret deposit consigned to its keeping by a revelation, must be equally valid for one man as for another, without regard to race or nation. For a *doctrinal* religion, therefore, to proselytize, is no more than a duty of consistent humanity. You, the professors of that religion, possess the medicinal fountains. You will not diminish your own share by imparting to others. What churlishness, if you should grudge to others a health which does not interfere with your own! Christians, therefore, Mahometans, and Jews originally, in proportion as they were sincere and conscientious, have always invited, or even forced, the unbelieving to their own faith: nothing but accidents of situation, local or political, have disturbed this effort. But, on the other hand, for a mere '*cultus*' to attempt conversions, is nonsense. An ancient Roman could have had

no motive for bringing you over to the worship of Jupiter Capitolinus; nor you any motive for going. 'Surely, poor man,' he would have said, 'you have, some god of your own, who will be quite as good for *your* countrymen as Jupiter for mine. But, if you have *not*, really I am sorry for your case; and a very odd case it is: but I don't see how it could be improved by talking nonsense. You cannot beneficially, you cannot rationally, worship a tutelary Roman deity, unless in the character of a Roman; and a Roman you may become, legally and politically. Being such, you will participate in all advantages, if any there *are*, or our national religion; and, without needing a process of conversion, either in substance or in form. *Ipsa facto*, and without any separate choice of your own, on becoming a Roman citizen, you become a party to the Roman worship.' For an idolatrous religion to proselytize, would, therefore, be not only useless but unintelligible.

Now, having explained *that* point, which is a great step towards the final object of my paper, viz., the investigation of the reason why Christianity *is*, which no pagan religion ever *has* been, an organ of political movement, I will go on to review rapidly those four constituents of a religion, as they are realized in Christianity, for the purpose of contrasting them with the false shadows, or even blank negations, of these constituents in pagan idolatries.

First, then, as to the CULTUS, or form of the national worship:—In our Christian ritual I recognise these separate acts; viz. A, an act of Praise; B, an act of Thanksgiving;

C, an act of Confession; D, an act of Prayer. In A, we commemorate with adoration the *general* perfections of the Deity. There, all of us have an equal interest. In B, we commemorate with thankfulness those special qualities of the Deity, or those special manifestations of them, by which we, the individual worshippers, have recently benefited. In C, by upright confession, we deprecate. In D, we pray, or ask for the things which we need. Now, in the *cultus* of the ancient pagans, B and C (the second act and the third) were wanting altogether. No thanksgiving ever ascended, on his own account, from the lips of an individual; and the state thanksgiving for a triumph of the national armies, was but a mode of ostentatiously publishing the news. As to C, it is scarcely necessary to say that this was wanting, when I mention that penitential feelings were unknown amongst the ancients, and had no name; for *pœnitentia*[Footnote: In Greek, there is a word for repentance, but not until it had been rebaptized into a Christian use. *Metanoia*, however, is not that word: it is grossly to defeat the profound meaning of the New Testament, if John the Baptist is translated as though summoning the world to *repentance*; it was not *that* to which he summoned them.] means *regret*, not *penitence*; and *me pœnitent hujus facti*, means, 'I rue this act in its consequences,' not 'I repent of this act for its moral nature.' A and D, the first act and the last, *appear* to be present; but are so most imperfectly. When 'God is praised aright,' praised by means of such deeds or such attributes as express a divine nature, we recognise one great

function of a national worship,—not otherwise. This, however, we must overlook and pardon, as being a fault essential to the religion: the poor creatures did the best they could to praise their god, lying under the curse of gods so thoroughly depraved. But in D, the case is different. Strictly speaking, the ancients never prayed; and it may be doubted whether D approaches so near to what *we* mean by prayer, as even by a mockery. You read of *preces*, of *αραι*, &c. and you are desirous to believe that pagan supplications were not *always* corrupt. It is too shocking to suppose, in thinking of nations idolatrous yet noble, that never *any* pure act of approach to the heavens took place on the part of man; that *always* the intercourse was corrupt; *always* doubly corrupt; that eternally the god was bought, and the votary was sold. Oh, weariness of man's spirit before that unresting mercenariness in high places, which neither, when his race clamored for justice, nor when it languished for pity, would listen without hire! How gladly would man turn away from his false rapacious divinities to the godlike human heart, that so often would yield pardon *before* it was asked, and for the thousandth time that would give without a bribe! In strict propriety, as my reader knows, the classical Latin word for a prayer is *votum*; it was a case of contract; of mercantile contract; of that contract which the Roman law expressed by the formula—*Do ut des*. Vainly you came before the altars with empty hands. "But *my* hands are pure." Pure, indeed! would reply the scoffing god, let me see what they contain. It was exactly what you daily read in

morning papers, viz.:—that, in order to appear effectually before that Olympus in London, which rains rarities upon us poor abject creatures in the provinces, you must enclose 'an order on the Post-Office or a reference.' It is true that a man did not always register his *votum*, (the particular offering which he vowed on the condition of receiving what he asked,) at the moment of asking. Ajax, for instance, prays for light in the 'Iliad,' and he does not then and there give either an order or a reference. But you are much mistaken, if you fancy that even light was to be had *gratis*. It would be 'carried to account.' Ajax would be 'debited' with that 'advance.'

Yet, when it occurs to a man that, in this *Do ut des*, the general *Do* was either a temple or a sacrifice, naturally it occurs to ask what *was* a sacrifice? I am afraid that the dark murderous nature of the pagan gods is here made apparent. Modern readers, who have had no particular reason for reflecting on the nature and management of a sacrifice, totally misconceive it. They have a vague notion that the slaughtered animal was roasted, served up on the altars as a banquet to the gods; that these gods by some representative ceremony 'made believe' to eat it; and that finally, (as dishes that had now become hallowed to divine use,) the several joints were disposed of in some mysterious manner: burned, suppose, or buried under the altars, or committed to the secret keeping of rivers. Nothing of the sort: when a man made a sacrifice, the meaning was, that he gave a dinner. And not only was every sacrifice a dinner party, but every dinner party

was a sacrifice. This was strictly so in the good old ferocious times of paganism, as may be seen in the Iliad: it was not said, 'Agamemnon has a dinner party to-day,' but 'Agamemnon sacrifices to Apollo.' Even in Rome, to the last days of paganism, it is probable that some slight memorial continued to connect the dinner party [*cæna*] with a divine sacrifice; and thence partly arose the sanctity of the hospitable board; but to the east of the Mediterranean the full ritual of a sacrifice must have been preserved in all banquets, long after it had faded to a form in the less superstitious West. This we may learn from that point of casuistry treated by St. Paul,—whether a Christian might lawfully eat of things offered to idols. The question was most urgent; because a Christian could not accept an invitation to dine with a Grecian fellow-citizen who still adhered to paganism, *without* eating things offered to idols;—the whole banquet was dedicated to an idol. If he would not take *that*, he must continue *impransus*. Consequently, the question virtually amounted to this: Were the Christians to separate themselves altogether from those whose interests were in so many ways entangled with their own, on the single consideration that these persons were heathens? To refuse their hospitalities, *was* to separate, and with a hostile expression of feeling. That would be to throw hindrances in the way of Christianity: the religion could not spread rapidly under such repulsive prejudices; and dangers, that it became un-Christian to provoke, would thus multiply against the infant faith. This being so, and as the gods were really the

only parties invited who got nothing at all of the banquet, it becomes a question of some interest,—what *did* they get? They were merely mocked, if they had no compensatory interest in the dinner! For surely it was an inconceivable mode of honoring Jupiter, that you and I should eat a piece of roast beef, leaving to the god's share only the mockery of a *Barmecide* invitation, assigning him a chair which every body knew that he would never fill, and a plate which might as well have been filled with warm water? Jupiter got *something*, be assured; and what *was* it? This it was,—the luxury of inhaling the groans, the fleeting breath, the palpitations, the agonies, of the dying victim. This was the dark interest which the wretches of Olympus had in human invitations to dinner: and it is too certain, upon comparing facts and dates, that, when left to their own choice, the gods had a preference for *man* as the victim. All things concur to show, that precisely as you ascend above civilization, which continually increased the limitations upon the gods of Olympus, precisely as you go back to that gloomy state in which their true propensities had power to reveal themselves, was man the genuine victim for *them*, and the dying anguish of man the best 'nidor' that ascended from earthly banquets to *their* nostrils. Their stern eyes smiled darkly upon the throbbings of tortured flesh, as in Moloch's ears dwelt like music the sound of infants' wailings. Secondly, as to the birth of a new idea respecting the nature of God:—It may not have occurred to every reader, but none will perhaps object to it, when once suggested to his consideration, that—as is the god

of any nation, such will be that nation. God, however falsely conceived of by man, even though splintered into fragments by Polytheism, or disfigured by the darkest mythologies, is still the greatest of all objects offered to human contemplation. Man, when thrown upon his own delusions, may have raised himself, or may have adopted from others, the very falsest of ideals, as the true image and reflection of what he calls god. In his lowest condition of darkness, terror may be the moulding principle for spiritual conceptions; power, the engrossing attribute which he ascribes to his deity; and this power may be hideously capricious, or associated with vindictive cruelty. It may even happen, that his standard of what is highest in the divinity should be capable of falling greatly below what an enlightened mind would figure to itself as lowest in man. A more shocking monument, indeed, there cannot be than this, of the infinity by which man may descend below his own capacities of grandeur: the gods, in some systems of religion, have been such and so monstrous by excesses of wickedness, as to insure, if annually one hour of periodical eclipse should have left them at the mercy of man, a general rush from their own worshippers for strangling them as mad dogs. Hypocrisy, the cringing of sycophants, and the credulities of fear, united to conceal this misotheism; but we may be sure that it was widely diffused through the sincerities of the human heart. An intense desire for kicking Jupiter, or for hanging him, if found convenient, must have lurked in the honorable Roman heart, before the sincerity of human nature could have extorted upon

the Roman stage a public declaration,—that their supreme gods were capable of enormities which a poor, unpretending human creature [homuncio] would have disdained. Many times the ideal of the divine nature, as adopted by pagan races, fell under the contempt, not only of men superior to the national superstition, but of men partaking in that superstition. Yet, with all those drawbacks, an ideal *was* an ideal. The being set up for adoration as god, *was* such upon the whole to the worshipper; since, if there had been any higher mode of excellence conceivable for *him*, that higher mode would have virtually become his deity. It cannot be doubted, therefore, that the nature of the national divinities indicated the qualities which ranked highest in the national estimation; and that being contemplated continually in the spirit of veneration, these qualities must have worked an extensive conformity to their own standard. The mythology sanctioned by the ritual of public worship, the features of moral nature in the gods distributed through that mythology, and sometimes commemorated by gleams in that ritual, domineered over the popular heart, even in those cases where the religion had been a derivative religion, and not originally moulded by impulses breathing from the native disposition. So that, upon the whole, such as were the gods of a nation, such was the nation: given the particular idolatry, it became possible to decipher the character of the idolaters. Where Moloch was worshipped, the people would naturally be found cruel; where the Paphian Venus, it could not be expected that they should escape the taint of a

voluptuous effeminacy.

Against this principle, there could have been no room for demur, were it not through that inveterate prejudice besieging the modern mind,—as though all religion, however false, implied some scheme of morals connected with it. However imperfectly discharged, one function even of the pagan priest (it is supposed) must have been—to guide, to counsel, to exhort, as a teacher of morals. And, had *that* been so, the practical precepts, and the moral commentary coming after even the grossest forms of worship, or the most revolting mythological legends, might have operated to neutralize their horrors, or even to allegorize them into better meanings. Lord Bacon, as a trial of skill, has attempted something of that sort in his 'Wisdom of the Ancients.' But all this is modern refinement, either in the spirit of playful ingenuity or of ignorance. I have said sufficiently that there was no *doctrinal* part in the religion of the pagans. There was a *cultus*, or ceremonial worship: *that* constituted the sum total of religion, in the idea of a pagan. There was a necessity, for the sake of guarding its traditional usages, and upholding and supporting its pomp, that official persons should preside in this *cultus*: *that* constituted the duty of the priest. Beyond this ritual of public worship, there was nothing at all; nothing to believe, nothing to understand. A set of legendary tales undoubtedly there was, connected with the mythologic history of each separate deity. But in what sense you understood these, or whether you were at all acquainted with them, was a matter of indifference to the

priests; since many of these legends were variously related, and some had apparently been propagated in ridicule of the gods, rather than in their honor.

With Christianity a new scene was opened. In this religion the *cultus*, or form of worship, was not even the primary business, far less was it the exclusive business. The worship flowed as a direct consequence from the new idea exposed of the divine nature, and from the new idea of man's relations to this nature. Here were suddenly unmasked great doctrines, truths positive and directly avowed: whereas, in Pagan forms of religion, any notices which then were, or seemed to be, of circumstances surrounding the gods, related only to matters of fact or accident, such as that a particular god was the son or the nephew of some other god; a truth, if it *were* a truth, wholly impertinent to any interest of man.

As there are some important truths, dimly perceived or not at all, lurking in the idea of God,—an idea too vast to be navigable as yet by the human understanding, yet here and there to be coasted,—I wish at this point to direct the reader's attention upon a passage which he may happen to remember in Sir Isaac Newton: the passage occurs at the end of the 'Optics;' and the exact expressions I do not remember; but the sense is what I am going to state: Sir Isaac is speaking of God; and he takes occasion to say, that God is not good, but goodness; is not holy, but holiness; is not infinite, but infinity. This, I apprehend, will have struck many readers as merely a rhetorical *bravura*; sublime, perhaps, and fitted to exalt the feeling of awe connected with

so unapproachable a mystery, but otherwise not throwing any new light upon the darkness of the idea as a problem before the intellect. Yet indirectly perhaps it *does*, when brought out into its latent sense by placing it in juxtaposition with paganism. If a philosophic theist, who is also a Christian, or who (*not* being a Christian,) has yet by his birth and breeding become saturated with Christian ideas and feelings,[Footnote: this case is far from uncommon; and undoubtedly, from having too much escaped observation, it has been the cause of much error. Poets I could mention, if it were not invidious to do so, who, whilst composing in a spirit of burning enmity to the Christian faith, yet rested for the very sting of their pathos upon ideas that but for Christianity could never have existed. Translators there have been, English, French, German, of Mahometan books, who have so colored the whole vein of thinking with sentiments peculiar to Christianity, as to draw from a reflecting reader the exclamation, 'If this can be indeed the product of Islamism, wherefore should Christianity exist?' If thoughts so divine can, indeed, belong to a false religion, what more could we gain from a true one?]

attempts to realize the idea of supreme Deity, he becomes aware of a double and contradictory movement in his own mind whilst striving towards that result. He demands, in the first place, something in the highest degree generic; and yet again in the opposite direction, something in the highest degree individual; he demands on the one path, a vast ideality, and yet on the other, in union with a determinate personality. He must

not surrender himself to the first impulse, else he is betrayed into a mere *anima mundi*; he must not surrender himself to the second, else he is betrayed into something merely human. This difficult antagonism, of what is most and what is least generic, must be maintained, otherwise the idea, the possible idea, of that august unveiling which takes place in the Judaico-Christian God, is absolutely in clouds. Now, this antagonism utterly collapses in paganism. And to a philosophic apprehension, this peculiarity of the heathen gods is more shocking and fearful than what at first sight had seemed most so. When a man pauses for the purpose of attentively reviewing the Pantheon of Greece and Rome, what strikes him at the first with most depth of impression and with most horror is, the *wickedness* of this Pantheon. And he observes with surprise, that this wickedness, which is at a furnace-heat in the superior gods, becomes fainter and paler as you descend. Amongst the semi-deities, such as the Oreads or Dryads, the Nereids or Naiads, he feels not at all offended. The odor of corruption, the *saeva mephitis*, has by this time exhaled. The uproar of eternal outrage has ceased. And these gentle divinities, if too human and too beset with infirmities, are not impure, and not vexed with ugly appetites, nor instinct of quarrel: they are tranquil as are the hills and the forests; passionless as are the seas and the fountains which they tenant. But, when he ascends to the *dii majorum gentium*, to those twelve gods of the supreme house, who may be called in respect of rank, the Paladins of the classical Pantheon, secret

horror comes over him at the thought that demons, reflecting the worst aspects of brutal races, ever *could* have levied worship from his own. It is true they do so no longer as regards *our* planet. But what *has* been apparently *may* be. God made the Greeks and Romans of one blood with himself; he cannot deny that *intellectually* the Greeks—he cannot deny that *morally* the Romans—were amongst the foremost of human races; and he trembles in thinking that abominations, whose smoke ascended through so many ages to the *supreme* heavens, may, or might, so far as human resistance is concerned, again become the law for the noblest of his species. A deep feeling, it is true, exists latently in human beings of something perishable in evil. Whatsoever is founded in wickedness, according to a deep misgiving dispersed amongst men, must be tainted with corruption. *There* might seem consolation; but a man who reflects is not quite so sure of *that*. As a commonplace resounding in schools, it may be justly current amongst us, that what is evil by nature or by origin must be transient. But *that* may be because evil in all human things is partial, is heterogeneous; evil mixed with good; and the two natures, by their mutual enmity, must enter into a collision, which may possibly guarantee the final destruction of the whole compound. Such a result may not threaten a nature that is purely and totally evil, that is *homogeneously* evil. Dark natures there may be, whose *essence* is evil, that may have an abiding root in the system of the universe not less awfully exempt from change than the mysterious foundations of God.

This is dreadful. Wickedness that is immeasurable, in connection with power that is superhuman, appals the imagination. Yet this is a combination that might easily have been conceived; and a wicked god still commands a mode of reverence. But that feature of the pagan pantheon, which I am contrasting with this, viz., that no pagan deity is an *abstraction* but a vile *concrete*, impresses myself with a subtler sense of horror; because it blends the hateful with a mode of the ludicrous. For the sake of explaining myself to the non-philosophic reader, I beg him to consider what is the sort of feeling with which he regards an ancient river-god, or the presiding nymph of a fountain. The impression which he receives is pretty much like that from the monumental figure of some allegoric being, such as Faith or Hope, Fame or Truth. He hardly believes that the most superstitious Grecian seriously believed in such a being as a distinct personality. He feels convinced that the sort of personal existence ascribed to such an abstraction, as well as the human shape, are merely modes of representing and drawing into unity a variety of phenomena and agencies that seem *one*, by means of their unintermitting continuity, and because they tend to one common purpose. Now, from such a symbolic god as this, let him pass to Jupiter or Mercury, and instantly he becomes aware of a revolting individuality. He sees before him the opposite pole of deity. The river-god had too little of a concrete character. Jupiter has nothing else. In Jupiter you read no incarnation of any abstract quality whatever: he represents nothing whatever in

the metaphysics of the universe. Except for the accident of his power, he is merely a man. He has a *character*, that is, a tendency or determination to this quality or that, in excess; whereas a nature truly divine must be *in equilibrio* as to all qualities, and comprehend them all, in the way that a *genus* comprehends the subordinate *species*. He has even a personal history: he has passed through certain adventures, faced certain dangers, and survived hostilities that, at one time, were doubtful in their issue. No trace, in short, appears, in any Grecian god, of the generic. Whereas we, in our Christian ideas of God, unconsciously, and without thinking of Sir Isaac Newton, realize Sir Isaac's conceptions. We think of him as having a sort of allegoric generality, liberated from the bonds of the individual; and yet, also, as the most awful among natures, having a conscious personality. He is diffused through all things, present everywhere, and yet not the less present locally. He is at a distance unapproachable by finite creatures; and yet, without any contradiction, (as the profound St. Paul observes,) 'not very far' from every one of us. And I will venture to say, that many a poor old woman has, by virtue of her Christian inoculation, Sir Isaac's great idea lurking in her mind; as for instance, in relation to any of God's attributes; suppose holiness or happiness, she feels, (though analytically she could not explain,) that God is not holy or is not happy by way of participation, after the manner of other beings: that is, he does not draw happiness from a fountain separate and external to himself, and common to other creatures, he drawing more and

they drawing less; but that he, himself *is* the fountain; that no other being can have the least proportion of either one or the other but by drawing from that fountain; that as to all other good gifts, that as to life itself, they are, in man, not on any separate tenure, not primarily, but derivatively, and only in so far as God enters into the nature of man; that 'we live and move' only so far and so long as the incomprehensible union takes place between the human spirit and the fountal abyss of the divine. In short, here, and here only, is found the outermost expansion, the centrifugal, of the TO catholic, united with the innermost centripetal of the personal consciousness. Had, therefore, the pagan gods been less detestable, neither impure nor malignant, they could not have won a salutary veneration—being so merely concrete individuals.

Next, it must have degraded the gods, (and have made them instruments of degradation for man,) that they were, one and all, incarnations; not, as even the Christian God is, for a transitory moment and for an eternal purpose; but essentially and by overruling necessity. The Greeks could not conceive of spirituality. Neither can *we*, metaphysically, assign the conditions of the spiritual; but, practically, we all feel and represent to our own minds the agencies of God, as liberated from bonds of space and time, of flesh and of resistance. This the Greeks could *not* feel, could *not* represent. And the only advantage which the gods enjoyed over the worm and the grub was, that they, (or at least the Paladins amongst them—the twelve supreme gods,) could pass, fluently, from one incarnation to another.

Thirdly. Out of that essential bondage to flesh arose a dreadful suspicion of something worse: in what relation did the pagan gods stand to the abominable phenomenon of death? It is not by uttering pompous flatteries of ever-living and *ambrotos aei*, &c., that a poet could intercept the searching jealousies of human penetration. These are merely oriental forms of compliment. And here, by the way, as elsewhere, we find Plato vehemently confuted: for it was the undue exaltation of the gods, and not their degradation, which must be ascribed to the frauds of poets. Tradition, and no poetic tradition, absolutely pointed to the grave of more gods than one. But waiving all *that* as liable to dispute, one thing we know, from the ancients themselves, as open to no question, that all the gods were *born*; were born infants; passed through the stages of helplessness and growth; from all which the inference was but too fatally obvious. Besides, there were grandfathers, and even great-grandfathers in the Pantheon: some of these were confessedly superannuated; nay, some had disappeared. Even men, who knew but little of Olympian records, knew this, at least, for certain, that more than one dynasty of gods had passed over the golden stage of Olympus, had made their *exit*, and were hurrying onward to oblivion. It was matter of notoriety, also, that all these gods were and had been liable to the taint of sorrow for the death of their earthly children, (as the Homeric Jupiter for Sarpedon, Thetis for Achilles, Calliope, in Euripides, for her blooming Rhesus;) all were liable to fear; all to physical pain; all to anxiety; all to

the indefinite menaces of a danger not measurable.[Footnote: it must not be forgotten that all the superior gods passed through an infancy (as Jove, &c.) or even an adolescence, (as Bacchus,) or even a maturity, (as the majority of Olympus during the insurrection of the Titans,) surrounded by perils that required not strength only, but artifice, and even abject self-concealment to evade.] Looking backwards or looking forwards, the gods beheld enemies that attacked their existence, or modes of decay, (known and unknown,) which gnawed at their roots. All this I take the trouble to insist upon: not as though it could be worth any man's trouble, at this day, to expose (on its own account) the frailty of the Pantheon, but with a view to the closer estimate of the Divine idea amongst men; and by way of contrast to the power of that idea under Christianity: since I contend that, such as is the God of every people, such, in the corresponding features of character, will be that people. If the god (like Moloch) is fierce, the people will be cruel; if (like Typhon) a destroying energy, the people will be gloomy; if (like the Paphian Venus) libidinous, the people will be voluptuously effeminate. When the gods are perishable, man cannot have the grandeurs of his nature developed: when the shadow of death sits upon the highest of what man represents to himself as celestial, essential blight will sit for ever upon human aspirations. One thing only remains to be added on this subject: Why were not the ancients more profoundly afflicted by the treacherous gleams of mortality in their gods? How was it that they could forget, for a moment,

a revelation so full of misery? Since not only the character of man partly depended upon the quality of his god, but also and *a fortiori*, his destiny upon the destiny of his god. But the reason of his indifference to the divine mortality was—because, at any rate, the pagan man's connection with the gods terminated at his own death. Even selfish men would reconcile themselves to an earthquake, which should swallow up all the world; and the most unreasonable man has professed his readiness, at all times, to die with a dying universe—*mundo secum pereunte, mori*.

But, *thirdly*, the gods being such, in what relation to them did man stand? It is a fact hidden from the mass of the ancients themselves, but sufficiently attested, that there was an ancient and secret enmity between the whole family of the gods and the human race. This is confessed by Herodotus as a persuasion spread through some of the nations amongst which he travelled: there was a sort of truce, indeed, between the parties; temples, with their religious services, and their votive offerings, recorded this truce. But below all these appearances lay deadly enmity, to be explained only by one who should know the mysterious history of both parties from the eldest times. It is extraordinary, however, that Herodotus should rely, for this account, upon the belief of distant nations, when the same belief was so deeply recorded amongst his own countrymen in the sublime story of Prometheus. Much[Footnote: not all: for part was due to the obstinate concealment from Jupiter, by Prometheus, of the danger which threatened his throne in a coming generation.] of

the sufferings endured by Prometheus was on account of man, whom he had befriended; and, *by* befriending, had defeated the malignity of Jove. According to some, man was even created by Prometheus: but no accounts, until lying Platonic philosphers arose, in far later times, represented man as created by Jupiter.

Now let us turn to Christianity; pursuing it through the functions which it exercises in common with Paganism, and also through those which it exercises separately and incommunicably.

I. As to the *Idea of God*,—how great was the chasm dividing the Hebrew God from all gods of idolatrous birth, and with what starry grandeur this revelation of *Supreme* deity must have wheeled upwards into the field of human contemplation, when first surmounting the steams of earth-born heathenism, I need not impress upon any Christian audience. To their *knowledge* little could be added. Yet to *know* is not always to *feel*: and without a correspondent depth of feeling, there is in moral cases no effectual knowledge. Not the understanding is sufficient upon such ground, but that which the Scriptures in their profound philosophy entitle the 'understanding heart.' And perhaps few readers will have adequately appreciated the prodigious change effected in the theatre of the human spirit, by the transition, sudden as the explosion of light, in the Hebrew cosmogony, when, from the caprice of a fleshly god, in one hour man mounted to a justice that knew no shadow of change; from cruelty, mounted to a love which was inexhaustible; from gleams of *essential* evil, to a holiness that could not be fathomed; from

a power and a knowledge, under limitations so merely and obviously human,[Footnote: It is a natural thought, to any person who has not explored these recesses of human degradation, that surely the Pagans must have had it in their power to invest their gods with all conceivable perfections, quite as much as we that are *not* Pagans. The thing wanting to the Pagans, he will think, was the *right*: otherwise as regarded the *power*.] to the same agencies lying underneath creation, as a root below a plant. Not less awful in power was the transition from the limitations of space and time to ubiquity and eternity, from the familiar to the mysterious, from the incarnate to the spiritual. These enormous transitions were fitted to work changes of answering magnitude in the human spirit. The reader can hardly make any mistake as to this. He *must* concede the changes. What he will be likely to misconceive, unless he has reflected, is—the immensity of these changes. And another mistake, which he is even more likely to make, is this: he will imagine that a new idea, even though the idea of an object so vast as God, cannot become the ground of any revolution more than intellectual—cannot revolutionize the moral and active principles in man, consequently cannot lay the ground of any political movement. We shall see. But next, that is,—

II. Secondly, as to the idea of man's relation to God, this, were it capable of disjunction, would be even more of a revolutionary idea than the idea of God. But the one idea is enlinked with the other. In Paganism, as I have said, the higher you ascend

towards the original fountains of the religion, the more you leave behind the frauds, forgeries, and treacheries of philosophy; so much the more clearly you descry the odious truth—that man stood in the relation of a superior to his gods, as respected all moral qualities of any value, but in the relation of an inferior as respected physical power. This was a position of the two parties fatal, by itself, to all grandeur of moral aspirations. Whatever was good or corrigibly bad, man saw associated with weakness; and power was sealed and guaranteed to absolute wickedness. The evil disposition in man to worship success, was strengthened by this mode of superiority in the gods. Merit was disjoined from prosperity. Even merit of a lower class, merit in things morally indifferent, was not so decidedly on the side of the gods as to reconcile man to the reasonableness of their yoke. They were compelled to acquiesce in a government which they did not regard as just. The gods were stronger, but not much; they had the unfair advantage of standing over the heads of men, and of wings for flight or for manoeuvring. Yet even so, it was clearly the opinion of Homer's age, that, in a fair fight, the gods might have been found liable to defeat. The gods again were generally beautiful: but not more so than the *elite* of mankind; else why did these gods, both male and female, continually persecute our race with their odious love? which love, be it observed, uniformly brought ruin upon its objects. Intellectually the gods were undoubtedly below men. They pretended to no great works in philosophy, in legislation, or in the fine arts, except only that,

as to one of these arts, viz. poetry, a single god vaunted himself greatly in simple ages. But he attempted neither a tragedy nor an epic poem. Even in what he did attempt, it is worth while to follow his career. His literary fate was what might have been expected. After the Persian war, the reputation of his verses rapidly decayed. Wits arose in Athens, who laughed so furiously at his style and his metre, in the Delphic oracles, that at length some echoes of their scoffing began to reach Delphi; upon which the god and his inspired ministers became sulky, and finally took refuge in prose, as the only shelter they could think of from the caustic venom of Athenian malice.

These were the miserable relations of man to the Pagan gods. Every thing, which it is worth doing at all, man could do better. Now it is some feature of alleviation in a servile condition, if the lord appears by natural endowments superior to his slave; or at least it embitters the degradation of slavery, if he does *not*. Greatly, therefore, must human interests have suffered, had this jealous approximation of the two parties been the sole feature noticeable in the relations between them. But there was a worse. There was an original enmity between man and the Pantheon; not the sort of enmity which we Christians ascribe to our God; *that* is but a figure of speech: and even there is a derivative enmity; an enmity founded on something in man *subsequent* to his creation, and having a ransom annexed to it. But the enmity of the heathen gods was original—that is, to the very nature of man, and as though man had in some stage of his career been their rival;

which indeed he was, if we adopt Milton's hypothesis of the gods as ruined angels, and of man as created to supply the vacancy thus arising in heaven.

Now, from this dreadful scheme of relations, between the human and divine, under Paganism, turn to the relations under Christianity. It is remarkable that even here, according to a doctrine current amongst many of the elder divines, man was naturally superior to the race of beings immediately ranking above him. Jeremy Taylor notices the obscure tradition, that the angelic order was, by original constitution, inferior to man; but this original precedency had been reversed for the present, by the fact that man, in his higher nature, was morally ruined, whereas the angelic race had not forfeited the perfection of *their* nature, though otherwise an inferior nature. Waiving a question so inscrutable as this, we know, at least, that no allegiance or homage is required from man towards this doubtfully superior race. And when man first finds himself called upon to pay tributes of this nature as to a being inimitably his superior, he is at the same moment taught by a revelation that this awful superior is the same who created him, and that in a sense more than figurative, he himself is the child of God. There stand the two relations, as declared in Paganism and in Christianity,—both probably true. In the former, man is the essential enemy of the gods, though sheltered by some conventional arrangement; in the latter, he is the son of God. In his own image God made him; and the very central principle of his religion is, that God

for a great purpose assumed his own human nature; a mode of incarnation which could not be conceivable, unless through some divine principle common to the two natures, and forming the *nexus* between them.

With these materials it is, and others resembling these, that Christianity has carried forward the work of human progression. The ethics of Christianity it was,—new ethics and unintelligible, in a degree as yet but little understood, to the old pagan nations,—which furnished the rudder, or guidance, for a human revolution; but the mysteries of Christianity it was,—new Eleusinian shows, presenting God under a new form and aspect, presenting man under a new relation to God,—which furnished the oars and sails, the moving forces, for the advance of this revolution.

It was my intention to have shown how this great idea of man's relation to God, connected with the previous idea of God, had first caused the state of *slavery* to be regarded as an evil. Next, I proposed to show how *charitable institutions*, not one of which existed in pagan ages, hospitals, and asylums of all classes, had arisen under the same idea brooding over man from age to age. Thirdly, I should have attempted to show, that from the same mighty influence had grown up a *social* influence of woman, which did not exist in pagan ages, and will hereafter be applied to greater purposes. But, for want of room, I confine myself to saying a few words on war, and the mode in which it will be extinguished by Christianity.

WAR.—This is amongst the foremost of questions that concern human progress, and it is one which, of all great questions, (the question of slavery not excepted, nor even the question of the *slave-trade*,) has travelled forward the most rapidly into public favor. Thirty years ago, there was hardly a breath stirring against war, as the sole natural resource of national anger or national competition. Hardly did a wish rise, at intervals, in that direction, or even a protesting sigh, over the calamities of war. And if here and there a contemplative author uttered such a sigh, it was in the spirit of mere hopeless sorrow, that mourned over an evil apparently as inalienable from man as hunger, as death, as the frailty of human expectations. Cowper, about sixty years ago, had said,

'War is a game which, were their subjects wise,
Kings would not play at.'

But Cowper would not have said this, had he not been nearly related to the Whig house of Panshanger. Every Whig thought it a duty occasionally to look fiercely at kings, saying—'D—, who's afraid?' pretty much as a regular John Bull, in the lower classes, expresses his independence by defying the peerage,—'A lord! do you say? what care I for a lord? I value a lord no more than a button top;' whilst, in fact, he secretly reveres a lord as being usually amongst the most ancient of landed proprietors, and, secondly, amongst the richest. The scourge of kingship was what

Cowper glanced at, rather than the scourge of war; and in any case the condition which he annexed to his suggestion of relief, is too remote to furnish much consolation for cynics like myself, or the reader. If war is to cease only when subjects become wise, we need not contract the scale of our cannon-founderies until the millennium. Sixty years ago, therefore, the abolition of war looked as unprosperous a speculation as Dr. Darwin's scheme for improving our British climate by hauling out all the icebergs from the polar basin in seasons when the wind sate fair for the tropics; by which means these wretched annoyers of our peace would soon find themselves in quarters too hot to hold them, and would disappear as rapidly as sugar-candy in children's mouths. Others, however, inclined rather to the Ancient Mariner's scheme, by shooting an albatross:—

'Twas right, said they, such birds to shoot,
That bring the frost and snow.'

Scarcely more hopeless than these crusades against frost, were any of the serious plans which had then been proposed for the extirpation of war. St. Pierre contributed '*son petite possible*' to this desirable end, in the shape of an essay towards the idea of a perpetual peace; Kant, the great professor of Koenigsberg, subscribed to the same benevolent scheme *his* little essay under the same title; and others in England subscribed a guinea each to the fund for the suppression of war. These efforts, one and all,

spent their fire as vainly as Darwin spent his wrath against the icebergs: the icebergs are as big and as cold as ever; and war is still, like a basking snake, ready to rear his horrid crest on the least rustling in the forests.

But in quarters more powerful than either purses of gold or scholastic reveries, there has, since the days of Kant and Cowper, begun to gather a menacing thundercloud against war. The nations, or at least the great leading nations, are beginning to set their faces against it. War, it is felt, comes under the denunciation of Christianity, by the havoc which it causes amongst those who bear God's image; of political economy, by its destruction of property and human labor; of rational logic, by the frequent absurdity of its pretexts. The wrong, which is put forth as the ostensible ground of the particular war, is oftentimes not of a nature to be redressed by war, or is even forgotten in the course of the war; and, secondly, the war prevents another course which *might* have redressed the wrong: viz., temperate negotiation, or neutral arbitration. These things were always true, and, indeed, heretofore more flagrantly true: but the difference, in favor of our own times, is, that they are now felt to be true. Formerly, the truths were seen, but not felt: they were inoperative truths, lifeless, and unvalued. Now, on the other hand, in England, America, France, societies are rising for making war upon war; and it is a striking proof of the progress made by such societies, that, some two years ago, a deputation from one of them being presented to King Louis Philippe, received from him—not the

sort of vague answer which might have been expected, but a sincere one, expressed in very encouraging words.[Footnote: and rather presumptuous words, if the newspapers reported them correctly: for they went the length of promising, that he separately, as King of the French, would coerce Europe into peace. But, from the known good sense of the king, it is more probable that he promised his *negative* aid,—the aid of not personally concurring to any war which might otherwise be attractive to the French government.] Ominous to himself this might have been thought by the superstitious, who should happen to recollect the sequel to a French king, of the very earliest movement in this direction: the great (but to this hour mysterious) design of Henry IV. in 1610, was supposed by many to be a plan of this very nature, for enforcing a general and permanent peace on Christendom, by means of an armed intervention; and no sooner had it partially transpired through traitorous evidence, or through angry suspicion, than his own assassination followed.

Shall I offend the reader by doubting, after all, whether war is not an evil still destined to survive through several centuries? Great progress has already been made. In the two leading nations of the earth, war can no longer be made with the levity which provoked Cowper's words two generations back. France is too ready to fight for mere bubbles of what she calls glory. But neither in France nor England could a war now be undertaken without a warrant from the *popular* voice. This is a great step

in advance; but the final step for its extinction will be taken by a new and Christian code of international law. This cannot be consummated until Christian philosophy shall have traversed the earth, and reorganized the structure of society.

But, finally, and (as regards extent, though not as regards intensity of effect) far beyond all other political powers of Christianity, is the power, the *demiurgic* power of this religion over the kingdoms of human opinion. Did it ever strike the reader, that the Greeks and Romans, although so frantically republican, and, in *some* of their institutions, so democratic, yet, on the other hand, never developed the idea of *representative* government, either as applied to legislation or to administration? The elective principle was widely used amongst them. Nay, the nicer casuistries of this principle had been latterly discussed. The separate advantages of open or of secret voting, had been the subject of keen dispute in the political circles of Rome; and the art was well understood of disturbing the natural course of the public suffrage, by varying the modes of combining the voters under the different forms of the *Comitia*. Public authority and jurisdiction were created and modified by the elective principle; but never was this principle applied to the creation or direction of public opinion. The senate of Rome, for instance, like our own sovereign, represented the national majesty, and, to a certain degree, continued to do so for centuries after this majesty had received a more immediate representative in the person of the reigning Caesar. The senate, like our own

sovereign, represented the grandeur of the nation, the hospitality of the nation to illustrious strangers, and the gratitude of the nation in the distribution of honors. For the senate continued to be the fountain of honors, even to Caesar himself: the titles of Germanicus, Britannicus, Dalmaticus, &c. (which may be viewed as peerages,) the privilege of precedency, the privilege of wearing a laurel diadem, &c. (which may be viewed as the Garter, Bath, Thistle,) all were honors conferred by the senate. But the senate, no more than our own sovereign ever represented, by any one act or function, the public opinion. How was this? Strange, indeed, that so mighty a secret as that of delegating public opinions to the custody of elect representatives, a secret which has changed the face of the world, should have been missed by nations applying so vast an energy to the whole theory of public administration. But the truth, however paradoxical, is, that in Greece and Rome no body of public opinions existed that could have furnished a standing ground for adverse parties, or that consequently could have required to be represented. In all the dissensions of Rome, from the secessions of the Plebs to the factions of the Gracchi, of Marius and Sylla, of Caesar and Pompey; in all the $\zeta\alpha\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ of the Grecian republics,—the contest could no more be described as a contest of opinion, than could the feuds of our buccaneers in the seventeenth century, when parting company, or fighting for opposite principles of dividing the general booty. One faction has, another sought to have, a preponderant share of power: but these struggles never

took the shape, even in pretence, of differences that moved through the conflict of principles. The case was always the simple one of power matched against power, faction against faction, usage against innovation. It was not that the patricians deluded themselves by any speculative views into the refusal of intermarriages with the plebeians: it was not as upon any opinion that they maintained the contest, (such as at this day divides ourselves from the French upon the question of opinion with regard to the social rank of literary men) but simply as upon a fact: they appealed to evidences not to speculations; to usage, not to argument. They were in possession, and fought against change, not as inconsistent with a theory, but as hostility to an interest. In the contest of Caesar with the oligarchic knavery of Cicero, Cato, and Pompey, no possible exercise of representative functions (had the people possessed them) could have been applied beneficially to the settlement of the question at issue. Law, and the abuses of law, good statutes and evil customs, had equally thrown the public power into a settlement fatal to the public welfare. Not any decay of public virtue, but increase of poverty amongst the inferior citizens, had thrown the suffrages, and consequently the honors and powers of the state, into the hands of some forty or fifty houses, rich enough to bribe, and bribing systematically. Caesar, undertaking to correct a state of disease which would else have convulsed the republic every third year by civil war, knew that no arguments could be available against a competition of mere interests. The remedy lay, not

through opposition speeches in the senate, or from the rostra,—not through pamphlets or journals,—but through a course of intense cudgelling. This he happily accomplished; and by that means restored Rome for centuries,—not to the aspiring condition which she once held, but to an immunity from annual carnage, and in other respects to a condition of prosperity which, if less than during her popular state, was greater than any else attainable after that popular state had become impossible, from changes in the composition of society.

Here, and in all other critical periods of ancient republics, we shall find that opinions did not exist as the grounds of feud, nor could by any dexterity have been applied to the settlement of feuds. Whereas, on the other hand, with ourselves for centuries, and latterly with the French, no public contest has arisen, or does now exist, without fighting its way through every stage of advance by appeals to public opinion. If, for instance, an improved tone of public feeling calls for a gradual mitigation of army punishments, the quarrel becomes instantly an intellectual one: and much information is brought forward, which throws light upon human nature generally. But in Rome, such a discussion would have been stopped summarily, as interfering with the discretionary power of the Praetorium. To take the *vitis*, or cane, from the hands of the centurion, was a perilous change; but, perilous or not, must be committed to the judgment of the particular imperator, or of his legatus. The executive business of the Roman exchequer, again, could

not have been made the subject of public discussion; not only because no sufficient material for judgment could, under the want of a public press, have been gathered, except from the parties interested in all its abuses, but also because these parties (a faction amongst the equestrian order) could have effectually overthrown any counter-faction formed amongst parties not personally *affected* by the question. The Roman institution of *clientela*—which had outlived its early uses—does any body imagine that this was open to investigation? The influence of murderous riots would easily have been brought to bear upon it, but not the light of public opinion. Even if public opinion could have been evoked in those days, or trained to combined action, insuperable difficulties would have arisen in adjusting its force to the necessities of the Roman provinces and allies. Any arrangement that was practicable, would have obtained an influence for these parties, either dangerous to the supreme section of the empire, or else nugatory for each of themselves. It is a separate consideration, that through total defect of cheap instruments for communication, whether personally or in the way of thought, public opinion must always have moved in the dark: what I chiefly assert is, that the feuds bearing at all upon public interests, never *did* turn, or could have turned, upon any collusion of opinions. And two things must strengthen the reader's conviction upon this point, viz. first, that no public meetings (such as with us carry on the weight of public business throughout the empire) were ever called in Rome; secondly, that

in the regular and 'official' meetings of the people, no social interest was ever discussed, but only some political interest.

Now, on the other hand, amongst ourselves, every question, that is large enough to engage public interest, though it should begin as a mere comparison of strength with strength, almost immediately travels forward into a comparison of right with rights, or of duty with duty. A mere fiscal question of restraint upon importation from this or that particular quarter, passes into a question of colonial rights. Arrangements of convenience for the management of the pauper, or the debtor, or the criminal, or the war-captive, become the occasions of profound investigations into the rights of persons occupying those relations. Sanatory ordinances for the protection of public health; such as quarantine, fever hospitals, draining, vaccination, &c., connect themselves, in the earliest stages of their discussion, with the general consideration of the duties which the state owes to its subjects. If education is to be promoted by public counsels, every step of the inquiry applies itself to the consideration of the knowledge to be communicated, and of the limits within which any section of religious partisanship can be safely authorized to interfere. If coercion, beyond the warrant of the ordinary law, is to be applied as a remedy for local outrages, a tumult of opinions arises instantly, as to the original causes of the evil, as to the sufficiency of the subsisting laws to meet its pressure, and as to the modes of connecting enlarged powers in the magistrate with the *minimum* of offence to the general rights of the subject.

Everywhere, in short, some question of duty and responsibility arises to face us in any the smallest public interest that *can* become the subject of public opinion. Questions, in fact, that fall short of this dignity; questions that concern public convenience only, and do not wear any moral aspect, such as the bullion question, never *do* become subjects of public opinion. It cannot be said in which direction lies the bias of public opinion. In the very possibility of interesting the public judgment, is involved the certainty of wearing some relation to moral principles. Hence the ardor of our public disputes; for no man views, without concern, a great moral principle darkened by party motives, or placed in risk by accident: hence the dignity and benefit of our public disputes; hence, also, their ultimate relation to the Christian faith. We do not, indeed, in these days, as did our homely ancestors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, cite texts of Scripture as themes for senatorial commentary or *exegesis*; but the virtual reference to scriptural principles is now a thousand times more frequent. The great principles of Christian morality are now so interwoven with our habits of thinking, that we appeal to them no longer as scriptural authorities, but as the natural suggestions of a sound judgment. For instance, in the case of any wrong offered to the Hindoo races, now so entirely dependent upon our wisdom and justice, we British [Footnote: It may be thought that, in the prosecution of Verres, the people of Rome acknowledged something of the same high responsibility. Not at all. The case came before Rome, not as

a case of injury to a colonial child, whom the general mother was bound to protect and avenge; but as an appeal, by way of special petition, from Sicilian clients. It was no grand political movement, but simply judicial. Verres was an ill-used man and the victim of private intrigues. Or, whatever *he* might be, Rome certainly sate upon the cause, not in any character of maternal protectress, taking up voluntarily the support of the weak, but as a sheriff assessing damages in a case forced upon his court by the plaintiff.] immediately, by our solemnity of investigation, testify our sense of the deep responsibility to India with which our Indian supremacy has invested us. We make no mention of the Christian oracles. Yet where, then, have we learned this doctrine of far-stretching responsibility? In all pagan systems of morality, there is the vaguest and slightest appreciation of such relations as connect us with our colonies. But, from the profound philosophy of Scripture, we have learned that no relations whatever, not even those of property, can connect us with even a brute animal, but that we contract concurrent obligations of justice and mercy.

In this age, then, public interests move and prosper through conflicts of opinion. Secondly, as I have endeavored to show, public opinion cannot settle, powerfully, upon any question that is *not* essentially a moral question. And, thirdly, in all moral questions, we, of Christian nations, are compelled, by habit and training, as well as other causes, to derive our first principles, consciously or not, from the Scriptures. It is, therefore, through the *doctrinality* of our religion that we derive arms for all moral

questions; and it is as moral questions that any political disputes much affect us, The daily conduct, therefore, of all great political interests, throws us unconsciously upon the first principles which we all derive from Christianity. And, in this respect, we are more advantageously placed, by a very noticeable distinction, than the professors of the two other doctrinal religions. The Koran having pirated many sentiments from the Jewish and the Christian systems, could not but offer some rudiments of moral judgment; yet, because so much of these rudiments is stolen, the whole is incoherent, and does not form a *system* of ethics. In Judaism, again, the special and insulated situation of the Jews has unavoidably impressed an exclusive bias upon its principles. In both codes the rules are often of restricted and narrow application. But, in the Christian Scriptures, the rules are so comprehensive and large as uniformly to furnish the major proposition of a syllogism; whilst the particular act under discussion, wearing, perhaps, some modern name, naturally is not directly mentioned: and to bring this, in the minor proposition, under the principle contained in the major, is a task left to the judgment of the inquirer in each particular case. Something is here intrusted to individual understanding; whereas in the Koran, from the circumstantiality of the rule, you are obliged mechanically to rest in the letter of the precept. The Christian Scriptures, therefore, not only teach, but train the mind to habits of *self-teaching* in all moral questions, by enforcing more or less of activity in applying the rule; that is, in subsuming

the given case proposed under the scriptural principle.

Hence it is certain, and has been repeatedly illustrated, that whilst the Christian faith, in collision with others, would inevitably rouse to the most active fermentation of minds, the Mahometan (as also doctrinal but unsystematical) would have the same effect, in kind, but far feebler in degree; and an idolatrous religion would have no such effect at all. Agreeably to this scale, some years ago, a sect of reforming or fanatical Mahometans, in Bengal,[Footnote: At Baraset, if I remember rightly.] commenced a persecution of the surrounding Hindoos. At length, a reaction took place on the part of the idolaters, but in what temper? Bitter enough, and so far alarming as to call down a government interference with troops and artillery, but yet with no signs of *religious* retaliation. That was a principle of movement which the Hindoos could not understand: their retaliation was simply to the personal violence they had suffered. Such is the inertia of a mere *cultus*. And, in the other extreme, if we Christians, in our intercourse with both Hindoos and Mahometans, were not sternly reined up by the vigilance of the local governments, no long time would pass before all India would be incurably convulsed by disorganizing feuds.

PROTESTANTISM. [Footnote: A Vindication of Protestant Principles. By Phileleutheros Anglicanus. London: Parker. 1847.]

[1847.]

The work whose substance and theme are thus briefly abstracted is, at this moment, making a noise in the world. It is ascribed by report to two bishops—not jointly, but alternatively—in the sense that, if one did *not* write the book, the other *did*. The Bishops of Oxford and St. David's, Wilberforce and Thirlwall, are the two pointed at by the popular finger; and, in some quarters, a third is suggested, viz., Stanley, Bishop of Norwich. The betting, however, is altogether in favor of Oxford. So runs the current of *public* gossip. But the public is a bad guesser, 'stiff in opinion' it is, and almost 'always in the wrong.' Now let *me* guess. When I had read for ten minutes, I offered a bet of seven to one (no takers) that the author's name began with H. Not out of any love for that amphibious letter; on the contrary, being myself what Professor Wilson calls a *hedonist*, or philosophical voluptuary, and murmuring, with good reason, if a rose leaf lies doubled below me, naturally I murmur at a letter that puts one to the expense of an aspiration, forcing into the lungs an extra charge of raw air on frosty mornings. But truth is truth, in spite of frosty air. And yet, upon further reading, doubts gathered upon my mind. The H. that I mean is an Englishman; now it happens that here and there a word, or some peculiarity in using a word, indicates, in this author, a Scotchman; for instance, the expletive 'just,' which so much infests Scotch

phraseology, written or spoken, at page 1; elsewhere the word '*short-comings*,' which, being horridly tabernacular, and such that no gentleman could allow himself to touch it without gloves, it is to be wished that our Scottish brethren would resign, together with '*backslidings*,' to the use of field preachers. But worse, by a great deal, and not even intelligible in England, is the word *thereafter*, used as an adverb of time, *i.e.*, as the correlative of *hereafter*. *Thereafter*, in pure vernacular English, bears a totally different sense. In 'Paradise Lost,' for instance, having heard the character of a particular angel, you are told that he spoke *thereafter*, *i.e.*, spoke agreeably to that character. 'How a score of sheep, Master Shallow?' The answer is, '*Thereafter* as they be.' Again, 'Thereafter as a man sows shall he reap.' The objections are overwhelming to the Scottish use of the word; first, because already in Scotland it is a barbarism transplanted from the filthy vocabulary of attorneys, locally called *writers*; secondly, because in England it is not even intelligible, and, what is worse still, sure to be *mis*-intelligible. And yet, after all, these exotic forms may be a mere blind. The writer is, perhaps, purposely leading us astray with his '*thereafters*,' and his horrid '*short-comings*.' Or, because London newspapers, and Acts of Parliament, are beginning to be more and more polluted with these barbarisms, he may even have caught them unconsciously.

And, on looking again at one case of '*thereafter*,' viz. at page 79, it seems impossible to determine whether he uses it in the classical English sense, or in the sense of leguleian barbarism.

This question of authorship, meantime, may seem to the reader of little moment. Far from it! The weightier part of the interest depends upon that very point. If the author really *is* a bishop, or supposing the public rumor so far correct as that he is a man of distinction in the English church, then, and by that simple fact, this book, or this pamphlet, interesting at any rate for itself, becomes separately interesting through its authorship, so as to be the most remarkable phenomenon of the day; and why? Because the most remarkable expression of a movement, accomplished and proceeding in a quarter that, if any on this earth, might be thought sacred from change. Oh, fearful are the motions of time, when suddenly lighted up to a retrospect of thirty years! Pathetic are the ruins of time in its slowest advance! Solemn are the prospects, so new and so incredible, which time unfolds at every turn of its wheeling flight! Is it come to this? Could any man, one generation back, have anticipated that an English dignitary, and speaking on a very delicate religious question, should deliberately appeal to a writer confessedly infidel, and proud of being an infidel, as a 'triumphant' settler of Christian scruples? But if the infidel is right, a point which I do not here discuss—but if the infidel is a man of genius, a point which I do not deny—was it not open to cite him, even though the citer were a bishop? Why, yes—uneasily one answers, *yes*; but still the case records a strange alteration, and still one could have wished to hear such a doctrine, which ascribes human infirmity (nay, human criminality) to *every* book of the Bible, uttered by

anybody rather than by a father of the Church, and guaranteed by anybody rather than by an infidel, in triumph. A boy may fire his pistol unnoticed; but a sentinel, mounting guard in the dark, must remember the trepidation that will follow any shot from *him*, and the certainty that it will cause all the stations within hearing to get under arms immediately. Yet why, if this bold opinion *does* come from a prelate, he being but one man, should it carry so alarming a sound? Is the whole bench of bishops bound and compromised by the audacity of any one amongst its members? Certainly not. But yet such an act, though it should be that of a rash precursor, marks the universal change of position; there is ever some sympathy between the van and the rear of the same body at the same time; and the boldest could not have dared to go ahead so rashly, if the rearmost was not known to be pressing forward to his support, far more closely than thirty years ago he could have done. There have been, it is true, heterodox professors of divinity and free-thinking bishops before now. England can show a considerable list of such people—even Rome has a smaller list. Rome, that weeds all libraries, and is continually burning books, in effigy, by means of her vast *Index Expurgatorius*, [Footnote: A question of some interest arises upon the casuistical construction of this Index. We, that are not by name included, may we consider ourselves indirectly licensed? Silence, I should think, gives consent. And if it wasn't that the present Pope, being a horrid Radical, would be sure to blackball *me* as an honest Tory, I would send him a copy of

my *Opera Omnia*, requesting his Holiness to say, by return of post, whether I ranked amongst the chaff winnowed by St. Peter's flail, or had his gracious permission to hold myself amongst the pure wheat gathered into the Vatican garner.] which index, continually, she is enlarging by successive supplements, needs also an *Index Expurgatorius* for the catalogue of her prelates. Weeds there are in the very flower-garden and conservatory of the church. Fathers of the church are no more to be relied on, as safe authorities, than we rascally lay authors, that notoriously will say anything. And it is a striking proof of this amongst our English bishops, that the very man who, in the last generation, most of all won the public esteem as the champion of the Bible against Tom Paine, was privately known amongst us connoisseurs in heresy (that are always prying into ugly secrets) to be the least orthodox thinker, one or other, amongst the whole brigade of fifteen thousand contemporary clerks who had subscribed the Thirty-nine Articles. Saving your presence, reader, his lordship was no better than a bigoted Socinian, which, in a petty diocese that he never visited, and amongst South Welshmen, that are all incorrigible Methodists, mattered little, but would have been awkward had he come to be Archbishop of York; and that he did *not*, turned upon the accident of a few weeks too soon, by which the Fates cut short the thread of the Whig ministry in 1807. Certainly, for a Romish or an English bishop to be a Socinian is *un peu fort*. But I contend that it is quite possible to be far less heretical, and yet dangerously bold; yes, upon the free and

spacious latitudes, purposely left open by the English Thirty-nine Articles (ay, or by any Protestant Confession), to plant novelties not less startling to religious ears than Socinianism itself. Besides (which adds to the shock), the dignitary now before us, whether bishop or no bishop, does not write in the tone of a conscious heretic; or, like Archdeacon Blackburne[Footnote: He was the author of *The Confessional*, which at one time made a memorable ferment amongst all those who loved as sons, or who hated as nonconformists, the English Establishment. This was his most popular work, but he wrote many others in the same temper, that fill six or seven octavos.] of old, in a spirit of hostility to his own fellow-churchmen; but, on the contrary, in the tone of one relying upon support from his clerical brethren, he stands forward as expositor and champion of views now prevailing amongst the *elite* of the English Church. So construed, the book is, indeed, a most extraordinary one, and exposes a history that almost shocks one of the strides made in religious speculation. Opinions change slowly and stealthily. The steps of the changes are generally continuous; but sometimes it happens that the notice of such steps, the publication of such changes, is not continuous, that it comes upon us *per saltum*, and, consequently, with the stunning effect of an apparent treachery. Every thoughtful man raises his hands with an involuntary gesture of awe at the revolutions of so revolutionary an age, when thus summoned to the spectacle of an English prelate serving a piece of artillery against what once were fancied to be main outworks of religion, and at a station

sometimes considerably in advance of any occupied by Voltaire. [Footnote: Let not the reader misunderstand me; I do not mean that the clerical writer now before us (bishop or not bishop) is more hostile to religion than Voltaire, or is hostile at all. On the contrary, he is, perhaps, profoundly religious, and he writes with neither levity nor insincerity. But this conscientious spirit, and this piety, do but the more call into relief the audacity of his free-thinking—do but the more forcibly illustrate the prodigious changes wrought by time, and by the contagion from secular revolutions, in the spirit of religious philosophy.]

It is this audacity of speculation, I apprehend, this *etalage* of bold results, rather than any success in their development, which has fixed the public attention. Development, indeed, applied to philosophic problems, or research applied to questions of erudition, was hardly possible within so small a compass as one hundred and seventeen pages, for *that* is the extent of the work, except as regards the notes, which amount to seventy-four pages more. Such brevity, on such a subject, is unseasonable, and almost culpable. On such a subject as the Philosophy of Protestantism—'*satius erat silere, quam parcius, dicere.*' Better were absolute silence, more respectful as regards the theme, less tantalizing as regards the reader, than a style of discussion so fragmentary and so rapid.

But, before we go farther, what are we to call this bold man? One must have some name for a man that one is reviewing; and, as he comes abroad *incognito*, it is difficult to see what

name *could* have any propriety. Let me consider: there are three bishops in the field, Mr. H., and the Scotchman—that makes five. But every one of these, you say, is represented equally by the name in the title—*Phileleutheros Anglicanus*. True, but *that's* as long as a team of horses. If it had but *Esquire* at the end, it would measure against a Latin Hendecasyllable verse. I'm afraid that we must come at last to *Phil*. I've been seeking to avoid it, for it's painful to say 'Jack' or 'Dick' either *to* or *of* an ecclesiastical great gun. But if such big wigs *will* come abroad in disguise, and with names as long as Fielding's Hononchrononthononthologus, they must submit to be hustled by pickpockets and critics, and to have *their* names docked as well as profane authors.

Phil, then, be it—that's settled. Now, let us inquire what it is that *Phil*. has been saying, to cause such a sensation amongst the Gnostics. And, to begin at the beginning, what is *Phil*.'s capital object? *Phil*. shall state it himself—these are his opening words:

'In the following pages we propose to vindicate the fundamental and inherent *principles* of Protestantism.'

Good; but what *are* the fundamental principles of Protestantism? 'They are,' says *Phil*., 'the sole sufficiency of Scripture,'[Footnote: This is much too elliptical a way of expressing the Protestant meaning. Sufficiency for what? 'Sufficiency for salvation' is the phrase of many, and I think elsewhere of *Phil*. But *that* is objectionable on more grounds than one; it is redundant, and it is aberrant from the true

point contemplated. *Sufficiency for itself, without alien helps*, is the thing contemplated. The Greek *autarkeia*, self-sufficiency, or, because that phrase, in English, has received a deflexion towards a bad meaning, the word *self-sufficingness* might answer; sufficiency for the exposition of its own most secret meaning, out of fountains within itself; needing, therefore, neither the supplementary aids of tradition, on the one hand, nor the complementary aids on the other, (in the event of unprovided cases, or of dilemmas arising,) from the infallibility of a *living* expounder.] the right of private judgment in its interpretation, and the authority of individual conscience in matters of religion.' Errors of logic show themselves more often in a man's terminology, and his antithesis, and his subdivisions, than anywhere else. *Phil.* goes on to make this distinction, which brings out his imperfect conception. 'We,' says he (and, by the way, if *Phil.* is *we*, then it must be my duty to call him *they*), 'we do not propose to defend the varieties of *doctrine* held by the different communities of Protestants.' Why, no; that would be a sad task for the most skilful of funambulists or theological tumblers, seeing that many of these varieties stand related to each other as categorical affirmative and categorical negative: it's heavy work to make *yes* and *no* pull together in the same proposition. But this, fortunately for himself, *Phil.* declines. You are to understand that he will not undertake the defence of Protestantism in its *doctrines*, but only in its *principles*. That won't do; that antithesis is as hollow as a drum; and, if

the objection were verbal only, I would not make it. But the contradistinction fails to convey the real meaning. It is not that he has falsely expressed his meaning, but that he has falsely developed that meaning to his own consciousness. Not the word only is wrong; but the wrong word is put forward for the sake of hiding the imperfect idea. What he calls *principles* might almost as well be called *doctrines*; and what he calls *doctrines* as well be called *principles*. Out of these terms, apart from the rectifications suggested by the context, no man could collect his drift, which is simply this. Protestantism, we must recollect, is not an absolute and self-dependent idea; it stands in relation to something antecedent, against which it protests, viz., Papal Rome. And under what phasis does it protest against Rome? Not against the Christianity of Rome, because every Protestant Church, though disapproving a great deal of *that*, disapproves also a great deal in its own sister churches of the protesting household; and because every Protestant Church holds a great deal of Christian truth, in common with Rome. But what furnishes the matter of protest is—the *deduction of the title* upon which Rome plants the right to be church at all. This deduction is so managed by Rome as to make herself, not merely a true church (which many Protestants grant), but the exclusive church. Now, what *Phil.* in effect undertakes to defend is not principles by preference to doctrines (for they are pretty nearly the same thing), but the question of title to teach at all, in preference to the question of what is the thing taught. *There* is the distinction, as

I apprehend it. All these terms—'principle,' 'doctrine,' 'system,' 'theory,' 'hypothesis'—are used nearly always most licentiously, and as arbitrarily as a Newmarket jockey selects the colors for his riding-dress. It is true that one shadow of justification offers itself for *Phil.'s* distinction. All principles are doctrines, but all doctrines are not principles; which, then, in particular? Why, those properly are principles which contain the *principia*, the beginnings, or starting-points of evolution, out of which any system of truth is evolved. Now, it may seem that the very starting-point of our Protestant pretensions is, first of all, to argue our *title* or right to be a church *sui juris*; apparently we must begin by making good our *locus standi*, before we can be heard upon our doctrines. And upon this mode of approach, the pleadings about the *title*, or right to teach at all, taking precedency of the pleadings about the particular things taught, would be the *principia*, or beginning of the whole process, and so far would be entitled by preference to the name of *principles*. But such a mode of approach is merely an accident, and contingent upon our being engaged in a polemical discussion of Protestantism in relation to Popery. *That*, however, is a pure matter of choice; Protestantism may be discussed, 'as though Rome were not, in relation to its own absolute merits; and this treatment is the logical treatment, applying itself to what is permanent in the *nature* of the object; whereas the other treatment applies itself to what is casual and vanishing in the *history* (or the origin) of Protestantism. For, after all, it would be no great triumph to Protestantism that she

should prove her birthright to revolve as a primary planet in the solar system; that she had the same original right as Rome to wheel about the great central orb, undegraded to the rank of satellite or secondary projection—if, in the meantime, telescopes should reveal the fact that she was pretty nearly a sandy desert. *What* a church teaches is true or not true, without reference to her independent right of teaching; and eventually, when the irritations of earthly feuds and political schisms shall be soothed by time, the philosophy of this whole question will take an inverse order. The credentials of a church will not be put in first, and the quality of her doctrine discussed as a secondary question. On the contrary, her credentials will be sought *in* her doctrine. The Protestant Church will say, I have the *right* to stand separate, because I stand; and from my holy teaching I deduce my title to teach. *Jus est ibi summum docendi, ubi est fons purissimus doctrinae*. That inversion of the Protestant plea with Rome is even now valid with many; and, when it becomes universally current, then the *principles*, or great beginnings of the controversy, will be transplanted from the *locus*, or centre, where *Phil.* places them, to the very *locus* which he neglects.

There is another expression of *Phil.*'s (I am afraid *Phil.* is getting angry by this time) to which I object. He describes the doctrines held by all the separate Protestant churches as doctrines of Protestantism. I would not delay either *Phil.* or myself for the sake of a trifle; but an impossibility is *not* a trifle. If from orthodox Turkey you pass to heretic Persia, if from the rigor

of the *Sonnees* to the laxity of the *Sheeahs*, you could not, in explaining those schisms, go on to say, 'And these are the doctrines *of* Islamism;' for they destroy each other. Both are supported by earthly powers; but one only could be supported by central Islamism. So of Calvinism and Arminianism; you cannot call them doctrines *of* Protestantism, as if growing out of some reconciling Protestant principles; one of the two, though not manifested to human eyes in its falsehood, must secretly be false; and a falsehood cannot be a doctrine of Protestantism. It is more accurate to say that the separate creeds of Turkey and Persia are *within* Mahommedanism; such, viz., as that neither excludes a man from the name of Mussulman; and, again, that Calvinism and Arminianism are doctrines *within* the Protestant Church—as a church of general toleration for all religious doctrines not de-monstrably hostile to any cardinal truth of Christianity.

Phil., then, we all understand, is not going to traverse the vast field of Protestant opinions as they are distributed through our many sects; *that* would be endless; and he illustrates the mazy character of the wilderness over which these sects are wandering, —'ubi passim Palantes error recto de tramite pellit,'

by the four cases of—1, the Calvinist; 2, the Newmanite; 3, the Romanist; [Footnote: What, amongst Protestant sects? Ay, even so. It's *Phil.*'s mistake, not mine. He will endeavor to doctor the case, by pleading that he was speaking universally of Christian error; but the position of the clause forbids this plea. Not only in relation to what immediately precedes, the

passage must be supposed to contemplate *Protestant* error; but the immediate inference from it, viz., that 'the world may well be excused for doubting whether there is, after all, so much to be gained by that liberty of private judgment, which is the essential characteristic of Protestantism; whether it be not, after all, merely a liberty to fall into error,' nails *Phil.* to that construction—argues too strongly that it is an oversight of indolence. *Phil.* was sleeping for the moment, which is excusable enough towards the end of a book, but hardly in section I. P.S.—I have since observed (which *not* to have observed is excused, perhaps, by the too complex machinery of hooks and eyes between the text and the notes involving a double reference—first, to the section; second, to the particular clause of the section) that *Phil.* has not here committed an inadvertency; or, if he *has*, is determined to fight himself through his inadvertency, rather than break up his quaternion of cases. 'In speaking of Romanism as arising from a misapplication of Protestant principles; we refer, not to those who were born, but to those who have become members of the Church of Rome.' What is the name of those people? And where do they live? I have heard of many who think (and there *are* cases in which most of us, that meddle with philosophy, are apt to think) occasional principles of Protestantism available for the defence of certain Roman Catholic mysteries too indiscriminately assaulted by the Protestant zealot; but, with this exception, I am not aware of any parties professing to derive their Popish learnings *from* Protestantism; it is *in spite of*

Protestantism, as seeming to *them* not strong enough, or through principles omitted by Protestantism, which therefore seems to *them* not careful enough or not impartial enough, that Protestants have lapsed to Popery. Protestants have certainly been known to become Papists, not through Popish arguments, but simply through their own Protestant books; yet never, that I heard of, through an *affirmative* process, as though any Protestant argument involved the rudiments of Popery, but by a *negative* process, as fancying the Protestant reasons, though lying in the right direction, not going far enough; or, again, though right partially, yet defective as a whole. *Phil.* therefore, seems to me absolutely caught in a sort of *Furcae Caudinae*, unless he has a dodge in reserve to puzzle us all. In a different point, I, that hold myself a *doctor seraphicus*, and also *inexpugnabilis* upon quilllets of logic, justify *Phil.*, whilst also I blame him. He defends himself rightly for distinguishing between the Romanist and Newmanite on the one hand, between the Calvinist and the Evangelical man on the other, though perhaps a young gentleman, commencing his studies on the *Organon*, will fancy that here he has *Phil.* in a trap, for these distinctions, he will say, do not entirely exclude to each other as they ought to do. The class calling itself Evangelical, for instance, may also be Calvinistic; the Newmanite is not, *therefore*, anti-Romanish. True, says *Phil.*; I am quite aware of it. But to be aware of an objection is not to answer it. The fact seems to be, that the actual combinations of life, not conforming to the truth of abstractions, compel us

to seeming breaches of logic. It would be right practically to distinguish the Radical from the Whig; and yet it might shock *Duns* or *Lombardus*, the *magister sententiarum*, when he came to understand that partially the principles of Radicals and Whigs coincide. But, for all that, the logic which distinguishes them is right; and the apparent error must be sought in the fact, that all cases (political or religious) being cases of life, are *concretes*, which never conform to the exquisite truth of abstractions. Practically, the Radical *is* opposed to the Whig, though casually the two are in conjunction continually; for, as *acting* partisans, they work *from* different centres, and finally, *for* different results.] 4, the Evangelical enthusiast—as holding systems of doctrine, 'no one of which is capable of recommending itself to the favorable opinion of an impartial judge.' Impartial! but what Christian *can* be impartial? To be free from all bias, and to begin his review of sects in that temper, he must begin by being an infidel. Vainly a man endeavors to reserve in a state of neutrality any preconceptions that he may have formed for himself, or prepossessions that he may have inherited from 'mamma;' he cannot do it any more than he can dismiss his own shadow. And it is strange to contemplate the weakness of strong minds in fancying that they can. Calvin, whilst amiably engaged in hunting Servetus to death, and writing daily letters to his friends, in which he expresses his hope that the executive power would not think of burning the poor man, since really justice would be quite satisfied by cutting his head off, meets with some correspondents

who conceive (idiots that they were!) even that little amputation not indispensable. But Calvin soon settles *their* scruples. You don't perceive, he tells them, what this man has been about. When a writer attacks Popery, it's very wrong in the Papists to cut his head off; and why? Because he has only been attacking error. But here lies the difference in this case; Servetus had been attacking the TRUTH. Do you see the distinction, my friends? Consider it, and I am sure you will be sensible that this quite alters the case. It is shocking, it is perfectly ridiculous, that the Bishop of Rome should touch a hair of any man's head for contradicting *him*; and why? Because, do you see? *he* is wrong. On the other hand, it is evidently agreeable to philosophy, that I, John Calvin, should shave off the hair, and, indeed, the head itself (as I heartily hope[Footnote: The reader may imagine that, in thus abstracting Calvin's epistolary sentiments, I am a little improving them. Certainly they would bear improvement, but that is not my business. What the reader sees here is but the result of bringing scattered passages into closer juxtaposition; whilst, as to the strongest (viz., the most sanguinary) sentiments here ascribed to him, it will be a sufficient evidence of my fidelity to the literal truth, if I cite three separate sentences. Writing to Farrel, he says, '*Spero capitale saltern fore judicium.*' Sentence of the court, he *hopes*, will, at any rate, reach the life of Servetus. Die he must, and die he shall. But why should he die a cruel death? "*Paenoe vero atrocitatem remitti cupio.*" To the same purpose, when writing to Sultzer, he expresses his

satisfaction in being able to assure him that a principal civic officer of Geneva was, in this case, entirely upright, and animated by the most virtuous sentiments. Indeed! what an interesting character! and in what way now might this good man show this beautiful tenderness of conscience? Why; by a fixed resolve that Servetus should not in any case escape the catastrophe which I, John Calvin, am longing for, ('ut saltem exitum, *quem optamus*, non fugiat.') Finally, writing to the same Sultzer, he remarks that—when we see the Papists such avenging champions of their own superstitious fables as not to falter in shedding innocent blood, 'pudeat Christianos magistratus [as if the Roman Catholic magistrates were not Christians] in tuenda *certa* veritate nihil prorsus habere animi'—'Christian magistrates ought to be ashamed of themselves for manifesting no energy at all in the vindication of truth undeniable;' yet really since these magistrates had at that time the full design, which design not many days after they executed, of maintaining truth by fire and faggot, one does not see the call upon them for blushes so very deep as Calvin requires. Hands so crimson with blood might compensate the absence of crimson cheeks.] will be done in this present case) of any man presumptuous enough to contradict *me*; but then, why? For a reason that makes all the difference in the world, and which, one would think, idiocy itself could not overlook, viz., that I, John Calvin, am right—right, through three degrees of comparison—right, righter, or more right, rightest, or most right. Calvin fancied that he could demonstrate his own impartiality.

The self-sufficingness of the Bible, and the right of private judgment—here, then, are the two great charters in which Protestantism commences; these are the bulwarks behind which it intrenches itself against Rome. And it is remarkable that these two great preliminary laws, which soon diverge into fields so different, at the first are virtually one and the same law. The refusal of an oracle alien to the Bible, extrinsic to the Bible, and claiming the sole interpretation of the Bible; the refusal of an oracle that reduced the Bible to a hollow masque, underneath which fraudulently introducing itself any earthly voice could mimic a heavenly voice, was in effect to refuse the coercion of this false oracle over each man's conscientious judgment; to make the Bible independent of the Pope, was to make man independent of all religious controllers. The *self-sufficingness of Scripture*, its independency of any external interpreter, passed in one moment into the other great Protestant doctrine of *Toleration*. It was but the same triumphal monument under a new angle of sight, the golden and silver faces of the same heraldic shield. The very same act which denies the right of interpretation to a mysterious Papal phoenix, renewed from generation to generation, having the antiquity and the incomprehensible omniscience of the Simorg in Southey, transferred this right of mere necessity to the individuals of the whole human race. For where else could it have been lodged? Any attempt in any other direction was but to restore the Papal power in a new impersonation. Every man, therefore, suddenly

obtained the right of interpreting the Bible for himself. But the word '*right*' obtained a new sense. Every man has the right, under the Queen's Bench, of publishing an unlimited number of metaphysical systems; and, under favor of the same indulgent Bench, we all enjoy the unlimited right of laughing at him. But not the whole race of man has a right to *coerce*, in the exercise of his intellectual rights, the humblest of individuals. The rights of men are thus unspeakably elevated; for, being now freed from all anxiety, being sacred as merely *legal* rights, they suddenly rise into a new mode of responsibility as *intellectual* rights. As a Protestant, every mature man has the same dignified right over his own opinions and profession of faith that he has over his own hearth. But his hearth can rarely be abused; whereas his religious system, being a vast kingdom, opening by immeasurable gates upon worlds of light and worlds of darkness, now brings him within a new amenability—called upon to answer new impeachments, and to seek for new assistances. Formerly another was answerable for his belief; if that were wrong, it was no fault of his. Now he has new rights, but these have burthened him with new obligations. Now he is crowned with the glory and the palms of an intellectual creature, but he is alarmed by the certainty of corresponding struggles. Protestantism it is that has created him into this child and heir of liberty; Protestantism it is that has invested him with these unbounded privileges of private judgment, giving him in one moment the sublime powers of a Pope within his own conscience; but Protestantism it is that has

introduced him to the most dreadful of responsibilities.

I repeat that the twin maxims, the columns of Hercules through which Protestantism entered the great sea of human activities, were originally but two aspects of one law: to deny the Papal control over men's conscience being to affirm man's self-control, was, therefore, to affirm man's universal right to toleration, which again implied a corresponding *duty* of toleration. Under this bi-fronted law, generated by Protestantism, but in its turn regulating Protestantism, *Phil.* undertakes to develop all the principles that belong to a Protestant church. The *seasonableness* of such an investigation—its critical application to an evil now spreading like a fever through Europe—he perceives fully, and in the following terms he expresses this perception:—

'That we stand on the brink of a great theological crisis, that the problem must soon be solved, how far orthodox Christianity is possible for those who are not behind their age in scholarship and science; this is a solemn fact, which may be ignored by the partisans of short-sighted bigotry, but which is felt by all, and confessed by most of those who are capable of appreciating its reality and importance. The deep Sibylline vaticinations of Coleridge's philosophical mind, the practical working of Arnold's religious sentimentalism, and the open acknowledgment of many divines who are living examples of the spirit of the age, have all, in different ways, foretold the advent of a Church of the Future.'

This is from the preface, p. ix., where the phrase, *Church of the Future*, points to the Prussian minister's (Bunsen's) *Kirche der Zukunft*; but in the body of the work, and not far from its close, (p. 114,) he recurs to this crisis, and more circumstantially.

Phil. embarrasses himself and his readers in this development of Protestant principles. His own view of the task before him requires that he should separate himself from the consideration of any particular church, and lay aside all partisanship—plausible or not plausible. It is his own overture that warrants us in expecting this. And yet, before we have travelled three measured inches, he is found entangling himself with Church of Englandism. Let me not be misunderstood, as though, borrowing a Bentham word, I were therefore a Jerry Benthamite: I, that may describe myself generally as *Philo-Phil.*, am not less a son of the 'Reformed Anglican Church' than *Phil.* Consequently, it is not likely that, in any vindication of that church, simply *as* such, and separately for itself, I should be the man to find grounds of exception. Loving most of what *Phil.* loves, loving *Phil.* himself, and hating (I grieve to say), with a theological hatred, whatever *Phil.* hates, why should I demur at this particular point to a course of argument that travels in the line of my own partialities? And yet I *do* demur. Having been promised a philosophic defence of the principles concerned in the great European schism of the sixteenth century, suddenly we find ourselves collapsing from that altitude of speculation into a defence of one individual church. Nobody would complain of *Phil.* if, *after*

having deduced philosophically the principles upon which all Protestant separation from Rome should revolve, he had gone forward to show, that in some one of the Protestant churches, more than in others, these principles had been asserted with peculiar strength, or carried through with special consistency, or associated pre-eminently with the other graces of a Christian church, such as a ritual more impressive to the heart of man, or a polity more symmetrical with the structure of English society. Once having unfolded from philosophic grounds the primary conditions of a pure scriptural church, *Phil.* might then, without blame, have turned sharp round upon us, saying, such being the conditions under which the great idea of a true Christian church must be *constructed*, I now go on to show that the Church of England has conformed to those conditions more faithfully than any other. But to entangle the pure outlines of the idealizing mind with the practical forms of any militant church, embarrassed (as we know all churches to have been) by preoccupations of judgment, derived from feuds too local and interests too political, moving too (as we know all churches to have moved) in a spirit of compromise, occasionally from mere necessities of position; this is in the result to injure the object of the writer doubly: first, as leaving an impression of partisanship the reader is mistrustful from the first, as against a judge that, in reality, is an advocate; second, without reference to the effect upon the reader, directly to *Phil.* it is injurious, by fettering the freedom of his speculations, or, if leaving their freedom undisturbed, by

narrowing their compass.

And, if *Phil.*, as to the general movement of his Protestant pleadings, modulates too little in the transcendental key, sometimes he does so too much. For instance, at p. 69, sec. 35, we find him half calling upon Protestantism to account for her belief in God; how then? Is this belief special to Protestants? Are Roman Catholics, are those of the Greek, the Armenian, and other Christian churches, atheistically given? We used to be told that there is no royal road to geometry. I don't know whether there is or not; but I am sure there is no Protestant by-road, no Reformation short-cut, to the demonstration of Deity. It is true that *Phil.* exonerates his philosophic scholar, when throwing himself in Protestant freedom upon pure intellectual aids, from the vain labor of such an effort. He consigns him, however philosophic, to the evidence of 'inevitable assumptions, upon axiomatic postulates, which the reflecting mind is compelled to accept, and which no more admit of doubt and cavil than of establishment by formal proof.' I am not sure whether I understand *Phil.* in this section. Apparently he is glancing at Kant. Kant was the first person, and perhaps the last, that ever undertook formally to demonstrate the indemonstrability of God. He showed that the three great arguments for the existence of the Deity were virtually one, inasmuch as the two weaker borrowed their value and *vis apodeictica* from the more rigorous metaphysical argument. The physico-theological argument he forced to back, as it were, into the cosmological, and *that* into

the ontological. After this reluctant *regressus* of the three into one, shutting up like a spying-glass, which (with the iron hand of Hercules forcing Cerberus up to daylight) the stern man of Koenigsberg resolutely dragged to the front of the arena, nothing remained, now that he had this pet scholastic argument driven up into a corner, than to break its neck—which he did. Kant took the conceit out of all the three arguments; but, if this is what *Phil.* alludes to, he should have added, that these three, after all, were only the arguments of speculating or *theoretic* reason. To this faculty Kant peremptorily denied the power of demonstrating the Deity; but then that same *apodeixis*, which he had thus inexorably torn from reason under one manifestation, Kant himself restored to the reason in another (the *praktische vernunft.*) God he asserts to be a postulate of the human reason, as speaking through the conscience and will, not proved *ostensively*, but indirectly proved as being *wanted* indispensably, and presupposed in other necessities of our human nature. This, probably, is what *Phil.* means by his short-hand expression of 'axiomatic postulates.' But then it should not have been said that the case does not 'admit of formal proof,' since the proof is as 'formal' and rigorous by this new method of Kant as by the old obsolete methods of Sam. Clarke and the schoolmen.[Footnote: The method of Des Cartes was altogether separate and peculiar to himself; it is a mere conjuror's juggle; and yet, what is strange, like some other audacious sophisms, it is capable of being so stated as most of all to baffle the subtle dialectician; and Kant himself, though not

cheated, was never so much perplexed in his life as in the effort to make its hollowness apparent.]

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