

**THE STATE IN ITS  
RELATIONS  
WITH THE CHURCH**

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The State in Its Relations with the Church by W. E. Gladstone

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**W. E. GLADSTONE**

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BY  
W. E. GLADSTONE, Esq.,  
STUDENT OF CHRISTCHURCH, AND M. P. FOR NEWARK.

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*Δύοτεροι οἱ παλαιοὶ δεκαῖσι μοι τὰς περὶ θεῶν ἐπιείας, καὶ τὰς περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἰσραὴλ διακρίσεις  
ὅσα εἰσὶν καὶ ὡς ἔτυχεν εἰς τὰ πλῆθη παρεσκευασμέναι· πολλὸν δὲ μᾶλλον οἱ νῦν εἰσὶν καὶ  
ἄλλοτερος ἐκβάλλειν αὐτά.—Polyb. B. VI. 54.*

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AND HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.

MDCCCXXXIX.

INSCRIBED TO  
THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD;  
TRIED, AND NOT FOUND WANTING,  
THROUGH THE VICISSITUDES OF A THOUSAND YEARS;  
IN THE BELIEF THAT SHE IS PROVIDENTIALLY DESIGNED TO BE  
A FOUNTAIN OF BLESSINGS,  
SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL, AND INTELLECTUAL,  
TO THIS AND TO OTHER COUNTRIES,  
TO THE PRESENT AND FUTURE TIMES;  
AND IN THE HOPE THAT THE TEMPER OF THESE PAGES MAY BE FOUND  
NOT ALIEN FROM HER OWN.

*London, August, 1838.*

# THE STATE

IN ITS

## RELATIONS WITH THE CHURCH.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTORY EXPLANATIONS AND STATEMENT OF SEVERAL PUBLISHED THEORIES.

1—7. Introductory Explanations. 8. Of prevalent Theories. 9, 10. Theory of Hooker. 11, 12. Comment. 13, 14. Of Warburton. 15—17. Comment. 18, 19. Of Paley. 20. Comment. 21, 22. Of Coleridge. 23. Comment. 24, 25. Of Chalmers. 26. Comment. 27. Of Hobbes and of Bellarmine and others. 28—30. Explanations.

1. PROBABLY there never was a time in the history of our country, when the connection between the Church and the State was threatened from quarters so manifold and various as at present. The infidel, with sagacious instinct, following out all that tends to the general diminution of religious influences; the Romanist, who, in order to erect his own structure of faith and discipline, aims first at the demolition of every other, and who seems, in general, to deem us so involved in fatal error, that we must pass through the zero of national infidelity in order to arrive at truth; the professor of political economy, who considers this connection as a visionary theory, only and mischievously known by its tendency, when obtruded into practice, to interfere

with what he deems the substantial interests of mankind; \* the democrat, who naturally desires to strip government of all its highest duties, and leave to it the performance of no more than mechanical functions: of all these it was perhaps, on the whole, to be expected that they should unite upon any seemingly favourable occasion to press for their common object; and they have so united.

2. But others of a different stamp are beginning to view the connection of church and state with an eye of aversion or indifference: men attached to the state, but more affectionately and intimately cleaving to the church—unwilling to regard the two as in any sense having opposite interests, but wearied, perhaps exasperated, at the injustice done of late years, or rather during recent generations, by the temporal to the spiritual body—injustice, inasmuch as the state has too frequently perverted and abused the institutions of the church by unworthy patronage, has crippled or suppressed her lawful powers, and has, lastly, when those same misdeeds have raised a strong sentiment of disfavour against its ally, evinced an inclination to make a separate peace, and surrender her to the will of her adversaries. Such being the case, we can hardly wonder, though we may lament it, that some attached members of the church are growing cool in their approbation of the connection, under the influence of a nascent and unconscious resentment; and, while they

\* See, for example, the preface to the "Principles of Political Economy," by Mr. Poulett Scrope, M.P.



seem at least to waver upon the question, there are others who, although they are themselves unshaken in their attachment to the principle, yet defend it upon grounds untenable for their purpose, and better fitted to be occupied as positions against them.

3. If, therefore, we believe that the connection of church and state, rescued on the one hand from Papal, and on the other from Erastian, tyranny of either power over its ally, be conformable to the will of God, essential to the permanent well-being of a community, implied and necessitated by every right idea of civil government, and calculated to extend and establish the vital influences of Christianity, and therewith to increase and purify the mass of individual happiness; then, as holders of that belief, are we all the most imperatively summoned to its defence in this the most critical period of its history.

4. The point of view from which it is now proposed to contemplate and discuss the question, is that which men occupy as members of a state; and the aim is to show, that the highest duty and highest interest of a body politic alike tend to place it in close relations of co-operation with the church of Christ. It is from this position that I propose to regard it; first, because the combatant in defensive warfare naturally resorts ἐπὶ τὸ κáμνον, to the quarter which is threatened and in danger; because the church is not likely to be the moving party in measures for the dissolution of this connection, while the state has, it is too certain, given signs, though perhaps unconsciously, of that inclination; and therefore it is the mind of the state, not of the church, which

requires to be more fully exercised upon this subject, in order to the better knowledge and fulfilment of its duty.

5. But besides the fact that we are more ignorant of our duty as citizens than as churchmen, in respect of the connection, we shall find another reason for instituting the investigation in the former capacity rather than the latter. The union is to the church a matter of secondary importance. *Her* foundations are on the holy hills. Her charter is legibly divine. She, if she should be excluded from the precinct of government, may still fulfil all her functions, and carry them out to perfection. Her condition would be anything rather than pitiable, should she once more occupy the position which she held before the reign of Constantine. But the state, in rejecting her, would actively violate its most solemn duty, and would, if the theory of the connection be sound, entail upon itself a curse. We know of no effectual preservative principle except religion; nor of any permanent, secure, and authenticated religion but in the church. The state, then, if she allows false opinions to overrun and bewilder her, and, under their influence, separates from the church, will be guilty of an obstinate refusal of truth and light, which is the heaviest sin of man. It is of more importance, therefore, for our interests as a nation, that we should sift this matter to the bottom, than for our interests as a church. Besides all which, it may be shown that the principles, upon which alone the connection can be disavowed, tend intrinsically and directly to disorganization, inasmuch as they place government itself upon a false foundation.

6. These are the main reasons for handling the question in that sense which most applies to individual Christians, anxious to be informed how they may best discharge their duties in respect of this connection, as members of the state: while, at the same time, we shall find ourselves led by the proposed process to exactly the same conclusion, as if, setting out from an opposite quarter, we were called upon to assist in directing the operations of the church, with reference to the best means of extending its utility. There is a substantial conformity between our several duties, though not always an apparent one. The only question is, respecting the order of the processes by which they are demonstrated.

7. Our inquiry, however, is into the grounds and reasons of the alliance, not into its terms. The precise arrangements, by which the respective rights of the contracting parties are to be preserved, are matter of very great importance, but they are entirely distinct from the preliminary question, whether they ought to be contracting parties at all. There are indeed, points of contact between the two subjects, but they are incidental, and it is enough to indicate that which is the specific object of these pages, and which constitutes an object of adequate magnitude when taken alone, while the other, it is true, is alike important and neglected. Milton\* wrote to Sir Harry Vane the younger,

— besides, to know  
Both spiritual power and civil, what each means,  
What severs each, thou hast learnt, *which few have done*

\* Sonnet xvii.