

dreams, what genius has already brought within the sphere of reality, I oppose to this blindness the voice of learned Europe, the authority of the Academy of Inscriptions, and the labors of many of its members. It is in the steps of these my illustrious colleagues that I have, in this paper, endeavored to tread; and encouraged by their voice and their example I have essayed this first application of the method of Champollion to the elucidation of an important fact in the history of the civilization, still imperfectly known, of ancient Egypt.

ARTICLE VI.

THE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENT IN CHRISTIANITY.

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CHRISTIANITY¹ has been represented as the most efficient agency existing in our world, as able to arouse and revolutionize all that ought to be excited and changed. Possessing such a wakeful, enterprising, renovating spirit, it becomes important to inquire, whether it holds along with it any sufficient, guiding, moderating principle, to prevent extravagances and violence.

Such a principle and power it contains preëminently within itself. It has a balancing, controlling provision, capable of keeping right, steady, straight onward, every human movement for the reform and elevation of man and society. Christianity is no less remarkable as a cautious guide, an efficient conservator, than as an aggressor and transformer.

Before entering upon a discussion of the conservatism of Christianity, it may be proper, as there exists a deep and extensive prejudice against everything which bears this name, to offer a preliminary observation, on the true meaning and use of the term. This word expresses no disrelish, distrust or resistance of actual melioration and advancement. Conservatism is no enemy to human progress. It is no lazy alarmist, uttering forebodings over what is to come; no

¹ By this term is meant everywhere in this discussion a pure, protestant Christianity.

croaker over the effacing of old landmarks and old customs; no retrospective seer that can discover nothing good except in the past; no prognosticator of evils inevitable on all the daring projections of enterprise. True conservatism would preserve enterprise from impracticable and fatal modes of action. It would save progress from losing a valuable portion of its force and accomplishment, by saving it from improvident expenditures of energy, by checking wasting experiments, by discouraging draining off-shoots of exertion, by teaching the avoidance of delaying obstructions. It operates to preserve all that has been gained, as well as to guard against all deductions and deteriorations upon existing and future gains. It is, in a word, an enemy to all bad moral investments; to all deeply hazardous and questionable moral enterprises; to undoing what is fairly and nobly done; to neutralizing what is already working out blessed consequences.

In treating, therefore, of the conservative element in Christianity, we set out with the important allegation, that there is contained in that element no discouragement to any excellence, any valuable progress, but only a happy influence against the whole modern doctrine, that inquires little and cares little concerning the means, provided the end be worthy; against rushes and plunges, that do evil along with endeavors at doing good; against intemperate haste and reckless excess. We set out, moreover, with the allegation, that there is contained in that conservative element a careful, watchful assiduity to do good, only good continually, in the great work of establishing in the world happiness and social order, arts and learning, wealth and power, laws and religion.

I. It is proposed now, in the first place, to refer to those attributes wherein lies this conservative power which we have ascribed to Christianity.

The Christian religion is conservative by means of its peaceful modes of influence. These modes are remarkably quiet and undisturbing, even when concerned with the inflammable passions, violent appetites, determined perversions of our fallen nature. To remove these bad affections, Christianity does not confine itself to direct attacks. This would awake resistance and excitement, perhaps augment the evil intended to be abated, at the most, be but partially successful. It places its great reliance on a process more philosophical. It silently sets down by the side of every corrupt passion in the heart of man an opposite pure and good one. Antagonist graces and tempers being planted, are carefully and assiduously nourished,

so that they expand, become strong and permanent. Depraved propensities by this operation are overtopped, overshadowed, exhausted of productive stimulants, inevitably enfeebled, withered, wasted. The tares are so choked that the wheat springs up and ripens nobly. The good affections, left alone, grow up unembarrassed and strong out of a cleansed spirit. The nutrition of such a spirit, being unabsorbed by a noxious growth, is plentifully furnished for their life and enlargement. In this method, without any rupture or convulsion, without any excitement of malignant passion or angry opposition, there is effected an important and radical reformation. In secret silence the mind is eviscerated of the foul and the destructive, and replenished with the pure. This sure production of moral beauty out of moral deformity; this holy change of man apostate into man angelic; this effacing Satan's dark form and sculpturing deep God's pure image all interiorly, without belligerent effort, is a fine illustration of the conservative action of Christianity in achieving its reformations.

It has the same kind of action, also, from the affectionate gentleness of its spirit and the blandness of its address. Man is singularly adapted to be a subject of pure persuasion. Threats and overbearing dictation are deeply offensive and revolting to him. There is scarcely one proverbial fact respecting human nature more apparent, oftener reiterated, more true, than this, that man may be led, but never can be driven. If we wish him to capitulate, we must wheel off our artillery, reverse our fire-arms, take the olive branch, make a gentlemanly address to his conscience, appeal to the nobler feelings of his nature, throw ourselves all bland, forgiving, confiding, sympathizing, upon his generosity, his fellow feeling, his self-respect. In this method, almost with certainty will his understanding become docile to our reasonings, his conscience sensitive and responsive to our appeals, his heart warm and open to our inculcations, his whole being a captive to our power. Altogether after this manner does Christianity come to mankind. It is far more richly charged and characterized by friendliness, frankness and love than any human communication. The Gospel is, indeed, one blessed embodiment of balmy gentleness, angelic mercy, overflowing charity and benignity. Nothing can be conceived more conservative than this spirit. Very rarely will bitterness and violence rise up to meet such a mild heavenly philanthropy. Who will resist words of love? Who will vilify evident intentions of kindness? Who will angrily shut his ears to glad tidings of good? The thundering legion, everything but conservative, prostrates, desolates, *forces its passage* over dead men and consumed

villages. Christianity makes its way, as a munificent prince journeya to his remote provinces, pouring abroad a profusion of royal benefactions to all whom he meets. Bearing, as the Gospel does, a tide of blessings to all the needy and the wretched, it can scarcely fail, whithersoever it goes, to receive acclamations of welcome. Even when in their highest faithfulness the teachings of the New Testament approach the vices of men without any compromise or allowance, it is with a winning expostulation, and with a hearty, fervent good will, which it is rarely in human depravity violently to resist. While they do not shrink from announcements of woe, dreadful and eternal, as due to impenitent transgression, these very announcements carry with them such a deep compassion and sympathy as to disarm opposition and at the same time augment their overwhelming power. Peals of thunder they are, but they come from clouds which have an orb of mild effulgence, not all concealed, shining behind them. It is also true, that submission to the Gospel, being a submission not chiefly to menace and power, but to proffered pity and grace and goodness, is on that account all the more hearty and whole, and therefore all the more peaceful. The powers of darkness, it is true, will always rise and meet the approaches of religion with more or less of struggle and resistance; but those approaches, although they will not crush, yet will to a great extent melt away the very hostility they themselves had before aroused, just as the nearing sun melts away the clouds which his own beams, when more distant, had created.

Christianity is conservative by means of its action on the original sources of evil things.

All along underneath our vegetation there is a circulation of rich juices which convey all the life and nutrition, and determine all the character of the immense growth and exuberant production on the surface. Could we gain access to this extended vascular system of all nutritive soils and find out the secret chemistry working there, we could effect any changes we pleased upon our luxuriant scenery. We could sow the interior currents with salt, and spread around general desolation, or we could introduce needed ingredients, enriching combinations, and thereby develop new forms of life as well as greatly augment the general beauty and munificence. The great wonder-working agencies in this case are all below; above instead of cutting, engrafting and nurturing, we have little to do but witness marvellous creations. This is a fair representation of the interior agencies and energies underlying all human character, all human

conduct, all social conditions. And we are well acquainted with the elemental vitality to be set in action widely under the surface of every community in order to all great and desirable exterior transformations. Christianity carries in its bosom the whole moral chemistry, and its favorite object and special mission is to descend with its efficient powers to work first and chiefly in the heart among the springs and seeds of all outward things. This is a field, where by operating elementally, it can operate on a grand scale, where acts are generic and recreative, where in striking one blow it strikes a thousand, where in waking a great and good thought or a great and good feeling, it opens up into the sphere of human influence and human affairs, a mighty element of change, melioration, progress. We are justified in this representation of Christianity as a hidden, energetic worker in the spirit of man, by many lessons left by our Saviour. He taught emphatically that purity and guilt exist in the heart before they appear in the act; that mischief purposed and good designed have all the turpitude and excellence of mischief perpetrated and good accomplished. Christian ethics recognize no reformation as true, trustworthy, sound, which has not its roots and its life in the internal spirit, nor any dereliction of duty decisive of depravity, that flows not out of the evil treasure of the heart. But the essential suggestion is, that it is in the recesses of the soul that all evil things have their beginnings, so that Christianity, working there, can easily mitigate and extinguish them. First sins are never great ones. So also the incipient impulses thereto are never great. It is according to a fixed law of all God's arrangements, that everything in nature, morals and mind, has its infancy and its feebleness and its littleness. The giant oak was once all involved in a tiny shell; the whole vitality of the cedar of Lebanon in a delicate germ. The conflagration that involves a city grew out of a single spark. These are illustrations of what occurs in human conduct and character. But Christianity is awake and present and ready with all its efficiency, at the first awakings and pulsations of evil. It furnishes its best influence to these seeds, germs, elements, earliest vitalities, incipient sparks. It plants itself down in the heart of society by the side of the first conception and stirring of mischief, of disorganization, of crime, and then attempts extinction and eradication, or at least abatement and control, before sufficient progress is made for the upheaving and disruption of the community. The restless, inflammable passions it approaches at the critical moment, when they are just kindling, and labors to cool and repress and confine them, before they

have time to put the population in a blaze. When it is recollected that the great storms of commotion on the surface of society, as also the most extensive, permanent and important reformations, have originated in some stirring of thought or of passion, first awaked feebly and silently in the unseen bosom of a people, Christianity that has its favorite and most perfect work upon these elements of agitation and of change, at their earliest throbbing and breathing, cannot fail to be appreciated and acknowledged as emphatically a great and effective conservative power. In a world where deep and desperate corruptions, urgent and stormy passions are in such full contradiction to the inculcations of religion, that slight causes will produce exasperation, resistance, often explosion, it is an invaluable attribute of Christianity, that it is fitted and accustomed to enter the interior spirit of communities, where gently, quietly, yet all powerfully, it can neutralize and regenerate. Living in a scene where so much is imperfect and calls for change, where the best things need to be better, teachers to be taught, improvements to be improved, meliorations to be meliorated, preachers of righteousness to be sanctified, prophets upon the slain to experience themselves moral resurrection; living in a scene where so many, so important transformations and advancements are urgently demanded, we cannot afford at all to augment existing opposition, to create any new prejudices, to waste any moral power in profitless collisions and fruitless projects. It is matter of profound and unfeigned gratitude, therefore, that Christianity supplies an instrumentality that works its largest and most essential ameliorating changes underneath, where it can do it most conservatively, without strife or turbulence or useless moral expenditure.

Christianity is conservative by means of the clear fullness of its ethical instructions. Some metaphysical minds, it is true, dissatisfied with a straight, beaten, illumined road, and also gratified with the enlarged forms in which mist and cloud present themselves, seem desirous and adapted to walk in obscurity and doubt. But a great part of the world needs a way all opened, undeviating, undeceptive. The human mind, since the fall, shows itself clogged, obscured, diseased and enfeebled. Its liabilities and tendencies to perversion and misapprehension are great. Certainly under such disabilities men must have a very clear and satisfactory light to prevent them from driving into visionary excesses, into unnecessary and wasting schemes. Religion is a teacher preëminently luminous and intelligible. Science has no lessons of such crystal transparency; literature has no such visible, tangible, speaking sentiments, descrip-

tions or images ; human ethics, no such perspicuous lessons of wisdom. It is not that Christianity has no high themes, no lofty tracts, no depths and wonders. It has objects, which by their vastness and grandeur stretch out and away altogether beyond the mind's power to follow. It is, that so far as these mighty things of God are open at all, the view is unclouded and satisfactory. It is, that whatever pertains to human life and duty, is made most definite and intelligible. While religion, in giving lessons to man, indulges in no metaphysical theories, it lays open all that is valuable to practical life in all theories. While neither the doctrines of the nominalists, the realists, nor the conceptualists are discussed, nor even so much as alluded to ; while transcendentalism, materialism, spiritualism have no place in scriptural nomenclature, the Bible, by means of a perfect acquaintance with the spirit of man, presents all good and needed instruction in terms and illustrations singularly familiar, transparent and expressive. While it despises philosophy falsely so called, nor attempts to thread its way through a chaos of conflicting opinions, it pours a guiding and sufficient light along all the private and public ways of men.

The comprehensiveness of the teachings of Christianity is an addition to their value as the light of mankind. Had all human duty been the matter of special and particular legislation, so that the feeling and thought and action, proper for every exigency, relation and character, could be found prescribed and set down in great tables, in regular columns, in order to be turned to constantly by every human being ; had this been so, the whole would have constituted a cumbersome, voluminous code which few could possess, which few would sufficiently read. It would, indeed, be a vast labor to learn from the immense mass what duties were presented, without performing any of them. The instructions of religion are to a great extent generic. Its precepts and principles, each of them by its inculcation of one thing, is an inculcation of a thousand. Its forbidding of one vice lays an injunction on a clustered family of sins. Its very few cardinal lessons have an accurate application to a large part of the conduct of life. Instances of such are the first commandment, on which hang all the law and the prophets ; and the second which is like unto it ; the golden rule which, so far as acted on, reproduces heaven on earth. Furnished with such clear, appropriable, comprehensive teachings, should some still go astray in their efforts for reform and advancement ; should some of the guides of society still need guidance, and some of its reformers reformation ; should some improvers and re-

generators be still swayed by impulse, be set on fire by passion, be driven to dashes, onsets, explosions, without opening their eyes on the consequences, then the ethical teaching of the Scriptures approaches with another influence. It acts to quicken men's vision, as well as to pour light on their pathway, to create a deep, responsive sense of personal obligation, as well as intelligibly to unfold human duty, to prepare the soil, in addition to providing the seed. The twofold power here referred to, Christianity possesses eminently. Besides affording its comprehensive and luminous lessons, it opens the human mind, wherever it comes, to receive, to appreciate, to adopt, to love and obey. Just as the sun, at the same time that he comes forth with his light, wakes up the world to walk in it. We are not now to discuss the mode and philosophy of this additional effect of evangelical instructions, to make appreciative, susceptible, conscientious, those to whom they are addressed. The fact itself is an important one. Christianity as first proffering the most perspicuous wisdom, then as preparing clear perceptions to understand them, and a good heart to give them root and growth and fruit, must be acknowledged an ethical teacher truly illustrious. It is a heavenly light which this sacred guide pours along every man's pathway. We think of religion as making that path open and all distinct, as if marked on both sides by walls of darkness. We think of religion as a clear voice always in the ear, saying with solemn, decided emphasis, this is the way, walk ye in it. When moral vision is disordered, so that matters of conscience and duty appear doubled, hazy, confused and doubtful, religion separates these, making all clear and intelligible. Imagine a populous city in utter darkness; all are groping, inquiring, receding, advancing, falling, rising; suddenly a glorious luminary comes out in the heavens; perfectly, delightfully now do all see their way; all hesitation, collision and obstruction have ceased. Christianity is that luminary. So does it dissipate darkness and beam down its light on all our moral way. Men may pursue their course of duty in perfect, open day, much as the heavenly inhabitants walk the streets of the New Jerusalem under the splendors of the eternal throne. In this character of an all-illuminating, steady, undeceptive light, in all human exigences and duties, Christianity appears a great and indispensable conservative power. With such a grand, clear, moral illumination around him, the reformer who scatters arrows, firebrands and death, can never, except through much settled blindness and depravity, cover and hide himself from the indignation of the wise and good, never hush the honest convictions and reprobation of his own heart.

They that do most to turn the world upside down in their attempts to reform it, are generally persons who shut themselves from religious influences, either by a dead insensibility to Christianity, or by a disbelief of its reality. A revealing light out of the Bible, wisdom from above, let in full and steady upon their motives and their acts, has a power to make men first pause, ponder and reconsider, then abandon their reckless mischiefs.

Christianity is conservative by means of the immutability of its moral distinctions.

The human mind readily perceives that a clear difference exists between right and wrong, justice and injustice, duty and delinquency. The human conscience, in all cases whatsoever, when these opposites are discerned clearly, gives the former its decided voice; the latter its entire reprobation. But there has always been prevalent in the world much confounding of moral distinctions. The indubitable line of demarcation, between that which is to be approved and that which is to be condemned, between that which is to be felt and done, and that which is not to be felt and done; this boundary ignorance and wickedness do not always easily settle, nor always settle right, however easily it might be done. Pressing exigences, new and unexpected relations, prospects of selfish advantage, impending disasters, have been allowed to introduce into the moralities and honesties of human conduct many monstrous perversions. Dishonesty and recititude, injury and mercy, disobedience and duty, depravity and purity, at the mere dictation of selfishness and passion, are made to change places with the most unblushing assurance. Who, that has been either an actor or an observer in the world, has not very frequently marked how men, who had before exhibited great energy in the performance of allotted services, immediately on discovering that their exertions are no longer necessary to the furtherance of private designs, will suffer a wonderful paralysis and lassitude and entire neglect to show themselves over the whole theatre of their previous assiduity and fidelity? Who has not marked a great deal occurring more positive and destructive than this, under the power of passion? Falsehood, avarice, ambition and sensuality, reckless of all right, charity and purity, often are seen to create oppression and disorganization and ruin to a melancholy extent over wide communities. This prostration of barriers between vice and virtue and consequent obliteration of moral distinctions, leaves the pathway all smooth and open for the rage and rush of every wild enthusiasm and every self-confident extravagance. Now if there were a great rule of right and jus-

tion and duty, unaffected by time, unmitigated by exigences, unaltered by opinions, undepreciated by prejudice, irrevocable by passion; if there were a comprehensive, high code of righteousness and equity, perfectly immutable in all latitudes and longitudes, in all families and nations, in all wealth and poverty, in all servitude and authority, it would certainly act most conservatively to prevent disastrous schemes, desolating movements, destructive changes. This code we have in absolute perfection. Just such an unchangeable prescription of all that is right and pure, does Christianity present to human society in its simple, definite, uncompromising laws. These bend to no selfishness, bow to no power, yield to no pressures, intermit injunctions for no cause. The immutability of the moral distinctions of Christianity rests, in the first place, upon the fact that they are eternal. From before the foundation of the world have they remained unchangeably the same. It rests, in the second place, upon the fact that these distinctions are founded on the relations of existence, of being to being. These relations are in their own nature definite and unalterable. So soon as God created a moral agent, the relation to its Creator of that created agent, gave rise to obligations, fulfilment of which was right, neglect of which was wrong unchangeably. So soon as God created another intelligence, the mutual relation of the two to each other, as offspring of a common parent, imposes mutual duties. To perform them is right; to contravene them is wrong; and nothing can abolish or change the character of these acts. The data given, existences and their relations, the rest is inevitable; consequent practical obligation nothing can prevent or remit or commute. There may be a thousand contingencies, and ten thousand adventitious circumstances; this alters not relations, this alters not obligation or responsibility. The immutability of moral distinctions, in the third place, rests on God's own nature. In respect to this nature there is no shadow of turning forever and ever. The universe may cease to be, everything material may change; God never. Can the perfect be improved? Can infinity receive accretions? Can omniscience become wiser? Can supreme rectitude be made more righteous? God's own moral nature, perfect, infinite, is embodied and expressed in the moral distinctions of Christianity. Therein is recorded in letters of light his own sense and sanction of all righteousness, his own sense and condemnation of all unrighteousness; both unchangeable as the pillars of heaven. Its sacred rules of life, thus unaltered and unalterable, religion sets up in full sight of all men, as a grand barrier, as a stern, solemn admonition against all resistance to law, against all social excesses.

Unceasingly does the Christian code thunder on the conscience of the world, promulgating its righteous precepts, which are incapable of any mitigation, or any remission forever. Kingly power cannot escape responsibility to Divine unchangeable equity; wealth and power cannot; discontents, insubordinations, insurrections, mobs, treasons cannot. An uninterrupted announcement by Christianity of what is right and what is wrong, what is duty and what is sin, to every member of a community, and that in terms definite and irrevocable, must act in the highest degree conservatively. It is as a recognized voice of the Almighty uttering invariable denunciation against evil; as a known light out of heaven making one and unalterable the way of righteousness.

These attributes — a bland, conciliating kindness and love; a renovating action on the sources of all conduct and character; clear and full ethical instructions; immutable moral distinctions — these attributes of Christianity render it powerfully conservative in all its movements, aggressions and transformations among men.

II. The happy influence in society of a conservative Christianity may here properly claim some consideration.

It acts as a quiet and gentle remedy of political evils. Among these are the wrongs and quarrels which arise between nations. Contiguous states are natural enemies. No two distinct sovereignties ever yet dwelt side by side on the earth, without differences, mutual oppressions, bloody conflicts. Wars, as the result of national animosities, have gorged in as much property as is now upon the earth; have slain their thousand millions of men. There are serious political evils living within the bosom of individual nations. In every civil community, there appears in some form, the patrician feeling warring, often bitterly, with the plebeian. The mildest result of this antagonism, is the oppression of power and the alienation of dependence, the haughtiness of wealth and the jealousy of poverty, the hard-heartedness of employers and the deep discontent of operatives. Large states have many local interests which give rise to sectional animosity and sectional legislation. North, south, east, west are thrown into hostile attitudes. The manufacturing interest is in collision with the planting interest, the mercantile with the agricultural. All civil order is at last endangered; the government totters; insubordination, anarchy, internal war are seen on the eve of bursting in a storm on the land.

All these feuds and conflicts within single states, and between nations, have in the conservatism of Christianity a counteracting influ-

once which is entirely peaceful, at the same time it is eminently efficient. It does not present itself amid these dissatisfactions and quarrels, as did Cromwell amid the British Parliament, with a drawn sword and three hundred armed men, thundering out: "Instantly to your homes." This is not its mode. It is not a whit less resolute and fearless than the Protector. It does not, however, enter national cabinets, State legislatures, partisan organizations, contending ranks of society, to tear off the mask from hypocrisy by violence, to execute by authority a summary punishment for political rotteness, selfish machinations, scandalous practices. This would break up the foundations of existing order, and place both governments and communities further beyond regeneration. This would add stimulants to excitements already dangerous, virulence and food to resentments already unmanageable. The Christian religion, fitted precisely by its conservative qualities to such exigences, communicates a silent, tranquil power into the interior among all the disturbing elements. It distils this influence, as the dew falls, without the least ostentation or commotion. It insinuates its own gentleness of spirit all through society, as leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Fraternization is the happy result; every person reached, governed and governed, is wrought into a fraternal sensibility. Man is to man, a brother united in warm alliance. This sentiment of human brotherhood, from its nature knowing no boundary but humanity, is in the first place emphatically national. It cherishes all that is valuable included under the name of father-land. Every home possession, honor, interest, it garners up to love and sustain. It is shocked at anything so narrow as a partisan or sectional interest. It revolts at the mean, contracted policy of stopping to bestow an exclusive blessing upon a faction, a monopoly, a geographical district, where all the interests, all the population of the entire domain are to be equally loved and provided for. This fraternal feeling, in the second place, is with equal emphasis international. Instead of resting at the lines, which circumscribe a single country, it takes all nations into its sympathies, prompts toward every one of them kindness and love, encourages the most amicable and advantageous mutual relations. The true, fraternal spirit of Christianity, kept pure and burning among men, however peremptorily it denounce and abolish political wrongs, may always be expected, through the fulness of its kindness, to leave the most delightful amenities over the whole field of its action.

In political communities, permeated by the conservative principles of religion, there exist also, in full activity, a vivid sense and recog-

nition of justice and honor, which are of no less happy and pacific tendency. The divine code of morals, stern, uncompromising, inflexible, lays as imperative an injunction to observe strict amity and integrity upon governments as upon subjects, bodies politic as bodies individual; it utters as unhesitating and fearful a condemnation of perfidy and oppression, when occurring between masses of men, as when recurring between neighbor and neighbor. These lessons, which, without exceptions or modifications, are solemnly commended to the judgment and conscience of man, possess a great and noiseless efficiency against international disputes, treacheries and aggressions; against sectional jealousies, party dominations and civil abuses. Remedies of physical maladies frequently effect their object by producing a new disorder. Christianity, by her thorough working principles, clears off all noxious political growths, and drops no bad seeds to spring up after her labors. The great unchangeable commandments of religion, proclaimed as the only laws of an individual nation and of different governments, bear to civilized men a dignity, an authority, a Divine excellence, which will rarely fail to arrest and arraign all political outrages without awaking active hostility, without inducing the mustering of a soldier, the unsheathing of a sword, the ravaging of a harvest, the disquieting of a family. Not more peacefully and signally did the application of natural laws, at the creation, reduce the universal chaos all to perfect arrangement and beauty, than will great moral principles, introduced into the midst of political jargon and confusion, transform the whole to a calm scene of order and harmony.

The conservative action of Christianity is favorably presented in its peaceable removal of ecclesiastical evils.

The delightful influence and aspect of religion, while conducting the reform of great church abuses, will be more apparent by a brief reference to the nature of these abuses themselves. Ecclesiastical evils are, an inculcation of gross religious errors; a prostration of the rights of conscience; a demanded servility to priestly assumptions; an adoption of form and fanaticism in the place of obedience and piety. These spiritual abominations are introduced and sustained chiefly through love of power, pleasure in enthusiastic fervors, passion for pompous rituals, blind veneration of ostensible sanctity, desired indulgence of the sensual appetites. Under the prominent systems of ecclesiastical corruption, the Pagan, Papal and Moham-medan, the depraved propensities of men are largely gratified. Conscience is quieted and religious hope encouraged, while the wide

theatre of worldly enjoyments is thrown freely open. The whole is an attempted accommodation of religion to man and not man to religion.

Church abuses, it is melancholy to know, are not confined to the three great perversions just now referred to. The present religious organizations unhappily are not free from ecclesiastical evils of the same nature, and of great magnitude. There are in the best communities, large church establishments instinct with love of power, penetrated with self-exaltation, exclusiveness, intolerance. We are obliged to witness within the boundary of religious establishments, much speculation, theory and mystery, instead of hard work and crucifying of the flesh; much blind reverence of a long existing church polity and of cold, imposing forms, in place of interior purity and an overcoming faith; much sectarian zeal and railing, instead of sincere contrition and deep humility; much blustering profession, instead of close communion with God. The firmness, with which modern church tyrannies, church infallibilities, church formalities, church fanaticisms are held, is probably not a whit feebler than that by which the Hindû or Moslem adheres to his peculiar delusions. There is no so difficult, so hazardous, so hopeless a labor as that of attempting to effect an abandonment of religious errors and absurdities, whether pertaining to faith or practice. It is entering into a great battle with the most strenuous propensities and sympathies of our nature. And the contest is the more protracted and determined, because these claim to be religious, to be all enlisted and disciplined in the pure service of God. Not an inch of ground will be yielded, not a concession be made, except in the last extremity. The resistance to all effort at reform comes from two quarters. First from the holders of ecclesiastical place and power. They fix an iron grasp on their system in order to retain and augment their dominion, their distinction, their lucre, their luxury. Secondly, from the common people. They dearly love their irresponsibility under the care of priests and saints, their easy escape from their sins at the confessional, their stereotyped reverences, their imposing ritualism, their self-flattering external sanctifications. In consequence of the tenacity of these attachments, all forcible means to carry reforms into corrupt religions, generally removes them still further from any favorable change. Even violent dissuasion, used on ecclesiastics, makes them lay hands more strongly upon prerogative and authority. External uncompromising urgency, by way of inducing the laity to abjure spiritual domination and cold

formalism, will be met with a more determined adhesion, and a more bitter resistance.

Undoubted and painful as these facts are, let it not be concluded that a peaceful reformation is hopeless. Christianity has a spirit, mode and efficiency, which remove all ecclesiastical evils without either a war of passions or an external struggle. Its favorite approach to man is in the character, most unwarlike, of a fountain of light. It so shines in upon the duped, darkened and bound, that they can actually see and know the ignominious chains wound around their souls, the murky fogs which involve their religious opinions, the despotism which treads its iron heels into their moral life, the icy forms which bind and freeze to death their pious fervors. How willingly, joyously, will they escape from these crushing, palsyng, suffocating spiritual disabilities !

The happy effect of the conservatism of Christianity, in respect to its peaceful action against ecclesiastical abuses, may be seen in its emphatic lessons on human rights. It recognizes nowhere, and in no manner, the right of any man to lord it over any other man whatever. According to the spirit of its teaching, every individual, so far as his fellows are concerned, is the sole owner of himself, and has in himself a rich cluster of personal immunities, which no created intelligence may at all interfere with. Among the possessions and privileges, which each man may retain and enjoy, and which no being, but the Almighty, may take from him either with or without his consent, are, a right to read, think, and judge, without the smallest restraint, and also to worship God in the mode chosen by the worshipper under the guidance of the Bible, independent of councils, synods, conventions, presbyteries, catechisms. How will a man thus instructed by Christianity, thus taught to walk abroad in perfect intellectual, moral freedom, wheresoever his spirit may take him, amenable only to heaven ; how will he break loose spontaneously from all the dictated ceremonials, humiliating servilities, imposed sanctities of false religions ? There is no commotion or struggle, because the abandonment is so willing, the proffered freedom so deeply cherished in the spirit of man. Not more decided and welcome is the emancipation of the aeronaut, when he clears from fastenings, buildings, trees, all things earthly, and mounts away a denizen of the serene heavens, as free as the element that sweeps him up.

The same happy result from the conservative element of the Christian religion, appears in the undisturbing influence against religious formalities and corruptions, by its earnest requirement of spirituality.

Its constant and great lesson is, that men be pure in heart. Its constant and great influence is, to breathe into the spirit a Divine life. It values and commends only such outward services, as are fair and natural expressions of interior godly affections. It represents God as regarding everything, where the heart is not found, as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal; as bending with approval and love to every pulsation of pure feeling in the whole wide heart of humanity; as affording the warm paternity and patronage of his whole gracious being, to every sincere and spiritual worshipper, who bows before him. Such a presentation by Christianity must put to shame priestly artifices and dogmatic prescriptions, must administer a weighty and impressive rebuke to all reliance on mere outward observances and professions. Such a presentation must supersede all use of force in removing these ecclesiastical evils. Self-convinced and self-sollicitous, great numbers, voluntarily, will burst off religious bondage, push out from religious darkness, and abandon mere forms.

By these conservative modes of action, the system of the New Testament maintains an immense efficiency against religious perversions. Did it carry the sword into the absurdities and corruptions of paganism, papacy and Mohammedanism, into the formalities and assumptions of corrupted Protestantism — did it enter any of these boundaries with a spirit to extirpate by force, the result would be, almost inevitably, in addition to the awakening of serious strife, a large augmentation and wider diffusion of the existing evils. When, therefore, it is remembered, that false forms of religion have inflicted on the world some of its greatest injuries, that under them most of the crimes of mankind are either sanctioned or winked at, that extensive moral desolations still exist through the influence or under cover of religious delusions, who can sufficiently admire and value the conservatism of Christianity, which redeems from all religious debasements and conquers a religious peace, without raising a weapon or at all disturbing the quiet of society; which, in gathering up the tares, roots up none of the wheat along with them, and, in casting out devils, leaves the subjects of evil possessions in their right mind, at the feet of the Prince of Peace.

The conservatism of Christianity is favorably exhibited in the removal of social evils. There are crimes which, in some communities, are so interwoven with established habits, so boldly countenanced by influential citizens, that all legal processes against them are a mere feint, a mere mock appeal to justice. While, however, the law rests quietly in the statute book, the sins themselves are scattering fire-

brands, arrows and death. There is another class of sins belonging to society, which in case law and force be attempted against them, will awaken resistance, bitterness, violence, confusion. We have an illustration of what will often result from the employment of compulsory measures, in the state of things produced a few years ago, by the conscientious and worthy efforts which were made to induce the Government to cease from its desecration of the Sabbath. Had the petitioners, who were the most respectable citizens of the United States, much further urged their object, there would have succeeded a general and violent excitement; a fierce array of Sabbath and anti-Sabbath feeling and action. An immense injury to that sacred institution and to all religion would, to human view, have been the consequence. There is a whole class of social vices like this of Sabbath desecration, licentiousness, intemperance, profaneness, duelling, and others, which, if attacked in the modes of worldly wisdom and worldly force, are rarely given up without a determined and formidable resistance, attended with angry discussion, virulent anathemas, heart-burning alienations. It is not intimated that the brandishing of carnal weapons by the abettors of these social disorders, can be wholly avoided, even under the action of the peaceful Gospel of Jesus. It is not intimated that the friends of their total abolition from human society ought, in consequence of such unrighteous opposition, wholly to distrust the strong arm of power, or refuse to seek the aid of the ballot-box and of legislation. It is suggested that Christianity has a more excellent way, a way more gentle and pacific, and yet not at all less powerful and effective. Under the action of its uncompromising principles and its regenerating power deep in the moral life of the community, these mischiefs of society will generally be removed with almost no ostensible resistance and warfare. Herein is a happy illustration of the benign influence of the conservatism of the New Testament.

This conservatism appears nowhere perhaps with more decided advantage, than in the great work appropriate to religion of extinguishing domestic slavery. This is the great social evil of our country. It has more human passions and depravities pleading in its behalf, than any other sin belonging to civilized society. What power is competent to remove this wickedness without acrimony and violence! When we ask men to give up their slaves, we ask them, in the first place, to give up their property; they are wealthy this morning; our proposition is that by a single dash of the pen they write themselves poor. We ask them to give up their only means

of living, for, long dependant on slave-labor, they are incapable, at first, of all efficient, self-supporting efforts. We ask them to yield up their dignity and importance in the community, as independent gentlemen. We ask them to give up caste, and descend to what they deem the class of menials, or at least, to the condition of a laboring peasantry. We ask them to give up their ease, leisure, literary and refined gratifications. When was society ever kept quiet, while the interests and prejudices of men were thus sacrificed, and the deepest affections of their nature were torn out by the roots? There will be a revolt, deliberate and most stubborn, against such a great change of social condition. The institution of slavery will be adhered to with a tenacity like the grasp of death. In many cases life will sooner be yielded, than the advantages and distinctions supposed to be conferred by the system of domestic servitude. In touching this institution, it is to be recollected therefore, that we touch a sensitiveness to rank, honor, character, wealth, enjoyments, which has often drenched the earth with blood. Besides the difficulty of peacefully breaking up this institution, arising from the fact that every fibre of fallen human nature is to be broken in the effort, the spirit of man naturally revolts against force, against any direct legislation designed to thwart him, against even indirect movements, which, by a violent action on public opinion, shall become virtually compulsory. Man loves to do things of his own freewill, of his own independent impulses, especially great and noble things like this of slave emancipation. He is filled with indignation, if ostentatiously informed what is just and commendable in the premises, as if his own spirit did not prompt him to all that is right, praiseworthy and magnanimous. All approaches to dictation will ever be in danger of arousing slaveholding communities to terrible indignation, and a determined belligerent attitude. Here let us mark the happy manner in which Christian conservatism acts on this great evil, upgrown and vitalized, though it be, out of the very soul of society. That manner is dispassionate and accompanied with no disturbing influences. Christianity has been represented in this discussion as carrying into the inner man of the heart an influence radical, powerful and transforming. The effect is, among other things, to give fresh vitality and life to the conscience; to set up this righteous, inflexible judge at the very springs, where passion and depravity begin their work, and secure their future victory. This stern assertor of right, thus going back to pronounce condemnation on every original propensity that prompts to any wrong against a fellow-man, gives scarcely an opportunity for the awakening

of animosity or turbulence. Artillery is not planted outside of the walls, but a power is set up within the fortress, which has reduced it to terms. There is no adjustment at the point of the bayonet, because of a previous adjustment at the higher tribunal of the heart. Suppose, then, the question of slavery brought to the bar of a clear, sensitive, honest conscience planted by Christianity in the spirit of an intelligent slave-owner. Suppose a slave to appear there and to set forth all his crushing wrongs and put in all his claims for just redress. Or, if he has not skill and confidence enough for such a presentation personally, let this very ignorance and inability plead for him against the servitude that so blights and depresses his understanding. Let his very contentment with his drudging condition of servility, plead for him against the same servitude which so extinguishes the sensibilities of the soul. Let the lashes of the task-master, pushing him to his sweltering toils, let his coarsely clad frame, his naked children, his violated family — let all these plead for him. There is no public assembly; no audible speech or rejoinder; no abolition lecture to stir angry blood, no anti-abolition assertion and denunciation to outrage all human sympathy and justice. All silently and unobserved, in the secret chamber of the master's own spirit, the whole matter is settled. Present, *Court*: Chief Justice Conscience, unbribed, illuminated, quickened, fearless; *Plaintiff*: the downtrodden African with his clanking chains, his idiot intellect, his scars, his blunted sensibility, his heaving sighs for freedom; *Defendant*: the master in his aristocratic ease, luxury, independence; *Counsel for the plaintiff*: the Golden Rule and the immunities of humanity; *for the defendant*: paternal usage and the rights of property. Does any one doubt what will be the judgment of the court? There is no room for doubt. The poor, unpitied, enslaved being will be declared unlawfully detained. He will be set free! He will go forth with the high consciousness, so far as now capable of such a feeling, with the high consciousness that he is a man! that he is God's freeman! God's nobleman, with all the rights and dignities appertaining! In this action of Christianity by means of conscience, there is no dissatisfaction and contention, because the party resisting and belligerent has voluntarily stayed proceedings, abandoned the defence, receded cordially and quietly from the whole controversy. After the same conservative manner is the Christian religion, if but allowed to exert its legitimate power, fully able and adapted to break all the chains of the oppressed, to root entirely out of the community the extended, tenacious, cherished "domestic institution" without essentially ruffling the spirits of men or disturbing the public peace.

This bland action of the conservatism of Christianity is not confined to the evils which have been now referred to. In a method equally benignant and tranquillizing does it proceed in the restraint and eradication of all the sins which appear in human society. Even where, through the depth and violence of depravity and passion, there is left in its wake, a quaking and rumbling underneath the surface of society, it will be found generally to have effected, to such an extent, a neutralization of troubled and antagonistic forces, as to prevent all serious upheavings and outbreaks.

The allaying and exorcising of social evils, without stirring up rancor, rupturing bands of brotherhood, creating violence, preventing communities from pursuing calmly all their great purposes, is a truly noble service. There is an incidental result attendant upon this achievement, which renders it specially valuable and permanent. In the process of cleansing society of crimes, by drying up the bad passions which feed them, Christianity plants in men pure and ennobling affections. In removing pride, it substitutes humility, in extinguishing avarice, it kindles philanthropy, in eradicating envy, it gives birth to brotherly kindness, in destroying passion for worldly fame, devotion to sensual pleasures, feelings of revenge, it creates the desire of God's approbation, wide beneficence, the spirit of forgiveness. Besides Christianity, there is not another power in our troubled, stormy world, competent to a permanent extinction of social offences without a strife and shock of the social elements. As a threatening cloud uttering thunder, by means of numerous electric points shooting up into its bosom, has its angry fluid conveyed gently into the earth, and its quick and dreaded discharges all hushed, so a community overcharged with crimes may, by the presence and action of Christianity, be dispossessed in perfect quietness of its vicious ingredients, and be left to enjoy the happy and undisturbed influence of a pure religion.

These observations, in respect to the valuable influences of the conservative element in Christianity, can by no means lay claim to the fullness and dignity of an adequate discussion. They may serve as partial illustrations. They may serve to attract attention to the peaceful spirit and manner with which the Gospel enters upon all its earthly labors and accomplishes all its results. It has been the object to show that in every agitated and threatening moral convulsion, awakened by attempted purifications of human society, Christianity will be heard, uttering the sublime rebuke of Jesus to the storm: 'Peace, be still!' words of omnipotence, able to bring down a great calm upon a troubled community. Inasmuch as, through the

violent and wilful tenacity of depraved passion, all efforts to effect radical reformatations will ever tend to create an immense excitement, and a hostile rally and rush to resistance and conflict, a bland, conservative Christianity will be always and altogether indispensable. We turn to it with pleasure and confidence, as the sufficient and only peaceful reformer of the world. For six thousand years have threats and force been used upon man with but slight advantage. Let the world turn with hope to the more peaceful and powerful Christian principles, conscience and love.

If the view, which has here been taken of Christianity as a great conservative influence, be just, then must it be regarded a grand and fatal mistake to commit desirable reformatations to irreligion and infidelity. The infidel and irreligious may possess commendable good works, and may show an ostensible zeal beyond those whose hearts glow with the benevolence of the Gospel. But quickly, oftentimes, their fervor is seen to turn belligerent, to grow into intolerance and unforgiving abuse. By this means, the good cause is left to care for itself and to sink, while a war is carried on, in another quarter, against sinners personally, and not against their sins. There is no hope of reforms such as need not themselves reformation, except they are penetrated and conducted by the peaceful religion of Christ. To this agency alone has heaven committed them. Nearly the same reasoning dissuades from entrusting the improvements of society to outward organizations which are not also richly pervaded with the same mild spirit of Christianity. It is freely admitted that voluntary association is a very important principle in all social amelioration and advancement. But the danger is, that combination in and of itself, shall come to be entirely trusted, while the conservative vitalities of the Christian Religion are undervalued and dispensed with. The result eventually will be, the growth and exhibition of somewhat that is compulsory, overbearing and dictatorial. And associations not bearing themselves so meekly as they should, resistance may be offered, and resistance may be resisted, and hereby not only all efforts at improving society be totally paralyzed, but great disturbances be introduced. In societies, which do not assist the Gospel of Christ to announce a single claim of heaven, or to enforce a single religious obligation; in societies, whose members present if any, but the faintest exemplification of the graces of the Gospel, and but a very doubtful obedience to its precepts; in these, true reformers should place very little reliance for any thorough, quiet cleansing and transformation of human society. They will be likely to make more show than ad-

vancement, more contentions than conquests. Vice is not a thing so gentle, so yielding, so loosely settled upon the heart of communities, as to shrink unresistingly before constitutions and presidents and treasurers and meetings and platform-discussions. Let the true friends of reform march right out into the open field of the world, with the deep-working spirit of an omnipotent Christianity. The irruptions and progress of wickedness, it may be hoped, will in this way be effectively stayed, and the community be settled into tranquillity, at the same time that it is established in righteousness.

Equally unfortunate would it be, that reforms should be committed to political parties. Legislative prohibitions have in this discussion been admitted to be important. These, doubtless, at the right place, just in the rear of full and voluntary decisions of public sentiment, and as expressions of that sentiment, are of great value and power. But the eradication of an existing evil, left for accomplishment to the corruption and intrigue and crooked policy of partisan politicians and place-hunters, will be likely to be made the cause or pretext of a great and bitter political scramble. In the commotion which is raised, the crying sin, instead of being removed, will probably, like the oak in the winds, only shoot deeper its roots into the heart of society. The moment that reform undertakes to employ the sword of political power, the sword of God's Spirit, infinitely more efficient, falls from its hand. Christianity considers the appliances of diplomatic policy and influence, when made an ulterior confidence in the business of reformation, as a decided libel on her character. Are not her treasured heavenly truth and heavenly power capable of working irresistible regenerations gently in the wide heart of the people! Are not these enough without submitting important reforms to a combat of wily, mercenary politicians! The Gospel, in its unostentations simplicity and divinity, in its pacific spirituality and omnipotence, should be our great reliable agency against all our evils, political, ecclesiastical and social. Some imagine that reform-movements, though rash and violent and at first view highly imprudent, may eventually work out good, and much advance consummations devoutly to be wished. God in his own pleasure may produce hurricanes and earthquakes and pestilences, as the means of valuable final results. But *men* have no authority to do such things. They must take the Gospel of peace, and, all instinct themselves with the spirit of peace, proceed to the needed transformations of human society. In its character as a pacific agency, Christianity by the wiser portion of mankind will be ever greatly valued and revered. Some minds might

prefer the more imposing and stirring things, involved in the preparations, tactics, struggles and shock of a great mental and moral war ! But the quiet changes, wrought by religion down in the deep soul of society, which produce a fair, blessed reformation and righteousness all over the surface of society, are far more desirable and God-like. We may well glory in a Christianity which, as a union of peace and power, of charity and omnipotence effects conquests without campaigns, subjugations without battles, alliances without compulsions. Such an instrumentality is the most important known under the government of God. Let Christians, with admiration and gratitude, mark how it enters into human communities — not violently to cauterise and amputate, but soothingly to remove external disease by healing the whole vital circulation — not to work in moral convulsions, while attempting to work out moral ailments, but, with far more efficiency than this implies, to recover all that is lost, renovate all that is destroyed, resuscitate all that is dead, without at all dispensing mischief or awakening violence. On the fore-front of our grand enterprise, human redemption, we are permitted to write: “Peace on earth, good will to men !” So far as we give Christianity its perfect work, we shall have the pleasure to witness, with but few exceptions, the evils among men, complicated and numerous though they are, yielding without commotion to its conservative power. Bright to us, therefore, is the vision of the promised day of a thousand years. Then a grand junction shall be effected, peaceably, of the kingdoms of this world with the eternal kingdom above ; then to the shout from heaven, “Peace on earth, good will to men,” shall go answering back from island and continent, from tribe and empire, from land and sea : “The wolf doth dwell with the lamb, the leopard doth lie down with the kid, the lion doth eat straw like the ox, the little child doth lead them. There is nothing to hurt or destroy ; swords are beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks !”