

by reactionary selfishness; to what chimerical hopes, to what wild schemes, to what calamitous disappointments, to what desperate conflicts, it has given birth; how often, being misunderstood and misapplied, it has brought not peace on earth but a sword,—it is needless here to rehearse. Such miscarriages, such delay, could not be averted unless the nature of man was to be changed, or the effort by which his character is formed, and which appears to be the law of his being, was to be superseded by the fiat of Omnipotence. Countless ages have no doubt yet to run before the idea is realized and the hope fulfilled. Still, as we look back over the range of past history, we can see beyond doubt that it is towards this goal that Christianity as a social principle has been always tending and still tends.

No sooner did the new religion gain power in the world, than the slave law, and the slave system of the Empire, began to be undermined by its influence. In unconscious alliance with Stoicism, to which among all the ancient systems of Philosophy it had the most affinity, Christianity broke in upon the despotism of the Master, as well as upon the despotism of the Father and the Husband. The right of life and death over the Slave was transferred from his owner to the magistrate. The right of correction was placed under humane limitations, which the magistrate was directed to maintain. All the restrictions on the enfranchisement of Slaves were swept away. The first Christian Emperor recognised enfranchisement as a religious act, and established the practice of performing it in the Church before the Bishop, and in the presence of the congregation. The