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ARTICLE I.

RELATIONS OF SCIENCE TO THE BIBLE.

1. *Modern Scepticism: a Course of Lectures Delivered at the Request of the Christian Evidence Society. With an Explanatory Paper*, by the Right Rev. C. J. ELLICOTT, D. D., Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. 1 vol., pp. 526. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 27 Paternoster Row. 1872.
2. *Modern Materialism: Some of its Phases and Elements*. By GEORGE B. CHEEVER, D. D. Published in Nos. I. to XI., in the *New York Observer*, March, April, May, and June, 1873.

Our remarks in this article will be confined to the single question, What are the relations of modern physical science to the Bible—to the volume which claims to be a very gradual revelation of spiritual truth, by a personal God, for his own glory, in the redemption of fallen man, created in the image of his Creator? We intend to discuss neither the evolution hypothesis and other forms of modern scepticism, nor the influence of physical science on modern morality, civilisation, and Christianity, as affected by arts, manufactures, and commerce. Has any truth of science been shown to conflict with any plain declaration of revealed truth? Can science discredit revelation? Is true science responsible for the use of physical hypotheses by sceptical scientists? Can theologians who are ignorant of science, reply wisely to speculations that grow out of scientific discoveries? Does the Bible denounce physical science, as it does divination,

2d. *Their nearness to the apostolic form of government.*—As they had only pastors and teachers, with chosen moderators over their assemblies, they were entirely free from Papal errors as to hierarchical offices—errors which characterise some denominations of the Protestant Church in our day.

3d. *Their opposition to the corrupt practices of the established Church.*—They had separated because they could not tolerate its many errors and innovations; and their hostility to these was the occasion of their being persecuted for over five hundred years, by both Church and State.

“Thrice hail! ye faithful shepherds of the fold,
By tortures unsubdued, unbribed by gold;
In your high scorn of honors, honored most,
Ye chose the martyr's, not the prelate's post;
Firmly the thorny path of suffering trod,
And counted death all gain to live with God.”

ARTICLE III.

LECKY'S HISTORY OF EUROPEAN MORALS.

History of European Morals, from Augustus to Charlemagne.
By WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY, M. A. 2 vols.
New York: D. Appleton & Company. 1870.

There is nothing more important to the casuistic infidelity of the day, than to account, upon natural principles, for the existence and success of Christianity. And there is nothing more entirely satisfactory to the Christian thinker, who has nerve to face the argument, and see it through, than the manner in which it is endeavored to be done.

It is a grand question, if one only could grapple with it, and really settle it! This mighty mass, which touches the earth, but will not mingle with it, or mixes with it only at the cost of life to the contaminated member; whose inner laws are in perfect harmony with the laws of God's lower kingdom, yet absolutely refuse to acknowledge any parentage or descent from them, much

less any subordination to them; this mass, upon which all evil things move to destroy it in vain, but which, in its turn, self-moving, descends upon them in a volume and power that overwhelms them all; whose energy is of the spirit, so subtle as to seem unreal, yet more solid than the mountain granite; whence is it? And how shall we account for its existence and its victories, *quin Deus intersit?* And verily, if it could but be explained on purely natural principles; if it could once be shown that no divine hand had been needed to send these springs of the water of life among the valleys, to give drink to all that are athirst; the whole question concerning the efficient interposition of God upon the earth would cease to have any living interest for any practical mind. If he did not command light into the pitchy darkness of man's ruin, we shall not very vehemently care whether he spoke it into the material chaos. If he is not the author of salvation, it is of little consequence to us whether he is the author of what we call creation. The God who was not our Father, would be indeed a God far off.

But if, on the other hand, he did thus interpose; if redemption is a real work, and his work, (as it must be, if it be at all;) then, when that point is proved, the infidel has really lost the whole battle; for there need be no question that God, who sovereignly restores, did sovereignly produce; and that he who has built the splendid temple, Grace, did not need to borrow the foundation, Nature. None the less, however, will we do battle wherever we find the foe. It is by faith we understand that the worlds *were made*, and did not grow. In them hath he graven the record of his eternal power and Godhead, (*Θειότης*) and not a letter or a vowel point shall any sacrilegious hand obliterate while Christ's Church can prevent it.

If, now, any reader shall consider these remarks irrelevant to the subject suggested by the book before us, it can be only because he has not read—or, reading, has not inwardly digested—the very subtle, learned, and elaborate work itself. The name is an egregious misnomer. Barring the last chapter, the book is only incidentally a “History of Morals.” It is not morals, nor the history thereof, that gives it unity. That must be sought in the

effort to do what Gibbon failed to do—to explain the success of Christianity on natural principles. The author's plan is exceedingly ingenious, his methods wisely chosen, his style laboriously good, his lore prodigious. Nevertheless, he has signally failed. Failing, he has demonstrated that the thing attempted cannot be done; for, if it could have been done, Mr. Lecky would appear to be the man to do it.

But we pause at the entrance of the lists, to congratulate him on his prudence. He has nowhere, not in one paragraph, or sentence, or clause, attempted to explain the *existence* of Christianity. He rigorously confines his speculations and reasonings to its *success*. It surely did begin to be; and inasmuch as, our author himself being judge and witness, it has changed the face of Europe, and made morals, in a thousand ways, just what they are, there would have been no fatal irrelevancy in his digressing so far as to tell us whence this marvel sprang, and with what throes of nature she came to the birth.

But no such dangerous question will Mr. Lecky handle. He is as prudently silent, just here, as the Pharisees, when they were asked of "the baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned among themselves, saying, If we shall say, from heaven, he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say of men, we fear the people."* He contents himself with acknowledging that the prodigy *is*; and being here, he will show us by its behavior and achievements, that it is no such prodigious matter, after all.

Now, we confess that, logically, this is all right. Every man has a perfect right to select the question he will discuss, and to try it with such resources as he has, and such wit and wisdom as he is capable of. But to Mr. Lecky's claims as a historical philosopher, we submit that this course is fatal. It was clearly his duty to trace the Stoical Philosophy, *ab ovo*, and he has done so. He has made sufficiently clear the rise of Neoplatonism, and of such other schemes and schemers as have largely affected the received ethics and the moral practice of mankind. Why not of Christianity also? This mightiest factor of all—this

* Matt. xxi. 25, 26.

all-potent, world-moulding element—shall we be contentedly ignorant of its cause? Shall we trace the Nile to its source, and not the River of the Water of Life? Shall Seneca have dozens of pages, and be quoted, and praised, and dissected, and “accounted for,” through the whole gamut, and Christ have not a line?

Nor shall this assailant of a divine redemption escape under the plea that, his subject being *European* morals, he cannot be called to account for not passing over into Asia. There is no such canon of historical writing. Mr. Lecky may safely be challenged to produce a single standard work in history, which does not go outside of its assigned limits to investigate the origin of those forces whose play and inter-relations produce the history.

Besides, the author has not hesitated to cross the great sea for his own purposes. Why should he not do as much to do honor to the convictions and the reverence of the Christian world? He has not hesitated to speak of the Pentateuch as “writings in which religious massacres, on the whole, the most ruthless and sanguinary on record, were said to have been directly enjoined by the Deity;”^{*} or to sneer at the sun’s being “literally arrested in its course, to illuminate an army engaged in massacring its enemies.”[†] Even so small a matter as that “St. Paul was probably unmarried,” and that “his writings showed a decided preference for the unmarried state,”[‡] is not overlooked; but neither Paul, nor John, nor Christ is found worthy of record in a History of European Morals, or to take a place, we will not say beside Seneca, or Plutarch, or Cicero, but beside Maximus of Tyr, or Apollonius of Tyana! He who could go back beyond Augustus to Joshua, and on beyond Charlemagne to Madame de Stael,^{||} can make no room for the ethics of Peter or James. It would have been as easy to find the reasons for the success of the gospel in those reverend names and holy truths, as to say that “Christianity floated into the Roman Empire on the wave of credulity that brought with it this long train of oriental superstitions and legends.”[§]

^{*}Vol. I., p. 421.

[†]Ibid, p. 376.

[‡]Vol. II., p. 111.

^{||}See her eloquent panegyric, Vol. II., pp. 62, 63. [§]Vol. I., p. 397.

The simple truth is, that Mr. Lecky *dared not* join issue with the Christian world, respecting the central facts of the Christian religion. Investigation has gone too far; the science of history is too vitally interested in their acceptance and recognition. This author is a man of too much learning and English common sense, either openly to deny the facts, or, admitting them, to hope to blink the conclusion. It remained, therefore, only to blur them by discrediting the system which rests upon them. And the quotations we have given, (which might be multiplied,) unhappily make it only too plain that this was his design.

In the brief discussion on which we propose now to enter, we omit all reference to the first chapter, devoted to "the Natural History of Morals," in which we have a very large and candid account of the two great systems of morals—the utilitarian and the intuitional—with an able advocacy of the latter; and also to the last chapter, on "the Position of Woman," in which Mr. Lecky abundantly shows us what a History of Morals he could have written, if he had really desired to do it. Here is one great ethical topic treated after a proper historical method, in an essay replete with learning, and enriched with much wisdom set forth in language often singularly beautiful and strong.

They are passed by here, therefore, not at all as unworthy of our best attention—for they deserve it—but as almost entirely apart from that great argument of the book, with which we are at present concerned.

Mr. Lecky's chief endeavor, to which we now limit ourselves, may be described as a game of three moves. The first move, made by means of Chapter II., on "the Pagan Empire," is an elucidation of, and panegyric upon, the Stoical Philosophy. Chapter III. makes the second move, by "accounting for" the Conversion of Rome. Chapter IV. should give the finale by its delineation of the moral ideal of Christianity and the methods by which "the new religion" attempted to introduce that ideal. For clearly, if the said philosophy, was not indeed quite the equal of our religion, yet such a precursor of it as admits of being favorably compared with it, and even of boasting certain moral superiorities; and if the preparatives for the advent of

Christianity into Rome were of such kinds, and of such force, as that the wonder would rather have been that it had not prevailed, on the ordinary and natural principles of human history alone; and if, thirdly, so great and virulent were the involved evils of Christianity, that nothing but the advent of Rationalism and Scientific Scepticism could have emancipated man; then Christianity is very unfortunate and very absurd, in having ever made pretensions to the character of a divine revelation.

It is a most significant fact, that, with our author, while man's philosophies are natural, his religions are artificial. He sees in the religion of the Greeks, "the creations of an unbridled and irreverent fancy;" in the gods of the Egyptians, "representations of the forces of nature;" in those of the Romans, "for the most part simple allegories, frigid personifications of different virtues, or imagined presiding spirits." Now, while there is enough of truth in these statements, correctly to characterise and distinguish these systems as against each other, it is unphilosophical to ignore the existence and power of the religious instinct itself, which impelled these efforts and enforced them upon the belief of the people, in the first place, and afterwards as irresistibly constrained men to cast them away like worn-out raiment, because they failed to satisfy its wants.

Of these two, religion and philosophy, each springs from a constitutional principle in man, but receives its shape from the peculiarities of the people, or of their circumstances. Thus "Xenophanes remarked that each nation attributed to the gods its distinctive national type; the gods of the Ethiopians being black, the gods of the Thracians fair and blue-eyed." And Mr. Lecky is as prompt as any man, not only to see this truth, as concerns philosophy, but to work it out in pages of fine and often profound reflections. But he fails to discern the fact, that while the philosophic impulse is intrinsically inventive and independent, the religious impulse is essentially receptive and dependent; and that, therefore, while philosophy is to be achieved, religion is to be acquired; while the doctrines of the one are to be discovered and wrought out, those of the other are to be accepted and wrought

in. All religions profess to have come down to man; if there is a true one, it must have done so.

It is written in the horoscope of every mere mythology that it shall fail of human reverence after a shorter or longer trial, because only a divine knowledge comprehends man's need, and only divine power can supply it. The pages of this book are burdened with the evidence of it, in the noblest instances of all:

“The very children and old women ridiculed Cerberus and the Furies, or treated them as mere metaphors of conscience. In the deism of Cicero the popular divinities were discarded, the oracles refuted and ridiculed, the whole system of divination pronounced a political imposture, and the genesis of the miraculous traced to the exuberance of the imagination, and to certain diseases of the judgment. Before the time of Constantine, numerous books had been written against the oracles. The greater number of these had actually ceased; and the ablest writers justly saw in this cessation an evidence of the declining credulity of the people, and a proof that the oracles had been a fruit of that credulity. . . . Cato wondered that two augurs could meet with gravity. A Roman general named Sertorius made the forgery of auspicious omens a continual resource in warfare.” Pp. 173, 174. “Augustus solemnly degraded the statue of Neptune, because his fleet had been wrecked. When Germanicus died, the populace stoned or overthrew the altars of the gods. The idea of sanctity was so far removed from the popular divinities, that it became a continual complaint that prayers were offered [to them] which the most depraved would blush to pronounce aloud.” P. 178. Mr. Lecky felicitously describes the state of the public mind as one of “superstitious scepticism.” It is the bourne to which every human religion descends, and from which it never returns.

But if the derivation of the word “religion” which Cicero accepts—*a religare*—be admitted; if its office is to bind man afresh to duty and to virtue; then we must agree with the author that the counterpart of religion, in our sense of the word, must be sought rather in the philosophies than in the mythologies of Greece and Rome. Gods that gave no law, and observed none but their own impulses, from high to vile; gods to whom good-

ness was not dear, with whom virtue was not safe; how could they fail to *rot* the country that did them reverence? Religious thought and feeling, and the sense of moral obligation, took refuge from these deities "vengeful, lustful, blind, passionate, unjust," with men that either scornfully discarded them, or mocked them with perfunctory observance.

We must now inquire of our author what guidance was offered, what work was done, what truths were taught, and how widely, and how practically, by that famous body of men, the Stoical philosophers.

The central conception of their system was "the dignity of man."* Pride was its leading moral agent; "pride, which looks within, making man seek his own approbation;" which never doubted the essential excellence of human nature; which counted man master of his own feelings, and "capable of such excellence that he might even challenge comparison with the gods."

Sin, in their conception, was "simply disease." In their scheme of preparation for death, "repentance for past sin has absolutely no place." And though some of the later writers improved a little upon this dreary self-worship—as we shall see, when we turn to their theology—they are confessed by their eulogist to be inconsistent in this respect.

Stoicism was an endeavor after a purely intuitional morality; *i. e.*, it insisted upon the sole worth and absolute obligation of virtue, and discarded not only the grosser utilitarian inducements, but even the affections themselves. The love of children, the purest conjugal love, were as alien to its theories as avarice or drunkenness. The sage, theoretically, was as absolutely self-centred and self-absorbed (on the affectional side) as the gods of Epicurus. He resolutely rejected from his thoughts even such motives as a future beyond the grave, with its rewards and woes, would have supplied. He bade man be absolutely pure, and self-sacrificingly patriotic, and the brother of universal man, not because it is prudent, not even because it is sweetness to the heart and peace to the conscience, but because nothing else is worthy of—Himself.

*Vol. I., p. 205, *seq.*

Now, we decline the plunge into the profound questions here suggested, touching the nature of virtue, the ground of its obligation, and the motives which may lawfully impel us to it. Our duty is with the historical sequences. However utterly astray its speculations may be, we cannot but confess that the enterprise this ancient system undertook was sublimely audacious—wonderful in its conception, marvellous in its temporary and partial success. It arose among the crude, passionáte, selfish minds which have composed the bulk of mankind, and challenged them to the pursuit of an ideal, the very loftiest invented by man, and to a faith in themselves, that they were naturally, and at the root, the very opposite of that poor and mean thing which each man knew himself in daily life to be. It floated truths—kept them from submersion and forgetfulness—which must always be foreign to the sloth and self-indulgence in which the world lived, and lives. It uttered them in words so grand as to have become a precious heritage of the race, as thus: “Cicero, expounding the principles of Stoicism, declares that no one has attained to true philosophy who has not learned that all vice is to be avoided, ‘though it were concealed from the eyes of God and men.’” Similarly write those who were more distinctively Stoics. “‘Nothing for opinion, all for conscience.’ ‘He who wishes his virtue to be blazed abroad, is not laboring for virtue, but for fame.’ . . . ‘If you do anything to please men, you have fallen from your estate.’ . . . ‘Never forget that it is possible to be at once a divine man, yet a man unknown to all the world.’ . . . ‘We do not love virtue because it gives us pleasure, but it gives us pleasure because we love it.’ ‘To ask to be paid for virtue, is as if the eye demanded a recompence for seeing, or the feet for walking.’ In doing good, man ‘should be like the vine which has produced grapes, and asks for nothing more after it has produced its proper fruit.’” Vol. I., pp. 195, 196.

What men of marble they strove to make, is well seen in the close of Seneca's account of clemency and pity—the former of which he makes “one of the highest virtues, and the latter a positive vice.” “The sage will console those who weep, without weeping with them; he will succor the shipwrecked, give hospitality to the proscribed, and alms to the poor, . . . restore the

son to the mother's tears, save the captive from the arena, and even bury the criminal; but in all, his mind and his countenance will be alike untroubled. He will feel no pity. . . . His countenance and his soul will betray no emotion as he looks upon the withered legs, the tattered rags, the bent and emaciated frame of the beggar. But he will help those who are worthy, and like the gods, his leaning will be toward the wretched."*

Three questions now require an answer: What religion did they teach? What did they effect for the people at large? What were they in their own lives?

That neither they, nor their rivals, the Epicureans, nor the Eclectics, (such as Cicero,) taught the religion in which they professed to live, is abundantly evident. Lucretius "boasts that the popular deities dwindle into significance" when compared with Epicurus. To destroy the superstitious terrors created by the popular religion "was represented as the highest function of philosophy." Yet they not only acquiesced in the worship of these immoral gods, but urged its practice upon each other, and accepted office in the temple. What was their theology, then?

Mr. Lecky acknowledges that it was "an ill-defined, uncertain, and somewhat inconsistent Pantheism; the divinity was especially worshipped under the two aspects of providence and moral goodness." But what kind of "worship" this was—whether it was a mere inward, silent interpretation of the service offered to gods whose persons and whose story symbolised neither of these two "aspects," or whether it was simply the utterance of these fine phrases about them—does not appear. That they did say many admirable things, in these two regards, is certainly true; but if they must be construed in a particular sense, they become as vapid as any German religiosities of the same class. Quoth Cicero, "There never was a great man without an inspiration from on high;" but what boots it, if the folly as well as the wisdom is from on high? Seneca says, "Nothing is closed to God. He is present in our consciences; he intervenes in our thoughts." Yea, verily, that is a purely identical equation, if he is we, and we are he. Mar-

*See this interesting discussion at length, Vol. I., pp. 199, 200.

cus Aurelius gives the highest possible expression to their religious ideas—literally the highest possible—when he says, “Offer to the God that is in thee,* a manly being, a citizen, a soldier at his post, ready to depart from life as soon as the trumpet sounds.” It is sufficient to believe in the genius who is within us, and to honor him by a pure worship.†

But let us consult our author as to the instructions they gave upon two very important matters; the one fundamental to all spiritual religion, the other a crucial point in morals, as the corollary of religion. We mean the doctrine of immortality, and the ethical quality of suicide.

As regards the first of these, we are told that, while Cæsar could assert in the Senate, “without scandal, and almost without dissent, that death was the end of all things;” while Pliny, speaking for the school of Epicurus, “describes the belief in a future life as a form of madness, a puerile and a pernicious illusion,” “the opinions of the Stoics were wavering and uncertain”‡ Their pantheism naturally led some to believe in the reabsorption of the soul into the parent Spirit. “Panætius, the founder of Roman Stoicism, maintained that the soul perished with the body; and his opinion was followed by Epictetus and Corutus. Seneca contradicted himself on the subject. Marcus Aurelius never rose beyond a vague and mournful aspiration.”||

Touching suicide, “among the Stoics, the belief that no man may shrink from a duty, coexisted with the belief that every man has a right to dispose of his own life.”§ Seneca, the most eminent of Latin Stoics, has left, not a defence, but a passionately eloquent panegyric of suicide. “The doctrine was, indeed, the culminating point of Roman Stoicism. . . . Life and death, in the Stoical system, were attuned to the same key. The deification of human virtue; the total absence of all sense of sin; the proud, stubborn will that deemed humiliation the worst of stains, appeared alike in each. The type, of its own kind, was perfect. All the virtues and all the majesty that accompany human pride,

‡ Vol. I., p. 192.

|| *Ib.*, p. 193.

§ *Ib.*, p. 225.

* Italics ours. † These quotations are all from Vol. I., pp. 207–209.

. . . were here displayed. All those which accompany humility and self-abasement were absent."*

This brief exhibit may be yet more briefly summed up: If such philosophy is the Pagan coördinate of religion in our sense of the word, it is a miserable failure. It blurred the personal gods that men had served, and gave them instead, themselves and the dim star-dust-cloud, Nature. It robbed its adherents of all those sublime motives that gather about man's immortality. It left man, a godless, hopeless wreck, to cast himself, with a last irrevocable defiance, into the abyss of death.

But, perhaps, though of so little substance in theory, Stoicism may have shown itself of more solid value in practice. Such things have been. There is an adventitious strength appearing, in certain cases, in connection with systems of little or no intrinsic power. It is fair to ask, therefore, whether this vaunted "wisdom of the world" took effectual hold upon the people, and so proved itself great? This question need not detain us long. The admissions in one quotation—whose audacious praise we pass without comment—are quite sufficient to settle it:

"On the one hand we find a system of ethics, of which, when we consider the range and beauty of its precepts, the sublimity of the motives to which it appealed, and its perfect freedom from superstitious (*quere*, religious?) elements, it is not too much to say, that though it may have been equalled, it has never been surpassed. On the other hand, we find a society almost absolutely destitute of moralising institutions, occupations, or beliefs, existing under an economical and political system, which inevitably led to general depravity, and passionately addicted to the most brutalizing amusements. The moral code, while it expanded in theoretical catholicity, had contracted in practical application. . . . The later Romans had attained a very high and spiritual conception of duty, but the philosopher with his group of disciples, or the writer with his few readers, had scarcely any point of contact with the people. *The great practical problem of the ancient philosophers was, how they could act upon the masses. . . . This problem the Roman Stoics were incapable of solving, but they did what lay in their power.*" Vol. I., pp. 308, 309. [The italics are ours.]

That is entirely conclusive of that question. Had we space, and were it necessary, we might give pages of vivid description

* Vol. I., pp. 234, 235.

from this high authority—description, contrasting “the party of virtue” with the people they manfully endeavored to purify, and in whose foulness and corruption they were at last submerged.

But we can clinch the argument still more effectually by drawing from his pages a brief answer to our third inquiry: What were these great teachers, these lights of ancient morals, themselves?

“There was one form in which [the love of truth] was absolutely unknown. The belief that it is wrong for a man in religious matters to act a lie, to sanction, by his presence and example, what he regards as baseless superstitions, had no place in the ethics of antiquity. The religious flexibility which Polytheism had originally generated, . . . had rendered nearly universal among philosophers, a state of feeling which is often exhibited, but rarely openly professed among ourselves. . . . No one did more to scatter the ancient superstitions than Cicero, who was himself an augur, and who strongly asserted the duty of complying with the national rites.” Vol. I., p. 430.

Other examples follow.

“While, too, the school of Zeno produced many of the best and greatest men who have ever lived, it must be acknowledged that its records exhibit a rather unusual number of men who, displaying in some forms the most undoubted and transcendent virtue, fell in others far below the average of mankind. The elder Cato, who, though not a philosopher, was a model of philosophers, was conspicuous for his inhumanity to his slaves. Brutus was one of the most extortionate usurers of his time; and several citizens of Salamis died of starvation, imprisoned because they could not pay the sum he demanded. . . . Sallust, in a corrupt age, was notorious for his rapacity. [Seneca's] life was deeply marked by the taint of flattery, and not free from the taint of avarice.” *Ib.*, pp. 203, 204.

This is not all, but it is surely enough.

It really seems unnecessary to go into further detail; to hear how Stoicism became religious, p. 259, and more introspective, p. 261; or to unearth for Mr. Lecky the moral of the story of Marcus Aurelius, which he has beautifully told, p. 263, *seq.*; or even to discuss his explanation of Stoicism, p. 204, farther than to draw from it the antithesis, that while this philosophy originated naturally, but became unnatural, Christianity originated supernaturally, yet proved its perfect adaptation to the nature of man.

Suffice it that it *did* fail. It fell, according to our author, before three tremendous antagonists—imperial despotism, slavery, and the “peculiar institution” of the Roman empire, the gladiatorial spectacles. It would not be difficult to show that his second point is wrongly taken, and that *clientelage* should take the place he has allotted to slavery. The first and second of these died a natural death, though they were too strong for philosophy. The third, Mr. Lecky himself declares, *was destroyed by Christianity*.

Hear, then, the conclusion of this matter: Stoicism gave the world a virtue without affections, a religion without a God, a soul without a future. It tried, by writing, by oral instruction, even by preaching,* to get hold of the people, and failed. It tried to produce model men, and failed. It tried to reform and save the empire, and failed. Of the splendid graces of character displayed in many cases; of the admirable patience and moral courage of this last effort, especially, it would be delightful to speak, if there were space. What chiefly concerns us is the fact, that while it was the very noblest thing man ever did, it broke down completely, and passed away, leaving hardly a wreck behind.

Yet its ethics were positive. It taught virtue biographically, which is of all methods the most efficient; it displayed many virtues in their very highest living expression. It gave way at last to Neoplatonism, and the Egyptian Orientalism, whose teachers brought their stores of learning, and wisdom, and a rich devoutness of spirit to the enterprise of religious reform, and gave a sad but beautiful afterglow to the declining day of Rome. But as the system that had strength was fatally devoid of spiritual life, so the system that had beauty, was without inward strength. The one denied man a heart; the other scorned his reason. Proud and high as they were, they toppled and fell.

They left the field to a religion, compared with whose venerable years—little as Mr. Lecky seems aware of it—the oldest of them had but the life of a babbling infant, which, nevertheless, is seen to-day to be rather in its youth than its age, and mewing its half-tried powers for flights of glory over all the world. Whence

* See pp. 327, 328, 329, Vol. I.

came that religion? And whence had it the strength it unquestionably displayed in the conversion of the Roman Empire?

Mr. Lecky's answer to this question constitutes what we have called his second move. It need not detain us long; for though he has written on it at great length, and enriched his numerous pages with stores of curious lore, and ingenious reasoning, and fine joinery of quotation, he has gathered his main points within a narrow compass. In the space of four pages,* he has given us "the main causes," "the cause," and "the chief cause." They are, respectively, "the general tendencies of the age," the combination of "so many distinct elements of power and attraction," and "the congruity of its teaching with the spiritual nature of mankind." Here you have the full-fledged philosopher in his best estate. Verily is it, as one said of old, "altogether vanity"!

For, as touching his "main causes," viz., the general tendencies of the age, it is obvious that he has confounded the *preparations* (providential as we maintain) for an event, with the *causes* of the event. The two are as distinct as the ploughing of a field from the sowing of the seed. Very far are we from blinking the truth that it was "in the fulness of time, that God sent forth his Son." Gal. iv. 4. It is a very precious and even necessary truth to us, that that supreme event came in no hap-hazard, but at an hour as closely calculated as the transit of Venus. The consolidation of all the important nations of the earth in one great empire, the reign of peace throughout its bounds, and the pervasion of the whole world by three languages—Hebrew for devotion, Greek for theology, Latin for organisation and business—these illustrate a class of preparatives just as real, and in some respects as necessary, as the decay of the old religions, the exhaustion of the old philosophies, the conscious misery and corruption of mankind, or the revulsion toward religious belief from the frivolous scepticism and infidel superstition into which the noblest nations of antiquity had descended: facts, which fall under Mr. Lecky's title of "general tendencies." Which of all these could have begotten Christianity? And if the answer be

* Vol. I., pp. 410-413.

attempted that these general tendencies explain not the existence, but the success of gospel religion, then we insist that the author has *confessedly* overlooked the royal and only perfect cause of that success—and that is, the gospel religion itself.

But this conclusion, of course, relegates us at once to the other explanations tendered us, viz., the many elements of power and attraction combined in Christianity, and chief of them all, its congruity with the spiritual nature of man. This witness is true. Its combinations of power and attraction were unrivalled. Its congruity to man's fallen but redeemable nature is absolutely unique. But if the witness is put forward in a naturalistic sense, we are ready for Mr. Lecky with his bravuras about Stoicism. Had Christianity greater men than Seneca, and Cicero, and his other worthies? Not in his opinion. Were the individual Christian teachers men of profounder wisdom and deeper insight, or a nobler type of man? He will admit no such thing, as we have seen in quotations already made. What was it then—or rather, let us reverently ask, Who was it, that out of His infinite treasures combined these attractions? Who understood man, when he failed to understand himself? Who founded this religion, which the philosophers detested and scorned, which the Emperors bitterly persecuted, which the heart of man in every nation and every age invariably rejects before it accepts; yet gave it, in their despite, imperial prevalence and ever-expanding conquests? In truth, if Mr. Lecky were as much of a philosopher as we wish he was, he would have seen that this congruity of which he speaks is by no means a simple congruity. There are elements in human nature with which Christianity is congruous; but they are submerged elements. Sense, and sinful habit, have overgrown them. They rarely understand themselves. They need a seer to behold them, a prophet to give them voice. The face of the world is strewn with wrecked mythologies and philosophies, whose fate was sealed by the fact that, though born of men, they were incapable of adjustment to the true needs, the inarticulate desires, the sublime inward challenges, of human nature. The statement does indeed explain the success of the gospel, but that explaining fact can itself only be accounted for by the confession of a re-

vealing God. To use it in any other interest is to beg the question.

But, seeing there is no relief from the acceptance of Christianity in either the first or the second of these efforts, can the historian, in the third place, so cheapen its character or its achievements, or make out such a case of failure, that the suggestion of a divine Redeemer, and great First Cause of the gospel, becomes an impertinence? The attempt is not new, but that is a small matter. Is it successful, to any seriously damaging extent?

It seems scarcely credible that a son of Protestant England should (1) segregate historical Christianity from the facts which are its root, and the authoritatively declared principles which are its life; (2) identify Popery and the Greek Church with Christianity; (3) be absolutely insensible to the difference between belief and faith. Yet this is the condition of this author, and if the masses of writing in his unconscionably long fourth chapter, which owe their presence there to these three mistakes, were extracted, the remainder would be almost an eulogium upon the Christian religion.

A few brief sentences comprise all that need be said in rejoinder:

(a) God has given no guarantees that a revealed religion should be incapable of corruption; on the contrary, it is a part of man's responsibility that it should be capable of it.

(b) The ordinances and false doctrines of the apostate Churches bear upon their face the distinctive marks of that very thing, namely, corruption—there being a wide difference between a thing of native growth, and the perversion of another thing.

(c) The application of the power of the gospel being first to the heart, secondarily to the individual life, and only in the third remove to communities, the possibility of its perversion is formidably large, and its development to perfection correspondingly difficult and slow.*

*Mr. L. caught a brief glimpse of this truth—see Vol. II., p. 156: "Its moral action has always been much more powerful upon individuals than upon societies; and the spheres in which its superiority over other

(d) There is absolutely no Church in the world, whether fallen or standing, that does not constantly and emphatically distinguish between intellectual belief and Christian faith. The blunder is one of which Mr. Lecky and his comrades of the "advanced thought" have the monopoly for public use. Faith is too rich and sweet and deep, a power both of action and of joy, to be lost sight of in a frame of mind of which even a philosopher is capable. The two are perfectly distinct and distinguishable, even when they relate to the same truth. The one is the having been convinced; the other is the being able to rely. The one is concerned most directly with the evidence; the other, with the witness. Intellectual belief is the work of that one power (the judgment) alone. In faith, the whole spiritual nature conspires and consents. But all that, however he may indirectly recognise it elsewhere, disappears from this writer's view, when it most concerns the great subject of his book that he should remember and grapple with it.

As to his second mistake, it really seems hardly worth while to repeat—what every Protestant but Mr. Lecky familiarly knows—that Popery is not Christianity; that it has always claimed to be that very divine institution which it has always been engaged in subverting; and that its divergencies from Christianity began early, ran far, and have never returned. And probably enough has been said, incidentally, concerning the first mistake in the opening pages of this article, to justify us now in passing it by.

It remains only to say—what he, alas, cannot appreciate, but our readers will feel to be of vital consequence—that there is no page in this book which recognises the existence, as a substantive reality, of religion. The word is there in superabundance; but the author does not (even intellectually) apprehend the thing. Unless the occasional mention of reverence as a virtue may be taken to mean something, this great book, with all its eloquence and all its learning, is on this subject a blank.

religions is most incontestable, are precisely those which history is least capable of realising." If he had carried that thought with him, how different a book this might have been!

It is merely *ad hominem* to say that such an omission is absurd in a work whose burden is Christianity. As a characteristic of a whole school of assailants, however, the point is exceedingly important and encouraging. The Church is in the world, as Lot's house was in Sodom. The angels are within; and they who would dishonor them, "weary themselves to find the door," but they cannot.

We look with wonder at the groping malignity whose very movements show the blindness of ungodly men to the real nature of the gospel and the priceless value of its religious products. Let them ask their irrelevant questions, and bring their cheapening histories to bear down the loftiness of Christianity to a purely human level. Milton's famous mathematical critic, with his "What does it prove?" exposed, not the poem, but himself. And so do they betray themselves, who attack a divine religion, while taking no account of sin, and scorning the doctrine of providence, and stumbling over the fact of an atonement, and superciliously slighting the promise of grace.

The *actual experience* of the Christian through this grace, is what enriches and illuminates his life. Very possibly, he has stood on the philosopher's high moral ground, and challengingly held up his virtues before God. He knows now how dreary and how dead a life that is, from which a Father, a Redeemer, and a Royal Comrade are absent. His new riches, his new light, are due not merely, not even chiefly, to comfort sensibly enjoyed, the daily and spontaneous pleasures of the renewed soul. Far more are they due to the responses of God's word to his inner life, and the experience of a Saviour's presence with him continually. The doctrine of a personal Providence, at which Mr. Lecky elaborately sneers, is the inevitable corollary of that kindred between God and his soul which *he knows* to exist, without which his present and current experience would be impossible.

Now, when the believer finds the busy enemies of his faith utterly astray, absolute blunderers, on these primary and fundamental matters, he smiles with pity upon their "foolishness." It is not by discussing adventitious questions, and belittling a history.

humiliating enough, indeed, to man, but resplendent with the prowess of heaven, that these men can accomplish the despair of millions.

Before that cruel work is done, they must obliterate the instinct of religion in man's nature, reverse the lessons of design written on rocks, and seas, and stars; disprove the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and thus wrench God's signet-ring from the hand of revelation.

Until all this is effected, we will still adore a Creator, carry our burdens of sin and woe to a Redeemer, hold up our tainted hearts to a sanctifying Spirit. We will still see in the Gospel the Rock hewn from the mountains without hand, rolling on and growing through the ages, crushing superstitions, gladiatorial games, oppressions, and even nations that will not be blessed; and preparing to fill the whole earth. We will still see in the only true religion a balm, healing the deadly wound of mankind, through the regeneration of the individual heart. We will still pray for these unfortunate men who "despitefully use and persecute" their and our divine Friend.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lecky must try again.

NOTE 1. Mr. L. has once or twice disclaimed any desire to meddle with theological matters. We have disregarded those disclaimers, because he *does* meddle with them.

2. We have omitted almost all reference to the valuable and interesting final chapter, on "the Position of Woman," partly because little of its matter is germane to the present discussion, and partly because he who does treat that chapter, ought to *complete* the history—if we may risk the Hibernicism—by writing the *first part* of it, viz., the position of woman in Old Testament history.