

# RELIGION:

ITS INFLUENCE ON THE STATE OF  
SOCIETY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

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“SOCIETY IS IN DANGER!” Such is the cry which is daily sounding in our ears. A general fear that the social edifice will altogether disappear, seems to pervade the minds of men, while they anxiously look on all sides for some means of averting the threatened danger. And as it is beyond question that revolutions have rapidly succeeded each other since the general faith in the old religious opinions has been shaken by sophistry; many have come to the conclusion, and a still greater number seek to persuade themselves, that a return to those religious opinions can alone give to society its desired stability. As this idea is daily gaining ground, it becomes important to examine whether it is founded on truth.

But first, it should be remarked, that this very hope and desire of saving society by Religion, is a tacit acknowledgement, that the social condition of a people depends upon their religious belief: and that Religion has, therefore, an all-powerful influence on society. This, we also admit, with this addition, that, as a necessary consequence of the power of this influence, the condition of society becomes better or worse in proportion as true or false religious principles are entertained. If society is now in such imminent danger, it is because, from the highest to the lowest step of our social ladder, there is every where to be found, animosity and disunion, instead of mutual love; true, this feeling is not the production of modern times alone, for from the earliest ages, it has every where developed itself,

with more or less intensity, under the different forms of self-love ; but in our own day, it has increased to an extent which threatens to absorb every other principle. Experience proves that civil and religious laws are powerless against its attacks ; they have but succeeded in moving it from place to place, or in forcing it to assume other forms ; but its existence is not less real, or the danger from it less alarming ; nothing but religious faith can conquer it, by changing entirely the human heart ; but, to accomplish this, this faith must be strong and true, not those old creeds which have sufficiently shewn their impotence, since, while their authority was generally admitted, they were unable to check the progress of this spirit of disunion. That which alone can destroy this principle, and change it by degrees into mutual love, is not a Christianity falsified for more than fifteen centuries, as we shall presently shew, but *true* christianity ; for that alone, by its teaching, and its doctrines, possesses the power of persuasion, necessary to effect such a change.

Those who are accustomed to confound Christianity, either with Roman Catholicism, with Protestantism, or with the Greek Church ; will doubtless, be astonished to hear, that Christianity, as it now exists in these various communions, is a falsified Christianity ; for while each of these three communions admits that Christianity has been corrupted by its two rivals, each equally maintains that its own faith is pure and true. However, as the spirit of disunion and disagreement reigns in an equal degree, though under different forms, in each of these three communions, the inference is evidently incontrovertable.

Either Christianity has been preserved in its purity, or it has been falsified. If it has been maintained in its purity, the social state of the Christian world during fifteen centuries, that is to say, since Christians have existed as a people, presents a continual accusation of its power, and occasions a consequent doubt of its Divine origin ; but if it has been corrupted and falsi-

fied, it is free from this reproach, and the miseries of these fifteen centuries must be imputed to those who have thus corrupted it.

Will any true Christian hesitate to at once absolve Christianity? Will he prefer rather to accuse it of impotence?

It is very evident that if Christianity had been preserved in its purity, its powerful internal influence would have so outwardly developed itself, as gradually to have produced a social condition totally different from what history presents to us; and would have thus proved to all mankind its Divine origin. Let us now examine the various propositions which have been thus advanced.

And first, in order to comprehend what would have been the social condition produced by Christianity, if it had been maintained in its original purity; let us see what are its real doctrines.

When we consider the doctrines set forth in our own times, by the various Christian communions, one is tempted to believe, from the extent and number of their differences, that our Lord, in founding his church on earth, was willing to leave its doctrines to the discretion of men; or at least, that he had not put them forth in terms so clear as not to be misunderstood. Such, however, has not been the case; the foundations of our faith were so distinctly marked, that they must have been blind indeed, who did not discern them. But the love of power and self-derived intelligence, renders man blind to truth, and only capable of seeing falsehood, which he perceives as truth; and as these loves began to shew themselves among Christians from the earliest ages of Christianity, and have since extended every where their dominion, the true foundations of our faith have been deserted, and others sought, more in conformity with these reigning loves.

The Christian faith, given to us by the Lord himself, had for its foundation, mutual love; and every man who reads the Gospels without preconceived doc-

trinal ideas, will be astonished at the fact, that, for fifteen hundred years, Christians have been torn to pieces by their dissensions on points of doctrine ; while they might have clearly seen that our Lord had placed *all* Christian doctrine in mutual love, and when they were no longer principled in that love, they were no longer in that doctrine, that is, were no longer Christians.

In truth, there is not one really well-instructed Christian, who does not acknowledge that in the words, "The law and the prophets," our Lord comprehended the whole of the Holy Scriptures. Now, a pharisee having enquired which was the greatest commandment of the law, Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength ; this is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. xxii. 36—40). Now, in enquiring of our Lord which was the greatest commandment, the pharisee evidently desired to ascertain what our Lord understood by the law, and what was the foundation of the doctrine which he preached ; and our Lord expressly stated, "love towards God" to be the first and great commandment ; but in order that this commandment should be taken in its fullest sense, he added, "The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," that is to say, "If thou knowest not what it is to love God, thou oughtest to know how to love thy neighbour as thyself ; love then thy neighbour as thyself, that will be to love God, 'for the second is like unto it ;'" then he adds, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Is not this saying in terms sufficiently clear, love to thy neighbour is the foundation of my doctrine ; it is the touchstone which thou must use, when thou wouldst test any interpretation of Scripture ; all interpretation which is in accordance with that love is true,

and all which is contrary to it is false; for all is comprehended in love to thy neighbour,—which love, again contains within it love to God.

There was still wanting for the completion of the answer, an explanation of who was included in the term neighbour, and our Lord gave this, in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke x. 25—37), when he replied to a lawyer, who addressed the question to him, “Who is my neighbour?” Our Lord also clearly explained in what consisted love to our neighbour, when he gave this rule;—“All things that you would that men should do unto you, that do ye unto them, for *that is the law and the prophets*” (Matt. vii. 12). Here, again, by these words, “the law and the prophets,” which he here employs, and which are not to be found in connection with any other commandment, he has plainly declared, that this commandment is the same with the two preceding ones,—that they are identical; and, consequently, that to do unto others as we would they should do unto us, is to love our neighbour as ourselves,—is also to love God.

All the doctrine of the gospel is then comprehended in this commandment, To do unto others, what we would they should do unto us; or, in other words, in mutual love; for if all Christians acted on this, they would entertain universal love one towards another, and there would be no more disagreement in the world. Besides, this doctrine has been abundantly confirmed by our Lord, in the last exhortations which he addressed to his disciples, “My *commandment* is that *you love one another*, even as I have loved you” (John xv. 12); and, again, “What I *command* you, is, that you should love one another” (John xv. 17). And just before, he had also said to them, “I give a new commandment unto you, that ye should love one another; for by that, they shall know that ye are my disciples, if you love one another” (John xiii. 34, 35). Is there need of any further confirmation?

The apostles, who had well understood how entirely the Christian religion was comprehended in mutual

love, always preached that love, so strongly enforced by our Lord. Tradition says, that John the Evangelist, surnamed the divine, when in advanced age, only addressed to believers these words, "My little children, love one another;" and when they asked him, why he always repeated the same thing, he replied, "It is the commandment of the Lord, if they keep it, they will be saved." Thus, one who was indeed the divine, made all divine knowledge to be contained in mutual love. Yes, truly, all divine science is contained in this love; love, and you shall know; but love really, or you shall remain in your ignorance. To love really, is to feel the happiness of another, as a happiness to ourselves; but to feel merely pleasure in others, is not the love of others, but self-love. To attempt to penetrate into the divine science, or to frame a theology without the real love of goodness, that is to say, without that love from which proceeds true intelligence, is to plunge into the thickest darkness. And, for this reason it is, that what is dignified with the name of theology in the Christian world, is only a tissue of incoherences and aberrations of the human mind. "They hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spider's web."

Now, since the whole of the Christian religion is comprehended in the doctrine of mutual love, it is evident, that if that doctrine had been followed out to its full extent, Christianity would have produced a social state which would have proved to all its divine origin; for mutual love, brought into practice, would have induced precisely the opposite of what has existed for fifteen hundred years. Christians would not have carried on continually a bloody and inhuman warfare, a warfare which has existed not only between nation and nation, but between city and city, village and village, and disregarding his neighbour, or only loving his family and family, and man and man, each despising neighbour from a principle of self-love.

But it will be said, that this mutual love has never ceased to be inculcated from every Christian pulpit.



Granted, but has it been made the foundation of all doctrine? Has each doctrine been referred to it? Have all the dogmas advanced been in accordance with it? Have all the practices recommended been in obedience to its dictates? In a word, has it been set forth prominently above every thing else, as the sole and only means of salvation? What avail has it been to recommend it in sermons, if the preacher has not so enforced it by example as to cause it to sink deeply into the heart?

The doctrine of mutual love, so expressly inculcated by the apostles, was held during the first three centuries. Not but what heresies already existed among those who called themselves Christians, but still the Apostolical doctrine was generally followed, and mutual love sufficiently practised to prove the divine origin of Christianity. However, it must be remembered, that at that time Christians were not formed into kingdoms and nations, but spread over a great number of countries, subject for the most part to the Roman dominion, and nearly always suffering persecution, and deprived of civil and religious rights. If the successors of the first Christians had imitated them, in living conformably to the Gospel, the true Christian doctrine would have been preserved; but the disputes by which they were soon agitated, had for their first result, to make them prefer truth to goodness, or faith to charity. Gradually these principles became inverted, that was placed first which ought to have been second, and that second which ought to have been first; and from this inversion has arisen the heresies, the schisms, the sects, and false doctrines, which have desolated the Christian world up to the present day. The Bible,—the New Testament as well as the Old, has been made an arsenal, where each party of combatants has sought for arms wherewith to support the doctrine which best accorded with the governing love and self-derived intelligence, and the passage which appeared most to favour that doctrine was taken as its foundation. That

this has been the case is abundantly proved by the fact, that among the numerous heresies and sects which have divided the Christian world, there has never existed one which did not support its opinions on the Scriptures.

From the moment when Christians first inverted the right order of things, by preferring truth to goodness, or faith to charity, they gradually lost all spiritual ideas, of which their predecessors had had so clear a perception. They lost their knowledge of God, of their neighbour, of truth and goodness, of charity and faith, heaven and hell, of the soul of man, of his mode of existence after death.

They had already arrived at this point, (at least those who professed to be leaders among them,—for the more simple yet preserved the ancient belief,)—when by an edict of Constantine, Christians were at length permitted the public exercise of their religion. Christianity was thus apparently triumphant; but it was only an outward prosperity, for it was wounded at the heart by the heresies and disputes which had so rapidly multiplied, and only preserved in its purity by a very small number. Arianism, though at that epoch extremely powerful, failed however to extinguish the true faith, since it could no more have existed even in name, had a heresy been victorious which denied the divinity of Christ. In fact, after a long and bitter contest, Arianism was vanquished, but the victory cost Christianity dear; for while hitherto, notwithstanding their discussions, there had been but one creed,—that of the Apostles, this had sufficed for those early Christians, who were generally simple minded men, believing without disputation, but now (in order to allay the dissensions which had arisen on the subject of the Arian heresy,) the Council of Nice was convened, which condemned the doctrine, and framed the creed bearing its name. And a little later, to oppose still more effectually that dangerous doctrine, a third creed appeared, which is known as that of Athanasius. These three creeds still remain

in the various Christian Churches, notwithstanding the diversity of these opinions. In the two first, the unity of the Deity is maintained, but in that of Athanasius it is not to be found, for it says, "I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost," therefore in three Gods; since it goes on to declare, "There is one person of the Father, one person of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost." It is true, that it adds that these three Divine Persons from all eternity are nevertheless but one God; but although persons may declare with the mouth, that there is but one God, the idea of three Gods still remains in the mind, since to each is assigned different attributes.

The Arians denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, because they did not see any other means of preserving intact the unity of the Deity; and the authors of the Creed of Athanasius, have made three Divine Persons, because they saw no other means of preserving any acknowledgement of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and as it was absolutely indispensable to the very existence of Christianity that this truth should be preserved, Providence permitted the Athanasian error to obtain the victory over the still more pernicious Arian heresy.

This dogma of the Divine Trinity in three distinct persons, was from that time adopted by those who directed the Christian faith, and became the head of all their theology; the same dogma was also supposed to be inculcated in the Nicene Creed, where it is simply said, "I believe in one God, the Father; in one Lord, Jesus Christ; and in the Holy Ghost." And even in the Apostles' Creed, where it is said, "I believe in God the Father, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost;" thus, to support such a dogma, it was necessary to introduce metaphysics into theology, and all sound ideas were supplanted by sophistry. Such, however, was not the doctrine of the trinity taught by the apostles. The first Christians did not acknowledge a trinity of persons; they knew that the Saviour or

Redeemer, announced by the prophets, and expected under the name of the Messiah, was no other than Jehovah Himself, since Jehovah had said in many places, and especially in Hosea, "I am Jehovah thy God, and thou shalt acknowledge no other God than Me, and there is no Saviour besides Me," (xiii. 4); and in Isaiah, "Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel; and his Redeemer Jehovah Sabaoth: I am the First and the Last, and besides Me there is no God," (xliv. 6). They acknowledged then but one God, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he himself, in whom they believe, has said, "I and the Father are One," (John x. 30); "Philip, he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father also; why sayest thou then, Shew us the Father," (John xiv. 9). Besides, this was the doctrine preached by the first disciples; for the apostle John said, in his first epistle, "Jesus Christ is the true God, and eternal life," (verse 20); and Paul declares, "That in Jesus Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," (Coloss. ii. 9). Was not this an assertion, that in the risen body of the Lord Jesus Christ, there was the Divine Trinity, and that thus the Lord was the *true God*, as John had said. And now, enlightened by a new dispensation of Divine Truth, the New Church Christians know, that in the Lord, there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; as in each man created in the image of God, there is the will, the understanding, and the action which results from them. That the Divine Will, or Divine Love, is the Father; that the Divine Understanding, or Divine Wisdom, is the Son; and that the action which results, or the Divine Operation, is the Holy Spirit; or in other words, that in the Lord, the soul is the Father, the Glorified Humanity, or the Body, is the Son, and the proceeding, or providence, is the Holy Spirit.

Let it not be said, in order to support the trinity of persons, that this dogma has been founded on the Scriptures; for it is sufficient answer to say, that the

Scriptures of the Old Testament teach every where the unity of God, and that if in the New Testament, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are spoken of, this Trinity concerns different attributes of the Deity, as has just been observed, and not distinct persons.

This dogma, of a trinity of divine persons from all eternity, shews how completely the authors of the Creed of Athanasius had lost all true notions of the Deity. From this doctrine also proceeded another, which attributes to God human passions, and made him more cruel than the most vindictive man; and, what is more surprising still, however repugnant this doctrine is to reason, it is nevertheless preserved entire among all Christians, and still reigns in an absolute manner as much among Protestants as among Roman Catholics. Common sense, however, teaches every man endowed with reason, that God is Pity and Mercy itself, because he is Love and Goodness itself, and it is that which constitutes his essence. If then Christians had not, from infancy, been familiarised with this dogma, could they hear without a feeling of indignation, that God, who is our heavenly Father, and Goodness itself, according to the expressions of the Gospels, was irritated with the whole human race, and condemned it to eternal damnation; that long afterwards, and by a special grace, he arranged that his Son,—God from all eternity like himself, should descend into the world, to take on himself the damnation to which it had been doomed, in order to appease the anger of his Father; that it was only by this means that the Father could regard man with favour; that the Son executed this work in such a manner, that taking on himself the punishment of the human race, he allowed himself to be crucified under the *curse of God*; that the Father, after the accomplishment of this work, was appeased, and for the love of his Son, retracted this condemnation, but only in favour of those for whom the Son interceded, leaving it in full force on all others.

From these two principal dogmas of theology, the effect which their teaching would produce may be imagined, for all doctrine has proceeded from them. With true Christian doctrine, the action of Christianity on the social condition would have been such, that among all nations, where it has been received, since the fourth century, men becoming gradually true Christians internally, would have formed an outward social condition in conformity with their internal condition, and thus mutual love would have been the foundation of the social state, as it is the foundation of all religious communities which are truly Christian. On the contrary, with the Christian doctrine, perverted by these two dogmas, the influence of Christianity, instead of extending itself over Christians generally, has only affected a few ; and thus, instead of mutual love, there is established in all Christendom that disagreement, which by degrees has at length arrived at its height, and threatens to engulf all Christian society.

If history is examined, from Constantine until our own age, will there be found in its annals one epoch, or even one year, in which mutual love has reigned ! I say not among all Christian nations, but among one people, in one of its provinces, in the least even of its villages. What will be found there ? Everywhere divisions, either open or secret ; everywhere antagonism, either visible or concealed. Are these the fruits which the gospel ought to bear ? Let the age in which we live, be compared with that in which Jehovah became incarnate to found Christianity, and to save men ; what difference will be discovered in them ? Was not civilization then at its highest pitch, even as it is now supposed to have reached its greatest refinement ? Were not the reproaches cast in that day, by thinking men, on that civilization, the same which is now cast upon it, in our own ? In what has mankind altered ? Is it that those evil passions which the gospel particularises, and which it is intended to repress, do not exist with equal strength in the human heart ? It is true that the

civilization of the two periods, though similar in most respects, is different in others; we have no longer the same manners, the same laws, the same political institutions. But if man is now externally more smooth and polished, is he internally better? Is there not still to be seen the same egotism, the same cupidity, the same love of domination? If then there is any progress in the exterior, or natural order of things, it is not to the so-called Christian faith that we are indebted for this progress, for it is sufficiently proved that it has employed all its strength in repressing reflection, and retaining in bondage what it considered could not be safely set free; but it is to true Christianity that we must look for the cause of the improvement, for although it has been stopped in its onward course, and enveloped in the swaddling clothes of Roman Catholicism, there is in its principles a latent strength which cannot be altogether stifled, and it is this which has produced these results.

Those who now direct the various Christian communities, will maintain that Christianity has not been falsified, and yet each one of these communities interpret it in its own manner, and claims exclusively for itself the name of Christian. They will say that it is to modern philosophy that we are indebted for the present social state. This manner of explaining the fact might be admitted, if, before the rise of modern philosophy, it could be proved that there was a single Christian nation, who had shewn, as the effect of their faith, the character of true Christianity; but for this, history would be searched in vain, not one would be found there, for of course this does not apply to the Christians who lived in the first centuries, for we repeat, till Constantine had admitted Christianity into this empire, there were no Christian nations. Christians formed then simple religious societies, and not a national body, and being continually persecuted, they had consequently no power over the civil and religious laws of the country which they inhabited.

It is true, however, that modern philosophy has contributed much to the present social state, but we shall see that it is only a secondary, not a principal cause.

It is generally believed that there is a natural antipathy between religion and philosophy, and that they cannot exist together ; but this is an error, since as the one treats of spiritual things, and the other of natural, there is between them the same relation as between what is spiritual and what is natural ; and as what is spiritual cannot exist without a natural corresponding, it follows that all religion has necessarily a philosophy belonging to it ; that is to say, that it has natural principles which correspond to its spiritual principles. If the religion be true, its philosophy is true ; if it is falsified, its philosophy is so also ; as there can be but one true religion, it follows as a consequence, that there can be but one true philosophy. So long as a falsified religion only contains in its bosom blind believers, it will reign with its attendant philosophy without contests or dissensions ; but from the moment that blind faith ceases to be universal, those who have torn the bandage from their eyes will form to themselves principles of philosophy, opposed to the philosophy of that religion, and consequently opposed also to its spiritual principles ; then a combat ensues between this old religion and the new philosophy, which latter (being self-formed, and not proceeding from true religion,) has not power to produce a true philosophy, but the contest will not be less fierce, for error attacks error, when opposed to itself, with as much bitterness as if it attacked truth. At the same time it should be remembered, that in all erroneous philosophy, as in all falsified religion, there is nevertheless some truth ; but these truths, being surrounded by errors and false-tenets, lose all their efficacy.

Again, it will be seen that when, besides its own proper philosophy, a falsified religion, in which a blind belief is required, allows a philosophy to be



formed which does not proceed from its dogma, that religion runs inevitably to its destruction, and will find it impossible to recover its authority; for the contest will not cease, until the two adversaries, after many alternate victories and defeats, sink exhausted on the field. France, especially during the last century, affords a striking example of this fact; Roman Catholicism and Philosophy waged there a relentless warfare, sometimes open, sometimes concealed; and this war will only cease, when the destruction of both, shall give place to the true christian religion and true philosophy.

These contests, more or less prolonged, which are everywhere found since the earliest ages recorded by history, are the result of the spiritual liberty which our Lord gave to man on his creation—Liberty, without which he would have been a brute, and not a human being. By the possession of this liberty man fell; it is by this that he must become regenerate; but as he cannot be *freely* brought from this deep spiritual degradation, into the true religion, but by the operation of such religious principles, of which his fallen nature is susceptible, our Lord has permitted the establishment of religions suited to the state of each nation; and as all religion which is not the true religion, has a tendency to remain ever stationary, and will not suffer itself to be transformed into one less impure (for its directors strive to preserve it thus entire, in order to enjoy the worldly advantages which it procures them); therefore, our Lord has permitted these contests between each religion, and the philosophy which springs up sooner or later, notwithstanding the pressure kept continually on the minds of men. Thus is manifested, and more especially in our day, the law of progress. If, as in the present day, the entire world is shaken in its old religious belief, what is it but a part of that same providential plan, which will, by degrees, conduct all the inhabitants of the globe, by spiritual liberty, to the true religion. Could the nations under the dominion of Ismalism, could the Indians, the Chinese, the Australians, and all the in-

habitants of the Isles, idolaters or savages, ever be delivered from the religious trammels which fetter them, if the Christian world, by means of railways and steam, did not insinuate along with their commercial goods those ideas which are the consequence of free examination? By this means a combat is preparing among all these different nations, between their old religion, and a new-born philosophy, both of which, however, will perish when their work is accomplished.

As to that same law of progress, of which we have spoken, its reality would never be doubted, if its true route were known. It does not follow a straight line, it does not traverse a circle; but it takes a spiral direction, and like all spirals, it is indefinite. This law, thus understood, is in agreement with the infinite nature of God, as manifested in the creation, by indefinites, and in the history of humanity itself; which descends, it is true, after having risen; but which only descends to mount again to a higher point each time. Besides which, this very law is illustrated in nature, by the apparent course of the sun, which, at the close of the winter solstice, rises and sets each day, only to become each day, a little higher in the horizon.

It is in accordance with this law of progress, that the various Christian communions, having evidently arrived at the end of their descending period, will, by degrees, give place to the true christian religion: and modern philosophy, having fulfilled the purposes of Providence, in destroying spiritual slavery, but being incapable of co-operating in the re-establishment of order, from the unstable principles which it contains, will itself also be gradually replaced by the true philosophy, whose principles are derived from those of true christianity,—which, far from being weakened by the examination of reason, will receive, on the contrary, a more certain confirmation. If the social state of Christian nations is so deplorable, it should yet be attributed rather to the various doctrines of the different communions of Christians, than to the principles of

modern philosophy; for philosophers, in combating spiritual slavery, serve religious progress, without the consciousness or desire of doing so, because Christianity can only enter into its new ascendant period, by means of a full and entire spiritual liberty; and therefore the teachers of the different Christian communions, in opposing, with all their might, spiritual liberty, retard this new period of Christianity.

Since the religious belief produced by the falsification of Christianity, is the principal cause of the existing social state, and since philosophy has been permitted by Providence, for the destruction of spiritual slavery, it is very evident that a return to these religious creeds would be powerless to save society; and that instead of preventing, it would only render the catastrophe more certain; for the cause persisted in, the effect remains, and to give more activity to the cause, would be to render the effect more rapid. Besides which, how can it be hoped that this impotence of the old Christian church will cease, when Roman Catholicism pretends to be unchangeable, and wishes to remain so; and when it is seen that Protestantism, variable by its very nature, is now endeavouring to return to the principles of its first founders, in order to become unchangeable also, and to avoid the rationalism which threatens its existence. But if, on one hand, a return to these religious creeds would be powerless to save society, on the other, a persistence in that philosophy would not be more efficacious, for that *philosophy* contains, in the order of natural things, almost as many errors as Roman Catholicism contains falsities in the spiritual, and, consequently, one is almost as dangerous as the other. Let no one, then, depend on either, but rather suffer them to destroy each other. In the present day in France, the University is attacked by Roman Catholicism, and it gives way under the blows of its rival; it is not however a victory, but only a passing success; one of those alternate successes and reverses which are permitted by our Lord, in order that they may finally

tear from each other their assumed draperies ; and that their disabused partisans may see them in all their nakedness, and be ashamed.

The only means, then, of saving the social condition of our times, will be to accomplish by degrees a return to true Christianity, not by retracing the course of ages, but by a new development of Christianity, in addition to the mass of spiritual and natural knowledge at this day acquired.

To retrace the course of centuries, that is to say, to take up Christianity at the epoch when it first began to be falsified, would be to run counter to the laws of Divine order, and to accuse Divine Providence of want of foresight, which would thus have wasted fifteen centuries ; when, on the contrary, that long period of time has served to accomplish its all-merciful intentions.

When Christianity was founded, the veil which concealed the truths which the Word contains, could not be entirely raised ; mankind was not then in a state to receive some of these truths, and if they had been exposed without a veil, not one of them would have been received : our Lord then but lifted one corner of this veil, and discovered to the world those truths which it was capable of receiving. He warned his disciples, that the church which he founded, would have the same fate with those which had preceded it ; but that at the "consummation of the age," that is to say, at the end of that church, he would come "in the clouds of heaven, with power and glory," to found a church, which should not have an end. It is this church, which our Lord restores in the present day, by taking away the veil which covered his Word. Divine Truths, those "precious stones," now exposed to the eyes of men, may be contemplated by them, and approved by intelligence and reason ; for the natural knowledges now acquired, far from being in opposition to the internal truths of the Divine Word, only serve, on the contrary, to confirm them ; and the more rapid the progress of science, the more confirmations will it af-

ford,—spiritual and natural truths being as closely connected as the soul and body.

This is not the place to prove, that the Lord Jesus Christ is no more with the Old Christian Church, whose consummation is already accomplished, and that He will now establish His New Church, signified in the Scriptures by the New Jerusalem. The proofs of this will be found in abundance in the theological writings of Swedenborg; it is only necessary to shew that this New Christian Church can alone save society.

Society is a collective being, or a whole, of which men are the parts. If the whole is bad it is evidently because the parts are bad, and in order that the whole should become good, it is necessary that the parts should first become so. Make these parts good, that is to say, reform men, and the whole of the social state will be good, but if you endeavour to reform it in any other manner, your efforts will be useless. Some, it is true, pretend that if man is wicked, it is because society being ill-constituted, does not allow him to be good; and to sustain this assertion, they lay down the principle, that man is born good; from which they conclude, that if he is wicked, it is the evil organisation of society which makes him so. To admit this principle is to deny the utility of Religion. For if it is the evil organization of society which makes man wicked, it would be sufficient to reform this organization to render him once more virtuous, and therefore Religion would be useless. But it is positively the contrary: man is born wicked, for he is born into self-love, as will be clearly seen by the fact that little children, without any exception, refer everything to themselves; now self-love, or selfishness, is the evil from which proceeds all other evils, since it is opposed to mutual love, or disinterestedness, which is the virtue from which proceeds all other virtues.

Thus society is bad because man is wicked, and it is not true to say that man is wicked because society is bad. We rest this on a general theory, founded on this principle, that mutual love or disinterestedness is

virtue, and self-love or selfishness is vice ; but we do not deny that the evil organization of society acts on many men, who, in a purer atmosphere, would have been less wicked. Besides which, it is easy to perceive, that the organization of a society is the consequence of the interior state of those who compose it, and that to endeavour to reform society without individuals having been previously reformed, is to desire what is impossible ; they may, it is true, change its form, as it has already been frequently changed, but to alter the form, is not to reform.

Let us suppose that in one of those revolutions which carry away an entire people, at that moment of enthusiasm, when, after a complete victory, each citizen, forgetting himself, gives every proof of a pure devotion ; let us suppose, I say, that a legislator, high in general estimation, turning to account that generous impulse, should present to them a constitution in every respect suited to that pure devotion, and that it should be accepted without reserve, with general love and admiration. This constitution, if the citizens have been worthy of it, not accidentally, but really worthy, that is to say, if they have been individually reformed, will make the happiness of the entire nation ; but, accepted in a moment of enthusiasm, it will not be long respected, and from the next day, this enthusiasm not being at the same pitch, the work so admired the evening before, will not be seen with the same eyes. Each man looking at society from his own point of view, wishes, and even desires with ardour, that it should be reformed ; but at the same time, each would remain as he is, that is to say, unreformed himself ; he sees evil in others, but in himself he does not perceive it, or if he perceives excuses it.

Mankind collectively, or society, then, will remain evil, while self-love or selfishness reigns in man individually, and we have already said that human institutions are powerless in removing this love, and substituting for it mutual love ; they may modify manners,

and accelerate civilization, but nothing more. In what respect have they changed the human heart? Is man less selfish at heart? He may appear less so externally, but internally he is as much so as ever. There is nothing but religion, that can work an entire reform, and only the true Christian religion, since the falsified Christianity which has reigned for so many centuries, has completely failed in this work.

The Old Christian Church has failed, because the falsification of its doctrines, has caused it to lose the ideas which it had received concerning God, the soul of man, and the life after death; and the New Christian Church can alone succeed, because possessing these ideas, with truths newly unveiled, and founded on true doctrines, it can regenerate man, and thus, by individual regeneration, accomplish the complete reformation of society. Would that those ecclesiastics in the various Christian communions, who understand the importance of their functions, that is to say, who desire the salvation of souls, and their own salvation, before all besides; would, I say, that they could be induced to fix their attention on this simple statement, and then resort to the theological writings of Swedenborg, for all the doctrines of the New Christian Church, and the unveiled truths now in the possession of that church. This church attempts not to break the chain of time by reversing the religious edifice, to construct a new one on the moving sand of human opinion. Revelation is carefully preserved by her, and it is on this revelation, as on a Book, that is founded the New Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one and only God, in whom is the Divine Trinity. It does not concern itself with exterior forms of worship; but allows you to preserve those which you have found useful for the salvation of souls, and which do not offend your own consciences; for the form is but a vestment which every one should be free to wear in his own fashion; but do not longer alter the substance of spiritual things. Cease to think, each in your turn, that your communion alone, is the church. The church

is not in this place or in that, it is in all places where mutual love reigns, based on the acknowledgement of a God. All those who shun evil as sin, belong to the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, whatever may be the religion in which they have been brought up; for to shun evils as sins, is to acknowledge a God, and to live in mutual love; and were the Lord to reject them, because of their never having heard of him, and therefore not acknowledging him, he would no longer be Love itself, and Justice itself.

To all well-disposed persons then, we would say, "Do you desire to save society? return to true religious ideas, and cease to persuade yourselves that the old creeds can do more than they have done; it is these creeds which have led society to the very brink of the abyss, and they will be powerless to prevent its fall. Besides, accustomed as you are to use your reason in other things, can you force yourself to believe what your reason rejects, and to make in religious matters a complete abnegation of your intelligence? Because man can never comprehend the infinity of God!—for to perfectly comprehend the Deity in His infinity, it is necessary to be God ones-self; it should not be inferred that Religion necessitates the belief of what is mathematically impossible; for God is the Supreme Geometrician, and all the laws of divine order are regulated on strictly mathematical principles. To believe, is not to admit without comprehending; it is to see with the eyes of intelligence those things which are not within the range of the senses. Abandon, then, those spiritual falsities, which are neither conformable to your nature or your education, adopt spiritual truths, propagate them, and you will then see antagonism disappear by degrees, and give place to mutual love; and society, reconstituted on a solid basis, will be raised above the reach of those violent revolutions which you with reason dread."

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