

RELATIVE INFLUENCE OF PAGANISM AND  
CHRISTIANITY UPON MORALS.

*History of European Morals.* By W. E. H. Lecky, M.A. New York. Appleton & Co. 1879.

*The Gentile and the Jew.* By J. I. Döllinger. London. Longman & Green. 1862.

**M**R. LECKY'S work is marked by much erudition. He sincerely aims at being impartial, but is somewhat tinctured with the traditional anti-Catholic prejudices of his country. Like Gibbon, he often betrays an ill-concealed predilection for Paganism.

Dr. Döllinger is a mine of historic wealth. He always exhibits a calm, judicious mind, which commands the admiration and confidence of the reader.

Although unable to close our eyes to the deplorable decadence of morals in this, our day—a decadence over which preceding generations have been equally called to mourn in their own age,—yet the contrast of Pagan with Christian morality cannot fail to result in the triumph of the latter. This thought has led us to place the two in juxtaposition, that the comparison may afford consolation to those who, with only too just reason, grieve for the evils of the times.

I.

We may form some idea of the moral degradation of the Pagan world when we reflect that they had no heavenly ideal of exalted virtue to follow.

The heathen gods and goddesses were monsters of iniquity. Jupiter and Bacchus, Mars and Mercury, Venus and Circe, were the patrons of some particular passion. Every vice was canonized in the person of some divinity. Lust and drunkenness, war and theft, had each its respective patron deity.

The Pagans had a religious worship; but, unlike the Christian worship, it was not intended to exercise, nor did it exercise, any influence on the morals of the people.<sup>1</sup> They had their priests. But what could be expected of a priesthood that offered sacrifice to divinities whose crimes they avowed? The disciples could not be expected to excel their masters; water does not rise above its level. Moreover, moral teaching was not included among the priestly functions. To make man virtuous was no more the business of the priest than

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. i., p. 161.

of the physician or the tax-gatherer. The priest was a mere state official.

They had festival days, but they were devoted to debauchery and not to moral growth. They had numerous temples, but they were haunts of licentiousness; the voice of exhortation to virtue never resounded within their walls. They offered sacrifices to Mercury from gratitude for his having made known the knavery and artifices of their slaves, and the slaves offered him the first-fruits of their pilferings.<sup>1</sup> On the festivals of Bacchus prizes were given to the deepest drinkers.<sup>2</sup> In Greece and Rome the worship of Aphrodite was characterized by shameless impurity and unnatural crimes. Shrines consecrated to Venus were maintained at the expense of notorious courtesans. Ovid advises women to shun the temples of the gods, that they might not be there reminded of the lasciviousness of Jupiter.<sup>3</sup>

"It is a matter of general notoriety," says Tertullian, "that the temples are the very places where adulteries are arranged, and procuresses pursue their victims between the altars."<sup>4</sup> In the chambers of the priests and ministers of the temple impurity was committed amid clouds of incense, and this more frequently than in the privileged haunts of sin.<sup>5</sup> Prostitution was practiced as a religious rite in many countries, notably in Syria, Armenia, Babylonia, and Lydia.<sup>6</sup>

If such scenes were enacted in the temples, we may judge of the obscenities of the theatres. The quarrels of the gods, their adulterous gallantries, their robberies and their deeds of violence, were the favorite themes of the plays. The effects of these exhibitions on the impressible hearts of the spectators are vividly described by Juvenal.<sup>7</sup> These representations were witnessed not only by the masses, but also by the Senate and Consuls, and even by the augurs and Vestal virgins, who had special seats assigned to them.

It should also be borne in mind that these popular amusements were regarded as religious acts, forming a part of the public worship. They were intended to appease the wrath of the gods and to propitiate their favor.

What mimic art presented in the theatre was reproduced in paintings on the walls of temples and private houses. Art was made the handmaid of vice. At every step the Greek and the Roman were confronted by lascivious portraits of their divinities. Religion became associated with lewdness in the mind of youth,

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<sup>1</sup> Pausanias, v. 24, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Trist., 2.

<sup>3</sup> Minutius Octavus, c. 25.

<sup>7</sup> *Sat.* vi., 67.

<sup>2</sup> Döllinger, *The Gentile and the Jew*, ii., 191.

<sup>4</sup> *Apol.*, c. 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Gentile and Jew*, vol. i., *passim*.

and the impure image was stamped upon the imagination, even before the heart was conscious of the poison it was imbibing.

We need not the pen of a Juvenal or a Tertullian to depict the abomination of Pagan art. A glance at the indecent pictures that have been unearthed from the ruins of Pompeii, reveals a moral depravity which the most purient imagination can scarcely conceive.

If such were the gods, what must the mortals that worshipped them have been? If such crimes were represented as having been committed in heaven, what infamous deeds must have polluted the earth? If man, by his corrupt nature, has so strong a tendency to glide down the slippery path of vice, what momentum must have been given to his passions by the examples of the gods, of whose excesses he was constantly reminded? "What means," says Seneca, "this appeal to the precedent of the gods, but to inflame our lusts, and to furnish a license and excuse for the corrupt act under shelter of its divine prototype?"<sup>1</sup>

After having feasted their eyes on wanton spectacles in the temples and theatres, the people hastened to the arena to slake their thirst for human blood. The gladiators must show no mercy to their antagonists; the sooner they dispatch one another, the more they delight the eager and impatient spectators. As soon as one victim has fallen, a fresh combatant enters the lists, till the amphitheatre runs with human blood. Cæsar once brought six hundred and forty gladiators into the arena.<sup>2</sup> Trajan, on one occasion, had ten thousand slaves engaged in mortal combat, and prolonged the spectacle for one hundred and twenty-three days.<sup>3</sup> At another time, Agrippa caused fourteen hundred men to fight in the amphitheatre of Berytus in Syria. These sanguinary contests extended over the empire; they were witnessed by multitudes of both sexes and every grade of society; they served to stifle all sentiments of compassion and to inflame the most fierce and brutal instincts of the human breast. It was the special delight of Claudius to watch the countenance of the dying, for he took an artistic pleasure in observing the variations of their agony.

The revolting practice of disgorging food by artificial means, in order to gratify the appetite anew, was quite general among the upper classes in Rome. Cicero, in defending King Dejotarus from the charge of having attempted to poison Cæsar while he was his guest, incidentally reminds Cæsar, who was presiding on the bench, of having expressed a wish to dispose of his last meal on a certain occasion. Cicero's remark was not intended as a reproach any more

<sup>1</sup> *De Vita Breui*, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Dio Cass. lxxviii., 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Suet. Dom.*, 4.

than if he had alluded to Cæsar's having taken a bath or a nap; for he was too dexterous an advocate to irritate the judge.

Juvenal lashes Domitian's gluttony by making the fisherman advise him :

"Haste to unload your stomach and devour  
A turbot destined for this happy hour."—(*Sat.* IV.)

The same poet thus describes the Roman matrons :

"All glowing, all athirst  
For wine, whole flasks of wine, and swallows first  
Two quarts to clear her stomach and excite  
A ravenous, an unbounded appetite."—(*Sat.* VI., Gifford's Trans.)

No president or lady of the land, if known to indulge in excesses so unnatural, could retain the respect of the American people.

The only teachers who might be supposed to have the capacity and authority to instruct the people and to check the current of immorality, were the philosophers. Some of them, indeed, guided by the light of reason, inculcated beautiful and sublime moral maxims; but many causes rendered their influence for good scarcely perceptible among the people.

Their audience was generally composed of a narrow circle of literary men. They shrank from proclaiming their doctrines to the masses for fear of exciting public odium against themselves.

They had no well-defined and uniform moral code, and they were often vague and contradictory in their ethical teachings. They suggested no adequate incentives to the practice of virtue. They never employed the great argument of the Apostle: "This is the will of God, your sanctification." The chief, indeed the only motive they had to offer for rectitude of conduct, was the intrinsic excellence of virtue and the deformity of vice.<sup>1</sup> But experience proves that the beauty of virtue and the hideousness of vice, unless fortified by higher considerations, afford a weak barrier against the encroachments of passion. If love, as they say, is blind to the defects of the lawful object of its affections, wanton love will little heed the repulsive character of the siren charmer.

There was no sanction attached to their moral precepts. They could not say, with the Christian teacher: "The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting," for they were in a state of lamentable uncertainty regarding a future life. The ablest moralists among them connived at, and even sanctioned by their example, certain violations of temperance, chastity, and humanity that Christianity reprobates.

Plato, "the Divine," condemned drunkenness, but tolerated it

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<sup>1</sup> Cicero, in his admirable moral treatise, *De Officiis*, has no other inducement to offer for the practice of virtue.

on the feasts of Bacchus.<sup>1</sup> In his ideal republic he recommends infanticide and community of wives, and declares contempt for slaves to be the mark of a gentleman. He advocates the merging of the individual life into the public life of the state, by which personal liberty is lost and man becomes but a part of the great machinery of the state.<sup>2</sup> He congratulates the Athenians on their hatred of foreigners.

The leading philosophers were so much addicted to those unnatural crimes denounced by St. Paul,<sup>3</sup> that parents generally forbade their children to have intercourse with them.<sup>4</sup> And so low was the standard of morals that the indulgence of this passion was not regarded as reflecting any disgrace on the transgressor.

Aristotle was not free from this vice. He also approved abortion and infanticide. He advised the legal destruction of weak and deformed children. While denouncing obscene pictures, he makes an exception in favor of the images of such gods as wished to be honored by indelicate representations.<sup>5</sup> He taught that Greeks had no more duties to barbarians (foreigners) than to wild beasts.<sup>6</sup>

Even the wise Socrates, if he is correctly reported by his apologist Xenophon, indulges in a license of speech and conduct that would be tolerated by no Christian teacher of our day.<sup>7</sup>

The elder Cato was noted for his inhumanity to his slaves.<sup>8</sup> Salust, who advocated with eloquence an austere simplicity of life, was conspicuous for his rapacity.<sup>9</sup>

Seneca uttered sentiments worthy of the Apostle to the Gentiles. But, unlike St. Paul, "his life was deeply marked by the taint of flattery, and not free from the taint of avarice; and it is unhappily certain that he lent his pen to conceal or varnish one of the worst crimes of Nero."<sup>10</sup>

To sum up: The standard of pagan morals was essentially low, because the pagans had no divine model held up to them; they had no uniform criterion of right and wrong; the motives presented to them for the practice of virtue were insufficient; no sanction was appended to their moral law; their teachers were limited in their sphere of action; they were often inconsistent in their ethical instructions, and the best of them were stained by some gross vice.

## II.

The superior excellence of Christian over Pagan morals is due, first, to the peerless life and example of the Founder of the Chris-

<sup>1</sup> *De Leg.*, Lib. VI.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii.

<sup>3</sup> Pol. vii.

<sup>4</sup> *Mem. Socr.* iii., 13.

<sup>5</sup> Lecky, vol. i., p. 194.

<sup>6</sup> Rep. iv., v., vi.

<sup>7</sup> Plutarch, *De Educ. Puer.*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Lecky, *European Morals*, i., 229.

<sup>9</sup> Plutarch, *Cato Major*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

tian religion. Our Saviour never inculcates any duty that He does not Himself practice in an eminent degree. No matter how fast we may run on the road of perfection, He is ever before us. No matter how high we may soar, He is still above us, inviting us to ascend higher, as the eagle entices her young to fly. No matter how much we may endure in the cause of righteousness, we find Him laden with a still heavier cross and bearing deeper wounds. He sweetens the most unpalatable ordinances by the seasoning of His example. The beautiful maxims of Plato, Seneca, and Zeno lose much of their savor because their lives were not always conformable to their words. But we have no apology to offer for our Master. He alone is above reproach. He alone can say of Himself: "Which of you shall convict Me of sin?"<sup>1</sup>

"It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may truly be said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus taught by example before He taught by words. We are drawn toward Him more by the charm of His life than by the sublimity of His doctrine and the eloquence of His words. The sermons of our Saviour inspire us indeed with esteem for virtue, but His conduct stimulates us to the practice of it. Never did any man speak as Jesus spoke. The most admired discourse that He ever delivered was the Sermon on the Mount. But even the Sermon on the Mount yields in force to the Sermon from the Cross. And if, like the Scribes and Pharisees, our Lord had restricted His mission to the preaching of the word, without illustrating that word by His glorious example, He never would have wrought that mighty moral revolution which has regenerated the world, nor would He be adored to-day by millions of disciples from the rising to the setting of the sun. When asked by the disciples of John whether He was the true Messiah, He laid more stress on His deeds than on His preaching. "Go," He says, "and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, . . . the poor have the Gospel preached to them."<sup>3</sup>

When we hear our Saviour saying on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,"<sup>4</sup> we are

<sup>1</sup> John vii., 46.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xi., 4, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Lecky, *European Morals*, ii., 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v., 3.

impressed with the sublimity of His teaching. But when we *see* Him acting out His words: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests: but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head,"<sup>1</sup>—oh, then, we are made to feel the blessedness of voluntary poverty, we cherish and embrace our Teacher, who, when He was rich, became poor for our sake! When we hear Him say: "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," we admire the virtue of humility. But when we *see* Him at the Last Supper laying aside His upper garment, girding Himself with a towel, pouring water into a basin, and washing the feet of His disciples, then that virtue assumes for us special attractions. When we hear Him say: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy," we are delighted with His doctrine. But we are more profoundly moved when we *witness* His compassion for the hungering multitude in the desert, and His mercy shown to the erring Magdalen. When He says: "If you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you," He is clothing an old commandment in new words.<sup>2</sup> But when He prays from the cross for His executioners: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," He gives a sublime lesson of forgiveness never before exhibited by sage or prophet.

When we listen to these words: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake," we are in admiration at His doctrine. But when we behold the innocent Lamb Himself accused of being a blasphemer, a seditious man, and a disturber of the public peace, we are consoled in our trials and calumny loses its sting.

Beautiful above the sons of men was Jesus in His glorious transfiguration; but far more beautiful is He to us when suspended from the Cross. The crown of thorns is more comforting to us than the halo that encircles His brow on Mount Tabor.

Our Saviour excels the philosophers as well in His moral teaching as in His personal virtues.

There is not a single principle of the natural law, there is not a healthy moral precept of sages or legislators, nor any commandment of the Decalogue, that is not engrafted on the Evangelical Code; for Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law.<sup>3</sup> The Christian religion appropriates all that is good, preserving the gold and eliminating the dross.

The moral teachings of our Saviour are as much superior to the Jewish law as the Jewish law itself surpassed all the Gentile

<sup>1</sup> Matt. viii., 20.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v., 17.

<sup>3</sup> See Eccus. xxviii., 3, 4.

moral codes. The Christian religion is more searching, more exacting, more specific in its obligations than the Mosaic legislation. The latter regulated chiefly the exterior conduct, the former guides the movements of the heart; the one forbids the overt act, the other the evil intention; the one condemned the crime of bloodshed, the other prohibits the sin of anger; the one demanded retaliation for injuries received, the other enjoins forgiveness of injuries; the one required us to love our friends, the other bids us love our enemies. "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. . . ."

"You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart. . . ."

"You have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other. . . ."

"You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you:

"That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the tax-gatherers the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathen this? Be ye, therefore, perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."<sup>1</sup>

The intrinsic excellence of the Christian moral code is enhanced by its broad and comprehensive spirit adapting itself to all times and circumstances, to all races and forms of government, and sympathizing with every class of society.

Unlike the *national* religion of the Jews, the Christian religion proclaims the law of universal brotherhood. Unlike the sanguinary religion of Mohammed, which subsists only under despotic rule, and which demands the surrender of one's faith as the highwayman demands the traveller's purse, at the point of the sword, the Christian religion flourishes under every system of government, from an absolute monarchy to the freest republic. Unlike the school of the Pagan philosophers, which was restricted to a narrow circle of disciples, the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed to Jew

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. v., 21-48.



and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, to bond and free. Like the air of heaven, which ascends the highest mountain and descends into the deepest valley, vivifying the face of nature, so has the Christian religion permeated every stratum of society, purifying and invigorating the moral world.

It has a message for the capitalist and the laborer, for the master and the servant, for the rich and for the poor. In the words of St. James, she warns the capitalist against the sin of labor-oppression: "Behold the hire of your laborers who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth: and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."<sup>1</sup> She admonishes the laborer to perform his work with fidelity, "not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but doing the will of God from the heart."<sup>2</sup> The most enlightened political economist never formulated a sentence so simple, so comprehensive, so effectual, as is contained in these words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This principle, if properly applied, would solve every labor problem that perplexes the minds of statesmen.

The Church of God has always admonished the master, wherever slavery exists, to be kind and humane to his slave, reminding him that the Master of both is in heaven, and that He has no respect of persons.<sup>3</sup>

She has brought comfort and sunshine to the wretched home of the slave. She proclaimed his manhood when he was treated as a chattel. She told him there was no dishonor in his chains; that by baptism he was incorporated into the Christian family, and was delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of a child of God.<sup>4</sup>

She charges "the rich of this world not to be highminded nor to trust to uncertain riches, but in the living God who giveth us all abundantly to enjoy. To do good, to become rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate to others, to lay up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."<sup>5</sup>

She preaches words of comfort to the poor man. She has exploded the false maxim of the world that estimates a man's dignity by his dollars and his degradation by his poverty. She has declared that a man may be scant in this world's goods, and yet be rich and honorable in the sight of God.<sup>6</sup> She cheers him with the old and familiar but always refreshing story of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, being rich, became poor for our sake, that through His poverty we might be rich.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St. James v., 4.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. viii.

<sup>7</sup> II. Cor. viii., 9.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. vi., 6.

<sup>5</sup> I. Tim. vi., 17-19.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. vi., 9.

<sup>6</sup> James ii.

The exposition of practical duty, as we have seen in the foregoing pages, was wholly unconnected with the life of the Pagan priest and the religious ceremonies of the Pagan temple. Happily, the same cannot be affirmed of our Christian priests and temples. As Mr. Lecky justly observes: "To amalgamate these two spheres (of worship and morals), to incorporate moral culture with religion . . . . was among the most important achievements of Christianity. . . . Unlike all Pagan religions, it made moral teaching a main feature of its clergy, moral discipline the leading object of its services, moral dispositions the necessary condition of the due performance of its rites."<sup>1</sup> The one great aim of our Christian ceremonial worship, of our Sacraments and Sacrifice, our preaching and our priesthood, is the advancement of personal holiness.

The moral power exercised by a good priest in his parish is incalculable. The priest is always a mysterious being in the eyes of the world. Like his Divine Master, he "is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted."<sup>2</sup> Various opinions are formed of him. Some say of him as was said of our Saviour: "He is a good man. And others say: no, but he seduceth the people."<sup>3</sup> He is loved most by those who know him best. Hated or despised he may be by many that are strangers to him and to his sacred character; but he has been too prominent a factor in the civilization of mankind and the advancement of morality ever to be ignored.

The life of a missionary priest is never written, nor can it be. He has no Boswell. His biographer may record the priest's public and official acts. He may recount the churches he erected, the schools he founded, the works of religion and charity he inaugurated and fostered, the sermons he preached, the children he catechised; the converts he received into the fold; and this is already a great deal. But it only touches upon the surface of that devoted life. There is no memoir of his private daily life of usefulness and of his sacred and confidential relations with his flock. All this is hidden with Christ in God, and is registered only by His recording angel.

"The civilizing and moralizing influence of the clergyman in his parish," says Mr. Lecky, "the simple, unostentatious, unselfish zeal with which he educates the ignorant, guides the erring, comforts the sorrowing, braves the horrors of pestilence, and sheds a hallowing influence over the dying hour, the countless ways in which, in his little sphere, he allays evil passions and softens manners, and elevates and purifies those around him; all these things, though very evident to the detailed observer, do not stand

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<sup>1</sup> *Hist. of European Morals*, ii., 2.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ii., 34.

<sup>3</sup> John vii., 12.

out in the same vivid prominence in historical records, and are continually forgotten by historians."<sup>1</sup>

The priest is Christ's unarmed officer of the law. He is more potent in repressing vice than a band of constables. His only weapon is his voice; his only badge of authority his sacred office. Like the fabled Neptune putting Eolus to flight and calming the troubled waves, the priest quiets many a domestic storm, subduing the winds of passion, reconciling the jarring elements of strife, healing dissensions, preventing divorce, and arresting bloodshed.

He is the daily depository of his parishioners' cares and trials, anxieties and fears, afflictions and temptations, and even of their sins. They come to him for counsel in doubt, for spiritual and even temporal aid. If he cannot suppress, he has at least the consolation of mitigating the moral evil around him.

We must not overlook the strong inducements that the Christian teacher holds out to his disciples for the practice of virtue in the pressing motives he offers for its due fulfilment. In this respect Christianity has a great advantage over all other systems of religion. The Stoic was incited to a moral life by a sentiment of duty; the Epicurean, by pleasure and self-interest; the Mohammedan, by the hope of sensual delights; the Jew, by servile fear; but the Christian is drawn chiefly by filial love. He is far, indeed, from excluding other motives. He, as well as the Stoic, is influenced by the intrinsic beauty of virtue and by the enormity of sin which he knows could be atoned for only by the blood of his Saviour. He is actuated in the pursuit of virtue by an enlightened self-interest; for he is taught that "Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."<sup>2</sup> He is moved by a salutary fear of future retribution. But his predominant motive for the practice of piety is love for his Heavenly Father, and love is the strongest of all moral forces. No one can deny that the devotedness of a child to a father is more tender, more profound, more disinterested, and more enduring than the devotedness of a servant to a master, or of a hireling to an employer. A son obeys his father with more alacrity than a servant does his master; and in disobeying his father, he not only transgresses parental authority, but does violence to the instincts of filial affection.

Now, the Christian Church is represented to us as a family whose *Father* is God, and whose members are His adopted children. "You are no more strangers and foreigners," says St. Paul, "but you are fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God."<sup>3</sup> It is only in the Christian Church that God is habitu-

<sup>1</sup> *European Morals*, i., 152.

<sup>2</sup> I. Tim. iv., 8.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. ii.

ally appealed to as Father, and that He admonishes us as His children. We never find the ancient Gentile religions nor the Mohammedan people addressing God by the title of Father. And the same can be affirmed of the Hebrew people. We may search the Old Testament from Genesis to Machabees, and we shall not find the name of Father applied to God a half dozen times. He is called Lord, Omnipotent, Master, King, Judge, and Ruler, titles suggesting the reciprocal relations of authority and fear; not in a solitary instance is a prayer addressed to Him under the endearing name of Father.

Not so you, says the Apostle to the Christians of his time, "for you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba, Father. For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God, and if sons, heirs also."<sup>1</sup> "Behold," says St. John, "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called and should be the sons of God."<sup>2</sup> In addressing our prayers to heaven, what name is more common on our lips than the name of Father, and what prayer is more familiar to us than that most touching and comprehensive of all prayers, the *Our Father*? The name of Father is applied to God upwards of one hundred times in the New Testament, brightening every page and cheering every heart.

What an incentive to virtue is presented to the Christian that recognizes in the moral precepts not only the injunction of his Creator, but also the voice of his loving Father, the Archetype of all sanctity! And what peculiar malice sin should have in his eyes since it is not only an infraction of the law, but also a straining or snapping of those tender ties that bound him to his Father in heaven.

We shall conclude this article by briefly reviewing the moral influence of Christianity on the world at the two extreme stages of its existence—in the first and in the nineteenth century. "It is not surprising," says Mr. Lecky, "that a religious system which made it a main object to inculcate moral excellence, and which, by its doctrine of future retribution, by its organization, and by its capacity of producing a disinterested enthusiasm, acquired an unexampled supremacy over the human mind, should have raised its disciples to a very high condition of sanctity. There can, indeed, be little doubt that for nearly two hundred years after its establishment in Europe, the Christian community exhibited a moral purity which, if it has been equalled, has never for any long period been surpassed."<sup>3</sup>

The primitive Church was not without its blemishes. There

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii., 15-17.

<sup>2</sup> I. John iii., 1.

<sup>3</sup> Lecky, *Hist. of European Morals*, ii., 11.

were occasional scandals, divisions, rivalries, envyings, strifes, acts of intemperance, and outbursts of litigious spirit, as is evident chiefly from the first epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians.<sup>1</sup> The luminous picture of Christian holiness had its shadows, but these shadows were few and far between. They were transient clouds flitting across the moral horizon. Far from dimming, they brought out in bolder relief the brilliant constellation of saints and martyrs that illumined the world.

The Pagans saw with admiration that the Christians, amid the licentiousness and sensuality that surrounded them, preserved their chastity. Like the three children in the fiery furnace, their robes of innocence were not scorched by the impure flames of wantonness that enveloped them. Amid drunkenness and dissipation, they remained temperate and mortified. Amid injustice, rapine, and general self-seeking, they were not only strictly honest and fair-dealing, but they also distributed their goods with a ready hand to their suffering brethren.

While the Pagans fled with horror from the breath of pestilence, the Christians buried their plague-stricken friends, and even their enemies. They surrendered their liberties and their lives that they might ransom or relieve their captive brethren.<sup>2</sup> No wonder that the Pagans exclaimed on witnessing such evidences of heroic charity: "See how these men love one another, how they are ready to die for one another, while we are consumed by mutual hate."<sup>3</sup>

In a word, amidst calumnies, contempt, insults, and persecutions, they were calm, patient, and self-possessed. They extorted praise from their enemies by laying down their lives for their faith not only with sublime fortitude, but with unutterable peace.

This peace was not the stern composure of the Stoic philosopher, nor the cold impassibility of the Mohammedan fatalist, nor the intoxicating delirium of the Epicure, but the serene joy of the Christian believer.

The exemplary lives of the primitive Christians served as a powerful auxiliary to the Apostles and their successors in the conversion of souls to Christ, and in swelling the ranks of the Christian family. The observing public were sensible that a religion which bore such celestial fruits must have been planted by the hand of God. They saw and they believed. The preëminent piety of the early Christians and their influence in drawing men to the Christian fold, are attested by one who cannot be suspected of blind partiality toward the Christian religion. "There has probably never existed upon earth," says Mr. Lecky, "a community

<sup>1</sup> I. Cor. i. and vi.

<sup>2</sup> St. Clem. i., Ep. to Corinthians, St. Cypr. Ep., 51.

<sup>3</sup> Tertull., c. 39.

whose members were bound to one another by a deeper or purer affection than the Christians in the days of persecution. There has probably never existed a community which exhibited in its dealings with crime a gentler or a more judicious kindness, which combined more happily an unflinching opposition to sin with a boundless charity to the sinner, and which was in consequence more successful in reclaiming and transforming the most vicious of mankind."<sup>1</sup>

But does Christianity retain its hold on the public conscience? Most assuredly it does. The name of Christ in the nineteenth century, as well as in the first, is the great battle cry of moral reformation. He has stamped His seal on the laws, the literature, the fine arts of the civilization of Europe and America. His voice is ever ringing among the nations of the earth. He has leavened the social mass. His spirit circulates through the veins of modern society. The precepts of His Gospel continue to regulate public morals. He is the Standard by which we approve or condemn our moral conduct. The number of those whose life is influenced by the teachings of Christ has increased a thousand-fold since the days of the Apostles; and though many have ceased to believe His doctrines of faith, they never cease to admire and praise His transcendent ethical precepts and counsels. The aroma of His sweet life still lingers among many who live outside the pale of the Church.

I have no desire to extenuate the gross vices prevailing among us, which are the more reprehensible, committed as they are in the face of an enlightened conscience. But after making every allowance for this moral depravity, it must be conceded by the most ardent admirer of Gentile civilization that the average morals of a Christian community are of a higher standard than were those of pagan Greece or Rome. The obscenities compelled among us to lurk in dark places, were perpetrated by them openly and without shame. The homage that public opinion pays to virtue is such that vice is not permitted to stalk abroad. Cæsar during his campaigns committed, without detriment to his reputation, unnatural excesses of gluttony and lust that would have consigned any American general to public infamy.<sup>2</sup>

Chastity is held in public esteem in Christendom; it was religiously prostituted in Pagandom.

Lascivious paintings and statues that would not be tolerated in any public hall, and still less in a church in this country, were dutifully exposed in Pagan temples as an homage to the gods.

Unnatural crimes which are severely punished among us, were rarely prohibited by law in ancient Greece.

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<sup>1</sup> *Hist. of European Morals*, i., 424.

<sup>2</sup> Sueton., *Cæsar*, 49.

The profanation of our Christian temples by acts of lasciviousness is unheard of among us ; with the Pagans the temples were favorite haunts of lust.

Lascivious dancing is reprobated by Christian ethics ; it formed a part of the religious rites among Pagans.

Lucretia was *their* highest type of female chastity. Christianity furnishes innumerable examples of women who suffered tortures and death rather than yield to the aggressor.

The augurs and Vestal virgins could publicly witness the most lascivious plays on the stage, and the butchery of the gladiators in the Flavian amphitheatre, without detriment to their sacred calling.

Imagine our Christian clergy and consecrated virgins frequenting the ballets and low theatres ! Could they do so without shocking the moral sense of the people and forfeiting all respect in the community ?

It is true, indeed, that the revelations of systematic crime in London, recently made by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, exhibit a state of moral turpitude hardly surpassed by Rome in the days of Nero. But Paganism was helpless to repair the evil. It had no remedial agencies at its disposal, nor any recuperative power to rise from the slough of sin. Its priests were silent. Its purest philosopher, Seneca, connived at, if he did not participate in, the corruptions of the court, and it sank under the superincumbent weight of its iniquity. The scandal of London, on the contrary, is exposed by the press ; it is denounced from hundreds of pulpits, and condemned by a healthy public opinion, so that members of Parliament, to screen themselves from public odium, are compelled to vie with one another in enacting laws for the repressing of immorality.

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