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THE CHARACTER OF SANCTITY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Mores Catholici, or Ages of Faith. By Kenelm H. Digby. London, C. Dolman, 1848.

History of European Morals, from Augustus to Charlemagne. By W. E. Hartpole Lecky, M.A. New York, D. Appleton & Co., 1877.

Atheistic Methodism. By W. H. Mallock, in *Nineteenth Century*. January, 1880.

THEOLOGIANs demonstrate that Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity, and Apostolicity are four characteristic marks of the true Church, as our Lord constituted it. The second of these, sanctity, is intended to be specially considered in this paper. The most elementary authors of theology, even, set forth convincing proofs that in the divine plan the universal and perpetual society established by Jesus Christ was from the beginning destined to be holy in its doctrine and its members. The types of the Old Law which foreshadowed it, the Prophets who described it minutely ages before its birth, the Apostles who were its founders and spoke of it in detail, the Fathers who, in working out its development, never swerved from its original ideal, cannot leave any doubt as to the intention of Christ, that His bride should be forever pure and immaculate.

Passing from the abstract plan to its realization, the historians of the Church prove that the ideal was carried out, not only at the first propagation of Christianity, but during all the nineteen centuries which have intervened; and even the great majority of non-Christian writers admit that, in point of fact, with the era of the

birth of Christ commences a period of immense moral progress, and that wherever the new religion made proselytes the most remarkable purity of life distinguished them from their still pagan countrymen.

But our object is not to develop a thesis of Catholic theology. This is indeed presupposed, and the intention is not to either set it entirely aside or lessen its importance. We think it preferable to answer some objections only which non-Catholic writers of talent have rendered popular in our day. To this we shall mainly confine ourselves. Our chief work will be to examine attentively what has always been, and what is at this moment the Church's action on the moral world, in comparison with the various ethical systems which are proposed in this century for the guidance of men. For it is remarkable that in this age extraordinary efforts are being made on every side to settle the morals of mankind on new bases, altogether different from, and often totally opposed to, the old and solid foundations laid down by the Apostles of Christ and their successors. The turn given to the new theories is occasionally calculated to deceive the unwary, and the proposed object of those writers is always to place the Church in an inferior position, and to induce the reader to conclude that the superiority in morals which the Catholic attributes to his religion is not supported by the verdict of history.

And what renders the need of this more urgent is that the new moralists concede in the main that the value of life consists in "virtue," whatever meaning they give to this word. They are often extremely strict in their ethics, and sometimes raise objections which would stagger a venerable professor in our theological seminaries. The time has passed for openly preaching immorality among men, except on the part of a few novelists and dramatists. Among serious writers the French phalansterians were the last to do it, worse than Epicurus ever did. We do not intend to speak of them, nor of the immoral writers of the last century. The school of Voltaire has passed away with the gibes and sneers it lavished on the purest and holiest persons and institutions belonging to our Holy Church. Neither is it our intention to bring into comparison with Catholic sanctity the pagan, Mohammedan, or Buddhist worlds, which even at this day compose the majority of mankind. The reason of this last exclusion is simply that those dregs of Asia form, confessedly, "the kingdom of moral darkness," which it would be folly to compare with Christian holiness. There are, it is true, some eccentric writers who admire the morality practiced by the followers of Mohammed and of Gautama, and find in the Koran and the folios attributed to Sakya-muni a strict

code of ethics. This will never become the general opinion of mankind.

There remains, therefore, what is now called the Christian world, including, besides the Catholic Church, the numerous schismatical and heretical sects into which Christendom is divided, and also the rationalistic and positivist schools to which the name Christian can scarcely be applied. We must briefly pass each of these consecutively in review, and see how far they can maintain their respective claims to being perfect moral systems superior to that of the Catholic Church.

Before the upheaval of Protestantism in the sixteenth century one code of morals ruled the conduct of all Europeans. It was inaugurated by Christ himself, and was based on the Decalogue in the Old Law, and on the precepts and counsels of the Gospel in the New. The Popes and the Fathers explained it authoritatively, and the schoolmen in the Middle Ages, led on by Jonas of Orleans, in the ninth century, formed it into a complete and a concrete system. Numerous councils interpreted, defined, and approved it, and passed decrees to secure its execution. To the Bishops was mainly intrusted the care of carrying it into effect; and under the direction both of Popes and Bishops, powerful preachers, chiefly of the religious orders, explained it to the people, and did their best, by their earnest exhortations, to assure its observance in its primitive purity. Whenever a decline in morals took place, owing to the weakness of individuals or the corruption of certain classes, bishops in councils issued new and more stringent canons of morals, and troops of devoted missionaries called the people to repentance, and brought on a new period of regeneration. Their zeal was always accompanied with a powerful effusion of grace from above, and often with extraordinary portents.

This is necessarily a short and very imperfect sketch of the Church's action in general in all ages for the enforcement of the moral code promulgated by Christ and his Apostles, and impartial history vouches for its success from first to last. No rationalist even can deny that wherever the Gospel was originally preached among Jews or Gentiles a most remarkable moral change was immediately perceptible, which has invariably invested in all countries the memory of the primitive Church, as it was established in each of them, with a peculiar character for moral excellence. This is particularly true of primeval Christian history, not only in Jerusalem, but likewise in Alexandria for the Egyptians, in Rome for the Latins, in Edessa for the Syrians, in the far Orient for the Persians and Indians, among the Irish from the sixth to the eighth century, among the Anglo-Saxons in Great Britain, the Celts in Western France, the Visigoths in Spain, the Frisians and Germans

at the preaching of Boniface; in France during the thirteenth century, in Spain as soon as it was freed from the yoke of the Saracens, and in many other countries which it would require too much space to enumerate in detail. These remarkable periods of holiness illustrate successively or concurrently the history of the Church from its foundation down to our own modern times.

When the discovery of a route to India, and of the Western Continent took place at the end of the fifteenth century, the renewal of this primitive purity was immediately observable among the first Hindoo converts of St. Francis Xavier and his successors; it was soon after noticeable among the debased negroes of the Guinea and Congo coasts; among the simple inhabitants of many islands in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, such as the Guanches in the Canaries under Betancourt, and later on among many tribes in the Philippine Islands in the Pacific. In America it was likewise the case with regard to the savages of Brazil converted by Anchieta and his companions; in Peru; in New Grenada; especially, too, in Paraguay at a quite recent period; and also among many tribes in Canada and the western regions of our own country.

This enumeration, incomplete as it is, will suffice to prove a fact which is universal in the history of the Catholic Church in the first efforts of its missionaries' zeal. And what renders it more surprising still is that the holiness which prevailed in those different and far-distant countries was essentially the same whether they were previously civilized or not. You can see no essential difference in Christian piety at Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria on one side, and among barbarous nations, such as were the Anglo-Saxons, the Visigoths, the Brazilians, the Algonquins and Hurons, on the other. The strict and precise code of the Gospel prevailed everywhere, and the practice of the evangelical counsels, so repugnant to our corrupt nature, flourished in all Christian communities, and covered the whole earth with innumerable establishments, charitable, religious, and educational.

It would require more time and space than are at our command to make the enumeration complete and bring it down to our days. The only thing possible here is to come directly to the actual state of the case, and sketch in a few words the Church's action as it strikes the eye at the present moment.

There is not the least exaggeration in saying that were it not for the persistence of the Catholic Church in constantly inculcating the practice of the most sublime virtues, and particularly of self-sacrifice, there would scarcely remain in our age a shred of true virtue on earth. What would have become, long ere this, of the moral world had it been left to the ravings of the maniacs who have been called the first Reformers, including Calvinists, Ana-

baptists, and all the sects of Antinomians? To what a moral abyss in our own age are not the principles of the various godless teachers of a pretended morality leading; of men who proclaim the necessity of excluding God and religion from education, of separating political rule from all the restraints imposed by right, and society from all connection with heaven? But besides these portentous characteristics of the times, the facts themselves we witness are eminently calculated to excite terror in the heart of every thoughtful observer. Look at the state of Christian Europe at the present day, if it can still be called Christian. What is the universal aim of these ardent theorists, profound scientists, or simply ardent promoters of civilization, as they pretend to be? Merely to enjoy with avidity the goods of the present life without bestowing a thought on the next. They blindly plunge into an unknown future, such as has never been unveiled to the world of past ages; and in order to realize their wild Utopias they aim at destroying every institution which the wisdom of our forefathers has established. These men are called Communists, Socialists, Nihilists. Many of them still talk of a high morality, but they subvert all its foundations. They pretend to work for the happiness of mankind, but mankind recoils with horror from the dark view they disclose to its vision. They array the poor against the rich, labor against capital, the unrestrained passions of a violent and insatiable appetite against the whole economy of divine and human laws. Is not this the state of Europe at this moment? It has never been so restless, discontented, ungovernable as it is to-day. The whole condition can be comprised in one single sentence. The law of God is openly disregarded, the tyranny of might must prevail.

On this Western Continent, formerly so happy and prosperous, because right was really respected, the change effected during the last twenty years, though at first unperceived, is now everywhere manifest. Every reflecting man sees it and openly expresses his concern, and cannot conceal his fears for the future. It is all embraced here in New York in a very comprehensive phrase: "In all transactions between man and man people are now swayed only by the letter of the civil law, no longer by the voice of conscience." It means that expediency rules and morality is dead.

In these ominous circumstances the conclusion forces itself upon the mind that the Catholic Church alone can save society, because it alone is unchangeable; and the same strictness of morals therefore, which governed the conduct of our happy ancestors is still prescribed only by our spiritual rulers.

This is strikingly true in point of fact, but it is in some sense more true than ever in point of doctrine. The Protestant world was shocked a few years ago when the Vatican Council reasserted

the Church's infallibility with like persistence as in all previous ages, and went so far as to proclaim the dogma of the Pope's infallibility in all matters pertaining to faith and morals, which had been always before admitted by the great majority of Catholics, though it had never before been defined as an article of faith. Protestants and rationalists expressed their surprise, could not understand it, and many went so far as to ridicule it; whilst others thought that *intelligent* Catholics would reject it with scorn. Still it was a forcible and striking proof that the morality of the Church would never change an iota. The Supreme Pontiffs would be henceforth more bound than ever before to preserve the moral code in its integrity in the midst of a universal decomposition of all ethical principles. In this is contained the germ of the world's salvation. Whoever wishes to stand by Christ and to be swayed by His precepts must place himself under the wings of the only Church which cannot change, and which must continue to preach Christ's unchangeable doctrine.

Nevertheless, some will, no doubt, demur to this "clerical pretension," to use a very common modern phrase. In fact, three great schools of morals, at this very moment, claim the right of inculcating the true principles which should govern man's conscience preferable to those of the Catholic Church. These are: 1st, the strict Protestants; 2d, the intuitive philosophers; 3d, the positivists. Condensation is necessarily required here, for the subject is immense.

I. The claim of the strict Protestants is urged by them with much persistence. That their claim is simply a delusion is not difficult to prove.

In the first place they themselves must admit that the very principles of Protestantism, as laid down by the first Reformers, evidently sapped the foundations of even the most elementary morality. This, for them, is a very sore point. Protestantism openly denied free will. All the founders of Protestant sects, from Luther down to John of Leyden, did it. But how can virtue exist without free will? Can a mere machine, irresistibly moved by God's action, be susceptible of any moral act? As well might we say that the planets are virtuous by faithfully revolving around the sun. There cannot be any accountability in the necessary motions of an automaton. Conscience in this case is a mere name, and the moral precepts, if there can be any, remain absolutely without sanction. Still this denial of free will was so completely adopted as an axiom among Protestants that Calvin immediately drew the conclusion, which was perfectly legitimate, that God is the sole author of moral evil; yea, of the worst sins a man can be guilty of.

This shocking doctrine was strongly confirmed by the universal

dogma (among Protestants) of justification by faith alone. Good works were naturally excluded from the scheme of salvation, because they are not possible in the total absence of free will. If some Protestants, frightened by this, asserted that good works always accompanied justification, it was understood that these good works were the result of the sole action of God; man had no agency whatever in their performance, except that he was the material subject of the phenomenon.

Their conception of the Church, as explained by the first Reformers, gave the last finishing touch to this Antinomian scheme. According to all those sects, "man in his regeneration worketh nothing; God worketh everything." It strictly followed from this that the Church was composed only of those whom God irresistibly attracted and sanctified. No sinners could exist in the Church; all were saints, and the exterior organization was absolutely nothing. Consequently, sanctity being of its nature invisible, the Church also was not visible. It is difficult to see how the existence of sanctity could be ascertained. Each individual had only the testimony of his own conscience. But this is merely fanaticism.

The Confession of Augsburg, it is true, not satisfied with defining the Church as "a community of saints," added the words, "in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments are duly administered." But as it is impossible to know exactly when these conditions are fulfilled, it came in the end to this, that the interior or invisible sanctity (the work of the Holy Ghost alone) was the only thing of any account. The terrible conclusion forced itself directly on the mind that this interior action of the Holy Spirit, being necessarily limited by the stern decrees of God, and altogether undiscernible by man, might be, for aught we know, reduced in its ever-contracting sphere to one single soul in the whole world, and thus sanctity would have almost entirely gone back to heaven. This supposition was, I believe, discussed among those sects; with what satisfaction to themselves I do not know.

There was, consequently, a deluge of moral disorders which accompanied the first outburst of the Reformation; so that all the leaders of the movement, beginning with Luther himself, bitterly complained that it had everywhere brought on corruption. A long array of Luther's own declarations and of other Reformers could be produced here in proof. They can be found in all the impartial historians who have written on that epoch.

In the second place, the actual state of the case must be attentively examined. For in our age Protestantism presents a quite different aspect, though its original Antinomianism cannot be easily blotted out. The theological theories which have just been briefly

mentioned are now universally set aside, and strict Protestants mainly try to follow the Gospel's precepts so far as they can understand them. It is strange, however, that the baneful principle of justification by faith remains for them nearly as prominent as ever, and we all have lately heard enough of it in the preaching tour of Messrs. Moody and Sankey. Still it must be confessed that Protestantism has not turned out so badly in point of morals as its origin portended. Human nature in the Protestant world has shown itself purer than the Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity would naturally have made it. It is, however, preposterous for Protestants to claim, as they do, a superiority of morals over Catholicism; though in order to vindicate this pretension they state broadly, with an air of triumph, that Protestant nations are invariably more virtuous than those that are Catholic.

Far from being afraid of meeting this objection, we will consent, before showing its fallacy, to adopt the example usually brought forward by their writers. England is generally contrasted with France. Though no general conclusion can be deduced from one or two facts, we will not refuse to accept this unfair condition of the problem to be discussed. It is said by Protestants that the high moral tone of the English strikes every one in comparison with the loose morals of the French. This appears not only in the strict integrity of many individual Englishmen of note, and in the sound principles which generally govern their actions, but this is acknowledged of the bulk of the nation by foreigners in all parts of the world where the British flag appears. Civilized nations in Europe, half barbarous tribes in Asia and Africa respect the probity of the sons of Great Britain wherever they travel for pleasure, instruction, or trade. The exceptions to this are rare and do not deserve to be taken into account. So it is asserted.

This again, Protestants allege, is conspicuous in the domestic virtues of the English and in the noble literature which is their natural expression. Compare English with French novelists. Examine attentively in their respective colonies the influence they exert on inferior races. Details without number are brought forward to illustrate the argument and give it the strength of demonstration.

The answer to all this is very plain, and cannot leave any doubt in the mind of an impartial thinker. In one word, it is a pure sophism, and a few reflections will prove it. The English nation has not yet come to the process of disintegration which the French reached many years ago. It is still in the main one, and that is Protestant of the Anglican type. This particular element contains undoubtedly a large amount of Christian principle. The French, on the contrary, after a full century of revolutions, are profoundly

divided. The only part of them which strikes the eye of foreigners has been for many years, and is still, radically infidel and godless. The contrast does not oppose a Protestant nation to a Catholic people, but to a profoundly unbelieving part. This does not touch the question we are discussing. Instead of this, choose among the French the now numerous, and at this moment rapidly increasing part of the nation which has remained faithful to the religion of the crusaders, and the result of the comparison will be immediately reversed. Take among the French those noble leaders of the Catholic party, as it is called. Look at their admirable deeds in fields of charity, of education, of zeal for the welfare of their countrymen and for the spread of faith all over the world. Their virtues far outshine those of British peers and politicians, though we fully admit whatever good is done by them in the domestic circle and even in the spread of fair-handed justice. The British aristocracy is satisfied in the field of charity with the working of the poor laws; in education they secure a high degree of it for their caste, and leave the lower classes in the abyss of degradation into which it is notorious they are plunged; with regard to the welfare of the people, they are only careful to see that oppression is not carried far enough to produce open rebellion. The French Catholics do not fear a close comparison with Englishmen in all acts of benevolence.

French literature, too, is not altogether debased. The present Gallic writers on history, on philosophy, on science, on religion, nay, in light literature, will well bear comparison with the best of England; and when French authors are inspired by a truly Catholic spirit, as is now the case with a large number, their works rise far above those which come from the press on the other side of the Channel. There is at the present time a French literature which is the true expression of the sound part of the nation; and to pretend that Protestant literature in England is superior to it, is to ignore totally the new French bibliography in all its branches.

But the discussion of the present question embraces many other points, some of which must be examined in order to elicit the truth fairly, if not entirely. In the first place, Protestant England, as has been said, has preserved many Catholic principles, which give it a great moral superiority over unbelieving peoples, and particularly over a considerable number of the French people. Precisely because Anglicanism has no settled rule of faith, Calvinism has not altogether pervaded the nation, and the elastic principle of its religious system, which embraces among others the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-nine Articles, allows its adherents, when they choose, the practice of many pious customs which are denied to the infidel. Prayer, examen of conscience, the

reception of the sacraments, the general belief in the incarnation, in the atonement, in the future judgment, etc., form among them a strong basis of Christian morality. All this is true. But with its pretended *via media* it carries too far its compromise with dogmas and morals, allows liberty of opinion on many important points which its humanly constituted ecclesiastical authority does not feel competent to settle, and closes its eyes to the requirements of a high standard of virtue. Thus there are among them few moral disorders, it is true, and not often open impiety; but, on the other side, the heroism of faith is positively discountenanced, and holiness is altogether absent. They are in general well regulated in their lives, but this is mainly in a worldly point of view; so that the appearance of a saint among them is totally unknown. The standard of morals with them is, therefore, earthly, not heavenly, and cannot come in competition with that of Catholics. Besides, what they possess of virtue comes from their previous Catholicism; the many deficiencies of their moral code is the outcome of their Protestantism.

In the second place their want of heroism in faith and the low standard of their moral virtues become glaring when compared with the wonders of faith, charity, and zeal displayed by a large number of the French of our day. Can it be supposed, without eliciting a smile, that a Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury would willingly die for his flock as Mgr. Affre did on the barricades in June, 1848? A few of the most ardent Anglicans, under the name of Puseyites, or Ritualists, advocate celibacy, monastic rules, almsgiving to the poor, and self-sacrifice for the help of the needy. But they find no countenance among the almost entire body of their Anglican brethren. Their vain efforts in the arduous path of holiness meet only with derision, opposition, persecution. This is because Protestantism is naturally opposed to sanctity.

The French Catholics, on the contrary, manifestly cultivate whatever is highest in Christian perfection. They, at this very time, cover the soil of their country with charitable and ascetic institutions worthy of the primitive ages. The ardent zeal of Christ appears among them as pure and as disinterested as in Jerusalem and Rome in the Apostolic age. Not content with establishing all over the French soil the glorious marks of the Christian religion destroyed a short time ago by an infidel rabble, they go forth from their country like the Apostles, and know no limit to their zeal but the utmost bounds of the earth. They do not spread the New Testament without comment, printed in all languages. They, themselves, learn all tongues in order to preach it; and their lives are the best commentary on the inspired volume. The whole continent of Africa, the remotest parts of Asia, the whole extent of the

South Seas are invaded by a peaceful army, such as the world has scarcely seen before. England trades and sends her goods, for a fair remuneration, to the civilized and uncivilized tribes of the earth. France carries the pure Gospel as far and often farther; and her children, men and women, consider the palm of martyrdom their best guerdon, which, too, is not unfrequently awarded them. Where, then, is the superiority of England over France?

In the third place, in spite of all her moral deficiencies modern France, including even the infidel half, has preserved to this day the true feeling of universal manhood, which is eminently a Christian feeling, and which, I am sorry to say, scarcely appears in Great Britain. Whatever may have been the cause, it is so, undoubtedly. When the first Crystal Palace was erected in London the French commissioners who were dispatched to render a faithful account of its unprecedented splendor were instructed also to inquire into the moral state of the London poor. Two of them (Léon Faucher and Eugène Rendu) came back to Paris with two different descriptions, bearing the most extraordinary features of an apparently impossible opposition. All the brilliant recent victories of industry, art, science, and labor formed in the one a picture of dazzling beauty; but the other sketch, though faithfully drawn, exhibited all the horrors of the lowest possible human degradation. The English Government could not express its dissatisfaction at this astounding French *compte rendu*, because British commissioners appointed at about the same time, for a like purpose, by the Parliament in London, had brought out almost the same result, and sent a thrill of horror through the whole English nation. Mr. Mayhew, moreover, a thorough Englishman, but a most candid writer, published in ten octavo volumes, a long array of facts which it had taken him thirty years to collect, and to which he gave the very simple title, *London Labor and the London Poor*. He met in his rambles many most destitute Irish families, but he was struck with the difference between them and the British plebeians. He narrated manfully and honestly what he saw and heard from both; and there could not be any longer the least difficulty in believing that the lower classes in London were thoroughly degraded. They had scarcely preserved any feature of the "king of creation," and it was hard to imagine that they themselves had been created "to the image and similitude of God." The difference, likewise, between the poor in France and the poor in England was most striking and undeniable. These last were mere animals. Their French congeners might become at times wild beasts and untutored savages, but as soon as they recovered their senses they became again sensible beings, and gave many proofs of true manhood, rising occasionally to heroism. This became manifest even in their revolutionary

excesses. They acted first as if they were deprived of reason and had sunk to the level of ferocious beasts, but in their lucid moments they checked their destructive appetites, and often wept over the havoc they had made. The only exception that I know to this happened in the last rising of the Commune, in 1871, which preserved its fierce character from first to last. In their poor dwellings, also, you seldom see filth and dirt, and their wives always know how to arrange into some kind of order whatever pieces of furniture they succeed in saving from the pawnbroker or the lottery-ticket seller.

The reason of the difference between the English and the French rabble is easily explained and becomes clear to any close observer. The lower classes of England are given over, soul and body, to the cruel mercies of the poor laws. If they are seldom allowed to die of hunger, whatever is given them does not come from the hand of true charity, which is always prompted by sincere love, but is severely doled out to them by the calculating reckoning of officials, whom they come at last to consider as their bitter enemies. On the contrary, in France it is not the state alone that attends to the needs of the indigent. As soon as it is heard that there is destitution anywhere troops of Daughters of Charity, of Brethren of St. Vincent de Paul, of individual Christians, men and women, often of the highest rank, are always at hand to relieve distress. They come as friends, full of sympathy and love, and the poor know that what they bring comes from the heart, that the first visit will be followed by many others, which will continue as long as the need remains. Thus there is always hope among the French poor. It is seldom, indeed, that they are reduced to despair, and generally the lowest turn of the wheel of fortune is sure to bring an ascending scale of comfort. Together with bread, charitable advice is invariably given; the children are taken care of, the sick are attended to and nursed, and thus a community of feeling is established between the wealthy and the poor.

It would require a large volume to describe the various societies established in France during the last thirty years, for the relief of human misery and for imparting to the forlorn and friendless the consolations of religion and the benefits of instruction. It is not true, consequently, that in a comparison between England and France the advantages are all on the side of the former and against the latter. The result of a candid inquiry is precisely the reverse, as has been already said. And since a comparison of those two great nations is proposed as a test for the whole question, it must be concluded that the moral superiority of the Catholics over the Protestants is clear and indubitable under all the aspects of the subject. A passage, however, from an admirable work of Mr.

Auguste Nicholas—on *Protestantism*—falls unexpectedly into my hands, and is too appropriate to this occasion to be overlooked or omitted here. I translate only a few paragraphs :

“ If the Divine Author of Christianity appeared suddenly in the midst of the Catholic nations he would find among them a multitude of charitable souls, of merciful and compassionate co-workers with Him for the benefit of mankind, of men bent on reproducing on earth something at least of His ardent tenderness for the poor; true continuators of His mission of love, in whom He would recognize the promptings of the spirit which animated Him, and to whom He would say: ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father; for I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was naked and you clothed me; I was a prisoner and you came to visit me.’

“ But if He happened to go through the streets of London, through the quarters of St. Giles, of Whitechapel, of Gretna Green, of Spitalfields, O my God! what a terrible *væ* would issue from His lips against those members of Bible societies who constantly speak of the Gospel spread through sea and land, its dead letter, with the sole purpose of propagating heresy, whilst they trample the Gospel under foot in the persons of Christ’s poor. This heavenly King, who blessed the lowly in his Gospel, would not have to change a single word in the imprecations addressed of old to the Pharisees: ‘Woe to you, because you go round about the sea and land to make one proselyte, and he becomes the child of hell twofold more than yourselves. Woe to you, because you are like to whited sepulchres, which appear outwardly beautiful, but within are full of dead men’s bones and of all filthiness.’ ”

This may appear severe language, but Mr. Nicholas has never been accused of using such unless the occasion required it. It is meanwhile remarkable that Protestants have been more violent than open infidels, even, in their denunciations of Catholic morality, as if they themselves had nothing to atone for; and this must delay us a little while longer on the present subject. The first Reformers pretended that the Catholic Church had for a long time ceased to be the Church of Christ on account of its moral corruption. They loaded with opprobrious epithets the very memory of the Middle Ages, which had just preceded the advent of Protestantism. It is chiefly from them, as well as from the *humanists* of the revival, that all the misconceptions originated which have until now prevailed, even among Catholic writers, with regard to the supposed low morality of the ages of faith. It is this false impression that forms mainly the basis of the broad assertion of Protestants that the Church of Christ had ceased to exist, except, perhaps, among the Valdenses and Albigenses. The rationalists of our day care very little for its existence or non-existence, but they continue to bring forward an immense number of details, true or not, which give to those ages all the appearance of barbarism and moral corruption. Mr. Lecky, I am sorry to say, is profuse on this subject in his second volume.

This question cannot be treated *in extenso* here. But a few reflections are required to rebut this wholesale accusation on the part of Protestantism. In our day, at least, the Middle Ages have been better studied than ever previously, and the result of the investi-

gation has been a thorough vindication. Many important works have appeared in Germany, England, and France, restoring to that much-abused epoch its true character. It is sufficient to mention two of them,—the *Mores Catholici* of Kenelm H. Digby, and the *Monks of the West* of Montalembert. The first of these, quoted at the head of this article, is bulky, but contains an immense number of facts which present the subject under a light altogether different from that of the Protestant view, and one which certainly is more correct. It has been objected against it that it gives only one side of the picture. Even if this were the case it would still, however, furnish a sufficient answer to the revilers of those times, who cannot see any good in an age which has covered Europe with stupendous cathedrals, and with innumerable other splendid edifices devoted to the relief of all forms of human misery.

But it is not true that Mr. Digby has not spoken of the evil side of the Middle Ages, chiefly of the incessant wars which characterized that epoch, and were the main cause of all the moral and social abuses with which it is reproached. He has done this admirably, particularly in the eleventh chapter of the ninth book, in the third volume of the London edition. At the same time that he has done this he has also proved that Catholicity was not responsible for these abuses. They all originated in feudalism; and the Church not only did not establish the feudal system, but constantly labored to mitigate its evils, and succeeded at last in rooting them out one after another. The great drawback of Mr. Digby's book is his method and style. The first is somewhat confused, and the second is far from being lucid and clear. These defects detract much from the interest of his work. But whoever looks only to the thoughts and the facts, and perseveres in reading, in spite of the literary deficiencies of the book, will soon experience great pleasure in perusing his pages, and admiring the beauty of Christendom in the ages when it embraced the whole of Europe under its wings.

If the great work of Montalembert is selected for the study of the Middle Ages, the effect will be still more striking, because the heroic leader of the French Catholics in the struggle for their emancipation was an eminent writer in every respect, as well as a great orator and debater. His *Life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary* and his *Monks of the West* suffice to vindicate the ages of faith from all the obloquy heaped upon them by Protestant writers, from the Centuriators of Magdeburgh down to the latest ranter of Exeter Hall.

II. After the strict Protestants, the "intuitive philosophers" think that they likewise can cast reproaches upon Catholic morality. Mr. Lecky, in his *History of European Morals*, is their chief exponent. A brief exposition of his views as to his own moral system

is required here before speaking of his objections to the Church's sanctity.

First, he is uncompromising in his opposition to the utilitarian school of ethics, as he calls those pretended moralists who deny that right and wrong depend on immutable principles, and pretend that utility is the grand basis of morals, so that an act is virtuous only when it is useful and pleasurable. This is a reproduction of the old Epicurean system, and leads logically to the worst moral abuses. This system Mr. Lecky has attempted to refute, and he has done it admirably in the first half of his first volume. At the same time he establishes on the most solid ground the innate rule of conduct by which right is absolutely distinguished from wrong, independently of present happiness or pleasure. And here he is opposed not only to the school of Bentham, so prevalent in England at the beginning of this century, but also to the rising school of positivists, of which Mr. Herbert Spencer is the chief leader.

It appears strange that laying down, as apparently he does, the same foundations of natural virtue which all Catholic theologians admit, he differs so much from them in many applications of the rule which is common to both. He was aware that the "innate rule of right and wrong," namely, the voice of human conscience, which he concedes was recognized by St. Paul in the pagans themselves, and was henceforth called *lex naturæ* (the law of nature), was likewise the basis of moral theology adopted by all the schoolmen. He even alludes to the "great writings of St. Thomas Aquinas," which he knows are sacred to all Catholic theologians. Still he wonders that "these monks, who were familiar with the language, and might easily have been familiar with the noble literature of ancient Rome, added so very little of any real value for so long a period to the knowledge of mankind." He goes still further, and frequently complains of the Church's morality as laid down by the Fathers and the schoolmen; in fact, of the Church's whole practice in different ages until our own time.

The strangeness of this conduct on the part of Mr. Lecky ceases to be matter of surprise as soon as it is remarked that he totally rejects the supernatural, which for him is merely *superstition*. There is not for him any other moral law than the natural. The order of grace is totally absent from his system, and he does not seem to have even the slightest knowledge of it. Throughout his two volumes I have failed to find even the most distant reference to it. Now there is not, it is true, the smallest disagreement between the law of nature and the order of grace, because they both come from God; but the second is far above the first, and commends us to infinitely higher motives, which a pure rationalist cannot under-

stand; and thus Mr. Lecky at once assumes that the one is contradictory of the other.

On the first page of his second volume, however, the question is unexpectedly brought before his eyes, and the author of *European Morals* begins there an interesting discussion on the relative merits of the moral system of pagan philosophers, such as were Marcus Aurelius and Seneca, on the one side, and that of Christianity on the other. He immediately makes the profound remark that "the ethics of paganism were part of a philosophy; the ethics of Christianity were part of a religion." The subject was thus broadly indicated, and he had only to develop it. But he did not arrive at a proper consideration of the order of grace. He must have found the expression in many Catholic books that he certainly perused; but probably because he could not understand them he laid them aside, without even trying to find out what they meant. This alone is sufficient to show that Mr. Lecky's knowledge, so extensive and so correct on many points, is extremely deficient respecting the doctrines upheld by the Catholic Church.

He furnishes, too, a most striking proof of this; for, with reference to Catholicism, instead of examining coolly and wisely, as he so often does when treating other points, how it is that a *philosophy* must widely differ from a *religion* as to the doctrine of virtue and its motives, he launches into mere declamation against the absurd harshness he attributes to Christian morality. The following sentences, which are the only ones that time and space allow us to quote, are really inexplicable when it is considered that the writer is eminently learned and discriminating whenever his preconceived opinions on the sufficiency of natural virtue do not mislead him. He says:

"The Christian notion of the enormity of little sins; the belief that all the details of life will be scrutinized hereafter; that weaknesses of character and petty infractions of duty may be made the ground of eternal condemnation, was altogether unknown to the ancients,"—that is, to the Pagan philosophers.

These reproaches might be addressed, to a certain extent, to several absurd sects of Puritans among Protestants; but Mr. Lecky's strictures are generally directed against the Catholic Church, which he abuses as often as he praises it. He seldom objects to any vagary of Protestantism, though on one or two occasions he justly speaks of the "horrible doctrines of Calvinism." But this is so rare that, whenever he severely reflects on *Christianity*, the reader infers that he therein speaks of the Catholic Church. In the passage just quoted no other Church organization will occur to the reader's mind, as alluded to by Mr. Lecky; and it is a most false,

may, absurd accusation, which by this time must be known to be such by everybody. The difference between venial and mortal sins is elementary among us, and all children who have begun to learn their Catechism could give the proper answer to this author of a great, and on many points an excellent work.

But the main cause of the ignorance here painfully manifested is derived, as has been already said, from the rejection of the supernatural; and this must be considered for a moment, because the supernatural side of Christianity gives to it in fact immense superiority, even in point of morals, over every purely rationalistic system. This is not generally perceived; nevertheless, the true cause of the Church's sanctity is derived from its supernatural character. Take away its dogmas and Christianity becomes a simple *philosophy*, as was that of Marcus Aurelius and Seneca. We must claim a great deal more, and the simple exposition of this will reduce to nothing all the objections of rationalists against the Catholic moral system, and even prove that the claim of *holiness* cannot be advanced in behalf of any other system than the Catholic religion.

On what grounds rests, after all, the practice of virtue when man has no other guide than his individual conscience? Only on the immutable principles of right and wrong engraved on the human heart by the finger of God, which form the basis of the natural law of morality. Had not revelation been added to it this might and would have sufficed, because God would in that case have given sufficient light to our intellect and sufficient strength to our will. This comes to what Catholic theologians call in general the *status nature pure*, whose possibility they all admit, and which would reduce humanity nearly to the condition which intuitive philosophers consider the present one. But revelation is a great fact, proved historically as well as rationally. The demonstration of it by Christian apologists has never been successfully attacked, and revelation supposes the fall. The fall itself is also a great fact, and is the original cause of the present obscurity of our intellect and the weakness of our will. So that, in his actual state, man is not in the condition supposed by rationalists, a condition which would give him the possibility of naturally practicing virtue and avoiding sin without other higher means.

Our own experience, therefore, demonstrates the necessity of revelation, and consequently of a supernatural religion, which is often called the "order of grace." Meanwhile, in the rationalistic system of Mr. Lecky, virtue is supposed to be clear in its precepts and easy of attainment. The mind of man is considered naturally competent to distinguish easily right from wrong, and the will is believed to enjoy a sufficient mastery over passion. That this is,

in abstracto, the case under ordinary circumstances can well be admitted, since the Church has rejected the dogma of total depravity. But that we have, *in concreto*, lost the power possessed by Adam at his creation, has always been the belief of the Church, and was made a dogma when Pelagianism arose. The common experience of all mankind would, moreover, suffice to prove this truth.

The author of the *History of European Morals* never speaks *ex professo* of the difficulties which beset man in the path of virtue, and seldom makes any mention of the arduous labor required in the performance of duty. This is probably the consequence of his system, which would entirely collapse if moral precepts were not supposed to be always clear, and the practice of virtue always easy. But his very supposition is fatal to the pretended superiority of his doctrine over that of the Catholic Church. For all know that without a great struggle not only moral perfection cannot be obtained, nor can vice itself in its most degrading aspect be conquered. If Mr. Lecky could succeed in convincing all men of the solid ground of his moral Utopia, his ubiquitous and innumerable disciples would rush headlong into what they would consider the strict path of duty, and most of them would soon perceive that they had suddenly fallen among pitfalls and snares. He is, after all, a poor professor of morals; and, if he went about preaching his system, it is very doubtful whether he would reform mankind; or rather it is not at all doubtful that he would not. And this is true of all teachers of ethics when they rely only on reason. If Mr. Lecky is here singled out, it is mainly because he is one of the very best among them.

Mr. Lecky even is candid enough to express some doubt on the perfect reliability of intuitive philosophers. At the beginning of his first volume he gives a respectable list of them, all English, and he admits that there is "an apparent discordance" among them as to the very foundation of virtue. He names Butler, Adam Smith, Cudworth, Clarke, and several others. But he tries to reconcile them by reducing their various definitions to "a complex moral sense, containing both a judgment of the reason and an emotion of the heart." (V. i., p. 77.) Still, not even here is a word said either on the obscurity which often throws a cloud over the "judgment of the reason," or of the strong bias towards evil, which oftener still carries the will in a wrong direction. All things considered, it does not look very likely that natural morality is destined to bring about the peaceful reign of virtue on earth. There are too many difficulties in the way. We must now examine attentively whether the supernatural side of the question is not more reliable.

In the first place, all there is of truth in the "intuitive" system

is admitted by Catholic moralists, and is expressed by the well-known axiom: *Gratia supponit naturam*. It is proper at this day people should know that the Church does not anathematize natural principles in morals, as she does not the exercise of reason in philosophy. The Council of the Vatican has spoken clearly on the subject, and both principles were invariably taught from the beginning by the Fathers and the Schoolmen. Heresy did its best to obscure the one as well as the other, but the Church has succeeded in defeating heresy on both these fields of battle.

In the second place, the Catholic doctrine asserts that the moral nature of man, though not totally depraved, as Calvin pretended, has been, nevertheless, weakened by original sin; and, as was just remarked, this dogma is strongly approved by reason and experience, so that to reject it is tantamount to introducing a new mystery into the nature and history of man on earth.

In the third place, with this single effect of the fall is connected the whole supernatural order of grace, through which an immense superiority of morals of necessity follows, and this requires serious attention. To understand it a very short sketch of the scheme of redemption will suffice. Man weakened in his nature by original sin requires help in the performance of duty. This help the Man-God furnishes by His example and His merits. The sacraments are the channels through which Christ's merits are applied to man; and virtuous habits resulting from this application joined with man's concurrence, the practice of virtue becomes easy, and can even take the shape of what is called *holiness*, which may be defined *the heavenly consecration of virtue*.

This must be examined somewhat in detail. From the revealed mystery of the Trinity and the infinite love of the Father and the Son, the Incarnation follows, and this opens the way for Redemption. The divine plan reveals to us the fact that the first Adam created in the image of God, and consequently holy at the beginning, having fallen from his high estate, was replaced as head of the human race by a second Adam consubstantial with God Himself. Human nature was consequently raised far above its primitive state, and now partakes by adoption of the Divine Sonship. The sacraments are the ever open channels through which abundant graces are constantly flowing. A new moral life is thus bestowed on humanity, and what was impossible to our fallen nature becomes easy to the redeemed soul. Hence a far higher morality is the consequence; and *holiness* becomes possible, whilst before it was perfectly unattainable.

This, it is true, cannot be understood by the intuitive philosophers; and the atonement of Christ is often blasphemed by them. To bring it, however, within the range of their vision, it perhaps

will suffice to examine attentively the rational grounds on which rest the claims of the Catholic Church and the divinity of its doctrine. Even in case both remain obscure for them, they can, however, easily understand that those principles being presupposed the highest possible sanctity on earth must follow. Let us see the rational grounds of this doctrine.

It is impossible here to enter into details ; but it may be sufficient to mention that the first establishment of Christianity, its propagation, and subsequent history through all ages, furnish abundant proof of its divine origin, and consequently of the absolute truth of all the mysteries mentioned above. The life of Christ alone, when it is studied and understood rightly, demonstrates that the Catholic claims are not a delusion, and that the author of our religion was truly God, since the contrary supposition carries with it the stigma of imposture, against which even mere human feeling recoils with horror when there is question of Christ. Mr. Lecky, it is true, does his best to prove that Christianity was merely the result of previous philosophers, and of the gradual progress of mankind, and this is generally the opinion of rationalists. But for their demonstration they rely only on an *ex parte* view of the Roman Empire, which can easily be proved to be false, and which even in the supposition of its truth could not render admissible a like conclusion for the whole world. The *conversion of Rome*, developed at length in the *History of European Morals* from natural data only, does not authorize any one to say the same was true of the entire earth ; but the mission of the Apostles extended to the whole of it. The well-known facts of a history so stupendous as was the universal propagation of Christ's doctrines, joined with the destruction of idolatry, the renovation of the whole world, and the introduction of new thoughts, new maxims, a new life ; all this compared with the weak instruments that were used, and the natural incompetency of the workers in the scheme, cannot possibly be explained except by the direct agency of God. Otherwise the effect would be infinitely superior to the cause, and the mystery would remain insoluble.

But the religion, which was thus established and propagated, and which brought about the highest degree of civilization, was altogether supernatural, and it contained, even in its incipient form, all the dogmatic mysteries which we have briefly referred to. New words were, it is true, gradually introduced into the Church's symbols of faith ; the ideas, however, remained the same, being only more definitely stated. Redemption through Christ, in particular, was as firmly believed in the Apostolic age as it is at the present day. All the moral doctrines which follow from it began to work in the Church, and have been constantly since then the well-spring of virtue, nay, of holiness. Man was known to have been born a sinner ; the prac-

tice of virtue was believed to be difficult, nay, impossible without the help of God. This help was furnished chiefly through baptism, the Eucharist, and penance, all derived from the merits of Christ and from the shedding of His blood on the Cross. Christ being the new Head of the human race, men were through Him adopted into the Sonship of God, as St. Peter clearly declared. The order of grace, already proclaimed by St. John, was the source of the new birth in which men were regenerated.

But man having to concur with the grace thus offered him, a manly warfare against vice was the consequence. The road to heaven had been declared by Christ himself to be arduous and rough; and the Apostles insisted in their preaching and epistles on the necessity of moral effort. The double principle on which hangs the whole conflict in the moral field was in the beginning adopted and ever since then insisted on; namely, in point of conviction, be persuaded that you can do absolutely nothing without divine help; in point of actual practice, do exactly as if everything depended on yourself. On account of the first part of this double axiom prayer was always highly recommended as the usual means for obtaining God's help; on account of the second all the natural means required for enlightening the judgment, and strengthening the will, called by Mr. Lecky the "emotion of the heart," must be employed by the man who desires to be truly virtuous. Occasions of sin are to be avoided, the company of the vicious is to be shunned, the first outbursts of passion must be repressed, the senses must be kept under control, sensual indulgence must be altogether renounced, etc. This warfare is to continue as long as life exists, and if ever, owing to the neglect of these restraints, guilt has been incurred, God must be propitiated by repentance, and His forgiveness obtained through the means which religion enjoins.

As instruments to lead Christians in this arduous path, thousands and thousands of zealous men have been constantly engaged in preaching, exhorting, supporting the weak, maintaining the ardor of the strong, forming Christ in the heart of men, since the great model always proposed to the Christian in his spiritual warfare is the stainless life of the Saviour. For virtue is not only the result of His merits, it is also strongly promoted by His example. Mr. Lecky, who never speaks of Christ's merits, because he ignores the scheme of redemption, acknowledges, however, the power of His example, and speaks of it eloquently in a remarkable and striking passage in his second volume.

All these things being combined together virtue is solidly established, and takes a shape in the Christian scheme altogether different from what it is supposed to be in any other ethical system.

The highest degree of it is called holiness or sanctity; and the Catholic Church is the only institution on earth which recognizes "saints," forms and trains them, as it were, and at the end of their lives "canonizes" them.

Holiness has been already defined as the "heavenly consecration of virtue." It is true that in natural virtue, that of the pagans, for instance, there was a glimpse of heaven. St. John tells us at the beginning of his Gospel that the eternal word—the splendor of the Father as He has been called—is the true light which illumines all men coming into the world; consequently even those who have been deprived of the supernatural light of revelation, and are reduced to that of reason; who, according to St. Paul, *ipsi sibi sunt lex*, really receive that law from the eternal Word. But as this is only in the "order of nature," and nature has been sundered from heaven by sin, it is only a *glimpse*, as it has been called, a *reflection* only from heaven, not a direct ray of light. On the contrary, supernatural virtue, derived from the scheme of revelation, contains, as it were, the substance of the eternal Word after His incarnation, who has brought down heaven to earth by a direct ray of His divine nature, so that theologians say that the infinite merits of the God-man have become the treasure of man after his redemption. The Church is the keeper of that treasure; but the first of the sacraments, baptism, by making us heirs of heaven, has given us the right to receive from and through her hands a part of that heavenly wealth, such as the world cannot comprehend. In this sublime generosity of the bestower of all good gifts virtue becomes "consecrated," and acquires the right to be called *holiness*. It is needless to say that no rationalistic system of morals, even of the highest order, can put forth a claim of this nature; and that consequently there is an infinite moral superiority in the Christian scheme over any other that can be imagined.

Hence, look at those sublime virtues in the "order of grace" which have been practiced in Jerusalem, as related by St. Luke; in Rome, as ascertained by recent inquiries; in Egypt, as known from Rosweid's *Vitæ Patrum*; in Edessa, as portrayed by the great St. Ephrem; in Celtic Ireland, in Anglo-Saxon England, in Catholic Spain and France; in all the monastic orders, as described by Montalembert, in so many religious houses of our own day. Where can be found among men of the "intuitive school of morals" anything like the sublime spirit of self-sacrifice which the teaching of Christianity introduced into this world? Mr. Lecky himself has said in his Preface: "Sometimes we find a kind of aristocracy of virtue, exhibiting the most refined excellence in their teachings and their actions, but exercising scarcely any appreciable influence upon the mass of the community." This may be said of the school

to which the writer belongs, but is not true of Christianity. On the contrary, it is not aristocracy but the commonalty of the people in Christendom that have been the most ready to adopt in their lives the highest precepts, nay, the counsels of the Saviour. And if the main reason of this is inquired into, it will be found in the fact that the scheme of our Saviour was Heavenly, that it worked in the "order of grace," that it embraced all mankind, that it acted on all classes of men, but chiefly on the most simple because less corrupt, on the less refined because more pure.

Of the moral deficiencies which have sometimes appeared in the Christian world, of the periods of looseness in morals which have occasionally afflicted the Church, much is said by those who refuse to admit the superiority of the Gospel's doctrine, as if such "deficiencies" and such looseness in morals came from the Gospel's imperfection, and was attributable to Christianity itself. It is pure sophism to reproach a religion with drawbacks, which that religion evidently condemns. It is true that its influence seems to be less holy when a number of its adherents lead a life at variance with their belief. But if at all times—as can be proved was the case—there have been in the Church men of the highest sanctity, raising aloft the standard of virtue as a signal for others to follow; if what they practiced was the outcome of the Church's teaching, and must be attributed to the religion itself, it is evident that the claim of sanctity is not vitiated by whatever may have been the moral deficiencies of others, who acted in direct contravention to the dictates of religion. It would, therefore, be needless to discuss the accusations brought forward by rationalistic writers against a Church, which in its official documents has never been known to favor any loose principle in morals, but which, on the contrary, has always prescribed the strictest rules for the guidance of mankind.

III. There is just now at this moment a third class of men, who claim for their system a moral superiority over that of the Church, and these, strange to say, are the positivists of our day. They pretend that even belief in God is not connected with a pure life, that Atheism is compatible with perfect virtue; and they go so far as to assert that the denial of all religion is promotive of the purest morality, because it is then more disinterested, and does not look to future reward. I sincerely beg pardon of my readers for discussing at all this question. On its very surface it seems perfectly absurd, and is an insult to good sense and propriety. Still it must not be left unreferred to, because a great number of men, outside of the Catholic Church, seem to incline to this opinion. Its refutation is the main object of Mr. W. H. Mallock in his book lately published, *Is Life Worth Living?* and the sensation it has produced shows that it was opportune and important.

This pretension of the positivists (of connecting pure morality with what we must call rank infidelity) is peculiar to our time, and has never been advanced before. The system of Evolution, which is the main support of modern atheism, has always been, in some form or other, a ground of disbelief in God. The existence of the world and of man without the intervention of a Supreme Designer, by the mere effect of physical laws or forces, was explained in Greece by Epicurus and developed by Lucretius in Rome through the means of the atomic theory. But the great object of the Greek philosopher and of his Latin interpreter was "to free mankind from the fear of the gods," and thus to leave human passions untrammelled by *superstition*. If some writers have pretended that Epicurus's doctrine was compatible with a blameless life, the fact seems to be proved that the Roman depravity, particularly among patricians under the first emperors, was in great part due to the adoption, almost general at that time, of Lucretius's principles. Horace has graphically expressed the common opinion on this subject by the celebrated line: "*Epicuri de grege porcum.*" The metaphysical pantheism originated by Giordano Bruno, at the close of the Middle Ages, and elaborated with great acumen later on by Spinoza, did not appear to have any fatal influence on morals, though it also was an attempt at deducing the existence of the universe from inflexible and necessary laws. But the chief reason of this seeming harmlessness was simply the narrow sphere which these doctrines penetrated. The uncouth and repulsive form under which they were offered to the public prevented them from becoming popular, and they never had more than a few adherents.

But as soon as the ancient Greek system was reproduced under more attractive forms in the eighteenth century all the previous immoral consequences of Epicurism followed. The numerous French systems on cosmology and natural history, invented by De Maillet, Buffon, Lamark, and others, all of them tending to free man from responsibility before God, were starting-points from which ethical principles of the most deleterious nature were immediately deduced. Such philosophers as Helvetius, Diderot, D'Holbach, La Mettrie, and, in general, the Encyclopædists, taught openly that self-gratification and the mere satisfaction of the appetite was the law of human nature. The most degrading consequences were immediately deduced by a besotted public, including the proud members of the most refined society. The *salons* of Madame Geoffrin, Madame du Deffand, Madame de Marchais, Madame Necker herself, were every day defiled by the lewd conversation of the great lights of literature in Paris, and husbands of the highest rank consented to live in intimacy and social intercourse with the well-known paramours of their wives. The moral corruption that en-

sued, and which brought about all the horrors of the French Revolution, is well known. It has been thoroughly unveiled by modern writers of light *feuilletons* in newspapers and of more pretentious articles in reviews.

Even during the first quarter of this century in France, the economist systems devised by Fourier and St. Simon, who pretended likewise to explain, on merely natural grounds, the whole universe and man's nature, were tainted with the same festering moral gangrene; they all proposed sensual gratification as the great object of human life.

At this moment the most explicit assertions of positivists seem to present their case in a quite different light. We shall presently hear what they say of virtue as the great aim of life, and of its strict practice in their own ranks. Nevertheless it must be admitted that they go still further in point of religious denial than all their philosophical ancestors; and it would seem strange if they could escape the immoral consequences which have invariably followed from analogous principles. Mr. Mallock, who knows them well, and always speaks of them without rancor, if not with undue courtesy, is appalled at the aspect of their doctrines, and represents them as unparalleled in the previous history of man. Here are a few of his words (*Is Life Worth Living?* p. 197, Putnam):

“When the present age shall realize its own condition truly [owing to those new doctrines], the dejection of which it is growing conscious may perhaps give way to despair. This condition, however, is so portentous that it is difficult to persuade ourselves that it is what it seems to be, and that it is not a dream. But the more steadily we look at it, the more real will its appalling features appear to us. We are literally in an age to which history can show no parallel, and which is new to the experience of humanity; and though the moral dejection we have been dwelling on may have had many seeming counterparts in other times, this is, as it were, solid substance, whereas they were only shadows. I have pointed out already in my first chapter how unexampled is the state in which the world now finds itself; but we will dwell once again upon its more general features.”

Then the gifted author draws a picture of the present age of positivism, the more frightful that it is most true in every particular, and thus concludes:

“It is not possible to conceive that this last development of humanity, this stupendous break from the past, which is being accomplished by our understanding of it, will not be the sort of break which takes place when a man awakes from a dream and finds all that he most prized vanished from him. It is not possible to conceive that this awakening, this discovery by man himself, will not be the beginning of his decadence; that it will not be the discovery on his part that he is a lesser and a lower thing than he thought he was, and that his condition will not sink till it tallies with his own opinion of it.”

This must be, in fact, the natural consequence of all atheistic systems, but principally of modern positivism. To make a full statement of its assertions and doctrines is not possible here through want

of space, and it is not needed, because they must be by this time well known to the reader. The system itself cannot be discussed in these pages. Still, in the midst of the denial of all principles on which society in all ages has since rested, the new theorists proclaim that virtue remains for them as firm as for Christians and more so. This part of the question remains to be discussed.

In the words of Mr. Mallock, "Dr. Tyndall informs us that though he has now rejected the religion of his former years, yet, granting him proper health of body, there is 'no spiritual experience,' such as he then knew; 'no resolve of duty, no work of mercy, no act of self-renouncement, no solemnity of thought, no joy in the life and aspect of nature, that would not still be his.' Like to this is the implicit teaching of all George Eliot's novels, whilst Professor Huxley tells us that, come what may to our 'intellectual beliefs and even education,' 'the beauty of holiness and the ugliness of sin' will remain for those that have eyes to see them, 'no mere metaphors, but real and intense feelings.'"

All the followers of this new doctrine speak in the same strain; and Miss Bevington, an English lady of the new school, in answering Mr. Mallock's book on the *Nineteenth Century*, bitterly complains that his object must evidently have been "to deprive her of her inducements to live righteously," nay, "to reap advantage from her unrighteousness." This point they have reached in their sophisms, that if any talented writer proves to them, as Mr. Mallock intended in his book, that "theism, with its attendant belief in man's immortality, has a practical effect upon practical life," and that "without these beliefs truth as truth, and virtue as virtue, cease to be in any way admirable," they immediately conclude that such a writer as this has the deliberate purpose to deprive them of every inducement to virtue and to render them "unrighteous, corrupt, immoral," as if such was the result of belief in God.

They consequently deny the catastrophe announced by Mr. Mallock in case their doctrines prevail; "a catastrophe," he says, "that might be not unfitly spoken of as the second fall of man." "That a vast change is imminent" they indeed readily admit; but it is a change, they say, that "does not touch virtue, nor any of the great emotions that are at present connected with it." There is, they assure us, to be no lowering of life; our highest hopes and pleasures and all our profoundest consolations are to still remain to us; and "so long as man is man," says Miss Bevington, "virtue as *virtue* will never cease to be admirable."

The author of *Is Life Worth Living?* answers them in an article published in the *Nineteenth Century*, entitled "Atheistic Methodism." His main object is to oblige them to admit that they must become strict rationalistic theists if they intend to establish a real foun-

dation for the practice of true virtue. In point of fact, all he wishes of them is that they should belong to the school of Mr. Lecky. Our purpose here is very different. Since they babble about Christianity also, and often find it below their aim, preferring their own morality, we must discuss briefly the question, What kind of *holiness* will be theirs in case they succeed in spreading their poison all over the world, and whether the claim of Christianity has anything to fear from their pretensions? And we must here say incidentally that we do not share in the excessive fears of Mr. Mallock. They will, no doubt, if they progress, do a great deal of mischief in the moral world. We do not think, however, that it will ever amount to a "second fall of man," for reasons which it is not necessary to develop here. But every sane man must acknowledge that their system is far less sure to leave virtue intact among men than that of the "intuitive philosophers." These, at least, admit the existence of God, and believe in a kind of hereafter. Simple good sense tells us that morality is much more effectually promoted by their belief than by its denial. But we have shown already the superiority of the Christian morality over that of intuitive philosophers.

The infatuation of positivists in rejecting both these beliefs, and at the same time in maintaining that in case this disbelief became universal, still, "so long as man is man, virtue as *virtue* will never cease to be admirable," is truly surprising and most illogical. For the last supposition, namely, that as long as man is man virtue must continue to be admirable, has no sense unless it is admitted that the principles of virtue are innate in our heart, that the voice of conscience is unerring, and right always distinguishable from wrong. How can this be unless there is a superior and infinite mind, whose truth and righteousness is the model of ours, and from whom is derived the life that is in us? Outside of Christianity even, all the truly great philosophers of antiquity, who from their own inward consciousness, not to refer to the voice of tradition, believed in the absolute distinction between right and wrong, were also firm believers in the existence of God, our Maker and Creator. The first part of this doctrine, in their judgment, carried with it the second. As soon as they recognized that there is an infallible moral law written in the heart of all men, they concluded that it came from God, the source of all justice and right; and in this last belief they found the great sanction of the first.

The positivists, on the contrary, recognize the inner law, but reject the only cause to which it can be ascribed. Thus they are illogical, as has been said already, and on this account they can even be justly called slaves of prejudice. As positivists, they reject revelation, alleging that because revealed facts are supernatural, they are, therefore, unknowable, and cannot become the basis of a scientific

system. These facts are believed by Christians, they say, merely through prejudice and education. A serious examination, they assert, reveals the weakness of Christian belief and destroys its foundation.

The same reasoning is strictly applicable to the innate sense of virtue. We defy them to show the reason for it, if God's existence is not first admitted. This innate sense of virtue belongs to the supersensual, if not to the supernatural order; and for positivists both are identical, since positivism does not admit anything above sense. It must, therefore, in their eyes, be only the offspring of education, of the common-sense of mankind, entirely misled and unreasonable in this case. It is, therefore, a pure prejudice; and they are the slaves of prejudice when they consent to be ruled by it. The French philosophers of last century were more consistent and more logical. They rejected with scorn the law of morality, as well as the dogmas of revelation; both were for them *de simples préjugés*. Most of them openly showed their contempt for both by living in adultery with the wives of others, often with those of their friends and fellow-philosophers.

We confess, however, that we prefer the inconsistency of modern positivists to the strict logic of the old French materialists. Still it is absurd on their part; and we contend that it cannot last, nor spread among the mass of their followers. At this moment they are trying their best to popularize their doctrine, and to inoculate with it the lowest ranks of society. In France, even, it is chiefly among these last that these pernicious notions prevail; and, thank God! the intellectual classes are with a few exceptions decidedly opposed to the new theories. And in that unfortunate country it is the immoral consequences of the new doctrine, and not its principles, that form the chief incentive that brings the uneducated into its ranks. And every one knows how far the people in many large French cities are demoralized through unbelief. In England it would be still worse if the social dregs, of London for instance, had simply an inkling of what the "leaders of thought" in Great Britain are about. It is the good fortune of the nation (we may say) that the lower classes are too degraded even to imbibe this poison. Let them be prepared for it by popular lessons, such as are given in French secret societies of the lowest kind, and the catastrophe predicted by Mr. Mallock, as the "second fall of man," might soon astonish mankind, even in England.

Meanwhile the effect produced by these doctrines on the men who are able to understand the lofty speculations of Mr. Herbert Spencer in his *Data of Ethics*, of Mr. Huxley, and many others in their Lectures, is sufficient to prove their deleterious nature. This is admirably described by the author of *Is Life Worth Living?* in

his eighth chapter, entitled "The Practical Prospect." The "moral dejection" therein analyzed is shown to be shared even by the leaders of the party. At the end of the chapter he quotes "one English writer on the positive side who has clearly seen what the movement really means, whose continuance and whose consummation he declares to us to be a necessity." Here are the words of the English writer quoted by Mr. Mallock :

"Never in the history of man has so terrific a calamity befallen the race as that which all who look may now behold, advancing as a deluge, black with destruction, resistless in might, uprooting our most cherished hopes, engulfing our most precious creed, and burying our highest life in mindless desolation."

A fine prospect, indeed, whilst it is pretended that in positivism virtue as *virtue* is as admirable as ever! The boast of Mr. Tyndall, referred to above, does not seem to be universal among positivists. It is well known that J. S. Mill, one of the greatest among them, lived most sadly, and almost died of despair.

It would seem useless after this to discuss the pretension that the morality of the Catholic Church is inferior to that of these new professors of ethics. But the quotation just given from Mr. Mallock gives rise to some serious considerations, with which we will conclude.

The heartfelt feeling expressed by that "English writer"—when he said that a frightful calamity was "advancing like a deluge, . . . uprooting our most cherished hopes, engulfing our most precious creed, and burying our highest life in mindless desolation"—referred simply to Protestantism. The writer was appalled by the mere juxtaposition of what would be the destiny of man on earth under the new dispensation prepared by positivism, and of its destructive effects upon those whose happy lot it was to possess the Anglican belief. He thought only of Protestant hopes, of the Protestant creed, and of Protestant life.

We have endeavored to show how inferior is Protestant morality compared with that of the Catholic Church, and consequently how superior to those of Protestantism are our hopes, creed, and life. Of these an imperfect description has been given in this paper. From it the true character of Catholic sanctity may be discerned, though it has not been brought fully to view. A volume would be required to do that, and the writer may say incidentally that the book is written, and may soon be published. But, from the few details here given, it may be concluded that the loss, if positivism should prevail, would be far greater for the Catholic than for the Anglican. Our holy religion, both in its supernatural character and in its exterior organization, is highly promotive of the most exalted sanctity. It has been proved that the character of holiness belongs to

it alone, and that *saints*, in the proper meaning of the term, cannot be found among Protestants. This is the necessary result of the elimination of Christian dogmas of which Protestantism is guilty; and in doing this it has reduced to a minimum quantity the supernatural element, of which its writers scarcely dare to speak. But the Catholic organization promotes the spread of holiness in a most wonderful manner. Its hierarchy, its monastic orders, its sacramental system, all unite in taking hold of man from his cradle to his grave; and nothing on earth is so powerful as they to mould the human being to the pattern of true sanctity. The history of the Church proves this beyond all doubt; and the more the truth becomes known through an enlightened criticism, the wider and deeper the influence of the Catholic Church is seen to have been in benefiting mankind, particularly as regards morality. Of all this we would be deprived should the doctrine of the new theorists become rooted in the public mind.

This becomes particularly perceptible when attention is paid to two circumstances which must necessarily be closely examined when there is question of virtue. These are the struggle and the reward:

First, therefore, the practice of virtue necessitates a struggle. The positivists recognize this, and often speak of it in terms of high consideration. It is evident that some of them, at least, have found in their experience how hard it is even occasionally to continue virtuous. They assert, however, that they can succeed; and it is astonishing how in England all join in acknowledging the moral uprightness of this school. But it is remarkable that the virtue they claim consists in self-sacrifice to others, an exterior thing, and not in the interior struggle for self-improvement, which is the primary foundation of virtue. This idea is graphically described by Mr. Mallock in his *Atheistic Methodism* in the following words:

“Bill and James are two tourists, whose keenest personal pleasure is in cutting their own names on the roofs of public buildings. They take a long and toilsome walk, that they may perform this feat on the highest pinnacle of a certain cathedral tower. Having climbed at last, however, to the lofty scene of action, they find, to their horror, that they have only two minutes to spare, that the leads of the coveted pinnacle are some distance out of reach, and that if either is to cut his name at all it can only be one of them raised on the other's shoulders. There is, for a moment, a struggle in the minds of both. Then Bill's will triumphs, and lifting James up, who cuts his name in rapture, Bill's only pleasure, the only reward of his walk, is such of James's pleasure as, received by himself vicariously, is in excess of the pain consequent on his own self-denial.”

We have here the whole theory of struggle and reward in the positivist's ethics. The struggle is carried on through *self-sacrifice for another* in which the will triumphs; and the reward is a pleasurable share in the other's gratification over the pain consequent

on his own self-denial. According to their view, therefore, the only kind of virtue which is of any value, namely, that which refers to others, ends in selfishness; still it is such kind of selfishness that the majority of mankind, if imbued with the positivist's notions, would never consent to, but would much prefer to it the merely animal gratification advocated by the former French "philosophers." Any one acquainted with human nature must acknowledge that the righteousness preached by the positivist cannot kindle in the will the enthusiasm required for carrying on successfully the struggle, such as it is. It is absurd to base virtue on such a struggle as this.

But, besides this vicarious virtue, as it is called, namely, that which looks to and is derived from others, there is the real fundamental virtue which regards only man's improvement, and constitutes sanctity in man, because it purifies the soul and prepares it for acts of exterior benevolence, carried on as far as self-sacrifice. Mr. Mallock expresses it very felicitously when he says in *Atheistic Methodism* :

"Virtue includes not only the subjugation of our own pleasures as warring against others' happiness, but the subjugation of our own lower pleasures as warring against our own holiness. And *logically*, in our conception of virtue, it is this last-named part of it which is the first. My desire for holiness must first make my life precious to me before I can attach much preciousness to the lives of other people. Thus the meaning of the word virtue is at once immeasurably widened, and its present popular use is explained naturally. I will but quote one instance, and that shall be the commonest and the most significant,—the popular identification of virtue with sexual continence. What is implied here is not that chastity is a virtue because externally it is of social use to others, but because internally it prepares self for God, because it is a part of that same debt to Him, of which subserving the welfare of others is another part, and a part logically subordinate."

It is to be remarked that the positivists do not condescend to speak of this branch of virtue.

How after this can the ethical system of positivism be compared with the Catholic. Both in the struggle and in the reward the Church offers to her children all the means of acquiring virtue of every kind, and all the incentives to its practice. They are taught that the first and greatest object of their lives is to purify themselves interiorly, to sanctify themselves and become holy in the all-searching eyes of God. They are prepared for the exterior struggle by this interior one; and they can rise to the highest degree of self-sacrifice when they have first subdued their passions, and established peace inwardly by rendering their senses obedient to reason. The reward comes directly after. In this life they know that they please God and do His will, which is a sufficient guerdon for the man of faith; and they see besides the immense and eternal reward which is prepared for them in the possession of God forever.

A long history of nearly nineteen hundred years has sufficiently established the claims of the Church over those of all other systems as regards morality. A few years more will put an end to the boasts of positivism, as has indeed been predicted both by impartial observers and even by some positivists themselves. Could we have taken up and shown the system of positivism as a whole, its delusive character and pernicious effects would be still more obvious, but we were compelled to restrict our discussion to an exhibition of its natural effects only on the morals of mankind, and even this has been compressed into too narrow limits to be as satisfactory as the writer could have wished.

PHYSIOLOGY AND MODERN MATERIALISM.

The Physiology of Mind. By Henry Maudsley, M.D. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

WITHIN a few years a so-called science, having appropriated the pretentious title of physiological psychology, has flaunted itself before men's eyes and courted the consideration of the scientific world on the ground that having rejected the figments and unrealities of the past, it has entered on the true pathway leading up to the knowledge of all mental phenomena, by studying what it delights to call the objective side, only, of mind. That this should be the result of the rapid growth of physiology in the course of the last half century is nothing more than what the history of philosophy prepared us to expect. The tendency of the mind, owing to its limited vision and inherent imperfection, is to overdo whatever it eagerly sets about doing, and men having brought to light magnificent truths under the stimulus which urged them to the prosecution of physical research, imagine they have discovered the highway which leads to the goal of all truth. The close interdependence of psychical and physical conditions rendered it impossible to study the latter without taking note of the former; and though the converse impossibility is not so obvious, it nevertheless exists, and those systems of psychology which are based on the substantial character of the thinking principle are sadly marred and one-sided in consequence of having disregarded it. The psychology which flourished in the seventeenth century would be puzzled to reconcile its leading positions with the facts