

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

of evil, and tells us of the great struggle of which man is the centre. The rest reveals to us a higher and more marvellous preparation for a nobler and more enduring sphere of existence, where man will be no longer a natural being, but one in whom the spiritual will be triumphant, and whose eternal home will be in the immediate nearness of God. And for all this we have the fitting introduction in those significant words: "And God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness. . . So God created man in His image, in the image of God created He him."

R. PAYNE SMITH.

---

ART. II.—EURIPIDES.

(*The References are to Nauck's Edition, Leipzig, 1866.*)

THE enormous popularity of Euripides is sufficiently attested by the large number of his extant plays—nineteen, besides a quantity of fragments equal in bulk to three or four more. The most salient and impressive feature of ancient genius, its prolific exuberance, is virtually lost upon us moderns by our unconsciously measuring the poet only by the scale of his extant remains. Æschylus is credited with seventy plays; Sophokles, when all the spurious or suspected ones have been deducted, with one hundred and thirteen, of each of which totals seven alone survive: and Euripides with eighty, of which nineteen survive; besides which, each of them was more or less conspicuous in lyric or elegiac effusions, even if they had not won the foremost place with the buskin and the mask. If, however, Euripides was so popular, it is because he was so human. He took tragedy off its stilts, and was the most ready, versatile and copious interpreter of our emotions, occupying thus the opposite pole to Æschylus, who, as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> dealt by preference with the superhuman, the sublime, and the unfathomable. Sophokles, alike in period and in genius, occupies a mean-point between the two, as in statuary the heroic scale between the colossal and the life-size. The three were in Greek anecdote severally connected with the immortal memory of the victory of Salamis, in which Æschylus was a combatant; Sophokles, then a stripling lad, chosen for his personal beauty to lead the youthful chorus of the celebrants; while Euripides was born on the day.<sup>2</sup> There are, of course, different accounts, some placing the birth of the

<sup>1</sup> THE CHURCHMAN, vol. xiii., p. 367, 371-2.

<sup>2</sup> The *Corp. Inscript.* 6,051 gives: Εὐρεπίδης Μνησαρχίδου Σαλαμίνιος τραγικός ποιητής. Salamis is known to have been a deme of Attica. This description is no doubt therefore official and technical, and we may

last-named five years earlier; but the above triune memorial, on the whole, holds possession, nor is any sceptical criticism likely to succeed in displacing it. Euripides, taken thus as born 480 B.C., is believed to have reached the mellow age of seventy-four, dying, therefore, 406 B.C., but not on Attic soil. He had, either under the shock of public calamity—although he survived not to hear of the crowning disaster of Ægospotami in 405 B.C.—or to avoid the attacks of his many enemies; or again, as some suppose, owing to unhappy domestic circumstances, retired to the Macedonian Court of King Archelaüs. There, in the upland glades, which lie among the spurs of the Pangæan range, he is believed to have composed the “Bacchæ,” probably among his latest works. The wild surroundings of mountain and forest ministered to his Muse, and the drama seems set in the scenery which lay before the poet’s eye. His father was a Mnesarchus or Mnesarchides, his mother a Kleitô. The only blot on his birth was that she at one time sold garden produce; for had his birth been assailable at any other point, we should surely have heard of it from Aristophanes. The fact was no doubt due to some temporary impoverishment during his early years. And, indeed, the Persian occupation of Attica and Salamis must have been the temporary ruin of many families locally connected with the soil. A work of Philochorus (circ. 250 B.C.) is cited by Suidas and others, defending the poet from the aspersions of enemies, and giving various interesting details of his life. He asserted the poet’s family to have been no mean one. Theophrastus also, the philosopher, friend, and successor of Aristotle, who flourished half a century earlier, is cited by Athenæus, as stating that the poet was, when a boy, chosen as cupbearer on a festive occasion, for which even noble blood was socially requisite. He was, in early youth, an athlete, and a fragment of his “Autolykus” has left on record his detestation of the professionals of the palæstra. The Olympian story referred to

---

take it that the poet belonged to the island. This makes it not unlikely that he was born either there or on the shore close by, in hurried removal from the immediate scene of action, and thus within earshot of the crash and roar of combat, described so powerfully by Æschylus in the “Persæ,” v. 353 foll. Other accounts make him belong to the deme of Phlya or to that of Phylé.

<sup>1</sup> The precise time of his birth, however, must be allowed doubtful. It is said, indeed, to have been doubted in his own lifetime, and that he was rejected from a competition at the Olympic games because what we should call his “birth-register” was not forthcoming. This, however, is a very natural circumstance, if, as has been suggested above, he was born amid the *Sturm und Drang* of the greatest naval fight in Grecian history, and close to the scene of struggle. There is also a tradition that he used a cavern in Salamis facing the sea as a favourite retreat for study, far from the *profanum vulgus*, like Horace at his Sabine Farm.

in Note 3 confirms this. He is also said to have studied painting; and as Polygnotus, greatest of the early school of art, was his contemporary, the current standard would have been by no means low. But philosophy early absorbed him, Anaxagoras, friend and tutor of Perikles, taught him, as did also Prodikus and Protagoras, greatest and most famous of the "Sophists." Thus the leaders of the early Attic school of thought formed his intellectual and moral character; while with Sokrates his intimacy was such that the story was current, how that sage (or Arch-Sophist, as Aristophanes would have it) helped him in the composition of his tragedies. We may compare him, in regard of philosophic basis and the discipline of thought, with Goethe among the moderns. The two, moreover, stand similarly related to the current orthodoxy of their respective periods in Hellas and in Germany. The theosophic sentiments in the scene where Gretchen expresses her abhorrence of Mephistopheles may even be nearly paralleled by several Euripidean specimens. Nor would it be difficult to trace analogies between some of the governing ideas in the "Walpurgis-nacht" and those of the "Bacchæ." The scenes in which Goethe deliberately classicizes are designedly dropped from our comparison, as having a foregone bias in favour of our parallel. But it would be easy to show that in these Goethe moves rather in an Euripidean than in a Sophoklean or Æschylean orbit. We return, however, to the scanty biographical materials at our disposal.

The poet is believed to have been twice married, but not happily, and at least once divorced; but scandal has been so busy alike with his living and posthumous fame, that it is not easy to say more than this. He had, at least, three sons, one of whom, as well as a nephew (each named Euripides) was a play-wright; and the son exhibited successfully, after his father's death, three of the latter's plays—the "Bacchæ," the "Alcmaeon," and the "Iphigeneia at Aulis." The remorseless espionage of scandal pursued him into private life. Every public man at Athens lived "in a glass house," and the popularity of our poet made him, too, a public property. He was moreover gifted with a sensibility which gave him an insight into the complex phenomena of human emotion. This one may infer from his dramas, which abound with all the traits of tender feeling. Every pressure of circumstance acts on him like pressure on the key of an organ, and rouses a responsive note of expression, whether simply sensitive, or reflective. Thus he sways his audience through a wider gamut of the moral sympathies than any of the poets of antiquity. The pathos of childhood, of childlessness, of bereavement, of old age, of exile, of desertion, of ingratitude, of treachery, of slavery,

of hapless self-devotion, of sanguine hopefulness, of sudden despair, are all his. We may reasonably infer that he was in personal temperament over-weighted with sensitiveness to correspond—that he felt keenly the fickleness of the popular voice, the favour shown to unworthy rivals, the influence of political prejudice upon literary judgments, and was one of those who, as Shelley says, “learn in suffering what they teach in song.” The utter abandonment of license conceded to the comic caricaturist was the crying vice of the greatest period of the drama. Euripides was likely to feel more vividly than most its wholesale exaggerations, its coarse scurrility, and its foul or flippant distortions of the harmless incidents of private life. Unhappy domestic circumstances were sure to be fly-blown by the numerous insects which swarmed in the atmosphere of Athenian gossip. Aristophanes himself too grossly stoops his genius to pamper this depravity of taste. The gigantic “dung-beetle” of his “Peace” is no unfit type of that which, above all in his attacks on Euripides, he himself condescended to become. But how long has modern society been free from the same pest, that we should venture to pillory the Comic Muse of olden Hellas? Look at the foul stream of English lampoon literature from Martin Marprelate to L’Estrange, from L’Estrange to Swift, from Swift to John Wilkes; see the atrocities which were talked and written, even by Cobbett, within the memory of men yet alive; and let us be humbly thankful that—save, perhaps, at the time of a general election—the understrappers of public life have ceased to fill the air with rival falsehoods.

The standard of society in Attica tended to degrade women, and thus generate far-reaching depravity. The ideal of woman which Perikles holds up in his famous oration (Thucyd., ii., 45), “to have as little as possible said about them, for good or for evil,” shows that to repress their energies and ignore their influence was the tendency of the social system there. Thus Attic women lay under continual provocation to assert themselves out of their proper sphere, being condemned to seclusion and repression within it. The stimulus thus given was the more fatal from the absence of any definitely fixed moral standard, and most fatal of all when the currents of thought became more and more guided by the influence of the “Sophists,” as in Euripides’ own time. Old traditions of reverence were giving way before the solvent of popular scepticism, and found nothing to replace them. Home hardly existed for the Athenian housewife. It was for the male sex a “Liberty-Hall;” for the female, little else than a prison-house. Thus, while there was nothing adequate to draw out the nobler energies of womanhood, which crave for their due development, the

elements of Faith and Love; there was much to draw out its baser energies towards gossip, scandal, contumacy and intrigue. In such a state of society a poet, with powers of abstract thought and imagination dominant within him, would not easily make a good choice of a helpmate, amidst the existing fatal facilities for a bad one.

We may remember the somewhat parallel case of Milton, whose poems certainly show that he was more familiar with Euripides than with any other Greek writer—a preference, perhaps, founded on deeper sympathy than that of the textual study merely. Euripides seems, from the anecdotes preserved, to have been grave, self-restrained, and a profound student; losing early whatever playful gush of character he may have possessed. If bad wives were, under the social circumstances of the age, more easy to come by than good ones, such a temperament as his was likely to make bad worse.<sup>1</sup>

The versatility of the poet's creed, in respect of great regulative principles which for his predecessors are fixed, is his leading mental characteristic. Counter-currents of belief seem to play through him. His principles, so to speak, exist for the immediate purpose of his plot, vary with the demands of dramatic interest, and seem to shift with the scene. They sit, as did Byron's, loosely upon him, and do not govern but serve. We shall see further on, how one play overthrows the conclusion and contradicts the characters of another, and how readily the "damp sponge" of the artist "effaces the lines" of plot traced in a kindred previous drama.<sup>2</sup> But I am speaking now of cardinal points of ethics and religion, which for Æschylus and Sophokles were absolute; although, as we saw, in the former sometimes pushed to antagonism. Euripides assumes or dispenses with them, led, it should seem, by poetic sympathy with the spirit of the work in hand. Thus, as regards the recognition of the gods, a fragment of his "Bellerophon" runs, "Does anyone venture now to assert that there are gods in heaven? There are not! there are not!" Another fragment doubts whether it is chance or Providence (*δαιμων*) that sways the affairs of mortals. And such passages were turned to account by Aristophanes, who roundly says, "In his tragedies he has brought men over to the belief that there are no gods." Yet, on the other hand, in the "Bacchæ" we read, "yet though dwelling aloof in the sky the celestials survey the affairs of mortals;" and so yet another fragment, "Behold!

<sup>1</sup> It should be remembered that we know Euripides almost wholly from his enemies' report; and chiefly from that enemy's who most flattered his own sense of power by vivisectioning the character and domestic relations of his victim.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Βολαῖς ὑγράσων σπύγγος ἔλειπεν γραφήν.—Æsch., "Agam.," 1329.

all ye who deem that there is no god—nay, there is! there is!" Elsewhere, again; he seems to deify Æther as a source or creator of all life. Thus in the "Danaë," "This it is which bids things flourish and fade, live and perish;" and again, "O maid, Æther begat thee, the Zeus whom men so call." Here again Aristophanes is close upon him, where, when called upon to "address his prayer to the gods of his own cult," he invokes "Æther, my source of sustenance (βόσκημα)!" This Æther, with its rotating current or whirl of air (δῆρος), the elemental forces and astronomical objects, were borrowed from the physical speculations of Anaxagoras, as is also the doctrine that Mind (νοῦς) is that which gives brute matter its orderly arrangement and motion—*mens agitat molem*. Similar in its source is the language applied in the "Orestes" to the sun, as a metallic mass heated to incandescence (μύδρος). And in the "Ion" one expression seems to challenge modern thought by its anticipation of a quite recent discovery, the "photosphere" of the sun.<sup>1</sup> We thus find the poet atheistic, pantheistic, and piously orthodox by turns. He probably had "an open mind" upon these deep subjects. Unable to shake off the notion of a Supreme Being, he yet sees the incredibility of the popular creed; and sometimes denounces its absurdity, more often leaves his audience to apply for themselves the *reductio ad absurdum* which his incidents of plot suggest. The wide views of natural philosophy opened by Anaxagoras had shaken in his mind all the strata of traditional beliefs. He lets those views have free range, personifies physical principles, and then clothes them poetically with attributes which seem to compete with divinity. But again, these centrifugal forces are balanced by others in the moral order which have a centripetal tendency. He cannot shake off a moral government of the world, nor dissociate Providence from Omnipotence. Again, as regards his social maxims, most of those which startle us are suited to the character; as when one of the rival brothers acquits injustice when committed for a throne, or the other commends servile dependency where advantage is to be gained. "Allow me," so we read in a fragment, "to be denounced as base, so long as I win by it;" which is doubtless to be understood as in Shakespeare the hireling murderer's discovery, that his "conscience" is "in the Duke of Gloucester's purse." Similarly the famous line for which he was arraigned, which we may render, "The tongue took an oath, but the mind was unsworn,"<sup>2</sup> is to be extorted as a defence against the binding power of an oath exchanged under false pretences, not as a wholesale plea for perjury.

<sup>1</sup> ἀὶ ἐν φαινεναῖς ἡλίου περιπτουχαις ἔνεστι, κ. τ. λ.—"Ion.," 1516.

<sup>2</sup> ἡ γλῶσσ' ὁμῶμοχ' ἢ δὲ φρῆν ἀνάμοτος.—"Hippol.," 612.

With regard to his famous misogynism, there are passages which blaze with it, and characters which seem constructed to feed the flame, as those of Medeia, the nurse in "Hippolytus," and Hecuba in the latter part of the play which bears her name. Yet there are other characters moulded on directly opposite lines: Andromache, the blameless wife and tender mother; Alkestis, the model of conjugal devotion, Elektra of sisterly, Makaria of patriotic. For such the poet breathes and feels unmingled reverence. He could appreciate, even in Athens, feminine nobleness, sweetness, and moral beauty, and fathom all the uncalculating depth of self-surrender of which woman's nature is capable. Yet, on the whole, the note of "bitterness against them" which St. Paul forbids must be allowed in him to prevail; and probably one of the "roots" of that "bitterness" lay in his own domestic experience. The Divorce Court is a bad school for the study of female character, and Euripides, as we hinted above, is supposed to have gone through it or some analogous process. But if there was a pound of looseness or fickleness in one or both of his wives, there was probably a grain of incompatibility in himself. His character seems to lack the "outwardness" which makes and keeps a contented spouse; even as we read of another with whom he is compared above, "Master John Milton was a sour-tempered gentleman." In weighing, however, the utterances of Euripides on the subject of woman, we must not forget that Hesiod, Simonides, and Archilochus had said as bad of her before. Even the mild and gracious Sophokles, although his Deianeira is a winning impersonation of the tender and anxious wife just on the verge of jealousy, yet says in a fragment, "If there be a pest to mortals, there is not and never will be one worse than a woman."<sup>1</sup> Nay, Aristotle, the prince of philosophers, is the prince of misogynists, and classes together women and slaves. (Is Aristotle much read at Girton and Newnham?) He says there *is* such a thing as goodness in either; which he then qualifies as follows: "Although perhaps the fact is that women are rather bad than good, and slaves wholly worthless."<sup>2</sup> Ancient society disrated woman, made her a *quantité négligeable*, save for nursery and domestic purposes, and then complained that woman justified its contempt by depravity or worthlessness. It was Christianity alone which set her free to love in purity. Can we be surprised that ancient poets reflect ancient society on the whole?

<sup>1</sup> κάκιον ἄλλ' οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδ' ἔσται ποτε

γυναικός, εἴ τι πῆμα γίγνεται βροτοῖς.—Soph., "Fragm., 195."

<sup>2</sup> καὶ γὰρ γυνή ἐστιν χρηστὴ καὶ δοῦλος καίτοι γε ἴσως τὸ μὲν χεῖρον, τὸ δὲ δλωσ φαυλόν ἐστι.—Aristot., "Poët.," xv.



Most remarkable is the mannerism which the teaching of the sophists with its daily application in the popular law-courts stamped on the poet's mind. Save in his lyrical passages he is seldom uninfluenced by it. The opposition pleadings are nicely balanced, as in speeches of counsel. Every topic is duly marshalled, rival examples are adduced, rival commonplaces urged, rival conclusions established. Where Sophokles is ethical, Euripides is rhetorical. In the former the sentiments, in the latter the arguments, form the outline of character. Every personage, from hero to slave, is in Euripides ready with some choice morsel of gnomic wisdom. The poet runs over with the utterances of the lecture-room; and can no more refrain from giving "Socratic" sageness to a chorus of damsels than Sheridan could from besparkling with dicacious brilliancy the "heavy fathers" of the stage. The first are ready to die of wisdom, as the latter of wit, misplaced.

Aristotle with his "woman and slave" theory finds support from Euripides for the first half only. In no poet of the Old World but Homer<sup>1</sup> and Euripides does the slave find a champion. "A good slave is none the worse for being called a slave, and many of them are better than free men," and "on many slaves their name is a slur; but their spirit is more free than those who are not slaves." Not that their evil points escape his notice—affectedness of a knowing air, gluttony, covetousness, untrustworthiness, and their aping the vices of their masters.<sup>2</sup> We have noticed his aversion to the athletic fraternity, and his denunciation of the swagger and greed, in spite of which they were "idols of society."<sup>3</sup> He had other *bêtes noires* in soothsayers and heralds. The former stood on the same ground as the augurs of Rome, but did not, as there, form a single *collegium*, and therefore had not the same trial to resist laughing in one another's faces. Euripides hardly makes any detailed charges against them, but evidently shares the view of their venality and untrustworthiness which Œdipus in his anger expresses in the scene with Teiresias.<sup>4</sup> Sophokles in the "Œdipus Tyrannus" evidently points part of his awful moral against the impiety of doubting such revelations from the god. In Euripides we breathe an atmosphere of free scepticism on such pretensions. He says these revealers "are seldom right and often wrong in their shots at truth;" and reckons it "a simpleton's belief that birds can so benefit men."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Homer allows that slavery takes half the good out of a man. But his single character of Eumæus justifies what is here said.

<sup>2</sup> "Fragm.," 514, 515, 533; 49, 50, 52, 86.

<sup>3</sup> *πῶλεως ἀγάλατα φειτῶσ*.—"Fragm.," 284, 10.

<sup>4</sup> "Œd. Rex.," 337-9. <sup>5</sup> "Iph. in Aul.," 957; "Helen," 747.

As regards heralds, they are babblers who intrude advice unsought, fawn upon fortune and power, are arrogant and exaggerating.<sup>1</sup> The sacredness attached to their office—one chiefly of ceremonial function—would naturally tend to inflate their pretensions, and make them regard themselves as a religious necessity.

One should notice in his treatment of his heroic themes that he never seems tied to any one version of their incidents, and cares not that those of one play conflict with those of another. The old epic matter, in whatever form it reached him, was so much mere protoplasm for his dramatic imagination to work upon. But he, further, seems to forget or ignore his own creations with the same license which he claims in respect to our Homer or the Cyclics. The power of novel situations and combinations to develop character or give powerful stage effect seems to master his remembrance at the moment, and he cancels at once the relations which he had previously created between the very same characters. It is as if Shakespeare had given us Falstaff married to Mrs. Ford in one play and to Mrs. Quickly in another, without the fat knight being either a widower or a bigamist; or had killed him first at Shrewsbury and then at Agincourt. To notice that Euripides makes Elektra married nominally to a virtuous rustic, and doing housewifely drudgery in a rural homestead, is only to take a sample of the way in which he sought his moral effects in the violent contrast of fortunes which such a situation of a heroine suggests. To compel a detested daughter to a degraded alliance was probably a resource within the current experience of family quarrels at the day, and would strike a responsive note in Athenian domestic feeling, whether of aversion or politic approval. To heighten the effect still further, he makes the heroine to have been first intended for Castor, the demi-god (as mythology mostly views him); and, to complicate relationships still further, makes Klytæmnestra to have borne children to Ægisthus. Each of these incidents is, I believe, equally *de suo*. We do not know what made Euripides alter the legend of Iphigenia's sacrifice into a theurgic rescue. Perhaps some local legend from Tauri, reaching Attica, supplied his motive. Æschylus and Sophokles give her sacrifice as consummated, and make it the cardinal point of their plot. But after all, the greatest inconsistencies are to be found in Euripides as compared with himself. Thus Orestes and Elektra are brother and sister, and each gives the title to a drama, carrying on the fortunes of the great house of Atreus. Here, if anywhere, one would expect the poet to

<sup>1</sup> "Suppl.," 426; "Orest.," 895; "Troiad," 425-6; "HeracL.," 292-4.

hold fast one consistent thread of plot.—Not in the least! The finale of one exactly upsets that of the other. The finales of Euripides, in fact, have no more “finality” than the successive Irish measures of a well-known statesman. The poet treats his creations as a child does his houses of cards. *Diruit, ædificat, mutat quadrata rotundis.*<sup>1</sup>

As regards purely literary questions, it seems to me that the “Rhesus” must be Euripides’ genuine work. It was probably a very early effort of the poet’s, who is supposed to have begun writing plays at eighteen. It is taken apparently direct from our “Iliad,” x. It has no female character save the goddesses. In its direct *rapport* with Homer, and as regards the absence of female parts, it, with the “Cyclops,” stands curiously alone from all the rest of the extant plays of Euripides.<sup>2</sup> As experience led him to rely more on himself, his margin of complication would tend to widen, and the “Rhesus,” therefore, probably marks a minimum of such secondary resources. From this point he expands in boldness, until the plots of one play, as we have seen, contradict those of another—things of yesterday—*hiers je plaidais!* There are, however, some of the lost plays on Homeric subjects of which we know approximately the plot’s outline. Such is the “Philoktetes.” And here we have the further advantage of comparing not only the extant tragedy of Sophokles on the same theme, but a similarly lost one of Æschylus, known also in outline from similar literary sources. The latter poet, as might be expected, sticks close to the simple form of epos, which he diversifies only by hints taken from other parts of the “Iliad,” of which, as it were, it forms an interlude. Odysseus alone is the envoy here, and the time is *before* the wrath of Achilles was appeased by the death of Hektor. In Sophokles, as is well known, a *pair* of envoys—Odysseus and Neoptolemus—at a period, therefore, *subsequent* to Achilles’ death and Neoptolemus’ arrival at Troy, undertake the errand. In the latter generous and chivalrous comrade, the poet finds the ethical counterpoise which he seems to have affected to the wily and unscrupulous Odysseus. It is like coupling Sir Galahad and Sir Modred in the same enterprise. Now compare Euripides’ plot. There, as in the “Rhesus” and “Iliad,” Diomedes is the comrade of Odysseus, who is transformed unrecognizably by Pallas’ aid as in the Odyssey, and by the aid of native Lemnians (the Chorus) steals the famous bow from Philoktetes while in a paroxysm of pain.

<sup>1</sup> For the evidence in detail of this inconstancy of Euripides in his plots, see preface to “Odyssey,” vol. iii., pp. 55 to 60, and the references there given in the footnotes.

<sup>2</sup> Some, however, of the lost plays certainly lacked the interest of female parts; *e.g.*, the “Philoktetes,” of which more below.

But the poet could no more do without his weapon of dialectic than Philoktetes without his bow. He must complicate with an opening for an argumentative contest. Even in Lemnos Euripides is forensic or nothing. He therefore brings in a Trojan embassy, who seek to win Philoktetes' aid by playing on his enmity to the Greek princes. Odysseus is, of course, victorious in the war of words, and the Trojan overtures fail. Diomedes then persuades Philoktetes to join the Greeks on condition that Odysseus, against whom alone his enmity appears implacable, is excluded for the future from their host and council. This condition accepted, Odysseus suddenly reveals his real identity, and gains a further rhetorical triumph, the details of which are lost, by even now persuading Philoktetes to return with the condition rescinded. Here we see situations showing much dramatic smartness, and a *περιπέτεια*, as Aristotle calls it, of first-rate stage effect. And here we get a glimpse of that talent as a play-wright which enabled our poet to enhance interest and outshine rivals by striking incident and sudden change. If the material he wrought in was of inferior grain, yet his dove-tailing was exact, his polish consummate, and every hinge of the work well oiled.<sup>1</sup>

A few words on the "Hippolytus" may here find place. I think my friend Professor Paley, to whose edition (and especially its preface, which has been before me as I write) I acknowledge special obligation, is correct in his moral estimate of this drama on the whole, perhaps with one reservation. Let us hear his words:

The character of Phædra is admirably conceived. The jeers of Aristophanes will never prevail with those who can sympathize with human feelings and infirmities, and who rightly judge Phædra to be neither a profligate nor an immodest woman. She makes no advances to Hippolytus; but, on the contrary, is fully conscious that the mere conception of love for him is criminal; and she strives to control and suppress it by every means in her power, but in vain. Finally, she prefers even death to shame. Her fault, doubtless, is the false charge which she leaves against Hippolytus; and it is not clear whether her object was to screen herself or to be avenged on him for his proud indifference. The former cause is alleged at v. 1310, the latter at v. 729. We must remember, in estimating her actions, that the Greeks thought suicide glorious, and deceit rather clever than wrong. In short, we may regard this false allegation against Hippolytus as an excuse for her suicide, and caused by her desire to assign a motive for it which would bring credit to herself, though to the discredit of another.—Introductory note to "Hippolytus," vol. i., p. 165.

I have only to add to the above one comment. I suppose that Juvenal expresses the traditional moral judgment of the

<sup>1</sup> Another very curious diversification on a simple Homeric theme was his "Phoenix." That hero tells his story in our "Iliad" ix.

ancients when he gives so far greater weight to the second of the above motives as to lose sight of the other, and make Phædra an example of the maxim, which indeed I see Mr. Paley has cited in his note on v. 730:

Mulier sævissima tunc est

Quum stimulos odio pudor admovet,<sup>1</sup>

which we may reinforce by his further maxim:

Vindicta

Nemo magis gaudet quam femina.<sup>2</sup>

The ancients judged more nearly from the Euripidean standpoint than we can, and may be presumed to represent the poet's own judgments. Phædra, then, in revenge is clearly reckless. She knows that her revenge can only take effect by sowing strife between a father and a son, that father being *her own husband*, and making him in some way his own son's executioner; somewhat as Medeia for vengeance on Jason takes her children's lives with her own hands. In each case the closest ties, the tenderest natural affections, are sacrificed to the passion of revenge. After this I need add, surely, nothing more on the ethics of the piece.

The obvious lesson which lies on the surface in this play and the "Bacchæ" is the danger of despising this or that deity of the Pantheon. Olympus is a court jealous of the prerogatives of all its members; and for "contempt of court," shown even to the least eminent of them, heavy damages are sure to follow. There is, as Artemis explains to Theseus in this play,<sup>3</sup> a joint interest among the immortals; and none will, even to rescue a favourite mortal, balk the vengeance of another. It is not unlike the principle of the proscription lists of the Triumvirs in Roman story. The notion is as old as Homer, and even those who deny antiquity to the "Iliad," must concede it to the tale of Meleagros in the ninth book. Thus, then, the "Hippolytus" and the "Bacchæ" both support in close detail a jealous polytheism. Is this what Euripides designed to teach?

I think that there is often a double purpose in genius, so that it conveys by the same vibrations of the same chord, one lesson obvious at the moment to the superficial thinker, and another, which may be opposed to the first, to the more ripened judgment. Whether both these are equally within the consciousness of the genius himself, is a question difficult to answer. Let us, however, take the direct moral of the poet's fable first. Hippolytus despises Aphrodite. He calmly remarks, when remonstrated with, that men have their favourite deities, as deities their favourite men, and that Artemis is *his*

<sup>1</sup> "Juv. Sat.," x. 328.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii. 191.

<sup>3</sup> "Hippol.," 1328 foll.

choice, coupled with a sexual asceticism of which, I think, we have no other instance in ancient Greek legends.<sup>1</sup> He is at once placed in a great strait of temptation. He recoils, but boils over with tempestuous indignation, and speaks the bitterest passage against women in all Euripides' remains. Then Theseus returns to find Phædra dead, with the fatal codicil of accusation in her hand, and Aphrodite's vengeance follows. As soon as that is over, too late to save, Artemis, his patroness, appears to explain and console. But the lesson of *læsa maiestas*, on the rival deity's part, is driven home.

In the "Bacchæ," Pentheus is slain, his mother and grandfather depart into exile, the vengeance of the god is complete. Great is Dionysus! as in the "Hippolytus" great was Aphrodite! So would the average Athenian spectator say, and, we may presume, would with renewed zeal frequent the rites of both.

But when a generation or two has passed in debating ethical problems, a knot of men here and there, led by Sokrates' and Plato's teaching, would put questions reaching behind these obvious lessons—as, What sort of gods must these be who directly stimulate to the unnatural access of a natural passion, and work through falsehood their way to wreck a whole household of innocent persons upon unnatural crimes suborned by these gods themselves? And how, if reason be the divine element in man, and passion the animal, can those be divine who in the struggle between them throw all their weight on the animal side? And how can she have died well whose last wish in dying was to be another's bane? Thus the greater the atrocity in which either tragedy deals, the greater would be the eventual recoil from mythological beliefs in the imprescriptible rights of the Olympians; the more intense the feeling that they represent but bloated passions, and goad to excesses which the sound mind of man abhors. Thus the lessons of accepting popular beliefs, and not being proudly wiser than the general public, which are inculcated in the letter, must be viewed either as an irony of the poet, or as a mere accommodation to the vulgar mind—a medium on which to float the more permanent lesson which lies below the surface for reflection to fetch up. Thus, taking the earlier and obvious lesson as that expressed in Virgil's line,

Discite justitiam moniti et non temnere Divos,

the lesson as presented by reflection would be, "The more we learn of justice, the more we must learn to despise *such* gods."

<sup>1</sup> It may be compared, of course, but distantly, with the relation of the peasant husband to Elektra. Both were, no doubt, of the poet's own device, and presumably had a root in his character—perhaps influencing his own conjugal relations.

Indeed, when we turn to the "Ion," we find some such lesson expressly formulated.

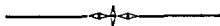
The language of Euripides is copious but chaste. He discarded, at least after his "Rhesus," nearly all traces of the somewhat bombastic style in which Æschylus delighted. The terse and vigorous Attic in which his dialogue proceeds leaves nothing of finish to be desired. The most stormy passion, the most delicate sentiment, the profoundest pathos, the most covert *innuendo*, all alike find their expression adequate. He was the most admired as a model of character-drawing by the great comic poets of the middle and later periods. He was the one whom Roman imitators in tragedy most readily followed. He has supplied the French stage of the golden classic period with a large amount of ready-made material. His love for the polished rapier of dialectic was his special weakness; but throughout the period of Attic independence that taste carried the relish of his countrymen with it. Nor were the constant apothegms and moral maxims in which all his characters indulge such a drug on the stage then as they would be now, or would have been in many an intervening age. Philosophy was then hardly fledged. Its results were curious novelties in the province of morals and in their application to conduct, as elsewhere. Remarks which are now staled by a thousand treatises embodying them or kindred topics had not become trite and threadbare of interest then.

These moral remarks and religious apothegms were so numerous that *spicilegia* of them were formed by various collectors. I will take a few as specimens, chiefly from the "Fragments":

399. But when wealth ebbs a match is weak-to-hold ;  
Nobility's a thing men praise indeed,  
But with the well-to-do they rather wed.
367. Regarding shame I can't quite see my way ;  
One cannot do without it, yet 'tis mischief.
564. But different men are pleased with different tastes  
[Or *chacun à son goût*.]
404. O mortal matters ! and O women's wits !  
How great a plague in Venus' wiles we find !
409. A well-born wife, though beauty there be none,  
Is prized by many for their children's sake,  
And high position more than property.
- "Elekt." 551. For many, though born noble, yet are base.
- "Fragm." 355. None from an unjust warfare comes home safe.
357. Your big ship's better than your little boat.
670. Love that leads on to wisdom and to worth  
Is all men's envy : may such love be mine.
548. Of all things worst to combat is a woman
1116. Nay, but what house, what frame of workmen's hands  
Can hedge the god within its folded walls ?  
[A striking parallel to the revealed truth : "The Most  
High dwelleth not in temples made with hands."]

- "Suppl." 312. 'Tis this upholdeth human polities,  
This their one safeguard—to hold fast the laws.
- "Fragm." 970. For silence is an answer for the wise.  
The parents' failures on the children's heads  
The gods bring back.  
[Compare the Second Commandment.]  
842 Virtue, best prize of all within men's power.

HENRY HAYMAN, D.D.



ART. III.—MR. OLIPHANT'S "LIFE IN MODERN PALESTINE."

*Haifa, or Life in Modern Palestine.* By LAURENCE OLIPHANT. Blackwood and Sons.

MR. OLIPHANT'S new work is a reprint of a series of letters which were originally contributed by him to the *New York Sun*. The author being the owner of a property on Mount Carmel, upon which he resides, has had opportunities seldom enjoyed by an English gentleman of observing the customs and character of the people, of investigating antiquities, and exploring ancient sites, and of forming opinions on many social, religious, and economical questions of great importance in connection with the prosperity of the Holy Land. His book is full of information, not always new, but always given in an agreeable and attractive style. It is likely to find many readers.

The last thirty years have witnessed many changes in the condition of Palestine. Increased facilities of communication with the Western world, and greater security for the lives and property of travellers, have caused a great influx of pilgrims and tourists, all of whom leave money behind them. The religious interest which attaches to the country has induced Christians as well as Jews to turn thither, in the hope of establishing themselves as settlers, and more than one great Christian power fosters the foundation of important enterprises, the aim of which is to extend the influence of the Greek and Latin Churches, and through them of the nations by which they are protected. Around Jerusalem alone a dozen places can be counted in which new convents, hospices, and schools have been erected under French or Russian protection during the present generation, and the consular representatives of those countries are accustomed to attend in great state the Easter and Christmas ceremonies of their respective Churches. Official France ignores religion at home, but makes use of the religious zeal and enthusiasm of its people to further its political aims abroad. "These French consuls," writes Mr.