

\_Phil\_. Oh, yes, princes look upon God as a goblin, wherewith to frighten grown-up children to bed when nothing else is of any avail; it is for this reason that they depend so much on God. All right; meanwhile I should like to advise every ruling lord to read through, on a certain day every six months, the fifteenth chapter of the First Book of Samuel, earnestly and attentively; so that he may always have in mind what it means to support the throne on the altar. Moreover, since burning at the stake, that *\_ultima ratio theologorum\_*, is a thing of the past, this mode of government has lost its efficacy. For, as you know, religions are like glowworms: before they can shine it must be dark. A certain degree of general ignorance is the condition of every religion, and is the element in which alone it is able to exist. While, as soon as astronomy, natural science, geology, history, knowledge of countries and nations have spread their light universally, and philosophy is finally allowed to speak, every faith which is based on miracle and revelation must perish, and then philosophy will take its place. In Europe the day of knowledge and science dawned towards the end of the fifteenth century with the arrival of the modern Greek philosophers, its sun rose higher in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which were so productive, and scattered the mists of the Middle Age. In the same proportion, both Church and Faith were obliged to gradually disappear; so that in the eighteenth century English and French philosophers became direct antagonists, until finally, under Frederick the Great, Kant came and took away from religious belief the support it had formerly received from philosophy, and emancipated the *\_ancilla theologiae\_* in that he attacked the question with German thoroughness and perseverance, whereby

it received a less frivolous, that is to say, a more earnest tone. As a result of this we see in the nineteenth century Christianity very much weakened, almost stripped entirely of serious belief, nay, fighting for its own existence; while apprehensive princes try to raise it up by an artificial stimulant, as the doctor tries to revive a dying man by the aid of a drug. There is a passage from Condorcet's *Des Progrès de l'esprit humain*, which seems to have been written as a warning to our epoch: *Le zèle religieux des philosophes et des grands n'était qu'une dévotion politique: et toute religion, qu'on se permet de défendre comme une croyance qu'il est utile de laisser au peuple, ne peut plus espérer qu'une agonie plus ou moins prolongée*. In the whole course of the events which I have pointed out you may always observe that belief and knowledge bear the same relation to each other as the two scales of a balance: when the one rises the other must fall. The balance is so sensitive that it indicates momentary influences. For example, in the beginning of this century the predatory excursions of French robbers under their leader Buonaparte, and the great efforts that were requisite to drive them out and to punish them, had led to a temporary neglect of science, and in consequence to a certain decrease in the general propagation of knowledge; the Church immediately began to raise her head again and Faith to be revived, a revival partly of a poetical nature, in keeping with the spirit of the times. On the other hand, in the more than thirty years' peace that followed, leisure and prosperity promoted the building up of science and the spread of knowledge in an exceptional degree, so that the result was what I have said, the dissolution and threatened fall of religion. Perhaps the time which has been so often

predicted is not far distant, when religion will depart from European humanity, like a nurse whose care the child has outgrown; it is now placed in the hands of a tutor for instruction. For without doubt doctrines of belief that are based only on authority, miracles, and revelation are only of use and suitable to the childhood of humanity. That a race, which all physical and historical data confirm as having been in existence only about a hundred times the life of a man sixty years old, is still in its first childhood is a fact that every one will admit.