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ARTICLE I.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND CHRISTIANITY.¹

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A FEW years ago French materialism was revived in Germany, and lifted its head in a somewhat threatening manner, under the form of a demonstration from "the exact sciences" that Christianity was a fable. The result was good. Men of real science were induced to turn their attention to the subject, and the consequence was that a demonstration, to which no reply has been attempted, was given by them, that the pretended connection between materialism and "the exact sciences," was a fable.

More recently, the Deism of England has been revived in a similar manner, in the land of its birth, by men who profess to utter their doubts or disbelief, in the name of science and learning. They are already in a fair way to be disposed of in the same manner as their German neighbors, predecessors, and teachers were. The essayists, represent-

¹ *Essai Historique sur la Société Civile dans le Monde Romain et sur sa Transformation par le Christianisme* par C. Schmidt. pp. 508. Strasbourg: 1853.

ing almost every shade of unbelief and every form of sophistry, from the most shallow to the most subtile, have aroused the English mind, which had too long slumbered over the achievements of the great Christian apologists of former generations, and given it a healthier and more vigorous tone. Indeed, this sudden outbreak of scepticism in England is attributable, not so much to the advancement of science as to the stagnation of sacred learning in the national church. That men, with such facilities for profound learning such universities, such foundations and fellowships; that professors, enjoying such sinecures, and prelates having such incomes, should suffer the national church to come to the very verge of bankruptcy in biblical learning, has long been a matter of regret in this country, and is now apparently one of surprise and grief to the better part of the whole English nation. Some signs of this are given in the numerous replies to the "Essays and Reviews" that have already been published. Still better signs of a return of English scholars to their former well-earned renown, are furnished in substantial works of an independent and positive character, such as those produced by Ellicott and Westcott.

It is with unfeigned pleasure that we have perused the work named at the head of this Article — a work of profound, original research, furnishing, in a historical way, important positive proof of the actual results of the introduction of Christianity into the ancient Roman world. Replies to the objections urged against Christianity, although necessary often for local and temporary effect, are, on account of their want of unity, their wearisome details, and purely negative character, the least satisfactory of the various modes of defending Christianity. Systematic treatises on the evidences of Christianity have the disadvantage of being obliged to attempt more than can be accomplished; namely, the task of presenting all the evidences under one view, while they are in their nature cumulative, and therefore inexhaustible. Even if it were possible for any one mind to take them all in, and give them their proper place

in a complete system, the execution of the task would prove as endless as a universal biography, with its innumerable supplements. The unfinished work of Lilienthal on the evidences, which was broken off at the sixteenth volume, had a most natural, and perhaps philosophical, history; and if a continuator of that learned and excellent work were to resume the task, he would be obliged either to leave it unfinished, or to omit much that another mind would look upon as pertaining to the subject. Without unduly disparaging such works, which certainly have their value, we may safely affirm that treatises on the subject which have the greatest permanent value, are those which, like Butler's Analogy, Paley's *Horae Paulinae*, Ullmann's *Sinlessness of Christ*, Westcott's *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, and this work of Schmidt, take up some one topic and treat it exhaustively. One man can no more present Christianity in all its apologetic aspects, than one bard can present nature in all its poetic aspects. The several articles of Ulrici on *Christian Art* in Herzog's *Encyclopaedia*, suggest that an admirable argument might be drawn in favor of Christianity from that single point of view. Another could be drawn from a history of the schemes of education, with or without the Christian element, as they have been tested by experiments, in different ages and in various countries. It will probably not be long before we shall have a new investigation of the subject; not merely whether society can be safe without Christianity, but whether governments can reach to any high degree of perfection without it. There is furthermore the historical inquiry, whether continued and uninterrupted social progress of the human species will be possible without the polar-star of a perfect humanity united with divinity, as in the Christ of the Bible. It would probably not be difficult to show that no biography of Christ could be written with psychological verisimilitude, or with a historical reasonableness for all its parts except on the theory of his miraculous character and history. Indeed, the grand defect of all sceptical theories of religion is, that they do

not leave room even for a tolerable historical explanation of the origin and progress of Christianity. It is precisely here that the attempt of Strauss is acknowledged by those once sympathizing with him, to be a signal failure. The more single points of view there can be taken by different Christian scholars, and conclusive deductions made from the facts in each case, showing that, in the distinct matters contemplated, the facts harmonize better with the theory of a veritable Christianity, than with a mythical or rationalistic one, the broader and the firmer will be the ground on which the public mind can stand in respect to its religious convictions. To contribute something to our theological literature in this direction, we propose to select certain topics of Schmidt's Historical Prize Essay, and bring them forward without reference to the precise order in which they are discussed by the author.

We begin with the moral nature of paganism. Its radical defect is, that it did not recognize the worth and dignity of a human being, as such; that it knew nothing of man as having been created in the image of his Maker. All the institutions of pagan society are vitiated in consequence of this fundamental error. The individual, as such, was of no special importance — had no special value. Only as a part of the state did he come into consideration. The social fabric, as a whole, was everything; its parts, dissevered from the whole, were nothing. As the state constitutes the whole, so it possesses everything. It can claim everything. The individual has no natural rights. His duty is obedience to the laws of the state, whatever be the sacrifice they require. The state absorbs and swallows up everything else. It knows the individual only as a citizen. It ignores, despises, and crushes him, if he be not a citizen. Morality itself is essentially political. The cardinal virtues are political, such as are necessary to the citizen. He who possesses them and adds to them decorum, the ornament of life, is a model man, a perfect citizen. Thus man is truly "a political animal." This idea pervades Greek and Roman life, and is

the source of its virtues in its best and palmiest days. The indissoluble union of the whole personality of the individual with the state as a citizen, and the acceptance of this position, come life, come death, constitutes his greatness.

But of what is the state composed? Does it embrace all men? May any man obtain the privileges of citizenship? By no means. They belong only to the native inhabitants, and are limited to certain classes of these. The wisest men of antiquity affirm that such blessings belong only to the Greek, to the Roman, to the citizen of the country. All others are foreigners, barbarians, beneath the rank of men, and on a level with the slave. They are born, not to command, but to obey; and it is perfectly just to subdue them, and sell them as slaves.

Nor do the blessings of citizenship belong to every Greek, or every Roman. Such a state of happiness and freedom, was not a natural right. Wherever the state is regarded as anterior to the individual, and the recognition of the latter is only secondary and derived from the state, there can be no natural and true liberty. In Greece and Rome the value of a man was determined, not by his inherent nature and his common origin with all other men, but by external and accidental circumstances. He is respected, not on account of the dignity of his nature, but according to his accidental position in the state. The end for which the state existed was the good of those who constituted it. This good was the reward of civil and political virtues. But, according to the ideas of the ancients, such virtues could be exercised by none but persons of leisure. A citizen must be unoccupied; must be free from the care of providing by labor for his livelihood; free to serve the state. This requires that he be a man of fortune. Wealth makes the citizen. He only is the true man. He only enjoys the favors of the state. Such persons guide and defend the state, and, taken collectively they are the state. No others are, in reality, citizens, and, in every sense, free.

Labor being an impediment to public service, is of course

degrading and servile. It does not allow time for intellectual culture, nor for attending to affairs of state. While political and military service belong to the independent citizen, labor is the lot of the slave. In ancient times, agriculture was respected; but it at length fell into the discredit which attached to all labor having for its object the procuring the necessaries of life. Hence it is easy to infer the condition of those, who, without being slaves, were not wealthy enough to live without labor. It is true they enjoyed some of the rights of citizens; but they were debarred from others. The laws of Solon excluded men of any profession, calling, or trade, from the public service. In Rome, only Patricians could attain to the highest offices of the state. The philosophers themselves did not rise in their speculations above the practices of their respective governments. Socrates thought it perfectly proper to look with contempt upon those whose occupations did not allow them to live for their friends or for the republic. Plato maintained that politicians and warriors were honorable castes, who ought to live at the expense of artisans and agriculturists, for whom he hardly provided any place in his republic. To merchants he assigned a still lower rank. Aristotle says they are occupations in which a gentleman cannot be engaged without degradation, such as require physical strength, for which nature has provided a special class of men. To this class belong those whom we reduce to subjection, in order that they may perform manual labor for us, under the name of slaves or of paid laborers. Rulers and warriors constitute the state. Husbandmen and artisans are indeed necessary; but they have nothing to do with public affairs, do not deserve to be called citizens, cannot be relied on for noble actions, as they are mercenary, and therefore incapable of virtue. Between them and slaves there is but a nominal distinction.

The Roman looked down upon labor with equal contempt. Cicero thought nothing was more senseless than to respect collectively those whom we despise individually.

It is to the slaves and freedmen that the citizen ought to abandon the mercenary occupations of trade and industry, because he is not free who depends on a salary, or must be paid for his labor. The citizen ought to disdain receiving a salary, as a sordid, illiberal gain, as the price of servitude, putting him who receives it in a state of dependence upon him who gives it. The freeman ought not to do anything for pay, not even to perform the intellectual work of a teacher. The more liberal arts, such as the science and practice of medicine, philosophy, architecture, commerce on a large scale, are honorable, and not unworthy of a citizen.

In all antiquity, poverty was regarded as one of those evils which were to be avoided with the greatest care. So dishonorable was it, that none but men of low minds were deemed capable of enduring it. The poor were judged incapable of wisdom or virtue. Neither their word nor their oath was trusted. It was considered unreasonable for them to marry; and if women married without dowry, their children were hardly recognized as legitimate. Poets and philosophers, indeed, speak of the contempt of riches; but this is limited to a world of the imagination, or at least to a few exceptional cases. In accordance with these general views, the poor were abandoned to the miseries of their lot. Accustomed to regard himself a man by virtue of his position in the state, of his liberty, and of his fortune, the rich citizen had no sympathy with the poor, from whom he was so widely separated. Lactantius justly says that the philosophers, not knowing the respect due to man as a human being, gave no moral precepts on the subject of relieving the poor. Even Cicero says, that though man is naturally prone to do good to others, even to strangers, he is not bound to yield to this sentiment to his own detriment. In other words, we are bound to show a favor to strangers only when it costs us nothing. Why, says Plautus, give to the poor? Such liberality not only deprives the giver of his possessions, but prolongs the miserable existence of the receiver. If you cannot enrich the poor, would it not be

better to leave them to end their 'useless life and their misery together. It is with such a view that Plato thought it unnecessary to attend to the wants of the poor if they were smitten with disease. If a poor man's constitution was not strong enough to resist disease, the physician might innocently abandon him; for of what use is his life, if he cannot labor? Thus, among the poor, the sick were left to perish, being abandoned without remorse by those whom they had served.

To this contempt of the poor was added a selfish love of life and fear of death. So strong was the selfish passion that the rich man would, in time of an epidemic, abandon his own household, or send away his nearest relative.

The largesses so often mentioned in Roman history, had nothing to do with charity or benevolence to a human sufferer. They were a very questionable means of compassing one's ambitious objects.

We will not enter upon the prolix subject of slavery in the ancient republics of Greece and Rome. When we say it was the corner stone of those republics, we state only a necessary corollary of the principles already presented; a principle and a practice whose immense mischievous results need not be portrayed anew in such a time as this. As a fundamental violation of the law of God, it could not but prove a most blighting curse. It was a turbid stream flowing from that prolific fountain of evil, the inhumanity that characterized ancient civilization.

According to what has already been said, one must, in order to be a citizen, be able to serve the state, either in administering the government, or in defending the country. This requires qualities to be found only in persons who are their own masters, who have wealth and leisure and bodily vigor. Others form no part of the state, and, according to ancient ideas, have no absolute rights as citizens. Thus there are two classes, those who are free, or independent and strong, and those who are not. The first are citizens; the second, including women, children, slaves, the infirm, the

poor, and laborers, forming a vast majority, are not citizens. It is not the least peculiarity of ancient civilization that women belonged to this despised class. In barbarous states they are consigned to this rank because of physical weakness; in civilized states, because of their inaptitude to political or public life. The stronger and more ambitious sex gives to the weaker and more quiet one a lower rank, assigning to it those toils which it thinks beneath itself. Woman does not exist on her own account; she is a mere means of perpetuating the race, and is the instrument and servant of her lord. Aristotle, while maintaining that the Asiatic nations erred in regarding and treating her as a slave, asserts that if she have a will, it is a will without rights, and if she have virtues they are kindred to those of slaves. In others, she was treated through all her life-time as a minor; she was always under a guardian, and could inherit property only when there were no male heirs. In Rome, it was customary to speak of the majesty of man and of the imbecility and levity of woman. This inferiority of rank, which tended to develop female vices rather than female virtues, was confounded with an inferiority of nature, and woman was said to be more inclined to evil than man, who was sustained by his intellectual superiority. Marriage did not improve the condition of women, but rather made their humiliation more complete. It was not a union of hearts; it was not even a moral relation. It was a political institution to provide citizens for the state. Plato maintained that in entering into this relation persons ought to regard their own inclinations less than the public good. Though Aristotle disapproved of the community of wives, practised in part at Sparta and advocated by Plato, he did not rise above the common idea, that marriage derived its importance, not from moral, but merely from political, considerations. Nowhere did the force of law act with more rigor upon the married woman than in Rome. Nearly all the obligations and burdens of married life were on one side; while on the other were unbounded licence and power. If in early times

there were examples of a contrary character, they were exceptions to the general rule. We pass over the topics of adultery and concubinage, not because they are regarded as only incidentally connected with our subject, for in few things do paganism and Christianity appear more strikingly in contrast, but because the discussion itself is repulsive.

This libertinage was rather increased than checked by the facility with which divorces were obtained. Towards the end of the Roman republic, and during the whole period of the empire, when the purity of ancient manners declined, and when marriage, which never had a moral character, ceased to be a political institution, except in name, and ambition and pleasure became its only objects, divorces, furnishing the readiest relief to the disappointments and disgusts incident to such connections, were multiplied in an almost incredible manner. They give a peculiar coloring to the social history of this period. They were sought sometimes by the husband, and sometimes by the wife, and generally on the most trivial grounds by both. Plutarch speaks of a Roman who was asked by his friends why he repudiated his wife, who was beautiful, rich, and wise. Showing them his shoe, he replied, "you see that it is beautiful and new, and no one knows where it pinches me." Macaenas, the celebrated patron of letters, was so notorious for his gallantries that Seneca speaks of his thousand marriages, and his daily divorces (*qui uxorem millies duxit. — Quotidiana repudia*). Tertullian said, it would seem that women entered into wedlock only that they might be released from it by divorce. Under the empire, marriage lost the last remains of its dignity and importance. Women, emancipating themselves from ancient servitude, at the same time emancipated themselves from all the laws of morality. No wonder that the Roman state was upon the eve of falling into ruins.

The same undervaluing of the individual and overvaluing of the state, already described, gave to the father an absolute power over the child. This power was given in order that the children might be raised for the service of the state.

Greece and Rome were alike in making political considerations overrule those of natural affection. In Rome the father was a civil magistrate, or rather despot, in his own family. He could cruelly rid himself of those children who did not promise usefulness to the republic. It was the object of the government to secure a vigorous and healthy population. It did not desire that there should be persons of feeble constitutions to perpetuate their race. Why, then, should a weak and sickly child be spared, especially if he were poor, since his life would be of no service to the state? Such children were sometimes destroyed without mercy: more frequently they were "exposed." The philosophers, instead of condemning this violation of the laws of nature, justified it. Both Plato and Aristotle offered political reasons for checking the growth of this kind of population. The practice of "exposing" children, to be devoured by wild beasts, or to be taken up and sold into slavery or put into places of infamy, if they were females, continued till the time of the Christian emperors.

Though we do not propose to enter upon the subject of ancient slavery, there are certain immoral uses made of slaves which it will be proper to notice. They were not only employed in all kinds of ordinary service, but also in those which ministered to the amusement of their masters, at the expense of virtue and humanity. They were trained to be actors, players upon instruments, and dancers to entertain the rich at banquets, stimulating them to voluptuousness by indecent songs and pantomimes. Before the introduction of Christianity, the Greek theatre had lost its ancient dignity. From the time of Augustus, obscenity was the chief characteristic of the Roman stage. The subjects most frequently represented were husbands deceived by their wives, libertines with their intrigues, and prostitutes in their dens. Of course the morals of these men and women devoted to the stage were ruined. Constant familiarity with scenes of vice and shame could not but leave a stain upon the soul. Virtue was derided, and everything holy was trampled on.

From actors and actresses the poison passed to the eager crowds of spectators, and a general corruption was the necessary consequence. But this was not enough. These immoral representations, these voluptuous pantomimes, nude women swimming in basins of water in the amphitheatres, surrounded by thousands of spectators of both sexes and of every age, did not satisfy the passions of the Roman people. They desired more exciting scenes, scenes of blood. The rich sent their own slaves, and the state its captives, into the murderous gladiatorial contest to amuse the demoralized populace.

The passion for these bloody contests was ardent and universal. For no purpose were there greater assemblies of the people. Tired of idleness, and yet averse to labor, the Roman citizen passed his days at the circus, witnessing the fights of bears and lions, and filling up the intervals of time by resorting to the combats of gladiators (*interim jugulantur homines, ne nihil agatur*). In times of anxiety and trouble, he repaired to the amphitheatre to banish his thoughts; in moods of sadness, he sought diversion by looking upon the spectacle of human slaughter. With the multitude were seen knights, nobles, and senators; men of distinguished rank presided. Not only tyrants, like Nero, Commodus, Gallienus, were of this number, but good princes, like Vespasian and Titus, found pleasure in the combats of the circus. And what is still more strange, females of every rank resorted to these scenes of cruelty with an avidity equal to that of the most hardened soldier. Among the vast crowds of spectators, there was no sign of pity for the combatants. The least indication of tenderness, by any person, would have been sufficient cause for his removal. The multitude applauded enthusiastically when one of the combatants fell gloriously; and uttered cries of vengeance, if one allowed his zeal to flag. They thought themselves insulted if men did not willingly rush to a barbarous death for their amusement (*injuriam putat, quod non libenter pereunt*).

This passion of the Romans for gladiatorial contests

continued as long as the empire stood. When they were pressed by barbarian invaders on every side, the people would run to the circus to see men shed each other's blood, when they themselves were too cowardly to lose a drop of their own to save their country. Consuls and quaestors were bound by the law of Tiberius to provide gladiatorial shows when they entered upon their office. To vary the scene, Domitian once compelled women to enter the lists. Men provided in their wills for honoring their own names with the populace by entertainments of this kind after their decease. This madness was carried to such an extent that a certain rich Roman desired that, after his death, the beautiful slaves which he kept in his own house should fight in these combats; another had the same desire in respect to the delicate boys who had been his *deliciae*. What a contrast to the last acts of departing Christians, who freed their slaves, and left legacies for the relief of the poor and the suffering! What must have been the state of society where men of wealth, to keep their own name in honor with the populace after their decease, would make the instruments of their own guilty pleasures the victims of murderous contests! Or what must one think of those impure orgies so common at Rome, in which the blood of slaves was mingled with the wine of their masters, crowned with flowers: in which the guests were entertained alternately with the grimaces of actors, the carnage of gladiators, and the kisses of courtezans?

If, now, from this general picture of the false principles, unjust acts, and immoral practices of the ancient pagan world, we turn to the Roman world immediately after its conversion to Christianity, or rather to the great body of Christians living in the empire between the apostolic age and the age of Constantine, we shall see the evidences of a revolution the most fundamental and extraordinary of any known in human history. Instead of the all-prevailing doctrine of a natural inequality in the various classes of men, we find, shining with celestial brightness everywhere

in this otherwise dark world, the doctrine of the original and essential equality of all men. The writers of the church, the interpreters of the Christian thought of the age, unanimously proclaim this equality, not only on the authority of their religion, but also on that of the laws of nature. The extent of the change thus wrought in the whole structure of human society, and in the condition of the entire mass of the population, is great almost beyond conception. In the midst of oppression and persecution, the fathers of the church taught the common origin and destiny of all men, and their natural equality. Coming from the hand of the same Creator, they are formed in the same divine image, descended from the same progenitors, are made of the same corporeal substance, come into the world with the same weakness and nakedness, are subject alike to death as the common lot, are equally immortal in their immaterial nature, are equally capable of receiving the Holy Spirit of God, and are all, without exception, subjects of the divine compassion. The distinctions that exist in the world are not founded in nature, but are accidental, and spring from causes purely external. It is not birth that ennobles, but high qualities of the soul. "You affirm," says Chrysostom, "that your father was a consul, and your mother a saint. What is that to me? Show me your own manner of life; it is by that alone that I judge of your claim to nobility." To these early Christian teachers, a human being was of great account (*μέγα ἄνθρωπος*), so that an Ambrose could say: *Magnum opus Dei es, homo*. All men were considered as deserving the same regard. A common origin made them all members of one and the same family; the world constituted one great republic (*unam omnium rempublicam agnoscimus mundum*). In this great family of mankind, love was the common bond of union. As this virtue had its most perfect manifestation in Christ, Christians were to imitate him in cherishing and exercising it. Like him, they were to pity their suffering fellow-men, and bear their burdens.

Familiar as these doctrines are to us, they were novelties,

and even paradoxes, when they were first announced to the pagan world. The philosophers foresaw that such views, if adopted, would change all things; but they could not conceive how they could be carried out in such a world as this. The new religion seemed to them opposed to nature.

According to Augustine, Christians formed a spiritual republic in the midst of pagan society,—the city of God upon the earth. It was not established by means of any violent change in the external order of things. Its members were required to respect the established forms of government. Its aim was to transform society by penetrating the hearts of individuals and introducing a new spirit there. Says one of the early writers: “Christians do not distinguish themselves from other nations by their language, their costume, or their usages. They do not live in towns by themselves, but remain in the midst of the Greeks or of the barbarians where they were born. But while they are not distinguished externally from the pagans, their life is altogether a different one.” They obeyed the laws, paid tribute with a zeal which might well serve as a model for those who were more interested to maintain the ancient forms of society. They honored magistrates, because they considered them appointed by God for the maintenance of civil order. They prayed to their divine Master that he would grant to the emperors a tranquil reign, courageous armies, faithful counsellors, and an upright people, disposed to peace. These petitions were put up in the midst of persecutions. Even the most cruel torture could not prevent them from commending the emperors to the divine protection. During this whole period, so full of revolts, often from the most trivial causes, the Christians, though oppressed and persecuted in the most inhuman manner, as public enemies, and as rebels against the imperial authority, were never found guilty of exciting a single insurrection. It was only when the magistrates required them to violate the laws of God that they refused to obey. Thus they refused to render divine honors to the emperors, either by offering incense to their images, or swearing by

their genius. At first, Christians would not hold public offices, on account of the pagan rites connected with them, for which Gibbon censures them. But, at a later period, the emperors preferred to be surrounded by Christians on account of their superior fidelity, and chose to favor them in matters of conscience, rather than to forego their services. What a tribute is this to the excellence of their character, that monarchs should pass by pagans, men of their own religion, and select their servants from among the followers of the new faith!

The primitive Christians, guided both by scripture and reason regarded labor as honorable rather than degrading. It is the natural means of procuring a livelihood, and ought to be common to all men. This is sufficiently indicated by the fact that nature has made no provision for man without labor on his part; and is confirmed by the example of Christ, who was a carpenter's son, and of the apostles, who labored with their own hands. Idleness was therefore regarded as culpable. It was maintained that a voluntary slave was much nearer to Christ, in that respect, than his master. Of course, if there ought, according to Christian perfection, to be no masters, there ought, in strictness, to be no slaves. The first lessons of the church were, that all Christians should make it a matter of religion to be the servants of others, and live for the benefit of all, with little concern about their external condition. The remote consequences involved were, that slavery would thus disappear of itself. The writings of the fathers are full of precepts and discussions on these subjects, to which we can make but this general allusion. The examples of the early Christians were in conformity with such instructions. The employment of slaves, in any way unfavorable to their morals or their honor, was entirely prohibited by the church. Both master and slave were required to abandon the circus, the theatre, and all places of unholy amusement.

It was as characteristic of Christianity to elevate the poor, as it was of paganism to depress and crush them. The

pagan philosopher taught only men of leisure and wealth, who were few in number; the Christian teacher addressed himself to the greatest number, to the poor and the ignorant, to women and children, as well as the rich, and thus built up society, beginning at the foundation. Said Origen in reply to a pagan representation of the selfish, exclusive principle: "We are separated from the irrational brutes, but not from men of low condition, for they are as much our brethren as those of distinguished rank." The church fathers repeatedly say that in order to show that the poor bear as distinctly the image of God as the rich, and that, in the view of the supreme Judge, the beggar is not inferior to the king. Christ himself chose the lot of humble poverty, and thus ennobled it for his immediate disciples and for his followers in all time to come. "Poverty," says Clement of Alexandria, "is not necessarily a curse, nor riches a blessing; it depends, in both cases, on the use that is made of them." Without aiming to overthrow the laws and institutions of society in respect to private property, or to alter the external relations of men, the Christian teachers urged, with great fervor and eloquence, the exercise of that voluntary beneficence which should make men like a society of angels. They opposed, not the holding of property, but selfishness in the use of it. The church, in exalting the poor, taught neither that riches are a bar to salvation, nor that the poor have a right to the property of the rich; but that it is the duty of all to live for all, and to do what is practicable towards equalizing the essential blessings of life.

Christian benevolence and active charity to the unfortunate are represented as a primary duty and a distinctive mark of a disciple of Christ. The early Christian writers and preachers employ all their resources to impress upon the faithful the duty of charity at all times and in all circumstances. At every period — in the dawning existence of the church, in the times of its persecution, and in the days of its final triumph; when the empire was powerful, when it was sinking, and when it had fallen, — charity, sincere and all-

pervading, was the Christian's life and watchword; and if some of the religious teachers, as Chrysostom and Augustine, were apparently more the apostles of charity than others, it was only because they had more frequent occasion to call for the exercise of this Christian grace than others had.

With the pagans we find only the semblance of true charity. The poor among them were generally repulsed with a coolness that was regarded as indicative of greatness; and if aid was granted, it was with a secret repugnance, and almost always from some selfish motive. With the Christians, it was quite otherwise. They extended a helping hand to the sufferer with joy, finding true delight in comforting and consoling the distressed. If the pagan gave anything in charity, it was that which he could part with without injury. The Christian gave not only of his abundance, but of his deep poverty. The pagan aided those who had a rank to maintain, but neglected others, especially if they were not needed by the state. The Christian, on the contrary, aided all the helpless without distinction, who stretched forth their hand for relief. The pagan gave most frequently from mere ostentation or ambition; he made largesses, which did no good, for the sake of gaining the favor of the populace. The Christian acted from an inward impulse, and judged of the act, not from its outward form, or from the estimation in which others held it, but from the measure of love there was in his heart towards God, and towards man as his creature.

Among the unfortunate persons cared for by the church should be mentioned captives and persons unjustly oppressed. Never was personal safety less guarded than under the capricious government of the emperors and the brutal power of the victorious barbarians; and never was Christian benevolence exercised with more perseverance, or with more happy results, than in this period of tyranny and disorder. During the persecutions, Christians thrown into prison or sent to the galleys, were visited by their brethren, who brought them aid and comfort. Collections were made for

them; and the poor would go without food for a day, that they might have something to give to their brethren. If the latter were condemned to labor on public works, or to contend in the circus, their freedom was purchased from the funds of the church. When the tyrant Licinius inflicted the same penalties upon those who visited the prisoners, even this did not deter tender females from braving those perils that they might care for the sick among the prisoners.

The wars of the empire, the civil troubles growing out of the struggles of competitors for the crown, and, above all, the invasions of the barbarians, gave ample scope for Christian charity. Besides the prisoners taken in battle, the population of whole districts, after having their homes laid waste, were sometimes carried into captivity. Young Christians were thus exposed, not only to death or slavery, but to the danger of relapsing into idolatry. Sons were torn not only from their country, but from their parents. Females were exposed to brutal treatment by rude barbarians. Men sometimes sacrificed their own liberty to restore to his family a husband or a son. The church of Rome sent money to Cappadocia to redeem captives doomed to slavery. When the Numidian hordes invaded northern Africa, and carried away many captives, the church of Carthage made a large collection to redeem them. When the Goths devastated Italy, carrying away prisoners, the latter were redeemed by their brethren, Ambrose giving up the sacred utensils of the church of Milan for the purpose. Augustine gave a similar example, which was followed, in turn, by the bishop of Carthage at a later time, who, for want of room elsewhere, lodged the returned captives in two churches, and attended personally to their wants. Nor were these acts of charity limited to Christian captives. Touched with compassion for all sufferers, and prizing the liberty of all, the Christians could make the same sacrifices to restore pagan prisoners of war to their country. Bishop Acacius of Amida, near the year 420, sold the sacred vessels of the church and purchased the liberty of nearly seven thousand Persians captured by the Roman army.

The ancient pagans, as we have seen, attached to the present life, and having no hopes for a future world, naturally feared death and dreaded sickness. They even avoided the sick. To the poor, already degraded, sickness added a new opprobrium, because they were now doubly incapacitated to serve the state. In Christian society all this was changed. Bodily disease was regarded rather as a trial of faith than as a misfortune, and as a call upon others to redouble their acts of love and tenderness. There was one class of sufferers for whom Christians felt a very lively sympathy. It was that of leprous persons, so numerous in the East, driven from the abodes of men, abandoned by their own kindred, and forced to retire to the mountains or to caverns, not daring to show themselves lest they should be stoned as objects of dread and aversion, instead of being pitied as objects of love. Basil made most eloquent pleas in their behalf, saying that to neglect them was nothing less than to grieve Christ, whose members they were, and that they ought to be loved and pitied all the more for their being abandoned by others. Great epidemics, which made the terrified pagans flee from the scene of danger, were the occasions of the most brilliant display of Christian charity. "The Lord," says Cyprian, "wishes to try men, and see if those in health will care for the sick; if members of the same family truly love each other; if masters have any pity for their slaves; if physicians will prove faithful; if the prospect of death will not soften the hearts of obdurate and violent men, and check the cupidity of the avaricious." It requires courage, no doubt, to overcome the fear of contagion and its repulsiveness; but Christian charity must allow no repulse. Let no one excuse himself, says a writer of the second century, under the pretext that he does not know how to take care of the sick, or that he cannot bear the sight. Let him who uses such language consider that he also may become a victim of disease, and may need the aid of his brethren. The same idea is developed, in touching words, two centuries later, by Gregory of Nazianzum, and Gregory of Nyssa.

The duties thus urgently enjoined, were as diligently performed, both by individuals and by churches. Everywhere, in the first ages of the church, the faithful, and more particularly Christian women, went to visit the sick, for their relief and for their religious consolation. The Fabiolas, the Placillas, Ephrems, and a long list of others of like character, are well known for their Christian labors in this direction. Especially were the deacons and deaconesses charged with the care of the sick, for whose relief the funds of the church were placed at their disposal. When the plague raged at Carthage, about the year 250, the Christians, led on by Cyprian their bishop, addressed themselves earnestly to the work of mercy, some of them taking charge of the sick, others providing the means for their relief. The same self-denying love was manifested on a similar occasion at Alexandria. Presbyters, deacons, and the rich and powerful among the laity, visited the sick and dying, and buried the dead. As fast as they themselves were cut down, their places were filled by other brethren, notwithstanding the great peril to which they exposed themselves.

The attention of the church to the poor visited by sickness and calamity, early led to the founding of charitable institutions which were wholly unknown to pagan antiquity. The first of these institutions, the fruit and the glory of Christianity, appears to have been established in the early part of the fourth century. Near the close of the century they became numerous, both in the East and in the West. Everywhere were seen houses of refuge, hospitals for the sick, and hostleries for poor travellers. Some of these were founded by individuals; others, by churches. The largest hostelry was that founded by Basil the Great, in Caesarea, where he was bishop. It rose, says Gregory of Nazianzum, like a villa, near the gates of the city, embracing apartments for weary travellers, halls for invalids, provided with physicians and nurses, work-shops for those who wished to labor, and a special asylum for leprous persons. Chrysostom followed Basil's example, and, like him, founded hospitals in

different parts of his diocese. In the time of Theodosius, most of the churches in large towns had such establishments.

The restitution of woman to her true place in society, proclaimed by Christ and the apostles, was practically effected by the church. In the midst of a pagan world where she was degraded by the laws and abased by the customs of society, Christianity extended to her a friendly hand, and the Fathers of the Church contended with great energy to deliver her from her degradation. Christ had come to redeem humanity without regard to sex. Both sexes were made in the image of God, were formed from the dust, were subject to like temptations, and were called to the same holy life. The differences of sex, which were construed to her disadvantage by the pagans, are in the views of Christianity, differences which admit of equal degrees of excellence. If the gentler sex is more a creature of feeling than the stronger, it is superior in Christian sympathy and tenderness, and not inferior in patience and endurance. "Who," says Gregory of Nyssa, "can compare with the Christian woman in times of trial; who is found to equal her in piety, constancy, and devotion"? Such views of the nature and proper sphere of woman, had an indescribable influence upon her character and condition. Those womanly sentiments which were repressed or perverted by paganism, shot forth into a beautiful life and activity under the genial influences of Christianity. Christian women showed from the beginning, a benign charity, a sweetness and modesty unknown to the pagan world. In the times of persecution, they were models of courage and charity, consoling the prisoners, nursing the sick, the vexed, the distressed, confessors, and martyrs. "More courageous than lions," says Chrysostom, "they endured the most cruel tortures, thereby proving, better than anything else, the superiority of the Christian woman over the pagan. In love for their Saviour, in purity, in compassion for the suffering, they excel us men." Among many splendid examples, may be mentioned Melania the younger, who, having vast possessions in all

parts of the empire, gave them liberally to relieve the suffering poor, and consecrated herself to the service of the unfortunate, travelling from province to province, seeking the objects of her compassion; Paulla, of the family of the Scipios and of Paulus Emilius, and Fabiola, of the family of the Fabii, who imitated the example of Melania, and added new lustre to their ancestral name; the princess Placilla, who visited hospitals, and with her own hands ministered to the wants of the sick; and the empresses Pulcheria and Eudoxia were no less distinguished for their Christian virtues than for their rank.

It was a great change when matrimony was raised from being a mere institution of the state, an expedient for civil purposes, to be an institution for the kingdom of God, a moral union, to improve, perfect, and sanctify life. Christ had pronounced it a divine institution; and an inspired apostle had declared it a type of the union of Christ and his church. This great idea was actually carried out in the primitive ages of Christianity.

The Christian fathers, with the scriptures as their guide, avoided the two extremes of the enslavement of the wife on the one hand, and the entire emancipation of her from all domestic restraints, as in the time of the empire, on the other. The submission of the wife to the husband, was not the submission of a slave to a master, but a union formed by love where the one was, voluntarily and for the good of both, merged, as it were, in the other. These fathers knew nothing of the doctrines of modern socialism. While the hearts of husband and wife were united, their spheres of action were kept distinct. God himself had drawn a dividing line between them which neither party could pass with impunity. To the husband, it was maintained, belong affairs abroad, in the forum, the senate, the camp; to the wife, domestic duties, the ministry of the interior in this little state, the family. "Woman," says Chrysostom, "is not to bear arms, not to vote in assemblies, nor to administer government; but to devote herself to domestic life, superin-

tending household matters, maintaining order in the house, directing servants, and educating her children. She is not the servant of her lord, but his companion and aid, his indispensable complement, by whose gentle influence he becomes what he was designed to be." The early Christians conceded no more liberty to the one sex than to the other; both were equally under the laws of Christ in all things. The husband was to be devoted to the wife, as Christ was to the church. The lenity of pagans towards the licentiousness of men was severely censured by Christian writers. Says Jerome, on this subject: "The laws of the Caesars are very different from the laws of Christ, and the requirements of paganism, from the requirements of Paul. The pagans gave loose reins to the profligacy of men, condemning them only for violence, or adultery with free persons, but allowing indulgence with slaves or prostitutes, as if sin depended, not on the will of the transgressor, but on the position of the person with whom it is committed. With us, on the contrary, what is not allowed in women is not allowed in men."

The Christian spirit, which elevated and sanctified marriage, transformed the family into a Christian family; it modified the relations of parents and children, without weakening the authority of the one or the respect and submission of the other. Christians, from the very beginning, reprobated the barbarous custom of "exposing" children, as well as the frequent abortions by which mothers attempted to conceal their criminal loves. Human life was considered sacred; and even the unborn, as well as the feeble and infirm, were cared for, and protected against inhumanity. The church espoused the cause of children and blessed them because Christ had declared "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Against the practice of "exposing infants," so deeply rooted in ancient society, Lactantius inveighs with a vigorous eloquence. His words are: "Let no one imagine that fathers have the right to destroy their new-born infants. Such an act is the greatest impiety; for God causes human souls to be born for life and not for death. But there are men who

think they are without sin, though they take from beings scarcely formed, a life which they did not give. Think not that they will spare the blood of strangers who spare not their own blood. Such men are entirely perverted in their minds. What shall I say of those whom a false feeling leads to expose their children? Can they be considered innocent who give as a prey to dogs their own bowels, who destroy them more cruelly than if they strangled them? Even when it happens that a child so exposed is taken up to be nourished by another, it is the father who is guilty of delivering up his own blood to slavery or to prostitution. It is true those homicidal fathers plead poverty, and their inability to rear a family, just as if the good things of this world were in the power of those who possess them, as if God did not continually plunge the rich into poverty, and raise the poor to abundance. If poverty really prevents anyone from the power of maintaining children, let him not be a father. That would be much better than, by impious hands, to destroy the work of God."

According to Ambrose, parents are responsible for the souls of the children committed to their care, and designed to be fellow-citizens with them in the kingdom of God. The ancient inflexible severity of the Roman father is to disappear, and give place to an authority softened by love. The father ought to consider the son equal to himself in natural dignity, and as designed to perpetuate upon the earth a race of the children of God. No doubt, the father is to teach his child obedience, but not the obedience of a slave; it is by making them know and love the law of God that he is to teach them to be subject to his own authority. This religious education is the subject of frequent exhortation with the fathers, and most of all with Chrysostom. This great man, the eloquent expounder of the Christian spirit in regard to the wants and necessities of men, saw in the want of a Christian education the cause of the decline of the empire. Men are occupied, said he, with the acquisition of honors and wealth, that they may give to their

children reputation and a fortune, but do not care for their souls. They are thus guilty of a great sin; for they devote their children to destruction, and contribute to the overthrow of society. He sees their salvation only in their religious education; and presses upon parents the duty of employing the tender age of childhood, when the will is flexible for making good impressions, and for forming them, by the fear of God and in the love of Christ, to faith, humility, and charity. He insists that parents should themselves teach their children the great principles of the Christian life, and not turn them over to be instructed by slaves. Especially is this duty inculcated upon mothers, who are more constantly at home than fathers, and who by their bland and soft natures are better adapted to instruct infancy and childhood than fathers are. The pagan moralists scarcely knew this power of the mother over the hearts of her children; they make no mention of the education of daughters by their own mothers, of which the Christian teachers speak so often and so eloquently. Chrysostom and Jerome insist on mothers bringing up their daughters in such a way as to make them models of Christian virtue, and to prepare them to take their place, in due time, in society, moulding it by their influence, and presiding over their own households in such a way as to train them for the kingdom of God. While pagan mothers rarely exerted any permanent influence over their sons, being confined in their gynaeceae, or devoted to a life of vicious pleasure, Christian mothers distinguished themselves by forming the characters of their sons, as was the case of Monica, the mother of Augustine, Nona, the mother of Gregorv of Nazianzum, and Arethusa, the mother of Chrysostom.

We have spoken thus far of the direct influence of Christianity upon those who embraced it. We should fail to do justice to the subject, if we did not notice that indirect and fainter influence exerted by Christian ideas upon the opinions and sentiments of those who were hardly conscious of it. At first, Christians, comparatively few in number, lived

scattered among those who were not Christians. They gradually multiplied till they became the predominant party, and their opponents, at first numerous, gradually decreased till they dwindled quite away. Now is there any observable change in the sentiments of the latter that can be accounted for only on the ground that they had some knowledge of the principles of the former? Our author thinks there is, and presents reasons for this opinion that seem to be not without weight. Of course, in some instances the modification of pagan ideas is very slight, and may have been occasioned by Christian ideas set afloat in society, and reaching the individuals referred to in a very circuitous way. The evidence is to be sought in the similarity of ideas not otherwise to be accounted for, rather than in direct proof of personal connection with Christians. The books of Christians, particularly the apologies addressed to the emperors, the discourses of Christian teachers as reported by pagans who listened to them, the conversation of Christians with pagans, and the marked peculiarities of Christians both in doctrine and in practice, might be known more or less accurately by those who professed to stand entirely aloof from the new religion.

The first philosopher who gives evidence of having his doctrines tinged by Christian ideas, is Seneca. His system of morality, drawn out at length, as it is by the author of the *Essay*, furnishes the means of forming a correct judgment on the disputed point whether his opinions were purely pagan or whether they had been affected by Christianity. We have room for specifying only one or two of his philosophical opinions that seem to betray a Christian origin. A human being, he teaches, is "a sacred thing," which no one ought to dispise, or has the right to abuse. Men, having a common origin, and being naturally equal, have a spiritual relationship, and are fellow-citizens of "the great state," not the Roman state, but that universal society, where all men are equal, and are governed by those natural principles which are above writ-

ten laws. "Nature has made us social beings; we are born for the general good." Men are designed to love and aid each other. Nature disposes us to such love by our common relationship. Love is not to be a barren sentiment, but an active principle. By such beneficence, we imitate the Deity who constantly pours his bounties upon us, upon the evil and the good. We ought to imitate him by bestowing benefits without regard to being benefitted in turn. The important thing in an act of beneficence is not what is done, but the intention with which it is done.

His views of forgiveness are no less remarkable. He said, that revenge is inhuman: that it is better to suffer injury than to inflict it; that we should be the more ready to forgive others if we consider how often we need to be forgiven by others. Such sentiments, and many others which might be mentioned—sentiments found nowhere in the pagan world before the introduction of Christianity—would be an enigma on any other supposition than that of their emanating in some way from the latter. If as early as the time of Nero Christianity could begin to influence the thoughts of reflective pagans, we should expect much more to find evidences of such influence under the later emperors.

Pliny's great humanity, his provisions for the poor, his sympathy for the slave, his efforts—the earliest known among pagans—to improve education by rendering it less public and more domestic, seem to indicate that some breath of Christian sentiment had passed over his mind.

Plutarch entertained the most elevated sentiments in respect to the unity and perfection of God, his providential care for men, the duty of loving him, and of loving and forgiving our fellow-men. His idea of marriage and of the family are even more nearly Christian than those of Seneca or Pliny. On the relations of husband and wife, their duties to each other, and the duty of educating their children with care, morally as well as physically and intellectually, his language sounds very much like that of some modern Christian writer.

Still more does Epictetus, the contemporary of Plutarch, show that the atmosphere which surrounded him was one upon which Christianity had shed its influences. Some have even gone so far as to maintain that he was a Christian; but it is enough to say, with Pascal, that "he is one of the philosophers of the world who best understood the duties of man." If it is true, as no doubt it is, that his writings are edifying to Christians, and yet that he was not a Christian himself, it is not easy to draw any other conclusion than that Christianity had cast a broad intellectual light over his mind. From the days of Plato we see no progress on moral subjects among the pagan writers, but rather degeneracy, till after the age of Christ and the apostles. We can discover no adequate cause for this rise in the tone of pagan philosophy aside from Christianity; and this explanation is the more satisfactory from the fact that the improvement lies exactly in the direction of Christian ideas and sentiments.

The emperor Marcus Aurelius, was not less religious than Epictetus, and seems to be more influenced by love. If the latter who was a slave, taught the theory of inward liberty, maintaining the natural equality of men as the children of God, the former, who ruled over a vast empire, insisted upon a practical benevolence in imitation of Divine Providence, which bordered very closely upon Christian charity. He taught that God, supreme in wisdom and goodness, directs all things well; that good and evil, which come at his bidding, are alike ordered for our benefit; that we ought to be entirely submissive to his will, and trustfully to walk in his ways, and so to elevate ourselves to him; that the human soul has a peculiar value, not affected by rank; that, in this respect, all men are equal, and form a vast society, of which a nation is but a part; that while Rome belonged to him as emperor, the world belonged to him as man; that each one has a mission to fulfil in a system in which God is chief; that in the most obscure position one can be "a divine man;" that we should always

remember that all men are our kindred ; that we are members of a great body which would be incomplete without us ; that we ought to love our neighbor and do him good irrespective of his deserts ; nay, that we ought to love our enemies and forgive them. These assuredly are noble sentiments, free from the refined selfishness of the more ancient philosophers, and from the proud self-sufficiency of the later stoics. They express a fraternal interest in man, and a tender compassion for the weak and erring, unknown, both in theory and in practice, till after the coming of Christ.

Putting together all these sentiments of the later philosophers, we observe a marked progress in respect to the social relations of men, humanity taking the place of nationality ; personal dignity, the place of political rank ; forgiveness the place of revenge ; compassion to the miserable, the place of indifference or inhumanity ; and a moral purity, if not sacredness, in domestic life taking the place of the low economic views which corrupted ancient life, and weakened the body politic. Finding such principles in the ethical writers of the age, we seem to have passed the dividing line between ancient and modern society. Strictly speaking, modern history begins where Christian influence begins ; and it is evidently a mistake to suppose that this began with the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity.

The spirit of legislation, during this period, was no less changed than that of philosophy. The whole atmosphere of public and private life was more or less affected by the presence of Christian ideas. Even when men opposed Christianity, they were unconsciously influenced by some of its doctrines. When we consider the extent to which the emperors and jurists of the first Christian centuries introduced humanity into the laws of the state, we are compelled to attribute the change to the cause above assigned. In this twilight of Christianity in which many lived without ever seeing its central luminary, we find several eminent jurists. They often induced tyrannical emperors to

mitigate the severity of the old Roman laws. "The injustice of the laws complained of, said Trajan, does not belong to our age (*nec nostri seculi est*)."¹ Florentinus maintained that men, *on account of their relationship to each other*, ought to abstain from doing injuries. The laws of nature, of affection and humanity now began to hold a place above the old civil law. Ulpian, a celebrated reformer of the laws under Alexander Severus, often said that the interpreter of the laws ought to lean to piety and humanity (*pietatis—humanitatis intuitu*). Antoninus also uniformly preferred the more humane interpretation (*humanior interpretatio*) of the law. While the ancient laws spoke only of *rights*, the idea of *duty* now entered into the laws. The judges were directed, in cases relating to domestic life, to regard the laws of natural affection as well as those of the civil code. This increasing humanity in the laws of the empire is easily explained by referring it to the benign spirit of Christianity, which was beginning to be felt even in pagan society.

It would require too much space to mention all the particular laws, or even classes of laws, which might be adduced to illustrate the foregoing general statements. The condition of woman was improved. The jurists admitted that her legal rights were inferior to those of men. Papinius says, *in multis juris nostri articulis deterior est conditio feminarum quam masculorum*. During the first three centuries her condition was gradually improved.

The same idea of the dignity of a human being which tended to equalize the rights of the two sexes, redounded to the advantage of children, who could no longer be crushed with impunity. Even the children of the poor began to be provided for. Nerva was the first pagan who made public provision for them. Trajan followed his example, and supported five thousand in Rome, and many others in different parts of Italy and Africa. In nothing, perhaps, is the indirect influence of Christianity upon paganism more evident than in these and other kindred institutions of charity. The emperor Julian resorted to them expressly for the purpose

of giving to paganism the advantages belonging to Christianity. Could there be a more unequivocal testimony to the excellence of that new spirit which was beginning to permeate and regenerate society?

ARTICLE II.

THE DENIAL OF THE SUPERNATURAL.

BY J. M. MANNING, CHAPLAIN OF 43D REGT. MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEERS.

THE subject of divine interpositions, recent denials of which we propose to consider in the present Article, is not a matter to be debated with all classes of unbelievers. There may be other questions lying back of this, which render any such debate useless. The adversary should not be allowed to meet us where, if we gain the battle, he can say it amounts to nothing; but should be compelled to defend himself in his real and fundamental position. Why should we discuss the problem of miracles, or of the supernatural generally, with a disciple of Spinoza? His pantheism is a foregone conclusion against every one of our arguments; and until he admits a personal Creator, distinct from the creation, we are merely chopping logic for each other's amusement or mockery. This remark holds in regard to the *positivist* also. As neither Spinoza, Hegel, or Emerson is the antagonist, in precisely the same way, we cannot argue with Comte or Mr. Buckle for divine interpositions. If there be no first truths, transcending time and space and revealed to the spirit, but all knowledge must be reached by the induction of the senses, then, as a matter of course, there is nothing of the nature of a miracle. It is idle to attempt to show that something above the cosmos may come into it, until the existence of that something is admitted; this is the common ground on which the objector must meet us, if he