

THE

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EDITED BY

JOHN T. DUFFIELD,

ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS, IN PRINCETON COLLEGE.

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THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLUTION.

BY

THE REV. M. B. HOPE, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC.

“ Thus saith the Lord God ; remove the diadem and take off the crown : this shall not be the same : exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it : and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is ; and I will give it him.”—EZEK. xxi : 26, 27.

THE true philosophical history of man, is that which reveals to us the causes and progress, first, of his depravity and deterioration ; and secondly, of his return towards that state of holiness and happiness which he is destined, in the purpose of God, and through the agency of the gospel, again to attain. Such a history is yet to be written. The attempts to evolve the philosophy of history, have been, for the most part, vitiated, by the assumption, derived from the pagan classics, that the civilization of the human race began in a condition of the lowest barbarism. There never was a more superficial or unfounded hypothesis, than that which ascribes the evolutions of human history, to a law of progressive development, inherent in the

human constitution. No plausible foundation for such a law can be found, except by an induction of facts, the most partial and inconclusive. In any complete survey of history, the facts which contradict such a law, are quite as numerous as those which support it. The great majority of the human race at any given time has been clearly either retrograding, or else stationary; while the progressive portion has been the merest fraction of the whole. And, farther, the progressive feature of that portion, has always been due; not to a blind, inherent law, but to some external agency, acting upon it from without, and in accordance with a plan extrinsic to itself. If the actual historic progress of the race were due to an intrinsic law, it ought, like all the laws of nature, to be constant in its tendencies, and uniform in its results. What then, it may be asked, becomes of this law of development, in the case of the Greeks since the days of Alexander, of the Romans since the time of Augustus, or of the Spaniards since the days of Ferdinand.

It is notorious, that so far from this assumed law of progress being the true expression of the facts, the progression which the history of the race exhibits, has been in cycles, and not in straight lines. In accordance with the principle announced by the prophet of Jehovah to the profane and wicked Prince of Israel, it has been a process of *revolution* and not of *development*. It involves the law of declension and decay, as much as that of quickening and growth. It is a vital, not a mechanical,—a

moral, not a physical, process. It proceeds upon a plan indeed ; but it is a plan exterior to the great collective mind of humanity. It is a development in the scheme of Divine Providence, with reference to the destiny of man ; and not the mere unfolding of capabilities inherent in unaided human nature.

It is impossible to comprehend aright the nature of that plan of human affairs, which it is the province of history to reveal, without a just apprehension of the moral truths which it involves, and on which it proceeds.

And in the first place, the origin of the human race was not from a state of barbarism, but one of absolute perfection ; and the first change which passed upon human nature, was that by which it fell into degeneracy, by reason of temptation from without. Social happiness was blighted and perished in the bud. The very first offspring of the social state, instead of love, sympathy, and mutual support, were, first, envy, then hatred, and lastly murder. Alienation and division, thus became at once, the universal law of society. And it is evident the race must have soon become extinct, or else produced a terrestrial pandemonium, if God had not determined to redeem it ; and applied the antidote to check, at least in part, the fatal workings of the poison.

From the moment of the announcement of that determination, began the great conflict of humanity,—the conflict between the two principles of sin and grace: the universal prevalence of the one tending to corrupt and ruin the race, the other,

under the special agency of God himself, struggling and destined to purify and redeem it. The history of this conflict, is the true history of man. It is not the rise and fall of nations,—it is not the growth and decay of institutions, domestic, social or political,—it is not the arts of war or peace;—it is the inward life of the race,—the changes in human nature, which all these indicate, from holiness to sin, and from sin to holiness,—it is the restoration of humanity to the image and favour of God, and the wonderful developments of God's providence to accomplish this result, in the different nations, ages and dispensations of history, that the Christian philosopher regards with most absorbing interest, and seeks to disengage from the tangled plot of human events.

Our limits and our special aim, forbid us to enter into any particular illustration, or proof, of the leading principles we propose to apply to the solution of the startling events of our age. We must be content with their simple statement; leaving it to the knowledge of our hearers, to confirm or to set them aside.

And in the first place, the earliest ages of the world after the fall, when the light of revealed truth was dimmest, and the reign of grace most feeble, were marked by a rapid degeneration, physical, intellectual, and moral, in the nature, the character, and the condition of man. The poison of sin worked, till it shortened human life from almost a thousand years, to three score and ten,—till the perception of truth was almost extinguished, and

men, even the most civilized and enlightened, became debased enough to humble themselves in religious worship, before beasts and creeping things; and until their moral nature was so corrupted, that virtue and religion were preserved alive upon the earth, only by the special interposition of God himself. Twice, in different forms, was this expedient resorted to,—thus making and closing respectively two great epochs of history:—first, in the selection and divine preservation of the single family of Noah; and, secondly, when the re-peopled earth had lapsed into universal corruption and idolatry, by selecting a faithful branch from the dominant race of the age, and organizing it under theocratic institutions, subject to his own immediate control. This single nation which was destined to multiply into a great and powerful people, and isolated from the other divisions of the race, was to serve as the depository of truth and religion, while the work of overturning and overturning went on among the other nations of the earth, until he should come, whose right it was to assume the sceptre, and found upon their ruins a dispensation, which shall terminate these countless overturnings, by the redemption of the world; and thus consummate the perfection of humanity on earth, and blend with it the glory of the God of Providence and grace.

In the second place, when the power of sin was checked by larger gifts of gracious influence, the power of divine truth became diffusive, and entered upon its aggressive work, in the achievement of man's regeneration; and has continued to the pre-

sent hour, progressive: and judging from the history of the past, and the characteristics of the present, as well as the prophetic delineation of the future, it will continue steadily progressive, till its final and perfect consummation.

By man's regeneration we mean his entire and complete regeneration, moral and intellectual, individual and social. The proofs of his past progress in all these respects, are as numerous as the incidents which make up his history. And yet it is obvious that no form of civilization yet reached, even by the most favoured nations of Christendom, can be accepted as even an approximate embodiment of that stage of human perfection which the race is destined to reach. Pervading and comprehensive as the historical agencies of the past have been, it is clear they are destined to be vastly more pervading and comprehensive still, before the period can arrive, when the Apocalyptic angel shall proclaim that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

In the third place, the great agent by which this progress has been carried forward, is that of revolution, or that of overturning, overturning, overturning, till he shall come whose right it is to wear the crown of universal dominion, amidst the redeemed race of man.

In any comprehensive survey of the subject, the central epoch of human history, is the advent of the Son of God. Everything anterior to that event, pointed to the incarnation as embracing the

fulness of its significancy, and everything subsequent derives its vitality and power from the same source. The revolutionary incidents of the ages preceding, had for their function to prepare the world for the coming of Christ; those succeeding, are charged with the business of consummating the great object which brought the Son of God into the world, as the source and head of a new spiritual seed, that will ultimately absorb in its ever widening sweep, the entire and ransomed races of Adam.

However difficult it may be to trace, with philosophic accuracy, the precise relations of the great master epochs of the early periods of history, there can no longer be a doubt of their reality. To the eye of the Christian, and in the light of the Bible, those vast and sublime overturnings which reared and overthrew, successively, the gigantic empires of Egypt, Assyria, Persia, and Macedon, to say nothing of countless smaller states, which concentrated the intellect, the genius and the cultivation of the world in the States of Greece, and finally enthroned Rome as sole mistress of the earth, these all appear as mighty and indispensable agencies, commissioned of God, to produce that mental culture that feeling of strong unsatisfied religious want, and that state of universal peace, which were essential to prepare the world for the advent of the Son of God.

The progress of the race to this result, was not by steady, uninterrupted marches; it has not been the mere evolution of a subjective law of progression: it has been by a succession of overturnings,

in which one nation after another has been thrown into the ascendant, for the obvious purpose, in each case, of working out some great problem of human welfare, or carrying to its utmost height, some single branch of human culture. Thus in the language of the prevailing school of historical philosophers, the dispensation of the Greeks was the æsthetic culture of humanity. No age of human improvement ever has excelled, or ever will excel, the arts of Greece. Even their philosophy and their morality were drawn from the same source, in the sensibilities of the soul, instead of being founded upon the objective truths of any divine revelation. They have settled the point for all coming time, that art however lofty and spiritual, cannot answer the ends, or take the place of religion as the true ulterior object of individual culture and still less as the life principle of a permanent or universal civilization.

So Rome was commissioned to work out a system of jurisprudence and municipal law, for the human race; to conquer the barbarism of the world, and then to clothe its naked forms with the institutions of an intellectual civilization. Her mission was to prepare the world for the incarnation of the Son of God, who was to found upon the boundless domain of her vast and peaceful empire, the glorious temple of Christian truth and Christian worship. And now in like manner we believe the peculiar dispensation of the age, and specifically of the race to which we belong, is to leaven the philosophy, the literature, the morality, and the civil and poli-

tical institutions of the world, with the religion of the Bible, and then carry their elevating purifying influence throughout the earth.

This is the last of the great dispensations of the world's progressive history. The true and final *civilization* of the race, as statesmen and philosophers delight to call it, is just that which owes to Christianity both the life of its being, and the law of its forms. Much as politicians may overlook or deride the notion, it is true that the only form of civilization capable of embracing the whole human family,—the only form that ever can become universal,—is that which owes its being and its power, to the gospel. The civilization of Greece was incomplete and local, that of Rome was temporary and subservient to ulterior purposes. We repeat, the only true civilization, capable of combining and enlightening, of purifying and elevating the race of man, is Christianity itself. This is the divine principle of human civilization. It was designed for the whole family of man; and it will therefore embrace the whole. It will absorb and incorporate all that is true and noble in the art and literature of Greece, the legislation and jurisprudence of Rome, the freedom and the industrial, economic, and commercial enterprise of the Teutonic races,—all that is beautiful, and true, and good, and great; and founding the structure upon the divine atonement of Jesus Christ as the only relief from the conscious crushing guilt of the human bosom, and the renewing and sanctifying power of the Spirit of God as the only possible source of its regeneration and

purification, it will stand forth, like the New Jerusalem of the Prophetic Scriptures resplendent in the light of heaven, the sanctuary and the home of all the nations of the earth.

The process we have indicated is going on with ever-increasing velocity: and in our day its elements are driven under impulses of almost fearful impetuosity. Changes are passing upon the internal policy and the outward face of nations, with a rapidity as much greater than those of the early ages of history, as the modes of locomotion, and the intercourse of the world, have been improved, by the agencies of steam and magnetic electricity. The progress of human events toward their ultimate goal, like some mighty mass acted upon by a constant mechanical force, is ever accelerating as it advances. This is pre-eminently true of the very point of time now passing. The plot thickens. Events crowd with ever-accumulating momentum toward the appointed end.

The application of these principles toward the solution of the recent revolutionary and reactionary movements of the world, in the present chaotic period of its history, opens a topic of great interest, by no means free of difficulty. If the claims we have set up for Christianity, as the great agent of human enfranchisement, and social elevation and progress, are well founded, it may be asked how it comes that all the Christian governments in the old world, are absolute and despotic, both in form and in fact. To reply to this inquiry intelligently, we must recall the circumstances under which Chris-

tianity entered upon its work of human redemption. It will be remembered that it found the world under the dominion of despotism, temporarily enthroned for the purpose of keeping the peace, in expectation of its legitimate ruler. It is easy to see, therefore, how the declaration of the great founder of Christianity was necessarily to be fulfilled;—that he came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword. The dominion usurped and tacitly conceded to absolute power, must first be dispossessed of its unnatural authority, before Christianity could fulfill its mission of social enfranchisement. It could not effect its object in behalf of the race, without diffusing abroad that enlightenment and moral virtue, which are incompatible with the persistent reign of civil despotism. The instantaneous result, therefore, of its entrance upon its assigned work of personal regeneration and enfranchisement, was just what its author declared it would be, and just what the past and current history of the world shows that it must be,—a steady conflict with the dominant passions of the human bosom, as concentrated into the various forms of despotic government. Wherever, in its early resistless march, it invaded the kingdom of darkness and tyranny, it awakened hostility and drew on a conflict; because it stood in natural and necessary antagonism with these vices of human society,—just as light is in natural antagonism with darkness. And as the universal establishment of Christian liberty, founded on the universal prevalence of truth and holiness, was the very end of all history, and as its triumph

was predetermined in the original plan of the moral ruler of the world, it followed that the general conflict in which Christianity became involved with the absolute governments of the world, must ultimately lead to their overthrow; and thus consummate again the great principle of the text,—overturning and overturning, with a view to the final establishment of that kingdom, which alone could be perpetual, because it alone was consistent with the complete enfranchisement, and the highest interest of man.

It is clear, therefore, that the repugnance and intolerance, which the absolute governments of the world have always manifested toward evangelical Christianity, is founded on a blind, but unerring instinct. Christianity and despotism cannot co-exist; because Christianity not only inculcates, but actually introduces the highest form of human freedom, in that liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. And it is equally plain, that where the people are not only awakened to the intimate consciousness of their right to be free, but actually invested with that right, by the authority of God himself, and at the same time are made adequately aware of their power as well as their rights, there is no domination on earth or in hell, that can hold them in bondage. Where is the tyrant who could hold a nation of Luthers under the yoke of civil despotism?

But it may be objected to this reasoning, in favor of the essential enfranchising tendencies of the Gospel, that Christianity was the religion of

Rome in the days of its darkest tyranny, and continues to be the religion of the despotic governments of modern Europe.

We acknowledge the fairness of the objection; and accept the challenge to reconcile the historical fact, with the claims we have been making in behalf of Christianity;—and all the more readily, because the principles involved are absolutely vital to the prosperous issue of the present exciting revolutionary period of history.

It must be remembered, then, that all stable and efficient government requires a religious support, and cannot be administered or perpetuated, except by the help of religious sanctions. When Christianity was deposited in the bosom of human society, it necessarily entered into reaction, not with the authority, but the abuses of existing institutions. Such was the light it shed upon those dark abuses, and such the might with which it shook the hoary pillars of despotic Rome, and spread its influence through her vast domain, that it soon became apparent on which side the victory must ultimately declare. To prevent a result so disastrous to herself, and for which the world was yet unprepared, the government itself, under Constantine, by a stroke of policy the most masterly and adroit, set itself to cement a league between the Church and the State; and thus avail itself for its own aggrandizement, of the power against which it was plainly unable to cope in open hostility. This alliance is the key to the history of the middle ages. Christianity was simply thrown into the heart of society, as a personal embodiment

of the divine life, which was to disenthral and redeem mankind. Before it was in a condition to achieve its great social mission for the race, it was necessary that it should grapple with all the forms of belief which had held possession of the human mind, and had served to give form and vitality to the existing institutions of society. A process like this was indispensable to bring the Christian religion into broad and quickening contact with all the varied forms of social life. It had been revealed as a principle of individual belief, and of personal salvation. But it could not stop here. A new and divine life, such as it was the object of the gospel to impart, could not fail to pervade and leaven every element of human society. It was destined to correct the errors of its philosophy, and mitigate, and ultimately abolish, the rigors and abuses of its social and political institutions. To do this, it was necessary that it should be cast into the established formulas of human thought, and incorporated into the intellectual, as well as the moral, life of the race. So that a revelation, which was primarily the element of personal regeneration, and individual holiness,—and as such existed in a form already complete, and incapable of development in the teachings of Christ and his apostles,—was to become in addition the living principle of the intellectual, the social, and even the political institutions of the world. In this process, Christianity was necessarily to be transformed from a concrete or subjective embodiment of living Christian truth in the heart and life of its disciples, into

abstract formulas of belief and of practice; or in other words, into logical creeds, embracing all the points of doctrine and of duty, which were essential to the complete fulfillment of the task assigned it, in the intellectual and civil, as well as personal regeneration of mankind.*

Now it was precisely this preparatory process of intellectual action and reaction, of sifting, elimination and settlement, applied to Christian doctrine, which constituted the distinctive task of the early and middle ages of the Christian history of the world; when the intellect of Christendom was concentrated in the monastic schools of Europe, and the active, logical, and metaphysical discussions of the schoolmen settled what was, or rather was not, the true faith of the Church. Such was the characteristic and invaluable function of a period and a class of men, commonly so little appreciated. The period has been stigmatized as the dark ages of

* It is hoped the tenor and spirit of this discourse will make it sufficiently apparent that what is meant in the text is widely different from what has been so often expressed in nearly analogous language, by a current popular school of infidel philosophers, who apply the favorite dogma of development to the teachings of a complete and closed revelation. Both as a system of doctrines and appliances for the conversion of men, and as a rule of life for their guidance, Christianity was completed when the canon of the New Testament was closed. But it is obvious that the relation of Christianity to an innumerable multitude of questions, in the social and political life of the race, could be ascertained and settled only by a long process of comparison and trial. To accomplish this, or even distinctly to conceive and propose it, would require, as we have expressed it above, that it should first "be cast into the established formulas of human thought," as worked out in the consciousness, and accumulated in the experience, of successive ages. It is only in this sense that we accept the doctrine of a development in Christianity, viz., a development in its *applications* to the complex forms of human well-being—a development that is parallel, if not identical, with that of God's plan, as unfolded in history, for the final redemption of the human race.

human history, and they were dark enough, in regard to the intellectual and social degradation of the masses of the people; but we should not forget that it was in the womb of their darkness that the hand of Providence was fashioning the germs of those truer and more Christian forms of social and political life, which it is the province of modern history to evolve into the highest types of Christian civilization. Preparatory to this indispensable process, and while it was still going on, Christianity had already, as we have seen, entered into alliance with the dominant powers of Europe; and in one aspect, at least, it was a merciful Providence that it was permitted to do so. For it was already apparent that no human power was adequate, without the aid of Christian sanctions, to preserve its own stability, and keep, as by iron rigor, the peace of the world through that most turbulent period of human history. But, of course, in lending its power to such a purpose, Christianity itself, in its courtly aspects, became corrupt, and degenerated into a system of concentrated despotism that was universal and complete; because it involved in its endless folds the souls, and finally the minds, as well as bodies, of its victims. Thus, in its political form, it ceased in the end to be a true expression of genuine Christianity at all. And when the work of the schools was completed, and the true faith of the Church was ready to come from its hidden retreats, in the form of a settled and compacted logical creed, instinct with the glorious evangelical spirit of the great Reformation, the whole sustained

by the revealed Word of God, in the dauntless hands of Luther and the other Reformers, then it was that Christianity entered upon its last great dispensation, viz., that of going forth to its final and triumphant conflict, with the ignorance and the vices which are the sources alike of the despotisms and the miseries of earth, with a view to the universal diffusion and ultimate establishment of the Gospel of Christ. And this, we repeat, is the true and real mission which this stirring revolutionary age is preparing to inaugurate.

In the light of these principles we are prepared to explain another phenomenon of the present epoch, which, at first sight, seems incompatible with the views now presented, viz., that the revolutionary movements of the times have been chiefly in the hands of radicals in religion as well as government, instead of the apostles of genuine Christianity.

We remark, in the first place, then, that the restlessness which is expressing itself in these movements is the result of the deep and living consciousness of unsatisfied wants, and the earnest conviction of rights unjustly withheld,—that, in other words, it is the legitimate and necessary consequence of the gradual spread of that light, whose fountain is in the word of God, and which, in virtue of its divine origin, like the light of day upon the statue of the vocal Memnon, wakes the latent harmonies of faith and hope in the gloomy bosom of the nations. That these overturnings never could have occurred unless they had been preceded by a great and comprehensive

reformation of religion, both doctrinal and spiritual, like that of the sixteenth century, is susceptible of easy proof, if it is not intuitively clear, from this simple statement of the facts. That the movements themselves have so generally taken on a form hostile to true religion, is easily explained.

In the first place, the very ignorance in which the people have been kept, tends to blind them to the true nature of the relief they are seeking, as well as the true means of its attainment. Light enough has struggled through the murky atmosphere of despotism, to reveal to men their higher spiritual tendencies and hopes, and the magnitude and weight of the burdens which have crushed them to the earth; but not enough to disclose the real source of these evils, and still less, the adequate and only means of their redress. In the instinctive effort to struggle up into a higher sphere of life, they first encounter the hopeless, social disabilities, and crushing political burdens, arising from the despotic governments which time has consolidated over their heads; and it is natural, therefore, that they should first seek relief, by the frantic and radical attempt to overthrow and trample in the dust the immediate instruments of their oppression and wrong. Hence the discontent and wretchedness of these restive classes of the old world, seek vent in revolutionary attempts, directed against the established governments of Europe. It may be long before their enlightenment is sufficiently advanced, and may require many and bitter and bloody experiences of failure, to convince them of the

emptiness of all other resources, and shut them up to the faith of Christianity, as the fundamental and indispensable condition of any sufficient or complete relief.

But, secondly, this alienation and repugnance to religion is the more natural, because the only form in which Christianity is known to these revolutionary advocates of social rights, is that in which it stands before their eyes, as the grand ally of civil despotism, the very corner-stone and binding cement of the fearful structure, which tyranny has reared upon the blood and bones of slaughtered and starving millions. No wonder, therefore, that their avowed aim is so often the extinction of Christianity; since, in their estimation, by reason of its vicious alliance with the State, it is the very breath and life, the very heart and soul of every living despotism on the Continent of Europe.

And in the last place, it is not to be disguised, that Christianity encounters their hatred, because it has no fellowship with the spirit in which these radical movements are often conducted, any more than it has with the oppression and wrong, against which they are aimed. Besides the universal dislike of the human heart to the characteristic doctrines of the Gospel, it is clear that the fanaticism and violence and bloodshed, which mark the track of civil revolutions, are rebuked by the Christianity of the New Testament, with the same calm and severe majesty, with which it denounces inevitable overthrow against the men and the measures

which extinguish the lights of human knowledge and human hope in the dark bosom of society.

The significancy of this extraordinary epoch can be understood, not by confining our attention to the character of the agencies which have produced it,—for these are often low in their origin, and blind in their intelligence, and evil in their intentions,—but by studying it deeply, as a historical development of the divine purpose which pervades all history as its life-principle, and to which all agencies, however blind and however bad, are alike subjected, and compelled to do its will. What the specific purpose of God, now in process of evolution is, may be a subject of great doubt; but that there is a divine purpose to be accomplished, is as certain as that there is a God. The Providence that is implicated in the fall of a sparrow, cannot be foreign to the downfall, or the destiny, of the great dynasties of the earth. The true intent and meaning of these overturnings is to be sought, not in the establishment of this or that form of government, as though the construction of political institutions was the chief end of man, but in their tendency to bring the living truth of God, in its quickening and sanctifying power, into vital contact with the heart of humanity. This is the true problem which modern history is to solve. It is not the low and imperfect form of political freedom, which, at best, is but a well-contrived system of checks and restraints upon the natural passions of men, but the universal establishment of that spiritual freedom, which is not only infinitely higher, but which admits of

being absolute, just because it always chooses freely to do right. It is this which constitutes the true key to the mysteries of Providence. Whatever else may come from these overturnings, one thing is certain, in the light of history as well as prophecy, that they all tend to give increased scope to the Word of God, and open wider and more effectual doors to the appointed agencies for its inculcation. Whatever absolutism may do, it cannot any longer bind the Word of God. It is to compel the hoary despotisms of the earth to strike the fetters from the soul of man, that God is causing the very ground to rock beneath them. They have, at no distant day, to make their election between a total change of policy, with reference to the enlightenment and freedom which the Gospel brings to mankind, or their own downfall.

We are not enunciating a philosophy of history, and still less, pretending to foretell the historical details of the future: we are simply dealing with the cardinal laws which govern its development: and though it is one of the surest tests of true science, that it enables us to predict, yet it requires a knowledge of conditions, as well as laws, to fulfill this requirement: and even then, the remoteness or complexity of the result may transcend the powers of any human calculus to compute. We may know the laws of hydrodynamics never so certainly; but we may not, nevertheless, be able to trace out the course of a body committed to the conflicting impulses of an angry flood: so, however true and important the principles we have been

striving to illustrate, they may not, still, enable us to foretell the course and the issue of the great stirring events of this turbulent period of human progress. Whether the old institutions of Europe, its hereditary monarchies, its spiritual hierarchies, and especially its master-piece of spiritual despotism, the papacy, are to be finally and utterly destroyed, may perhaps be a question, but that their flagrant wrongs and abuses are, is not only a certainty, but, we may almost say, a fact accomplished. Who imagines, for a moment, that the later reactions in favor of absolutism are, or can be, permanent? Who does not see that they are procured by means which necessarily involve other and more fearful retributory reactions? There is nothing in them that looks like permanence or stability. The thing is impossible. We should just as soon expect the Mississippi or the Amazon, the snow-fed Danube or the arrowy Rhone, to pause in their glad and triumphant course. The great current of human enfranchisement, like every other obstructed current, must have its eddies, but its flow is onward, and irresistible. Russia, that awful incarnation of human despotism, may throw into the stream her fifty millions of slaves, and then pile upon them the thirty millions of poor, miserable, ignominious Austria, in order to dam up and arrest its resistless flow; but the very weight of its accumulated waters will soon sweep them away, like straws on the plunge of the cataract. Whether any of the late gains of the spirit of liberty can be maintained, is more than questionable: but whether they can or

not, that higher freedom of the Gospel—without which, the change from absolute monarchy to republicanism, is but a change from the despotism of the intelligent but selfish few, to the despotism of the blind, and more selfish and brutal many,—is destined to be advanced by these overturnings, and finally enthroned supreme in the confidence and hearts of men. This, surely, cannot be doubted by any one who studies their causes, or comprehends the true nature of history, as an evolution of the divine purpose, with reference to man.* Even

* The late reaction in favor of despotism in France, the news of which reached us after this paragraph was penned, furnishes a curious illustration of the principles of this discourse. The solution of what seems to excite so general surprise and disappointment, appears to be abundantly clear. France, by the election of a military usurper, has pronounced her unequivocal judgment, that she was not prepared for the institutions of constitutional liberty. In the emphatic language of one of her ablest statesmen, of a former revolution, *La France doit avoir une religion*—France must have a religion. In the absence of that prime condition of civil freedom, the choice of the country lay between the evils of anarchy on the one hand, and those of a military despotism on the other: and France has chosen the latter, as immeasurably the least of the two. The material interests of the country all demand peace, in order to prosperity; and peace is impossible at present in France, except under the strong hand of absolute power. But let the principles of religion and education so leaven the masses, that liberty can be entered as one of the possible conditions, compatible with the peace of the country, and then see how the nation will rise in its might, and sweep away the treacherous perfidy of a tyrannical usurper, as the majestic king of the forest would brush an annoying, envenomed insect from his flanks. To suppose that such a government can stand an hour, after its felt necessity has passed away, is to suppose that perjury, and violence, and perfidy can command the confidence and support of honest and true men. It is to suppose that history has no appointed goal—no great ulterior purpose to achieve in behalf of humanity. It is to ignore every lesson of the past, and every hope of the future; it is to dethrone Jehovah, and to put the reins of the universe into the hands of chance, or of Satan. There can be no stronger statement of the doom that hangs over the cause of despotism, than to say, that it contravenes the plans of the Almighty, for the benefit of the race; as clearly revealed in history as well as prophecy.

If the cause of Hungary could be detached from that of Continental Eu-

the wildest devices of folly which characterize the social movements of the age, Fourierism in France, Republicanism in Germany and Italy, Chartism in England, and Repeal in Ireland, are the earnest expression of felt wants, which Christianity alone can relieve. That some of them are infidel in their spirit and their supporters, is the result, not so much of intelligent hatred of the Gospel, as of simple ignorance as to what the Gospel is.

And yet even in these visionary and fanatical outbursts of the radical revolutionary spirit, the instincts of the heart are often true to their object, when the darkened intellect wholly fails to recognize their true nature, or set them forth in the clear light of the reason. The watch-words of the down-trodden classes of the old world—*liberty, equality, fraternity*—are not so far from the embodiment of the true and fundamental principles of that very civilization which yet awaits the human race. But as to the sources whence these blessings are to come, they are, by the necessities of their previous condition, wholly in the dark.

rope, we might hope to see the beginning of the end speedily initiated. Four millions of Protestants, with nearly 3,000 churches, might serve as a foundation for the political and religious freedom of a nation of ten millions of people, if they were instinct with the life of true evangelical religion. And whatever doubt there may be on this latter point, there can be none, that the truth is making rapid progress among them, and that the time is not far distant when these fundamental conditions of success will be reached. No proposition seems clearer to us, than that the coming history of Europe is to embody the conflict between Protestantism and civil freedom on the one hand, and the Church of Rome and despotism on the other. The very forms, as well as the spirit, of the Romish Church have been developed under conditions which made it essentially despotic; and the final freedom of Europe is impossible, under the absolute dominion of that church, as well as under the anarchy incident to the prevalence of infidelity or atheism.

The "liberty" which they are blindly struggling after, in the turbulent and bloody track of radicalism, is to be realized in the enfranchisement of the gospel, and grounded on that personal liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. The "equality," to which their inward convictions assure them they are entitled, is not an agrarian equality of social and material position, but an equality in human rights, founded on an equality of moral condition and desert in the sight of God: and the "fraternity," emblazoned on their motto, is the genuine, but it may be perverted heart-utterance of the conscious right to membership in that common brotherhood of humanity, which springs out of the common Fatherhood of God. The whole and every item, of this ideal longing of humanity in its most degraded and dangerous forms, and which has been moulded into the war-cry of modern revolution, is destined to fulfilment; but in a form and from a source widely different from that to which the ignorant and vicious and dangerous paupers and outcasts of the world, are looking for succour. They shall yet enjoy all, and more than all, their brightest hopes: but only as a fruit of the gospel of Christ. Let them see, as they ultimately will see, that all they have conceived, and infinitely more, is attainable, as the free gift of a gracious salvation, the purchase of the Son of God by the sacrifice of the cross, and how will they not joyfully embrace the gospel which does satisfy, in lieu of empty and absurd theories which do not. It is this blind but energetic feeling after truth, which

awakens in us the hope, that truth will ultimately be found. That the first attempts are wild and fruitless, and therefore subject to repeated disappointments and reverses, results necessarily from their being made in the dark. But the very fact that they are fruitless, will compel their earnest authors to grope on till light comes. And it is morally impossible that light should fail to reach them ere long, from some of the innumerable sources, from which it is streaming all over Christendom. We are not of those who regard these struggles of oppressed humanity either with unmingled dislike or despair; or who would withdraw the sympathies of the Christian world from their sufferings, because they are sometimes baptized with the spirit of an optimist infidelity. Even if many of them are atheists at heart, they are yet human beings; and as such have an immortal interest at stake, in the redemption and the hopes of the gospel; and are therefore accessible,—most invitingly accessible,—to its ministry of mercy. And there is no conviction more clear or unalterable to us, than that the hopes of a crushed and bleeding humanity are all conditioned upon the presence of Christianity, to an extent sufficient to control the movements, and animate the heart, and nerve the arm, of those who are to lead the destinies of mankind in the final great struggle for salvation and freedom.

Let men of the world, philosophers and statesmen, overlook and despise the Church, the living embodiment of Christianity;—let them regard

what Christians are doing to spread the gospel of the Son of God among men, as well enough in itself, but yet as boyish occupation, in comparison with their great schemes of national enterprise; they will one day find out, that it is this very Christianity, which is yet to occupy the vacant throne of the world: that all their expenditures and bloodshed, their turmoils and state craft, have been only contributing to this result; and that a power higher than the highest has uttered the decree,—“Thus saith the Lord God; remove the diadem and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.”

The work of revolution has often been more disastrous and bloody, but never, we believe, more universal and pervading, than it is at this moment. Without the light of revelation, we might well be alarmed in attempting to guess whereto these events are tending. But in the full blaze of that light, the Christian believer may watch their accelerating progress, not only without dismay, but with a full and joyous confidence, that they are all fulfilling the resistless will of Him, who “hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm;” the great law of whose Providence, as revealed in universal nature, both animate and inanimate, hath ever been to educe from the revolution and overthrow of one dispensation, another more lofty, more glorious and more perfect; and whose final triumph will be

inaugurated, when the blast of the Apocalyptic trumpet shall proclaim to the universe, that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.