THE GREATEST OF ILLUSIONS."

1/6 NET

CHRISTIANITY AND CONDUCT;

OR,

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ON MORALS

By HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER

THIS valuable handbook treats of the general relation of morality to religion both in civilized countries and primitive tribes, and examines the influence of Christianity on the principal aspects of human life. Mr. Adam Gowans Whyte contributes a brightly written and appreciative Foreword.

LONDON: WATTS & CO.

THE

RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, Ltd.

Secretary and Registered Offices:

CHARLES T. GORHAM, Nos. 5 & 6 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.

THE minimum subscription to constitute Membership is 5s., renewable in January of each year.

A form of application for Membership, with full particulars, including latest Annual Report and specimen copy of the *Literary Guide* (the unofficial organ of the Association), can be obtained gratis on application to the Secretary, Charles T. Gorham, Nos. 5 and 6 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.

Copies of new publications are forwarded regularly on account of Members' subscriptions, or a Member can arrange to make his own selection from the lists of new books which are issued from time to time.

To join the Association is to help on its work, but to subscribe liberally is of course to help more effectually. As Subscribers of from 5s. to 10s. and more are entitled to receive back the whole value of their subscriptions in books, on which there is little if any profit made, the Association is dependent, for the capital required to carry out its objects, upon subscriptions of a larger amount and upon donations and bequests.

"*Lucid, well arranged, concise, suggestive discussion.*"—DAILY HERALD.

THE INQUIRER'S LIBRARY.

Each 160 pp.: cloth, 1s. 3d. net, by post 1s. 6d. The 5 vols. post free to any Inland address 6s. 9d. (foreign 7s. 3d.).

THE INQUIRER'S LIBRARY is intended to fill an acknowledged gap in advanced literature. There is no such thing in English as a series of handy and easily purchasable volumes dealing with the fundamental issues of religious controversy. The inquirer who would meet the arguments of his neighbour has to roam through many large volumes in search of the answer. The new "Library" deals concisely with various leading issues, and forms a brief cyclopædia of researches thereon. It contains historical sketches of the development of religions and sects, and replies to all current arguments of supernaturalists.

ALREADY ISSUED.

No. 1.—THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. By Joseph McCabe.

No. 2.—THE BELIEF IN PERSONAL IMMORTALITY. By E. S. P. Haynes.

No. 3.—THE OLD TESTAMENT. By Chilperic Edwards.

No. 4.—CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILIZATION. By Charles T. Gorham.

No. 5.—THE NEW TESTAMENT. By F. J. Gould.

London: WATTS & CO., 17 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, E.C.4.

CHRISTIANITY AND CONDUCT;

OR,

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ON MORALS

BY

HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER

With Foreword by ADAM GOWANS WHYTE

LONDON:
WATTS & CO.,
17 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.4.
1919

Issued for the
RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LIMITED.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

THERE is much wisdom in fairy tales, but in none are the humour and the insight which go to make wisdom more conspicuous than in Hans Andersen's story of "The Emperor's New Clothes." The Prime Minister, the Lords of the Bed-Chamber, the courtiers, and the sovereign people themselves united in praising the beauty and magnificence of garments which had no existence. Not until a positive, unsophisticated vision had been turned upon the illusion was the Emperor's nakedness declared.

A similar illusion has long existed about Christianity as an institution. Historians, philosophers, divines, novelists, poets, and journalists have for centuries described Christianity as the one perfect blessing conferred on mankind. Before the Christian Church came into being as a spiritual, social, and political force, the world was sunk in darkness and degradation; to that Church we owe the dawn of true morality, the beginning of freedom for body and soul, and every manifestation of the good, true, and beautiful in human life. Progress apart from Christianity is unimaginable. Take away the foundations of the Christian creed or the pillars of the Christian Church, and the world will sink into the utter barbarism from which Christianity raised it.

Such is the thesis expounded with so much unanimity

and persistence that it has become a prime article of belief with almost every man, woman, and child in Christian countries. Even those who reject Christian theology have an apparently instinctive conviction that Christianity has been the one pellucid well-spring of virtue, happiness, and progress. Into this benevolent conspiracy of illusion Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's book comes as an envoy in the cause of truth. It examines the actual record of Christianity as an organization, in the evolution of moral codes, in the history of slavery, in war and persecution, in the development of liberty, in the treatment of women and children, and in the growth of human brotherhood. The evidence is drawn from many countries, and from every epoch in the history of Christianity; it is both indisputable and typical; and its cumulative force must, in every mind capable of seeing things as they are, sweep away for ever the false assertions and the dishonest concealments with which Christian apologists have induced the world to believe in the divine excellence of their system.

When we look back upon the history of Christianity, upon the perpetual and bloody wars of religion, upon the bitter and abominable persecution of heretics, upon the melancholy procession of martyrs, upon the organized suppression of secular knowledge, and upon the Church's desperate opposition to every movement of human emancipation, it seems astounding that sensible men should ever clothe that institution in garments of white and gold. Their hallucination is due, however, to the subtle manner in which, from early childhood, they have been led to look away from the truth.

In the following pages their vision is corrected by facts which are not only illuminating in themselves, but will serve to bring into the light many corroborative events whose significance in the indictment of Christianity was formerly overlooked.

There is one count in the indictment with which Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner does not deal. It is outside even the comprehensive scope of her book, because it deals not with history, but rather with the private side of life. I mean the element of discord, of antagonism in families and among friends, introduced by the faith which was alleged to unite mankind in perfect harmony. We may count the victims of religious wars and massacres; we may estimate the dreadful total of murdered heretics; we may follow the red trail of the Church through the course of nations; but who can form any conception of the unrecorded misery, the dismal and degrading passion, the envy, malice, and all uncharitableness created among multitudes of ordinary men and women in the name of Christianity?

I am sure that no one can read these vivid and informative pages without a salutary clearing of the mental horizon. They are destructive of the greatest of illusions. Nevertheless, coming back to the fairy-tale, it must not be forgotten that, after the child declared that the Emperor had no clothes on him, the royal procession went forward as before, and the Lords of the Bed-Chamber took more pains than ever to pretend that they were holding up a magnificent train.

ADAM GOWANS WHYTE.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

How long wilt thou delay to hold thyself worthy of the best things, and to transgress in nothing the decrees of Reason? Thou hast received the maxims by which it behoves thee to live; and dost live by them? What teacher dost thou still look for? Thou art no longer a boy, but already a man full grown.....Therefore hold thyself worthy to live as a man of full age and one who is pressing forward, and let everything that appeareth the best be to thee as an inviolable law. And if any toil or pleasure or reputation or the loss of it be laid upon thee, remember that now is the contest, here already are the Olympian games; there is no deferring them any longer; in a single day and in a single trial ground is to be lost or gained.

It was thus that Socrates made himself what he was—in all things that befell him having regard to no other thing than Reason. But thou, albeit thou be yet no Socrates, yet as one who would be Socrates, so it behoveth thee to live. EPICTETUS.

THE relation which religion[1] bears to morality is constantly talked about by religious people and discussed among Rationalists. A discrimination must be made between the two methods of dealing with this important subject; for, while Rationalists endeavour to trace the weight and extent of the influence of religious beliefs upon ethics, religious people base all they have to say upon the assumption that religion is necessary to morality, and that there can be no morality without religion. They

[1] Throughout these pages the word "religion" is used in the generally accepted sense of implying a belief in a Supreme Being, or deity or deities, and not in any special sense which dispenses with that belief.

do not discuss; they assert. They do not inquire; they are satisfied that they know without inquiry.

Nor does their claim rest there. Not merely do they say that religion is necessary to morality, but they insist that it is their particular religion which holds the saving grace. At any time the ordinary Christian may be heard speaking slightingly of a morality based upon Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, or Mohammedanism; to him the only true key to morals is that forged in the Christian workshop. Among Christians themselves there is a still closer winnowing, for each church and sect is apt upon occasion to scout the morality taught by the others. When, at the Convocation of Calcutta University, held in 1905, the Christian Viceroy, Lord Curzon, grossly offended his Hindu hearers by claiming the highest ideal of truth as to a large extent a Western conception, he overlooked the fact that the morality of Western peoples is professedly based upon Eastern religious precepts. The missionaries of the China Inland Mission do not appear to have had a very high opinion of Western morality when they accused the Roman Catholic priests of being secret, arrogant, and unscrupulous, and indirectly, if not directly, responsible for the Boxer rising.[1] Nor had Father Vaughan when, while claiming Ireland, "the most Catholic country in the world," as the home of the pure and the brave, he denounced Protestant English society as, at best, poor and paltry, and, at worst, lying, vicious, and diabolical;[2] nor had the Churchman who, at a ruridecanal conference, stigmatized the Nonconformist chapels scattered about the country as emblems of division and monuments of sin.[3]

[1] *A Thousand Miles of Miracle in China*, by the Rev. A. E. Glover (1906), p. 8.
[2] *Daily News*, March 11, 1907.
[3] *Church Times*, November 10, 1911.

The good or evil influence of religion upon morals, upon the formation of character, is a subject which all students of ethics from the Rationalist point of view are bound to examine as critically and at the same time as dispassionately as they can. Were they ever so disposed to ignore it, they could not, for it is continually forced upon their attention. They could not forget it if they would, for year after year books are turned out by the score, newspaper and magazine articles by the hundred, and sermons by the thousand, wearisomely reiterating the assertion that religion is necessary to morality. So far as these writers and preachers are labouring in the interests of religion rather than morality, they can hardly be blamed for their persistency, since their only hope of keeping life in decaying creeds lies in tacking them on to the skirts of morality. If they placed morality above religion instead of religion above morality, they would be less positive and more inquiring. As it is, they continue positive; to all appearances blind and deaf to the lessons which experience is daily teaching to those who can see and hear.

Prior to the War, for example, it was a commonplace with the ordinary religious person that crime was on the increase in the colony of Victoria, where, since 1892, education has been purely secular. This accusation has been again and again repudiated by indignant Victorians, not only as untrue, but as the very reverse of truth; and they have pointed to their official statistics to show that not only had crime and drunkenness decreased to a remarkable extent, but that the proportion of offences to the number of the population in Victoria compared very favourably with that of New South Wales, where religious instruction is given in the schools each day either by a minister of religion or by a substitute appointed by him. Similar charges were brought against

New Zealand, and were similarly repudiated. It is hardly necessary to point out that secular education was introduced into Victoria and New Zealand, not because there was any preponderance of Freethinkers in these colonies, but because the bitterness of sectarian strife left no other alternative to those who had the interests of the children at heart.

Among the clergy the idea of a similar system of secular education in England is bitterly resisted. "When they saw the condition of education in France and in some parts of Australia they could not but fear what might happen in England," said the Bishop of Lincoln in 1905. A little later the Archbishop of Canterbury, addressing a great meeting of Church people at Swansea, said that "What they dreaded beyond all words was the growth of secularism in their schools. They had in some of their Colonies and in America object lessons which to the thoughtful man were full of significance—a condition of things where in the elementary schools religion was the one thing not taught." In a country parish magazine for July, 1910, one excitable writer even went so far as to declare that "to deprive a child of definite religious teaching is to inflict upon it a deadly wrong, compared with which the horrors of infant labour in factories or coal pit shrink into comparative insignificance. The physical deterioration produced by unhealthy surroundings and work unsuited to a child's years cannot be compared with the injury inflicted on character by the lack of definite religious teaching."

Of France, where a system of secular education was established in 1886, nothing used to be too hard to say. Even Mr. D. C. Lathbury,[1] arguing in favour of the adoption of secularism in the State schools of England

[1] *Times*, August 10, 1910.

(which he regarded as inevitable, "not on its merits, but as the sole refuge from the educational strife of tongues"), condemned continental secularism because, he said, "it sets up a system of morals which has nothing in common with the Christian system." Right up to the summer of 1914 we were constantly asked by pious persons, What else but depravity could be expected in a nation whose children were brought up without knowledge of God? After August, 1914, the system under which the youth of the various countries of the Allies have been educated was never mentioned. The gallantry of the Victorian and New Zealand soldiers is unquestioned, while the high qualities shown by the French—soldiers and civilians alike—their restraint, unyielding determination, cheerful devotion, and self-sacrifice, have been warmly recognized and commended. The fine temper and high moral qualities so conspicuous in the France of 1914–1918 were the product of the secular schools, and form a marked contrast to the France of 1870–1871, when religious instruction was the rule.

In Germany, under the Empire, no moral instruction was permitted in the schools which was not based upon religion. Some years ago a teacher, Fraulein Ida Altmann, was punished by imprisonment because, in spite of prohibition, she persisted in giving moral instruction upon a secular basis. In a speech delivered at the centenary celebrations in 1913 at the Friedrich Wilhelm University the Kaiser attributed the greatness of the Prussian people to the fact that it based its moral view of life on religion; he said that the visible proofs vouchsafed them of the governance of God furnished a shield of faith which must never be lacking in the armoury of Germans and Prussians.[1] The German Chancellor,

[1] *Times*, March 10, 1913.

Dr. Michaelis, was a member of the German Association for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, and reputedly one of the most religious of men. So far, however, from acknowledging the Christian basis of German morality, pious English Christians wilfully blinded themselves to the facts, and loudly proclaimed that the War and its barbarities were the outcome of German Materialism and German Atheism due to the German system of education.[1] Even so great an educational authority as Sir Philip Magnus, representative in Parliament of the University of London, when speaking on the second reading of the Education Bill in March, 1918, and expressing the opinion that the great element in the shaping of character must be derived from the religious motive, did not hesitate to declare that this opinion was strengthened by "our unhappy and painful experience of the barbarous and immoral acts perpetrated by our German enemies, who had been reared in schools..... which have been bereft of the higher sanction which religion gives to conduct." The facts were easily accessible to Sir Philip Magnus; he ought to have known that religious teaching was compulsory in the German schools. If he did not know, his lapse is hardly less serious.

It has been roundly asserted that people who do not believe in the immortality of the soul are inveterate criminals, kept in restraint only by the law. It is always something to be kept in restraint if only by the law, for an inquiry into the religious beliefs of the population of our gaols shows that there are a large number of people who do believe in the immortality of the soul whom the law itself is unable to restrain.

[1] See Tract No. 22 of the Secular Education League.

According to the religious census taken by the Home Office in 1913, out of 18,225 prisoners only 101 were persons without religious belief.

This blind reliance upon religion as an effective foundation for morality is found among all sorts and conditions of men. Lord Haldane (then Mr. Haldane), addressing the Committee appointed in 1906 to advise the Army Council in matters affecting the spiritual and moral welfare of the Army, said that "unless a man is capable of having kindled in him the sacred flame of religion he will not be a great leader, for it is religion which makes him forget himself and his individuality, and makes him conscious of the great realities when he is face to face with death." Alexander and Akbar were great leaders, but it is doubtful whether the Paganism of the former or the extremely tolerant Mohammedanism of the latter would commend itself to a British Army Council as "religion." Lady St. Helier, in a book entitled *Memories of Fifty Years*, tells a story of a dinner-party given at her house at which Lord Goschen, Sir J. F. Stephen, Sir Henry Maine, Mr. W. E. Forster, and Mr. Froude were present. During the evening the conversation drifted from politics to religion, and more particularly upon the influence of a belief in immortality. Mr. Forster vehemently maintained that "a belief in a future state was the pivot on which all conduct depended, and that but for that belief life would be a hideous mockery, and there would be no reason for any morality or any high standard of life." The argument was so engrossing that it was carried on until the small hours of the morning; and then Mr. Forster, who was apparently in the minority, on rising to go, said to the others: "Well, if I thought as you do, I would not care to live another hour, for I can honestly say I have acted all through my life in the firm belief in a future state, and but for that

belief I should not have had the courage to face life, its difficulties, and tribulations."[1]

Mr. W. E. Forster sat in the House of Commons during that six years of struggle when Charles Bradlaugh fought for religious liberty and the rights of constituencies to send their duly elected members to Parliament, and the morality of that struggle was certainly not on the side of those who professed a belief in immortality. Hundreds of millions of people are born into the world who have no belief in a future state as the pivot upon which all conduct depends; yet they face life, its difficulties, and tribulations without the least consciousness of any need for special courage. Mr. Forster, without doubt, spoke quite sincerely, fully believing what he said; but his words prove that he had never brought his belief to the bar of reason, or tried to understand the real motives which guided his conduct. He was, in fact, a better man than he knew.

[1] *Memories of Fifty Years*, by Lady St. Helier (1909), p. 175. Mr. W. E. Forster was of Quaker ancestry and training, but he was apparently of the same mind as the Spanish prelates who wrote in November, 1909, to their Prime Minister praying for the suppression of lay and neutral schools, arguing that "to teach morals without religion would be to attempt to build a house without foundations. As man is naturally inclined to evil, he requires a belief in an eternal reward and punishment if he is to keep within the narrow limits of duty and walk in the arduous paths of virtue. If he were not taught to respect the authority of God, it would be vain to expect him to respect any other if such respect entailed sacrifices and privations. The power of State and private interest would be the only means of bridling his passions." Ruskin, on the other hand, was convinced that a disbelief in immortality demanded higher standards of conduct. Those who looked forward to a state of infinite existence in which all their errors were overruled and all their faults forgiven might be excused for wrong-doing in this life, but those who had no such hope had no excuse. He said plainly that he regarded it as "a sign of the last depravity in the Church itself when it assumes that such a belief ["in death"—*i.e.*, without belief in a future life] is inconsistent with either purity of character or energy of hand." (*The Crown of Wild Olive*, Introduction, pp. 13–16.)

The case of Mr. Forster illustrates the great difficulty too often found with the "true" believer; neither argument nor experience makes any impression upon his mind; he is cased in an armour which no ordinary weapon can pierce. Instead of thinking, he believes; instead of criticizing, he lives in a fairyland of faith.

In exploring the field of religion and ethics, Rationalists are usually content to argue that the problems grouped under this head belong either to religion or to ethics, which may and do interact, but which are fundamentally distinct; that, so far from being one and indivisible, they are two and separate—so far from being interdependent, they are essentially independent; that you can have religion without morality, and morality without religion; that morality relates to this life, and is concerned with the conduct of man towards man, while religion relates to some other life, of which we have no information, and is concerned with the conduct of man towards a deity or deities, of whom we have no knowledge.[1] This broadly represents the Rationalist position, but in some quarters a strong feeling is growing up that it is no longer sufficient to be content with a purely defensive attitude, and

[1] Professor Flinders Petrie (*Religion and Commerce in Ancient Egypt*, p. 13) unhesitatingly declares that morality is not an integral part of religion; that right and wrong do not enter into the circle of the religious ideas of most races. In defining religion he says: "The act of belief in what is not provable to the senses is the very basis and limiting boundary of all religions." The distinction between morality and religion is indeed so fundamental that it is sometimes inadvertently admitted even by Christian writers. "True morality," says the Rev. Prof. Momerie (*Agnosticism and Other Sermons*, p. 281), "is devotion of the soul to goodness; true religion is devotion of the soul to God." As an example of genuine morality Professor Momerie cites Socrates; as an example of genuine religion he mentions the Apostles. Not a few high-minded persons would prefer the Rationalist Socrates, to whom principle was everything, to any of the Apostles individually or collectively.

that in the interests of clear thinking and right conduct the argument should be carried further. This has already been done to a certain extent by the Encyclopædists of the eighteenth century and by later writers; but to-day, with the aid of the data laboriously collected and placed before the world by Professors Tylor, Westermarck, Frazer, Hobhouse, and other great writers and thinkers, we can examine in detail the general influence of religion upon morals in a manner impossible to our predecessors even of a generation ago. We can show that not only is religion unnecessary to morality, but that as a basis it is confused, obscure, and unstable; that it is frequently a hindrance to true morality, and that not infrequently it is actually conducive to immorality.[1]

It is not for one moment suggested that the influence of religious belief upon ethics has been at all times and everywhere wholly evil. That would be absurd. Religions are just what men have made them, and such ethics as they teach, if any, were the accepted ethics, real or ideal, of the particular age in which their sacred books were compiled, or in which their sacred traditions became crystallized into a more or less permanent shape. Consequently we find in them, as we should expect, much that is beautiful and much that is ugly, some things which are wise and many which are foolish. But, whatever may be the value of any particular precept it may advocate, the influence of religion upon

[1] "The difference [between religion and morality] is this—the moral man, following laws which he believes to be ascertained and continually tested by their effect upon human welfare, seldom goes astray far or for a long time. Whereas the religious man, believing that he is obeying the positive commands of a Deity, or is securing his own welfare or possibly that of others after death (points which cannot be ascertained or tested), may be, and often has been, led into extravagancies of conceit, pride, folly, and cruelty, which bring mankind into degradation and misery." (Lord Hobhouse, *Memoir*, p. 248.)

ethics is, on the whole, bad. Its influence is bad because it places duty to a god or gods higher than duty to man; responsibility to the supernatural higher than responsibility to society. All human obligation is made a secondary consideration, gods and priests intervene between man and man, and ethical teaching becomes submerged in a mass of rites and ceremonies, or is lost in the strife of warring dogmas.

Christianity, for example, took over the ethical ideas taught in earlier ages and joined on to them the unethical doctrines of reward and punishment in a life after death, and a repentance which wipes out all sin and qualifies the sinner for eternal happiness, however far-reaching and enduring may be the unhappiness of others arising out of his misdeeds.[1] To these were added dogmas concerning an impossible Trinity, predestination, election, virgin birth, and endless other essentials to salvation. Moreover, Christian public opinion is far more indulgent to the transgression of ethical precepts than to the transgression of religious practices. A man may grow rich by

[1] Professor Jowett, in his prelude to Plato's *Phædo*, says (sect. 21): "The other ethical proof of the immortality of the soul [given in the *Phædo*] is derived from the necessity of retribution. The wicked would be too well off if their evil deeds came to an end." This "ethical proof" is no proof; nor is it, so far as the Christian doctrine is concerned, ethical. There are degrees of wickedness in this life, but in the Christian after-life there is only one degree of punishment; and even that punishment may be averted by repentance. "I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." Repentance provides a clean slate for the sinner, but it leaves the sinner's victims with their wounds unhealed. This doctrine of the Christian Scriptures which places a higher value upon the duty of repentance than upon the duty of refraining from conduct needing repentance is believed by the majority of Christians to be an essential part of Christianity. Judged by the ordinary critical standards of the plain man rather than by religious standards, the influence of a teaching which ranks "joy in heaven" higher than rectitude on earth is absolutely opposite to ethics.

grinding the faces of the poor, and every door will be open to him; but let him wear his old clothes and work in his garden on Sunday instead of putting on a silk hat and going to church or chapel, and he will soon find a black mark against his name, especially if he happens to be a candidate for some public office.[1]

[1] In some parts of the country this intolerant reprobation of Sunday labour on the land even extended to the emergency cultivation of allotments in war time. In 1917 a prolonged and heated controversy took place on the subject in the *Southampton Times*, and the Bible was ransacked for handy texts. When the swarm of caterpillars came in the late spring of the year, it was hailed by the pious as a "judgment for man's iniquity and disobedience." In 1918 the Thrapston Parish Council solemnly carried a resolution ("nem. dis.") disapproving of the spraying of potatoes by the Allotments Association on Sunday.

Chapter II

MORAL CODES

At its best religious belief is wholly unnecessary to sound ethics; at its worst it is a distinctly corrupting influence. It follows therefore that a people without any religion at all would stand a far better chance of being a really moral people than those whose conduct is controlled by their religion. This does not mean that a man without religion is therefore necessarily a moral man. It takes a great deal more than absence of religion to make a man moral. "Unfortunately, neither orthodoxy nor heterodoxy has any exclusive patent for monopoly of rascals."[1] But this at least may be said, and said emphatically: a man without religion is free to base his ethics upon the rational foundation of human need and human welfare with a completeness impossible to the man whose thoughts and acts are in bondage to his religion.

In the very nature of the case it is difficult for individuals living in a society which professes to found its morality upon religion, and which is hourly claiming Divine sanction or reprobation for its acts, to escape religious influence altogether; they can do so only by keeping their minds clear of the prepossessions and prejudices of their environment, and by seeking to understand the real basis of the moral ideas by which their conduct should be ruled. Even primitive people are not always free from the influence of religion, or "a sort of religion,"

[1] Lord Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopædists* (1884), p. 98.

as Lord Halsbury might say. Primitive people are necessarily ignorant people; and ignorance breeds fear, and fear breeds gods. The savage conception of the supernatural is usually that of a malignant power to be conciliated, appeased, or deceived; and Ignorance and Fear are the first parents of nearly every religion in the world.

At one time it was a common assertion that there was absolutely no people in the world without a religion of some kind or another—meaning by religion a belief in a Supreme Being; and the alleged universality of the belief was triumphantly adduced as a proof of the existence of a Supreme Being. Modern investigations, however, show that there is no such universality of belief. On the other hand, it is quite certain that there is no people, no tribe, however small or however primitive, which is wholly without some more or less definite rules of conduct supported by the public opinion of the community. These rules constitute the tribal morality.

Morality is, in its very essence, a social virtue. It is, in fact, social virtue itself. An isolated person cast adrift utterly alone in the world, if one could conceive of such a case, might be a devoutly religious person, but he would be incapable of a moral or an immoral act. Morality does not concern a man's conduct in regard to himself by himself; but once his conduct touches directly or indirectly upon the welfare of another, even in the remotest degree, at that moment we get the moral act; and the ultimate foundation for the whole elaborate structure of morality is to be found in the extremely prosaic desire for self-preservation.

Thus the morals of a people are always governed to a greater or less extent by the conditions under which their social life has arisen, and consequently we find the

moral idea in its simplest form in the smallest and most primitive social groups. Take, for example, the forest or jungle peoples such as are to be found in Ceylon or other parts of the world where there are great forests. These people live alone in isolated family groups—husband, wife, and children. In summer they live in trees, in winter they build rude huts, or else they live in caves which may have to shelter two or three families, who yet manage to live independently of each other. Among these people there is a very simple form of morality, and immorality is rare. Among the well-known Veddahs of Ceylon we find very little religious belief; the nearest approach to it is a belief in the power of witchcraft to kill men or animals. Nevertheless, the Veddahs are described as a strictly truthful people;[1] to them it is perfectly inconceivable that any one should tell a lie. They are unaggressive; indeed, they fear strangers, although to a stranger in need they are hospitable and sympathetic. They have no class distinctions, no slavery, no war other than occasional fighting over the boundaries of their hunting grounds. They are averse to cruelty to animals, and are annoyed at the unnecessary slaughter of an animal. Their respect for the property of another is such that they will not take even the leaves of a banana tree without permission.[2] In fact, these people, living in the most primitive social groups, have such a reputation for simple virtue that they are sometimes spoken of as "Nature's gentlemen."

Passing to larger groups, we see men banded together into small communities, concerned only with the welfare of their own group and indifferent or actively hostile to

[1] This refers only to the primitive Veddahs of the forest, not the Veddahs met with at Colombo, who have been corrupted by contact with a "higher" civilization.

[2] Hobhouse's *Morals in Evolution*, I, pp. 42, 45.

all outside. With these morality becomes more complex, and two standards are developed—morality within and without the tribe. During the last few years we have heard a great deal about the Arctic Eskimos. These people are wonderfully amiable, and there is co-operation in all things necessary to life. When a seal is killed it is divided equally among the members, and no one dreams of seizing more than his share. In the ordinary way there is absolutely no surplus; therefore, if one habitually had more, others would have less than was necessary for subsistence; hence a cheerful communism is the rule. But as there are few rules without exceptions, sometimes there are thievish Eskimos; if these persist in their evil ways, as a last resort they are either driven out of the tribe or simply killed off. The hardships and privations are normally so great that the community itself would cease to exist if some were suffered to sponge upon the rest. Commander Peary described the Eskimos as a people without government but not lawless, without education yet exhibiting a remarkable degree of intelligence:—

> In temperament like children, with all a child's delight in little things, they are nevertheless enduring as the most mature of civilized men and women, and the best of them are faithful unto death. Without religion, and having no idea of God, they will share their last meal with any one who is hungry, while the aged and the helpless among them are taken care of as a matter of course. They are healthy and pure blooded; they have no vices, no intoxicants, and no bad habits—not even gambling.[1]

Another well-known explorer, Captain Amundsen, speaks highly of the intelligence, absolute trustworthiness, gaiety, and lightheartedness of the Eskimo remote

[1] *Nash's Magazine*, March, 1910.

from civilization. Their religious ideas he found very vague. They "left most things to one's own imagination. If these people had any belief in a higher being, they at any rate concealed it jealously.....Evidently they loved life; but, on the other hand, they had not the slightest fear of death. If they were sick or in misery, they bade farewell to life with a tranquil mind and strangled themselves." The tribes which come under the influence of civilization are usually ruined, and Captain Amundsen's "sincerest wish for our friends the Nechilli Eskimo is that civilization may *never* reach them."[1]

The wild tribes inhabiting the hills to the north and north west of the State of Negri Sembilan are described as intellectual and bright, and living moral, blameless lives. These hill people have no rites to celebrate birth, marriage, or death, no religion, no belief in a spiritual existence after death; nor do they practise any form of witchcraft or magic.[2] Messrs. Spencer and Gillen tell us that from Lake Eyre to the far north, and eastwards to the Gulf of Carpentaria, the tribes of Central Australia have no idea whatever of the existence of any supreme being who may be pleased or displeased with their conduct. Any idea of a future life of happiness as a reward for meritorious, or the reverse as a punishment for blameworthy, conduct is quite foreign to them. The Central Australian native has nevertheless a very strict moral code.[3] The Salish and Déné tribes occupying an extensive territory comprising about one half the whole area of British North America are people who are rapidly dying out under the burden of the white man.

[1] Roald Amundsen, *The North West Passage* (1908), II, pp. 48, 51.
[2] F. W. Knocker, at the British Association, York, 1906.
[3] Spencer and Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (1904), chap. xiv.

In their happier days they had a high reputation for honesty, hospitality, and chastity. The Hudson Bay Co., during forty years' trading with them, never found the smallest object stolen from them, although from spring to autumn the agent left his store in charge of an Indian, or even perhaps totally unwatched. The Salish are taught that it is bad to steal, to be unvirtuous, to lie, to be lazy, to commit adultery, to boast, to be cowardly, to be inhospitable, and to be quarrelsome; that it is good to be pure and cleanly, honest, truthful, and faithful, brave, industrious, and grateful, hospitable, liberal, and friendly, modest and sociable. "Of religion in the ordinary meaning of the word the north-west tribes had none. They recognized no Supreme Being who controlled the universe, no High Gods who ruled the destinies of man, nor even a 'Great Spirit' such as is ascribed, and wrongly so, to some of the eastern tribes of America, to whom they could pray for protection and help."[1]

Primitive people, as the cases cited show, may have very definite rules of conduct—*i.e.*, a very precise practical morality, which is the fruit of the experience of generations—and yet be entirely without religious belief, unless, indeed, the vague animism and belief in witchcraft found among some of them may be claimed as religious belief. Moreover, not only is their morality independent of Christianity or any other of the recognized religions, but it is notorious that contact with Christianity invariably tends to degrade the primitive standards and to demoralize the people.

It is beyond the scope of this little book to attempt to trace out step by step the development of morality

[1] C. Hill Tout, *The Natives of British North America* (1907), p. 166.

from the primitive to the more and more complex forms, interesting as such a study might be. It is sufficient for our purpose to note that directly we have groups of men living together in large communities in an environment of plenty, there we find a development of the interest of the individual as opposed to the interest of the community. The ultimate basis of morality, self-preservation, is lost sight of, and the moral impulse becomes less simple and less direct as it becomes subject to varying influences. By degrees there grows up a more elaborate conception of the social bond; but as the moral code becomes more complex, so the temptations to depart from it become more numerous and more urgent. And thus it happens that in all civilized societies we have not only one moral code, but several moral codes; codes which are often quite irreconcilable the one with the others. In Great Britain, *e.g.*, we have a private code, a public code, a national code, a class code, and a religious code. It is the urgent duty of all thoughtful Ethicists to bring these various codes, into harmony, or, better still, to reduce them as far as possible to one. So long as we permit one code of morality to the individual in his private capacity and another and a lower code to him in his public or national capacity—which is only the "civilized" form of the savage morality within and without the tribe—so long shall we have international strife. So long as we permit one set of rules to govern the conduct of the rich towards the rich and another to govern their relations to the poor, and *vice versa*, so long shall we have life embittered with class hatred. And in regard to the question immediately under our consideration, every one must be acutely conscious of the immense gulf which lies between the normal conduct of the average Christian and that prescribed for him by his religion. It is rare indeed that his practice and his

precept agree. As Professor Hobhouse pointedly says, "the civilized world, unlike the savage and barbarian world, has almost invariably a double code, one for use and the other—as a cynic would say—for ornament."[1] In this respect at least the savage shows himself the more truly moral man.

The adoption of a double or multiple code of morals necessarily gives rise to hypocrisy, and Professor Hobhouse—to whose masterly work all students of the evolution of morals are deeply indebted—explains this hypocrisy as a sign of evolution, as a "hint of better things," inasmuch as it shows that the hypocrite has done something to be ashamed of. But it is only the *conscious* hypocrite who is ashamed, and the religious man is in most cases an unconscious hypocrite; he conforms to the conventions of his environment without reflection, and does not trouble further. The constant automatic repetition of precepts, presented to him at an early age ready made with the stamp of sanctity upon them, dulls his appreciation of their real meaning. The words are to him little more than mere empty sounds, and in a general way they might as well be uttered in an unknown tongue for all the influence they have upon his conduct. There are, indeed, occasions when the religious man is roused to a sense of the commands laid upon him by his religion, and when he relies upon Divine authority as a cover for his actions; but too often these are occasions obnoxious to the general welfare.

While, then, we find men, professedly religious, who never dream of following the rules of conduct laid upon them by their religion, ignoring some completely, rendering lip service to others, and observing the remainder

[1] Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution*, I, p. 26.

only so far as they coincide with the accepted morality of the age and country in which they live, we also find that the teachings of religion, and still more the authorized teachers of religion, have influenced, and still influence, conduct in matters of every-day life to an extraordinary degree.

Religion tells men what they shall wear and what they shall not wear.

> At the end of the sixteenth century the English Puritans hotly protested against the use of the surplice by the clergy as a badge of idolatry, stigmatizing it as "accursed, abhominable, and filthie" (*Second Parte of a Register*, vol. i, p. 68, and elsewhere). In the Jewish synagogue men have to wear their hats; in the Christian church they must not do so. Women, however, must keep their hats on in church. In the *Parish Magazine* for July, 1910, the Yarmouth clergy were very severe upon certain ladies who did not recognize what was "due to God's house," and said that no woman would be allowed to enter the church for a single moment unless she was wearing a reasonable headdress. No matter how perfect her character, unless her head was covered God's house was closed to her. No matter how imperfect her character, if she wore a reasonable headdress, then she had the right of entry. In Catholic families where ecclesiastical influence is supreme the authority of the priest is required before the girls may wear low dresses, and the priest often fixes the depth of lowness. (*Fourteen Years a Jesuit*, Graf Paul von Hoensbroech.)

It tells men what they shall eat and what they shall not eat.

> The Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican High Church prescribe weekly fasts and a Lenten mourning fast. A law of Charlemagne condemned

to death any one who eat meat in Lent. The orthodox Greek peasants of the present day keep a Lenten fast of six weeks, which in some localities is so strictly observed that it approaches starvation. At the termination of the fast the people are reduced to an intensely nervous condition, and are without physical energy (J. C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion*, p. 574). Jews and Mohammedans may not eat pork; Hindus may not eat beef. In some cases fowls are prohibited; in others, fish. In others, again, the use of animal food of any kind is condemned. The *Times* Special Correspondent, writing from Murmansk on April 4, 1919, recalls "a tragi-comedy of the early days out here when the transport *City of Marseilles* came with a crowd of Lascar firemen. It was the first time they had ventured into the Polar region, and they might have weathered the ice floes and a thermometer that sank pitilessly to fifteen and lower below zero. It was the continuous daylight that wrought the tragedy, for the Fast of Ramazan had to be observed. No good Mohammedan must eat between sunrise and sunset during that fast. They came up on deck, these Lascars, at the hour when the sun should be taking its leave; they were hungry, but there was the sun shining still.....They fought valiantly against the pangs of hunger, but the sun was obdurate and refused to be sympathetic. .....The record shows that seventeen Lascars died for their religion; and the apostasy of the others is probably pardoned ere now." The correspondent refers to this incident as a "tragi-comedy"; but the tragedy was for the Lascars who died martyrs to their religious belief—the comedy was for the Christian onlooker.

It tells men what they shall read and what they shall not read.

"For the space of fifteen centuries the education of the people had remained almost exclusively under

the direction of the Church [of Rome]. The faithful believers (and the unbelievers were but few) had accepted their entire intellectual sustenance at the hands of the priests" (G. H. Putnam, *The Censorship of the Church of Rome*, vol. i, p. 9). The list of books condemned under Protestant censorship was very much more considerable than the aggregate of those issued under the authority of the Romish Church. The censorship policy of the Protestants was more spasmodic, and directed, on the whole, "by a less wholesome, dignified, and honourable purpose. It represented very much more largely the spirit of faction, or of personal grievance" (*id.*, p. 51). The application of the Blasphemy Laws for the suppression of heretical literature, the interference of the clergy in the literature of the free libraries, and the recent incident of clerical intervention to prevent the circulation of Rationalist works to the troops by the Camps Library are well-known instances.

It tells people on which days they shall labour and on which they shall rest.

Nearly every religion prescribes a period for the cessation of labour. In many cases these—like the Christian seventh day of rest—are associated with phases of the moon, or with the adoration of the sun. After the Reformation, Sunday rest was enforced by law in England, and people who worked or amused themselves on Sunday were liable to be fined, set in the stocks, or imprisoned. In Scotland it was a sin to walk, to sit at your door, to bathe, to shave, to sleep during sermon time, or water the kail in your garden on Sunday (Buckle, *History of Civilization*, vol. iii, p. 265). The Scotch clergy did not hesitate to teach that "on that day it was sinful to save a vessel in distress, and that it was a proof of religion to leave ship and crew to perish" (*id.*, p. 276).

It tells people which candidate they shall vote for at Parliamentary elections and which they shall not vote for.

In January, 1910, the Bishop of Worcester addressed a letter on the forthcoming election to the Secretary of the Diocesan Conference, in which he said that the voter who did not place his religious interests in the front rank did not hold his Church dear (*Times*, January 13, 1910). At the elections held throughout Germany in January, 1919, the priests and nuns shepherded their flocks to the poll to vote solid for the Centre or Catholic Party.

It induces people to dance, and shake, and twirl, and hop, and go into convulsions.

In 1909 there was a shocking and widespread epidemic of tarantism or dancing mania connected with the Church of St. George at Yenishehr on the day of the feast of St. George, which takes place in the first week in May. The epidemic recurred in the following year and the year after at the same period, gaining ground each year. The unhappy victims to this mania were believed to be "possessed" with the spirit of St. George (*Times*, September 9, 1911). There were dancing manias in Flanders and Germany in the Middle Ages (Lecky, *Rise of Rationalism in Europe*, p. 20); there were yearly religious dances in honour of St. Willibrod up to the time of the War at Echternach in Luxemburg (*Literary Guide*, March, 1912); and contortions and convulsions are common at revival meetings.

It induces some people to torture themselves and some to torture others.

The whole history of Christendom since the torture of Hypatia in 315 is associated with the torture of heretics. Flagellation and other forms of self-torture have always been favoured by religions as methods of discipline, or as proofs of religious fervour. The late Cardinal Vaughan for years "wore on his left arm an iron bracelet with spikes on the inside which were pressed into his flesh" (J. G. Snead-Cox, *Life of Cardinal Vaughan*).

Religion tells one man to shave and another to go unshorn; it makes both cleanliness and uncleanliness a virtue, and generally orders a man's life from the hour of his birth to the day of his death. The field of conduct is so wide that we can touch only the fringe of it in these pages and take up a few points to illustrate the manner in which religion has influenced conduct. Although these points are taken with special reference to the Christian religion, which concerns us more closely than any other in this country, nevertheless what is true of Christianity is more or less true of all religions.

Chapter III

SLAVERY

A system that an overruling Providence has seen fit to permit in certain climates since the foundations of society.

JOHN GLADSTONE to Sir Robert Peel, 1830.[1]

A free patriarchal society, with several ranks and grades, but with no slavery—that is the general type presented by most of the earliest communities that we find in Greece, Italy, and Asia Minor.

GILBERT MURRAY, *Exploitation of the Inferior Races.*

CHRISTIAN apologists claim that Christianity abolished slavery. Among those who have recently made this claim must be numbered the Bishop of London, who, in an address delivered at the Central Y.M.C.A. in November, 1915, said that, "although slavery had been abolished by Christianity, war had not, because Christianity had not permeated the world." That the premier Bishop of the Church of England should be in such complete ignorance of the history of Christianity is more remarkable than creditable; for, while giving all credit to the efforts of individual Christians such as Wilberforce and Clarkson, inquiry shows that for century after century organized Christianity resisted the abolition of slavery, and that it was unbelief in France and America which did the pioneer work in the emancipation of the slave.

The earliest form of slavery probably originated in war; the captives taken in battle were retained for the

[1] In 1833 John Gladstone received upwards of £75,000 compensation for 1,609 slaves. (Morley's *Life of Gladstone.*)

service of their captors instead of being put to death; and slavery, although by no means universal, has been fairly general all over the world wherever there were warlike or industrial peoples. But, although slavery has been widespread, the condition of the slaves has varied immensely. In ancient Greece and Rome, while the slaves often endured both hardship and cruelty, their condition was not infrequently quite compatible with a large amount of personal liberty and even authority. For example, Zaleucus of Locris, who lived seven centuries before the Christian era, was the author of the first written code of laws for that republic.[1] He was a shepherd and a slave, yet he had enough learning to compile these laws, and was held in sufficient esteem to get them accepted by the community among whom he lived. The evils of slavery were recognized by the great Stoic teachers and condemned by them in their writings. When, however, Christianity made its appearance, slavery was accepted without protest by all Christian writers, who conveniently explained the unfortunate slaves as the descendants of Ham.[2]

> The medieval Church "justified servitude both in theory and practice. St. Gregory the Great, in a letter often quoted by apologists, wrote in words of lofty generosity concerning two slaves whom he was setting free; but we must remember also that Gregory's papal estates were tilled by thousands of others whom he never attempted to liberate; and in a later letter we find him actually exerting himself to recover a slave of his own brother who had escaped with his wife and child and small belongings. St. Thomas Aquinas expressly defends servitude as economically expedient. Servitude was recognized and enforced by Canon Law; bishops are severely

[1] Mure, *Literature of Ancient Greece*, III, p. 449.
[2] St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*.

> condemned for freeing serfs of the Church. For churchmen, especially monks, were always among the richest holders of serfs. When Theodore of Tarsus became Archbishop of Canterbury he noted that, whereas 'Greek monks keep no serfs, Roman monks possess them.' Nor were churchmen more willing than others to free their bondsmen, except on business terms."[1] (G. C. Coulton, *Social Life in Britain from the Conquest to the Reformation*, p. 336.)

For hundreds of years slaves were freely bought and sold by dignitaries of the Church, who drew the line only at selling Christian slaves to Jews or to the "heathen." In 1051 a Church Council held at Rome directed that the wives of married priests should be enslaved and held for the benefit of the various churches in the different dioceses.[2] A few years later (1089) Pope Urban II published a decree reducing to slavery the wives of priests who refused to submit to celibacy, and offering these unfortunate women as a bribe to the nobles who aided in thus purifying the Church.[3] During the Middle Ages, owing to the depopulation caused by civil wars, famine, and pestilence, labour became more valuable, and there was a gradual advance in Europe from slavery to serfdom and from serfdom to freedom John of Trevisa, a Cornishman, Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, writing in the latter half of the fourteenth century, gives a striking picture of the lamentable condition of the serfs in England :—

> A servaunt woman is ordeyned for to lerne the wyves rule and is put to office and werke of traveylle, toylynge and slubberynge [drudgery]. And is fedde with grosse mete and symple, and is clothed with

[1] See also chapters on Slavery in *The Church and the People*, by Joseph McCabe, and *Christianity and Slavery*, by Chapman Cohen.
[2] H. C. Lea, *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, I, p. 221.
[3] *Idem*, I, p. 289.

> clothes and kept lowe under the yoeke of thraldom and of servage; and, if she conceyve a chylde, it is thralle or it be borne, and is taken frome the mothers womb to servage. Also if a servynge woman be of bonde condition she is not suffred to take a husbonde at her own wylle: and he that weddyth her, if he be free afore, he is made bonde after the contracte. A bonde servaunt woman is bought and solde lyke a beeste.....Also a bonde servaunt sufferith many wronges, and is bete with roddes, and constreyned and holde lowe with diverse and contrarye charges and travayles amonges wretchydnes and woo. Oneth [scarcely] he is suffered to reste or take brethe. (*Ibid*, p. 339.)

We are asked to believe that "in virtue of the faith of Christ, and of that alone.....slavery was practically extinct in Europe by the fourteenth century."[1] But the fact is that progress was both slow and intermittent; child slavery continued until a very late period—the serfs in Russia were not emancipated until the middle of the nineteenth century—and under an Act passed in 1606 the institution of slavery became newly established in Scotland in connection with the collieries and the salt works. The labourers in the collieries of East Lothian belonged to those who bought or succeeded to the property of the works, and they could be sold, bartered, or pawned. This continued until the Act of Liberation in 1799. There is no trace that the Scottish clergy ever raised a voice against this slavery, or that they took the smallest notice of the Act of 1799.[1] Meanwhile there grew up within Christendom a new slavery—negro slavery—which was far more brutal than the old, and far more demoralizing to both slave and slave owner.

[1] Rev. J. K. Mozley, *Achievements of Christianity*, pp. xiv, 197, 208.

[2] J. M. Robertson, *The Perversion of Scotland.*

This new slavery, with all the attendant horrors and cruelties of slave raids, slave ships, and slave markets, was inaugurated by that pious mariner, John Hawkins, whose slaving vessel, the *Jesus*, sailed for West Africa on its first voyage to kidnap negro slaves in October, 1564, under the blessing of Almighty God. Sir William Butler, who served in West Africa in 1893, remarks in his *Autobiography* that for more than two hundred years the Gold Coast was the greatest slave preserve in the world. "All those castles," he says, "dotted along the surf-beaten shore at ten or twelve mile intervals, were the prisons where, in the days of the slave trade, millions of wretched negroes had been immured, waiting the arrival of slave ships from Bristol or Liverpool to load the human cargo for West Indian or American ports. It would not be too much to say that from each of these prison castles to some West Indian port a cable of slave skeletons must be lying at the bottom of the ocean.....Slaves, rum, and gunpowder were the chief items in the bills of lading. The gunpowder went into the interior; the rum was drunk on the coast; the slaves, or those who survived among them, went to America. If two in ten lived through the horrors of the middle passage, the trade paid."

Negro slavery was recognized by all the Christian Governments of Europe and America; it was supported by the great bulk of the clergy, and justified by Christian writers of nearly every denomination except the Quakers. Clergymen and missionaries were among the slave-holders, and churches were supported from slave property.[1]

In 1794 the French Revolutionists—"infidels" as

[1] Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Idea*, I, pp. 711–13.

they have been called—set an example to the world by abolishing slavery in France; in the very same year the English House of Lords rejected a lesser measure for the abolition of the slave trade. Well might Wilberforce exclaim: "What would some future historian say in describing two great nations—the one (France) accused of promoting anarchy and confusion, the other (England) contending for religion, morality, and justice, yet obstinately continuing a system of cruelty and injustice."[1]

George III, hereditary Defender of the Faith, always upheld slavery and regarded its abolition with abhorrence. He even issued an injunction under his own hand commanding the Governor of Virginia, under pain of the highest displeasure, to assent to no law by which the importation of slaves could be in any respect prohibited or obstructed.[2] Traffic in slaves was forbidden by our legislature only in 1807, and it was not until twenty-six years later that the slave-holders were bought out and the institution of slavery abolished in the British Dominions. Barely fifty-six years have passed away since it was finally abolished in the Christian States of America.

It was not Christianity which freed the slave: Christianity accepted slavery; Christian ministers defended it; Christian merchants trafficked in human flesh and blood, and drew their profits from the unspeakable horrors of the middle passage. Christian slaveholders treated their slaves as they did the cattle in their fields: they worked them, scourged them, mated them, parted them, and sold them at will. Abolition came with the decline in religious belief, and largely through the efforts of those who were denounced as heretics. In America Thomas

[1] House of Commons, February 18, 1796.
[2] Buckle, *History of Civilization*, I, pp. 448, 464.

Paine was the first person to publicly advocate the emancipation of the slave, and the work was taken up and carried to success three quarters of a century later by Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln was certainly not an orthodox Christian; at most he was a Deist, and it is extremely doubtful whether he was even that. He was an eager reader and admirer of Thomas Paine and of Volney; he himself wrote an attack upon Christianity.[1] So general was the Christian opposition to abolition in the United States that even in Boston itself all the churches and the schools, which were at that time under the control of the churches, were closed against the anti-slavery advocates. The only hall open to that most eloquent abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison—for the kidnapping of whom Georgia offered a reward of five thousand dollars—was one belonging to Abner Kneeland, the despised "infidel" who had been imprisoned for his heresy. During the anti-slavery struggle in America, so closely were emancipation and unbelief associated in the popular mind that "abolitionist" and "infidel" were frequently used as synonymous terms.

The curse of slavery has left behind it in the United States a colour problem of the utmost gravity, for which the Church does not even attempt to find a solution. Much is heard of the Christian ideal of the brotherhood of man; but at the World's Sunday School Convention, held in Washington in 1910, coloured Sunday-school teachers and scholars were forbidden to join their white "brothers" in taking part in the demonstration.

Christianity has been no less guilty in its condonation of the allied traffic in indentured coolies, the history of which, overshadowed by that of its sister slavery, is,

[1] *Biography*, Ward H. Lamon.

nevertheless, one of sickening horror. In Assam, where this system was for many years accompanied by the highest habitual mortality, it was Sir Henry Cotton—a Positivist—who had the courage to speak out most openly and most strongly in its condemnation.

Chapter IV

VENGEANCE

SOCRATES: Then we ought not to retaliate or render evil for evil to any one, whatever evil we have suffered from him.....Tell me, then, Crito, whether you agree with, and assent to, my first principle, that neither injury, nor retaliation, nor warding off evil by evil is ever right. Or do you decline and dissent from this? For so I have ever thought and continue to think; but if you are of another opinion let me hear what you have to say.

CRITO (Jowett's translation).

He who lives according to the guidance of reason strives as much as possible to repay the hatred, anger, or contempt of others towards himself with love and generosity.—He who wishes to avenge injuries by hating in return lives miserably.

SPINOZA'S *Ethic* (W. Hale White's translation).

The earthquake whelms
Its undistinguished thousands, making graves
Of peopled cities in its path; and this
Is Heaven's dread justice. Ay, it is well.

MRS. HEMANS, *Vespers of Palermo*.

THE nineteenth century has been well called a wonderful century, and its achievements were truly marvellous. The use of steam and electricity alone produced a revolution in our mode of life. Yet the century which revealed to us so many scientific truths closed in the utmost confusion in regard to certain moral truths. In spite of the growth of humanitarian ideas and the undoubted tendency towards more humane laws and more humane methods, the battle is still being fought between our blind brutal impulses and our more rational, kindlier judgments. We see it in the persistence of

many cruel sports side by side with laws or the prevention of cruelty to animals; we see it in the use of poison gas and liquid fire following upon conferences for the humanizing of war. And day by day we may see it in the large part which the passion of revenge plays both in the lives of nations and communities and in the lives of individual men and women.

Anger is defined as a *sudden* resentment (hatred or indignation), and revenge as a *deliberate* or brooding resentment.[1] Carlyle, in his *Latter-day Pamphlets*,[2] declared that "the ineradicable tendency" to revenge was "for ever more intrinsically a correct and even a divine feeling in the mind of every man.....a monition sent to poor man by the Maker Himself." Carlyle was right when he characterized it as a "divine" feeling, but he was utterly wrong when he called it a correct one. Unrestrained indulgence in the passion of vengeance can never benefit the human race; it can only increase human misery. It is nearly seventy years since Carlyle wrote, yet the desire for revenge is scarcely less strong now than it was in his day. In spite of the growing enlightenment which should make towards its elimination, it has been preserved to the civilized world through the religions of the world.

The whole theory of Christianity is based and built up upon this idea of vengeance. Eliminate that and Christianity falls to the ground. If we take the Biblical narrative, we find the first man and woman severely punished for a trivial act of preventable disobedience. For this, in sorrow, they were condemned to eat out all the days of their life. Not only were Adam and Eve punished, but the very ground, which had neither part nor lot in their offence, was cursed for their sakes. They

[1] Westermarck, *Origin of Moral Ideas*, I, p. 22.
[2] No. 11: *Model Prisons*.

had two children, Cain and Abel. Each gave of what he had to the Lord; Abel brought flesh, and Cain the fruits of the earth. The Lord showed his preference for Abel's flesh offering; whereupon Cain was very angry, and, full of the "divine feeling," he revenged himself by slaying his brother. For this he, in turn, was punished by being made a fugitive and a vagabond, and tenfold vengeance is threatened on any who should slay him. The Creation story, therefore, opens strongly on the theme of vengeance, which unfortunately does not end there, but is maintained as the keynote throughout the Old Testament. If we go through the Mosaic legends, we find them full of hot wrath, of so-called "judgments," of vengeance; of the Lord proclaimed as merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness, forgiving iniquity, yet visiting the iniquity of the father upon the children and upon the children's children until the third and fourth generation. As we turn over the pages we read such stories as the slaying of Saul's seven sons in cold blood; the indiscriminate vengeance taken so that from Dan to Beersheba there died 70,000 innocent men because David had thought fit to number his people; the cursing by Elisha of the little children of the city because they mocked at him; he cursed them in the name of the Lord, and two she-bears came out of the wood and devoured forty-two of them. In the Psalms we get constant appeals to the Lord for vengeance, and an unrestrained glorification of the passion of vengeance, such as:—

> "Oh Lord God of Hosts, awake to visit the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors" (*Ps.* lix, 5).
>
> "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth vengeance, he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked" (*Ps.* lviii, 10).

> "Let the saints be joyful in glory.....let high praises of God be in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hands to execute vengeance upon the heathen and punishment on the people" (*Ps.* cxlix, 5 and 7).

In 1917 the Houses of Convocation decided to omit certain passages from the Psalms as used in the Churches as "uncharitable and vindictive"; but the proposal to do so was carried only in the face of keen opposition. The Dean of Canterbury approved the denunciations of wrongdoing and calls for vengeance contained in the Psalms as peculiarly appropriate to the time. Canon Aitken humanely suggested that such expressions as "May I dip my feet in the blood of my enemies," or "May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow," were an insult to the Divine Majesty. The Archdeacon of Sudbury, however, boldly affirmed that "the Psalms are a mirror of human nature, which is precisely the same to-day as in the times of the Psalmist, and to omit the righteous call for vengeance is not only to misrepresent Christianity, but to fall out of touch with the whole moral feeling of the country."[1] Here we have not only an unqualified justification of vengeance, but also an admission on the part of a professional Christian that human nature after nineteen hundred years of Christian teaching is exactly the same as it was a thousand years before the Christian era; in no way improved, absolutely unchanged.

If we turn to the New Testament, we read the story of Jesus Christ, whose death four thousand years after Adam's sin was in some measure to stay the unquenchable anger of Jehovah—truly a "brooding" anger, which had not exhausted itself in four thousand years, but was still demanding fresh victims. In the New Testa-

[1] Daily Press, July 6, 1917.

ment, it is true, we find continual injunctions to be merciful, to forgive injuries, to love our enemies—echoes of past Pagan teachings;[1] but we are also admonished that at the end of the world there will be a furnace of fire for the wicked. This doctrine of everlasting punishment is surely the most terribly vengeful idea that could possibly be conceived. In his *Epistle to the Romans* Paul asks: "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?" "God forbid," he replies, "for then how shall God judge the world?" This passage has particular interest, inasmuch as we see the growing doubt whether vengeance can be really a righteous feeling. Paul sees no other way for the Almighty to judge; yet, as a man, speaking to men, he inculcates peace: "Overcome evil with good," he says, "for it is written: Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."[2]

In the Church of England Book of Common Prayer, which dates back to the time of Edward VI, and is the handbook, as it were, of the Protestant religion and guide to its ceremonies, the text is given of prayers for rain, for fair weather, for peace, for times of death and of sickness. These prayers always assume that the drought, the excessive rains, the wars, or other evils from which

[1] In the *Fragments* of Epictetus we read that Pittacus of Mytilene, one of the seven wise men of Greece, who lived 600 years before the Christian era, having it in his power to revenge himself upon some one who had wronged him, let him go, saying: "Forgiveness is better than revenge, for, while the former is the sign of a gentle nature, revenge is the sign of a savage nature." There is also the beautiful story told by Polycænus of Gisco the Carthaginian general who lived 300 years before Christ. Gisco was sent into exile through the intrigues of his enemies, but the time came when he was recalled and his enemies given over to his vengeance. He did not hang them, or scourge them, or make slaves of them, but, gently placing his foot upon their prostrate necks in token of their submission, said: "I have not returned evil for evil, but good for evil."

[2] *Romans*, iii, 5, and xii, 19-21.

the people are suffering, are sent as punishment (or vengeance) for their iniquities. On the other hand, the thanksgiving prayers never by any chance acknowledge benefits as a reward for right-doing; they are mere grovelling thanks for a surprising mercy. These prayers —essentially primitive as expressions of intelligence— show clearly that the Deity to whom they are addressed is looked upon as an Avenger, and that the people have reason to be hugely rejoiced when he can be induced to forgo some measure of his indiscriminate vengeance.

In the Book of Common Prayer the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed are such as to be a trouble even to Churchmen; and the ceremony of the baptism of infants was designed in order to rescue the little ones from the awful doom of eternal damnation—a punishment not incurred through any sins of their own, but through the sin of Adam. Then, as a final effort of the Church, there is actually an approved form for a Commination Service, in which people are cursed wholesale and cursed retail!

It would be difficult to exaggerate the influence which this emphasis laid by Christianity upon the righteousness of vengeance has had upon conduct. It is impossible that such seed could be sown week after week, year after year, generation after generation, without bearing fruit. The earlier pious moralists of our own country are generally agreed as to the salutary effect of vengeance, and in an edition of *Butler's Sermons*, brought out in the year 1900 and edited by J. H. Barnard, D.D., the editor has a note to the sermon on "Resentment" in which he quotes with approval from Fuller's *Holy State*: "Anger is one of the sinews of the soul; he that wants it hath a maimed mind, and with Jacob sinew shrunk in the hollow of his thigh must needs halt." "We should be none the worse," says Dr. Barnard, "in these later days

if this robust and manly teaching were more frequently set before us."

The fruit of this "robust and manly teaching" may be found in the history of Christendom, more particularly in its penal laws, in its treatment of "inferior" races, and in the attitude of Christian peoples towards their enemies. In the case of the punishment of criminals, for long it was seriously argued that it should be such as would satisfy the natural vindictiveness of mankind, and every variety of torture has been used or advocated. It was not until the eighteenth century, when Beccaria on the Continent, followed by Jeremy Bentham in England—both of whom were inspired by the writings of the Freethinking Helvétius[1]—pointed the way to more enlightened and humaner methods, that there was any amelioration in the treatment of criminals. During the nineteenth century, and more especially during the latter half of it, the idea that punishment should be reformative rather than vindictive has been making steady progress in England; but much remains to be done before the mere "satisfaction of the natural vindictiveness of mankind" can be said to be entirely eliminated from our penal policy. The prolonged imprisonment of conscientious objectors to military service, for example, and the infliction of fresh sentences of imprisonment in 1919, after the conclusion of the War, for which their services were nominally required, was neither deterrent nor reformative; it was purely vindictive.

In the treatment of the so-called "inferior races" by Europeans the lack of mutual understanding and consideration easily brings trouble, and revengeful feelings quickly come to the surface. The numerous punitive expeditions, or revenge for injuries (real or imaginary),

[1] J. M. Robertson, *Short History of Freethought*, II, pp. 266-67.

are nearly always out of all proportion to the offence, and are frequently wholly indiscriminate. The bitter comment, "How these Christians love one another!", appropriate through all the ages of Christianity, should suffice to illustrate the attitude of Christian peoples towards their enemies even when they are co-religionists. "Love your enemies" is an impossible precept, and Christians have made no attempt to live up to it. On the contrary, hatred of the enemy and desire for vengeance will often obliterate from the mind all sense of justice, kindliness, and decency. In 1900, when the Boers were our enemies, they were a gang of unscrupulous dacoits,[1] cunning, deceitful, and treacherous,[2] whose only motive for fighting us was hate.[3] In those days the Rev. Arthur Robins, Rector of Holy Trinity, Windsor, wrote[4]:—

> Oom Paul will swim through seas of blood upon his belly, psalm-singing with every stomach stroke, and not the least bit off colour all the while. While we are politically procrastinating, he is prayerfully preparing, and, while some of our Radicals are calling on the hucksters of the party to curse our cause and bless our enemies, he is in pious protestation before the Lord of Hosts. Meanwhile his myrmidons can all do murder at a pinch, and to ravish they are not ashamed.

Fifteen years later Africanders of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were brothers-in-arms, heroes, and statesmen. A striking study of this ebullition of hatred towards the enemy and invocations to God to send down vengeance upon him may be found in the collection of pulpit utterances by the pastors and theologians of Germany,

[1] Rev. J. B. Heard, M.A., Hulsean Lecturer, *Church Gazette*, June 16, 1900.
[2] Canon Bartram, *Dover Standard*, March 18, 1901.
[3] Bishop Thornton, *Times*, December 26, 1901.
[4] *Daily Chronicle*, September 5, 1899.

edited by Professor Bang.[1] The *Hymn of Hate*, adapted by Ernst Lissauer, and distributed by the Bavarian Crown Prince to his army, will not soon be forgotten. By its very extravagance it failed to impress Englishmen, but there is no doubt that in Germany it acted like a spark falling upon tinder. The Lady Elizabeth Carew,[2] in the seventeenth century, possessed a nobler conception of the ethics of revenge than the whole German pastorate of the twentieth :—

The fairest action of our human life
  Is scorning to revenge an injury ;
For who forgives without a further strife
  His adversary's heart to him doth tie.
And 'tis a firmer conquest, truly said,
  To win the heart than overthrow the head.

If we a worthy enemy do find,
  To yield to worth it must be nobly done ;
But if of baser metal to his mind,
  In base revenge there is no honour won.
Who would a worthy courage overthrow ?
And who would wrestle with a worthless foe ?

We say our hearts are great and cannot yield ;
  Because they cannot yield, it proves them poor :
Great hearts are tasked beyond their powers but seld,
  The weakest lion will the loudest roar.
Truth's school for certain doth this same allow,
High heartedness doth sometimes teach to bow.

A noble heart doth teach a virtuous scorn—
  To scorn to owe a duty over long ;

[1] *Hurrah and Hallelujah: the Spirit of New Germanism ;* edited by J. P. Bang, D.D.

[2] *The Tragedie of Mariam, the Faire Queen of Jewry ;* written by the learned, virtuous, and truly noble Ladie, Elizabeth Carew, 1613.

To scorn to be for benefits forborne;
To scorn to lie, to scorn to do a wrong;
To scorn to bear an injury in mind,
To scorn a freeborn heart slave like to bind.

But if for wrongs we needs revenge must have,
Then be our vengeance of the noblest kind;
Do we his body from our fury save,
And let our hate prevail against our mind.
What can 'gainst him a greater vengeance be
Than make his woe more worthy far than he?

Professor Alexander Bain, Emeritus Professor of Aberdeen University and well known as a Rationalist, says that "the ordinary measure of revenge in civilized life is in some proportion to the fancied injury; the barbarian exceeds all proportions, and gluts himself with the satisfaction of vengeance."[1] The precepts of Christianity as to vengeance and the forgiveness of injuries are absolutely contradictory, and can leave no clear impression upon the minds of its votaries. Measured by Professor Bain's standard, the demands and the practice of Christendom from the fourth century to the twentieth have been too often those of the barbarian rather than of civilized life.

[1] *Mental Science*, p. 264. Professor Bain further says: "A benevolent mind seldom gives way to revenge."

Chapter V

WAR

We will not cease from battle, we will not sheathe the sword;
St. George, St. George for England, and England for the Lord.[1]

For some wise but inscrutable reason it has pleased the Almighty to constitute all life in this world on a war and not on a peace basis; and is it wise of the creature to dispute the wisdom of the Creator?

LT.-GEN. SIR REGINALD HART,
in *Nineteenth Century and After*, August, 1911.

ALLIED with and arising out of the conception of vengeance as a righteous desire is the justification of war. Save the Buddhist, not one of the great religions of the world has been without its God of War, its sacred books singing the glories of war, and even its propaganda by the sword. The belief in immortality alone has been the cause of much bloodshed.

> The belief in immortality has not merely coloured the outlook of the individual upon the world; it has deeply affected the social and political relations of humanity in all ages, for the religious wars and persecutions which distracted and devastated Europe for ages were only the civilized equivalents of the battles and murders which the fear of ghosts has instigated among almost all races of savages of whom we possess a record. Regarded from this point of view, the faith in a life hereafter has been

[1] Refrain of a hymn specially written for a commemoration service on St. George's Day, 1906, held at St. Margaret's Church, Lothbury.

sown like dragons' teeth on the earth, and has brought forth crop after crop of armed men, who have turned their swords against each other. And when we consider further the gratuitous and wasteful destruction of property as well as of life which is involved in sacrifices to the dead, we must admit that, with all its advantages, the belief in immortality has entailed heavy economic losses upon the races—and they are practically all the races of the world—who have indulged in this expensive luxury.[1]

Before August, 1914, it was the correct thing to proclaim Christ as the Prince of Peace and Christianity as the religion of love and the brotherhood of man. We had a Peace Sunday each year, when lip-service was paid to Peace from thousands of pulpits. After August, 1914, these same pulpits resounded with praises of the Lord as a man of war (*Exodus*, xv, 3) and declarations that the great European War was a Christian war, sent directly by Almighty God himself. The earlier attitude, disassociating Christianity from war, was both dishonest and, to say the least of it, ungrateful; for Christianity has been nursed, nourished, and spread abroad by war and by what we now call frightfulness.

During the first three centuries, when its adherents were few and humble, with a considerable proportion of women among them, besides a number of slaves and paupers, Christianity was no doubt a religion of peace. It could hardly have been otherwise. But all that changed from the moment Constantine took it under his protection in the year 312. The story as related by the ecclesiastical historians[2] is that when Constantine determined to free Rome from the tyranny of Maxentius

[1] Sir J. G. Frazer, *Belief in Immortality*, I, p. 468.
[2] Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, B. i, c. ii.

he debated in his mind which divinity he should invoke, for the Pagan deities had disappointed him; they had not done what was expected of them, consequently they had fallen out of favour. While he was hesitating and his mind was still in doubt, he had a wonderful vision. In the dusk of the declining day he saw in the western sky a pillar of light in the form of a cross inscribed with the words "In hoc signo vinces." This was enough for Constantine—as, indeed, it might well be enough for any man. Under the Christian banner he proceeded to attack and vanquish the enemy; and, having conquered, he offered up thanks to God, his benefactor. Henceforward the Cross was his war standard. He became protector of the Christians, built churches for them, and enriched them with splendid gifts; besides suppressing —temporarily at least—the pagan temples, and treating the images they contained with contempt.

Launched in this way by Constantine as a war fetish, the early ideals of brotherly love, peace, and poverty fell away, and Christianity has ever since been associated with warfare. Weapons have been blessed, troops have been blessed, and warships have been blessed. A few centuries ago Bishops themselves led forth their wolves of war to harry other men's sheepfolds. That arrant humbug of romance known as chivalry was a specially vicious combination of religion and war, and was made the cover for every sort of outrage.

> The Order of Knighthood, in these days of ours, is mere disorder.....These men who should have used their strength against the enemies of the cross of Christ contend in wassail and drunkenness; they stagnate in sluggardy and rot in riotous living; dragging through their degenerate lives in uncleanliness, they dishonour the name and Order of Knighthood.....If these Knights of ours are sometimes

> constrained to take the field, then their sumpter-beasts are laden not with steel but with wine, not with spears but with cheeses, not with swords but with wine skins, not with javelins but with spits. You would think they were on their way to feast not to fight.....They embroider their saddles and blazon their shields with scenes of battle and tourney, delighting in a certain imagination of those wars which, in very deed, they dare not mingle in or behold. (Peter of Blois, Archdeacon of Bath.)[1]

For the first three centuries Christianity was, no doubt, a religion of peace; for the last sixteen the cross has been both figuratively and actually the handle of the sword.

In spite of pulpit conventions, there has never been a war yet which has not been supported by the clergy of the belligerent countries. After the opium war with China, the London Missionary Society held a meeting[2] at which a resolution was passed giving thanks to God for the greatly enlarged facilities for the introduction of Christianity into China. After the battle of Tel-el-Kebir the Archbishop of York ordered thanksgiving in the churches because God fought on the side of Sir Garnet Wolseley against the Egyptians. In the reprisals which took place in Manchuria after the Boxer outbreak, solemn religious services were held when the Cossacks set out on their punitive expedition; after the towns were destroyed and their inhabitants massacred, further services, this time of thanksgiving, were held among the smoking ruins. The Churches in this country were almost unanimous in support of the South African war.[3] The Archbishops of

[1] G. G. Coulton, *Social Life in Britain from the Conquest to the Reformation*, p. 282. See also Mill's *History of Chivalry* and Farrar's *Military Manners and Customs*.

[2] January 21, 1843.

[3] *The Churches and the South African War* (1905).

Canterbury and York, the Bishops of Bath and Wells, Chester, Chichester, Durham, Lichfield, Lincoln, Liverpool, London, Marlborough, Peterborough, Ripon, Rochester, St. Albans, Southwell, Stepney, and Truro, were all quite convinced of the righteousness of the war. And so were any number of Canons, Deans, Archdeacons, Vicars, and Rectors. The Protestant Archbishop of Armagh put his sentiments into plain prose and still plainer verse. At the Diocesan Synod (October 24, 1899) he said :—

> There was too much sugary jargon and talk of peace. It was said that war was hell. He had his doubts about that. There were worse things than war. God, in the scheme of this great universe, had included the earthquake, the pestilence, and the storm, and how did they know that He was not the Lord of Hosts and the God of Battles ?

This idea, put into verse by this "most venerable and excellent prelate,"[1] was given a prominent place in the *Times* a few days later :—

> They say that "war is hell," "the great accursed,"
> The sin impossible to be forgiven ;
> Yet I can look beyond it at its worst,
> And still find peace in heaven.
>
> And as I note how nobly natures form
> Under the war's red rain, I deem it true
> That he who made the earthquake and the storm
> Perchance makes battles, too !
>
> . . . .
>
> Thus, as the heaven's many-coloured flames
> At sunset are but dust in rich disguise,
> The ascending earthquake dust of battle frames
> God's picture in the skies.

Another dignitary of the Protestant Church of Ireland

[1] Dean Farrar, *North American Review*, September, 1900.

was, if possible, even more plain-spoken on the Christian aspect of war. "The Bible," said Canon Carmichael,

> hardly seems to see any evil in war at all.....Nor is the New Testament far behind in this respect. The Lord Jesus never says a word against war. John the Baptist gives advice to soldiers, but never condemns their profession. St. Paul revels in military phrases. The history of the world is full of wars; then must war be congenial to the mind of God in His evolution of Humanity. What does God care for death? What does God care for pain?[1]

Equally enthusiastic in their approval of the war were such well-known Nonconformist preachers as the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, Dr. Parker of the City Temple, and its future minister, the Rev. R. J. Campbell,[2] the Rev. Bernard Snell, Dr. Horton, and Dr. John Watson (Ian Maclaren). The Chief Rabbi joined hands with the Christian in giving thanks to the Lord, "for already hath Thy right hand helped our troops."

In the recent great World War, both here and in Germany, the clergy asserted that the war was a judgment sent direct by God as a punishment for the sins of the people. One English Churchman even declared that it was sent by God as reprisal for the proposed "wicked robbery of the Welsh Church."[3] Decent, kindly, pious people, who rebelled against such a frightful conception of Deity, were warned that they must not lightly discard the idea of Divine judgment.

[1] *The Christian*, January 11, 1900.

[2] "We have heard a great deal of late of the horrors of the war in which we were recently engaged. It is all a question of imagination. The horrors of war—and war is always hell—are nothing to the devastations of peace." Sermon on *Some Signs of the Times*, November 1, 1903.

[3] *Pall Mall Gazette*, February 23, 1916.

> I am old-fashioned enough to believe in God's judgment on national sins. If we are to abandon belief in God's judgment, God's visitation, and God's chastisement and discipline, we may as well burn our Bibles and Prayer Books altogether.[1]

The Bishop of London was one of the multitude of clergy who preached the "judgment" theory of the war, and in the first year of it, in his exuberance, he called it a "glorious war." But Father Bernard Vaughan surely outdid all his brethren. In a sermon preached in his church at Farm Street[2] he said that God might indeed have stopped the war, but it would take an eternity to thank God for not having stopped it. Had it been deferred for ten years the horrors of Belgium and Poland, the despair of the Armenians, would have been child's play to what would have happened to England. "Our dear island home, with its cathedrals, minsters, and abbeys, would have been utterly destroyed; we should have had nothing left us but 'our eyes to weep with.'" That is to say, God might have stopped this awful war and did not, and English Christians

[1] Hon. G. W. E. Russell, Annual Meeting of the London Sunday Defence Union, June 8, 1916. This belief in the judgment of God for national sins as a cause of disaster involves the most amazing conception of the divine propensity for senseless and indiscriminate vengeance. Some years ago, when the spire of St. Mary's, Shrewsbury, was blown down and the church wrecked in a great gale, the Vicar, Prebendary Poyntz, publicly affirmed that the disaster was a direct visitation of God on the town, because the townspeople had allowed a statue of Charles Darwin to be erected in their midst. Father Vaughan, who is always eager to assert God's responsibility, lamented, in 1906, England's "great sin of apostasy" and declared that God had uttered warnings by the eruption of Vesuvius and the San Francisco and Chilian earthquakes. That Italy, San Francisco, and Chili should be stricken because of England's apostasy is an instance of the justice of God which passeth all understanding.

[2] *Daily Chronicle*, December 13, 1915.

owe him an eternity of thanks for having permitted unspeakable horrors to be perpetrated upon the men, women, and little children of other nationalities because their suffering purchased our safety!

No Rationalist will envy the frame of mind of the Christian who really believes, or who pretends to believe, that the indiscriminate cruelty, the overwhelming misery and anguish caused by war, is the work of Almighty God, deliberately sent upon the innocent as well as the guilty as a punishment for offences which He himself had power to prevent. Nor can any sane and thoughtful person suppose that the worship of such a Deity can be in any way conducive to morality.

The General, in one of Solov'ev's "Conversations," points out that half the saints in the Russian Calendar are military men; that the saints of the Russian Church belong to two classes only, monks and princes; and that to be a prince in the old time was to be a warrior. For himself, he says, his "purest memory" is that in a quarter of an hour he killed considerably more than a thousand men. "Certainly I did not kill with my hands, with these sinful hands, but with the aid of six pure, sinless, steel cannon, with the most virtuous, beneficent shrapnel." He explains that this slaughter took place during the Russo-Turkish war, and was by way of reprisal for horrible outrages upon the Armenians perpetrated by the Bashi-Bazouks, and he describes his pursuit and annihilation of the enemy in terribly vivid and exultant language. "God blessed all my cannon," he says. "It was the Easterday of my soul, the bright day of the resurrection of Christ.....I was as if in heaven. I felt the presence of God, and that only." Thirty-seven of his Cossacks were killed in the attack, and, if he himself had died, "I have not the slightest doubt that I should have gone straight with my thirty-

seven Cossacks to the Almighty."[1] The Russians have hitherto always been represented as being a deeply religious people. The peasantry and many of the aristocracy were very backward in education and intellectual development, but they were very religious; and, according to the Rev. R. J. Campbell,[2] "the difference between Russia and England is essentially that Russia is a spiritual and religious country, and England is not; England was religious once, and it might be again."

[1] *War and Christianity: Conversations.* By Vladimir Solov'ev.

[2] *Daily Chronicle*, October 20, 1916. The Russians are so religious that in February, 1910, the approaching appearance of Halley's Comet created something like a panic in Kieff. Widely circulated leaflets described the comet as "the sign of God's scourge and the harbinger of universal war and famine, if not the end of the world." Large sums of money were subscribed for supplicatory masses and special prayers for the "rescue of Holy Russia from destruction by the falling comet," and the subscription lists included the names of prominent members of the various learned professions. In October of the same year there was a cholera epidemic which carried off thousands of persons every week. In some of the villages the peasants refused to be treated for cholera on the ground that it was "God's scourge." In Odessa the Prefect, M. Tolmatcheff, a well-known Jew-baiter, levied administrative fines on all Jews who broke the sanitary regulations, while the Christian offenders nearly always got off.

Chapter VI

PERSECUTION

XII. A man has a right to unrestricted liberty of discussion. Falsehood is a scorpion that will sting itself to death.

XIII. A man has not only a right to express his thoughts, but it is his duty to do so.

XIV. No law has a right to discourage the practice of truth.

XVIII. Expediency is inadmissible in morals. Politics are only sound when conducted on principles of morality; they are, in fact, the morals of a nation.

From SHELLEY'S *Declaration of Rights.*

THE desire for vengeance upon nations finds its satisfaction in war; upon individuals or groups of individuals it finds its satisfaction in persecution. The injuries to be avenged need not have taken place; they may be merely imaginary, or the vengeance may be anticipatory, like thanks for favours to come.

To take a single instance. During that long dark period when the Christian Churches were most powerful, and the believers many and densely ignorant, thousands of poor men and women—mostly women—were charged with witchcraft and sorcery, condemned by ecclesiastical and lay tribunals, and put to death in agonizing torments. Lecky, in his *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, notes that in the Bishopric of Wurzburg nine hundred persons were burned in a single year; in Toulouse, under the Inquisition, four hundred were executed in a single day; in Como a thousand were done to death in one year; in Geneva five hundred in three months. And so the dreadful story runs; throughout every province of

Germany, throughout France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Switzerland. So late as 1850, at Tarbes in the Pyrenees, a woman was accused of sorcery by certain people, and so dreadfully tortured by them that she died in extreme agony. When her torturers were brought before the civil tribunal they—as real believers—gloried in their inhuman deed; and the court sympathized with them to such an extent that the criminal pair were sentenced only to four months' imprisonment and to pay a fine of 25 frs. They had faithfully obeyed the Old Testament command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," and why should they be punished for obeying the Divine injunction?

The Reformers were no less cruel than the Catholics. Luther, Erasmus, and Calvin were all believers in witchcraft and the persecution of witches. "I would have no compassion on these witches; I would burn them all," said Luther; and Calvin left the Genevan laws against witchcraft intact. In England, Scotland, and the New World the law of Exodus put a flaming sword in the hands of the fanatic, and the persecution of poverty-stricken old women and of helpless old women in their dotage was carried on with horrible zest. The great Wesley, founder of a powerful religious sect, believed so firmly in witchcraft that he emphatically declared that "the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible." But half a century or so after Wesley said this there came the introduction of steam navigation, railways, and telegraphs, opening up undreamed-of facilities of communication, throwing light into dark places, and bringing with them wider knowledge and understanding. Very few Wesleyans or other Christians to-day openly believe in witchcraft; such belief is now to be found only in remote rural districts at home, or in out-of-the-way corners of that Continent of Europe where it once

persecuted and tortured without mercy. The habit of credulity is such, however, that forms of belief in witchcraft still linger under the names of palmistry, occultism, fortune-telling and crystal-gazing, and in the use of mascots;[1] and also in some of the grosser forms of Spiritualism. The twentieth-century medium who gets the dead to perform all sorts of kitchen tricks for the satisfaction of the living is the modern and less dignified version of the Witch of Endor raising up the disquieted Samuel. Fortunately for the mediums, the decline in religious belief enables them to carry on their profession without peril.

That Catholics have persecuted Protestants and Protestants Catholics, that both have continued to persecute other heretics and the Jews, and that these persecutions were often accompanied by appalling cruelty, is admitted. But it is urged that this is a chapter of the past. "Modern feeling, Christian and non-Christian alike, runs in other and wider grooves than those which limited sentiment and opinion five hundred years ago. .....To allow our present feelings to dictate our judgment of the past, to compound for sins that we in our modern civilization may be inclined to, by damning with an indignation, however real, those we have no mind to, is to reveal the spirit, not of the sober and intelligent

[1] On April 18, 1919, Major Wood left Eastchurch for the Curragh on the first stage of his Atlantic flight. A few minutes before the send-off the Air Force Church of England chaplain conducted a brief service, and offered up a prayer for the aviator's safety and success. Major Wood carried with him as mascots an ancient Chinese carving and a silver medallion of St. Christopher fording a river with a baby in his arms. Within a few hours the aeroplane came down in the Irish Sea owing to engine trouble. Neither the chaplain's prayers nor the Chinese mascot availed to keep the defective engine in good order. Three days later the *Daily Chronicle* published a paragraph commenting on the supernormal precautions taken by Major Wood to ensure his safety, under the blasphemous heading, "Mixing the Mascots."

critic and historian, but of the boisterous and undisplined partisan."[1] This plea would carry greater force if applied to the precepts and practices of the pre-Christian period of two or more thousand years ago than to the more recent period of the Middle Ages. It has no force at all when applied to the persecutions of modern times. It may be true that in this country at least Jews and heretics are no longer put to death ; but there are Jewish *pogroms* in Russia, Roumania, Poland, Austria, and Germany, and legal penalties on heresy here.[2] And all these religious persecutions, whether on a large scale or a small, have tended and still tend to the demoralization of those who take part in them, of those who condone them, and even of those who suffer them and survive. Among these last there are, here and there, stronger, bolder minds who emerge from the ordeal unscathed and even strengthened; but the weaker—*i.e.*, the majority—seek security in a silence which leads too often to evasions, deceit, and hypocrisy.

> But it is not the minds of heretics that are deteriorated most by the ban placed on all inquiry which does not end in the orthodox conclusions. The greatest harm done is to those who are not heretics, and whose whole mental development is cramped and their reason cowed by the fear of heresy. Who can compute what the world loses in the multitude of promising intellects combined with timid characters who dare not follow out any bold, vigorous, independent train of thought lest it should land them in something which would admit of being considered irreligious or immoral?.....No one can be a great thinker who does not recognize that as a thinker it is his first duty to follow his intellect to

[1] J. K. Mozley, B.D., *The Achievements of Christianity*, pp. 50–54.

[2] See also chapter viii.

whatever conclusions it may lead. Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think. Not that it is solely or chiefly to form great thinkers that freedom of thinking is required. On the contrary, it is as much and even more indispensable to enable average human beings to attain the mental stature which they are capable of. There have been, and may again be, great individual thinkers in a general atmosphere of mental slavery. But there never has been, and never will be, in that atmosphere an intellectually active people.[1]

[1] Mill, *On Liberty*.

Chapter VII

TRUTH

If veracity and a thousand horse sacrifices are weighed against each other, it is found that truth ranks even higher than a thousand horse sacrifices. *Institutes of Vishnu.*

Break not the contract, O Spitama, neither the one thou hast entered into with one of the unfaithful nor the one thou hast entered into with the faithful.....For Mithra stands both for the faithful and the unfaithful. *Zend Avesta.*

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
Ninth Commandment.

The recognition of the fact that persecution of opinion puts a premium upon dishonesty leads us to the examination of the influence of religion upon regard for truth generally. That this influence is distinctly adverse may be less obvious to the casual observer than in the more glaring cases of war and slavery.

While many uncivilized races are conspicuous for their unfailing regard for truth, want of veracity is a common defect among civilized people. This seems all the more singular in that nearly all religions hold up truth as the greatest of moral virtues, as it undoubtedly is. In the sacred books of the great pre-Christian religions, Brahminism, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism, and in the writings of the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome, veracity and good faith are highly praised. In the Christian Scriptures, also, there are condemnations of "lying lips" and praise of truth. But religious

precepts eulogizing truth have carried little weight, because, in the first place, the precepts are too often accompanied by reservations which undermine the principle itself; and, in the next, they have not been reinforced by example.

Brahminism, by its sacred books, authorizes perjury for a Brahmin's sake; Moslem doctors hold that no faith must be kept with infidels; a number of Greek Christian fathers teach that perjury, from zeal to God's honour, and from several other motives, is innocent; the infallible General Council of Nicea in 787 accepted the doctrine that the duty of image worship takes precedence of the duty of keeping an oath; the Canon law asserts that oaths disadvantageous to the Church must not be kept, and teaches that the Church can dispense from all "forced" oaths; Pope Urban VI, in the fourteenth century, solemnly laid down the doctrine that no faith is to be kept with heretics—a doctrine consistently maintained by Catholics, and still maintained in purely Catholic countries; the infallible Council of Constance, early in the fifteenth century, solemnly decreed that no faith must be kept with a heretic; Pope Eugenius IV, vice-regent of Christ, laid it down on three different occasions that oaths contracted with heretics, infidels, and enemies of the Church must not be kept; Cardinal Ximenes, in 1501, insisted that oaths made to infidels must be broken; Bishop Simancas, later in the same century, reasserted dogmatically this favourite maxim that no faith must be kept with heretics; the Jesuits taught that the Pope had power to dispense with the dictates of morality in general, and by their casuistry invited men to every form of equivocation and worse, and sapped every basis of truthfulness; and late in the nineteenth century the Catholic Church asserted the ultramontane principle that on occasions it is a Catholic's duty to lie, and recognized as authoritative the teaching

of Liguori, who had reinstated all the abominations of Jesuitry.[1]

The stories of gods and religious heroes are full of instances of dishonesty triumphant, and nowhere do we find this to a greater extent than in the Old Testament, which even describes the Almighty himself as sending a lying spirit to further his own ends.[2] The early Christian Church dealt very gently with the liar when he lied in the service of the Church; it juggled with words to relieve men's consciences, and sent forth many a "lying spirit" to serve its own interests. As Lecky and Westermarck both point out, it is not easy to measure the extent to which the sense of truth in Christian people must have been weakened and impaired through the use made by the Church of "pious frauds," fabrications, legendary miracles, ambiguities, and downright forgeries. To this day there are Christians who seek to prove the truth of Christianity by wholesale falsifications and fictions, and by mean and wanton slanders upon the heretical dead. The force of Christian example, persisting from the earliest ages of Christianity, joined to the necessity of professing to believe, and of asking others to believe, conflicting statements authorized by the Church—some of which must be untrue, whatever may be said of the rest—all this must of necessity tend to dull the general sense of accuracy in Christian people.

It may perhaps be urged that Christianity *does* teach the importance of truth through the dreadful case of Ananias and Sapphira;[3] Ananias who kept back part of the price of his land instead of putting it into the common lot, and who was aided and abetted in his deceit by Sapphira, his wife; for which offence both were

[1] F. H. Perrycoste, *The Influence of Religion upon Truthfulness*, p. 243.

[2] 1 *Kings*, 22, 23.

[3] *Acts*, 5.

punished with instant death without being allowed one moment of time or any opportunity to amend their fault. Countless children have been terrorized by the story of the awful fate of Ananias and Sapphira, and have anxiously refrained from lying, not because they hated the lie, but because they believed with the utmost faith that the lie, once uttered, would be followed by sudden death. Yet the day invariably arrives when stress of immediate temptation overcomes their fears and the lie is spoken. Finding that nothing happens, that they are as hale and hearty as before, their objection to lying is removed. Moreover, as a set-off against any lesson which might be derived from the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, the religious person can always fall back upon the case of Peter, who was the judge of Ananias, but who had himself so little concern for the truth that with curses and oaths he thrice denied his master in his hour of greatest need.[1] Yet Peter was not punished. On the contrary, he was given the keys of the kingdom of heaven.[2] Considering the immunity enjoyed by most of the sacred heroes who wandered from the paths of truth, it is hardly matter for surprise that the outrageously unjust punishment of Ananias and Sapphira should have left so little impression upon the pious mind.

Shortly before the devastating war of 1914–1918 broke down the restraints of civilization, the opinion was confidently expressed that there was a growing appreciation of the value of truth and a marked decrease in the tendency to deception. This may have been so under normal conditions, but there have been times—at general elections, for example—when it has been difficult to believe that there was any but the most superficial understanding of what truth really is.

[1] *Matthew*, xxvi, 75. [2] *Matthew*, xvi, 19.

When Lord Curzon was Viceroy of India he delivered an exordium on truth at the Calcutta University,[1] in the course of which he said :—

> I hope I am making no false or arrogant claim when I say that the highest ideal of truth is to a large extent a Western conception. I do not mean to claim that Europeans are universally or even generally truthful; still less do I mean that Asiatics deliberately or habitually deviate from the truth. The one proposition would be absurd, and the other insulting. But undoubtedly truth took a higher place in the moral codes of the West before it had been similarly honoured in the East, where craftiness and diplomatic wile have always been held in much repute. We may prove it by the common innuendo that lurks in the words "oriental diplomacy,"[2] by which is meant something tortuous and super-subtle.....Now, the commonest forms which are taken by untruth in this country [India] seem to me to be the following: The first is exaggeration, particularly in language; the tendency to speak or write things which the speaker or writer does not believe, or which are more than he believes, for the sake of colouring the picture or producing an effect. It is quite a common thing to see the most extravagant account of ordinary occurrences, or the most fanciful motives attributed to persons. Invention and imputation flourish in an unusual degree.....I know no country where "mare's nests" are more prolific than here. Some ridiculous concoction is publicly believed until it is officially denied. Very often a whole fabric of hypothesis is built out of nothing at all. Worthy people are extolled as heroes. Political opponents are branded as male-factors. Immoderate adjectives are flung about as though they had no significance. The writer no doubt did not mean to lie. But the habit of exaggeration had laid such firm hold of him that he

[1] February 11, 1905. [2] *Cp. Machiavellian Policy.*

> is like a man who has taken too much to drink, and who sees two things where there is only one, or something where there is nothing. As he writes in hyperbole, so he tends to think in hyperbole, and ends in becoming blind to the truth.

Had Lord Curzon delivered this address at a British university in relation to his own country any time during the last five years, his audience would have had no difficulty in seeing the application.

In Courts of Law, in order to induce them to speak the truth, Christian witnesses are compelled to take an oath and to invoke the aid of Deity; but Judges constantly complain of the perjury committed in the Courts. Judge Rentoul declared that "perjury was committed at least a hundred times a week in the City of London Courts, and sometimes by persons who desired to avoid the payment of so small a sum as 1s. 6d."[1] Whatever may be the witnesses' religious belief, few of them attach any importance to the oath they have taken upon the Bible. If they are honest men, they speak the truth; if they are dishonest, the oath never restrains them from lying.

The schools, with their would-be moral teaching based upon religion, do very little towards promoting a high standard of truth. The poverty of ethical teaching both in the Church and in the school was noted and deplored a generation ago by Mr. Hale White ("Mark Rutherford"). "Ethical science, strictly so-called," he said, "is non-existent. No preacher preaches it; the orthodox Churches are given over to a philosophy of rags, and 'free' pulpits do nothing but mince and mash-up for popular ears commonplaces upon books and passing events. Neither does any school teach it....." In my class, and it is a

[1] *Times*, December 6, 1912. At the Old Bailey on April 4, 1919, the Common Sergeant remarked on the enormous amount of perjury committed in the County Courts and elsewhere.

large one,' said a teacher to me the other day, 'there is not one girl who would not on the slightest pressure tell me a lie'; and this was in a school not certainly for the rich, but certainly not for the poor."[1] Nor have the succeeding years shown much improvement in the ethical atmosphere of the schools. Mr. F. H. Rawlins, speaking from thirty years' experience as a teacher at Eton, the premier public school of this country, said that he found in the boys an "acquiescence in comparatively low standards of honesty and truth, subservience to public opinion on questions of right or wrong, and readiness to believe evil of one another on very slight evidence or none at all."[2] Nor is the atmosphere of the State elementary schools any better. Heated controversies take place as to the religious instruction in our schools; but, apart from the efforts of Mr. F. J. Gould and the Moral Instruction League, education in ethics is rarely considered.

It is clear that no general or stable improvement in the regard for truth and honesty can be expected until we get in our schools a recognized teaching of ethics entirely free from the corrupting influence of religion, which seeks to implant in the tender, impressionable mind of the child ideas as true which are manifestly false, and which impose upon him two standards of truth—a thing utterly subversive of all honesty. When we get ethics taught purely and directly as ethics, and not as part of a religion to which they have to be adjusted; then, but not until then, may we hope that this much-to-be-desired development of higher standards of veracity in public as well as private life will be considerably accelerated.

[1] Preface to W. H. White's translation of Spinoza's *Ethic*, p. xxiii.

[2] *Times*, May 23, 1906.

Chapter VIII

LIBERTY

> Ethical progress has taken the form of a protest against the principle of authority which at the outset of the period everywhere dominated the world, and, so far, has tended to curtail the sphere of government in favour of individual liberty.....From the moment that honesty is recognized as a duty it becomes increasingly repugnant to penalize the belief to which it may lead. The heavier the penalties, the more exclusively they fall on the stoutest and best natures—that is, precisely on those qualified under happier circumstances to serve society.
>
> L. T. Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution.*

In this country there is much talk about liberty, and we are very proud of our traditions of liberty. Some of us, indeed, are more proud of our traditions than of our liberty; but that is by the way. When we inquire how much of that liberty has been won by the efforts of the Christian Church, or by men inspired by their Christianity, our investigations show us that orthodox Christianity has always opposed liberty, and that only in proportion as men have cut themselves adrift from orthodoxy have they become ardent in the cause of liberty. Freethinkers—*i.e.*, men who have rejected the dogmas of Christianity—have never been found wanting in the world's struggle for liberty. They are to be found more or less prominently associated with nearly every struggle for liberty which has taken place during the last century and a-half. Earlier than that avowed Freethought was almost unknown; nevertheless, the struggle for liberty was always carried on by the heretics of the day, and not by the orthodox.

To say that liberty is a sublime possession is no more than a truism. It is absolutely necessary to the proper development alike of nations and of individuals. Bonds, whether they be material or mental, tend to deformity. The cramped foot of the Chinese woman may be thought beautiful in China. The cramped mentality of the priest may be thought beautiful at the Vatican in Rome, or at Lambeth Palace in London. To the Rationalist both are equally ugly.

What is liberty? In the *Morning Chronicle* of 1832 there is an article dated "Paris, February 9," which is written round a little story which may furnish some sort of answer to that question. The *Chronicle* correspondent relates that, as he was crossing the *Palais Royal* that morning, he noticed a boy who was hurrying along with a small parcel under his arm, singing as he went a popular song, the refrain of which laid stress on the word "*Liberté*." The correspondent stopped the boy, and asked him: "What do you mean by liberty?" The boy stared at his questioner, but answered promptly enough: "What is liberty? Why, the liberty I was singing about is the liberty of saying, doing, and writing what we please, without being persecuted by the Government. But we are not to say, or do, or write anything which can injure our neighbour or our country." Asked as to his age, parentage, and occupation, the boy said that he was nearly thirteen, that his father was a porter, and that when he was not at school he himself was a shoemaker's errand boy. Asked if he were happy, he answered: "Very much so"; if he wanted anything, he replied: "Nothing, but to be allowed to run off with his parcel." It is unlikely that there are many boys of thirteen among us in this nineteenth year of the twentieth century who could spontaneously give such an answer to the question, "What is liberty?" The French boy's

idea of liberty was clearly derived directly from the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* drawn up by Thomas Paine in Paris in 1793, one of the clauses of which affirms that liberty consists in "the right to say or do whatever is not contrary to the rights of others." This idea of liberty proclaimed during the stress and storm of the Revolution penetrated so deeply into the minds of the people that it survived even the Imperialism of Napoleon, and was found on the lips of the children of the succeeding generation. To-day also, when we ask for liberty, we ask for the right to speak, to write, to act freely according to conscience, with no other limitation than that which shall ensure equal liberty to others.

But equal liberty for all means special privilege to none; consequently the privileged classes always oppose liberty to the utmost of their power, and liberty has no more inveterate enemies than war and religion. Militarism enslaves the body; religion enslaves the mind: when the two go together the servitude is complete. Priestly authority and secular authority, Church and State, are constantly found in alliance; and together or separately they wage perpetual war upon the liberties of mankind. A certain measure of secular authority is, of course, necessary to ensure the security of society and protect individuals in the enjoyment of their liberties; but every extension of authority beyond what is absolutely necessary for these purposes is to be regarded with suspicion as more likely to destroy liberty than to promote it.

Both in the etymological meaning of the word and in actual practice religion means bondage. And, unfortunately, it not only binds its own adherents, but nearly every religion seeks to punish here or hereafter, or both, those who refuse their adherence and are unable to accept its particular dogmas and precepts. The conflict between liberty and the tyranny of religion is a very old

one; and it must have begun almost with the very birth of religion. In this country the only religion which concerns our daily lives to any extent is Christianity, and we know that from the moment Christianity became a power it began to deny to others the same free expression of opinion which it had earlier claimed for itself. Before the first quarter of the fourth century had passed, the Bishop of Alexandria was "exasperated to the highest degree" because the Presbyter Arius had taken the liberty of thinking for himself upon the subject of the Trinity, and he pronounced a solemn anathema upon Arius and upon all who countenanced his ideas. A century later another ecclesiastic of Alexandria, the Patriarch Cyril, was also "exasperated to the highest degree" because of the successful teaching of the noble and learned Hypatia. He accordingly excited against her the fury of his crew of priestly ruffians, who dragged her from her carriage, stripped her clothes from her person, and carried her to the altar of their church, where they tore her flesh piece by piece from her bones.[1]

This absolute denial of liberty of opinion has been from the very first a rigid rule with the Christian Church, which in its persecuting zeal has not spared man, woman, or child. For example, Judaism is the parent religion of Christianity, the religion from which Christianity sprang, and without which there could have been no Christianity. Yet the new religion turned against its parent with the utmost rancour, and for upwards of fifteen centuries the Christian communities of Europe have ostracized Jews, denying them the most elementary of liberties. They have burned them at the stake; they have robbed them of their wealth; they have robbed them of their children, whom they have forcibly educated

[1] Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, B. vii, c. 15.

in the Christian faith; they have prohibited or burned their sacred books; they have denied them almost everything which makes life worth living. Even within the period of our own generation, time after time there have been Easter *pogroms*, or wholesale massacres of men, women, and children of the Jewish faith. The Christian treatment of the Jews makes a black chapter in the history of the Church, whether "Orthodox" in Russia and Roumania, Catholic in Austria, or Lutheran in Germany. In certain countries the spirit of anti-Semitism burns as strongly to-day as ever it did, and *pogroms* are still taking place; in others it is held in check only by the steady growth of Rationalism.

But the Jews do not stand alone as victims of Christian ruthlessness. To realize the extent of the relentless enmity of the Church to all who refused submission to her authority we have only to recall the horrible persecutions organized by the Christian Church and carried on systematically for nearly six centuries under the Inquisition, or such savage massacres as that of St. Bartholomew. Human memory is short, otherwise one might have imagined that it would require centuries of unblemished virtue on the part of Christians everywhere, great and small, high and low, to cleanse their shield from the bloodstain of these awful crimes. But official Christians have either no memory or no shame. By some curious mental twist they can ignore their dark record and boast of the reign of love and brotherhood of man inaugurated by Christianity. There are some of us living even at the present day who have learned by bitter experience that their love begins only where their power to strike has become paralysed by the growth of a sane Rationalism. To-day the Christian Church no longer dares to torture or put to death whole communities; but it has not yet ceased to oppress individuals who venture

to think for themselves. In our own country Christianity still clings to the remnants of power given it by the law to imprison men who speak against its dogmas, although it is only when it is able to couple Freethought advocacy with coarse and scurrilous language that it dares to use its power. But it should be clearly understood that it is the Freethought advocacy which is the crime, not the language used. Identical language in the mouth of a Christian might pass without censure, or if used to denounce Freethought might even be received with applause.

It is a matter of experience that the Church has always shown itself more anxious to suppress heresy than to repress coarseness or any form of immorality.

> The Church of Rome.....has been and still is very pliant in regard to morals and very inflexible in regard to dogmas.....This peculiarity, though strongly marked in the Romish Church, is by no means confined to it, but is found in every religious sect which is regularly organized.[1]

The Catholic Church in the past sold indulgences to sinners by the thousand, but it has always refused liberty to moralists to expose the licentiousness of the clergy. In the fifteenth century so intensely a religious man as John Huss was burned as a heretic, largely because of his indignant denunciation of the profligacy of the priesthood; and when he was put upon his trial before the assembled ecclesiastics of the Christian world at the great Council at Constance he was denied the assistance of an advocate on the ground that, according to Canon law, no aid could be given to heretics; they were outside the pale of humanity, persons with whom no faith could be kept. In England a judge of the time of Henry VIII

[1] Buckle, *History of Civilization*, II, p. 52.

held that a Pagan—*i.e.*, a non-Christian—could not have and could not maintain any action at law; and later on Lord Coke, referring to this dictum and to St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians ("What part hath he that believeth, with an infidel?", vi, 15), laid down that infidels were perpetual enemies, and a perpetual enemy could not maintain any action, or yet anything within the realm.[1] By "infidel" Coke meant every one who did not subscribe to the dogmas of the orthodox Church; one who denied the Trinity or the truth of the Holy Scriptures. So long as this ruling endured, which it did to a greater or less extent until the passing of the Evidence Amendment Acts of 1869 and 1870, Freethinkers in England were outlaws; they had practically no rights in law; such rights as they enjoyed were in evasion of the law, and not in accordance with it. Hostility to the free expression of opinion has been from first to last so firmly implanted in the Christian mind that even so notable a man as Erasmus did not hesitate to declare that "heresy was a greater sin than impurity of life." But so wide was the priestly conception of heresy and so narrow the conception of Christian faith that Erasmus's own works were placed upon the *Index* by the Catholics as heretical, and condemned by the Lutherans as un-Christian and time-serving.

The history of the Church censorship of books[2] is well worth the attention of Rationalists and Christians alike, for the light it throws on the means used by the Church in power to keep the mind in subjection to priestly authority. There is hardly any subject within the purview of human interest which has not been prohibited by the Catholic Church at some time or another. Not only were all books of religious criticism suppressed, but

[1] Lord Sumner in House of Lords, 1917.
[2] See *The Censorship of the Church of Rome*, by G. H. Putnam.

the Scriptures themselves were forbidden to the common people. Histories have been forbidden, books on law, philosophy, natural science, and medicine; even encyclopædias were prohibited because they contained inconvenient entries. For more than two hundred years the writings of Copernicus and Galileo were forbidden; to read them was to run the risk of eternal damnation; it was not until the year 1835 that an edition of the *Index* was allowed to appear without containing a prohibition of all works which taught the double motion of the earth.

The Lutherans, Calvinists, and Puritans were scarcely less active and scarcely less vindictive than the Church of Rome when they possessed the power. Milton's *Areopagitica*, the finest, the most eloquent defence of a free press ever given to the world, was prohibited by the Puritan Cromwell; and by statute law and common law the publication of heresy was made a penal offence in Protestant England as well as under Catholicism. In 1791 Dr. Priestley's library in Birmingham was burned by a fanatical mob as Atheistic, and for years Paine's *Age of Reason* was suppressed by law. It was not until the courage and persistency of Richard Carlile and his colleagues had worn out the zeal of the bigots and persecutors that it could be freely bought and sold. Even newspapers in this country had to give securities against sedition and blasphemy; until in 1868 the Government attempted by this means to suppress the *National Reformer*, and Mr. Bradlaugh's defence forced the repeal of the law, and so finally freed the press from this bondage.[1]

One thing that persecutors always seem slow to learn is that suppressions and prohibitions of opinion are invariably a failure in the long run. Persecution succeeds

[1] Collet W. Collet, *History of the Taxes on Knowledge*, II, pp. 185–195.

only in those rare cases when it is carried to the extreme point of extermination; when the persecutors, like Ferdinand II of Austria, think even "a desert preferable to a land of heretics." Persecution may appear to suppress opinion, but what it really does is to drive thought underground. Men who are forbidden to speak aloud will whisper in secret; but sooner or later the day inevitably comes when their thoughts, if they have any substance in them, are spoken aloud once more.

Every Church is an instrument of bondage. A great Church, such as the Catholic Church, is a most powerful instrument; the Greek Church, the Lutheran, the Calvinist, all these are powerful; but even the smallest Church puts hobbles on the feet of its adherents: they must travel the narrow way marked out for them; that way they must go, and no other.

Christianity, in its precept and its practice, has been hardly less hostile to political liberty than to liberty of speech. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."[1] "Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward."[2] This is the doctrine preached by the New Testament and practised by tyrants and slaves; it is not for the man who would be free.

Every liberty won by mankind has been won in spite of the hostility of the Church in power, and not through its aid. The Churches always fight against liberty—

[1] *Romans*, xiii, 1, 2. [2] *1 Peter*, ii, 17, 18.

never for it, except it may be for particular liberties which serve their interests, and which in their hands cease to be liberties and become privileges. The heart of the individual is in the fight for liberty just in proportion as he loses his sense of obligation to the creed which binds him, and the man who fights most wholeheartedly and with the fewest reservations is he who has no religious creed to fetter him at all.

Chapter IX

WOMEN

Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee. But he answered.....Who is my mother?

Matt., xii, 47.

Woman, what have I to do with thee?

JESUS to his Mother (*John*, ii, 4).

Let women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness and sobriety.

First Epistle of Paul to Timothy, ii, 11-15.

IT is difficult to exaggerate the adverse influence of the precepts and practices of religion upon the status and happiness of woman. Owing to the fact that upon women devolves the burden of motherhood, with all its accompanying disabilities, they always have been, and always must be, at a natural disadvantage in the struggle of life as compared with men. Men have had two courses open to them in regard to women: (1) to minimize the disadvantages so far as it lay in their power to do so; or (2) to take advantage of the natural disabilities in order to impose artificial ones, and by this means increase their own power and authority. The first course is the moral course, tending to the common good; the second is the immoral course, in which the selfish interests of one part of the community are made to triumph at the expense of the other part. It is the

second course which usually has been followed. With certain rare exceptions, women all the world over have been relegated to a position of inferiority in the community, greater or less according to the religion and the social organization of the people; the more religious the people the lower the status of the women.

In ancient Egypt, two thousand years before the Christian era, women were in a position of closer equality with men, and had greater freedom and independence, than anywhere at any time since,[1] at any rate until quite recently. Egyptologists such as Professor Flinders Petrie, M. Maspero, and M. Paturet describe the women who lived in Egypt four thousand years ago as equal with men before the law, inheriting equally and having full control over their property and person. Polygamy existed in theory in ancient Egypt, but seems to have been rare in practice. In Europe under Christianity polygamy has been forbidden in theory, but has been by no means rare in practice—in a clandestine form.

The women of ancient Greece and Rome had no such freedom as that enjoyed by the earlier Egyptian generation. Under the Roman Republic they were, according to law, subject to the absolute control of the father or the husband. In marrying, the woman merely exchanged one master for another. During the days of the later Empire there was a general relaxing of restrictions; this reacted favourably in the case of women, who then reached their position of greatest independence in Europe. They held property, took part in public affairs, had complete control over their own homes and establishments, and even held municipal offices.[2] In a recent

[1] For a more detailed study of this subject see *The Religion of Woman*, by Joseph McCabe.

[2] Donaldson, *Woman: Her Position in Ancient Greece and Rome*, Bk. II.

book, which professes to see in history the working of Christian principles, it is claimed that "it was in virtue of the faith of Christ, and that alone, that the position of woman was bettered, and respect for woman increased, in the later Roman Empire and in the dark ages that followed."[1] But the records bear witness that on the advent of Christianity, with its doctrine of the inferiority of women, their liberties were curtailed, the range of their activities contracted, and their character lowered.[2]

Christianity is sometimes described as an essentially feminine religion, inasmuch as the Mother of God is a chief object of worship, and women have had a conspicuous place allotted to them as saints and martyrs; and also because in the New Testament there is much which appeals to the peculiarly feminine emotions of tenderness and pity. It is very certain that Christianity has always found its chief supporters among women, although, with a few recent exceptions, they have never been permitted to aspire to the priesthood, and have been strictly forbidden to allow their voices to be heard as Christian teachers.

Tertullian, who lived in the third century, described women as "the devil's gateway," and declared that they ought to go about in humble garb mourning and repentant for the sin of their mother Eve. The Canon law could neither forget nor forgive the seduction of Adam.[3] St. Ambrose, in fact, puts this forward definitely as the reason why woman should take man as her ruler, so that he may not fall a second time through female levity. The saint evidently thought that, with man and woman on equal terms, the man would stand a poor chance. At a Church Council held at Mâcon at the end of the sixth

[1] Mozley, *The Achievements of Christianity*, p. xiv.
[2] Donaldson, Bk. III.
[3] Ostrogorski, *Rights of Woman*, p. xi.

century there was a bishop who expressed a doubt whether woman was a human being at all; but the Council decided that, in spite of all her shortcomings, she really did belong to the human species. At a Council held at Auxerre, women were forbidden to receive the Eucharist in their bare hands; and some of the Canons of the Church forbade them to approach the altar during the celebration of Mass: in the Middle Ages the Church even employed eunuchs in the cathedral choirs in order to supply the soprano voices, which otherwise belong only to women.[1] In parts of Europe women were obliged to enter the church by a separate door, and to sit and stand apart from the men—a practice which still prevails in certain churches at the present day.

It is notorious that the early Church took a very coarse and detestable view of marriage, and advocated celibacy as a far higher state. Marriage, said the Fathers, prevented a person from serving God perfectly, since it induced him to occupy himself with worldly affairs.

> This antagonism to marriage had a great influence on family life. It is strange how seldom children are mentioned in the Christian writings of the second and third centuries. Almost nothing is said of their training; no efforts are mentioned as being made for their instruction.....Tertullian describes children as "burdens which are to us most of all unsuitable, as being perilous to faith."[2]

After a prolonged struggle the Church succeeded in establishing the institution of clerical celibacy, which, with its nominally celibate clergy and its congregations of nominally celibate monks and nuns, was one of the most frightful sources of immorality which it is

[1] Westermarck, *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, I, pp. 663, 666.
[2] Donaldson, p. 180.

possible to conceive.[1] This position taken by the Christian Church towards marriage was accompanied by the most odious views concerning women generally. And there is very little doubt that this contemptuous and hostile attitude adopted towards them by official Christianity has been largely responsible for the heavy disabilities under which European women have suffered even in the most progressive Christian States. The Pauline doctrine of the subjection of women is alone answerable for much that is evil in the conduct of society towards women.

This contempt for women, carrying with it their exclusion from active participation in issues affecting the welfare of the community, has not been confined to any one branch of Christianity; it is to be found to a greater or less extent among all sects. Nothing, for example, could be more insolent than John Wesley's attitude towards women as displayed in a rebuke he addressed to his wife:—

> Be content [he wrote] to be a private insignificant person, known and loved by God and me. Of what importance is your character to mankind? If you was buried just now, or if you had never lived, what loss would it be to the cause of God?[2]

If we look at the position of women in Europe at any time between the rise of Christianity and the dawn of Rationalism at the end of the eighteenth century, we find them generally in a very low state of culture and condition. There have, of course, been exceptions. There always have been individual women who,

[1] No one can have any real idea of the grossness or the extent of the immorality of the clergy who has not read Lea's *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, or consulted the records of ancient cities, visitations to religious houses, and similar documents. See also Coulton's *Medieval Studies* (first series).

[2] Quoted by Morley in his *Diderot*, p. 169.

through force of circumstances and sheer driving power, have risen above their fellows; but these were the exceptions, the rare exceptions. Too often, indeed, both men and women of the rural populations were sunk deep in misery and degradation, and then the woman was just the slave of a slave. Too often both lived and died in a condition scarcely better—in some respects, infinitely worse—than that of the cattle in the fields. Who that has ever read it can forget *La Bruyère's* poignant description of the peasantry of Christian France in the century before the Revolution, in which he speaks of them as having fallen to such depths of misery that only the power of difficult speech distinguished man from beast? Where humanity is sunk so low as this it is the bitterest irony for the Christian apologist to talk of the betterment of the position of woman and the increase of respect in which Christian influences caused her to be held. The "faith of Christ" which could bring wealth to the coffers of the Church and enable its ecclesiastics to live in splendour with huge followings of courtiers and courtesans availed nothing to alleviate the lot of the man and woman who tilled the soil and sowed the seed.

What has Christianity done for the women of Abyssinia? Abyssinia is one of the oldest of Christian countries, and its late ruler, Menelek, traced his descent back to the Queen of Sheba. In Abyssinia there is no development of Rationalism to dispute the claims of Christian influence. Whatever unaided faith in Christ could accomplish, we might expect to see it there. The Abyssinians care a great deal about their religion, and believe that they are the only real Christians; they would not admit that the English who visited them were Christians at all.[1] They may be quite right; there

[1] A. B. Wylde, *Modern Abyssinia*, p. 142; H. Vivian, *Abyssinia*, p. 275.

are so many varieties of Christians, each professing to be the only true one, that it is difficult for outsiders to decide. In Austria, under the Empire, the Church of England, all-important as it is in Great Britain, was not accepted as Christian. The Abyssinians, at any rate, are described as being extremely religious, and the clergy hold the people in their power by threat of excommunication and other clerical anathemas. A favourite subject for church decoration appears to be martyrdom on earth and torture in hell; all the good people are represented as white, and all the bad people and the devils as black. Education—such as it is—is confined to the Church, the women are regarded as beasts of burden who do all the hard work of daily life, and the people generally are described as being morally lax, while polygamy is a common practice. In Abyssinia, where Christianity has been the prevailing religion for close upon sixteen hundred years, and where Rationalism is utterly unknown, the women folk are no better than beasts of burden.

Russia is another very Christian country untouched by Rationalism until quite modern times. In Russia, among the so-called upper classes, it was the custom two hundred years ago for the husband's horsewhip to hang over the bed of the married couple; and we are assured that it was no empty symbol. The treatment of female serfs was often infamous to the last degree. There were nobles who "plied a regular trade in young peasant girls, whom they sold to brothels. Gangs of serfs were taken to the southern markets, where Armenian merchants bought them for the purpose of exportation to Turkey."[1] Until well within the last century the Russian peasantry lived together in great families composed of twenty, thirty, or sometimes as many as

[1] Tikhomorov, *Russia: Political and Social*, I, p. 234.

fifty or sixty members, all subject to the absolute authority of the eldest man, usually the eldest grandfather, unless he was too feeble to keep order. The despotic authority in such families fell most heavily upon the women, especially upon the last new daughter-in-law; each generation was a slave to the elders, and the last comer was a slave to all, scolded, cursed, and beaten without mercy.[1] These Russians were intensely pious, living on terms of the closest intimacy with God, the Holy Virgin, and the saints—if one may judge from their folk-lore, folk-songs, and traditions. The gross superstitions of the peasants were kept up and even fostered by the Church.[2] It was the intellectual movement—not Christianity, but the movement away from Christianity—which bettered the condition of the cultured classes and brought them increased respect. Heresy is sometimes fanatical and irrational, at other times rational and temperate; and in so numerous, so varied, and so emotional a people as the Russians it has taken every variety of form. One good result of the movement towards intellectual and personal emancipation was the break-up of the old despotic great family system and the awakening interest in education; but emancipation was still very partial and very tentative when the War came; then followed the Revolution, and then chaos, out of which a new and greater Russia may be born.

[1] "The Little Russians have a very characteristic saying:—

Who is going to bring the water? The daughter-in-law.
Who is to be beaten? The daughter-in-law.
Why is she beaten? Because she is the daughter-in-law."

A song of the Great Russians, in which the young wife laments her weariness, shows that the husband is powerless to protect his bride from the "striking, roaring, striking, roaring," of the angry father-in-law and the upbraiding of the angry mother-in-law (Tikhomorov, *Russia: Political and Social*, I, p. 185).

[2] *Id.*, p. 180.

The case of Russia and that of Abyssinia are extreme instances of the worthlessness of "faith of Christ" as an influence in the betterment of humanity; extreme both in their brutal despotism towards women and in the unquestioning credulity of the people. The Russians doubted neither Christ nor Mary, neither Heaven nor Hell, neither witchcraft nor sorcery; their faith knew no bounds, for it was commensurate with their ignorance.

The rise which has taken place recently in the status of women in certain countries is due almost wholly, if not entirely, to the decline in religious belief. Among our own people, where circumstances have been specially favourable to the growth of the spirit of liberty, the independence of women and the equalization of their rights have come only little by little; every step has been gained in defiance of the Church and the teachings of the Scriptures, and in no way through their aid.[1] When women cease to kiss the rod which has chastised them for the past sixteen centuries, their emancipation will be still further hastened, their characters strengthened, and their activities given full scope, not only in England, but in France, Italy, Spain, and in other of the Christian countries of the world. The wider education of women should do much to improve their condition; it should make them more respected, and, what is of equal importance, it should

[1] What irony it is to boast of the respect in which women are held by virtue of the faith of Christ when twentieth-century Christians could defend the establishment of *maisons tolerées*, and a notoriously pious Prime Minister of England could authorize a police regulation under which young women—even decent, modest young women—could be arrested, while their men companions went free. The Rev. A. A. Toms (Hunstanton) actually suggested that "frail women" should be compelled to wear red bonnets. There are no frail women without frail men, but there was no suggestion made that frail men should wear red caps as a danger signal to weak women.

make them respect themselves more. The more women know, the less they will "believe." And once released from the thraldom of belief, they will be free to prove their own worth. The more heretical women become—*i.e.*, the more they think, criticize, and make up their minds for themselves, instead of humbly asking their husbands, as enjoined by St. Paul—the sooner will they reach a position of dignity and independence.

Chapter X

CHILDREN

In the official Report of the N.S.P.C.C. for last year it is stated that 156,637 children were involved in the cases of cruelty, and of this terrible total 154,387 were related to the offenders.....In spite of the vast hordes of Jewish aliens who pour into this country every year, a case of cruelty to children is hardly ever found in a Jewish home. So far as I have been able to ascertain, child torture seems to be a form of barbarity entirely confined to Christian people. What is the answer of our churches and our chapels to this indictment? G. R. Sims, December, 1912.

What has Christianity done for the child? In what way has it aided him; in what way has it used its enormous power to protect him from oppression? Has it ever sought to further his education, except on special lines for its own ends, or taken definite practical steps to elevate his social condition and moral standards? What particular movements has it inspired towards the physical, mental, and moral development of the young?

Humanity has a right to demand of the Christian Church an account of the trust it voluntarily assumed, for Christianity is conspicuous among the world religions in professing to take children under its special protection. Jesus Christ is constantly represented as the guardian of the little ones, and the words attributed to him, "Suffer little children to come unto me.....for of such is the kingdom of heaven,"[1] and the warning that "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me,

[1] *Mark*, x, 14.

it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea,"[1] are familiar to all of us. And the inference we are asked to draw is that they cover a benevolent activity on the part of the Christian Church towards children. It is when we seek for details of this benevolent activity that the trouble begins. There is one thing, however, which we are invariably told, and it is that, whereas infanticide and child exposure were commonly practised among the Pagan Greeks and Romans, the advent of Christianity put an end to these abominations.

Both infanticide and child exposure were undoubtedly practised among the ancient Greeks and Romans, as they were among the Semites, among various Hindu castes, and among some savage tribes. In the majority of these cases there can be little doubt that the practice was due to economic causes; people living on the margin of subsistence find every new mouth to be fed a very serious consideration. Infanticide, however, has not always been due to economic causes; in some cases we find it practised as a definitely sacrificial rite in connection with religion, in order to appease an angry god or to avert his anger. Abraham, for example, made no difficulty about sacrificing the son of his old age in order to please Jehovah.[2] Instances of human sacrifice associated with religion are to be found in nearly every part of the world. A common occasion for the sacrifice was in connection with the foundation of buildings, and the victim chosen was frequently a little child. The excavations made at Gezer (Palestine) showed that it was customary for the Canaanites to build a new-born infant into the foundation corners of the houses, and at

[1] *Matthew*, xviii, 6. [2] *Genesis*, xxii.

Ta' Annek as many as twenty infants appear to have been sacrificed at the foundations of the rock altar or temple there.[1] The belief in this rite—a belief said to exist in parts of India at the present day—was long current even in Europe; and Grimm, in his *Teutonic Mythology*,[2] says that so late as 1843, when the bridge at Halle was being built, the superstitious peasantry thought that a child was needed to be built into the foundations.[3] Nearly all religions have, in their early stages, demanded human sacrifices; but a very secular humanity, revolting from such atrocities, led at length to their discontinuance. The gods still required to be appeased, but it seems remarkably easy to cheat a god, and animals and other substitutes were used in place of the human victim; or scourging, bleeding, or mutilation was substituted for the actual killing.

The exposure or putting to death of sickly and deformed infants was a recognized custom in Greece, approved by Grecian philosophers, and in Sparta even enjoined by law. The explanation of this practice seems to be that the resources of the Greek states were strictly limited, and they feared to be burdened with useless lives. But, although the exposure of sickly and deformed infants was approved, the exposure of healthy infants was explicitly condemned, and at Thebes was made a capital offence. Among the Romans also it was customary to destroy deformed children. But the Romans, being a military people constantly engaged in warfare, wanted —as militarists always do want—a large population to supply material for the greater human sacrifice of war. So far, therefore, from encouraging indiscriminate

[1] Payne, *Child in Human Progress*, p. 150. [2] III, p. 1142.
[3] *Cp.* Legend of St. Columba and the Cathedral at Iona. *The Antiquary*, III, p. 11.

infanticide, the Roman rulers gave special privileges to the fathers of large families. Nevertheless, there was a great deal of poverty, and in consequence the exposure of healthy infants took place on a considerable scale. It was the custom to deposit in special places the children about to be abandoned, together with certain articles for the purpose of future identification. Sometimes the children died, but more often they were picked up by speculators, who educated them as slaves or prostitutes, or mutilated them to fit them for the profession of beggars. Under Roman law, however, the father always had the right to recover his child on payment of the expenses incurred for its maintenance.

Christianity from the very first denounced infanticide as an atrocious crime. It was influenced in this course less from any consideration for the child as a human being than from the fact that children slain in early infancy were nearly always unbaptized children, and were therefore, according to the terrible Christian doctrine, doomed to endless torment after death. Christians taught that these little children, infant children, guiltless of all offence save being born unwanted into the world, having been killed by their earthly fathers, were condemned by their Heavenly Father to an eternity of hell-fire.[1] So strong was this solicitude for the unbaptized child, and so long did it endure, that, by the French laws of the sixteenth century and the English and Scotch laws of the seventeenth, it was laid down that any woman who had concealed her pregnancy and whose child was found dead, and was thus "deprived of the holy sacrament of baptism," was to be punished as a murderer.

[1] Illegitimate children were commonly believed to be inherently wicked and doomed to hell. Manning, *The People's Faith in the Time of Wyclif*, p. 106.

The same religious motive which acted—or which might have been expected to act—as a check upon infanticide within Christendom acted as an enslaving and exterminating force outside. The warning given by Jesus to those who should offend the little ones was precisely limited to the little ones "which believe in me." Those who did not so believe were not only outside the protection of the Church, but were even regarded as fit subjects for persecution. The Bible heroes do not appear to have indulged in any sentiment of pity towards the little ones. When the children of Israel made war against the Midianites and conquered them, they slew the men, but spared the women and children. This leniency, so creditable to the soldiers, angered Moses, who thereupon ordered that all the mothers and male children should be slain and only the women children kept alive for the use of their conquerors.[1] St. Augustine held that not only heretics, but the children of heretics also, were dangerous lunatics, and should be treated accordingly. In Spain, in the seventh and eighth centuries, Jewish children were seized and shut up in monasteries or handed over to God-fearing Christians. In Toledo, in 694, the Council of the Inquisition decreed that Jewish children should be reduced to perpetual servitude and their property confiscated. Under the Inquisition, children were held capable of heresy at six to seven years; and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries children of eight, nine, and ten years of age were tried and punished for heresy.[2] Neither the Inquisition nor any other form of religious persecution has ever spared the children of heretics since Christianity first made its appearance.

[1] *Numbers*, xxxi. [2] Lea, *Spanish Inquisition*.

Whatever may be said about the barbarism of child exposure as distinguished from direct infanticide, this practice, so far from being abolished, was not even checked by the influence of Christianity; it prevailed quite as extensively after the advent of Christianity as before, and we find the Councils of the Church making various regulations as to the adoption of foundling children. A receptacle was placed in the porch of the church for the accommodation of abandoned infants, and the child was either transferred with the consent of the bishop to a parishioner for adoption, and henceforth held by him as his slave, or the Church itself assumed responsibility for the orphan under similar conditions. This traffic in children became so general and so profitable that the Churches actually reckoned the newly-born among their assets; the Church of Seville, for example, enumerated the abandoned children it took in as among its sources of revenue.[1] Thus for hundreds of years in Christian Europe, just as in earlier days in Pagan Rome, abandoned children were brought up as slaves. In Rome the slavery was made a source of revenue to the master; in Christian Europe it was made a source of revenue to the Church, which professed to succour and protect the orphan. Humane Christians seek to salve their conscience by urging that at any rate these enslaved children of the Church were brought up with no criminal purpose; and, so far as the ecclesiastical authorities were able to exercise control, they were not condemned to lives of immorality. But since the ecclesiastics themselves were for the most part grossly immoral, and sometimes criminal as well, it is hard to believe that they took much trouble about the morality of their helpless wards.

[1] Payne, *Child in Human Progress*, p. 287.

As one scans the records of Europe from century to century, from the third to the eighteenth, small evidence is to be found of any appreciable amelioration in the conditions of child life. For a thousand years, and half-a-thousand again, during which Christianity was all-powerful in Europe, it is more or less the same story of lands devastated by war, of peoples deep sunk in misery, poverty, and ignorance; of children abandoned in the church porch, or exposed on the high ways, or even—more mercifully—drowned in the river or the sewer. Children were sold by their parents to middle men in the open market; they were stolen from parents and sold. And so late as the seventeenth century of the Christian era, just as in the centuries which preceded it, little children fell into the hands of mountebanks and pedlars who deformed and mutilated them in order to employ them as beggars.[1]

From time to time efforts were made by compassionate individuals to found hospitals or asylums for abandoned children, but there is no evidence that any of them was a success. At length, at the end of the seventeenth century—that is to say, after more than sixteen hundred years of Christianity—a priest named Vincent de Paul, shocked and horrified at the terrible suffering endured by the helpless little ones abandoned by their parents, established in Paris an institution for foundling children. Vincent de Paul had himself been carried off and sold as a slave in Tunis, and knew what slavery meant. The orphanage founded by him met with instant favour, and was patronized by all sorts of wealthy and charitable people; Louis XIII and Louis XIV both set aside large sums for its maintenance. The hospital became so famous that abandoned children were sent to it from far

[1] Payne, *Child in Human Progress*, pp. 290, 305–7.

and near by every community which desired to get rid of its foundlings. These unhappy little creatures were sent to Paris, sometimes from long distances, in all sorts of vehicles, without proper care or attendance. Large numbers died on the way, and it is estimated that not one-fourth of those who were sent survived more than three months.[1] So that this institution, established with the most benevolent intentions to save life, was so overwhelmed with abandoned children that for a time at least it resulted in a greatly increased sacrifice.

Inspired either by religious sentiment or by the desire to relieve themselves from responsibility, parents brought their children and offered them as monks or nuns at a very early age; the Canons Regular of Porto admitted them "three or four years after they had been weaned." In the monasteries the children suffered the iron discipline of a prison; day and night they lived under ceaseless espionage and fear of the rod.

> Espionage and the rod were the two main pillars of monastic and scholastic discipline in the Middle Ages. The scholars of Pembroke College, Cambridge, held their scholarships on the express condition of acting as faithful tale-bearers.[2]

More favoured children who had the good fortune to be related to ecclesiastical dignitaries were elevated to ecclesiastical offices.

> I have heard how one of these boys, after receiving an archdeaconry from a bishop, his uncle, was set solemnly in his stall during the ceremony of instal-

[1] Payne, *Child in Human Progress*, p. 311.

[2] Coulton, *Medieval Garner*, pp. 32–36. In the mind of the celibate clergy, who knew little or nothing of child life, chastisement was necessary, not only to education, but to salvation. A child of five, wrote Robert Mannyng of Brunne in the fourteenth century, had been known to go to hell because its father had neglected his duty and not beaten it. B. L. Manning, *The People's Faith in the Time of Wyclif*, p. 108.

lation, and was found not yet to have outgrown the needful ministrations of his nurse.[1]

In making any kind of survey of what Christianity has or has not done for the child, we cannot pass without a brief reference to a great movement of the Middle Ages concerning children, which was directly inspired by religious fervour and encouraged by the Church—viz., the Children's Crusade, surely one of the most extraordinary and most pitiable episodes which ever took place in connection with religion. In the year 1212 some 30,000 young children, excited by preaching and prophecies, gathered at St. Denys, near Paris, for the purpose of entering upon a crusade against the Saracens. These children, some of them no more than eight years of age, marched from St. Denys to Marseilles on their way to Palestine, fresh recruits joining them as they went. At Marseilles they had been led to expect that the waters of the Mediterranean would roll back and allow them to pass dry-shod on their divine mission to carry the Cross to the Holy Land. But the waters proved obdurate and intractable to prayer. Two kind Christian merchants then offered to provide ships to carry the children across. Seeing in this offer a direct response to their prayers, the children joyfully embarked in seven vessels, and the sailors set their sails in the name of God. Two of the ships foundered in a storm, and all on board were drowned. The remainder of the children, less happy in their fate, were taken to Alexandria, and there sold by the kind Christian merchants as slaves.

Two other bands of children set out from Cologne in Germany, each numbering some 20,000 or more. These had a much longer journey to go than the French children

[1] Coulton, *Medieval Garner*, p. 193. Quoted from Jacques de Vitry, a thirteenth-century priest and writer.

before they could reach the Mediterranean. One band made its way across the Alps to Genoa, and it is difficult to exaggerate the hardships the little ones suffered on their terrible march. They were robbed and maltreated; some were even murdered; many died of starvation, or exhaustion, or fell out footsore to perish by the way. Of the first twenty thousand children who left the Rhine it is estimated that not more than seven thousand reached Genoa. Here, again, the waters declined to yield a passage to the children's prayers; and, as the city of Genoa refused to harbour them for more than a single night, the miserable remnant, disappointed and terrified, had to turn their faces homeward again and confront once more the perils of a march of which they had had already so bitter an experience. The second army of German children—after a march entailing similar losses and disasters—arrived at length at Brindisi. Many of them embarked on ships, and were never heard of again. Few of them—few, indeed, of the whole host of children, nearly a hundred thousand altogether, the "Lord's children" as they have been called—ever found their way to their homes again. Thousands are known to have perished, thousands were sold as slaves, and those who actually did return were formally bound over by the Pope to renew their attempt to enter Palestine whenever it should please the Church to undertake a fresh crusade.

There were other child pilgrimages in the Middle Ages besides the Children's Crusade, though none on so large a scale as this. But, large or small, they are one and all deeply discreditable to the Church, which could use its influence to send tender, defenceless children to encounter hardships which might well daunt strong men, and which were almost certain to end in slavery or death for the majority of the little victims.

If we turn to the conditions obtaining in our own country, other problems in connection with child life confront us, especially as we draw nearer our own times. There is no reason to suppose that infanticide and child exposure were ever specially prevalent in Great Britain, but they were certainly never wholly absent; and so little real influence has Christianity upon a practice which has its roots in poverty and shame that infanticide and child abandonment are not unknown here or in any other Christian community, even at the present day.

The documentary references to child life in Great Britain right down to two hundred years ago are so scanty that we can get only glimpses here and there of the conditions under which children lived. An ordinance of the City of London in 1398 (R. II), when Richard Whittington was Lord Mayor, shows that child labour was common at that period, inasmuch as, among other things, it refers to the children of tender age who were sent down to the Thames in all weathers to scour caps for the cap-makers. An addition to the Statute of Labourers about this time ordained that if a boy or girl served up to the age of twelve at husbandry they were to continue in that employment all their lives and not take up any other craft. By a statute of Henry IV it was provided that no one might apprentice his son or daughter to any trade within the cities or the boroughs of the realm unless he had land or rent to the value of 20s. a year at least. Other children were to be set to the same labour as their fathers before them, or to such other labour as their estates required. In the days of that pious polygamist and defender of the faith, Henry VIII, a law was passed ordering that all children of vagrants over five years of age should be taken into custody and put to husbandry or other crafts; if they ran away they were to be flogged.

Henry's still more pious son, Edward VI, under whose auspices the Book of Common Prayer was issued, improved upon his father's idea, for he enacted that any child above five and under fourteen found wandering with or without vagabonds might be seized and adjudged the servant or apprentice of the apprehender until the age of twenty-four if a boy, or twenty if a girl; if the child ran away he was to be treated as a slave, put into irons, and otherwise punished. The peasant revolt following on this cruel legislation, which reduced men to a branded serfdom and children to slaves, resulted in the repeal of the law against children.

In 1562 (Eliz.) the passing of an Act, known as the Statute of Artificers, by which boys were bound by indenture to a minimum apprenticeship of seven years under the absolute control of their masters, influenced the relations of employer and apprentice in England right down to the nineteenth century. The end of the eighteenth century witnessed a great industrial revolution and the beginning of the factory system. It is hard for the present generation, with its higher standards of comfort and its fuller understanding of what is necessary for the proper development of the child, to realize the tragedy of the children of 150, 100, or even 80 years ago, although there are some yet living whose grandparents had actual experience of the misery of those times. The maternal grandfather of the present writer went to work when he was six, his task being to pick up the bricks in his little hands and pass them up to the bricklayer. But his case was by no means among the worst; that was to be found in the mills, mines, and factories, and among the chimney sweepers' boys. Pauper children were sent to the mills and factories and to the master sweeps, nominally as apprentices, really as slaves. The report of the Commission held in 1840 on the employment of young

children in England and Scotland, read in the light of to-day, is an appalling document. The two chapters devoted to this subject in *The Town Labourer, 1760–1832*, by J. L. and Barbara Hammond, are even more enlightening, inasmuch as they cover a wider field. A year or two since the Bishop of London said that we were more godly a hundred years ago than we are to-day. If that be a fact—and no one desires to question the Bishop's word—then it is clear that the *less* godly we are the happier, the more moral, and the better we are likely to be.

A hundred years ago children were taken into the mills when they were about four years old, and were set regularly to work when they had reached the mature age of six or seven. In the 1840 Report it is told how children were withdrawn from school—when there happened to be a school—at six, or even at five, for the purpose of putting them to work. These children—mere babies, many of them—toiled in a vile atmosphere, under unwholesome conditions, for twelve, fourteen, sixteen hours a day, and sometimes for even longer than that. The pauper apprentices slept, in relays, in beds which were never aired; they were beaten and badly fed, and those who ran away were hunted down and compelled to work with chains round their ankles. The lot of the other children working in the pits and in the mills was not much better. They were often so exhausted when their day's labour was at an end that they just lay upon the ground where they fell, and their mothers or the elder children had to carry them home.

The story of the chimney sweepers' boys is no less tragic. The use of children for sweeping chimneys was a practice peculiar to Great Britain. On the Continent it was unknown. In 1817 there were about one thousand boys engaged in this dangerous and unhealthy occupation. The boys were, as a rule, children whom nobody wanted;

paupers apprenticed by the parish authorities, or boys sold by inhuman parents; the smaller the child, the higher the price. A few were kidnapped or enticed away. In one case of this kind a little victim of four was sold by a beggar woman for as much as eight guineas. In the absence of his mother the father of a boy sold him to a master sweep for three guineas. Tiny children were indispensable for sweeping the chimneys, since some flues were no more than twelve, some no more than seven, inches square, and in such cases even a tiny child had to be sent up naked with his arms above his head.[1]

It may be asked, What has all this to do with religion? It has a great deal to do with religion, for in those days the Christian Church was the only organization in this country outside Parliament which had the power to ameliorate the lot of the children; and in Parliament the bishops could, when they would, make their influence felt. But the bishops and the rest of the clergy, who were so ready to impose all sorts of penalties upon the poor if they did not go to church on Sundays, had no interest in the conditions under which they toiled and lived during the rest of the week. In those godly days the preachers of "Suffer little children" were quite content with preaching, and never concerned themselves about practice, except on Sundays, when the exhausted children were dragged out of their beds to attend church or Sunday school.

At last there was a man who did trouble about practice, a man whom godly people have delighted to honour with the title of "infidel." When Robert Owen took charge of the mills at Lanark in the year 1800, out of the two thousand persons employed there no fewer than five hundred were child apprentices from the parish work-

[1] Hammond, *The Town Labourer*, pp. 177-192.

houses. This figure gives us some idea of the extent to which child labour—pauper child labour—was used in the mills at that time. Owen soon resolved to take no more parish children, but to draw his supply of child labour from the surrounding districts. He would admit no child to work in the mills under ten years of age, and he established a school in connection with the mills in which children between five and ten were taught free of charge. Flogging, the cherished panacea of the incompetent, was abolished, and milder methods of discipline were introduced. On one important point Owen was not allowed to have his way. When he took charge, the Lanark mills were worked for thirteen and a-half hours a day, with one and a-half hours off for meals. That was good compared with some mills, but it was not good enough for Robert Owen. Nevertheless, it took him sixteen years before he was able to get the hours reduced to twelve, with one and a-quarter hours off for meals. Small as this reform seems to-day, in that godly time, just a hundred years ago, it was looked upon as absolutely revolutionary. While the Church with all its power and all its professions stood aside, this one man, who belonged to no Church, set a practical example in ameliorating the lot of the child worker.[1] In addition, he was the founder of infant schools and the pioneer in this country in organizing a rational system of education which aimed at the development of the child's natural faculties.

Robert Owen could do this; but what has the Christian Church done for the education of the child? In answering that question it is necessary to glance back at the attitude of the early Fathers of the Church towards

[1] Lord Shaftesbury, to whom so much credit is due and given, came later. He was not born until 1801, when Owen had already begun his work at Lanark.

education, because it is only during the last century that people have been shaking themselves free from the deadening influence of these men, who were retrograde even in their own day.

In the introductory chapter to his great work on education in France, Professor Compayré points out that, although some of the early Fathers of the Christian Church, who were trained in the pagan schools, retained a love of letters and advocated the study of ancient masters, they were in the minority. St. Augustine, who has exercised so profound an influence upon the precepts and practice of Christianity, and whose words carry weight with theologians to the present day, was in his pagan youth an enthusiastic admirer of the old poets and philosophers. But, once converted to Christianity, he turned his back so completely upon his former loves that he actually boasted that in his bishopric of Hippo it would be impossible to find a single copy of Cicero! And this in spite of the fact that it was to Cicero's writings Augustine owed his reclamation from a life of disgusting debauchery. Under his guidance the Council of Carthage forbade even the bishops to read heathen authors. More than a century later St. Gregory the Great was so proud of ignorance that he said he would blush to submit the words of the divine oracle to the rules of grammar, and found fault with the Bishop of Vienne for teaching grammar in the cathedral school. It was improper, he said, that a mouth consecrated to the praises of God should be opened for profaner purposes. Under such guidance it is not surprising that there was decadence everywhere, and that literature fell into complete discredit throughout the whole Christian world. It was almost as though the past had been blotted out; and the labours, the discoveries, the lofty thoughts, the perfection of style arrived at in pre-Christian days, had

vanished. The fifth century of the Christian era to the fifteenth was a thousand years of ignorance, the densest ignorance. Now and again one who saw a little further than the rest would deplore the condition into which the Western world was sunk, and try to mend things a little by establishing schools; but they were too few and availed little. In the tenth and eleventh centuries more fortified castles were built than schools. The great lords preferred the clash of steel upon steel to the scratch of quill upon parchment, and among lesser folks it was rare indeed to find one who knew how to read and write. The ignorance of the bishops was as great as that of the laity; in many cases the mouths consecrated to the praises of God were unable to read the simplest sentences, and they could count the letters of the alphabet only by the aid of their profane fingers. In those days instruction was a luxury, theology alone was held in honour, and the Benedictines themselves—the most learned of all the religious orders—avowed that they studied mathematics only in order to calculate Easter Day!

At length there came into existence a new religious order, which soon arrived at the conclusion that education on certain definite lines might be made an invaluable instrument in its service; and in the sixteenth century the Jesuits established their schools, first in France, and then throughout the Catholic world. The object of these schools was to turn out scholars all cut to the approved Jesuit pattern; but, incidentally, they have influenced education in certain important directions, even in our own country, where the Society of Jesus has never been able to obtain any sure hold. The Jesuits never did anything willingly for primary education. Like the rest of their brethren, they regarded education as a dangerous weapon when placed in the hands of all and sundry, and believed there could be no better safeguard to faith in

the common people than ignorance. The pupils in their schools were kept under ceaseless surveillance; and in order that the parental authority should be weakened or entirely superseded the holidays of the boarders were few and short. Indeed, the idea of the boarding-school removed from home influence, which is so familiar to us to-day, originated with the Jesuits, although among them, of course, the estrangement from family influence was deliberate and carried to extreme lengths. In the Jesuit schools the mother tongue was forbidden, and the basis of instruction was the study of Latin and Greek—principally Latin. It is to the example set by the Jesuits that we owe the predominance given to Latin and Greek in our older universities and public schools. The Jesuits taught theology, rhetoric, elegant language, and brilliant periods; but they would teach neither law nor medicine, nor even history, other than by selected passages. They were the first to definitely organize education in connection with a religious body. Some teaching had previously been undertaken by the Benedictines, the Dominicans, Franciscans, and others; but it had been without any special plan or system. In the Jesuit schools the Catholic Church for the first time laid a positive, possessive hand upon education, and began that systematic direction of the child's mind through the school which she and the seceding Churches have ever since striven so strenuously to maintain.

In our own country it was long before there was any education worthy of the name. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a number of schools were founded in England for the middle classes and the well-to-do; but in many cases the endowments were stolen and the scholars were few. In the eighteenth century so-called "Charity schools" were founded to give poor children that sort of education which would enable them hereafter

"to become useful in inferior stations."[1] The "charity" of these schools was much more conspicuous than the instruction they gave; the teachers were incompetent even for such elementary work, and the unhappy children were not permitted to attend after they were big enough to be employed. As a consequence of this neglect of primary education, at the beginning of the nineteenth century probably one-half the children of England were without teaching of any kind.

In 1807 a Bill to provide elementary schools throughout England was introduced by Samuel Whitbread, but was rejected by the House of Lords at the instance of Lord Chancellor Eldon and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Opponents of the Bill declared that education would be prejudicial to the morals and the happiness of the poor; also that it would enable them to read seditious books and publications against Christianity, and render them insolent to their superiors. In 1820 Brougham took up the cause of popular education. His Bill passed its second reading; but it was received with such violent opposition by the Established Church and Nonconformists alike that he had to withdraw it. Hannah More and other pious folks were quite willing that "the poor" should be taught to read the Bible, but they would allow no instruction in writing.[2]

In Scotland parish schools were more or less generally

[1] These charity schools would seem to have had their origin in a free school for the children of the poor, which was set up by the Jesuits. In order to "stop the mouths of the Papists," a school for forty poor or fatherless children was founded at Highgate in 1685 by a Protestant woollen-draper. Fifteen or twenty years later the work was taken up by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The Dissenters also founded a charity school in Gravel Lane, Southwark, in 1687, as "an antidote to the school of one Poulter, a Jesuit." Holman, *English National Education*, chap. ii.

[2] Hammond, *The Town Labourer, 1760–1832* (1918), pp. 56–59.

established in the seventeenth century, and burgh schools and academies were to be found in most of the large towns. But these parish schools, which were set up at the instance of John Knox, were starved by the land-owners who were supposed to maintain them; the teachers were miserably paid, and the scholars miserably housed. Moreover, the one aim of these schools was to teach the children to read the Bible and to learn by heart the longer Catechism. Like the Jesuits, the disciples of Knox did not aim at turning out scholars and useful citizens; their object was to mould instruments for their own use.

The Sunday-schools, which are now a feature of every church, were started by a man named Lindsey in 1765, and developed some sixteen years later by Raikes. At first it was intended to use them to teach reading and writing on this the only day on which industrial children could go to school. But this was so much objected to that the instruction had to be confined to Scripture reading and matters connected with religion. Even in this, the Church's own subjects, the teaching was ludicrously inefficient. The Commission Report of 1840, to which reference has already been made, gives an account of a series of visits of inspection paid to various Sunday-schools. The ignorance disclosed is amazing. At Wolverhampton, for example, a number of young persons were examined who had been attending Sunday-school for from five to seven years. When they were asked "Who was Jesus Christ?" they seemed utterly at a loss for an answer until one bright young person of sixteen said he thought "Jesus Christ was a King of London a long time ago"! These Sunday-schools, where the Bible reigns supreme, are claimed as the great safeguard of the children's morals, and, indeed, of the national morals. Yet during these last four years, when we have witnessed

a startling increase in juvenile crime, it is admitted that practically the whole of these young offenders have been regular attendants at Sunday-school.

If we come back once more to the opening question, and ask what has Christianity done for the child, we answer that the record shows that its influence has been adverse to the last degree. It has not brought a single advantage; it has not conferred a single benefit which could not have been obtained without it, and most of which have been obtained in spite of the Church and not because of it.

The Great War presented a tremendous occasion, when Christianity—if it had had any grit in it—might have stepped forward as the protector of the children in the belligerent countries. But it did nothing. The religion which can threaten eternal damnation for the violation of some trivial rite, or for attendance at the secular schools of the State, accepted the mutilation and the slaughter of the little ones without a word of organized protest, or condemnation of the criminals. Indeed, when one of the criminal monarchs died, Catholic Christianity condoned the crime and sent a special representative to the funeral. Just as the Churches stood aside a hundred years ago and did not lift a finger to help the little ones when they were being tortured and crushed under the industrial machine, so they stood aside in the World War.

Chapter XI

THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.....Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. 1 *John*, iii, 11, 12, 15.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 1 *John*, iv, 20.

A WEIGHTY test of the influence of Christianity on conduct is to be found in the treatment by Christians of aboriginal and subject races. In America, in Asia, in Africa, in Australasia, the native populations have come under the influence of Christian races. When it is claimed that the world has been made better by Christianity, the inquirer is entitled to ask what has been its influence upon people of a lower or a different civilization from our own, who form so large a proportion of the population of the world. Have the standards of these peoples been raised by contact with Christianity? Have their lands and other property been assured to them? Have their women been respected, their children educated, their men treated fairly and honestly? In what way has Christianity influenced conduct towards them?

What has become of the old civilizations and the peoples of Mexico and Peru under the Catholic ideals brought to them from Spain? What has happened to the native races of Africa, America, and Australia under

the Christian teaching brought them by the Anglo-Saxon peoples? Take, for example, Newfoundland, the oldest of our British colonies. When the English went there under Cabot, with letters patent granted to him by Henry VII in 1437, they found the island inhabited by a numerous and powerful race, well developed physically, intelligent, and friendly. Untouched by Christian influences, they had lived there for countless ages, hunting and fishing. Under the relentless pressure of the white man, with none to aid or protect them, these people gradually died out, and for a hundred years or more there has not been a single living representative of that once numerous race. "There are few darker chapters in the history of the white man's progress in the New World than that which records the fate of the unhappy Beothiks."[1] Again and again this "dark chapter" in the life story of the Beothiks is found repeated of other races in other countries. The Tasmanians are gone; the Australian aborigines, having endured countless tyrannies,[2] are in the last agonies of

[1] Rev. M. Harvey, *Newfoundland* (issued by the Government), p. 162.

[2] "Let no one delude himself with the fancy that, though the German Dr. Peters may flog his concubines to death, though Frenchmen in the New Hebrides may twist the flesh off their servants' backs with pincers, though our own newspapers may revel in reported horrors from the old Transvaal or the Congo Free State, Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen are quite of another breed. Not to speak of strange and unpleasant dealings with black women, I myself knew well one man who told me he had shot blacks at sight. I have met a man who boasted of having spilt poisoned meal along a road near a blackfellows' camp in order to get rid of them like rats. My brother was the guest of a man in Queensland who showed him a particular bend of a river where he had once, as a jest, driven a black family, man, woman, and children, into the water among a shoal of crocodiles. My father has described to me his fruitless efforts to get men punished in New South Wales in the old days for offering hospitality to blacks and giving them poisoned meat. I received, while first writing these notes, a newspaper from Perth giving an account of the trial of some Coolgardie miners for

disease, demoralization, and degradation; and before long they too will have passed away, unless something is done to arrest their decay. In Australasia the Maories alone have been able to resist the pressure of the white man, and make good their standing in the community.

In North America, the Delawares, the Sioux, the Cheyennes, tribe upon tribe, have been driven from their lands, degraded, massacred, and exterminated, or—in spite of the greater care of recent times—are in process of extermination. How often have we not been thrilled and horrified in our young days by tales of the treachery and malignity of the savage red men, and their onslaughts on peaceful settlers! But there is another side to these tales, less often told, less widely known, even more thrilling and more horrible, and that is the story of the treachery and malignity of the Christian white men whom the red heathen trusted; white savages who made the little naked children of the red man a mark to shoot at, who disembowelled women, who slew and scalped men.[1] These stories are not turned into novels for the entertainment of an idle hour; they are for the most part hidden away in the records of the Western States of America, where they are not likely to disturb the sensibilities of the good Christian who fondly believes that his creed, and that alone, is the basis of morality. But if such deeds had been perpetrated by men who were not Christian, no publicity would be too

beating to death with heavy bits of wood a black woman and boy who had been unable to show them the way. The bodies were found with the shoulder blades in shivers, and the judge observed that such cases were getting too common! These atrocities are not necessarily the work of isolated and extraordinary villains. Two of the men mentioned above were rather good men than bad. Nor have I mentioned the worst class of outrages." (*The Exploitation of Inferior Races*, by Gilbert Murray, 1900.)

[1] *A Century of Dishonour*, pp. 344–45.

wide, no words too strong, in which to make their iniquity known. The good things, the righteous things, the just and merciful things which have happened during the past 1900 years, are placed to the credit of Christianity; but Christianity at the bar of judgment must be held equally responsible for the deeds of crime and horror which have been perpetrated under its auspices and in its name.

Where the aboriginal races have not been squeezed out of existence it is notorious that in the majority of cases contact with Christian civilization brings demoralization and disease to the tribes. Even missionaries themselves have admitted that tribes removed from cities and centres of Christian civilization are usually healthier, simpler, more honest and sober, than their more sophisticated brethren. The attempt to substitute an alien civilization and an unreal and impracticable system of morality for the customary tribal morality is too often an utter and disastrous failure.

A brief reference must be made to India, a country vast in area and inhabited by peoples who reached a high state of civilization centuries before the Christian era, when the greater part of Europe was occupied by barbarian tribes. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to make any settlement in the Indian peninsula, and from 1500 to 1600 they held the monopoly of the Oriental trade. Much of the story of that hundred years is a very terrible one; it makes a truly "dark chapter"—to use that phrase so lamentably familiar in describing the dealings of Europeans with conquered peoples. We are told in the colourless pages of the *Imperial Gazetteer* that the Portuguese went to India not as traders, but as "knights errant and crusaders, who looked upon every pagan as an enemy of Portugal and Christ. Only those

who have read the contemporary narratives of their conquests can realize the superstition and the cruelty with which their history in the Indies is stained."[1] A Madras civil servant, writing a history of Vijayanagar, incidentally remarks that he had not found a single instance where the Hindu kings broke faith with the intruders; but the Europeans seemed to think that they had the Divine right to pillage, rob, and massacre; "their whole record is one of a series of atrocities." They rewarded friendship by treachery, and goodwill by plundering Hindu temples.[2] Towards the middle of the century the whole authority of the Portuguese Government was placed at the disposal of the Christian missionaries, and in 1560 the See of Goa was elevated into an archbishopric and the Inquisition established. The inhabitants of Goa and its dependencies were forced to embrace Christianity, and on refusal were imprisoned and tortured.[3] The Hindus were forbidden the use of their own sacred books and the exercise of their own religion. The temples and mosques were destroyed, and the people so harassed that they fled in large numbers from a place where they were liable to imprisonment, torture, or death, for worshipping their own gods after their own fashion.[4]

The Dutch, the English, the French, the Danish, and the Germans all sought to establish themselves in India by force of arms, and the people of India suffered from each in turn. From the long struggle England came out as "the prize winner," and India now forms an important part of the British Empire.

Scrafton, in his *Reflections on the Government of Indostan*, describes the people of Bengal in 1750 as

[1] II, p. 448.
[2] Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire*, pp. 177–78.
[3] *Id.*, p. 195.
[4] *Id.*, p. 211.

"temperate and abstemious, charitable, ready to sacrifice their lives for the preservation of their religious purity, their women chaste and affectionate." Mr. S. C. Hill quotes these words in his volume on Bengal, compiled for the Indian Record Series, and remarks that students of social history agree that the condition of the peasantry in Bengal under Mohammedan rule in the middle of the eighteenth century compared not unfavourably with that of the same class in France or Germany. This comparison would hardly hold good at the opening of the twentieth century, after one hundred and fifty years of Christian rule; but, as ethical principles tend more and more to supersede religious prejudices and practices, it may be hoped that the condition of the peasantry all over India may once more compare "not unfavourably" with that of the peasantry of France or Germany.

If Christianity is tried by its treatment of defenceless and trusting aboriginal peoples, or by its conduct towards those of alien civilizations, then it must stand condemned in every case without exception. Christianity happened to be the religion of physically powerful people possessed of enormous resources, and its record shows that it has never hesitated to use this power and these resources to subjugate or destroy the weaker races. On this count alone Christianity must be adjudged a failure as a moral force.

Chapter XII

CONCLUSION

There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. 'Tis their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince; yet all must be suppressed which is not found in their Syntagma. They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dissevered pieces which are yet wanting to the body of Truth. To be still searching what we know not by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it—this is the golden rule in philosophy, as well as in arithmetic.[1]

MILTON'S *Areopagitica*.

THE lesson the open-minded and thoughtful student is bound to draw from an investigation of the origin and evolution of morals in the different countries of the world is that the formation of our moral code, or of any moral code, is in no way the result of deliberate forethought or intention. Among ourselves hitherto every accepted moral principle has been explained by referring it to the authority of God and a Divinely-inspired conscience, and until recent years few attempts have been made to ascertain the real foundations on which our rules of conduct are based or should be based. Only here and there in the past has a thinker, deeply tinged with heresy, ventured to ask why we do this and why we do that: whether in the interests of the community, or of self, or of the Deity—which is, after all, only

[1] In this extract the word "philosophy" has been substituted for "theology."

another name for self-interest, since to offend the Deity is to injure oneself?

A sound morality can never be built upon an unsound basis. Religious authority, whether Christian or another, is an unsound basis. The Christian God, so far from being the Immutable Being which he is claimed to be, changes from generation to generation. Heresy is the Great Alchemist; it is the great purifier, as it is also the great solvent of religions.[1] The God in whose name men and women were martyred at Smithfield a few centuries ago no more resembles the God worshipped by the educated British Christian of to-day than does the rudely-carved stone worshipped by some savage tribe. Christian morality is based ostensibly upon the Divine authority stamped by the Church upon a collection of precepts and injunctions preserved from bygone ages, and gathered from here, there, and everywhere by Christian writers and quoted as authoritative even when the practice of them has long been abandoned, or, it may be, renders people liable to punishment.

Further, Christian morality depends finally upon the belief in immortality, with—in most cases—a belief in a future state of rewards and punishments of some kind or another. The Christian life upon earth is a mere brief episode in eternity. To the devout believer life here is just a preparation for death; he lives to fit himself for life beyond the grave. He holds this life on a short lease; his freehold lies the other side of death. Necessarily, therefore, the individual believer is much more concerned about the welfare of his own soul in eternity than about the welfare of the bodies of others sojourning here on earth for a short space of time.

[1] "Bradlaugh used to say: 'Religions do not die; they change'" (*Spectator*, October 23, 1909).

The mental outlook of the man without religion is in complete contrast to that of the believing Christian. This life is all he has: it is all his brother has. When death's long sleep comes to end the chapter, the book is closed. There is no sequel, no after-life, good or bad. Hence it becomes the duty of every man to live the best life he can, so that he may leave the world, the only world he will ever know, better than he found it. The instinct for self-preservation—the primary source of morality—has developed by process of time into the desire for self-preservation under the best conditions; and no man can seek the best conditions for himself without trying to obtain them for others also. It is impossible for the normal healthy man to be happy amid unhappiness, to be content amid discontent, to rejoice when others are miserable. Even the selfish man will, in his degree, seek the common welfare, knowing that if he misses the good in this life he has none other to look forward to. To the believing Christian, concern, first for his own soul and next for the souls of others, comes before the general welfare; but the general welfare is the prime consideration for the man whose ethics are based upon reason and experience rather than upon religious authority. Such a one must watch his acts as he goes, for he knows that a man's deeds, be they good or bad, are seldom "interred with his bones," but live after him to bear their fruit in shaping the lives of others. As a bad moral environment tends to produce a worse morality, so will a good moral environment tend to produce a better.

Unlike the religious man, the unbeliever is not obliged to fit, or to profess to fit, his morality and his facts into the four corners of any religion or tradition or inherited dogma. He is always in a position to review and to revise his teaching and his experiences; to absorb new

knowledge and to remould his ideas according to the new light he receives. He has no Church dogmas to hinder him from searching what he knows not by what he knows, and "closing up truth to truth." He is well aware that his thoughts and the truths for which he seeks, and which he sometimes finds, can no more be accepted as absolutely final than the thoughts and truths of his fathers before him. But he also knows that, at the least, his new thoughts mean growth, and not stagnation; and he is always possessed with the inspiring hope that the glowing thought which he plucks to-day from the darkness of the unknown may to-morrow be the light showing the way to greater and more important truths.

Happily for the world, except under stress of fanaticism or bigotry, men in the mass are almost always better than their creed. The desire for the common good, rooted deep in the primitive instinct for self-preservation, is constantly triumphing over the combined forces of self-interest and religious authority. But in future ethics, in rational ethics, the general interest of humanity should have no rival; it must be supreme. For on the broad foundations of human welfare, and on that alone, can men ever hope to build up a truly sane and lofty morality.

INDEX

LONDON:
WATTS AND CO., JOHNSON'S COURT,
FLEET STREET, E.C.4

WORKS BY HAECKEL.

THE EVOLUTION OF MAN. Library Edition, in two vols. demy 8vo. xxxii+774 pp.; 30 Plates, 463 Illustrations, and 60 Genetic Tables; cloth, 12s. 6d. net, inland postage 2d. Abridged edition, 264 pp., cloth, 5s. net, by post 5s. 6d.; paper cover, 2s. 6d. net, by post 3s.

THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE. Library Edition, xv+391 pp., cloth, gilt top, 6s. net, by post 6s. 6d. Pocket Edition, 398 pp.; cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.

THE WONDERS OF LIFE. 158 pp.; paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 2½d.

HAECKEL: HIS LIFE AND WORK. By W. Bölsche. 128 pp.; cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.; paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 2½d.

HAECKEL'S CRITICS ANSWERED. By Joseph McCabe. 128 pp.; cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.; paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 2½d.

"These splendid handbooks belong to an age of wonders."—Birmingham Gazette.

SCIENCE HISTORIES.

Each about 160 pages, with Illustrations; cloth, **1s. 9d. net**, by post **2s. 1d.** The 13 vols. post free **23s. 9d.**

ASTRONOMY. By Prof. GEORGE FORBES, M.A., F.R.S., M.Inst.C.E.

CHEMISTRY. In two vols. Vol. I: 2000 B.C. to 1850 A.D. Vol. II: 1850 A.D. to Date. By Sir EDWARD THORPE, C.B., LL.D., D.Sc., F.R.S. (Now supplied the 2 vols. bound in 1 vol., price 3s. 6d. net.)

GEOGRAPHY. By Dr. J. SCOTT KELTIE, F.R.G.S., F.S.S., F.R.S., and O. J. R. HOWARTH, M.A.

GEOLOGY. By H. B. WOODWARD, F.R.S., F.G.S.

BIOLOGY. By Prof. L. C. MIALL, F.R.S.

ANTHROPOLOGY. By A. C. HADDON, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S.

PSYCHOLOGY. In two vols. By Prof. J. MARK BALDWIN.

OLD TESTAMENT CRITICISM. By Prof. A. DUFF.

NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM. By F. C. CONYBEARE, M.A.

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY. By A. W. BENN.

MODERN PHILOSOPHY. By A. W. BENN.

London: WATTS & CO., 17 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, E.C.4.

R.P.A. CHEAP REPRINTS

EACH 1s. NET (except those marked with a X), BY POST 1s. 2½d.

**Huxley's Lectures & Essays.* (A Selection.)

**The Pioneers of Evolution.* By EDWARD CLODD.

Modern Science & Modern Thought. By SAMUEL LAING.

**Literature and Dogma.* By MATTHEW ARNOLD.

**Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical.* By HERBERT SPENCER.

**The Evolution of the Idea of God.* By GRANT ALLEN.

**Human Origins.* By SAMUEL LAING.

**The Service of Man.* By J. COTTER MORISON.

Tyndall's Lectures and Essays.

**The Origin of Species.* By CHARLES DARWIN.

Emerson's Addresses and Essays. (A Selection.)

**On Liberty.* By J. S. MILL.

**The Story of Creation.* By EDWARD CLODD.

**An Agnostic's Apology.* By SIR LESLIE STEPHEN.

Life of Jesus. By ERNEST RENAN.

An Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer. By Prof. W. H. HUDSON.

**Three Essays on Religion.* By JOHN STUART MILL.

The Creed of Christendom. By W. R. GREG.

The Apostles. By ERNEST RENAN.

**Problems of the Future.* By S. LAING.

**Wonders of Life.* By ERNST HAECKEL.

**Jesus of Nazareth.* By EDWARD CLODD.

**God and the Bible.* By MATTHEW ARNOLD.

X†*The Evolution of Man.* By ERNST HAECKEL. Complete in one vol., paper 2s. 6d. net, cloth 5s. net.

**Hume's Essays:* I.—An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding. II. — An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals.

Herbert Spencer's Essays. (A Selection.)

**An Easy Outline of Evolution.* By DENNIS HIRD, M.A.

Phases of Faith. By F. W. NEWMAN.

Man's Place in Nature. By T. H. HUXLEY.

The Origins of Religion. By ANDREW LANG.

Twelve Lectures and Essays. By T. H. HUXLEY.

Haeckel: His Life and Work. By WILHELM BÖLSCHE.

X†*Life of Thomas Paine.* By MONCURE D. CONWAY. Complete in one vol., cloth, 4s. net.

**The Nature and Origin of Living Matter.* By Dr. H. CHARLTON BASTIAN.

X*Last Words on Evolution.* By ERNST HAECKEL. (Now published only in cr. 8vo at 7d. net.)

Paganism and Christianity. By J. A. FARRER.

X†*History of Rationalism.* By W. E. H. LECKY. In 2 vols.

Aphorisms and Reflections. By T. H. HUXLEY.

X†*History of European Morals.* By W. E. H. LECKY. In 2 vols.

Selected Works of Voltaire. Translated by J. MCCABE.

The Kingdom of Man. By SIR RAY LANKESTER.

Twelve Years in a Monastery. By JOSEPH MCCABE.

**Lectures & Essays.* By Professor W. K. CLIFFORD.

The whole of the above list, with the exception of those marked with an *, †, or a ‡, may be had in cloth at 2s. 6d. net.

* In paper cover only. † In cloth, complete, at 5s. net. ‡ In cloth at 3s. 6d. net.

London: WATTS & Co., 17 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, E.C.4.