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THE BIBLE IN EUROPE

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION TO CIVILISATION

BY

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LONDON:

WATTS & CO.,

17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1907

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PREFACE

RECENT discussions of our educational system have directed attention once more to an historical question of some interest: How far has the religion of Europe been a creative force in the making of its distinctive civilisation? Ever since the Churches entered upon the apologetic phase of their life, they have laid peculiar stress on their past service to Europe, and sought to ground thereon a claim to continued recognition and power. To the majority of people the appeal was effective enough. The co-extension of our Western religion with our Western civilisation, and the permeation of most of our institutions with theological ideas and ecclesiastical traditions, constituted a solid fact that made a minute examination superfluous. When, in addition, a number of obviously sceptical writers urged that the maintenance of religion is essential to the maintenance of our civilisation; when scholars like Mr. Birrell and Mr. Bryce solemnly repeated that the Bible is "the source of England's greatness"; men and women of little historical culture felt that they might continue to lend a sympathetic ear to the solicitations of the clergy.

But the reform of history and the general reconsideration of older convictions have tended to strengthen the attitude of interrogation. The apologetic works, to which one turns for some explicit proof, either offer us only the unsubstantial rhetoric and the strained generalisations of the older fashion of writing history, or else they make indiscriminate appeals to that earlier Christian literature which Mr. Lecky has described as "surpassing in its mendacious ferocity any other that the world has known." Indeed, living masters of

ecclesiastical history, like Professor Harnack, have regretted that their science has not advanced in line with profane history, and abandoned the irregularities of its youth. Still, in reading it, one feels that it is "history with a purpose," and that its purpose is, in the mind of the writers, so lofty and imperious as to throw in the shade the ordinary canons of the profane historian.

The following essay is a study in detail of the social effect of the adoption of the Christian religion in Europe. The beneficent results of some of the Christian ideas and emotions have been enlarged upon so fully at all times that it only remained for me to dwell, at any length, on the less familiar disadvantages of the new doctrines. Here, again, however, most of the facts which I bring to the reader's notice are so well established by historians like Milman, Lecky, Gibbon, Buckle, Boissier, Draper, White, Hallam, Bryce, and others, that I have not frequently been compelled to make original research. Where I have done so, the text is fully supported by authorities. In the main, my little work is a sketch of a side of the historical development of European institutions that is too often ignored. But the study of it is essential for the formation of a sound judgment on the social value of Christianity, and a wise determination of our attitude towards it to-day. That my work is unadorned with those flowers of rhetoric with which the reader is wont to be entertained in the perusal of works on this subject will not, I trust, diminish its utility. The brief space to which I had to confine myself barely sufficed to contain the vast mass of facts that I wished to submit, and I must leave the appropriate observations on them to the discerning and sensitive reader.

J. M.

January 5th, 1907.

Chapter I.

THE PASSAGE FROM PAGAN TO CHRISTIAN CIVILISATION

At the outset of an inquiry such as I propose to make it is particularly necessary to have a definition of civilisation that shall be free from philosophical or sectarian prejudice. The difficulty of giving a precise expression to familiar ideas has often been noted, but there are few subjects on which reflection discovers a larger confusion than here. A dozen authoritative writers assail us at once with radically different views. Dr. Fairbairn, one of the ablest ecclesiastical writers on our subject, bestows a broad blessing on our age, and assures us that *this* is "the age of faith." Dr. W. Barry, writing with equal authority from the Catholic point of view, dwells with sombre phrases on the chief features of our time, and, presumably, finds a superior civilisation in the eighteenth or the fourteenth or some even earlier century; while Dr. Barry's spiritual chief, Pius X., is so perplexed, as he reads the signs of the times, that he can only give the authoritative decision that our world is indeed dominated by Satan, but by that astuter Satan who borrows the drapery of an angel of light. Nor is

the confusion less when we turn aside entirely from writers whose vision may, without offence, be suspected of a sectarian warp. Mr. Lowes Dickinson conceives our modern development as a restored continuity with the broken civilisation of Greece, "across the delirious fumes of the Middle Ages"; while Mr. William Morris seeks in those Middle Ages, as he reads them, the ideal of the future state. Mr. Edward Carpenter scorns the whole elaborate growth that we call modern civilisation, and advocates a return to an almost patriarchal simplicity; while Mr. Bernard Shaw would breed a superman, and put him in a world far different from any that has yet been.

In the face of these formidable differences, one must shrink from the task of defining civilisation, and have recourse to a less stately expedient. It will be enough for my purpose to select a few points on which most social writers are agreed, and to test the action of the Christian Churches by the proportion in which they have contributed to those qualities.

Dr. Beattie Crozier, in his work on *Civilisation and Progress*, finds the advance of humanity's cause in the expansion of our powers. That is at once in harmony with the current philosophic definition of evolution, and an accurate abstract presentation of the general feeling of thoughtful men. For my purpose, which is, ultimately, rather practical than philosophical, I must take it in

conjunction with the utilitarian ideal of the greatest possible happiness for the greatest possible number of human beings. One fact emerges distinctly, dominantly, out of the controversial welter of our time. Whether there be gods or no, whether there be a future life or no, whether our inherited ideas and institutions be true or false, men seek happiness. It is two feelings, two instincts, that hold the last and the universal authority, even in our rationalistic age. The world-old impulse toward happiness, working upward through a thousand discarded forms of art and religion and polity and custom, is still the great standard by which all shall be judged ; and to it is now added an altruistic feeling, or, rather, a communal feeling, that rises above the antithesis of self and other, the demand that all men shall share, as far as possible, in the new happiness.

Thus we get a guiding principle on which we may securely question the facts of history. Whether or no it obtain the elegant sanction of the philosopher, it expresses the general feeling with which we regard the complex elements of our civilisation. Even ecclesiastical writers are, on this particular issue, willing to suspend the claim that they are safeguarding the transmundane future of men, and they challenge inquiry into the effect of their long domination in promoting this humane ideal. Amid the complexities of modern life most of us are agreed that certain

elements do tend to further the progress of the race and increase its well-being. Correct theology may or may not be necessary, a simple life may or may not be happier than one with a thousand needs and luxuries; but there are few who question that the cause of real civilisation must include a cultivation of the intellect, the character, and the sense of beauty, together with such modification of our material environment as shall reduce pain and ugliness to the smallest possible dimensions.

In this, at all events, we have a criterion of the action of Christianity which would not be rejected by Guizot or Villemain or Döllinger or Maitland, or any other great historical apologist. These are precisely the claims that they have advanced on behalf of their respective Churches, or of the collective agency of Christian belief in Europe. They urge that the religion of Europe has promoted intellectual culture, improved character, fostered artistic creation, stimulated benevolence, guided political development, and had no small share in the transformation of our homes and cities. They rightly observe that these are among the indisputable elements of civilisation; and they go on to claim, with some plausibility, that the destruction of their religion will enfeeble these progressive forces and endanger the cause of humanity.

Thus it is, fortunately, unnecessary for me to indulge in the attractive and laborious work of

finding a philosophic formula for civilisation. Four great and simple questions confront us the moment we conceive our problem aright. How far is that intellectual development, for which Europe (the reader will see that the United States is part of the problem) is distinguished, due to the adoption of Christianity? To what extent has character improved in Europe during the last 1,900 years, and how far is the advance due to Christianity? Has artistic evolution in Europe been healthily stimulated by religion? Has the material development of our civilisation, the removal of sources of pain and the multiplication of agreeable commodities, been fostered or hindered by the Churches? These are the leading questions that must guide such an inquiry. They break up into a hundred matters of detail at once, if we are to answer them with profit and discernment. What was the share of the Churches in the abolition of slavery, the humanisation of warfare, the control of disease and assuagement of pain, the multiplication of works of mercy and charity, the attainment of a dominion over the great forces of nature, the advance of science, the elimination of violence and vice, the reform of jurisprudence, the saner treatment of crime, the spread of education, the betterment of the position of woman, and a score of other reforms? I have endeavoured to collect all the available material for answering these questions, so that the reader may judge for himself. In this I am indebted to those

ecclesiastical writers who have dealt with the subject, and I shall keep them steadily in view. No doubt a serious historical student must regret that they usually hang such rich and heavy garlands of rhetorical generalisation on the facts they establish. The effect of this is, at times, so thoroughly to hide the points of attachment that their readers must be content with a mere æsthetic admiration and enjoyment of their periods. Our age demands a different procedure, and I shall be content to collect and present, in bald outline, the relevant historical facts on each issue.

But before I approach the first of the leading questions I have enumerated it is expedient to say a few words on the social changes which accompanied the early acceptance of Christianity. There still lingers in our midst, though it has long been banished from the realm of serious history, a touching and dramatic version of the fortune of Europe in the first six centuries of the Christian era. Teachers in Young Men's Christian Associations still tell their pupils—when they have reached the age of discretion—how the Roman Empire was reeling into the abyss, intoxicated by its vices and burdened with its unique luxuries; how its callous senators fed their carp with human flesh, and sat to admire the emotions of a crucified slave, or the thrill of lascivious dances, after Lucullan banquets of unexampled prodigality; and how the shadow of the Cross suddenly crept over the worn and despairing

world, and Rome, in an ascetic reaction, cast its arms about the symbol of Redemption, and deserted its evil ways. In view of the obstinate prevalence of this fairy-tale, it is incumbent on me to establish, or to point out that historians have established, a very different version of the moral evolution of the Roman Empire, the adoption of Christianity, and the moral and social state of Europe after that adoption.

Possibly a couple of quotations from two reputable writers will give some idea of the confusion which must exist in many minds with regard to the condition of ancient Rome. In his *Religion in History and Modern Life* (p. 204) Principal Fairbairn writes: "You know not how destitute of true and generous action the Roman world was." That is the current estimate in some quarters. But a student of history who, among other distinctions, has lately won some prestige by his attacks on Higher Critics and Rationalists, Dr. Emil Reich, breaks out into the following impassioned protest against that view :—

> It would be the easiest thing in the world to accumulate examples of the most tender charity practised by these immoral Romans; for instance, the charitable institutions of the Emperors Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian, which embraced all the orphans and the minor children of the vast Empire. Numberless are the cases of the most magnanimous individuals. Justice in imperial Rome, in this rotten and diseased Rome, was administered in the most perfect way. We seldom or never hear a complaint over the injustice of judges, or the injustice

> of the imperial chamber. The liberty of citizens, even the personal safety of slaves, were protected by powerful laws; the taxes were small, and were, comparatively speaking, a rare event. The average Roman gentleman was a firm believer in the pure doctrine of the Stoa..... These rotten Romans of the first three centuries of our era, instead of dozing away in idle profligacy, were the founders of thousands of flourishing cities in France, Britain, Germany, Austria, etc., with so many aqueducts for fresh water, with countless dikes and roads in almost all Europe, in Asia Minor, and in Africa. These rotten Romans protected everybody and persecuted nobody..... They cultivated literature and science, and a host of the greatest writers, thinkers, and scientists the world has ever seen, like Strabo, Ptolemy, Galenus, Pappus, etc., lived under their mild rule. Commerce was protected and extended to the land of the Chinese and the bays of Sweden. There was a most admirable postal system all over the vast extent of the Empire, connecting London with Alexandria in Egypt, and furnishing the greatest facilities for private correspondence. The innumerable nations under these diseased Romans felt so happy that they never, or very rarely, thought of revolting against a rule at once so mild and profitable. This is the real picture of the Roman Empire.[1]

To many who have been imbued from youth with the dark ecclesiastical idea of the Roman Empire this picture will cause great surprise. It is, however, in the main, a fair summary of the character of the Empire under the Antonines (before Christian influence affects it); and it is borne out in nearly every phrase by the most recent and authoritative writers on the period, such as Boissier and Dill.[2] Clerical writers usually

[1] *The History of Civilisation*, p. 371.
[2] The reader who may think Gibbon (ch. ii.), or Lecky

omit to notice a very considerable change that came over Roman life before the end of the first century. They zealously propagate a half-dozen stories of barbaric cruelty to slaves, and convey an impression that these stories illustrate the general character of a people. They dwell with discreet emphasis, and even darker suggestion, on the most virulent passages in the satirists of the time, but do not repeat the warning which every serious historian gives in regard to these expressions. And not one in fifty of them observes that Tacitus and Suetonius, the historians of the time, record a great change that took place at the accession of Vespasian (70 A.D.).

In the century preceding that date we have the worst moral period of the Roman people. The world had been laid under tribute to the victorious city, and luxury and vice flourished in the degree they have ever done in the like circumstances both before and since the rise of Christianity. No informed student, indeed, measures the character of the period by the satires of Juvenal or the epigrams of his friend Martial. The embittered temper of the one and the unscrupulous art of the other were sure to light upon the eccentricities and extremities of the worse features of the time. We

(*History of European Morals*), or Renan (*Marc Aurèle*) less credible than Dr. Fairbairn, will do well to read Dr. Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* or Boissier's *La Religion Romaine.*

trust that our generation will not some day be judged by the censures of pessimists like Max Nordau or of rhetoricians like Father Vaughan. I will deal in later chapters with the specific evils of the time. For the moment I will only point out that the "nameless vices" of the time, on which the preacher shudderingly dwells, turn out to be vices that are appallingly prevalent in London and Paris to-day; and that the wealth and luxury of the "smart set" of the time were at least not more flagrant than those of modern millionaires. The enormity of having a palace that cost £60,000 and of leaving a fortune of £1,700,000, as Crassus did, is dwarfed by recent examples in England and America. The banquets, of which Macrobius has given us the *menu*, have their equals in our time. The charge of having given £1,000 for a good slave-cook or a pretty slave-girl would provoke only a smile from an eighteenth-century or even a twentieth-century epicure. But the mansions of a Whitaker Wright or the wardrobes of a Marquis of Anglesea will not give a character to our epoch, and we must be equally just to a generation that laid more than one foundation-stone of our civilisation.

It is, however, far from my intention to apologise for the vulgar ostentation, the shameful prodigality, the cruelty, and the profligacy which were widespread in the first century of the Empire. It is more pertinent to tell how, while Christianity still

lingered in the communistic clubs of the time and had no influence on the general life, Rome passed to a period, as Dr. Dill calls it, "of almost unexampled peace and prosperity, a period of upright and benevolent administration and of high public virtue." Tacitus (*Annals*, iii., 55), a stern censor of luxury and vice, dwells emphatically on this change and its causes. The example of Vespasian and the re-assertion of the older Roman spirit by fresh arrivals from the uncorrupted provinces were the chief of these causes. In this he is fully supported by Suetonius (*Vespasianus*, 9), by the letters of the younger Pliny, and the inscriptions of the period. These are men who knew intimately that Roman society on the fringe of which Juvenal and Martial penned their malignant gossip. We must not assume that there was a sudden conversion of the entire city to more sober ways. Such conversions have rarely occurred, and then only in the stress of an emotional storm which has generally been succeeded quickly by reversion. But that there was a remarkable advance in sobriety, humanity, and social efficiency is questioned by no authoritative historian. Philosophers and emperors proclaimed, in impassioned language, the universal brotherhood of men. Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius declared, in almost modern phrases, that all men were their brothers and the whole world their country. Inscriptions of the period, which may be read in Boissier and Dill,

show that works of charity and mercy were lavishly multiplied. The gulf between the slave and the master was being partly filled, and a series of imperial enactments made the previous excesses of cruelty impossible in the future. In a word—I give details in the respective chapters—the better spirit of Rome ripened into a concern for personal and public virtue and a practice of benevolence of which the reader of ecclesiastical history has not the vaguest suspicion. "It would," says Mr. Lecky (i., 241), "be impossible to recognise more cordially, or to enforce more beautifully, that doctrine of universal brotherhood for which the circumstances of the Roman Empire had made men ripe."

All the authorities I have quoted are agreed that we must not look in this new phase of Rome's life for any tincture of Christian influence, nor will anyone who is acquainted with its extent at the time dream of finding it. The chief moral agency at work was a development of the Stoic philosophy. The elevated character of its ideal of virtue has never been challenged, and I will deal later with its less known doctrine of human brotherhood and benevolence. But it is a singular and regrettable circumstance that religious and social writers can still theorise on the conversion of Rome without any allusion to this beneficent development of Stoicism under the emperors. Mr. Benjamin Kidd, for instance, in introducing the pseudo-

scientific argument he has adduced on behalf of religion, contrives to omit Stoicism altogether from his description of Roman development, and passes directly from the vice of the Augustan age to what he conceives to be Christian sobriety.[1] From such perverse readings of history conclusions of little value can be drawn. We are passing into an age when most readers are prepared to accommodate their sympathies to the historical facts, and do not wish to have the facts distorted into compliance with their sympathies. In the new spirit we shall, perhaps, find a greater promptness to do justice to one of the finest of the pre-Christian agencies in the amelioration of Europe. A philosophy—or, if the colder and more academic name raise a prejudice, a religion (but a religion without cult or priests)—that spread peace over so vast and unstable an Empire for a century, that diffused a spirit of humanity in a corrupted city, and that culminated in the finest series of despotic rulers that the world has ever known, is one that we may usefully take account of in the religious reconstruction of our time.

From the last of the Stoic emperors until the fourth century the Roman Empire slowly disintegrated. Civil war, military ascendancy, fiscal and

[1] *Social Evolution*, p. 133. Among other historical curiosities Mr. Kidd countenances the notion that Greek morality, of which Stoicism is the crown, "never embraced any conception of humanity" (p. 145). Stoic moralists urged it almost in the words of Thomas Paine, as we shall see.

political disorder, weakened its gigantic frame, and made it incapable to resist the heavy shock of the northern barbarians. It must be granted that the Stoic system did not, and could not, become the religion of the poorer freemen and the slaves; but its extension in that direction must not be forgotten. Debased as the slaves usually were, it cannot have been without some new and strange stirring of the moral pulse that they heard the greatest philosopher of their time and the all-powerful emperor sincerely greet them as brothers, and saw one of their class attain the rank of a teacher of the wealthy. On the other hand, a religion that came to the slave and the worker through their own social centres (if it did not, indeed, originate there)[1] was sure to touch them more effectually. The philanthropic sentiment of a Seneca or a Marcus Aurelius would command respect; but the same sentiment expressed in their own language, and flowing from hearts that suffered as theirs did, would ensure allegiance. Christianity made rapid progress throughout the Empire, and, by its very success in appealing to the secret aspiration of the oppressed, incurred a political suspicion on the part of the masters.

But I may pass on at once to the point, in the latter half of the fourth century, where Christianity supersedes paganism as the religion of Europe.

[1] See the recent work on Christian origins of A. Kalthoff, *Die Entstehung des Christenthums*, ch. iv., of which the Rationalist Press Association trust shortly to issue an English translation.

It will appear presently that I hold a restricted view of the growth of the new religion up to that time; those who do not share it have to face the singular problem that, as Christianity grew (say, from 180 to 380), the Empire decayed in every respect. The Stoic had laid great stress on public service as an element of morality, but the new religions—Christianity, Mithraism, Manicheism, and the reformed religion of Isis—concentrated on the work of personal regeneration.[1] Still, the high level of the Antonine age was not well maintained, and the two centuries are marked by political, social, and literary decay. It is often assumed that the persecutions preserved the Christian Churches from the dangers incident to prosperity. But, besides the fact that modern historians follow Gibbon in reducing the number and extent of the persecutions, we do not find that this was the case. The Migne edition of Optatus's history of the Donatist schism in Africa contains some civic documents that put in a painful light the condition of the African Church during and just after the last persecution.[2] The charges

[1] Mr. Lecky, who does ample justice to the Stoicism he shares, strangely belittles the other Eastern religions, and religious writers follow him with al .crity. He seems, in an unguarded moment, to have been impressed with the strictures passed on them by their Christian rivals, which he finds in those early Christian writings of whose "glaring mendacity" he so often complains. They were, in reality, very spiritual religions, with a normal share of scandals and hypocrites, and spread more widely than Christianity.

[2] See the author's *Saint Augustine and his Age*, p. 247.

of fraud, perjury, theft, and (in one case) murder, which are there proved against most of the bishops in one province, must make us hesitate before we accept the idyllic picture of the persecuted African Christians that Newman gives in his *Callista*. St. Augustine's later works and sermons betray that their less offensive vices continued to evade the Church's discipline ; nor may we assume that the Church of Tertullian and St. Cyprian was exceptionally corrupt.

However, I am not concerned at this juncture with the specific question of morality. My sole purpose here is to point out : (1) that the conversion of the Romans to Christianity was for the most part compulsory, and (2) that it was not followed by any such large change in personal or social habits as is frequently supposed.

With the conversion of Constantine (312) the new religion entered upon a new phase. Up to that time the Church had only obtained the allegiance of about two or three per cent. of the Empire.[1] The broad change came in the ninth decade of the century. Even so candid and authoritative a writer as Milman gives a totally

[1] See Schultze's *Geschichte des Untergangs des Heidenthums* for an elaborate calculation. Gibbon's too generous estimate is based on a wrong idea of the early Christian bishop. On the general question see Boissier's *La fin du Paganisme*, Beugnot's *Destruction du Paganisme*, Tzschirner's *Fall des Heidenthums*, and Dill's *Roman Society in the Last Centuries of the Western Empire*.

false view of the transition. He says that at this time "the heathens, as represented by such men as Prætextatus, seem to have retired into a separate community, and stood in relation to the general society as the Christians had done to the heathen under Vespasian or the Antonines" (i. 91). When we find St. Augustine himself saying that at this period "nearly the whole nobility of Rome" was still pagan, we have a sufficient measure of Milman's accuracy on this point. But it is even more remarkable when we find him going on to describe the completion of the Christian triumph without a single reference to the imperial decrees. In 381, 382, 383, 385, and 391 stringent decrees were passed for the suppression of all religions but Christianity, and for the next forty years they continued to be enacted, under the fiercest penalties, until the last pagan or heretic had died in defence of his beliefs. Not that very many of the adherents of the old Roman religion submitted to the baptism of blood, though thousands of the others did so. Their rites, their altars, their very deities, were too liberally admitted into the new Christian basilicæ to counsel so heroic a resistance to so slight a change.

And while the acceptance of the new religion by Rome had not the spiritual complexion which is so often ascribed to it, it was equally devoid of any great moral effect. Limits of space compel me to deal very briefly with the immediate moral and

social effect of the acceptance of Christianity, but the subject is so candidly presented by Dean Milman that I need insist little on it. One point must be noted. In the ninth decade of the fourth century, when the great transfer from temple to basilica was effected, the standard of pagan character was infinitely better than is usually conceived, and the standard of general Christian character very much worse. Of the two chief authorities, Boissier and Dill, the one says that the pagans of the fourth century recall the age of the Antonines, and the other observes that even the least flattering pictures we have of them are no worse than English society under George II. and George III. The richest senators may have had £180,000 a year, but the general taste in diet and display was sober. Ammianus Marcellinus, a sturdy soldier, is their chief censor. The worst he says of them is not in the least worse than the frivolities of a section of the rich in any subsequent age. On the other hand, the more reliable picture we have of them in the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius (see ii. 1 and iii. 13 and 14) and the letters of Symmachus shows us a humane, cultured, honourable generation, hopelessly paralysed by the defects of their political system. And the last traces we have of the educated pagan, in the later writings of Ausonius and Apollinaris Sidonius, maintain the impression to the end. A generation of gentlemen was violently extinguished.

Thus the senatorial class had purged itself of the repulsive practices of the Augustan age under its native inspiration. From these things Christianity did *not* redeem Europe, as is commonly represented; and our clergy might, if they were better informed in the matter, spare themselves those moments of pain and embarrassment in which they feel at times compelled to convey to their blushing flocks a sense of the enormities of the Augustan age. But among the mass of the people the standard of morals was low, and here lay the real opportunity of the new religion. Once more we must beware of current exaggerations. We have no evidence at all that pæderasty was more common then than it is in London or in Naples to-day;[1] we have no reason to think that prostitution flourished more than it did all through the Middle Ages, or in London a hundred years ago; and we have strong negative evidence (in the adultery laws and prosecutions) that adultery was far less common than it has been or is in Christian France and Spain. However, the general character was low, and, though we may not quite admit that philosophic appeals were as the sprinkling of rose-water on a

[1] One would have thought the modern prevalence of this vice, in town and country, was notorious enough. Yet we find Mr. Brace (*Gesta Christi*), one of the least intemperate of the apologists, representing it as one of the most undeniable triumphs of his Church that it completely extinguished "unnatural vices" in Europe, though "they still exist among peoples outside of Christianity" (p. 299)!

slum, we may rightly entertain a larger expectation in regard to the action of Christianity.

It is a matter of common historical knowledge that this hope was not realised. Mr. Lecky, who seems eager at every moment to temper the severity of the historical facts for the tender religious reader, is bound to confess that "the two centuries after Constantine are uniformly represented by the fathers as a period of general and scandalous vice" (ii. 16), and that Christianity "proved itself altogether unable to regenerate Europe" until recent times—until the re-birth of humanism. Dean Milman cannot dissent from that verdict. With what pleasant anticipations the learned cleric approached his task of describing the triumph of Christianity we can only conjecture, but his first glow of rhetoric quickly dies away. He finds that "evil was too profoundly seated in the habits of the Roman world to submit to the control of religion." To the profane observer it has always been a matter of perplexity how the action of a supernatural power has ever experienced the same check before more obstinate impediments as a merely natural moral agency does, but one may express some surprise that a divine so readily admits this. In point of fact, the distressed historian has soon to record that the main cause of its impotence was the corruption of Christianity itself, especially of the clergy. He finds little but "melancholy and disgraceful contests" in the Eastern Church, and a

progressive moral degeneration in Europe. Nor does he have recourse to the customary ruse of laying everything on the shoulders of the invading barbarians. With most creditable candour he admits that, "in the conflict or coalition of barbarism with Roman Christianity, barbarism has introduced into Christianity all its ferocity, with none of its generosity or magnanimity.....Christianity has given to barbarism hardly more than its superstition and its hatred of heretics and unbelievers."[1] The barbarians had at least brought to southern Europe fine ideals of chastity and a great respect for woman. But, when he finds them established after their conversion to Christianity, the Christian historian exclaims: "It is difficult to conceive a more dark and odious state of society than that of France under the Merovingian kings. .....Assassinations, parricides, and fratricides intermingle with adulteries and rapes.....In such times the celibacy, or even the continence, of the clergy was not likely to be severely observed" (p. 365). One realm in Christendom alone shines out of the gathering gloom—the kingdom of the Ostrogoths in Italy. "Under the Ostrogothic kingdom the manners in Italy might seem to revert to the dignified austerity of the old Roman Republic" (p. 364). When we note that this is an appeal back to the standard of those pagan times that are

[1] *Latin Christianity*, i. 365. For the ethics and customs of the barbarians see Hodgkin's *Italy and her Invaders*.

generally so darkly painted, and when we learn that the Ostrogothic king, Theodoric, was a heretic, proceeding on secular principles and flouting the authority of the clergy, we feel that the simple candour of a Milman cuts more deeply than the tempered irony of a Gibbon. The only other part of the Roman world where any zeal for chastity was displayed was under the Vandal kings—heretics once more, and the later types of barbarism—in Africa! There the chaste Genseric swept the thick foulness from the streets of Christian Carthage with the swords of his soldiers, and poured scorn on the dissoluteness of the vanquished Trinitarians. And thus, halting for a moment with the better work of Justinian—the temper of whose age, nevertheless, may be not improperly gathered from his choice of the most notorious and industrious prostitute in Constantinople as his empress—Europe hastens down the slope into the Middle Ages.

The reader who would trace this terrible degeneration of the Church in authentic records may be advised to read in succession the letters of St. Jerome (especially 22, 52, and 125), the *Res Gestæ* of Ammianus, the *De Gubernatione Dei* of Salvianus, the Gallic history of Gregory of Tours, and the *Vita Arcana* of Procopius. St. Jerome's account of the morals of Christian Rome is terrible—consecrated virgins living in the same house, "if not the same bed," as clerics; priests who have sought the position in order to get easier

access to women, or for the hunting of the fortunes of widows and widowers; vice everywhere under the mantle of religion. St. Jerome, in the fourth century, implores his virgin-pupils never to remain in the solitary company of a priest, and to avoid all intercourse with Christian widows and matrons. Salvianus, a priest of Marseilles of the fifth century, urges again and again that the slaves and the barbarians shame Christians by their inferiority in vice: "Besides a very few who avoid evil, what is almost the whole body of Christians but a sink of iniquity? How many in the Church will you find that are not drunkards, or adulterers, or fornicators, or gamblers, or robbers, or murderers—or all together?" (iii. 9). Gregory of Tours, in the sixth century, describes a world which is, says Mr. Lecky, "absolutely anarchical." Even in the east, where there are no barbarian inroads, there is profound decay. In the third century St. Gregory of Nyssa calls Palestine, the Mecca of Christendom, "a hotbed of debauchery" (ep. ii.), dwells with horror on the adulteries, robberies, and murders perpetrated there, and says that "nowhere else is there so great a propensity to shed blood for money." Five centuries later we find St. Boniface (ep. lxiii.) warning the Archbishop of Canterbury that English women who have set out for Jerusalem are to be found in prostitution and adultery in almost every town between London and Palestine. And in the intervening centuries

the history of the Eastern Church is filled up with the sanguinary conflicts of monks and sects, while Procopius furnishes, in his *Secret Life*, a picture of the moral temper of the eastern capital.

Chapter II.

THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPE

If the picture we have contemplated in the previous chapter is too little relieved by more agreeable features, the fault may, without injustice, be imputed to those clerical artists who have wholly omitted these important points from their chaste delineations of primitive Christianity. It is well known that the new religion modified, if it did not obliterate, some of the uglier episodes of Roman life. It evoked works of mercy and charity on a large scale ; it dealt a blow at the gladiatorial contests of the amphitheatre that no Stoic had been able, and few had been eager, to deal; it abolished the festivals of Flora and Cybele, and suppressed the cult of Priapus. These advantages we shall consider in their places. In the meantime it was necessary to have a definite picture of the moral and social phenomena that immediately accompanied the conversion of Rome. If that picture is felt to be unwontedly and inartistically repellent, we can only plead that the conditions of the task were imposed on us by the nature of ecclesiastical history. A great Christian historian, Herder,

confessed long ago that "Christian veracity" was dangerously parallel to "Punic faith"; and it is only a few years since one of our leading Christian journals bemoaned, in editorial dignity, "the lack of honesty" in apologetic literature.[1] It is these facts that force upon the secular historian the painful duty of giving prominence to the less pleasant pages of the Christian record.

We may now proceed to examine the specific questions which the general problem has already suggested to us; and the first of these to demand attention is the Church's claim to have promoted the intellectual development of Europe. Whether or no Buckle be right in saying that rational truths are the mainspring of human progress, it is acknowledged to-day that mental development and the spread of knowledge are among the first conditions of civilisation. Writers on the subject are agreed as to the pertinence of this inquiry. Mr. Lecky, carefully advancing the singular concession to his religious readers that the Dark Ages were superior to Greece in regard to chastity and to Rome in regard to the infliction of suffering—statements which are amply refuted by his own work—goes on to say that "the influence of theology for centuries numbed and paralysed the intellect of Europe," and that "the pagan literature of antiquity and the Mohammedan school of science

[1] *The Christian World*, August 20th, 1903.

were the chief agencies in resuscitating the dormant energies of Christendom."[1] Dean Milman, with a natural reluctance to be so explicit as to the earlier period, notices the modern advance, and says: "This progressive development of Christianity seems the inevitable consequence of man's progress in knowledge, and in the more general dissemination of that knowledge" (i. 12). There is a pagan or rationalistic note in the observation, but we need not hesitate to accept it. Progress in knowledge is one of the basic conditions of all progress. How far are we indebted to Christianity for this element of our civilisation?

I must exclude at once several branches of knowledge from the investigation. After the words I have quoted, no one will expect the modern historian to admit any profound indebtedness to the Church. Early Christian and medieval writings have indeed furnished him with some nice and curious problems, and he will not forget the labours of a Mabillon or a D'Achéry. But the science of history is a new science, and the list of its greatest makers—Hume, Gibbon, Mommsen, Buckle, Michelet, etc —at once removes it far out of reach of any ecclesiastical claim. Theology is an intellectual discipline which we must rule out for other reasons. Until our modern logicians have settled the definition of knowledge itself, and

[1] *History of European Morals*, ii., 17.

our theologians have finally decided what they will reject or retain, it will remain "under the judge." Nor need we say much on the subject of philosophy. An Ueberweg or a Schwegler will fill many pages with the ingenious speculations of the schoolmen, but to the modern thinker they have only an historical interest. The serious problems of philosophy were abandoned by humanity when Greece had rung the changes on the Ionic, Eleatic, Pythagorean, Platonic, Aristotelic, and sceptical systems, and were only resumed in the eighteenth century. But we may glance at the scholastic efforts as we pass.

On the other hand, natural science has more claim to our attention. We may express it in broader terms, and say, the investigation of nature. Modern success in this kind of research is one of the chief roots of our actual civilisation. The triumphs of modern engineering, modern industrial production, modern surgery and medicine, and many more of our most appreciated advantages, are the direct fruit of it. What is the position of the Christian religion in regard to it?

Let us go back once more to that fourth century which is the real starting-point of Christian influence. The Romans had entirely failed to increase or develop the sum of positive or philosophical knowledge they had inherited from the Greeks, but they had at least a high regard for culture and a general and graduated system of education. In the fourth century the great Christian

leaders arose whose writings were to dominate Europe for the next thousand years. That they were inimical to the literary culture of the pagans was natural enough. They could not be expected to look with favour on admiring descriptions of the loves, the quarrels, and the powers of the pagan gods. But they unfortunately conceived a scorn for all culture that was not purely Biblical, and ridiculed all scientific research. Tertullian, the grim dogmatist of the African Church, said that "after Jesus Christ all curiosity, after the Gospel all inquiry, were unnecessary." Lactantius, the most eloquent of the Latin fathers, treated with contempt the physical problems on which the genius of Greek Alexandria had been profitably employed (*Div. Inst.*, iii. 8). St. Jerome, with great literary gifts and learning, spoke disdainfully (in his letter to Heliodorus) of the greatest of the Greeks as "that fool Plato," and taught that the innocent study of Cicero was profoundly displeasing to Christ. St. Augustine, the first thinker of his age, is often quoted as favourable to culture. But in his *Retractations* he withdrew his earlier praise of "Plato and the Platonists," and denounced them as "impious men." Like Lactantius, too, he enumerated many problems of physics and astronomy in his later works (*On Genesis*), only to pour contempt on them as "waste of time." It was the mature St. Augustine that guided the succeeding ages.

One might indeed enlarge with much charm on the positive religious ideal that thus, in these fathers' minds, threw all scientific research into so deep a shade; but I am concerned only with the scientific consequences. Their attitude is not ambiguous. "It is not," said Eusebius, "through ignorance of the things they admire, but through contempt of their useless labours, that we think little of these matters." Knowledge of the Bible was the only desirable knowledge. We need not stop to discuss whether their estimate of the worth of Biblical knowledge was right or no. The fact that concerns us here is that the founders of European Christianity discouraged research, and set up the Bible as the supreme standard of conviction on all matters that it even incidentally touched.

The result, whatever other aspects it may have, was disastrous to science. The Alexandrian scholars had made an important advance in the development of those mathematical and mechanical principles which contained the germs of modern science and all its splendid service to humanity. On the further cultivation of those ideas depended the greater part of the material development of civilisation; and under the influence of the Christian leaders the work was suspended for a thousand years.[1] I do not forget the invasions;

[1] See Routledge's *History of Science*, Whewell's *Inductive Sciences*, and White's *Warfare between Science and Theology.*

because, as we are so often reminded, the monasteries provided ample leisure and tranquillity for mental work. Yet if one runs one's eye over the volumes of Migne's library, from the fifth to the eleventh century, one sees at a glance the appalling blight that fell on culture and research. Here is the whole literary output of the first 600 years of Christian power, and its poverty is remarkable. The slender poetry of Prudentius and Paulinus of Nola represent the last influence of pagan culture in the fifth century; the literary labours of Cassiodorus slightly relieve the sixth, and the history of Gregory of Tours, grossly uncultured and uncritical, the seventh, century. And after these only the almost purely religious work of Isidore (7th cent.), Bede (8th), Rabanus Maurus and Alcuin (9th), mitigate the terrible poverty of Christendom until the rise of the twelfth-century Rationalists. During those ages a few priests and monks (Cassiodorus, Rabanus Maurus, Alcuin, etc.) evinced a moderate interest in a non-theological culture, but only two men of power tried to re-open the precious vein that had been abandoned. They were Theodoric, the heretic, and Charlemagne: both hotly resisted by, and their work demolished by, the Christian clergy.

How thoroughly the precepts of St. Jerome and St. Augustine had been taken to heart will be seen from the following letter. It was written by the most powerful and zealous prelate of the whole of

that period—by Gregory the Great to Desiderius, Bishop of Vienee. The bishop had asked for certain privileges, and Gregory had promised them, when the Gallic prelate received this further message from the pope:—

> .....After that we heard a thing that cannot be repeated without a feeling of shame—namely, that you are teaching grammar to some. This troubled us so greatly, and filled us with so deep a disdain, that we fell from our former praise of you to mourning and sorrow, because the praise of Jove must never be heard from the mouth that praises Christ. Think how grave and horrible [*nefandum*] it is for a bishop to repeat what even a religious layman should not. And, though our beloved son, the presbyter Candidus, denied the affair, at our pressing inquiry, and tried to excuse you, we have not lost the suspicion, because it is so execrable for this to be said of a priest that it must be strictly investigated.

He goes on to promise the desired privileges if Desiderius is not found to have been guilty of "studying trifles and secular letters."[1]

Such a document throws a lurid light on the temper and the ignorance of the times. All the efforts of a Montalembert or a Maitland cannot alter it. The most able and powerful of the popes until Gregory VII. describes an elementary secular culture as a "horrible" and "execrable" occupation. And in the whole of his 800 letters, written to bishops and others in every part of civilised Europe, this is the only occasion on which he is compelled to rebuke the crime. Who, after

[1] Gregory's letters, libr. xi., ep. liv., Migne edition.

this, will question Mr. Lecky's thesis that the period of Catholic ascendancy is, "on the whole, one of the most deplorable in the history of the human mind"?

Some resentment has been expressed of the habit of giving the name of the Dark Ages to this terrible period (from the fifth to the twelfth century). Among others an Agnostic and Positivist writer has affected to mitigate the Church's responsibility for the incredible vice and violence and misery of the period, on the very ground that it at least promoted an intellectual interest by its theological discussions. Mr. Cotter Morison *(Service of Man)* cannot have been familiar with the way in which the intellectual struggles of the early Church were conducted. Take Alexandria, the treasury of Greek science, the intellectual centre of the Roman Empire. Until the fifth century its pagan professors and Jewish doctors bravely maintained the thread of mental development, according to the measure of their ability. Mathematics, astronomy, and geography, as well as philosophy, were taught to crowds of eager pupils in its famous schools, and even in the public places. With the growth of the Christian Church new and strange actors came on the scene. Its prodigal charities had attached to its cause thousands of the most violent and least intellectual. A few miles away, on the bleak Nitrian hills, other thousands, equally violent and equally

ignorant, fed their fanaticism with vague charges of heresy and paganism. Armies of ragged monks besieged the schools, tore the flesh of the venerable Hypatia from her bones with oyster shells, and demolished the princely institutes and the priceless treasures of culture. After the pagans they fell on heretics, schismatics, and opponents of their protecting prelates. The floors of Christian temples were spattered with blood. Whole provinces were rendered hideous by the encounters of sectarian rivals. The most beautiful edifices of the older days were burnt, and their art-treasures broken into fragments. In a few years more than 10,000 Asiatics murdered each other over the Arian controversy, and succeeding heresies and schisms were dealt with on similar lines. In Europe, where the monks were less violent and later in their growth, Roman legions were employed to close the mouths and the conventicles of disputants. In the face of this horrible carnage and tumult, before which Milman shudders, the intellectual stimulus given to a few men by the debates must be disregarded. The best that can be said for the Church, in this connection, is that it most decidedly never wished the controversies to arise, and that, when they arose, it grasped at the most drastic and least scrupulous means to suppress them.

I have said that "the monks of the west" were less violent, and it is to the labours of these that

Montalembert and other writers more plausibly appeal. The agricultural services of the Benedictines and other features of their activity will fall under our inquiry in later chapters, but we have now to notice their exertions on behalf of culture. Let us try to realise the true conditions of the subject. Monasticism had been introduced into Europe in the fourth century, and had been promoted by St. Augustine in his primitive fervour. The great doctor came in time to pen an indictment (*Contra Monachos*) of the monks, who had spread thickly over the Church, which far surpasses in vigour the pagan criticisms of them; but they continued to thrive. In the sixth century St. Benedict gave a more formal constitution to western monasticism, and it soon dotted the map of medieval Europe with monasteries. Amid the increasing violence of the age these holy centres were generally respected, and the more sensitive and thoughtful men could retire to them with a confident expectation of maintenance, a complete relief from political or military burdens, and access to whatever literature had been preserved. For six centuries this was one of the characteristic features of Christendom. No estimate of the number of the men who were thus freed from the ordinary burdens of life, and generally maintained by the community, is possible; but it would be moderate to say that fifty per cent. of the men who were best equipped for intellectual work lived in

these monasteries during the next six centuries, and had abundant leisure for its performance.

When we thus fairly conceive what the monasteries *might* have done for culture, I think Montalembert's famous attempt to vindicate them is a sufficient indication of their appalling failure. Add together all the instances that the industrious apologist gives of abbots who quote a classic author, and of monasteries that had large libraries, or devoted themselves to teaching, and it will be seen how trifling is the achievement in comparison with the power. I have already pointed out that Migne's library contains the whole literature of Europe from the fifth to the twelfth century, and noticed its terrible meagreness and general uselessness. To show that a few monasteries out of thousands and a few monks out of millions had an elementary concern for letters as such is a strange idea of apologetic triumph. Moreover, even in the cases that Montalembert so exultantly adduces it is the poverty, not the wealth, of Christian culture that we notice. Not a single one of those Greek attainments which have proved so fruitful in modern civilisation was developed in the slightest degree. Theological speculations, which the modern world is content to leave with them, absorbed ninety per cent. of their energy. At the most we have a copying and reading of the Roman writers, which, however agreeable to our taste, made no contribution to our progress. Montalembert

dilates on the vast libraries of the monks. The highest figure he gives is 6,700 works (at Novalese); and the Alexandrian library had had (according to Aulus Gellius) 700,000 works, the Julian library 120,000, and at that very time the Moors had seventy public libraries (one royal library containing 600,000 works) in Spain. He says that "every monastery was a school," whereas every expert on education declares that, until Charlemagne forced them to open schools, there was not a monastery in a hundred that taught even its own monks.[1] He singles out the great monastery of St. Gall as his finest illustration of monkish intellectual activity; whereas Compayré shows that, at the very height of the scholastic activity, not one monk in St. Gall could read or write. The vast majority of the medieval clergy and monks were quite illiterate, and many bishops and monarchs could not write their names.

It is such works as that of Montalembert that compel us to dwell on the darker side of monastic life. We are not unwilling to see that in hundreds of monasteries during the Middle Ages there was an industrious scriptorium, a fair library, a school to which children of the laity were admitted at times, an oasis of peace and sobriety in a vicious world. But when Catholic writers adduce these as *typical* of the monastic condition, and base their

[1] See Denk's *Geschichte des Gallo-Frankischen Unterrichts*, or Compayré's *History of Pedagogy*. I deal with this subject later.

imposing generalisations on these comparatively few sound monasteries, we are forced to complete the picture. In age after age contemporary writers describe the majority of the monasteries as grossly corrupt. The biographers of Charlemagne throw light on their condition in the ninth century, and even in the eleventh we have Abélard and Cardinal de Vitry still declaring that almost all the monasteries of their time are corrupt. The sober and industrious monasteries and the cultured monks are the rare exceptions to the general rule. Century after century the Orders had to be reformed, and there were few reforms that lasted fifty years, and few new Orders that were not corrupt before the founder died.[1] Even at its best "monasticism," Milman says (i. 5), "withdrew a great number of those who might have been energetic and useful citizens into barren seclusion and religious indolence.....secure, as they supposed, of their own salvation, they left the rest of mankind to inevitable perdition."

One point in connection with the activity of the monks needs special consideration. Apologists are never tired of repeating that we owe to them the preservation of the classics. "Without these copyists," says Montalembert, "we should possess

[1] To take two of the best known Orders, the Franciscan and Dominican, every reader of Sabatier knows how St. Francis witnessed the corruption of his Order before he died; while Milman (ix. 123) admits that Albert the Great, when appointed a Dominican authority, found his brethren "almost universally sunk in ignorance and idleness."

nothing—absolutely nothing—of classic antiquity."[1] The emphasis seems to imply that, if there is a marked tinge of apology in the writer's other claims, he gives us here a statement of an indisputable truth. But the statement is grossly misleading. The inexpert reader will learn with surprise that the monks did not preserve a single one of the Greek classics for us, except one treatise of Aristotle, a doubtful tragedy of Sophocles, and a very doubtful dialogue of Plato.[2] This very important fact is apparently quite unknown to most of the writers and preachers who deal with the monks and the classics, yet it is virtually admitted by Montalembert himself, when he gives his list of classic works in the hands of the monks, and it is recorded by every historian of classic literature. One of the ablest of these, in fact, Professor Heeren (*Geschichte des Studiums der Classischen Litteratur*), will only admit our indebtedness to the monks for the Latin classics in a very qualified sense. He insists that Christian zeal did more than the barbarians in destroying classical works, and that some of the leading monks, like St. Isidore, forbade the monks to read the works of the Gentiles. He quotes the Monachus Engolisnensis

[1] *Monks of the West*, vol. v., p. 145.

[2] I am bound to add that even the *Dialectics* of Aristotle is said by some of the best authorities to have been obtained from the Saracens, *not* preserved by the monks. If they are right, we do not owe a single piece of Greek literature—so much more precious than Latin—to the monks.

to the effect that "before Charlemagne there was no study of the liberal arts in Gaul," and declares that his research only reveals the fact that, before Charlemagne, there was not a single monastery in France, Italy, or Spain "that rendered any service whatever in connection with classical literature" (p. 101); and in the century after that of Charlemagne he again fails to find any trace of a concern for the classics.

These severe strictures of so high an authority may well make us hesitate; yet we may accept Montalembert's claim as far as Latin literature is concerned. We find copies of Aristotle's *Dialectics*, Plautus, Terence, Vergil, Horace, Cicero, Juvenal, Persius, Ovid, Sallust, Statius, Lucan, Pliny, Suetonius, Varro, Apuleius, and all the later Latin writers, at rare intervals, in one or other part of the Middle Ages. How rare they were, so that only rich abbeys and princes could secure them, has often been pointed out. And it must not be forgotten that, when parchment began to run short after the heathens had captured Egypt, the monks scraped the writing off hundreds of valuable works to write their medieval nonsense in its place. We need not insist on these points. We are indebted to the literary taste of a few rare scholars in the Middle Ages that these works have come down to us. Literature will always acknowledge that debt. But the truths and discoveries on the development of which European civilisation depended were

buried in the Greek, not the Latin, classics, and these might have been lost to Europe for ever for all that the medieval copyists cared. Even before the religious quarrel of East and West, which did incalculable harm to both, the study of Greek fell into decay. It is to the despised Jews and the Mohammedans that we owe that importation of Greek works which at length awoke Europe from its heavy slumbers and fantastic dreams.

Thus, when we accept all the verifiable statements of detail which apologetic writers make, and frame more sober generalisations on these, we reach a conclusion that is not flattering to the Church. Not all the monasteries were corrupt; not all the monks were ignorant and indolent; the works of the Roman writers were not all destroyed in the monasteries, which were in this the natural heirs to the temples and schools of Paganism. But the sum of human knowledge was not advanced one inch by these millions of men who were supported in quiet homes during the seven centuries that followed the triumph of Christianity.

In the twelfth century began in earnest that remarkable ferment of intellectual life which culminated in the production of a Thomas Aquinas, a Duns Scotus, and a Dante, and led to the founding of our universities. May we not see at least in this a service of the Church to civilisation? On that stirring period, when scholars walked hundreds of miles over the rough roads of Europe to hear

famous masters, and when several thousand pupils would crowd about the larger schools, I can only make a few general observations here.

In the first place, it is well to note the real origin of most of these monastic and episcopal schools which became in places the universities of Europe. There are not ten important Councils or ten important prelates between the fifth and the tenth century that concern themselves about them. The one man who made a noble effort on behalf of general education in that period was Charlemagne, a very secular ruler. It was he who forced the reluctant monks and clergy to teach. After his death the great majority of the schools were closed again (sometimes by the order of Church Councils), but not all.

The next point is that, when we find these surviving schools assuming an important place in the life of Europe at the end of the eleventh century, we generally find that it is rationalistic or semi-rationalistic teachers—almost always men condemned by the Church—who are the centres of the new activity. Bérenger, Amalric of Bena, David of Dinant, Roscelin, Abélard, Arnaldo da Brescia, and their like, are the dominant figures. They are watched by the orthodox with ferocious jealousy; they are hunted down remorselessly by men like Bernard of Clairvaux; they are burned alive (Arnaldo da Brescia), or ground under the tyranny of Rome, for saying things that are taught

officially by Rome to-day.[1] The Church was determined that interest should be confined to what Scripture or the Fathers had laid down.

The third point is the most interesting for our purpose. It is a commonplace to-day that this medieval activity was a barren work. The issues were too remote from nature and human life for any success to react on these. But in the thirteenth century there was revived the zeal for natural and positive knowledge which contained such fateful promise for the future. Even in the eleventh century we find a Christian scholar (afterwards Pope Sylvester II.) devoting himself to the study of mechanical and physical science. In the thirteenth century Albert the Great, Roger Bacon, and others, pursue the same studies in Christendom; and chemistry, astronomy, mechanics, optics, medicine, and other sciences (in their then crude forms), begin their slow evolution. Now, from the point of view of our later civilisation, this was a momentous beginning. The schoolmen would spend years in attempting to settle whether a shield that was half black and half white could be called categorically either black or white, and whether a pig that is being driven to market must or may be said to be held by the rope or the man. These were the questions in which alone they

[1] The full details for these observations on the period will be found in the author's *Peter Abélard.* See also Compayré's *Life of Abelard* and his *History of Pedagogy.*

could luxuriate with any safety. These discussions doubtless did much to sharpen medieval wit—without, unfortunately, providing any field for its useful occupation—and the theological debates may have had a lofty advantage of which the profane historian can take no account; but in these physical researches we do strike one of the remote rootlets of modern civilisation. What was the source of this happy inspiration, and how much concern was the Church directed to bestow on its development, in view of its prospective service to humanity? The questions are so important, and demand so careful an answer, that we must open a fresh chapter with them.

Chapter III.

THE RESTRICTION OF SCIENCE

It is admitted that the picture of Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries, as any conscientious historian must paint it, is a repulsive one. Monasteries there assuredly were in which humane abbots tended the flickering flame of culture; but their feeble light only catches our attention because of the dark background of general ignorance. Saints there were who embodied, with all its defects, a high ideal; but their rare saintliness cannot, in the modern mind, redeem the almost unconscious vice of their age. It was the leaden age of Christian Europe. The busy schools, the great broad roads, the normal peace, the artistic treasures, of the pagan world had disappeared. A network of merciless bravos lay across the land, and famine and pestilence stalked with impunity. In the towns men of coarse and violent habit huddled together in dirty hovels, by which ran filthy, unpaved, and unlighted streets. It was the golden age only of microbes and of robbers and of superstition.

But in the south-west corner of Europe there was a civilisation. While Paris was still "a sewer"

(as Pouchet says), Cordova had its miles of well-paved and well-lighted streets. While Christian princes maintained habits of incredible uncleanliness in straw-carpeted halls without windows or chimneys, Moorish princes lived in palaces of superb marbles, refreshed by fountains and rich gardens, and brightened with elegant tapestry, Persian carpets, and every evidence of refinement. In the rest of Europe culture was at its lowest point; in Mohammedan Spain it was at its highest point of development between the Paganism of Rome and the Paganism of the Renascence. In France and Italy original thought was punished with the stake; in Spain it was, at that time, acclaimed and rewarded.

The contrast will meet us in later chapters, but it is sufficiently well known to-day. For our present purpose it is enough to observe that this splendid civilisation of the Arabs was a direct outgrowth from those pagan writings and investigations which the Fathers had persuaded Europe to ignore, and that the awakening of Europe was in a very large measure due to its example. Neither of these points is in dispute. As to the first, it is now familiarly known how the Nestorian heretics, the Unitarian outcasts from Christendom, had preserved Greek culture, and transmitted it to the Mohammedan Arabians; and how these stray gleams of high thought had quickened the better instincts of the Arabs, and elevated them from

barbarism and ignorant fanaticism to a high and just civilisation.[1] The point is not without interest. Whether the Arabs were a more promising material for conversion than the Goths we need not stay to calculate. The instructive feature is that pagan culture did create a high civilisation out of barbaric elements; while those Christian beliefs that had taken over its mission in Europe had so far completely failed in their enterprise.

But the second point is material to our study. If we follow the pure line of development of European culture, it is difficult to see how it could end in anything more than the most ingenious subtilities and refinements of the scholastic performances. Happily for our age, a new element came into the life of Europe. Jewish merchants from beyond the Pyrenees brought a knowledge of the shining cities of Spain. Christian scholars went themselves to study its life. Monk Gerbert (afterwards Pope Sylvester II.) brought back from the Spanish March a knowledge of geometry and mechanics, the use of the Arab numerals instead of the cumbrous Roman ones, and many another germ of later achievements. Monk Adelhard brought from Spain a translation of Euclid. In the end the prejudice against the heathen broke down, and Christendom deigned, with becoming hesitation and ingratitude, to learn from the Moor.

[1] See Renan's *Averroes*, Draper's *History of Intellectual Development*, Routledge's *History of Science*, etc.

The Arabian elements still scattered over our dictionaries (admiral, alchemy, alcohol, algebra, alkali, chemise, cotton, etc.) are permanent witnesses of our debt. Not only the precious elements of Greek culture, but a score of important inventions or habits were imported: the fabrication of cotton or silk stuffs and of paper, the finer tempering of steel and other metal work, improved methods of raising cattle and crops (with the introduction of rice, sugar, peaches, spinach, saffron, etc.), an advanced art of pottery, and the mariner's compass, are a few of the more prominent advantages. There are not many points of view from which we fail to see their influence. They inspired the light literature that soon began to relieve the sullen temper of the North; they gave a more serious direction to scholastic discussions, diverting authority from Plato and Augustine to Aristotle; they taught our dirty lords the use of white and changeable under-linen; they communicated, in some degree, an appreciation of fresh water and sanitation; they helped to moderate the fatal religious dogma that told our semi-civilised fathers they were the *élite* of humanity.

The particular service rendered to Europe by the Arabs that engages our attention here is the transmission of the germs of physical and medical science. Under the fantastic form of alchemy the Spanish investigators were preparing the way for modern chemistry, and they made some progress

in optics, mechanics, geometry, and astronomy. The first observatory in Europe was erected by them; though, when Spain returned to the true faith, the Giralda at Seville was promptly dedicated to the higher service of religion. Modern chemists date the beginnings of their science from the Arabian alchemist Geber (800 A.D.). In surgery they exhibited great skill and hardihood, and they and the Jews cultivated the art of healing and the science of anatomy with success. A glance at any impartial history of science will show how these were the beginnings of that beneficent development of science which has done so much in our time to smooth the rugged way of humanity. It is, therefore, an essential point in our inquiry that we consider the attitude of the Church in this matter.

Unhappily, that attitude is too notorious today to impose on us a laborious investigation. Whewell's verdict is the most moderate expression that any informed student can pen: "During a considerable period of the history of the Christian Church, and by many of its principal authorities, the study of natural philosophy was not only disregarded, but discommended."[1] It is of little use here for Montalembert to discover that an occasional abbot indulged in the study of optics or astronomy. The Church took up a determined

[1] *Inductive Sciences*, I, 268.

official attitude on the matter, and it restricted the development of science for five centuries, to the incalculable prejudice of civilisation.[1] During those five centuries almost all the possible scholars and investigators in Europe were enlisted in its service, either as clerics or monks. The great abbeys swarmed with men who had the talent, the leisure, and the wealth to pursue research; and the position of lay-scholar, outside the monasteries, was almost impossible. Yet few monks paid the slightest attention to research: those who did so with profit were almost always persecuted: ecclesiastical authorities forbade them, time after time, to pursue it; and the courageous laymen who did so did it at the peril of their lives.

I do not intend to go over the familiar story of Galileo and the restriction of astronomy and geography. While contemning physical inquiry, the Fathers had established a considerable number

[1] The Catholic reader may wonder why I have refrained from noticing Mr. W. S. Lilly's *Christianity and Modern Civilisation*. I will reply with a characteristic quotation from it that the reader will now be in a position to appreciate. The monks, he says, "were the founders of modern literature, the creators of the arts, the masters of the philosophy, the sages of the jurisprudence, the pioneers of the physical sciences, the originators of the agriculture, of the modern world. To them the civilisation of which—and with reason—we, in this twentieth century, make such proud boasting, owes all that is most valuable in it" (p. 244). To this extraordinary claim he appends only—a study of medieval hymns! He dispenses with evidence on the ground that it is "a twice-told tale, familiar to every school-boy." Many things are familiar to the school-boy that are not now so familiar to his master.

of physical theorems on texts of Scripture. The fortunes of astronomy are well known. Geography was equally hampered. St. Augustine and the other Fathers denied the existence of the Antipodes. Christ had sent his apostles to "all nations": they had not gone to the Antipodes: ergo. When a German bishop, Virgilius, attempted to revive the truth as it had been previously held, Pope Zachary denounced his theory of the Antipodes as "perverse, iniquitous, and against his own soul." In the enlightened fourteenth century the Church burned the astronomer Cecco d'Ascoli, for this and other errors; and the most venerable and philanthropic doctor of Padua, Peter of Abano, only escaped the Inquisition by death. Nor was the older Church alone to blame. Luther said of Copernicus: "This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth." Calvin and Melanchthon (who taught physics at Wittenberg, and discovered demons in the whole range of physical phenomena) agreed with him. Even in the light of the eighteenth century we find Wesley opposing the Copernican system as "tending towards infidelity." But astronomy discovered an instrument of research that silenced even the anathemas of Rome. Long after the invention of the telescope the Protestant authorities at Wittenberg and other universities forbade the professors to communicate its revelations to their pupils;

while the clerical authorities of the Catholic universities (Pisa, Innspruck, Louvain, Douai, etc.) compelled their professors on oath to teach the erroneous old system. Through such difficulties passed the science which is now acclaimed as the finest revelation of the power and splendour of the deity.

One astronomical question merits a special notice. From earlier ages the Christian Fathers had inherited the notion that comets had a remarkable moral significance. The language of the inspired writers clearly endorsed that belief, and Christendom developed the error to an extraordinary extent. Old prints still show us the forms which these harmless masses of glowing gas assumed in the minds of the terrified faithful. They were monstrous dragons, shaking pestilences from their hair. When we remember how this belief prevented any attempt to deal with pestilence as a natural phenomenon; when we read how France was scourged seventeen times in one century, and how the Church only counselled processions and great prayer-meetings, where people infected each other more effectually, so that the very sanctuary of the All-powerful God was strewn with gangrenous corpses; when we try to realise the appalling wave of misery that swept over England in the Black Death, we feel the tragic nature of this and similar errors. Yet humanity had to suffer these things for a thousand

years longer than it needed, if the Fathers had not poured contempt on Alexandrian astronomy and optics, and if the Church had—I will not say encouraged, but merely permitted—their peaceful development. Instead of that we have a line of the most powerful teachers in Christendom insisting on the fatal error about the comet, from Bede and Rabanus Maurus to Thomas Aquinas, from Cranmer and Latimer to Jeremy Taylor and John Knox. We now know that the Chaldean astronomers taught the truth 3,000 years ago. Seneca had emphasised it at the very beginning of the Christian era, and it was Seneca's words, especially insisted on by the sceptic Bayle, that led to a fresh recognition of the truth.

The career of the young twin sciences, physics and chemistry, was watched with the same Herodian jealousy and hostility. Men who had an aptitude for those sciences, like Albert the Great and Roger Bacon, men who would undoubtedly have brought on the age of science long before the nineteenth century, were discouraged and persecuted. Albert the Great was diverted to theological study. The story of Roger Bacon's sufferings is well known. It is with incredible levity that some apologists now appeal to these men as examples of the *Church's* beneficent service to humanity. In 1163 Alexander III. forbade "the study of physics or of the laws of the world" to all clerics, the one set of men who had

leisure and opportunity for study. The Dominican Order, which now boasts its Albert the Great, in 1243 forbade any of its members to study medicine or natural philosophy; in 1287 they included chemistry in the prohibition. The Franciscan Order, that claims Roger Bacon, imprisoned him for fourteen years for "novelties," after a solemn examination of his teaching, and placed its ban upon the study of natural science. When we know that Albert the Great corrected many errors in zoology, accepted the sphericity of the earth and the existence of antipodes, taught that noxious gases were not demons, but natural exhalations, and acquired a remarkable skill in mechanical construction; when we read of Roger Bacon discovering the formula for gunpowder, explaining away the miraculous rainbow, projecting magnifying lenses, making clocks, conceiving the principle of the diving-bell, the method of extracting manganese, phosphor, and bismuth, and apparently approaching an idea of the telegraph and the use of steam, we have some measure of the retardation of civilisation on its material side. Both these students started from the data of Aristotle and the Arabs, with whose works they were familiar.[1] Both of them were paralysed by the Church and by their Orders, and men

[1] A brief word on Dante. The great poet breathes in every line his indebtedness to paganism. Aristotle and the Arabs are his great instructors, and he is noble enough to outstrip the

of similar gifts were deterred from following them.

But the diversion of its vast army of leisured clerics and monks from profitable research does not complete the Church's responsibility. Towards the close of the Middle Ages positions were created in which a layman could devote himself to culture and research. A number of these teachers and medical men, turning aside from the dangerous study of theology, betook themselves to astrology and alchemy, the astronomy and chemistry of the time. For some centuries they pursued their researches in fear of their lives. In 1317 John XXII. issued a solemn bull, *Spondent pariter*, against the alchemists. In other official documents this Vicar of Christ lashed up the worst prejudices of the ignorant mass against these secret students of nature. They were sorcerers, devising evil for him and his flock. They could send devils into the mirrors you looked into of a morning or the ring you wore, and they had attempted his life by piercing a wax image of him. The cry of our Oxford monks and divines as they scattered before Roger Bacon's chemical experiments, "Down with the magician," resounded harshly through the land. In a world where religion had become one vast and complex system of magic, the charge of magic was levelled as the

feeling of his time, and take a pagan (Vergil) as his guide, and make another pagan (Cato) the warder of Purgatory.

most deadly one could raise.[1] In obscure chambers, with windows anxiously boarded up, the pioneers of modern science continued their work at the peril of their lives. In the fifteenth century (1437–1523) bull after bull was fulminated against them, and the terrible Inquisitors were expressly directed to them. There is hardly an able investigator in five centuries who escaped the title of magician, and did not tremble with apprehension. The French monarch, Charles V., forbade the possession of furnaces or any chemical apparatus; and the chemist Barillon narrowly escaped with his life under the law. Our English Henry IV. passed a similar law in 1414, and the Republic of Venice in 1418. The Reformation brought no change in the clerical attitude, and this most beneficent and valuable science (in medicine and industry) only came to its maturity in deadly conflict with the Churches. As late as 1624 the Parliament of Paris, instigated by the theological faculty, prohibited, under severe penalties, the improved chemical research that had been begun there. The great early discoverer, Basil Valentine (of Erfurt), had to conceal his achievements, and live as a simple apothecary, though his remarks on the

[1] And our Catholic Mr. Lilly turns from this picture of Christendom to tell us that the Stoics and neo-Platonists had had "no sense of the sanctification of men." It curiously illustrates my point to find that Roger Bacon was denounced as "a Mohammedan."

gases in mines and on ventilation were of great moment.[1]

The reader will observe that I am entirely avoiding many cases of persecution, such as that of Galileo, on which I might enlarge with safety if my aim were merely to leave on his mind an impression discreditable to the Church. My object is dispassionately to examine the relation of the Churches to the growth of some of the chief elements of our modern civilisation. When we consider this on its material side; when we trace the growth of the agencies which have led to our mastery of disease and epidemic, our enslavement of the great forces of nature, such as steam and electricity, and the thousand and one comforts of modern life; we are bound to consider the branches of research which, like physics and chemistry, so directly and abundantly contributed to our progress. With this material before us a verdict is possible; and I leave it to the reader to decide whether the services in this department of ten centuries of learned and leisured monks are a fitting discharge of their powers, and what the Bible has done in connection with the growth of the most characteristic and important element of modern civilisation.

I conclude the narrative at the dawn of the

[1] On the whole question of the restriction of science see White's *Warfare of Science with Theology;* also Routledge's or any other history of science.

modern scientific period with some self-restraint. Everybody knows how individual students and scientific bodies have fared at the hands of the clergy for the last two centuries. But my less militant purpose imposes an abstention from these details in the absence of any serious controversy about them. I must pass on to consider briefly the accompanying development of industry and commerce before I deal with medical and hygienic science. Here, again, I beg the reader to feel that I am not so much concerned with an academic conflict of theological knowledge and method with scientific knowledge and method. It is a question of human life and human happiness, and therefore essentially one of civilisation.

At the outset we are met once more by inflated claims on behalf of the monks. Through them, Mr. Lilly says, the Church created modern agriculture; and it is at least generally contended that it dignified labour, and so promoted industry. That the early monks reclaimed large stretches of swamp and forest is gratefully acknowledged by every historian; but honesty compels us to resent the extraordinary inflation of this service by apologetic writers. It has been observed by Milman and other writers that monks had no idea whatever of benefiting humanity. Idleness was the "devil's couch," as St. Francis of Assisi vigorously said, and the labour had a spiritual end. Further, we cannot forget that the laborious monks were a tiny

minority in the great monastic army that settled on Europe from the sixth to the sixteenth century. M. Montalembert is once more useful to us. His diligent scrutiny of the records has gathered most of the instances where the monks really led industrious lives, and he thus enables us to estimate the enormous mass of idleness that disfigured Europe apart from his few abbeys. Millions of men were withdrawn from productive industry by monasticism at the very period when the soil of Europe most needed cultivation, and their maintenance was laid as a further burden on the distressed producers.

We have already seen that it was the Arabs who introduced important reforms into agriculture, and we have now to consider another aspect of it with which the Church is directly connected. I have said that, while it persecuted students of science as wizards and drowned hysterical or skilful women as witches, the Church encouraged a system of magic of its own that had a very important influence on the development of agriculture and industry. From Persia and Assyria it had brought to Europe a belief in the ubiquity of demons that can best be realised by taking as a parallel the modern theory of the ubiquity of the microbe. The New Testament explicitly sanctioned the belief. The Fathers expounded it luxuriantly; and, as the innumerable deities of Rome and Greece and the Teutonic religions fell into the category of demons on the ordinary rules of religious evolution, Europe

soon became peopled with an army of fallen angels that could not have found standing-room on all the needles in Christendom. They took over the whole of the weather, the whole range of diseases of man and beast, the growth of the crops, all underground minerals, and everything connected with production. They paralysed agriculture and industry; and, though the Church had not created them, it dealt heavy blows at every scholar who tried to annihilate them, and so to abolish its own great industry of consecrated magic.

There is no dispute about these facts. From the days when St. Hilary (in the fourth century) gave cups of blessed water to his clients to keep the devils off their racing studs, until the eighteenth century, the Church insisted on the theory. St. Thomas of Aquin said: "It is a dogma of faith that the demons can produce wind, storms, and rain of fire from heaven." The Reformers assented, and for nearly 200 years after the Reformation theologians were agreed on it. So late as 1752, when Franklin brought down one large section of the atmospheric devils with his lightning-rod, preachers and theologians opposed him, Catholic divines and John Wesley taking prominence in the matter. There had been an almost equal reluctance to give up the subterraneous devils. Albert the Great had suggested that the poisonous gases in mines were natural exhalations, but a sixteenth-century writer describes most of the

mines of France and Germany as abandoned on account of the "evil spirits of metals that had taken possession of them." The idea even lingered in Agricola and Van Helmont. In the eighteenth century the medical faculty at Jena ventured to decide that a man who had been suffocated underground had fallen a victim, not to a devil, but a natural gas; and a distinguished theologian raised an outcry against their "lamentable license." Robert Boyle, our own great chemist, was severely denounced from the pulpit at Oxford.

For twelve centuries this system of Christian agriculture, of which Mr. Lilly is proud, was based on the demonic theory. Agnus Dei's (bits of wax, blessed at Rome, which are still worn in thousands by English Catholics—I wore them myself for twenty years), holy water, relics, exorcisms, charms, etc., were a normal and universal part of the agricultural outfit. Church bells had a great importance.

> On the devil my spite I'll vent,
> And, God helping, bad weather prevent,

is a temperate sample of the mottoes cast on them. Monks sold "conception-billets," bits of paper with prayers written on, which you swallowed to cure ailments, put in the cradle to keep the devils (or the wind) away, attached to your beer-cask or butter-keg to prevent magical souring, or put in the corner of your field to keep off the rain and the insect. In some places rain was induced by the

clergy bringing a dead donkey to the church gate, putting a wafer in his mouth, and then burying him. At other places the clergy solemnly exorcised the may-bug, the grasshopper, the field mouse, the cabbage worm, etc. There is an account of the proceeding in Switzerland (in 1471), where the challenge to the may-bug to clear its character was read by the clergy in churchyard and pulpit; and, as even the most hardened lawyer in Berne would not take up its case, it was, after due delay, excommunicated by the bishop.[1]

When even the crude agriculture of the time (twelve centuries of Europe's history) was paralysed by this stupendous superstition, and taxed by the heavy cost of it; when the Churches vigorously opposed the physical research which was to redeem it; one may express some surprise at finding the word "agriculture" mentioned in any apologetic work. But many another branch of industry was similarly impeded. The solemn blessing of the sea in modern French fisher towns, which British artists love to look upon, is another survival of a system which the economist and humanitarian

[1] See, on the whole subject, Rydberg's *Magic of the Middle Ages*. There are still parts of Italy where a naked girl and a priest—at decent intervals—perambulate the fields in the early morning to ensure good crops. In the west of Ireland the belief is still common that there is a professional and potent class of sorceresses among them. I have met erudite Irish priests who fully believe it, and have solemnly received the confession of these witches that they turned a neighbour's milk into blood.

cannot think of without a shudder. The conviction that the result of one's labour lay so entirely in the power of wilful spirits, and not in one's own skilfully directed energy, was a terrible hindrance to progress. Yet for twelve centuries the Churches fostered this conviction, and strangled every healthy attempt to correct it. We shall see more of this apropos of witches. Here I need add only two instances which illustrate the responsibility of both branches of the Christian Church. In 1593 Cornelius Loofs, Professor at Treves, a devout Catholic, wrote a temperate criticism of the diabolic theory in his *True and False Magic*. He was thrown into prison, and forced to recant on his knees before the Holy Inquisitors. The Jesuits afterwards declared that they would have had him burnt at the stake, but death withdrew the heart-broken student from the power of the Church. A few years before this the Protestant authorities had proved they were no less orthodox. Dietrich Flade, a respected judge, began to doubt the value of confessions extorted from witches by horrible torture, and acted on his scruple. He was himself subjected to such appalling torture that the venerable scholar confessed ne had sold himself to the devil and any other absurdity they suggested, and was then, on his confession, strangled and burned.

These are horrible episodes in the lives of our fathers to dwell upon, and it is regrettable that the

persistent misstatements of apologists oblige us to recall them. The authority of the Bible was the chief source of this benumbing belief in magic, and of the Church's violent and prolonged insistence on it. It was not until scepticism made some progress in Europe that the new physical sciences could arise to reform agriculture and industry, teach self-reliance and skill to the worker, and inaugurate the modern period of comfort.

I reserve for a later chapter the ecclesiastical claim to have helped the worker himself, and will conclude with a brief reference to the development of commerce, so important a factor in modern civilisation. Here, once more, we are compelled to dwell on an error of the Christian Church—not of a few members of it, but of the Church—which hindered the evolution of commerce and retarded civilisation for centuries. This is the well-known condemnation of lending money at interest. Aristotle and Plato had condemned interest on academic grounds; but, as both the Egyptian and the Roman law allowed moderate interest, there should have been a normal growth in Europe. Unhappily, both the Old and the New Testament strongly condemned interest. The Christian sentiment, taking shape in the slaves' and poor workers' societies with a communist ideal and a hatred of the capitalist, consistently denounced interest.[1] The

[1] The laxity which soon crept into the Church will allow the historians to find exceptions, but the clerical writer is not eager

Fathers were unanimous on the subject. Usury, or the taking of any interest on money, was branded by Basil, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzum, Cyprian, Tertullian, Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome, as "robbery," "a fecund monster," etc. The Council of Nicæa forbade clerics to take it, and the Synod of Elvira (306) had already forbidden laymen to do so. All the schoolmen followed (except Duns Scotus), and Dante put money-lenders in a particularly unpleasant part of his ghastly pit. Gregory IX. explicitly declared it a "damnable usury" to take interest on money lent in maritime trade—one of the most pressing needs for development—and Gregory X. forbade the giving of Christian burial to the sinner. The important Council of Vienne, presided over by Clement V., declared it heresy to say that the taking of interest was not a sin. The only concession to trade by the theologians was that, as the Jews were hopelessly damned on a larger count, they might be the usurers of Europe; and the Christians who forced them into this

to give them prominence. Thus the early pope St. Callistus (second century) had, while a Christian slave, traded with his master's money and induced his fellow Christians to invest through him. When this early Jabez Balfour went bankrupt, and was condemned to the mines, he somehow won the favour of the emperor's Christian concubine, Marcia, and was appointed to the Roman see. See Kalthoff's *Entstehung des Christenthums* for this story and the subject of interest; for the Fathers' views see Addis and Arnold's *Catholic Dictionary*, article "Usury"; and on the whole question White's *Warfare*.

channel, and closed every other against them, now revile them as materialistic money-seekers.

Any ample history of commerce or industry will show the terrible mischief of this ecclesiastical conviction. Industry declined for want of capital, maritime adventure was restricted, pauperism assumed very large proportions. Stoic emperors had lent money at four per cent. to small enterprisers, and had encouraged a healthy circulation. In the Middle Ages interest was generally at twenty to twenty-five per cent. The Jew lender had no moral and civic standing. His debts might be cancelled at any time, and his evidence rejected by any court. Between this very serious restriction of capital, the insecurity of roads and seas, the heavy tolls and royalties imposed at every gate and bridge and *seigneurerie*, and the unwise regulations of the medieval guilds, industry and commerce suffered very gravely. The *pax Romana* had gone from land and sea; the great Roman roads were in decay, the Roman lights on the coast extinguished, and pirates from the north and from Africa swept the whole coast of Europe. Ship-building retrograded in the utterly unscientific age, and even the advantages brought by the Arabs were looked on with superstitious fear. A thirteenth-century writer says of the compass, which the Arabs introduced to Europe: "No master mariner dare use it, lest he should be suspected of being a magician; nor would the sailors venture to go to sea under the

command of a man using an instrument which so much appeared to be under the influence of the powers below."[1] For two centuries the use of this valuable ally was thwarted by superstition.

From the thirteenth century a commercial development proceeded that at last swept away the ecclesiastical restriction. The growth of free workers, the rivalries of free towns, the security won by leagues, etc., fostered industry, until a time came when over-production stimulated foreign trade. The Crusades had opened the Levant to the Italian merchants, but the Turkish conquests forced the eyes of Europe to look out wonderingly over the broad seas. I have only to make two observations on the subsequent development. The immorality of the new commerce is notorious. It was largely a process of frank piracy, filibustering, and cheating. Letourneau (p. 515) remarks that religion was chiefly responsible for this low moral standard. Pagans had no rights, and they could be plundered and killed with a safe conscience. The story of Spain in Mexico illustrates this. God had, the Spaniards said, with priests by their side, given his peoples to the care of the pope, and the pope entrusted them to the Spanish monarch. Mr. Brace, at least, is candid on this point. He says that this supposed right to despoil the heathen was "one of the curses

[1] Routledge's *History of Science*, p. 71. See also Letourneau, *L'évolution du Commerce*, and the article "Commerce" in the *Enc. Britt.*

of the world," and that "the Church always supported this right" (p. 334).

The second point to be noted is that it was these profane merchants who forced the reluctant theologians to adopt saner views of money-lending. Gerson and others attacked the old idea in their interest, and a few theologians began to draw a distinction between usury and interest. Elizabeth and her councillors frankly rejected the ecclesiastical dictation, and, though the Puritans revived the Biblical idea, the battle between merchants and priests soon came to an end in England. The Catholic Church continued for two centuries to brand every evasion with its dogmatic irons. In the eighteenth century it began that subtle casuistic retreat which Pascal scourged in his *Provincial Letters*, and which is well known to-day. Its moral theologians now teach in the seminaries that interest up to twelve per cent. is quite lawful (Leo XIII. having made every effort to get far more than that), that the Church has never made any mistake in the matter, and that "those who say the Church's laws against usury were injurious to the common good do not know what they are talking about."[1]

The effect of the Crusades in promoting commerce is emphasised by some apologists. Whether this gain was worth the immense and horrible carnage of men, women, and children that those expeditions

[1] Father Lehmkuhl, S.J., *Theologia Moralis*, I, 687.

involved, and whether a pacific treaty with the highly-civilised and humane Arabs would not have achieved the end far better (we have nothing to do here with the spiritual value of the holy places), I leave to the reader to consider. But there is one point in the suggestion that demands notice. We are asked to regard the trade in relics as one of the streams that run into the later commercial prosperity. The most obstinate critic of the Church cannot deny the magnitude of this commerce, but we may, without undue censoriousness, plead that it has other than the economic aspect. It began early. St. Augustine, who denounces the monks for hawking spurious relics, became in the end an ardent and indulgent devotee. Gregory the Great tells how, in his time, the industrious Greeks were caught in the occupation of emptying graves, and confessed that the proceeds were intended for the relic-market. In time a vast amount of Europe's wealth was locked up in this sterile (I speak economically) property. Of the individual value of relics we have some idea when we find the king of France, in 1056, pledging securities to the value of 10,000 solidi to produce the bodies of two obscure saints whose ownership was in dispute. On this scale we may vaguely appreciate the value of a tooth of the Saviour;[1] a little phial of his blood (there were

[1] Kept at St. Medard. It had fallen out of the infant Saviour's mouth, in the ordinary course of nature, and been treasured by his mother; so the monks told the peasants. The learned

one hundred of these, and my learned professor of theology, Father David, subtly discussed their relation to the divinity of Christ), his baby-linen (kept in Rome, Spain, and France — simultaneously), his manger (at Santa Maria Maggiore), his umbilical cord (prized, in spite of the virgin-birth, by no less than seven churches), his prepuce (also kept at several churches, so that even the learned and inspired Pope, Innocent III., had, after grave consideration, to "leave the whole matter to God"), or a stone on which the sitting Saviour had left a miraculous *intaglio*. Mary had left to a grateful clergy her wedding ring, girdle, stockings, shoes, two combs, innumerable locks of hair, phials of milk, and several chemises (one of which is still venerated by Catholics at Chartres, under the modern title of "the veil"). And when all the saints in the calendar had been divided and multiplied (six churches, for instance, having the authentic head of John the Baptist), the older patriarchs, Jacob, Abraham, Aaron, etc., began to furnish most interesting relics. If we remember that the exhibition of these relics in the churches was one of the features of all the medieval fairs, when the holiday peasantry showered coppers on

Benedictine, D'Achéry, in editing, in the nineteenth century, the document referring to it, appends a note in which he gravely discusses whether the infant Jesus may not have had milk-teeth, like other infants, and left one behind. But he forgets that a rival monastery (Charroux) had a whole set of them.

the altars, and that "the whole of France and Italy" came together on the finding of a great relic (as monk Rudolph Glaber tells of the finding of Aaron's rod), we cannot for a moment question the magnitude of the stimulus given to commerce; but we may not incongruously plead that other sides of the subject prevent us from appreciating that stimulus.[1]

[1] A medieval treatise on relics, *De Pignoribus Sanctorum*, by Abbot Gilbert, is worth reading. The reader will be interested to know that the less romantic relics have still an enormous circulation in the Catholic Church, some being compulsorily inserted in every consecrated altar. But as the Vatican now insists that it does not "sell" the relics—it gives you the relic, and you give it a specified alms—the modern process does not come under the head of commerce. The picture that Milman gives of the taking of Constantinople by the Catholics in 1203 shows the value set on relics in the thirteenth century. While the Christian virgins and matrons of the Greek Church were raped on the public streets, and the soldiery dragged their carts into the cathedral to take away their loot, and prostitutes filled the sacred edifice with lewd songs and sat in the primate's chair, the monks and priests, who had come with the army, displayed only an eager zeal to secure and divide the rich collection of relics.

Chapter IV.

WORKS OF MERCY AND HUMANITY

If we must conclude that the Christian religion has had a very limited influence of a favourable kind on the development of science and the material advantages of our civilisation, we will hasten at once to a field in which its beneficent action is undeniable. The more prudent apologist of our time does not advance the claim that European civilisation is, on its material side, an outcome of Biblical ideas or clerical labours. Christianity set out, he observes, with a spiritual aim. From the first it sought to direct men's attention to inward purity, and did not enunciate a programme for the betterment of their environment. It did not preach the value of culture or research, and had no presentiment of the way in which a mature science would transform the homes of men. Character and moral influence it knew. It told how charity would sweeten and ennoble life. It insisted on the great truth of the brotherhood of men.

It is unfortunate that so few of our apologists have yet learned this prudence, and we have been compelled first to conduct an inquiry into the intellectual development of Europe, the causes of the

long paralysis of science, and the sources of its modern strength and triumph. This has necessarily involved the consideration of a good deal of distasteful historical matter. The humane reader will not lose the feeling that the men who stumbled into these errors and crimes were our fathers. We see better to-day, because we are higher up the hill on which they cut the paths for us. Only the intemperance and untruthfulness of apologists can be our excuse for dwelling on their aberrations. With some relief we turn to those brighter deeds of the Christian Church, the works of charity, mercy, and humanity, with which it sought to alleviate the actual suffering of humanity.

We may consider first the founding of hospitals and tending of the sick poor which is ever advanced as one of the distinctive merits of Christianity. The student of evolution will be prepared to find characteristic good qualities in the new religion. The law of the disappearance of old forms to make way for better generally holds as good of religions as it does of organisms or polities. It will be entirely in accord with rational and scientific principles that a new religion shall generally prove superior at points to its predecessors. The slow growth of mind and conscience, which the conservative character of religions finds it so difficult to accommodate, and that in the end has usually rent and rejected them, finds its expression in their successor. So, when we find the Christian Church

inheriting the combined moral experience of four of the greatest races of the old world—of Assyria, Egypt, Greece, and Rome—we naturally look to it for some distinctive advance on its parent-religions.

Thus it is that the Rationalist approaches the ardent philanthropy of the early Christian Church with no feeling of surprise. Fully appreciating the stimulus to benevolence which the Church gave, he merely stipulates that the advance shall be conceived in proper accordance with historical facts. Here, unfortunately, the apologist mars his case by his customary exaggeration. Almost every single clerical writer on the subject represents the doctrine of the universal brotherhood of men and the practice of benevolence to the suffering as new things in Europe. Writers like Mr. Kidd and Mr. Lilly are by no means free from this really gross exaggeration. But I will take the distinguished Protestant divine, Principal Fairbairn, to illustrate my point.

He claims (in his *Religion in History and Modern Life*) three characteristics for the new religion. It was universal (and, "as universal, it was something generically new, absolutely unlike all that had been before, or were around"), and it was spiritual. I need only remark on these two features that it is singular how so responsible a writer seems to be completely ignorant of the existence or the characters of Mithraism, Manicheeism, and the religion of Isis, which were just as universal and, many

would hold, as spiritual as Christianity. But the third characteristic claimed is the one that concerns us here. It is that under Christian influence "virtues new and beautiful were created." "The man who knows classic life," he says (p. 185), after contrasting the pagan and the Christian idea of love, "knows that the distance between these is an infinite distance," because "to the ancient world love is only a form of lust." Here we have the typical exaggeration, sanctioned in the most emphatic language by a representative divine. From his weighty pages it is copied into a hundred booklets and pamphlets, and repeated with the megaphonic effect of the preacher. In the mind of a youth who thinks he knows paganism when he has read a translation of Juvenal it would be intelligible; in a scholar it is frankly unintelligible.

I have already spoken of the admirable development of Stoicism in the first and second centuries. The higher standard of character which was then advocated included, very explicitly, both the theoretic and the practical recognition of the brotherhood of men. "The Stoics taught," says Mr. Lecky, "in the most emphatic language, the fraternity of all men, and the consequent duty of each man to consecrate his life to the welfare of others. They developed this general doctrine in a series of detailed precepts, which for the range, depth, and beauty of their character have never

been surpassed."[1] "The great Stoic doctrine of the brotherhood and equality of men," says Dr. Dill, "as members of a world-wide commonwealth, which was destined to inspire legislation in the Antonine age, was openly preached in the reigns of Caligula and Nero. A softer tone—a modern note of pity for the miserable and succour for the helpless—makes itself heard in the literature of the first century."[2] Renan had pointed out the fact long before, and M. Boissier has more than supported it with his great authority. One would have expected Principal Fairbairn to have some knowledge of this work.

The gospel of benevolence had been growing for ages. Centuries before, it had been a current belief in ancient Egypt, incorporated in the *Book of the Dead*, that one of the first questions put to the soul by Osiris was: "Have you made any man weep?" In far-off China the Golden Rule was formulated, and became a proverb, many centuries before Christ. In early Greece the dying Pericles protested with joy that no Athenian had ever worn mourning for any deed of his; and Aristides prayed to the gods that those who had banished him might never be compelled by danger or suffering to recall him. Cicero, in Rome, had written a fine chapter on benevolence (*De Officiis*, i. 14), in which he spoke more than once of "the charity that embraces the

[1] *History of European Morals*, i. 91.
[2] *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 3.

human race" and "the universal fellowship of the human race." "Nature," he said, "ordains that a man should wish the good of every man, whoever he may be, for this very reason, that he is a man." Lucan (*Pharsalia*, vi.) had a humanitarian vision of the cessation of war and the general reign of love. The Stoic writers, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, and the Neo-Platonists, headed by Plutarch, apply the general principle to nearly every feature of contemporary life. Every sentiment attributed to Christ and St. Paul has a parallel in their writings.

These philosophic precepts were, moreover, abundantly carried out. The letters that remain, the imperial rescripts, and especially the inscriptions, exhibit a very wide and tender practice of philanthropy. "Anyone," says Dr. Dill (p. 191), "who knows the inscriptions may be inclined to doubt whether private benefactions under the Antonines were less frequent and generous than in our own day." That is a very different state of things from what the apologist declares, and both Boissier and Dill, who substantiate it, exclude Christian influence. I have to deal later with the growing tenderness to the child, the slave, the woman, the poor, and the animal, and will only give a few general instances here. The emperors Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius, all founded charities for poor children. An inscription found at Velleia records

that Trajan lent a large sum of money at five per cent. to poor land-owners there, and with the interest paid for the support of 300 poor children.[1] He also maintained 5,000 children in Rome, and decreed their maintenance in other parts of Italy—a practice begun by Nerva, and extended by many rulers. Hadrian founded charities for poor women. Antoninus Pius lent money to the industrious needy, and founded an institute for training young girls, in honour of his wife. Marcus Aurelius founded a similar one in memory of his wife, and built adjuncts to certain temples for the reception of the dying and of women in pregnancy. Wealthy Romans liberally responded to their rulers with gifts and bequests for the poor, the aged, the young, and the infirm.

The impatient censor of paganism may retort that at least this tardy generosity throws earlier Roman practice into a deep shade. The feeling is largely due to ignorance of Roman life. There were few uncared-for poor in the earlier period. Most of the workers were slaves, and were maintained and medically treated by their masters. When manumission and purchase had created a mass of free workers, or free idlers, with a growth of poverty, the Empire undertook to feed them on a gigantic scale. Under the Antonines ample

[1] Dr. Dill points out the interesting fact, so little in accord with popular notions of Roman morality, that only two or three of these children were illegitimate.

rations were served out daily to 500,000 men, and they were provided with free baths and free theatres, or at least admitted to sumptuous baths and places of entertainment for a fraction of a penny. Medicine was given freely to them by the priests of Æsculapius; salt was a State monopoly, and was sold to them for a trifle. The economic enormity of all this does not alter the moral argument. Indeed, Mr. Lecky insists that the copious alms-giving of the Christian body was not less fatal economically and socially. The rich, he says, came to give alms "simply and exclusively for their own spiritual benefit," and, on the other hand, that enormous army of professional mendicants was gradually formed that marches through the whole history of Europe, and is still vigorous and repulsive in Italy and Spain. "In the sphere of simple poverty," he says, "it can hardly be doubted that the Catholic Church has created more misery than it has ever cured."[1]

But that is to anticipate. At the beginning of the Christian era there was little destitution. The impecunious "middle class" lived as clients on their patrons' generosity, and almost all the rest of the resourceless freemen received corn, wine, oil, and pork from the State. Their lot in that genial

[1] Loc. cit., ii. 93. The earlier Romans dealt drastically with mendicants on account of the peculiar liability to abuse. The Christian Church ran to the opposite and, socially, more noxious extreme.

climate, as M. H. de Rothschild has pointed out,[1] was not a hard one. As the slaves and poor turned to Christianity, and stood aloof from the pagan public life, they naturally looked to the Church's charity; and when the imperial machinery was destroyed, and the finances cut off, an entirely new social order, with an entirely new problem of poverty, confronted the charity of the new religion. Tollet observes that there was no *raison d'être* for alms or poor-houses at Rome before 270 A.D.[2] Then poverty increased, and taxes multiplied. Roman municipal officials were soon swept away by the invaders, and the Christian bishops virtually succeeded them. At the same time, large numbers of slaves were freed, and were unable to provide for themselves. It was under this pressure that the multiplication of poor-houses went on.

A somewhat similar evolution must be taken into account in appreciating the Church's care of the sick. That there were no hospitals in Europe until Fabiola founded one in the fourth century is a most improper statement. Both in Greece and Rome the sick poor had free access to State-paid physicians, and were medically treated by the priests of Æsculapius.[3] These Asclepeia are

[1] *Etablissements hospitaliers dans l'antiquité.*

[2] *De l'assistance publique et des hôpitaux.*

[3] On this question see the above works of Tollet and H. de Rothschild, and the articles "Medicina" and "Valetudinarium" in Smith's *Dictionary.*

expressly said in Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* to have taken the place of hospitals, the sick poor receiving advice and medicine there, and medical students making part of their preparation there. Indeed, that high and impartial authority goes on to say: "It may fairly be surmised that the disuse of these temples in Christian times made the necessity of hospitals more apparent, and so led to their institution." In other words, the new departure in the treatment of the sick was in a great measure due to other than humanitarian motives. In Greece, besides the Asclepeia (there were also institutes for orphans and for aged men), the poor had the attention of numerous State-paid doctors. Smith's *Dictionary* even hints that the more seriously ill may have stayed at their surgeries for some time. At Rome the art of healing was for a long time a domestic practice, based on books of hereditary recipes. The master, as Cato intimates, treated his family, his slaves, and his acquaintances. All were provided for in this system. When medical men were introduced each house had its doctor and infirmary for the family, the slaves, and the clients; and there were special military hospitals. The master might, it is true, cast out his slaves; but if they were then cured by the Æsculapian priests, they obtained their freedom.

With the development of the Empire and the multiplication of poor freemen a new institution,

the State-paid doctor, was introduced. The temples of Æsculapius were still the great hospitals of the poor;[1] the private hospitals still served the slaves and clients of the family; but a number of *archiatri populares* now ministered to all comers at the State's expense. There were fourteen of these free doctors at Rome and a proportionate number in other towns. We have a rescript of Antoninus Pius appointing them in the provinces. There were also women doctors for women's ailments. I must add that there are authorities who go even further, and hold that there were public *valetudinaria* (hospitals) at Rome in the first century. There seems to be an allusion to one of these in a letter of Seneca's, but the interpretation is much disputed. In any case, we are now in a position to appreciate more correctly what happened in the fourth and fifth centuries. The Christian abhorrence of the Æsculapian temple cut off the Christian poor from these popular dispensaries, and threw them on the charity of their co-religionists. As all the temples were entirely closed before the end of the century, and the invasions broke up the Roman structure with its civic doctors, the Church had a new problem of disease to face, just as we have seen in regard to poverty. And as no strong and well-organised secular power succeeded the Western Empire, it only remained for the priests of Christ to

[1] Plautus refers to the fact in his line :—
"Hic leno incubat in Esculapi templo."

take over the function of those priests of Æsculapius whom they had suppressed and superseded.

These are historical circumstances that must be borne in mind in connection with the new charities, and every humane reader will learn with gratification of the ample provision for the infirm under the older order, even if the knowledge diminishes somewhat the account he had heard of the origin of hospitals. We may candidly applaud the insistence on this charity of the Christian leaders, but we must not forget that they were confronting an entirely new situation. It was a transfer of philanthropy from the civic or collective sense of duty of the pagan days to the theocratic *régime* and individualist doctrine of charity of medieval Christendom.

In the new religious order a philanthropic heroism was evolved that was certainly new to Europe. In the whole story of Stoicism there is no figure like that of a Catherine of Siena, sucking the sores of a leper, or a Vincent de Paul. How far this fresh enthusiasm was due to the new doctrine of a hundred-fold reward in heaven—the Stoics either disbelieving in, or at least totally disregarding, the theory of a future life—we will not stop to consider. Dr. Beattie Crozier has observed that we must not entirely confuse enthusiasm with its grounds. That valuable element of human nature is not confined to any specific motives. The self-immolation of early Roman

patriots and the uncalculating ardour of the modern Agnostic Japanese officer warn us to avoid narrow estimates of human nature. But I cannot refrain, however ungenerous it may seem, from dwelling for a moment on another and very different aspect of this branch of philanthropy. If we are really concerned, in the broadest sense, with the degree in which the Church has assuaged human grief, we are forced to consider, not only its actual ministration to disease, but its attitude towards the progressive elimination of disease. Here again, unhappily, there is a debit side to the Church's account with humanity which the comprehensiveness of our inquiry obliges us to regard.

The Christian religion applied to disease that fatal devil-theory which it had inherited from Persia, Egypt, and Greece. The evolution of the evil is so closely similar to what we have already discussed that I will deal cursorily with the unhappy story. The Fathers, taking their stand on the Bible, insisted on the demonic nature of illness. "The diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to demons," said St. Augustine; and Tertullian, Gregory of Nazianzum, and other Fathers taught the same fatal theory. It followed that medical treatment was of little, if any, consequence, and the curing of disease became a function of ecclesiastical magic. "The precepts of medicine are contrary to celestial science," said St. Ambrose. As a result, medical science fell into disrepute and

impotence. In the Greek and Roman days medical men had been greatly respected. Their corporations in Italy often imposed a moral discipline on their members, and there is no doubt that the profession held in the mind of the time the high position to which it has returned in our own. In Christian Europe it fell very much into quackery and knavery, and for this the religious ideas have a grave responsibility.

Chemistry is one of the chief roots of modern therapeutics, and we have seen how that science was hampered by the Church. Another chief root is anatomy, and here all advance was arrested by the even more explicit action of the clergy. Galen had naturally insisted on dissection as a condition of progress. The Alexandrian schools of medicine and surgery had proceeded on his principles, and the outlook for the science in the fourth century was promising. Then the Church leaders developed their demonic theory of disease, and denounced the anatomist with particular violence. The body was the temple of the Holy Ghost, and must not be desecrated by the knife and the saw; though why the Holy Ghost permitted it to be desecrated by foul disease they never considered. Moreover, the difficulties of the theologian in regard to the resurrection were great enough without this further complication of a dismemberment and scattering in fragments of the body that was to rise again entire. So for more than a thousand years dissection was

prevented and the dissector outlawed; and just at the time when the stirring of the European mind gave better promise, Boniface VIII. issued a bull which, though it had literally a different aim, proved a drastic impediment to dissection for several centuries more.

Throughout the Middle Ages a number of the monasteries treated not only their own sick, but also laymen. We find, however, that some of the great monastic leaders, like St. Bernard, denounced recourse to medical aid, and that the study of medicine (a parrot-like repetition of Galen) in a few of the abbeys is to be traced to the humanitarianism of Charlemagne in the ninth century, and of the Jews and Arabs at a later date. Broadly speaking, disease was treated by supernatural magic with a fearful and wonderful admixture of naturalism. Herbal science ran riot, and to the ridiculous plants of the medieval pharmacy were added (on the demonic theory) the livers of toads, the blood of frogs and rats, and everything loathsome. The devil, it occurred to these ingenious practitioners, might be driven out in disgust. So the poor patient was rubbed with ointment prepared from the gibbeted bodies of criminals, smeared with ordure, made to swallow fibres of the hangman's rope and drink urine, etc., while the exorcist thundered lively and unprintable imprecations in his wearied ear. The following prescription for a man who was troubled with nocturnal visits from

goblins (in other words, dyspepsia) will make the modern patient grateful that he lives in an age of unbelief:—

> Take hop-plant, worm-wood, bishopswort, lupine, ash-throat, henbane, harewort, viper's bugloss, heathberry plant, cropleek, garlic, grains of hedgerife, githrife, and fennel. Put these worts into a vessel, set them under the altar, sing over them nine masses, boil them in butter and sheeps' grease, add much holy salt, strain through a cloth, throw the worts into running water. If any ill-tempting occur to a man, or an elf or goblin night-visitors come, smear his body with this salve, and put it on his eyes, and cense with incense and sign him with the sign of the cross.

While the elect were subjected to this extraordinary treatment, the heathen patients of the Jew and the Mohammedan were being attended with comparative skill and enlightenment. It is, indeed, a point to be remembered in connection with even modern discussions of the Jew that, as long as he was allowed to do so, he proved one of the most humane and skilful practitioners of an art that we regard as peculiarly beneficent. It was the Jews (not the monks, as some falsely assert) who founded the first great medical schools in Europe, at Salerno and Montpellier. Their influence had a good effect on the later monastic studies, but just when this was beginning to tell, the papacy, with its extraordinary instinct for false moves, cut off medicine and surgery absolutely from those centres of leisure and learning (fourth Lateran Council), and forbade the lay physician to practise without the concurrence

of the priest. Pius V. renewed the prohibition, on the express ground that disease was commonly due to sin. Physicians who showed any tendency to go beyond Galen and tradition were denounced as Averroists, and the able Jew physician was everywhere stigmatised, and often entirely prohibited (by Eugenius IV., Nicholas V., Calixtus III., and several Councils). The natural result was a degradation of medicine and surgery, and a fatal prolongation of the sufferings of humanity. Broken bones were cured with ordure, sprains by the hangman's touch, poisoning by the breath of a donkey, toothache by the application of a dead man's tooth, and so on.[1] The Reformers, who had a much smaller scheme of therapeutical magic to sustain, recommended drugs, but otherwise clung to the old diabolic theory.

The usual third stage set in at length, and met with the usual opposition from Christian sentiment. Frederick II., the anti-clerical, gave frequent permission to dissect in his dominions. In 1391 John of Aragon gave the medical faculty permission to dissect one dead criminal in three years. The clergy met all these concessions with the bull of Boniface, and the pulpits resounded as only pulpits can. In the sixteenth century Paracelsus and Vesalius fought their great fight for progress.

[1] See Ford's *History of Medical Economy during the Middle Ages*, or any history of medicine and surgery; and especially White's *Warfare*.

The story of the brave Andreas Vesalius, haunting gibbets to get bodies, scorning the clergy and the mob, protected for a time on account of his services to Philip II., but expelled at length and perishing an outcast, fittingly inaugurated the rise of a modern profession that has done so much for humanity and free thought. But long afterwards echoes of the great religious error were heard. In Catholic Spain the circulation of the blood was still denied at the end of the eighteenth century. In Catholic Canada the priests violently resisted vaccination: the picture of the clergy spending themselves in succouring the small-pox patients, yet urging them to disregard urgent medical advice, is not untypical of the whole chapter. In godly Scotland Sir J. Simpson's proposal to use anæsthetics at child-birth was met with pulpit protests against any scheme to "avoid one part of the primeval curse on woman."

How vast a flood of human suffering was thus allowed to flow on that might have been lowered or arrested ages ago but for religious illusions, I leave to the reader to imagine. I will only add two other considerations for the benefit of those who desire convictions founded on knowledge rather than on rhetoric. The epidemics that so often made a hell of Europe in the Middle Ages are known to-day to have been made possible by the neglect of cleanliness and sanitation, as well as by the impotence of medicine. Not only had the

Church brought no message to humanity in this, as the Arabs had done, but its saintly legends were a grave source of mischief. When we find the Church of Rome solemnly beatifying a man (B. J. Labré) in the full light of the nineteenth century, on the ground (among many other indications of holiness) that he deliberately cultivated filth (for penance), we can gauge its earlier responsibility. Scores of saints were lauded for that distinction. The monasteries were particularly filthy, and suffered in epidemics. To-day, in parts of the Continent, I have seen in them "sanitary" arrangements that make one shudder. Down to the seventeenth century the filthiness of the average English home and town was inconceivable. Plagues carried off millions in indescribable torment. In tenth-century France there were forty-eight famines (people eating human flesh, sometimes of slain children) and epidemics in seventy-three years. They were met with holy water, infectious processions and veneration of relics, and incantations. In the fourteenth century 25,000,000 people perished of the Black Death, and tens of thousands of Jews and witches were burnt to stay its progress.[1]

[1] Nearly the whole of the considerations in this work apply with particular force to Scotland. Before the Reformation it had its wonderful clerical magic; after the Reformation it met epidemics with fast-days and the burning of witches; but its villages remained horribly unclean down to the nineteenth century. Yet a reviewer of a recent work of mine lightly observed in the *Glasgow Herald* that at least in their country they know what

In the eighteenth century the death-rate in London was eighty in 1,000; now it is fourteen or fifteen. The jails were simply inhuman; Howard found far better ones among the Turks. So late as 1837 it was found that of 77,000 paupers in London 14,000 had fever.

To talk of charity and ignore the culpable continuation of these things is perverse. When we study the admirable structure of a city of 2,000 years ago (Pompeii) or the clean life of Moorish cities of 1,000 years ago, we want to know why our own civilisation was, in these respects, so tragically retarded by the neglect of the study of sanitation and medicine. Let us frankly admire the philanthropic heroism of hundreds of Christian men and women; and let their followers frankly deplore errors that cost humanity more than a thousand years of preventable misery.

The treatment of lunatics is a peculiarly painful episode in the story of Christian Europe. Hippocrates and Galen had strongly insisted on the true version of their condition, but the Church led the whole of Europe into an absolute conviction of the theory of diabolic possession. The text of the New Testament was explicit. The Fathers, the schoolmen, and the Reformers all preached it; and it continued to live in the eloquence of Bossuet and the authority of Wesley. In the early Middle Ages

their civilisation owes to the Bible, and will have none of my naughty strictures.

little notice was taken of these hopeless cases of possession; but the salutary influence of the Moors, who, as usual, held sound views and applied secular treatment, inspired the multiplication of asylums. It would have been better, perhaps, if the idea had not been transplanted into the unhealthy soil of Christendom. These asylums became dens of horror. The patient was flogged, smeared and drugged with filth, wearied with the most abominable imprecations, "bowsened" in water—in other words, treated literally as a devil. The terrors of the witch-hunts and other features of medieval life multiplied insanity, and the incantations and violence grew. Jesuit fathers (at Vienna in 1583) boasted that they had cast out 12,642 devils. And not a single Christian teacher, down to the end of the seventeenth century, was prompted by his sources of inspiration—whatever they were—to discern the awful brutality of this error. The truth was left to sceptics like Montaigne and Bayle to reveal. They it was who in this, as in other matters, began the distinctive humanity of modern civilisation. A physician of Cleves, John Weyer, led the early reform. The Church put his books on the *Index*, and Catholics and Protestants united in hostility to him. Pastor Bekker was outlawed by his Church for helping the light. In America (1750) the heretical Quakers inaugurated the new treatment, and the Quaker Tuke led the reform in England, where Locke had pleaded for saner views.

Few of the clergy gave any countenance to Tuke; and the scorn of the *Edinburgh Review* on the one hand, and of Wesley on the other, indicate the solid religious hostility. The chief work was, however, done in France. Initiated by the sceptical Montaigne and fostered by the teaching of the philosophers, it was only established by the work of Pinel at Bicêtre, when the Revolution had shattered Catholic power. In Germany Frederick William I. was the most powerful reformer.

I have treated very summarily the facts relating to the long abuse and to the rise of the modern civilised practice.[1] The reader will now be able to decide how far the Church was responsible for the ages of suffering that an encouragement of research might have arrested long ago, and how far its alleviation of much of that suffering by charitable institutions can compensate for its failure to touch the root of the evil. I need not linger over the pretended anxiety of some for the future of our hospitals if Christian beliefs are abandoned. We have now as a community the same sense of responsibility to the helpless and suffering as the Romans had. Hospitals may be municipalised—the sooner the bette.—but cannot disappear. In fact, there is an enormously exaggerated idea about

[1] The full facts, with authorities for each, will be found in White's *Warfare*. He speaks of the French appointing a Commission "in 1791, just before the Revolution." This was, of course, in the height of the best part of the Revolution.

of the proportion in which our Christian neighbours support or erect these institutions. Writing twenty years ago, Mr. B. B. Rawlings showed that, whereas the annual expenditure of the London hospitals was three-quarters of a million, the Church collections only made up £33,000 of this. He gave an instance where an irreproachable hospital had sent out an urgent appeal to 10,000 people living in a fashionable, and therefore religious, quarter. To this there were only nine replies, and half of them were refusals. As to the clergy, he said: "There is a general and well-founded complaint that, as a body, the clergy are unsympathetic in regard to the institutions they make use of."[1] Religion has done its work, for good and for evil, in connection with the sufferings of the poor and the infirm. Only when its intemperate advocates press exorbitant claims on us do we hasten to cast up the reckoning.

[1] *The Church and the Hospitals*, p. 13. A very curious coincidence may be noted in connection with this foolish talk about Christianity and modern philanthropy. On the very day that I am writing this chapter Mr. Beit's will is published. It bequeathes over £2,000,000 for public purposes, including £20,000 each to two hospitals and £25,000 for medical science. Religion is not mentioned, and the *Daily News* editorially observes: "Religion, *as is the fashion in the will of the modern millionaire*, does not receive a mention or a farthing." It is an instructive reply to those who fancy philanthropy is distinctively Christian.

Chapter V.

THE CHILD AND THE MOTHER

We have still to examine a number of the charitable and humane accomplishments that are set out by the apologists for the Church, and we will proceed at once to consider those which are felt to contain the finest expression of the Christian spirit. Admitting, as we have done, that there was a decay of character at Rome in the Augustan age ; admitting, as we must, that the imposing structure of the Empire rises very largely out of a field of conquest and violence, we must expect to find ample opportunities for reform when the new religion penetrates to the hearts of the people. The really aristocratic complexion of the Roman world—the strong emphasis on the man and master—left large classes of living beings at his mercy. When that mercy deteriorated there was much inhumanity, and every effort to abolish it calls for our gratitude.

The lot of the slave, the child, and the woman suggests itself to us at once for inquiry, and, deferring the first point until the following chapter, I now approach the work of the Church on behalf of the child and its mother. It will be recognised

that I am not avoiding the more confident of the apologists' claims in order to rake up incidental errors of the clergy from the *débris* of history. Within the limits imposed by my purpose—the analysis of the elements of our civilisation—I am candidly following the lead of the most distinguished divines. Dr. Fairbairn, for instance, warmly insists on the service that the Church rendered to humanity in throwing "a halo" about the woman and the child. Even some non-Christian writers have accepted Raphael's famous Madonna and Child as the most impressive symbol of our debt to the Church. The point is a very natural one. As Dr. Fairbairn feelingly records, Roman law gave the father absolute power over mother, child, and slave. They had no rights. The child might be cast away alive, and would then be picked up by speculators and brought up to a career which he shudders to contemplate. The boy who was retained and bred might be put to death at any time by the father, just like the slave. "The very sense of their rights," he says, "was not yet born; the feeling of obligation towards them waited on the footsteps of Christ."[1]

It is a pity that a very natural warmth of indignation prevented the distinguished apologist from going more closely into the historical details. He seems to have sadly confused various periods of

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 201.

Roman life, and entirely failed to see the safeguards against abuse of the early Roman system. He refers us to Mommsen, certainly the first authority on the Republic. But when we go to Mommsen we find this remarkable assurance *àpropos* of the exposure of children: "The moral obligations of parents towards their children were fully and deeply felt by the Roman nation";[1] and the historian elsewhere says of the worst things that befell the exposed children, "as is still commonly done in Italy." It would seem, then, that the "sense of their rights" came long before "the footsteps of Christ," and the infliction of their wrongs lingered eighteen hundred years after them. Clearly, we must proceed once more with discrimination, and consult the best available authorities on the question.

The first service that the Christian Church rendered was in the checking of the exposure of children.[2] Mr. Lecky has said that infanticide was

[1] *Roman History*, i. 74. The second quotation is from Mommsen and Marquardt's *Handbuch*, under title "Aussetzung." A parallel passage is found in Sir Henry Maine's *Ancient Law*, p. 164: "I do not know how the operation and nature of the ancient Patria Potestas can be brought so vividly before the mind as by reflecting on the prerogatives attached to the husband by the pure English Common Law"; and this, he observes, was chiefly inspired (on that point) by the theologians.

[2] Its condemnation of abortion may seem to some to have first place. But the Church in this only repeated a condemnation often expressed before it—one school of Roman doctors binding its members on oath not to administer drugs for the purpose (see Smith's *Dictionary*)—Ovid, Seneca, Favorinus, Plutarch, Juvenal,

one of the deepest stains on the life of antiquity, and—though the facts given by Mr. Lecky do not wholly sustain his censure—the old Roman custom had a barbaric complexion. The new-born babe was brought to the father. If he took it in his arms, it became a prospective citizen of the Republic and sharer of its power. If he turned away after his inspection of the pink morsel of humanity, it was hurried from the home and placed by night on the public street or square. The speculator in these exposed infants (usually girls or unpromising boys) too often reared them for the slave-market, the brothel, or (later) the beggar's trade. On the other hand, the child that remained in the family lay under the despotic power of the father, and might be put to death by him at any time with perfect legal impunity. The abolition of this relic of the patriarchal days of the Roman people is a service that must be gratefully acclaimed. However, we again find that the change did not come about with the dramatic suddenness which is so dear to the apologist.

We have already seen the growth of a deep humanitarian feeling before Christian influence

and J. Paulus passing strong censure on it as criminal—and there is no clear evidence at all that the practice of abortion has been less in Christian times than it was in pagan. Moreover, the Catholic Church has proceeded in this on a dogma that has carried it to eccentric extremes. Its rigid and narrow law really causes a great deal of suffering unnecessarily. The Roman feeling was that the fœtus was not a human being till born.

was felt at Rome, and the position of the child could not, and did not, escape the watchful eye of the new moralists. People are, in fact, not always just to even the older Roman generation. The theory of the child's position no doubt suggests lurid visions of child-hecatombs to the man or woman who only knows the Roman patrician from the pages of Christian literature. The suggestion has very little foundation in fact. I have already quoted Mommsen's strong testimony to the moral sense of the Roman parent under the Republic, and no one has better knowledge than he. Other authorities (Smith's *Dictionary*, for instance) tell us that a sober and powerful public opinion kept the less sensitive parents in check, and generally prevented abuses. It is extremely untrue to Roman life to imagine that the child was treated as a slave (the *Dictionary* observes). What the impartial social student will seek to know is whether there was more cruelty to children in pre-Christian Rome than in Rome, or Europe generally, at a later date. History certainly cannot affirm this; and, with the annals of the modern Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children before us, we shall find it hard to believe that a worse state of things existed at Rome, and was overlooked by its fierce literary censors, than there was in England less than a century ago.

However, the state of the law and the practice of exposition demanded reform, and the Stoic

development of which I have spoken inaugurated it; and little serious advance was made for several centuries after them.[1] The great Stoic lawyer, Ulpian, declared it illegal and criminal for a parent to slay his son without a trial, and tells us the father is bound to lay his serious complaint before the prefect. Trajan compelled a cruel father to set his son free. Hadrian banished a man who killed his son for a very grave misdeed; in fact, it is a strange commentary on the popular notion of patrician morality to find that in most cases where daughters were put to death (and in some cases of sons) the charge was immorality! Many instances are known to us of the pagan emperors banishing or severely punishing cruel parents. Under Alexander Severus the killing or exposition of a child was declared to be murder. Diocletian, the persecutor, prohibited the sale of children; Constantine, the first Christian emperor, removed the restriction and allowed sale once more. The truth is that the Christian legislation shows no appreciable advance until we come to Justinian (two centuries after Constantine). The decrees are almost all echoes of earlier pagan enactments. The much-quoted words of the Christian law, that "a father's power must be shown in piety, not in atrocity," are a passage from one of the great Stoic lawyers. The chief advance made by

[1] See the article "Infanticide" in the *Enc. Britt.*, Smith's *Dictionary*, and Mommsen and Marquardt's *Handbuch.*

Justinian was that the foundling (for the practice of exposition continued) should no longer be the slave of the finder; but we are told (*Enc. Britt.*) that this law "did not affect western Europe," where great numbers of children were still sold into slavery by their Christian parents. In the eighth century the practice of selling children was more widespread than it had ever been under the pagans. And if an even longer period is asked for the working of Christian charity, I will take the nineteenth century, and ask any reader to study the facts of child labour exposed by R. Owen or Lord Shaftesbury, or the horrible state of things thirty years ago that was disclosed by an inquiry into "nursing homes" and the insurance of children.

It would appear that Dr. Fairbairn has not that command of the facts of Roman life which his warm language would seem to imply. Nor may we suppose that the peculiar service of the new religion lay rather in the introduction of a new feeling of philanthropy for the children of the free poor. I have already shown that under the Antonines such works of philanthropy were greatly multiplied. The emperors and the wealthy patricians founded numbers of orphanages and institutes for children, especially girls. The institutes of Antoninus Pius and of Marcus Aurelius set a princely example that was not disregarded; and we have seen how widespread was the State or

municipal feeding of children in the second century. As the imperial and civic machinery broke down there would, no doubt, be considerable distress, and Christian efforts to meet this were very praiseworthy. Whether these efforts were equally effective one cannot say. We have few traces of such charities, while the distress must have been enormous.

Of another work of benevolence in regard to the child, the foundling hospital, a few words will suffice. Very contradictory opinions are expressed on the effect of these institutions on morality, but we need not consider that aspect here. We have only to notice that, though exposition long continued at the centre of Christendom, it had no foundling hospital, Mr. Lecky finds, until the thirteenth century. The earliest of which we have a trace in Europe seems to belong to the seventh or eighth century. The decree of the first Christian emperor, re-affirmed at the Church Council of Arles, gave foundlings as slaves to their finders, so that for many ages the change in practice was inconsiderable. The clergy generally were content to put shells for receiving foundlings at the church door. These children then generally passed into the rank of serfs of the Church. The noble efforts of St. Vincent de Paul mark the real beginning of charity in their regard—ten centuries after the establishment of the Christian religion in Europe.

The meagreness of these charities will probably be redeemed in the mind of the apologist by the institution which we have now to consider—the school. Initiating the child into some share of the distinctive life of humanity, throwing open to him as he matures the literary treasures of the world, the school is at once a benefactor to the individual and one of the surest elements of our civilisation. It is, therefore, not unnatural that we should find the apologist dilating with generosity on the Church's share in the creation of modern education. At a time, he says, when secular powers had no sense of duty whatever in regard to education, the Church multiplied and maintained schools throughout Europe. From its higher schools have been evolved the most venerable universities of Europe, and on the humble structure of its charity schools has been reared the imposing edifice of our modern State systems. From the end of the fifth to the end of the eighteenth century she alone imparted any instruction. She is the creator of the European school.

With this view of the importance of the school in our civilisation every Rationalist will concur, but he will probably dissent from the version of the Church's relation to education. I have published a special inquiry into the subject, and, as most of my present readers will have seen it, I will be content to summarise here the facts which I

have there set out in detail and grounded on the proper authorities.[1]

The truth is that in the Roman Empire there was an admirable scheme of education. Primary schools were scattered over the whole of civilised Europe, and the vast majority of the freemen, and very many of the slaves, learned to read, write, and cipher. Secondary schools, with generous municipal support, were very numerous everywhere. At Rome and Constantinople there were higher schools, or universities, where the most eminent teachers were maintained by the State, and where pupils chosen by merit out of the whole Empire obtained gratuitous instruction. The emperors gave large subsidies to education out of the imperial treasury, and many privileges to teachers, and forced the municipal authorities to see that they had an adequate salary. Had this scheme of education been steadily developed, Europe would have passed our present position many centuries ago. But the Christian Fathers strongly discouraged secular instruction, and, when the barbarian invasions had destroyed the existing schools, the Church made no effort to replace them.

I have already quoted a letter of Gregory the Great in illustration of the ecclesiastical attitude and the profound ignorance that had succeeded the

[1] *The Truth about Secular Education*, chs. i.–iii. But essentially the same story will be found in Compayré's or Seeley's or any other expert manual of the history of education.

high proportion of literacy of the pagan Empire. A few monks or clerics gave a rudimentary instruction here and there, but experts on pedagogy are agreed that up to the year 800 these efforts were most rare and slight. I am, of course, speaking of the education of the children of the laity, not of the children admitted to monastic life or of adult culture (with which I have dealt).[1] In the ninth century Charlemagne attempted to revive the older system. He was resisted by nearly the whole of the clergy, and his work almost perished. A few of the schools which he had forced the monks and the clergy to open continued, however, to teach lay children, and some of these began to attract hundreds of pupils in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, to be followed by thousands in the days of Abélard. But I have already spoken of the kind of culture given to youths and men at these future universities. Let us confine our attention to the question of schools for the elementary training of the children of the workers. From the sixth to the sixteenth century, the period during which monks and monasteries spread their vast net over Europe, the number of such schools was insignificant. The Reformers encouraged the building of schools for the people, but the impulse they gave was lost in the religious wars that followed. On

[1] Mr. Brace is able to quote only six Councils up to the ninth century that raised the question of education, and even these do not all speak of schools for the laity.

the Catholic side the Jesuits and the Christian Brothers founded a large number of schools in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Then began the pressure of Deists, Quakers, and Freethinkers, and the nations of Europe began to awake to their responsibilities.

All this I have explained elsewhere, and have told how the Churches grievously hampered the work of establishing State systems in every country. The Church throughout its long dominion insisted that education was primarily a religious matter. How far it met its self-appointed duty we know. Hardly a single pope or powerful prelate or important Council in more than 1,000 years gave any attention to the subject. The gross illiteracy of Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century is a sufficient reply to the inflated claims of apologists. In England only one man in six could read and write *at the middle of the nineteenth century*, forty years after the founding of the British and Foreign Schools Society and the National Schools Society. What the earlier clerical work had been worth for the people at large is apparent. In Italy eighty per cent. of the people were illiterate until the destruction of the papal power; in Spain seventy per cent. were illiterate until a few years ago.

Thus it is clear that we must make serious reserves when the claim is advanced that the Christian religion inspired the institutions which

protect and develop the life of our children and form so commendable a part of our civilisation. Pagan Rome had, before its dissolution, given legal security to the child in the home, and established a system of educating and feeding the poorer children and of free medical assistance. The child of the next twelve or thirteen centuries had, indeed, a greater legal security against murder or alienation, but its life was menaced by the new dangers of an illiterate, superstitious, and profoundly insanitary world, and was generally deprived of all the earlier advantages of the State institutions. The nineteenth century has witnessed a revival and development of those older institutions. But when we examine the history of the recent work for the child we do not find any conspicuous activity of the clergy. They retarded the development of education, looked with general coldness and indifference on the appalling evils of child-labour and child-imprisonment in the early nineteenth century, and did little for the prevention of the child-sacrifice that so terribly marred our life. Nearly every movement for alleviating the heavy lot of the child was initiated, not merely by laymen, but by laymen and laywomen who were beyond the sphere of clerical influence.[1]

[1] I have not space to deal in detail with these movements. A good account of many of the civilising movements of the nineteenth century is given in the Rev. Ramsden Balmforth's *Social and Political Pioneers*. Only one clergyman, Kingsley, figures

Dr. Fairbairn is more emphatic in his claim when he comes to speak of the mother, and he is supported by the unanimous voice of the apologists. "I confess," he says, "that there are moments when, with all my strong dislike to priestcraft, sacerdotalism, and the poor external form of Christianity it implies, I can feel how it taught us reverence for woman" (p. 204). With the admirable spirit of that remark every right-minded man will concur. Whatever errors we discover in the religion we reject should not blind us to its excellences and achievements. It is a narrow mind that will expect any large body of men, holding power and wealth and ideals for a considerable period, to have done no good service whatever to their fellows. And, of all the social and civilising services that can be rendered, the just and wise settlement of the position of woman is among the most important. Cruelty and injustice to those frailer companions whom men ever speak of as softening for them the trials of life, whose tenure of life and happiness so generally depends neither on force nor law, but on the will of the man, and who make and mould the successive generations, are rightly abhorred by all thoughtful men. If Christianity has rendered any signal service in this respect, it is entitled to no small gratitude, not

among his chief heroes; only one clerical name occurs among the helpers of Shaftesbury and Mrs. Fry; while the names of Quakers and Freethinkers occur on nearly every page.

only from women, but from every admirer of modern civilisation.

Here, again, the reader will probably be acquainted with an earlier study of the question which I have published, and I cannot do more here than summarise the result. The apologists have, as is usual, confused the various periods or phases of Rome's development. Under the Republic woman's position was legally severe and socially restricted, but not unhappy and by no means degraded. The period has given us some of the most admirable types of womanhood. During the luxurious early years of the Empire she passed out of the despotic authority of the male, obtained complete social liberty and much property, and contracted not a little of the general dissoluteness. In the great Stoic period her liberty was sanctioned, her character improved with general society, and her legal position was enormously improved by the lawyers. When the Christian religion came to influence in Europe, it found woman as free as she was in the nineteenth century, and not generally lower in character. It is true that her power had been far greater in ancient Egypt, and there was a greater reverence for her among the barbarians; but our concern is with the passage from the Roman to the Christian community.

In most parts of Europe—all except England—she then fell to a lower legal and social position

than she had ever had in Greece or Rome. The great legal authority on the matter, Sir Henry Maine, says that the legislation in regard to her of the *Christian* emperors "bears some marks of a reaction against the liberal doctrines of the great Antonine jurisconsults."[1] Women writers are more emphatic. In the medieval treatment of women, says Mrs. Cady Stanton, "mankind touched the lowest depth of degradation." "It was the policy of the Church," says Miss G. Hill, "to keep women in a subordinate position." "By the close of the Middle Ages," says Mlle. Chauvin, "reaction was triumphant in the whole of society." I have described the retrograde process in detail in my book. It was directly due to the teaching of the Old Testament, against which Christ had not uttered a word of protest or warning, of St. Paul, and of the Fathers. The outcome of it was that woman entirely lost the legal rights she had been accorded under the Stoics and the respect she had enjoyed among the barbarians, and she received no compensating advantage. Fathers, schoolmen, and Reformers used language in regard to her that deepened the idea of her inferiority in the not unwilling masculine mind; popes and Councils sanctioned the degradation. Hardly a voice was raised on her behalf until pagan ideas revived in the Renaissance, and again until Frances Wright,

[1] *Ancient Law*, p. 156.

Mary Wollstonecraft, Lucretia Mott, Abby Kelly, Ernestine Rose, Harriet Martineau, George Eliot, Robert Owen, J. S. Mill, G. J. Holyoake, and other heretics and Freethinkers, demanded her reinstatement in the nineteenth century. And their efforts were violently resisted by the clergy, on Biblical grounds.

That is the plain outline of the story that Mlle. Chauvin, Mrs. Gage, Mrs. Cady Stanton, and other women writers, have given us at length. On what grounds do the clergy now base their claim to have improved the position of women? They point out that in many passages of the New Testament Christ is described as holding an attitude favourable to woman. How, then, did every divine, from Augustine to Luther, overlook those passages, and only quote St. Paul and the Old Testament? We are concerned with the influence Biblical ideas *actually exercised* in Europe, not with the influence a different interpretation of them *might* have exercised.

They point to the elevation of Mary. But in a world that had been peculiarly rich in lady-goddesses the elevation of Mary was a small matter. And what is, to our own day, the position of woman in Mariolatric Italy or Spain?

They protest that, though the spiritual aim of Christianity prevented it from arresting her legal and social degradation, it at least promulgated a spiritual ideal of womanhood that elevated her

in personal dignity. Now, Sir Henry Maine points out that it was the Canon or Church Law that was responsible for the injustice to woman in European law. It is a singular gospel that preaches dignity and teaches indignity. But it is utterly unhistorical either that the later pagan idea of womanhood was low, or that the new Christian womanhood was high. Read Mr. Dill's book on Roman society in the second and the fourth century, instead of shuddering over Juvenal's bitter attack on an earlier period; then read Jerome's description of the Christian Roman women, Gregory of Tours' description of the women of Christian Gaul, or any description of the women of medieval Italy.

They describe how Christianity branded divorce and consecrated marriage. The Fathers' utterances on marriage and conjugal union have been published often enough. "They laid," said St. Jerome, "the axe of virginity at the root of the tree of matrimony." "It was a decent sort of adultery," said Athenagoras. They worked infinite evil by their ill-advised denunciation of second marriages. They brought about, by their refusal of divorce under any conditions, a state of things that has increased irregular commerce and laid a long and heavy burden on honourable men and women. Rational control of divorce was greatly needed, in the interest of woman and child. By its dogmatic restriction the Church wrought more

evil—we see it to-day—than we discover the older laxity to have caused.

But they provided refuges for women in convents, says the desperate apologist. It is doubtful if they committed any greater sin against woman and humanity. For a heaven that is fading fast before the eye of humanity to-day they induced millions of women to sacrifice life, love, and motherhood. On an ascetic ideal that is rejected to-day by the majority of Christians, they bade gentle women scourge themselves and starve themselves and shun the sunlight and the sweeter things of earth. I know well how many women find happiness in the convent; and the same sacerdotal experience has taught me how many are beguiled into it as immature girls and do not find happiness in it, but cannot leave. For a thousand years they drew the best blood of Europe from its veins, and condemned it to sterility. For a thousand years women's arms ached for the husband or child that would never come, and embraced an illusion. For a thousand years no religious man was inspired to see the error. Possibly the world will one day point out with complacency that the average nun's life is short, and that in the Middle Ages it very often contrived to be merry.

I must not go again over the story of woman under Christianity, but there is a point that I did not touch in my previous work—witchcraft, a painful, but necessary, page in the story that is

thrust on us. It has been treated so often that I may be brief. There had been laws against magicians in the Roman Empire, but they were rarely enforced except on the impulse of political suspicion. The generous peopling of Europe with evil spirits by the new religion led to a terrible extension of the belief, as we have already seen. In a work issued from the Vatican, the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*, it was laid down that the devil was more apt to act through women than men on account of their inherent wickedness, and on them the worst of the evil fell. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—when the Catholic writer finds so great an expression of a divine spirit—the terror had reached an enormous height. The trials were caricatures of justice, and the tortures fiendish. Witnesses were admitted to give evidence against—but not for—them who were considered incapable of giving evidence in other cases. The horrible system of "questioning" under torture, which had been taken over from paganism, was applied to them with exceptional severity. Pagan Rome, which is represented as so inhuman, had put a strict limit to torture in all cases. The Church not only maintained the institution, but permitted the withdrawal of the limit in two cases—heresy and witchcraft; one of which is now acknowledged by the Roman Church itself to be an imaginary crime, and the other is admitted to be such at least by the rest of

Christendom. I will tell a little of these tortures later. But their severity and the number of victims are well known to have been tragical.

No saint, no pope, no Christian scholar, rebuked the great crime of the Middle Ages. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries pope after pope solemnly sanctioned and encouraged it. Innocent III., in 1484, gave a fearful impetus to the slaughter throughout Europe, urging the Dominican monks on with awful effect. The Reformers joined in the error, and Protestant lands were just as much desecrated as Catholic. No estimate of the number of victims is possible, but details such as a French judge boasting that he has accounted for 900 witches in fifteen years, or a Swiss judge dealing with 1,000 cases in one year, give some idea. The horror that was added to life by the hunts of Inquisitors, and the monstrous nature of their courts, can hardly be realised, but a letter written in 1629 by the chancellor of the Bishop of Wurtzburg helps us to conceive it :—

> There are still 400 in the city, high and low, of every rank and sex—nay, even clerics—so strongly accused that they may be arrested any hour. Some out of all offices and faculties must be executed : clerics, councillors, and doctors, city officials, court assessors. There are law students to be arrested. The prince-bishop has over forty students here who are to be pastors : thirteen or fourteen of these are said to be witches. A few days ago a Dean was arrested ; two others who were summoned have fled. The notary of our church consistory, a very learned man, was yesterday arrested and put to torture

> In a word, a third part of the city is involved. A week ago a maiden of nineteen was put to death, of whom it is everywhere said that she was the fairest in the whole city, and was held by everybody a girl of singular modesty and purity. She will be followed by seven or eight others of the fairest. There are 300 children of three or four years of age who are said to have had intercourse with the devil. I have seen put to death children of seven, promising students of ten, twelve, fourteen, and fifteen, etc.[1]

I do not wish to prolong the terrible story, but one cannot write of woman under the reign of Biblical ideas without noticing it. In Protestant Germany the tragedy, led by the Bishops of Saltzburg, Wurtzburg, and Bamberg, was as bad as in Catholic countries, though the Catholics, as in almost every other evil, learned wisdom last. In England all know of the persecution under James I., and again under the Puritans. In Scotland nine women were burned together at Leith so late as 1664. It was a specifically Biblical error. Those of us who regard the Bible as a valuable synthesis of the best and the worst of a former age do not attack the book on that account. But one cannot, in all seriousness, help asking how those who regard it as an inspired work, and who think a Divine Spirit passes from it to the reverent reader, can conceive these appalling aberrations. Not a saint or prelate, from Francis of Assisi to Wesley, was moved to protest. It was laymen (with the

[1] The letter, and other appalling indications, are given in White's *Warfare*. See also Lecky.

exception of Pastor Bekker, who was rejected by his Church) who first perceived the truth. It was unbelievers who forced it on a reluctant clergy. The Italian philosopher, Pomponazzi, often condemned for his views, first hinted the truth in 1513. Five years later the student of science, Agrippa of Nettesheim, raised his voice, and was driven from city to city by the persecuting Dominicans. In 1563 John Weyer, a doctor, incurred persecution for his partial scepticism. In 1584 Reginald Scot, an English layman of rationalist temper, struck a blow in this country. In 1586 Dietrich Flade was strangled and burnt, and in 1593 Cornelius Loofs degraded and imprisoned, as we have seen. Not until 1631 did a cleric (the Jesuit Spee) attack the evil, and then anonymously, and he was followed by the German Pastor Bekker in 1691. But the new spirit diffused by the sceptics, Bayle and Montaigne, was making progress, and with the final assault of Beccaria, Voltaire, and others, the Churches were taught the lesson of justice and humanity.

Chapter VI.

THE SLAVE, THE SERF, AND THE WORKER

In passing to the subject of the abolition of slavery it will be convenient to follow the lead of an apologist of comparative moderation who has gone very fully, and with some candour, into the question. Mr. Brace's *Gesta Christi* may be regarded by the faithful as indiscreetly candid at times, but it is at least valued for its defence, where it does defend. We have already seen on more than one occasion that, with all its admissions, the work must be read with caution. When we find the author, after the usual claim to have uplifted and served woman, speculating that, if Agnosticism ever prevail, woman "will become but as a weaker fellow-animal," and will "perhaps lose herself the purity and sanctity which made her under Christianity the object of so much reverence," we wonder, in the light of the previous chapter, what historical works apologists *do* read; we wonder whether they ever heard of Owen, Mill, and Holyoake, or whether they know anything of the ideals of Huxley, Clifford, and the other Agnostic leaders. Works of the type of Mr. Brace's and Dr.

Fairbairn's are, unfortunately, the only ones on those matters that most women and many men will read.

However, Mr. Brace's statement of the apologetic position in regard to slavery is the most informed and, on the whole, the most ingenuous, so that we will keep it before us. An apologist who starts with the admission that the Church has "committed gigantic blunders which have retarded for ages the progress of Christ's principles" (p. 46) may or may not be effective in his own work (when we think of the doctrine of the divine institution and guidance of the Church), but he is entitled to our sympathy. And when Mr. Brace goes on to say that "probably no one organised evil in history has been so replete with human misery and has drawn after it such a train of vice, degradation, and corruption, as slavery," we see that he appreciates the duty of Christianity at least. Slavery was one of the gravest defects of the older civilisations. There are writers like Dr. E. Reich who point out that this relegation of the harder work to slaves was a necessary condition of the achievements of Greece and Rome in Europe, but we will shrink from so delicate a defence. In earlier Roman days the institution, though always unjust, had not the same evil features, and it had come to be accepted even by moralists. The military captive was understood to hand over the life that had been spared to the entire service of his captor, and so human beings

and their offspring came to be regarded as human property. By the time of Christ the evil had assumed terrible proportions. At Rome there were 900,000 slaves in a population of 1,610,000. The markets were filled by the most unscrupulous traders—much in the same way as in the seventeenth century of the Christian era—and the treatment of the slave was frequently barbarous.

Clearly the very first *gestum Christi*, the first act of a saviour of mankind (in any other than a purely mythological sense), should be the denunciation of slavery. Mr. Brace scans his Gospels with ill-concealed perturbation. Not one single syllable is written in condemnation of slavery from one cover of the Bible to the other. Admirable general principles are enunciated from which a logician or a moralist can easily deduce a condemnation of slavery *after* its abolition, but not a word is spoken against the institution by Christ, by St. Paul (who had a slave), by any apostle, or by any early Father of the Church. Mr. Brace conjectures that Christ, looking out upon a sea of "fathomless pauperism," would not at once abolish slavery lest it entail terrible economic complications and increase poverty. Even this feeble and remarkable consolation must be denied him. In the time of Christ poverty was at its lowest in Europe, and wealth and commerce at their best. Europe was to become poorer and poorer until the fourteenth century. And it was precisely in these infinitely poorer

centuries that slavery *was* abolished; and in the two centuries after Christ the slaves were freed in tens of thousands by their pagan masters on the very ground—as we shall see—that it paid them better to have free workers.

For one who holds the view of Christ and the Church that Mr. Brace does it must indeed be painful to record that no Christian condemned the institution radically until St. Theodore did so in the ninth century. Father after father, pope after pope, and council after council, supported it. But our apologist finds comfort in the fact that there was "slow but sure" progress, and that, though the Stoic influence in this respect was "superficial," the rise of the Christian emperors immediately benefited the slave's condition. Let us see.

"It is an historical fact, supported by the most positive of evidence," says Dr. Reich, "that slavery in the Roman Empire was mitigated by the noble philosophy of the Stoics, and not by the teaching of the Church Fathers, who never thought of recommending the abolition of slavery."[1] In point of fact, there is nothing in Christian effort in the first few centuries to compare with what the Stoics were doing. This is the more remarkable because the new religion confessedly spread and took shape largely among the slaves and poor freemen. Yet, though

[1] *History of Civilisation*, p. 421. See also Ingram's *History of Slavery and Serfdom*, Letourneau's *L'évolution de l'esclavage*, Mr. Dill's *Roman Society*, and Mr. Lecky's *History of European Morals*.

the Church encouraged manumission, none of its leaders protested against the institution, as several of the Stoics did. Epicurus had said long before in Greece that "the slave is a friend of a lesser condition," and the Epicurean Hegesias declared slaves to be the equals of free men, because they were equally capable of happiness. Plutarch carried the new Greek feeling very much farther, and condemned slavery. Mr. Brace is careful to give the usual quotation of Cato's insensibility in the matter of the slave, but he does not tell that Plutarch, who records it, adds that in his opinion it was the act of "a mean and ungenerous spirit." Seneca gives with evident pleasure many illustrations of the change of feeling in regard to them—stories of slaves who have the affection of their masters, eat at the same table with them, and have been faithful to them to death. Dion Chrysostom, the adviser of Trajan, declared (I quote from Ingram) that slavery was "against the law of nature," the supreme ideal of the Stoic. Florentinus, the Stoic jurist, said it was "against nature"; Ulpian that "by nature" all men were equal. Pliny wrote a beautiful and touching letter on hearing of the death of some of his slaves.

A French religious writer on these declarations of moralists and jurists, M. Allard, asks us to look upon them as "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals," and Mr. Brace assures us they "had no strong effect on the position of the slave under

Roman law." Old and infirm slaves, Mr. Brace says, were still exposed on an island in the Tiber, and "left to the care of the god in the temple." We have already seen that these temples of Æsculapius were the hospitals of the poor, and in them they received not "the care of the god," but the trained care of the priests. "The poet says of such," Mr. Brace adds, to enforce his point, "that to help them only lengthens out a life of misery"; and as authority for this he gives a couplet in Latin from an unnamed poet, who, properly translated, is not speaking of the ailing poor at all, but of beggars [*mendici*]. "Further," says Mr. Brace, "Juvenal, who wrote when Stoicism had full sweep among the Roman cultivated class, asks with bitter irony, 'how a slave could be a man.'" To this he appends a wrong reference to Juvenal (vi. 475 instead of vi. 222), and when you do find the passage you discover that Mr. Brace has mutilated the couplet, and that what Juvenal really does is to put the words in the mouth of a Roman woman whose husband humanely desires to make inquiry before punishing her slave. To represent the bitterly anti-aristocratic Juvenal as scorning the slaves is a remarkable feat. He was one of the loudest in claiming humanity for them.

With these and similar misrepresentations of the position of Ulpian, Seneca, and others who were cordially working for the slave, Mr. Brace helps out his case against the Stoics, and justifies his saying that they had only a "superficial influence."

Anyone who has read the long list of pre-Christian measures in regard to the slave will agree rather with Mr. Ingram that "the general tendency both of the imperial constitutions and the maxims of the legislators is in favour of liberty" (p. 62); or with Dr. Dill, that "the slave is treated by all the great leaders of moral reform as a being of the same mould as his master, his equal, if not superior, in capacity for virtue" (p. 3). The position of the slave was, indeed, radically altered by the pagan emperors. Nero appointed a judge to hear their complaints and punish masters who treated them with barbarity. Hadrian banished for five years a lady who had been guilty of great cruelty to her slaves; he also declared it murder to kill a slave, forbade masters to sell them for the gladiatorial combats, and abolished the subterraneous prisons for slaves. Antoninus Pius issued a decree against the killing of slaves without just cause, and directed that a slave who had been treated with great cruelty (extending later to the slave who had been put to degrading work), and had taken refuge at an altar or an imperial statue, should be transferred by sale to another master. Ulpian inveighed against delays in the manumission of slaves. A number of legal obstacles to manumission were removed, the tendency to favour their liberty in all litigation was encouraged, and their right to hold certain property was protected. Caracalla forbade the sale of children into slavery. Diocletian forbade a man

to sell himself into slavery, or a creditor to make a slave of his debtor. Other measures punished the mutilation of young male slaves with exile, the mines, or death; enacted that, if a slave returned to the seller in a redhibitory action, his parents, brothers, and lover must be returned also; gave him the right to bequeathe half his possessions; declared that in the interpretation of wills a division of succession was to be assumed not to entail a division of slave families; limited the application of torture to them; and awarded them a pleader in the court for certain offences on the part of the master.[1]

If this long and benevolent series of pagan acts was the outcome of the "superficial influence" of Stoicism, we turn with interest to what Mr. Brace calls "the series of remarkable laws issued under Constantine." Remarkable they assuredly are when they are seriously proposed to us as the measure of Christian influence. A half-dozen meagre improvements, most of them being obviously in the nature of privileges to Christians, are all that we can find; and against these we must set Constantine's undoing of some of the previous reforms in allowing parents to sell their children into slavery, and allowing the finder of an exposed child to enslave it. The same emperor passed what Letourneau calls "the savage law" that, if a Christian woman had intercourse

[1] All these reforms are found in Ingram and Letourneau.

with a slave, both should be put to death. The succeeding Christian emperors continued the reform, says Mr. Brace. Among other things, "the informer against those guilty of certain capital offences became free"; the truth being that by a new law of Gratian a slave who laid an information against his master was to be burned alive (a new punishment at Rome) *unless* it was an accusation of treachery to the emperor! Equally ingenious is Mr. Brace's presentment of the reforms of Theodosius. That emperor, he says, held a master to be guilty of murder if he killed his slave by torture or branding, and we are asked to contrast this with the words of "the purest of the Stoic jurists." When we do turn to the words of this jurist, Paulus, we find that Mr. Brace has omitted two important words, and misrepresented the whole meaning. Paulus is stating that the law prescribes the torture of a slave in certain situations, but assumes that it will only be applied within limits, as was always done in the Stoic period. It was actually the Christian Church that removed this restriction of torture in certain cases. Mr. Brace enlarges with great satisfaction on the favourable legislation of Justinian. He does not explain that Justinian married a notorious woman of the class that had been put on a level with slaves, and had therefore a natural feeling for the lowly. Moreover, when he says that Justinian admitted "a kind of marriage *(contubernium)*" between slaves, he is flatly misleading. From the

Christian point of view *contubernium* was concubinage pure and simple, and even Milman admits that the Church gave no blessing to slave "marriages" until the ninth century. Finally, when he thinks "one great source of slavery dried up" when Leo forbade the poor freeman to sell himself, he seems to be ignorant that Hadrian had forbidden it in the second century.

It is unfortunate that I have been compelled to trace the steps in the emancipation of the slave in this polemical fashion, but the extreme inaccuracy of even the best apologetic work on the subject has compelled me to do so. The reader will, nevertheless, have an impression of the general development. In the first, second, and third centuries a large number of measures were passed in relief or protection of the slave, and many jurists and some philosophers (like Plutarch) condemned the institution of slavery as radically unjust. With the adoption of Christianity legislation continued, though less vigorously and with some serious reactionary measures, to improve the slave's position; while no Christian moralist for eight centuries took up the cry of Plutarch and Dion Chrysostom. The Church did indeed encourage manumission for various reasons, but one has to make certain reserves even in appreciating this. Leo the Great (*ep.* iv.) indignantly forbade the reception of slaves into the Christian ministry, not from a lofty abhorrence of bondage, but "lest the

sacred ministry be polluted by the vileness of their association." The Abbé Théron tells us that the great Council of Chalcedon passed a similar decree, with the same allusion to their "bassesse servile." Clearly, the Christian theory of the spiritual equality of men was not as consistent as the doctrine of the Stoics. Ingram explains that, under the Christian rulers, the union of slave and free was long forbidden under atrocious penalties, the children of the slave remained slaves, the female slave was held incapable of adultery, the slave witness was still tortured, and the slave criminal was treated by a different code than the freeman. It seems evident that the change which came to the slave with the advent to power of Christianity was much less dramatic than it is frequently represented to have been.

When we go on to consider the actual transition from slavery to serfdom, we have once more a process that is, unhappily, not so simple as is often believed. For the first few centuries of Christian power, says Mr. Lecky, there were more slaves than there had been under the pagans. By the fourteenth slavery, even in the modified form of serfdom, was generally extinct in Europe. It would take me beyond my plan to examine all the agencies that slowly evolved the modern worker out of the ancient slave, but I must deal briefly with the question.

The gulf between slave and free was beginning to fill before the Christian era began. Cicero

explains that in his time a slave could earn enough to buy his freedom in ten years. The early emperors checked the growing emancipation on political grounds; but the Stoic lawyers, as we saw, once more facilitated it. Landowners found it expedient to free their slaves and give them a share in the profit, so that by the fourth century agricultural workers generally had the legal position, not of slaves, but *coloni*, the forerunners of the medieval serfs. Others, at a lower grade, were *quasi coloni*, slave-tenants, but with their own houses and certain privileges. All these were fixed to the soil. In the later empire, in fact, most occupations became rigidly hereditary, and imperial authority held every man and his sons strictly to their proper vocation. Thus the freedom of free workers was much restricted and the condition of the slave improved. The barbarian invasions caused much poverty, and the practice of selling oneself and one's children into slavery spread very considerably; but this was met by the contrary movement of emancipation, and the slave slowly passed into the serf. It must be remembered, too, that the great streams of captive barbarians, that had so long fed the slave-markets, ceased in the fourth century, and the enormous fortunes of the rich melted away.

The serious social student will easily appreciate the action of these economic and political movements in the conversion of the slave into the serf.

They had the co-operation of the Church to a certain extent; but even a Catholic historian like Muratori says that the churches and monasteries more rarely freed their slaves (on the becoming ground that they were corporate, not personal, property) than the secular owners, who were indulged in a belief that the recording angel would take careful note of their manumissions, while they had the gratifying knowledge that they would get the same amount of work out of the serf as they had done from the slave. The churches and monasteries, indeed, had a very large share of the slaves and quasi-slaves of the time. Men felt that the benefit of the monks' prayers was an asset of some value, and the monks were good masters. Generally springing from the slave class themselves,[1] exempt from the heavy military burdens and taxes, and receiving a generous flow of gifts from the outside world, they would inevitably be sought as employers. Mr.

[1] I am following the high and reputable authority of Guizot, who says that in the eighth and ninth centuries the Church was "a population of slaves." The easy life and the exemption from military and other burdens attracted the serfs in thousands, and the clergy and monasteries recruited very largely from their own serfs. The circumstance may throw light, not only on the share of the monks and clergy in emancipation, but also on their moral and intellectual condition. The Abbé Théron points out that, as several Councils indicate, many freed and promoted their slaves to the clergy in order to secure patronage. Another curious piece of clerical activity was that the Council of Macon (581) allowed anybody to take a slave from a Jew, forcibly, for twelve sous (pence). He might then use the emancipated as his own slave. But the Christian Venetians were harder slave-dealers than the Jews.

Lecky points out that the clergy also rendered most energetic service in the redemption of captives. Many admirable stories are told of priests selling their silver ornaments for this work. We should, however, remember Dean Milman's observation, that this was always a work of redeeming Christian captives from heathen masters, and must be classed as a theological rather than a humanitarian procedure.

By the operation of these varied agencies the slaves of the Roman Empire had become the serfs of Christian Europe by the tenth century. Instead of minute research into the respective share of religious and economic motives in the change, it will be more profitable to inquire what was its moral value. No doubt it was, philosophically, a great step forward when the master ceased to hold a right to the person of his servant; but the long and terrible list of feudal duties forbids us to appraise it too highly. Still chained to the soil, the serf was violently compelled to render the most odious services to the lord. His condition was "horrible," says Letourneau, down to the sixteenth and even the seventeenth century. Cardinal de Vitry writes in the thirteenth century that the lords make life insupportable for their vassals by their thefts and violence. As late as 1579 we find a law being passed that vassals should be properly married, and not merely coupled by their masters. Bede observes that it is "an inveterate custom" in

the England of his time for the noble to appropriate any young woman on his estate, and "sell her when she becomes pregnant." The right of the noble to force the newly-married woman to spend the first few nights at his house lasted for many centuries after Bede's time. I have read Schmidt's *Jus Primæ Noctis*, in which the "right to the first night" is called in question; but the evidence he examines clearly proves it. Sinking under heavy industrial and military burdens, subjected to these degrading "rights," surrounded by an atmosphere of coarseness and violence, scourged by constant epidemics and famines, living, in gross ignorance and superstition, in dirty hovels, the workers of Europe had as yet found but a caricature of salvation. And during the whole period, says Letourneau, "wars, great and small, crush the servile class, which often turns and rebels. The serfs rise in hundreds of thousands, burn the chateaux, and cruelly apply the law of talio to their inhabitants. Then, conquered and slain in turn, they disappear, and the old iniquity begins again, till the next explosion." Whether Mr. Brace thinks this state of Europe worse than what would have ensued if Christ had abolished slavery at once, or had at least uttered one authoritative word against it, he does not say; but he candidly remarks that the condition of the peasants during many centuries in Europe forms "one of the most melancholy pictures in the human annals."

This state of things continued to a great extent in France until 1790, and continues in Russia to-day. In Europe generally it came to a close in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the free workers of modern civilisation were evolved from the serfs. Our next step, therefore, is to examine how far the Church has contributed to this evolution. So far, it will be generally agreed, the ten centuries of its domination (fifth to fifteenth century) have been singularly unfruitful for the worker. Slavery has ceased, partly owing to its recommendation of manumission, though we must never forget that the Church merely inherited a strong tendency in that direction. But in the Roman world there were at least powerful corporations of free workers in the towns and great numbers of free *coloni* on the soil. It cannot possibly be maintained that the spectacle of early medieval Christendom was an improvement on that condition. However, before I examine the last stage of the evolution of the modern worker I must say a few words on the terrible recrudescence of slavery in the Christian colonies in the fifteenth century.

We may deal briefly with that appalling page of modern history. The African slave trade, says Mr. Brace, was "the most dreadful curse that has perhaps ever afflicted humanity"; and he admits, with a most rare generosity, that "the guilt of this great crime rests on the Christian Church as an organised body" (p. 365). The root-evil was, he

says, the religious conviction that the conversion of the blacks outweighed all other considerations. The theologians of Spain differed on the matter when Columbus first suggested it; but when Bishop de las Casas, in 1517, begged that Africans might be imported into the West Indies to replace his Indians in the mines, the trade began in earnest. Spain made treaties "in the name of the Most Holy Trinity," giving monopolies to traders, and no priest saw the blasphemy. Captain Hawkins sailed from England in quest of natives to kidnap in a ship called the "Jesus." Among the rules he gave his men were the precepts to "serve God daily" and "love one another." Elizabeth knighted him, and the nobility supported him; while bishops and clergy gave countenance to the trade. In 1708 our Parliament declared that "the trade was important, and ought to be free and open to all the Queen's subjects." The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands, which sent missionaries to Guinea to convert the natives, had slaves on its plantations in Barbadoes, and did not even (says Mr. Brace) afford them religious instruction. The horrors the natives were subjected to are well known. I need only add that the English colonies alone imported 2,130,000 of them between 1680 and 1780.[1]

[1] In an able article on the subject in the *Independent Review* for October, 1905, it is stated that there were 80,000 black slaves *in London* in 1760. They were regularly advertised in the papers, and bequeathed in wills.

Did the Church abolish the trade? That is a question on which much discussion still continues. Now, if we allowed that the Christian body, as such, abolished it, I do not see how far that would redeem the circumstance of its having looked on the awful traffic, with at least indifference, for two hundred years. It is a relative blessing for a man to desist from a criminal course; but the fact of his desisting at length does not erase his misdeeds from our memory. If "the guilt of this great crime" of black slavery—the reader must carefully distinguish between it and the earlier slavery in Europe, which began, Mommsen says, in a "comparatively innocent" form—lies on "the organised Christian body, as such," we can hardly be expected to gush over the fact that the Church did not support it for more than two centuries. However, the question is raised in a wrong form altogether. These things we may say: Firstly, it would be wholly and ridiculously untrue to say that the clergy abolished colonial slavery. It remains to their eternal discredit that they, the only influential representatives of moral principle in Europe and America at the time, took no corporate action whatever, and little individual action (comparatively to their numbers), in the work of abolition; and thousands of them supported the institution to the end. Secondly, it would be wholly untrue to say that the Churches, as bodies of clergy and laity, abolished Colonial slavery. They were rent in two and paralysed on

the matter, even at the eleventh hour; and for two centuries not one member of the Churches in a million raised any protest against it. Thirdly, it would be equally untrue to say that Rationalists abolished slavery, except in particular places. They were too few even to rouse public feeling; and very many of the leading agitators working with them were sincere Christian men. But, fourthly, whereas Christian sentiment was almost unanimous in supporting black slavery for two centuries, and was very far indeed from unanimity at the final stage, Rationalists, as they arose, were all but unanimous in their demand for the abandonment of the crime.

The abolition-movement has a different complexion in each country. In France the opposition was led and the abandonment decreed by the early Revolutionaries, with Condorcet at their head. Though the workers included the rebellious Abbé Grégoire, the sentiment of the group was purely humanitarian. In Spain and Portugal, which lagged decades behind the rest of the world, and where the clergy were ingloriously silent, the abandonment was forced by the voice of civilisation. In England the active opposition began just before the French Revolution. Ingram gives a list of the earliest and therefore noblest protests; only one clergyman is found among them. Even later the work was left to the laity to an extraordinary extent, and Wilberforce can hardly be said to represent the

supine clergy of his day. Had one tenth of them done their duty, we should not have this dark stain on our national annals from 1600 to 1833. In America, where the great fight was fought, the Churches have a terrible responsibility. It was the Quakers who began the protest, as they have inaugurated many another reform, and it was chiefly Unitarians and Humanitarians who lit up the North with moral indignation. They had to fight, not merely commercial selfishness, but the Churches. "If," said Theodore Parker, "the whole American Church had dropped through the Continent and disappeared altogether, the anti-slavery cause would have been further on." Wilberforce said of the American Episcopal Church: "She raises no voice against the predominant evil; she palliates it in theory, and in practice she shares in it." Many of its southern bishops held slaves, and it was calculated that Baptists owned 225,000 and Methodists 250,000 slaves. Dr. Barnes, a Presbyterian, declared that "there was no power out of the Church that could sustain slavery an hour if it were not sustained in it." Mr. Ingram says: "The Christian Churches in the slave states scandalously violated their most sacred duty, and used their influence in the maintenance of slavery, the ministers of religion declaring it to be sanctioned by Scripture, and sometimes even encouraging the atrocities resorted to in defence of the system" (p. 194). Mr. Brace confesses that even in the

Northern States "the organised Church, in many of its branches, became arrayed against true Christianity"—which, for the nonce (he does *not* say), was represented mainly by Quakers, Deists, and Freethinkers.[1]

The reader will probably conclude that the silent endurance of this crime for two centuries and a-half of modern civilisation by the Churches is the chief feature of sociological importance, and that the extraordinary division of opinion in the Churches of the nineteenth century, the general cowardice of the clergy, and the way in which the blacks had to wait for the growth of radical heresy and humanitarianism, are next in significance. We will now turn back to the main stream of industrial evolution, and follow the conversion of the serf into the modern toiler.

We have seen that slavery was being undermined by the natural course of economic and moral development at the time when Christianity came to power. We saw that the recommendation of manumission by the clergy, who were largely of the servile class, and by the nobler prelates of the Church, accelerated the process. But we then saw that the next stage, serfdom, which coincides with

[1] Mr. Brace's *Gesta Christi* is full and candid on this subject. See especially Ingram's *History of Slavery and Serfdom;* also Letourneau's *L'évolution de l'esclavage,* Tourmagne's *Histoire de l'esclavage,* Foote's *Crimes of Christianity,* and Larroque's *De l'esclavage chez les nations Chrétiennes.*

the thousand years during which the Church had supreme power in Europe, was not a very great improvement. For those thousand years—a strange millennium for the new religion to have inaugurated, from the modern workers' point of view !—the condition of the toilers was, Mr. Brace admits, "one of the most melancholy pictures in the human annals." The next stage is the complete freeing of the people from feudal burdens and the creation of the modern proletariat.

Here the experts confess to a great scantiness and confusion of evidence. Mr. Brace is not intimidated by this meagreness of indications, which he notices. On the contrary, it leaves him free to assume that the change from serf to free worker was due to the action of Christian beliefs. He and his colleagues would have us believe, I suppose, that the same religious ideas put an end to the worst features of feudalism in England several centuries ago, and allowed them to run in France until the end of the eighteenth century, and in Russia until the twentieth. They ask us to think that Christianity brought a new conception of human dignity, supported by a supernatural power, into Europe; and that, after this conception and this miraculous force had been at work in Europe for 1,600 years, they had raised the mass of the people merely to the level they were at on the eve of the French Revolution. Nay, we may take an even later date, and take England,

where political development was most advanced. Mr. Benjamin Kidd, one of the believers in this remarkable power of religion, observes incidentally that so late as Robert Owen's day the working classes in this country "lived like brutes, huddled together in wretched dwellings, without education, and without any voice in politics or in the management of public affairs" (p. 10). It is a singular admission in a work that claims religion to be a great civilising force, seeing that this religion had then been powerful in England for 1,200 years, and that, unlike the Stoic philosophy, it had been founded by workers and propagated for centuries among workers. And, what is more curious still, the last 120 years have seen more progress in regard to the workers than the previous 1,200 had accomplished; and during these 120 years religious ideas have steadily declined.

Most of us will be content to see natural development in the slow evolution of the proletariat; and, obscure as the process is, we have indications enough of its character. It depended mainly on the growth of industry and on political developments which had nothing to do with religion as such. The two great causes indicated by Adam Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, are generally accepted as important. The first was that free labour is more profitable to a master than servile. This had been a strong factor in the pagan manumissions, and it was active in the emancipation of

the serfs.[1] It was reinforced by the later need of money on the part of the feudal lords—from dissipation, for crusading purposes, and so on—which increased their readiness to sell liberty to the serfs. The second great factor was political. In the struggle of monarchs and nobles the former had a distinct advantage in encouraging the latters' vassals and in promoting the growth of strong bodies of free citizens. Further, in the later quarrels of nobles and free towns, the nobles themselves often found it expedient to free and attach their serfs. The result was the gradual substitution of a landlord-and-tenant arrangement on the land, and the growth of towns with prosperous industries. The workers drew together into close and powerful guilds, and the revival of commercial wealth and civic life inaugurated the modern period.

Catholic writers have at times endeavoured to win the sympathy of modern trade unionists by fond pictures of the power of medieval guilds. Recent economists speak of their use in industrial development with great reserve, on account of the excessive restrictions they put on production; but it is enough for our purpose to note that they were by no means a medieval creation. Walford has shown that the English guilds were a continuation

[1] Mr. J. M. Robertson, who has an interesting passage on the subject in his *Introduction to English Politics* (pp. 204-6), points out that freemen were also much more profitable to the Church than slaves. This fact must be taken into account in weighing clerical action.

of the Roman *collegia*, which had survived the troubled centuries. In the Roman Empire, as in Greece, all the workers (often including slaves and women) were associated in sodalities, or collegia. They had their *scholæ*, or club-houses, with a titular deity, and often a rich patron. Their meetings had frequently a strongly religious character, and they were the "burying clubs" and mutual-aid societies of the pagan world. It is still to be seen if these communist clubs had not a much more important connection with the origin of Christianity itself than is generally allowed;[1] but, at all events, they are the forerunners of the medieval guilds. By the fourteenth century there were 150 *corps de métiers*, or workers' unions, in Paris alone.

The next steps in the ascent of the worker were the struggles for political rights and the improvement of the condition of the vast mass of labourers and peasants. Since my task is only to follow the advance of civilisation in so far as it is claimed to be due to religious influence, I need not dwell on the later stages. Priests of all Churches have at times sufficiently remembered their origin and their principles to help the workers in their struggles; but these comparatively few individuals do not represent the action of Christianity. The workers

[1] The idea is carried out in Kalthoff's *Entstehung des Christenthums*. Curiously enough, I just notice that a high authority on architecture, Professor Brown, considers that the *scholæ*, or club-houses, of these corporations were the real models of the early Christian basilica.

of the world have won their redemption by bloody struggles in earlier years and strenuous agitation in later times. A political historian like Guizot, a strong advocate of the civilising force of Christianity, passes this terrible verdict on the Church:—

> The Church has often, no doubt, set up and defended the rights of the people against the bad government of their rulers.....but when the question of political securities arose between power and liberty, when any step was taken to establish a system of permanent instruments which might effectively protect liberty from the invasions of power in general, the Church has always ranged herself on the side of despotism.[1]

A moment's reflection on the story of the French Church will enable the reader to understand how these words were wrung from Guizot. Down to the very morning of the Revolution the Church had raised no protest against the atrocious injustice that was done to the peasants and workers. Again, it is true that you will find a priest here and there, possibly a group of priests, who did so; but we must remember that these *curés* were mainly of the peasant class, and they spoke chiefly from class feeling. The responsible ecclesiastics fawned on nobles and monarchs as if there were no crime being committed against the mass of the people. Then the people rose, and swept clergy and nobility together out of the country. It was a terrible event in the end, certainly. We all know the blunders which gave power at length to the fanatics. But it

[1] *History of Civilisation in Europe*, p. 171.

was such movements, so far removed from religion, that blasted the granite walls of priest and prince, and made possible the freer life and expression of the modern worker. Here is the verdict on its effect of a standard historian :—

> Thus, in the space of about five and twenty years, Europe was more changed than it had ever been before in the same space of time. The great wonder of these times was that, in France itself and in all the countries which were brought altogether under French influence, old ideas and old institutions were utterly swept away in a way that had never happened before.....Even where there was no great political change there was a wide social change ; and we may say generally that, since the French Revolution, there has been no part of Europe where the people have been so utterly downtrodden as they were in many parts before.[1]

No social student will connect the Churches with the modern rise of the workers. Small groups of Christian Socialists have helped, but they were ever looked at askance by their own authorities. The great democratic movements of Germany, Belgium, France, and Italy proclaim the truth to the world. They are solidly anti-Christian. The Church has been content during its long reign to

[1] Freeman's *General Sketch of European History*, p. 360. Dr. Fairbairn boldly quotes the Revolution as a contrast to the Church's message of liberty ! He informs his readers that Clootz and eighteen others were put to death "for being atheists," and quotes Hume, Rousseau, and Comte as admirers of despotism. The idea of religious liberty, he says, was born in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. He then, of course, quotes the early Fathers who were claiming protection *from* persecution, but is discreetly silent about the later Fathers who recommended persecution as soon as they had power themselves.

preach patience and submission to slave, to serf, and to worker in turn. It was silent when the peasantry groaned under the burden of feudalism. It was silent still when the new industry of the nineteenth century worked children for fourteen hours a day, and made the life of the toilers, as it is described in a Government document, "a round of sordid work and sordid play." The keener-eyed worker of our time has a notion that the clergy sacrificed his cause to maintain their own position with the wealthy and the powerful.

Chapter VII.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

One of the most distinctive and indisputable qualities of modern civilisation is the concern for a strict administration of justice and a wise treatment of the criminal. The first advance of social law upon the anarchy of pre-historic savagery was for the community to examine the quarrel of two individuals, and say whether the injured might or might not retaliate on his injurer. The next step was for the community itself to inflict the punishment, or, for social reasons, to retaliate on behalf of the injured individual. In time the punishment in kind was commuted for a money payment, and after long ages the idea of a purely preventive rather than vindictive punishment dawned on the mind. The great improvement made in our time is that we are seeking to rid our penal system of the last base trace of mere vindictiveness, and we are encouraging a scientific study of the criminal which promises to revolutionise the administration of justice—perhaps, we should say, to inaugurate it at length.

It is very important for the purpose of our study to see how far the Christian religion has initiated or fostered these finer tendencies of legislation and

the penal system. The ordinary apologist loudly claims that the advance is due to that slow and tardy comprehension of the Christian principles on which he builds most of his structure. As we have hinted more than once, the only miracle one can see in the process he claims is the slowness of the Christian mind to grasp the bearings of his revealed truth and the tardiness of the action of his supernatural forces. With all the facts of European history before us, we cannot entertain his theory seriously. But there remains the theory that the Christian ideas, as moral truths of a natural growth but an unusual altitude, did of themselves effect, or largely contribute to effect, those great advances in life and thought which distinguish our civilisation from all that preceded it. It is this more temperate suggestion that we chiefly keep before us in the course of our analysis.

Our first task must be to show that the establishment of the Christian religion in Europe was not accompanied by any great advance in the realm of justice. An ecclesiastical historian who has gone somewhat closely into the subject pens this remarkable verdict :—

> The immutable principles of justice had been so clearly discerned by the inflexible rectitude of the Roman mind, so sagaciously applied by the wisdom of her great lawyers, that Christianity was content to acquiesce in those statutes which even she might, excepting in some respects, despair of rendering more equitable.[1]

[1] Milman's *Latin Christianity*, ii. 11. Dean Merivale also says

We have already seen so much of the Stoic legislation, to which Milman refers, that we need add here little specific reference to their measures. One of the chief authorities on the evolution of law, Letourneau, says of the Roman system: "The serious innovations, those that reduced the element of injustice, were the work of the Emperors Adrian and Alexander Severus. Theodosius and Justinian chiefly devoted themselves to redacting legal compilations."[1] Lecky makes the same observation, almost in the same words (ii. 42), and the justice of it will be clear from the special studies we have already made. The Christian emperors of the fourth century made—apart from the interest of religion—few humane advances on the Antonine legislation. Constantine abolished crucifixion and branding (on religious grounds), but introduced the horrible penalty of burning alive. The new Christian laws for the protection of morals may have seemed to the St. Jeromes of the time to mark an advance, but a modern social student sees two aspects of them. The existing Roman law already condemned to death for rape, incest, and pæderasty. Constantine (the murderer of his son, nephew, wife, and others) decreed that the incestuous should be burned alive, and that a free woman and a slave

that "the education of the world in the principles of a sound jurisprudence was the most wonderful work of the Roman Conquerors." He is quoted with full approval by Dean Church in his *Gifts of Civilisation.*

[1] *L'évolution juridique*, p. 395.

detected in sexual intercourse should both be put to death; and as the slave was not only allowed to denounce them, but received his freedom for doing so, the working of the law can be imagined. Theodosius passed stringent decrees as to divorce (which his successors demolished, as Milman observes), and condemned those guilty of unnatural vice to the most horrible torture and death.

It is usual to rely on the work of Justinian for a substantiation of the claim of great and salutary Christian influence. I have already quoted Letourneau and Lecky to the effect that Justinian's lawyers did little more than codify existing decrees, and there are other reserves to be made. Milman tells us that there is so little indication of Christian sentiment in the Justinian code that the great lawyer Tribonian, to whom he committed the work, "has incurred the suspicion of atheism." That is a singular commentary on the apologist's claims, yet it is not all. Sir Henry Maine declares that our modern civilisation is not indebted to Justinian's reforms: "It was not the reformed and purified jurisprudence of Justinian, but the undigested system, which prevailed in the Western Empire, and which the Eastern *Corpus Juris* never succeeded in displacing" (p. 305).

It is, in fact, generally agreed that the distinctive Christian influence on the legal and punitive system of Europe was predominantly disastrous. That it led to certain reforms no one will question, but

it also directly introduced a number of terrible and tragic blunders into the code and practice. The new legislation which was evolved out of Teutonic and Roman elements under its guidance was marred by barbarisms of the most repellent type. These barbarisms were supported by saint and prelate for centuries, and were only finally suppressed by the influence of anti-clerical lawyers and Rationalist writers. Even at points with regard to which Christian authors boldly claim an advance, we are assured by the highest legal authority that there was terrible reaction. The following quotation from Sir Henry Maine will serve as an adequate illustration:—

> The chapter relating to married women was, for the most part, read by the light, not of Roman, but of Canon, Law, which in no one particular departs so widely from the spirit of the secular jurisprudence as in the view it takes of the relations created by marriage. This was in part inevitable, since no society which preserves any tincture of Christian institutions is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred on them by the middle [Stoic] Roman laws; but the proprietary disabilities of married females stand on quite a different basis from their personal incapacities, and it is by the tendency of their doctrines to keep alive and consolidate the former that the expositors of the Canon Law have deeply injured civilisation.[1]

But the injustice done to woman is trivial in comparison with others that were directly set up by

[1] *Ancient Law* (Pollock's edition), p. 162. Canon Kingsley said that "this will never be a good world for women until the last remnant of the Canon Law is swept from the face of the earth." Perhaps the reader will now appreciate the value of Brace's disgraceful suggestion of what will happen to woman if the world becomes Agnostic.

religious influence. One of the most notable of these was the creation of the crime of heresy. I will not dwell on the horrors that disgraced Europe, from the judicial murder of Priscillian in the fifth century down to the eighteenth and even the nineteenth century (in Spain). The slight reforms set afoot by the Church are lost in the shadow of this colossal crime. The most sensitive were peculiarly doomed to suffer by the new legal machinery; scholars who might have accelerated the pace of civilisation centuries ago had their lips sealed and their brows branded with shame. No estimate can convey any idea either of the unmerited sufferings of individuals or the injury done to society at large by the restriction of research and intelligence. "Religious criminality," says Letourneau, "and the enormous importance that was given to it, characterise medieval jurisprudence, and constitute a retrograde movement that is unique in history"; while "there is nothing analogous to the Inquisition in any country with the least pretension to civilisation." From the guilt of this crime no subterfuge can release Christianity; nor can we forget that it was St. Augustine himself who laid down the principle of compulsion in religious matters, though he wavered as to that infliction of penalties and death which was indispensable for carrying it out.[1]

[1] The treatment of the Jews, one of the darkest blots on European life from the seventh to the seventeenth century, was

We have already seen other instances of pernicious legislation inaugurated or intensified by the Church. The legal processes in trials for sorcery and witchcraft, says Letourneau, "bring down medieval civilisation to the level of the African negroes." Another frightful feature of medieval civilisation, he points out, was the principle of criminal and penal solidarity. Time after time a family or a whole village was punished for an untraced crime. All over Europe we find the administration of justice degenerating into the grossness and the childishness of the savage, and the influence of Biblical ideas is generally evident. Animals were frequently arraigned and executed. In 1396 a sow was hanged in France for biting a child. In 1474 a cock was solemnly burned by the public executioner for laying an egg. Suicide was, on religious grounds, twisted into a horrible crime, without any regard to circumstances. Many a man or woman whose brain had given way under the horrors of medieval life, or who was menaced with the terrors of the Inquisition, or who frankly preferred a cessation of the kind of life that medieval Christendom offered, was buried with a stake

directly instigated by Biblical ideas, and had the fullest support of the clergy until Luther's day. The greatest moralist of Christendom, St. Thomas Aquinas, declared (in a letter to the Duchess of Brabant) that their goods could legitimately be confiscated, since they were the murderers of Christ, and therefore the slaves of Christendom. On this principle Christendom proceeded for a thousand years.

through his heart and every circumstance of ignominy. His relatives were often punished by the forfeiture of his goods. Blasphemy was another important heading introduced by the Church into the code, and the punishment even of breaches of its own technical commandments was imposed on civil powers. A law of Charlemagne condemned men to death for eating meat in Lent. Judicial procedure was gross beyond words. With the Church "setting the example of the most iniquitous juridical oppression" (Letourneau), secular rulers had little scruple: "like her, other authorities proceeded with extreme barbarism." We are asked to remember that the Church had her own tribunals, and the laity could have recourse to these and escape iniquitous rulers. No doubt the bishops' courts of primitive Christianity had often protected an injured man; but the institution itself soon became only an instrument of power to the clergy, and ceased to have a beneficent action. Sir James F. Stephen describes the working of the ecclesiastical courts in England, in the third volume of his history. He finds it as crude as that of the Spanish Inquisition (though these courts did not torture), and observes that most people will be astonished to hear that such things existed in England from William the Conqueror (who first separated the secular and clerical courts) to Charles I.

On the other hand, the withdrawal of the clergy from the secular courts, which was secured as early

as the fourth century, was equally disastrous to the interests of justice. The right of asylum, too, began at a very early date to shelter culprits from the just action of the law. In the letters of St. Augustine we have case after case of abuse of this privilege by debtors. The few cases we know of a happy protection of the innocent by this right of finding shelter in or near the church must not cause us to forget the perennial abuses which it encouraged. In fine, we have a crowning iniquity of the whole Christian period of jurisprudence in the appalling use of torture. Sir James F. Stephen points out that in the pagan days torture was applied only to slaves, as a rule, and then only with strict limitations. Augustus had laid down that "it must not be applied to any person or in any case indiscriminately"; but his wise and humane ruling, strongly sustained by the Stoic lawyers, was utterly ignored when paganism had passed away. It is clear that in the pagan days the practice was being undermined, and there was fair hope of its abolition, when the Christian emperors suddenly developed it once more. Cicero had, as a lawyer, severely condemned the torturing of witnesses. Seneca eloquently attacked it. Ulpian pronounced it to be "untrustworthy, perilous, and deceptive." Slaves were only called as witnesses in cases of murder, incest, adultery, and treason, and where it was impossible to establish the guilt without them. Hadrian laid it down, moreover, that a strong

probability of guilt must already exist in the mind of the judge before he could apply torture. Paulus, the Stoic lawyer, directed that at least two witnesses must be heard before any slaves were introduced; and that the offer of an accused person to have his slaves tortured should not be accepted.[1]

The whole of the ground thus won for humanitarian reform was lost under the Christian rule. Constantine ordered that the tongues of informers should be cut out, introduced the penalty of burning alive, and prescribed that molten lead be poured down the throats of other offenders. The ecclesiastical historian Socrates tells us that in the conflict with the Arians punishments were invented that had been unknown to the pagans. Delicate consecrated virgins had their breasts squeezed in derision between blocks of wood, or scorched with heated irons or hot eggs. Theodosius ordered that the heretic—the man who would imitate the heroism of the Christian martyrs—should be flogged with lead and then banished. Justinian moderated the code in this respect; but, "where the interests of the Church were concerned, the tendency was in

[1] On p. 126 we have seen Mr. Brace quoting this "purest of the Stoic jurists" with disdain as an advocate of torture. The above passage (taken from Lecky's *History of European Morals*) shows how strangely facts are distorted in the interest of the apologetic theory. It is stranger still that Mr. Brace seeks to contrast unfavourably this humane Stoic lawyer with Theodosius, who, we have seen, ordered some of the most brutal punishments on both slave and free!

favour of greater severity" *(Encyc. Brit.)*. He directed that any man who insulted a bishop or priest—and we shall presently see their character at the time—should be tortured and exiled. By an ingenious process of reasoning the Church concluded that Satan might lend supernatural strength to heretics and witches, and so frustrate the ends of justice. It thus inspired the doctrine of "exceptional cases," in which the humane pagan limit of torture might be entirely disregarded.

As a result of these pernicious arguments and rulings, the administration of justice in Europe fell into the most lamentable condition. All the ingenuity of the cruel medieval imagination was devoted to the conception of tortures, and the amount of pain that was inflicted in "questioning" accused between the fifth and the nineteenth centuries is beyond realisation. Every district had its own refinements of torture. In Brittany they put the feet of the accused in a hot brasier. At Rouen they crushed the fingers in iron screws. At Autun they wrapped the legs in calf's skin, and poured boiling oil on them. Blasphemers had their tongues cut out, or pierced with hot iron. Coiners were boiled in oil. Traitors had their bowels cut out and burned before their dying eyes. Boiled eggs were put under the arm-pits; the feet were washed with salt water, and then licked by goats; drops of water were made to trickle from the roof on to the naked stomach of the prisoner;

strong men pulled at his limbs, or he was hung up by the arms with a heavy weight to his feet. Monk Hermann tells in his chronicle of a canon at Laon who was accused (and decidedly guilty) of burglary, and who was hung up by the arms ten times in one afternoon, and had boiling fat poured over him in each interval. Stephen gives a case in the time of Thomas à Becket where a man, suspected of stealing a few pennyworths of goods (a shilling's worth sufficed, and in this case they added a little to make value), was put to the ordeal, and had his eyes pulled out and pubic organs cut off. The medieval chronicler only tells the story to introduce a miracle—as if the real miracle would not be for a supernatural power and a divine Church to witness such things complacently for centuries. Stephen observes, in fact, in another place, that "the clergy were probably never more powerful in any time or country than in England before the Norman Conquest."

The general grossness of the people was fully encouraged by these institutions. "Medieval justice," says Letourneau, "was inspired solely and implacably by the primitive demand for vengeance, and this demand was satisfied with less scruple as it had been sanctified by the laws and approved by the Church." Among others, Pope Innocent IV., in 1252 — the highest point in medieval fervour—ordered that heretics should be tortured by the civil power. The Church also

enjoined torture for the "sin" of usury.[1] The doctrine of "an eye for an eye," etc., was carried out with frightful fidelity, and the public amputation of the generative organs is found in all parts of Europe. When the famous Peter Abélard had suffered this outrage at the hands of a canon of the Paris cathedral and his servants, several of the latter were caught and treated in the same fashion. The grossness thus encouraged in the imaginations of the people was not less than had prevailed among the lowest strata of the Roman Empire. I have found Christian knights described in medieval chronicles as going to Palestine, when it was in the hands of the Saracens, who allowed a pilgrim to kiss the stone of the Holy Sepulchre only on the condition that he first desecrated it. These knights, —coarse and brutal ruffians, eager to expiate their crimes cheaply—are said to have cheated the Saracen by the adroit use of pigs' bladders, and the chronicle actually adds with complacency that God worked a miracle in reward of their perseverance and ingenuity.

All this grossness and violence was as futile from the juridical point of view as it was mischievous from the general moral standpoint. Men and women confessed whatever they were asked to confess in order to find relief from the horrible tortures. We have seen cases of humane and

[1] See article "Torture," in *Encyc. Brit.*, for these details.

venerable scholars confessing that they had sold themselves to the devil. With one more historical instance I conclude this appalling description. Mr. A. D. White gives it at length in his *Warfare of Science and Theology*, in order to illustrate the effect of the torture of witnesses. In the seventeenth century a man was accused at Milan of smearing the walls with the intent to cause a plague by sorcery. Under heavy torture he confessed what they wished, and accused as his accomplices the men whose names first occurred to him. These in turn were tortured and accused others, so that in the end a large number of people suffered a most frightful death. It is fairly clear, Mr. White adds, that the only real fact at the root of this carnage was that two old women noticed the man (a writer) wiping the ink off his finger on the walls. Yet cases analogous to this happened all over Europe during many centuries. And this was because the Church declared heresy and sorcery to be cases in which torture should be unlimited. These "crimes" had taken the place of treason; while for treason itself confiscation of goods and injury to innocent relatives was enjoined. "The doctrine of confiscation for treason was so convenient and profitable that it was rapidly adopted by the Church" (*Encyc. Brit.*).

The social student cannot hesitate for a moment in judging the effect of the new religious ideas on the administration of justice. They wrought

appalling and incalculable evil. They prolonged and intensified the worst features of the older juridical system ; they created, and put at the very head of the code, new crimes which are now recognised to be no crimes at all ; they afforded secular rulers the example of the most crude and stupid criminal processes ; they inspired not a single man among all the saints and prelates to take the enlightened view of crime that is gaining ground today ; and they suffered prisons to remain until the nineteenth century the worst nurseries of crime and disease. From the fifth to the eighteenth century the clergy calmly contemplated, imitated, and cooperated with this ghastly travesty of justice in Europe. Laymen, usually of an advanced rationalistic temper, were the first to protest, and the most effective in reform. Thomasius, the anti-clerical lawyer and satirical humanist of the seventeenth century ; Beccaria, the great Italian criminologist, and friend of the French Encyclopedists ; the deistic Abbé Morellet and Voltaire, translating Beccaria into French—these men, following in the footsteps of the sceptical Bayle and Montaigne, are the ones noted by every authority as the great reformers of Christendom, and the inspirers of a civilised treatment of crime.

I must deal briefly with another feature of medieval justice that modern civilisation has had to sweep away. Of the ordeal in general little need be said. The barbarians brought into the new kingdoms their

ancient method of detecting guilt by casting the accused into water or making him walk on hot irons, or some such method. The Church often condemned the practice, but, on the whole, gave it encouragement. For ages the ordeal took place inside the churches. Priests blessed the tanks of cold water, or the vessels of boiling water, or the red-hot irons, and bishops often sat solemnly by while the "verdict of God" was being registered. The practice was so thoroughly consonant with the ideas propagated by the medieval Church that there was very little ground for the occasional clerical protests (which, moreover, were mainly determined by the heathen origin of the custom). But there was one form of ordeal, the judicial duel, that calls for more notice. This "monstrous birth of ferocity and superstition," as Hallam calls it, had a curious origin. The settlement of a dispute by recourse to arms was a barbaric custom of our Teutonic fathers. On their conversion to the new religion they were induced to lay it aside, and rely on the oath of witnesses to ascertain the truth. The oaths were made as sonorous and blood-curdling as the vigour of the time could accomplish, but it was found that perjury became universal, and the Burgundians in the sixth century revived the more effective, if less religious, device.[1] It was soon admitted into every Christian land. Men of the baser class usually

[1] See Neilson's *Trial by Combat*, and Gibbon, ch. xxxviii.

fought with heavy staves, and knights with sword and shield; though through most of the Middle Ages the procedure seems to have been a simple and deadly duel with swords. Women and priests generally had hired champions, though the gross medieval mind could not always allow itself to be thus defrauded. In medieval Germany a woman fought her own case for breach of promise and for some conjugal complications. The man stood in a tub, sunk in the ground, with a heavy stick in one hand, while the lady ranged freely round him in her smock, with a heavy paving-stone sewn into one sleeve of her sole and scanty garment.

Apologists quote decree after decree of pope and prelate in condemnation of these barbarities; but they were totally ineffectual, and the gross-minded clergy and monks supported the custom everywhere. Mass was generally said for the combatants before the fight began; the clergy assisted at it, and a bier was often at hand with the promise of Christian burial. Bishops and abbots had their professional champions, and up to the eleventh and twelfth centuries used these well-paid and well-trained swordsmen to settle their endless disputes about the property left to them, and coveted by surviving relatives. In the course of some research into French chronicles of the twelfth century I found these encounters—and even the monks and clergy themselves armed and organised for lawful warfare and for foraging—on nearly every page.

In 1165 Pope Alexander III. directed that a priest who had lost part of his finger in a duel was not thereby incapacitated from saying Mass. Official pronouncements on the duel (a pagan custom) were, it is true, always hostile; but the clergy supported it almost everywhere until the improvement of the administration of justice made it less defensible. Chivalry, that strange mixture of honour with dissoluteness and bloodthirstiness which apologists so curiously press on us, prolonged the life of the judicial combat, and in the end it evolved into the duel of recent centuries. How ineffectual the Church's efforts have been to suppress this relic of barbarism is seen by its lingering still in Catholic countries. Voltaire and Rousseau were its most outspoken critics in France before the Revolution; and, though Napoleon suppressed it, the priest-ridden Bourbons allowed its revival.

These historical conditions are so sadly at variance with that claim of humanity which the apologists advance, and that suppression of the gladiatorial conflicts which Mr. Lecky thinks one of the surest triumphs of Christianity, that we must retrace our steps a little. The statement that there was no movement of disgust at the gladiatorial exhibitions among the pagans is quite incorrect. Cicero tells us that many condemned them in his day, though he himself defended them on the grounds on which some modern writers

defend war or the more combative "sports." Apollonius of Tyana secured their suppression at Athens when they were introduced there; and Plutarch *(De Esu Carnium)* scourged them with the language of a modern humanitarian, and declared all shedding of blood to be debasing. Seneca (Ep. vii.) was hardly less moving in his condemnation, and several other Roman writers attacked them. Marcus Aurelius went so far as to force the gladiators to fight with blunted swords.

While acknowledging the great service which the leaders of the Church rendered in denouncing these combats of the amphitheatre, we must not lose sight of the pagan protest against them. On the other hand, there seems to be a little of the customary exaggeration in the common description of their suppression. People often imagine that, as soon as the new religion came to power, the Christian authorities secured the abolition of these cruel spectacles. Constantine did issue a decree against them in 325, but it seems to have been restricted to the Phenician province, and was quite ineffectual there; the "games" are found to be in full swing at Antioch four years later. Valentinian forbade Christians to fight in the amphitheatre; but the practice was not abolished at Rome until nearly a century after the conversion of Constantine. Theodosius compelled prisoners to take part in them. The games that were interrupted by Monk Telemachus in 404—"if we may

believe the story told by Theodoret and Cassiodorus," says the *Encyclopædia Britannica*—had been provided by the Christian emperor Honorius to honour one of his triumphs. It must not be forgotten, too, that the year 404 brings us into the period of disintegration of wealthy Roman society, when the conditions are much more favourable for abolition. However, Mr. Lecky is entirely wrong in stating that gladiatorial combats ceased in 404. Salvianus (*De Gubernatione Dei*, vi. 2) describes combats between men and wild beasts, together with the most obscene spectacles of the Roman theatre, as frequently occurring in Christian Gaul in 450.

There are, moreover, two circumstances in the subsequent history of Christendom that must temper our feeling of gratitude for the abolition of the *ludi*. One of these is the character of the "games" which replaced them in the life of the peoples of Europe. With bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and dog-fighting coming down as far as the nineteenth century in England, one need not dwell on these "pastimes." Canning, in the nineteenth century, defended bull-baiting in much the same words as, and with more warmth than, Cicero—to the horror of apologists—defended gladiatorial combats in his own time. The truth is that the idea of humanity to animals, so distinctive a feature of our civilisation, has no root whatever in Christianity. Plutarch and Seneca and many of the older pagan philosophers advocated vegetarianism 1,800 years ago, and insisted

that man has duties to the lower animals. "Little or no progress" was made in this "gospel of humanitarianism under Christianity," says Mr. Lecky, and we find "no parallel to Plutarch's sentiments in any Christian writer for 1,700 years." If we do not find a parallel, we, unhappily, find many a contrast. We find the supreme head of the Catholic Church, Pius IX., saying, in reply to an application for patronage of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: "Such an association could not be sanctioned by the Holy See, being founded on a theological error—namely, that Christians owed any duties to animals."[1] It is the language still used by bishops in Spain, where not only the showy fights of the public arena, but the coarser savagery of every village onslaught on an infirm bull or young calf, and the widespread and horrible cruelty to cats, dogs, birds, etc., retain for us some trace of the life of medieval Christendom. In one of the most recent and authoritative manuals of Catholic moral theology, a huge and explicit work on virtue and vice of 1,600 quarto pages, I find only *eight* lines devoted to the subject of cruelty (to man or beast), which is only represented to be a sin in a very restricted sense.[2] This is no mere accident of compilation, but a naïve revelation of a terrible defect

[1] F. P. Cobbe, *Hope of the Human Race*, p. 207 (quoted in Foote's *Crimes of Christianity*).

[2] Father Lehmkuhl's *Theologia Moralis*, i. 721.

in the moral system that so long dominated Europe. Humanitarianism is a peculiarly modern growth.

And, while we cannot recognise the suppression of the gladiatorial combats as the inauguration of a spirit of humanity in Europe, there are a hundred features of medieval life that prevent us from looking on it as the introduction of a new gospel of the sanctity of human life. Seneca tells us how the professional gladiators themselves resented any attack upon, or attempt to humanise, the amphitheatre, though that circumstance does not diminish our gratification that it was closed for ever. But it was a dark presage for the future that, long before blood ceased to be shed in the Flavian amphitheatre, a hundred other arenas were opened that the Roman world had never known. Religious wars extended the field of bloodshed in a particularly odious manner. The Christian world in the first century of its power (the fourth century) is sadly described by Baxter as "a cockpit." Tens of thousands of lives were sacrificed in the Arian and Donatist struggles, and these were but the precursors of a hundred others. The early Christians had gone to the culpable extreme of frowning on the soldier who fought the legitimate battles of his country; but Christendom soon habituated itself to an atmosphere of violence and bloodshed that makes readers of medieval chronicles recoil in horror. When to the ordinary and eternal causes of friction between State and State we add the long

list of religious wars, massacres, and crusades of the Middle Ages and even later, the vast numbers of witches, Jews, and heretics sacrificed, the legions that succumbed to ordeal or torture, or were swept away by famine or plague that the discouragement of science made so rife, we do not feel disposed to entertain seriously the claim of the apologists that Christianity brought into Europe a new appreciation of the sanctity of life.

To these vast disorders the Reformation brought no remedy. The religious wars that succeeded dwarfed all that had gone before (the population of Germany sinking from thirty to twelve millions during the seventeenth century), and helped enormously to evolve the national armies that are the chief disgrace and the curse of our civilisation. Rome, with its vast empire, had not had more than 400,000 soldiers under its eagles. In the twentieth century we have the spectacle of Christian Europe maintaining fifteen million men for the purpose of war, and spending three hundred millions a year on its military needs. The evil has now become so gigantic that the economic consequences of an abolition of warfare give grave concern. Where were the ideals of the Christian Church during the centuries that this terrible burden was augmenting? What effort did she make, in the days of her supreme power, the days when armies were relatively small, to instil into the Christian nations some sense of the wisdom and humanity of arbitra-

tion on international quarrels? None whatever, is the reply of the historian. It is true that she secured some hours of tranquillity with her "peace of God"; it is true that certain individual Churchmen shrank from the horrors of war; but it is equally and lamentably true that the influence of Christianity on the military system has been one predominantly of stimulation and of blessing, and that the nobler protest of our time against this nefarious cult of Moloch was largely begun by sceptics and radical heretics, and was coldly ignored by the solid mass of the clergy, of all Churches, during the earlier decades when it most needed their support. Once more modern humanitarianism, instead of being born of Christianity, has had to force itself upon the notice of the long reluctant Churches.

Chapter VIII.

THE CHURCH AND ART

We have so often, in the course of our inquiry, been compelled to dwell on the less pleasant features of medieval life that the name "Dark Ages" seems a not inappropriate appellation for the whole period when the influence of Biblical ideas was paramount in Europe. The more humane and enlightened elements of modern civilisation are so quickly lost, when we pursue them back through the past, that we are tempted to regard our age as one of supreme triumph in every respect. Now, however, we come to an aspect of our civilisation which must modify our conception of the later Middle Ages at least. However little we can find to redeem the barbarity of life in Europe from the fifth to the eleventh century, after that date we have developments of the utmost value and promise. The great cathedrals and the great paintings of the later Middle Ages are among the supreme artistic achievements of our race. From the middle of the thirteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century, the genius of the time flowers in works of beauty that the historian of culture and civilisation cannot appraise too highly, and that the modern artist looks back upon with a feeling of profound veneration. Their inspiration

lives in the life of our own generation, and must count as one of the great factors in the making of the modern world.

And this marvellous artistic wealth is so constantly religious in its aim and content that the superficial thinker cannot conceive it apart from Christianity. It is an immortal and refulgent embodiment of the doctrines of the Church, the religious sentiments of the medieval people. From creation to final judgment, the whole cycle of Christian truths finds expression in its stained windows, its frescoes, its sculptures, its bronzes, its mosaics, its paintings, and its edifices. Spontaneously one feels that this superb self-expression of the later Middle Ages indicates the moment when the Christian message has at last touched the heart of Europe, and elevated it to the height of genius; and in proportion as scepticism advances the inspiration dies away. On this conviction the apologist builds his case with confidence. Here, still irradiating and dominating our materialistic age, are a thousand proofs of the power and inspiration of his ideals.

I have already made it clear that it is far from my design to seek, in a narrow and petulant spirit, to question all the achievements of Christianity. Art is undoubtedly as great a factor in the making of the higher humanity as science or morality; and art reached one of the highest points of its development under the apparent tutelage of the Christian

Church. These are two facts that one cannot with any dignity dispute. But our experience of the apologist has been so unsatisfactory that we are compelled to weigh with some caution the imposing phrases in which he usually sets forth this service of the Church to humanity. I propose, therefore, to consult the facts of the history of medieval art somewhat closely, and see if there be any considerations that restrict the conventional view of the Church's relation to it.

In accordance with my practice of taking first those developments which are most highly prized by the apologist, I begin with architecture. In all ages the greatest triumphs of the architect have been achieved in the erection of the earthly homes of the gods. The massive and enduring temples of Egypt, the stately shrines of Greece and Rome, the soaring and graceful mosques of the Mohammedan, all testify to the influence of the religious idea. The artist, to whom truth means consistency and appropriateness, gives expression to the feeling of the community—whether he share it or no—that the home of the God must be raised above that of men as divinity transcends humanity. The priesthood finds such structures essential for the daily exhibition of its high prestige. In the new religion, with a conception of deity that at least magnified the gulf between him and his worshippers, a fresh development of architecture was inevitable. As soon as the conversion of Constantine gave freedom

to the Christians to emerge from the catacombs and showered wealth on them, they began their long cultivation of the architect. Whether the early Christian basilica was modelled on the civic Roman *basilica* (court-house), or on the private basilica of the larger houses, or on the *schola*—the meeting-place of the sodalities or clubs of workers—we need not discuss.[1] For obvious reasons the Church shrank from imitating or using the Roman temples, though the medieval baptisteries were often modelled on these. It chose the severer form of the basilica, but continued to follow the Roman model. "The Church," says Lübke, "put on the corporeal garment of ancient and decaying art." From the humanitarian point of view, it is, perhaps, a pity she did not adopt the garment more liberally. The modern Catholic is, indeed, horrified when his archeologists discover altars of the jovial Bacchus in his older churches, statues and pictures of Isis in his Madonnas, and hymns to Cybele in his hymns to Mary; but the process of borrowing was limited. In the period of religious transition (380–420) the priceless and bountiful art treasures of the older world were broken into fragments and cast among the rubbish of Rome and Alexandria, or scattered over the fields of Syria. Hordes of fanatical monks

[1] The last opinion is now pressed, and, in view of the connection of early Christianity with these Communist clubs, seems plausible. The church of St. Paul (without the walls) at Rome is, though very greatly altered, a fine specimen of the basilica.

trampled under foot noble works that our age would give so much of their accomplishments to redeem ; for the pagan temple in the large town had, by the fourth century, become a crowded museum of painting, sculpture, and mosaic ; while the temple of Isis at Pompei, and the temple of Castor and Pollux at Rome, bear witness to the extent of our loss in Roman temple architecture.

However, the needs of the new Church, as it conquered nation after nation, called forth the efforts of architects. By a process that we have already noticed in so many departments, architecture became a sacred art. Humanity had frittered its resources and its energies on a hundred profane achievements in the earlier days of pagan obscurity. The very model that the Church adopted was a profane model ; and the Roman architect had no less inspiring motives when he was set, by wealthy patrons or municipal authorities, to build fora, or marble villas, or arches, or amphitheatres, or aqueducts. With the dissipation of lay fortunes, and the imperious nature of the new religious idea, secular architecture had little encouragement. The clergy insisted that the building of a church was the first requirement, and the very art passed largely into their own hands. To speak, therefore, of the Church as creating architecture, or to demand our gratitude on the ground that it almost alone encouraged architecture in those dark days, is to incur a fallacy we have already met several times.

But the achievements of religious architecture during the next seven centuries are not pressed upon us. In the East, where the Roman-Greek style was modified into the Byzantine under oriental influence, and where no barbarian invasions could be pleaded, there was at least a brisk development in the wealthy and stirring age of Justinian, and the famous church of Sancta Sophia was built at Constantinople. We are concerned rather with Europe. But in one respect the fortune of art in the Eastern Church is significant. From the seventh century to the nineteenth the religious beliefs have been protected in the Greek Church from that corroding action of scepticism that set in five centuries ago in the Latin Church. If Christian conviction were the chief and primary source of artistic inspiration, we should naturally look for a unique exhibition of it in the East. The artistic poverty of the Greek Church in comparison with the Latin shows that this is not the case, and we shall be prepared to find quite other factors at work in the creation of our own medieval art, however religious its form.

Until the eleventh century the architectural accomplishments of Christian Europe have little more than historical and expert interest. The structures that were raised must seem meagre and unlovely to anyone who realises the noble garment of fashioned marble with which the Romans had invested their Empire. The apologist is content to

point to the barbaric invasions. No doubt the man who discards the *supernatural* view of the force of Christianity will be disposed to make a very large allowance on that account; but it must not be forgotten that the early followers of Mohammed were not more intellectual and had not higher ideals than the Goths, yet in less than two centuries they carried the arts and sciences to an altitude that towered high above contemporary Europe.[1] In Europe architecture was slowly passing from the classical to the Romanesque style, and preparing for the great development of Gothic. It is not for me to trace the steps of its evolution, nor are experts at all agreed in the matter. One point only calls for notice. The change from the round arch and severe lines of the Roman style to the pointed arch, the flying buttresses, pinnacles, and infinite detail of the Gothic is now generally studied on utilitarian and æsthetic lines. The pretty fancy of earlier students, so often repeated still by clerical writers, that the upward points of the Gothic structure are an expression of the soaring aspiration implanted in the breast of Europe by the new religion, is a very superficial and ungrounded observation. "The flat roofs, heavy architraves,

[1] Reber makes the observation in his *History of Medieval Art.* He only pleads, in extenuation of the unflattering contrast to Christendom, that the Arabs had a national and, if I may so put it, home-made religion to inspire them. But their fathers had had to sacrifice an earlier one no less than the Goths. Milman, who speaks of the "barbarous Bedouins," is almost as explicit.

and low arches of the Romanesque," says Leader Scott, "which suited a warm climate, gradually changed as they went northward into the pointed arches and sharp gables of the Gothic, the steep sloping lines being a necessity in a land where snow and rain were frequent."[1] Other theorists trace the change to fresh structural needs, poverty of material, the intersecting of round arches, etc. Some writers even—the bathos of it, after so much rhetoric!—hold (so the writer in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and Lübke) that the pointed arch was borrowed from the Saracen.

Thus the experts admit more secular considerations into the stylic development of ecclesiastical architecture, and we must add others in regard to its intensity in the thirteenth century. When Mr. Brace approaches the great flowering of Christian art, he shortly observes that the process began from "causes which we need not here investigate." But, as he is formulating an imposing claim for the Church in connection with this outburst, it is very material to examine those causes. In the first place, we must notice that there was a tremendous accumulation of wealth in the churches and monasteries at the commencement of the period. The

[1] *The Cathedral Builders,* p. vii. The point may be taken apart from her general theory, which is much disputed. In Mr. Moore's recent *Gothic Architecture* we have another theory of the arch, with detailed accounts of the buttress, pinnacle, etc., on utilitarian lines.

giving or bequeathing of property to the Church had proceeded with generosity since the days of Constantine. At the end of the tenth century a religious movement gave it a singular impetus. The expectation that the world would come to an end at, or about, the year 1000 spread far and wide, and was confirmed by the prodigies and calamities that then multiplied. Michelet tells how the wealthy feverishly thrust their worldly goods on the clergy and the monks, and prepared for the sound of the last trumpet. It is hardly surprising that the recovery from the panic was followed by a vast activity in building churches and monasteries. A great architectural development ensued; the Romanesque style was rapidly improved, and was presently embodied in some of the abbeys and cathedrals that are a just pride to the older nations of Europe. We may or may not regard with favour the accumulation of wealth by the clergy and monks; we may strongly resent the methods —I have described many of them—by which the wealth was obtained; we may remember that a very great part of this wealth was spent in riotous living by men who professed asceticism; but we will not refuse a sentiment of gratitude that the Church spent so much of its wealth in the erection of these imperishable structures.

However, we must not forget that less exalted motives were actively at work in the creation of our cathedrals. The recognition of these motives is

not a matter of pedantic analysis or anti-clerical animus. The practical question we have always in view is, whether the modern world will discard a powerful and irreplaceable source of inspiration, artistic and other, if it abandons the Christian faith. That question cannot be answered, as far as art is concerned, unless we see whether there may not have been other motives energetically at work which will survive the decay of faith. And here, indeed, we do find a number of facts that will encourage the humanist. We find that, if the rich architectural development of the time was guided by the Church into religious forms, its creative forces were to a very great extent independent of religion. The basic facts are that the brain of Europe was awakening, the taste of the nations was improving, industrial progress was providing a surplus for luxuries, and civic forms were once more emerging from the chaos. Every modern historian of art connects the medieval outburst with these cultural and economic changes. It was, of course, natural that the new enterprise should seek expression in embodying the most dominant idea of life at the time, the Christian legend ; but it is none the less interesting to us to discover that forces were at work in European life which were bound to find some expression in noble collective enterprise.

Mr. Moore and other writers lay a becoming stress on these secular factors in the birth of Gothic architecture. It was not merely that the religious

conviction was deepened, for it is precisely in the twelfth century that Rationalism was born ; it was not merely that wealth accumulated, for the monks and clergy had long been wealthy. The new element was the formation of free communities, and Mr. Moore says their new civic feeling counted as much as religious ardour in the great work. That rivalry of free and prosperous communities began which was to do a hundred times more for art in the next three centuries than the wealth and activity of the monks had done in seven centuries. It was the beginning of the secularisation of art, and—like secularisation in all other matters—it proved most momentous, both with regard to productiveness and advance, both for art and for humanity. I will show presently how it liberated painting and sculpture from subordination, and will conclude the subject of architecture with one further point.

The question of the character of the medieval architects and builders is still very obscure, like most of the questions connected with the evolution of architecture. But by the twelfth century there was clearly a strong lay profession. "Leader Scott," Professor Merzario, and other writers, hold that the ancient Roman guild *(collegium)* of builders took refuge at Como from the barbarians, and grew in time to control the whole architecture of Europe. The theory of these early "free masons" is, however, much disputed, and we must avoid the straining of evidence which we have so often to

criticise in others. In the twelfth century, at least, it was possible for an artist to live outside a monastery, and as soon as that was possible he generally did so. The passing of the craft into secular hands was good for architecture. Monastic discipline is essentially destructive of individuality. Rule and tradition are sacred to the conventual authority. Hence, though the monk builders continued to be very active, "the most potent ideas and influences in development" (Mr. Moore says) did not come from them, but from the lay architects, commissioned by the lay rulers and communities. In their hands, especially in the more prosperous and progressive part of France, the Gothic style soon advanced to the glory of the great cathedrals.

There is hardly a single modern historian of art who does not dwell on this fact of the laicisation of art and its advantage. "After the Crusades," says Reber, "art was taken by the laity from the hands of the clergy and the monkish communities, and was freed from dogmatic traditions. In poetry, sculpture, and painting the study of nature was cultivated, and in architecture a greater independence and individuality soon made itself felt."[1] We shall see the effect of this more particularly in connection with painting. For the present we have a sufficiently clear indication that it was not a deepening of the religious conviction, but a departure from

[1] *History of Medieval Art*, p. 481.

it in the direction of humanism, that constitutes the "new fact" at the root of the great artistic outburst. Laymen succeeded the monks as artists, and art began to advance with redoubled speed. Laymen —wealthy rulers or prosperous communities— largely succeeded the clergy as employers, and their less religious motives gave greater freedom to the artist. We find this leaven of purely human considerations all over Europe, and we shall see that, as the humanist replace the strictly religious motives, art ever advances. These are considerations which Mr. Brace may think negligible, but they undo his argument. I remember a few years ago standing between the baptistery and the cathedral at Florence, and feeling something of the conventional regard for the lost power of religious conviction. The superb bronze doors of the baptistery, the "Gates of Paradise," as they have been well called, seemed to me one of the purest expressions in Italy of the medieval piety of which so much is said. I learned afterwards that the artist, Ghiberti, was so thoroughly pagan in artistic feeling (while accepting the Christian faith) that he rejected Christian chronology altogether, and measured history still by the old Greek chronology. On the other hand was the cathedral, not the finest in Italy, yet a great and beautiful edifice. Long afterwards I read the document in which the prosperous citizens of Florence commissioned their civic architect to undertake it in 1294. "Since," they said, "the highest mark

of prudence in a people of noble origin is to proceed in the management of their affairs so that their magnanimity and wisdom may be evinced in their outward acts," they direct Arnolfo to build the finest conceivable church for the decoration of their city, and raise taxes accordingly. There were cathedrals, like Chartres, built in a different spirit; but even in the thirteenth century we find everywhere how much humanity counted for in the rearing of its noblest monuments.

When we turn from architecture to painting, we have a very much more striking manifestation of the same truth. The painter's art, which had attained a high perfection in Greece, and some distinction in Rome, was in evident decay by the fourth century. It was then taken into the service of Christianity. Historians of the art speak with scant praise of its development in the hands of the monks. Their beautiful illuminating work is well known, but, speaking broadly of the art in their authoritative history, Woltmann and Woermann describe it up to 950 as a mere echo of the antique, and say that up to 1250 painting and sculpture in Europe were still "the painting and sculpture of children." From 1250 to 1400 we have, as Mr. Brace points out, the "most brilliant period of Christian art." But what had Christian inspiration been doing during the preceding centuries of unclouded faith and infinite leisure in the monasteries? And what new change happened in the

thirteenth century? The experts are happily agreed on both points. "Painting in the earlier period," says Mr. Symonds, "suffered from 'a barren scholasticism.'" The Christian artists attained a high technical excellence, but it was spent in "frigid reproductions of lifeless forms, copied technically, and without inspiration, from debased patterns." When we find the second Council of Nicæa decreeing that the artist is not to be allowed to follow his "own invention," but must adhere to the "forms laid down" [*probata legislatio*], we can understand this. When we remember, with Reber, the general decline of culture and taste, and the ascetic doctrine of the Church that shrank from the beauty of the human body, and frowned even on the innocent radiance of nature, we are not surprised at the stagnancy.

The answer to the second question is given with equal unanimity. From the thirteenth century, Woltmann and Woermann say, painting "emancipated itself from priestly dictation."[1] It passed into the hands of laymen, who, adhering to the conventional subjects, brought a new spirit and new models to the work. Europe attains great prosperity after the long horrors of the Dark Ages. A delight in good living spreads through every country, an appreciation of nature, a growth of realism. General culture is revived and deepened,

[1] *History of Painting*, i. 356.

and by the end of the fourteenth century, these authorities say, artists find once more the lost conception of "the true functions and capacities of painting." What happened, says Mr. Symonds, is that the artist "humanised the altar-pieces and cloister frescoes on which he worked," and "piety, at the lure of art, folded her soaring wings, and rested on the genial earth." These features are the most prominent in every expert history of medieval art: the laicisation of the work, the gradual turning to nature and discovery of the glory of the human frame, and the growth of civic prosperity and lay patronage. When to these was added the great impulse of the revival of the pagan culture in 1440, medieval art towered to its highest point. "For the painters of the full Renaissance Roman martyrs and Olympian deities were alike burghers of one spiritual city, the city of the beautiful and the human."

To pursue this theme into a detailed study of the various schools of painting is quite beyond our power here, but a few hints may be given to the inexpert reader who wishes to do so. The "barren scholasticism" of purely Christian art culminated in the fine work of Cimabue. With Giotto (born 1276) the new art commences. His figures are Italian men and women and children, seen with an artist's eye. Painting begins to turn from the visions of monks to living humanity and the sun-lit earth. Religion remains the great and dominating

motive, but it is religion flushed and softened with humane feeling, until at last the whole glow is humanitarian. Italian painting has its greatest development, and produces the masterpieces of Botticelli, Ghirlandajo, Pietro Perugino, Leonardo da Vinci, Michel Angelo, Raphael, Giorgione, Correggio, Titian, Andrea del Sarto, and Tintoretto, in the latter half of the fifteenth and in the sixteenth centuries. During that period Christianity touched the lowest depth in Italy that it ever reached between the fourth and the nineteenth century. "The times were darkened by the greed and crimes of the Borgias, and the gifted nation demoralised," say Woltmann and Woermann; but "Italian art still had its root in civil and municipal freedom."

A study of what is called "the Roman school" is the best corrective to the exaggerated notion of Christian inspiration. Rome never produced a great artist—and very few great men or women in any department since pagan days. Its wealth attracted many of the great Italian artists, so that it has at least the distinction of patronage. But who will boast the pontifical patrons of art during that brilliant period? Who will associate with their repulsive names any idea of Christian inspiration?[1] Nicholas V. (1447–1453) was the first great papal patron. With the vast wealth obtained from

[1] See "The Popes of the Renaissance" and "The Church and Morality," chaps. vi. and vii. in vol. i. of Mr. Symonds's *Renaissance in Italy*.

the Jubilee he started the famous artistic enrichment of Rome. "Nothing," Mr. Symonds says, "illustrates more forcibly the transition from the Middle Ages to the worldliness of the Renaissance than the conviction of the pontiff that the destinies of Christianity depended on the state and glory of the town of Rome." Pius II. did little either to arrest or promote, and after him that papal see about which Catholics still fancy there is some strong and never-ceasing action of the Holy Ghost was unspeakably degraded. A succession of men who were open libertines, cynically avaricious and simoniacal, and "played the part of Antichrist on the theatre of Europe," bought and debauched the papal chair. To these men we owe the art-treasures which still fill visitors from England and America with a sense of the Church's inspiration. Sixtus IV., who paraded his amours in the Vatican and started the Spanish Inquisition, founded the Sistine Chapel, where Botticelli, Ghirlandajo, and Perugino worked. His successor, Innocent VIII., father of seven children, surpassed him in the publicity of his licentiousness and in venality. Alexander VI.—Roderigo Borgia—had a character and a career that could only be summarised in language we may not indulge in. Julius II. is the pope to whom "we owe the most splendid of Raphael's and Michel Angelo's masterpieces"; he is also the pope who "drowned the peninsula in blood," and who (his master of ceremonies relates) had to omit

the ceremony of the kissing of his feet lest he should betray his syphilitic condition. His successor, Leo X., continued Julius's practice of selling indulgences all over Europe (a practice now confined to Catholic Spain), and raised 3,000,000 ducats by the sale of offices. On these tainted and shameful funds was reared the glory of St. Peter's at Rome. One is prepared to hear that "the example of Rome was in some sense the justification of the fraud, violence, lust, filthy living, and ungodliness of the whole nation."[1] But this was the period during which the art which we are asked to call Christian reached its highest and most glorious development. It was after half a century of this kind of Christianity, and during its greatest moral degradation, that, in the words of Woltmann and Woermann, "the highest beauty which the gods themselves had, 2,000 years before, revealed to the Greeks, now revisited earth among the Italians." Let us conclude soberly with Mr. Symonds. Raphael and Michel Angelo were neither pagans nor Christians. They were artists and men.

The humanitarian conclusion forces itself on us at every point in the history of painting. We find that there was a great school founded in the Netherlands by the Van Eycks at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and turn to study it. We are told that its rise must be connected with the new

[1] J. A. Symonds, *loc. cit.*, i., 383.

prosperity of the country, and the birth of a jovial, free-living generation that had the taste and the means for luxury; and that "the feeling for Nature in Flanders was stronger even than in Italy." Of later Rembrandt and Rubens, with their known inspiration in the living human face and human body, we need not speak. We are reminded that the civic institution of Florence, the Palazzo Vecchio, was the centre and focus of Florentine art. We are taught that the great Venetian painters—Titian, Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese—are "the interpreters of the worldly splendour" of Venice, that their piety is superficial and conventional, and that what they really express is "the free enjoyment and living energy" of a humanist age. But I will close with a few words on the development of painting in Spain.

"The artists of Spain," says one of the chief living authorities on them, "were cramped and stultified in their finest expression by the strict and often childish surveillance of king and priest. Indeed, it is not overstating the truth to say that the patronage which called the Spanish school into its fullest, fairest existence likewise caused its destruction."[1] The story of the Spanish school begins after the fall of Granada (1492), and is retarded by the prevalence of war and the "childish subordination" of the Spanish painter. Besides

[1] C. G. Hartley, *A Record of Spanish Painting*, p. 2.

the general spirit of the Church, standing in the way of a correct interpretation of nature and of the human form, there was the special obstacle of the Inquisition, which kept a close watch on sacred work. It was not until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that Spanish painting broke away and "refused to remain solely the handmaid of the Church." The event was the culmination of a tendency towards naturalism that had been working for centuries, and was strengthened by the example of the Low Countries. Of Murillo, Miss Hartley says that "his work depends for its charm upon its execution, not upon its inspiration." He depicted the common types of Andalusia, and, in proportion as he touched them with the idealism of Catholic convention, he "lost dignity and truth." The paintings of Velasquez, the greatest of Spain's artists, she describes as "untinged with the Spanish Roman Catholic ideal." "The medieval spirit did not exist in Velasquez. He had selected truth to common nature as the load-star of his work."

Thus there is no mistaking the meaning of the great outburst of medieval art. From Giotto to Raphael the growing inspiration is humanist. Titian and Tintoretto, Murillo and Velasquez, Rembrandt and Rubens—they are all interpreters of human life, even when they are painting Mary or the saints. Every school takes its rise in a phase of human joy and prosperity, an increased refinement of taste and demand for luxury. As the

whole movement advances, piety decays, and a sceptical culture prevails. Art, even when it retains religious subjects, falls away from the Christian spirit as soon as it is free to do so, and it can secure secular patronage. In proportion as it ceases to be inspired by the old religious ardour it gains in splendour and puts on the garb of immortality. Monasteries for a time still have their Fra Angelicos, but also their Fra Lippis. The greatest masters of medieval art are "full of the breadth of humanity," and fired by its inspiration.

The evolution of sculpture is parallel to that of painting. Till the thirteenth century it was but subsidiary to architecture. When it found freedom it found its highest inspiration in the human form. The evolution of music has the same lesson. Its development was slow and restricted in the Christian period, in spite of its ample adoption. When it passed to the hands of laymen like Bach and Handel, when it was touched by the influence of profane song, it began its great modern growth. The evolution of poetry is no exception. With Chaucer the new spirit begins; in Shakespeare it reaches maturity. Since Milton every great poet has been a great humanist. In every art, in every country, we see the transition from supernaturalism to naturalism; and, as the latter inspiration gains on the former, art approaches its most lofty altitudes.

Chapter IX.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE ON MORALITY

It is possible that many of my readers will have resented what they will feel to be the irrelevance of my previous chapters. They may observe that Christ gave his Church no direction to devote itself to social problems or the elevation of art and science, and that the application of such tests to its success is fallacious. In that view of the narrowness of aim of the founders of Christianity I entirely concur, but almost the whole school of the apologists do not, and I have been forced to examine their claims. Our age attaches very great importance to the cultivation of art and science, and the improvement of our social, industrial, and juridical order; and the temptation to trace these modern growths to Christian inspiration was not to be resisted. In spite of the impressive warning of men like Dean Church, in his *Gifts of Civilisation,* that these imprudent claims only provoke an "overwhelming reply"; in spite of the Dean's protest that "many of the characteristic phenomena of our time seem to point to great and salutary results, brought about without calling on the religious

principle" (p. 118), the bulk of the apologists have rushed into the wider arena, and we have had to follow. The reader will now be in a position to appreciate their knowledge of the historical facts and their concern for accuracy.

The distinguished preacher whom I have just quoted is content, in the main, to feel that Christianity brought "a new morality" into the world. With the rare candour that distinguishes his work, as it does that of Dean Milman, he confesses that it is not improbable the world will continue to "thrive and grow strong" even if it discards Christianity. It is enough for him that his religion did make this important contribution of character to European civilisation. It may seem ungracious to quarrel with so modest a claim, but the historical facts once more compel us to make very serious reserves in accepting his conclusion. We will, therefore, glance at the development of morality in Europe as the concluding part of our inquiry. If there are any who feel impatience that I seem to narrow the word "morality" to its sexual implications, I may say that this is only because it is precisely here we can best examine the claim of the apologist, and that I do not for a moment agree with the tendency. For me morality is no god, but the servant of a higher ideal, the happiness of mankind, and only in so far as it promotes that ideal may we render rational homage to it.

We saw in the first chapter that the current

notion of a moral revolution in Europe in the fourth century is mere nonsense. There had been a more conspicuous change of character under the Stoics, in the second century. It is to be feared that Dean Church, like all the other apologists, has too hastily accepted this estimate, when he speaks of "the great restoration of civilisation, due mainly to the impulse and the power of Christian morality," in the fourth century. In the light of the facts I have adduced, it is singular to be told that "they forbade with intense and terrible severity, before which even passion quailed, the frightful liberty in the relation of the sexes which in Greece, and at last in Rome, had been thought so natural." The preacher is evidently unaware that Stoics and Neo-Platonists denounced sexual irregularities with as much zeal as, and more discernment than, the Fathers — even Juvenal (xiii., 208) teaching the sinfulness of inner thoughts, which is coolly claimed to be a Christian innovation—and that the mass of the Roman people continued to pay no attention to either. Dean Milman is better informed, as becomes a historian. He observes that celibacy appealed to a number of lofty minds—we can almost count them on our fingers in the fourth century—"but it may be doubted whether conjugal fidelity had made equal progress"; that Christianity had its effect on these higher minds "rather than on the whole mass of worshippers"; and that "with the world Christianity began rapidly to

barbarise," and "the clergy were at last swept away by the torrent." After reading the contemporary letters and sermons of St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Chrysostom, the social student will probably qualify this as a moderate view. He would, however, be inclined to say "from the first" instead of "at last," as regards the clergy. For this degradation of the Christian clergy is the real secret of failure.

As Milman indicates, most of the sonorous rhetoric about the "conversion" of the Roman world is based on the acceptance of celibacy and asceticism by a number of excellent men and women. In our day, when even the Catholic Church virtually discards the ascetic principle, it is usual to say that this extreme reaction against Roman corruption was expedient in the fourth century. But we have seen that such corruption as there was did not diminish in the least by the example of the ascetics. Thousands were withdrawn from the service of the sinking Empire, the work of maintaining a sound public spirit, and the function of rearing estimable families, under the influence of this error; and Milman admits that their example had no compensating effect on "the mass of the worshippers." On the one hand, the ascetics degenerated into eccentricities that repel the modern mind. It is true that the literature describing their deeds is characterised by what Mr. Lecky calls "glaring mendacity"; but through all its exaggerations we

see a sad picture of the cultivation of filth, the savage renunciation of natural affections, and the contemptuous ignoring of public duties. "You must now learn to forget that you are a father," said the monks to the rich man who had cast away his wealth, and came with his boy to seek admission. Scores of such stories betray a horribly perverse morality. Monks intrigued with Roman mothers for the sons that their fathers destined for the service of their stricken Empire. "A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac," says Mr. Lecky, "without knowledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghostly phantoms of his delirious brain, had become the ideal of the nations that had known the writings of Plato and Cicero and the lives of Socrates and Cato." One Egyptian town of moderate size contained 20,000 virgins and 10,000 monks; and 50,000 monks would assemble for common ceremonies on the banks of the Nile.

Amid the increasing wealth of the Church in Europe great numbers embraced this "ascetic life" as a hypocritical cloak. St. Augustine's *De Opere Monachorum* and St. Jerome's letters tell of their licentiousness. Even the more sober Fathers exhausted themselves in denunciations of false hair, paint, and other little masculine and feminine weaknesses.[1] Between the hypocrisy of the lower

[1] This abnormal Puritanism must be discounted when we read

clergy and the ascetic excesses of the higher, the bulk of humanity went its gay way along the broad road. The writings I have quoted show in the Christian world, says Mr. Lecky, "a condition of depravity, and especially of degradation, which has seldom been surpassed." The *agapæ,* or love-feasts, in the churches were taken in a more literal and sensual sense than the Catholic writer describes. Drinking and dancing went on all night, and immorality abounded: so St. Ambrose and St. Augustine. Consecrated virgins and monks or clerics cohabited under thin pretences, says St. Jerome. Widows made vows not to re-marry, so as to avoid the proved irksomeness of marital supervision. Pilgrimages were found a convenient escape from neighbours, and Palestine—another saint says—became "a hotbed of debauchery." Troops of monks wandered everywhere, selling spurious relics, and indulging their worst passions —I speak of cruelty and ferocity—in a holy zeal for orthodoxy and the support of rival candidates for rich bishoprics.

Such was the fourth century—the century of the triumph of Christianity. Milman, who admits all this, finds a quaint consolation in the thought that

their denunciations of vice, either Christian or Pagan. Even the Pagan moralists evince it. Seneca was scandalised at the icing (or snowing) of drinks, Pliny and Ammianus at the wearing of rings, Juvenal at a noble driving his own chariot. But the apologist is too discreet to mention these important excesses of their standard of conduct.

evil was too deeply rooted for even so exalted a religion to eradicate it at once. But as he himself goes on to review the succeeding centuries his language grows more and more sombre and vigorous. "The barbarians," the apologist at once objects. The barbarians are very convenient to the ecclesiastical historian. They fully explain the darkness of the Middle Ages, yet they equally explain the later rise from the abyss. Their "fresh blood," etc., had to be poured into the veins of the senile Empire before Christianity could do anything with it. I have met this fallacy more than once. The Teutonic barbarians were no worse than the desert followers of Mohammed, who were fully civilised in less than two centuries; the Eastern Empire was not overrun with them, yet its history, says Mr. Lecky, is "a monotonous story of the intrigues of priests, eunuchs, and women, of poisonings, of conspiracies, of uniform ingratitude, and of perpetual fratricides"; and history shows that, wherever the barbarians found a strong and enlightened *secular* ruler—Theodoric, Charlemagne, or Alfred—they showed a remarkable aptitude for civilisation. However, let us briefly survey the development of morality in Europe.

The difficulty of conveying a just impression of the matter is considerable. It would be the easiest thing in the world to fill my whole volume with harrowing stories of vice and violence, and the lurid verdicts of contemporaries of each age; but

that is not enough. The religious writer finds it just as easy to cull flowers of virtue and grace from the medieval documents, and persuade his uncritical readers that these ages were certainly not predominantly wicked. People forget, although it has been pointed out by historian after historian, that numerous examples of virtue in a city or a province are quite consistent with a wide and deep prevalence of vice. Christian Antioch gave its richest supply of anchorites to the desert when its general population was at its worst. The worst centuries of medieval France are among those that furnished most saints to the calendar. "The number of cases of uncommon turpitude in a time of extraordinary religious purism forces itself upon our attention," says a historian, commenting on Calvinistic Scotland. Examples could be very greatly multiplied, and we can only warn the reader not to be misled into attributing even general decency to an age or country because it boasts many saints. The wealth of a few men in a community may mean the poverty of all the rest. We must seek indications of a more general validity.

There is so little serious question about the general licentiousness of Europe from the dissolution of paganism to the thirteenth century that we need not linger over it. We have heard Salvian denounce the Christians of Gaul in the middle of the fifth century as far worse than the slaves or the barbarians in point of every single vice. About

the same time we find Pope Leo the Great scourging Rome for its vices, and Milman observes that the wretched Valentinian III. found the papal city "a congenial scene for his license." Christendom, the distressed historian remarks, was "torn with inward dissensions," and "anathema instead of benediction had almost become the general language of the Church." A little later we find Pope Gelasius (*ep.* ix., etc.) lamenting the numbers of marriages and incestuous connections among the consecrated virgins; while St. Benedict, a few years later, describes in his Rule the frightful irregularities of the European monks. In fact, from the sixth to the twelfth century ecclesiastical annals are one mass of decrees for the suppression of fornication and incest among the clergy, the monks, and the nuns.[1] Gregory the Great, who describes how Benedictine monks (less than a century from their foundation) are openly acting as godfathers to the children of women who had access to the monasteries, made an effort at reform; but it was, says Mr. Lea, "powerless to restore order in the chaos of an utterly demoralised society." His successors were avaricious and unscrupulous, and, as few serious attempts were made to reform the clergy, the condition of the laity may be left to the imagination.

[1] Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy* contains a large number of them. See also Lecky, Milman, Gibbon, Hallam, Bryce, and (for later centuries) Cotter Morison's *Service of Man,* ch. vi.

There is no controversy about the morality of Europe up to the time of Charlemagne. The reformers themselves, like St. Boniface, "had a scruple about associating in ordinary intercourse with men so licentious and depraved as the Frankish bishops and priests." Lea shows the condition of the clergy, high and low, in Italy, France, and Spain; while Gildas describes the Anglo-Saxon clergy as "utterly corrupt." Then came (at the end of the eighth and beginning of the ninth century) the bright episode of the reign of Charlemagne. With all his vigour, a monarch who had six wives living at one time was hardly likely to effect more than a superficial improvement. Open disorders were checked; but the growth of infanticide in nunneries and other signs show that there was "a corroding ulcer" in the mass of the clergy, and after his time, says Milman, we find the Church "still degraded, enslaved, and disqualified for her own office by her power and wealth" (ii., 92). The moral anarchy and license grew worse than ever. In 836 we find a council at Aix-la-Chapelle, Charlemagne's capital, saying that many convents are mere brothels. The new prelates appointed by the monarch fell completely away, and Rome, in its new wealth and power, became the scene of greater scandals than ever. The papal see was "won by crime and vacated by murder" time after time, says Milman; and Mr. Bryce observes that, "after the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire, Rome

relapsed into a state of profligacy and barbarism to which even in that age Europe supplied no parallel. The papal office in particular seemed to have lost its religious character, as many of its occupants had lost all claim to moral purity."[1]

From the ninth century we have to stoop still lower to reach the tenth, "the most repulsive in the Christian annals." To that qualification of it no historian will demur, and we need not dwell on the bloodshed, coarseness, depravity, and crass superstition that characterise it. But the eleventh century is really no better, for the first half. Among the clergy "legal marriage or promiscuous profligacy is almost universal," says Mr. Lea. In England all the monasteries except Glastonbury and Abingdon had become irregular, and were "notorious as places of the most scandalous dissipation and corruption" (Lea), and the Normans found the Saxon clergy "abandoned to sloth, ignorance, and lusts of the flesh." At Rome, says Milman, in one of those sentences in which he seems to approach Gibbon, "chastity had now become so rare as to be called an angelic virtue," and visitors found that "there was not one in the Roman Church who was not illiterate, simoniacal, or living in concubinage." In fact, we have one document on the Roman and Italian clergy which no historian dare more than allude to. We have

[1] *Holy Roman Empire*, p. 287.

seen Mr. Brace claim that the Church had utterly extinguished unnatural vice. As a fact, we find two *bishops* mutilated for it in the sixth century, and in the eleventh it is described as terribly prevalent among the clergy and monks. St. Peter Damiani, cardinal and papal secretary, wrote a book—the *Liber Gomorrhaicus* (Migne, vol. 145, col. 159)—on the subject, and the pope gave a warm blessing to his enterprise. He boldly enumerates four species of the vice, and says that all of them, in addition to bestiality, are very common among confessors and penitents, monks and acolytes, and so on. Many rectors of churches are so lenient, he complains, that they refuse to punish clerics unless they have committed pæderasty in the strict legal sense. The saint and cardinal does not shrink from suggesting a penalty for each crime, even specifying the case of a bishop and an animal. The ordinary monk or cleric should be publicly flogged, shaved, and spat upon, and then imprisoned for six months. The leniency of the penalty, comparatively to the rest of medieval jurisprudence, is not without significance.

But all the efforts of Peter Damiani and his master, Hildebrand, were unsuccessful from the moral point of view, however much they succeeded from the ecclesiastical standpoint. The official suppression of priestly marriage led to more secret vice than ever, and the impulse which Hildebrand gave to the "finding" of relics, in which he was

an unrivalled expert, had evil consequences. The very centre of their work, Rome, relapsed into its worst ways. "During the three centuries that lie between Arnold of Brescia [1155] and Porcaro," says Mr. Bryce, "the disorders of Rome were hardly less violent than they had been in the Dark Ages, and to all appearance worse than those of any other European city." He should have said "four" centuries instead of "three," for his period closes just at the beginning of one of the foulest centuries in papal history.

All over Christendom there was still appalling corruption. Apologists press on us the saintliness of St. Bernard and his monks in France. But contemporary writers like Cardinal de Vitry, Ordericus Vitalis, and Abélard uniformly give us a shocking picture of the state of France at the time. Unnatural vice was so flagrant at Paris that the canons had to be prohibited from lodging students, and Cardinal de Vitry tells how harlots openly carried off clerics on the street, and accused of a worse vice clerics who refused to go with them. "The clergy," says the cardinal, "saw no sin in simple fornication."[1] Abélard says that "nearly all the monasteries" of France were corrupt; Cardinal Jacques says that no nunneries in France, except those of the Cistercians (his own order),

[1] I am quoting directly from his *Historia Occidentalis*. Curiously, these are almost the words that Dean Church applies with horror to the pagans.

were "fit for an honest woman to live in." The chronicles swarm with stories of clerical and conventual vice.

In the thirteenth century we have the preaching of St. Francis, St. Antony, St. Dominic, and a remarkable number of saintly men. May we assume that at last religion has curbed the passions of humanity? Mr. Cotter Morison, who has made a close study of its morals, says: "On the contrary, it was an age of violence, fraud, and impurity, such as can hardly be conceived now." In the diary of the Archbishop of Rouen we have a contemporary picture of clerical morals that could not be much worse. In 1225 we find the pope denouncing the "shameless licentiousness" of the Scotch clergy, and the English were hardly better. We find a vessel containing three hundred prostitutes sent out to the French soldiers who are rescuing the Holy Sepulchre from the defilement of the Saracen. In the schools we find the grossest questions discussed, and the casuists busy in determining how many men a woman must admit to be classed as a prostitute—one put the number at 23,000. We find a pope decreeing severe punishments for the youths who burn the doors of prostitutes at Rome. We find such gross customs in places as that, if one woman calls another by that ugly name, she shall walk in the public procession in her smock, while the injured one follows with a needle.

By the end of the thirteenth century the Church

succeeded in suppressing the marriages of priests, monks, and nuns, and we need little historical proof of the result. Infanticide in nunneries, incest in presbyteries, and pæderasty in monasteries increased. The Church, says Mr. Lea, "sank deeper and deeper into the mire of corruption." Mr. Cotter Morison finds the fourteenth a century of "extraordinary license and crime." For two centuries more the legislation of the Church reflects the depravity of the clergy. Laymen begin the practice of compelling their priests to have a concubine, for their own protection; secular and ecclesiastical authorities reap a rich harvest in licenses and fines—though, according to a clause in a Concordat with Francis I., half a ducat (5s.) covers the crime of incest with mother or sister. Spanish authorities find that the unmarried have as many children as the married in their country. In France, Germany, and Austria we read of proceedings that can hardly be equalled in pre-Christian Rome, especially in connection with prostitution. In France a brothel came to be spoken of familiarly as an "abbey." At Toulouse the authorities and the university conjointly own the "Grand Abbaye," and apply its profits to public purposes. Unable to repress unruly youths from annoying the inmates, they apply to Charles X., who, solemnly repeating the name "abbey," sternly reproves these youths, who "do not show the fear of God." In 1421 the Venetian authorities instal

one in order to "preserve the purity of their town." At Geneva the magistrates genially chose each year the queen of the *filles*.[1] There are civic brothels at Würtzburg, Nürnberg, Ulm, Leipzig, Cologne, Frankfort, and other places. When King Ladislas enters Vienna in 1452 the municipality send out to meet him a troop of women dressed only in gauze; when the Emperor Charles II. visits Bruges he is greeted by a similar troop of these picked women, without the gauze. The devout French statesman Gerson, seriously suggests that Rome should recognise a system of organised concubinage for the clergy as the lesser of two evils.

But Rome, enriching herself with indulgences and licenses and simony, remained habitually at a low level, and in the fifteenth century sank deeper than ever. From 1464 to the Reformation and counter-Reformation the papacy was hopelessly debauched, and cast a shadow over the whole of Christendom. Pope after pope openly wantoned at the Vatican, amassed immense sums by simony, and pursued a cynical and sanguinary policy in Italy. I have said enough about them in the previous chapter. The supreme domination of Catholicism in Europe came to a tragic end with Leo X., a man of odious character, unscrupulous and unbounded simony, and not even a serious belief in the doctrines of his Church.

[1] See Rabutasse, *Histoire de la Prostitution,* and Bebel's *Woman.*

It would, however, be an error to suppose that either Reformation or counter-Reformation wrought a moral revolution in Europe. Luther rejected the clerical restrictions on sexual intercourse, and so wiped off much of the disgrace of clerical depravity; but lay virtue was little improved, while the religious wars let loose a flood of violence and vice. When Alva took the field in the Netherlands with 10,000 men, they were officially accompanied by 400 women on horse and 800 on foot. The troops of the Covenanters in Scotland are heavily indicted, and even unnatural vice grew to a terrible extent there in the days of its strictest Calvinism. "Culprits of all ages," we are told, "from boys to old men, are heard of every few months as burned upon the Castle Hill at Edinburgh."[1] Nor will anyone seek an exemplary morality in England under the Stuarts, or in the France of Richelieu and Mazarin and Louis XIV.

We are thus brought to the eighteenth century without discovering in Europe at large that remarkable change of morals which is so widely fancied to have taken place. Except in certain narrow areas of Europe which are influenced for a brief period by a St. Augustine, St. Boniface, or St. Francis, there is little change in the sex-habits of

[1] See Mr. C. Morison's *Service of Man,* ch. vi., for details and authorities. The author institutes a comparison in vice with Spain, which will check any tendency of the Catholic to scoff. See also Buckle on both countries.

men. There is, indeed, the added abomination of a priesthood professing high ideals and exhibiting so profound and widespread a depravity. I have as far as possible taken general and authoritative indications, instead of merely enlarging on individual cases—as is the fashion of apologists—and I leave it to the reader to consider whether much advance had been made in sexual morality, the point on which the greatest stress is laid, since the days of the Antonines or the fourth century. And it must be remembered that violence, cruelty, and roguery prevailed in equal proportion; and that those northern barbarians who are made the scapegoats of medieval vice did not bring loose habits, but exceedingly strict principles on sexual matters, into the countries they conquered.

I leave out of consideration the morals of the eighteenth century. Thackeray, who knew them, says: "You could no more suffer in a British drawing-room, under the reign of Queen Victoria, a fine lady or a fine gentleman of Queen Anne's time, or hear what they heard and said, than you would receive an ancient Briton." We may guess, if we do not know, what the "lower orders" were like.[1] In France, under Louis XIV. and Louis XV., with the *parc-aux-cerfs* at Versailles,

[1] As I have quoted elsewhere, Sir W. Besant says: "For drunkenness, brutality, and ignorance, the Englishmen of the baser kind reached the lowest depth ever reached by civilised man."

we shall not look for anything better, except in refinement of vice; nor can Italy, Austria, or Spain claim superiority. We may pass at once to the close of the eighteenth century, and we shall then see that more moral progress, in every sense of the word (and especially in its better senses), has been made in the nineteenth century than in any five preceding centuries.

It is impossible to take a single point of public or personal morality in which our age is not far superior to the age of the Georges. The jeremiads of rhetoricians like Dr. W. Barry are sheer rhetoric with no foundation in social facts. Because we now have an argus-eyed Press, with an army of ubiquitous reporters, there is infinitely more prominence given to disorder; yet the social student will find ample material for a comparison; and if the general reader will remember that the novels of Thackeray and Dickens are somewhat expurgated versions of Georgian life, he will have some notion of its coarseness. The head of the London police at the end of the eighteenth century has left us a picture of the metropolis from his professional point of view.[1] There were then, he says, 50,000 women and men living on prostitution in a population of 600,000, and we know what was

[1] Colquhoun's *Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis.* See also the introduction to Sir L. Stephen's *English Utilitarians,* Traill's *Social England,* and, for the working people, Ludlow and Jones's *Progress of the Working Classes.*

the laxity of the general population. There are now said to be about 25,000 in a population of 6,000,000, and there is nothing like the open parading of mistresses and general licence of that time. Ludlow and Jones say that "an almost general unchastity prevailed among the workers. Theft and robbery were organised on a colossal scale, some £1,200,000 worth of property being captured yearly in London alone." Drink, other writers tell us, was hardly looked upon as an evil in any class of the community. The gentry drank to intoxication habitually; the clergy were cynically divided into "one-bottle, two-bottle, and three-bottle" clergy; the workers bought beer from costers' barrows, or swarmed into public-houses that promised to make them "drunk for a penny, dead drunk for twopence." Gambling was carried on in every street by the poor, and ran to terrible excesses in the clubs of the wealthy. The Government made £260,000 a year by public lotteries. The "sports" of the time were correspondingly coarse, the ignorance of the poor and the apathy of the rich, the clergy, and the universities almost incredible. The prisons were dens of infamy and infection. There were 160 offences punishable with death, and it was regarded as a treat to go to witness the public executions of men, women, and youths. The country gentry, the peasantry, and the workers in the other towns of England and Scotland (which is described as worse than

England), were at the same low level of general morality.

We need not cross the Channel and inquire into the state of morality in France before the Revolution, or in Spain and Italy. Taking Europe as a whole, the nineteenth century opened with a general level of character that was little, if at all, above the general level in the Roman Empire in the second or the fourth centuries. We have seen how Dr. Dill, in seeking for a social parallel to pagan life in its last (the fourth) century, chooses the Georgian days as the best available. That is a singular, though unconscious, commentary on the clerical claim to have introduced a "new morality" and to have gradually lifted the moral level of the world. When we remember how much progress was made in the later pagan days, and what promise the development of Stoicism and of the better Eastern religions held out to Europe, we cannot but be disappointed at the subsequent deep degeneration and slow recovery of character.

To those clerical writers who ask us to regard the progress made in the nineteenth century as due to Christianity it is difficult to give a serious reply. Religious belief has been notoriously enfeebled on the one hand; and, on the other, the spread of education, the scientific study of crime and the reform of the law and police, the admission of the workers to political responsibility, the public provision of literature, and of museums of science and

art, the great extension and improvement of the Press, and the growth of a powerful body of critics of the clergy and independent moralists, are quite enough to account for the advance. We prefer Dean Church's honourable admission that many of the "great and salutary results" of our time—he enumerates "justice, honesty, humanity, honour, the love of truth, and that moderation in word and act which is so akin to truth"—seem to have been "brought about without calling on the religious principle." The contradictions of our apologists are enough to confirm this. While some, like Pius X., rail against our age as an age in which "man has put himself in the place of God," and which is "reeling into the abyss," others, with Dr. Fairbairn, regard it as the true age of Christian influence. The impartial onlooker will see where the truth lies between the two schools. It is, in Mazzini's words, "the age of humanity," and the most promising and aspiring age the sun has yet looked down on.

I cannot close without a reference to the light phrase that still trips from tongue to tongue, and that lately has been uttered by a historian like Mr. Bryce in the House of Commons, that the Bible is "the source of England's greatness." Possibly the present and the preceding chapters will afford the reader material enough to appraise

that statement at its real value, but a further word will not be superfluous.

What do we mean by England's greatness? The question will be a novel one to many who habitually and ardently quote the phrase about the Bible, and probably a little clear analysis of that point alone would check their eloquence. On reflection we shall find that four chief distinctions go to make up the position we undoubtedly hold among the greatest nations of the modern world. We have vast extent of empire, a high position in industry and commerce, resulting in great wealth, considerable distinction in science, art, and letters, and a comparatively equitable system of political and juridical life. When these qualities are studied separately it is at once seen how stupid is the attempt to connect them with our national religion. The confusion is a simple instance of the common fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc:* we became great after we became Christian, *therefore* the one change is the cause of the other.

Who will seriously hold that the men who "made the Empire" owed their success in their peculiar line to Biblical inspiration? The process was one, on the whole, that is totally incompatible not merely with the Sermon on the Mount, but with the more sober morality of the New Testament. It was a process of conquest in most cases based on the abominable medieval idea that non-Christian natives had no rights. How did we

come to annex India? But we need not go into details. Our soldiers and sailors worked on the same strength and the same impulses as their Saxon and Danish and Norman ancestors did before they knew anything of the Bible, the same as Alexander, or Cæsar, or Hadrian, or any other world-conqueror: impulses that are condemned by the New Testament.

It would be no less ridiculous to ascribe our pre-eminence in industry and commerce and national wealth to Biblical influence. Rome had achieved all this, as Babylon, Persia, Egypt, and Greece had done before it, without any religious assistance. The religion of their merchants had as little to do with their mercantile instincts and successes as ours had. It is true that they were often very religious men—remember Sir John Hawkins and his ship *Jesus* making a huge fortune in the slave trade—but, in so far as it affected their operations, it was happily a very heterodox religion. Must we attribute it to religion that between 1757 and 1815 we took out of India, in the form of pure loot, property that is valued at between 500 and 1,000 million sterling? Must we ascribe to religious influence the vast wealth piled up in the early decades of the nineteenth century, when our cotton-spinners, buying slave-grown cotton, worked women and children for twelve, fourteen, and even sixteen hours a day, and wrought fearful moral havoc among them?

The claim breaks up no less speedily when we consider our distinction in art, science, and letters. Is the literary splendour of the Elizabethan age due to a momentary glow of religious fervour any more than its naval and commercial greatness? Have our English artists found much inspiration in Biblical ideas? Is our imposing success in scientific research an outcome of religious feeling or clerical patronage? What was the experience of Roger Bacon, who is now preferred to Francis Bacon? How much influence had Biblical ideas on the work of Lyell, Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, and Spencer, on Hume, Gibbon, Adam Smith, and Bentham, or even on the *scientific* activity of Faraday, Herschel, or Kelvin?

But it is probable that the average man who talks of the "greatness of England" is thinking confusedly of just these elements—territorial expansion, national wealth, and distinguished scholarship—and it is certainly these that put us among "the great Powers of the world." There remains the question of political, colonial, and juridical administration, the boast that England is a land of justice and liberty. Comparatively, it is a sound boast; though there are many opinions as to what the twenty-fifth century will think of us. But, once more, progress in these respects has little or nothing to do with religion. The official interpreters of the Bible in this country, as in every other, have never inaugurated one great reform in

the long list of those that have been carried in our history. From Magna Charta in 1215 to the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832 political liberty has been won by the politically oppressed; and not because they accepted the Sermon on the Mount, but because they violently dissented from it. How many reforms were granted—without pressure—from a mere sense of justice in rulers, which is all that the Christian religion could claim to inspire? For how many ages has the Church stood between rulers and ruled, and had no word but "patience" to the ruled? How many clergymen protested against the barbarities of "justice" through the Middle Ages, or the infamy of prisons down to the time of Elizabeth Fry?

Mr. Bryce has given in the quietness of his study a better key to the greatness of England than the one he offered in the demoralising atmosphere of the House of Commons. He has spoken in his *Holy Roman Empire* of "that mutual knowledge and co-operation [of nations] which is the condition, if it be not the source, of all true culture and progress." That is the key to the progress of Europe, and the comparative stillness of China and Japan until lately. Europe was fertilised by the experience of six great empires when our modern civilisation grew out of it. Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, and Persia bequeathed their experience to Greece and Rome, and these transmitted the elaborated outcome to Europe. The real problem of the historian is,

why there ever was a Dark Age in Europe, why its civilisation grew so slowly. And for the more recent period, the period of ascent, we have the great and pregnant fact—besides the Saracen impulse and the Renaissance—of there being ten powerful, hostile, independent nations, in constant intercommunication and rivalry, within the limits of Christendom. These conditions were bound to stimulate advance. Possibly the material presented in this little work, scanty as it is, on account of the strict limitations of a popular study, will help the reader to understand why the advance was so slow and so chequered.

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WATTS AND CO., PRINTERS, 17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.