

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php

ORDINARY MEETING, JANUARY 15TH, 1877.

THE REV. R. THORNTON, D.D., VICE-PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed, and the presentation of the following Works for the Library was announced :—

- “On a Recent Discovery of Carboniferous Batrachians in Nova Scotia.” By
 Dr. J. W. Dawson, F.R.S. *From the Author.*
 “The International Review.” *From Dr. J. W. Dawson, F.R.S.*
 “The Charing Cross Magazine.” *From T. W. Greenwell, Esq.*

The following paper was then read by the author :—

CHRISTIANITY CONSIDERED AS A MORAL POWER. By the Rev. J. J. LIAS, M.A., Professor of Modern Literature, St. David's College, Lampeter.

1. **T**HE never-ceasing conflict between Christianity and her assailants is continually assuming new forms. At one time it rages round the evidences, at another it busies itself with the doctrines of Christianity. One set of opponents desires to attack it through its connection with Judaism, another seeks to undermine it by disparaging the credit of the writings in which its system is embodied. Most of these attacks, however, are directed against the outworks of Christianity: the question to which I propose to ask your attention to-day is the citadel itself. If it can be shown that since the introduction of Christianity into the world a new principle has been at work which has proved itself capable of transforming the character and regenerating the nature of mankind to an extent utterly out of proportion with the effects of any other influence that has been brought to bear upon man, the position of Christianity is impregnable. For, after all, the true criterion by which a religion should be estimated is the influence it exerts upon conduct. That man, somehow or other, does not fulfil the law of his being to the same extent as other creatures, animate or inanimate, is a fact acknowledged on all sides. Whatever has an obvious tendency to produce conformity to that law must be in harmony with the purposes of the God who brought him into being, and therefore a part of the Divine scheme for the moral and spiritual education of man.

2. A part of the Divine scheme, I have said. It may be answered, that so is every other religion or doctrine which has contributed its share to man's training. And this is undoubtedly the fact. The earnest and vigorous defender of our

religion so lately lost to us* has told us his belief that the literature and philosophy of Greece was as much a part of God's design for man's elevation as the Law of Moses, and I have no wish to contradict him. But Christianity, as I believe, stands apart from any other element in the moral education of the world. The object of this paper is to show that its influence upon conduct is immeasurably greater than any other mankind has known. And we may remark, at the outset, that this influence upon conduct is precisely what Christianity professes to exert. It professes to be a divinely-revealed scheme for the regeneration of man's nature. Its greatest Apostle tells us, in the introduction to his greatest Epistle, that the Gospel is a "power of God unto salvation unto all them that believe"; and we surely do not require to be reminded that salvation, in the Scripture sense of the word, implies safety from sin as well as from sin's punishment? Nor need I stop to show from Scripture that this regenerating power of our religion is not to be violent, sudden, imperious in its operation; but that it is to be gradual, as the growth of the seed into the tree—of the infant into the man.†

3. The Christian religion, then, has challenged the inquiry into which we are about to enter. If we are concerned to defend Christianity at all, we are bound to show that she has made good her pretensions; that she has actually introduced into the world the most effective instrument for the moral and spiritual improvement of man which has ever been brought to bear upon him. And since that which elevates the individual cannot be without its effect upon the race, it will satisfy all the conditions of the inquiry if we show that Christianity has actually produced an extraordinary change in the condition of the world.

4. Now this is precisely what, in my belief, will be found to be the case. If we cast even the most cursory glance at history, we cannot fail to see that Christianity has worked a most miraculous moral revolution in the world, that it has changed the whole face of society, that it has waged unceasing war against everything which is contrary to man's true welfare, and that this campaign is still being carried on and will continue to be carried on until "the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ," or, in other words, until holiness, justice, purity, and truth shall be firmly established, and violence and oppression and sin and wickedness shall for ever cease to be.

* Canon Kingsley.

† Eph. iv. 13-15; 2 Pet. i. 5-7.

5. The proof of this statement need not be a minute or toilsome one. The evidences upon which I have to rely are not hidden in the nooks and corners of history ; they are stamped in ineffaceable characters upon the broad outlines of the collective life of humanity. Cast your eyes back upon the time when the doctrine of Christ was first preached on the earth,—when the brutal and sensual Tiberius was on the throne of the Cæsars ; when Imperial Rome too clearly displayed the seeds of her impending decay ; when Horace, his fever-fit of youthful enjoyment past, was regretting in his maturer years the loss of those domestic virtues, that purity and integrity, that self-sacrificing bravery which had brought Rome to the pinnacle of greatness on which she then stood ; * when Juvenal viewed with such loathing the iniquities of his day that he declared that should nature deny the poet's power, indignation would supply it ; † when Tacitus, at a loss how to shame his countrymen into decency, holds up before them in his despair the half-naked barbarians of Germany as a model of what Romans ought to be. Cast your eyes back upon that age of indescribable depravity, and then accompany me in fancy to that upper chamber at Jerusalem, where “ they that believed were of one heart and of one soul, neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common.” Follow the fortunes of that little band as they entered upon the apparently hopeless task of regenerating a world so steeped in vice and debasement, and you will find that you are following a triumphant march—the march of Christ's soldiers under the ever-victorious banner of His Cross.

6. It was a bold attempt ; *that* has been confessed on all hands. It was undertaken, as the once famous, but now unduly discredited Christian apologist ‡ reminds us, without any of those aids of external influence and power which on all human principles were absolutely necessary for success. And it was opposed by all those engines of authority which have usually been so successful in stamping out new beliefs. At first with a mixture of lenity and severity, afterwards with a rigour ever on the increase, and at last with the full weight of the Imperial power, did the Roman State endeavour to enforce the laws prohibiting the existence of secret and foreign corporations. Yet, in just three centuries from the first promulgation of its doctrines, the Christian Church found herself triumphant over her enemies,

* Horace, Odes, iii. 5, 6.

† Juvenal, Satires, i.

‡ Paley.

and had enlisted on her side, instead of against her, the whole power of Imperial Rome. To what cause is this victory to be attributed? I say, without doubt to the moral influence of Christianity. It was not so much the attractiveness of Christian doctrine, nor the cogency of Christian argument, as the purity of Christian life which decided the victory in favour of Christ's Church. The evident sincerity of the Christians, their fortitude under trial, their mutual love, the earnestness with which they vindicated the purity of their lives, and the agreement of their practice with their professions—not the apologies of Justin and Tertullian, nor the laboured treatises of Origen—were the weapons with which they conquered the world. It was by these that they forced even their adversaries to admit that a power had come into existence which could enable mankind to rise superior to temptation, and to soar to a height of purity and virtue which had never before been reached by mortal man. Justin Martyr has left it on record that it was the contempt of death manifested by the Christians which made him feel that the common report of their impiety and impurity must needs be false.* Eusebius reminds us how on two several occasions the pious care for the sick and suffering exhibited by the Christians, as contrasted by the selfish indifference of the heathen for anything but their own safety, attracted the attention of the heathen, and caused them to glorify the God of the Christians, and to acknowledge that these were the only genuine worshippers of God.† The cry, "See how these Christians love one another," and its persuasive influence upon those who uttered it, has long since passed into a proverb, nor could any heathen deny the truth of the martyrs' repeated cry, "I am a Christian, and with us no evil is done."‡

7. It was thus, and thus only, that Christianity conquered Imperial Rome. Not by argument and dissertation, not by the logic and dialectic of the schools, but by the simple argument of facts, the practical manifestation of the truth that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, were the rulers of the civilized world constrained to bow their necks to the mild yoke of the Gospel. But the triumphs of the Christian Church were far from being at an end when the Roman empire acknowledged her superiority. Now for the first time did Christianity begin on a large scale its work of regeneration. The Church of Christ set herself in earnest to reform the utterly depraved

* 2nd Apology, c. xii.

† Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, vii. 22 ; ix. 8.

‡ *Ibid.*, v. 1.

morals of the empire, to introduce a better and a holier spirit among those who had been accustomed to the unrestrained indulgence of their passions. Christian bishops like St. Ambrose dared to shut the church doors in the face of the all-powerful Emperor when his hands were stained by a barbarous murder of his fellow-creatures.* A Christian monk braved the fury of the multitude by his bold denunciation of the brutality of the scenes of slaughter continually enacted in the Roman circus; and though he paid the penalty of his boldness by his death, the result was the final and absolute abolition of those cruel acts of bloodshed by the decree of the Roman Emperor.† Nor was the Christian Church altogether unsuccessful in her conflict with a more insidious enemy. It is impossible to express in our English language the frightful excesses of licentiousness which were openly indulged in in the days of heathen Rome. But if licentiousness has not been subdued by Christianity, it has at least been kept within bounds. Shameful as was the profligacy, disgraceful as were the crimes, of the Byzantine court, there was at least a marked difference between heathen Rome and Christian Constantinople. Crimes which were not even offences at all in the eyes of Paganism, were punished with death by the code of Justinian.‡ An historian whose impartiality will not be called in question—I mean the late Dean Milman—has remarked that “the courts of the Christian emperors, notwithstanding their crimes, weaknesses, and intrigues, had been awed, even on the throne, to greater decency of manners.” “Neither Rome, nor Ravenna, nor Byzantium,” he continues, “had witnessed,—they would not have endured, a Nero or an Elagabalus. The females (believing the worst of the early life of the Empress Theodora,”—which, by the way, I do *not* believe, resting, as such a belief must, solely upon the malignant *Anecdotes* of Procopius) “were more disposed on the whole to the crimes of ambition and political and religious intrigue than to the flagrant licentiousness of the wives and mothers of the early Cæsars.”§ Or if the statement

* Neander, *Ch. Hist.*, vol. iii. sec. 2.

† Theodoret, *Ecl. Hist.*, v. 26. St. Augustine (*Confessions*, vi. 8) is sometimes quoted to show that these games still continued after the date fixed by Theodoret. But he is speaking of an earlier period, when he and his friend Alypius were young.

‡ Milman, *Hist. Lat. Christianity*, book iii. c. 5; Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, c. 44.

§ Milman, *Latin Christianity*, book iii. c. 2. Theodora is not accused, even by Procopius, of disgracing the Imperial throne with the vices of a Messalina, as described in revolting terms in the 6th Satire of Juvenal.

of so honest an historian be discredited, on the ground that he is a believer in Christianity, at least that objection will not apply to the passage I am about to cite from Lecky's *History of Christian Morals*. "In some respects," says that author, "Christianity had already effected an improvement. . . . The vast schools of prostitution which had grown up under the name of temples of Venus, were suppressed. . . . Under the influence of Christianity the effrontery of vice had in a great measure disappeared. The gross and extravagant indecency of representation of which we still have examples in the paintings on the walls, and the signs on many of the portals at Pompeii; the banquets of patricians, with their indescribable and revolting accompaniments; the hideous excesses of nameless abomination in which some of the Roman emperors had indulged with so much publicity,—were no longer tolerated. Although sensuality was still very general, it was less obtrusive. The presence of a great Church, which amid much superstition and fanaticism still taught a pure morality, and enforced it by the strongest motives, was everywhere felt, controlling, strengthening, or overawing."*

8. Such, then, was the influence of Christianity upon the Pagan civilization of ancient Rome. But the time soon came when, with the exception of the ever-narrowing area of the Byzantine Empire, that civilization was overthrown. Hordes of fierce barbarians, of almost every nation under heaven, overran Europe, and trampled under their feet the Roman patricians, now so enfeebled by their vices that neither their civilization nor their wealth could save them from subjection to those who, in every respect save two, were their inferiors. Yet, if the barbarians in their native forests had preserved their domestic purity,† their frugality and temperance, and thus the bravery which continence and temperance can alone keep alive, these virtues for the most part ceased to exist when, in the license of uncontrolled power, the Frank and the Lombard, the Goth, the Vandal, and the Hun were exposed to the corrupting influence of Roman luxury. The hardy self-restraint, the barbarians' only virtue, soon disappeared; the fierceness and brutality were retained. Therefore, the history of the centuries immediately

* Lecky, *History Christian Morals*, vol. ii. p. 163. I have been obliged to soften the language even of the English historian of these abominably depraved times. It is too gross, at least for oral delivery before a mixed audience.

† Milman, *Latin Christianity*, ii. p. 67; Tacitus, *Germania*.

succeeding the fall of the Western Empire is, perhaps, the most frightful record of atrocious crimes that the world has ever known. The barbarians had not yet imbibed the precepts of Christianity, while they united the vices of savage and of civilized life. Therefore, murders, parricides, fierce and bloody wars undertaken without any adequate provocation, adulteries, divorces, acts of gross oppression and cruelty followed one another in terrible succession. There was scarcely a single break in the dark uniformity of colouring spread over the whole picture of these times. Few characters in history display more cruelty, arrogance, and perfidy combined, than the famous Clovis.* Yet, even his crimes are surpassed by those of the members of his family, and nowhere can we find greater monsters of iniquity than a Clotaire or a Chilpéric, a Frédégonde or a Brunehaut. Four hundred years passed away, and even in the tenth century pious Christians, shocked at the violence and wickedness that reigned around them, and had now continued to reign for centuries, believed that the world was approaching its end, and that a just God intended to require of their generation the accumulated sins of the ages which had elapsed since Christ came to save the world. Yet, dark as that tenth century undoubtedly was, we can see that some influence had been at work which had already produced a mighty change for the better. If we compare the age of Charles the Great with that of Clovis, we cannot fail to observe a marked improvement. A still more visible advance is to be found when we compare the age of the Great Charles with that of the saintly Louis IX. Between the ninth century and the thirteenth the whole spirit of society had undergone a revolution. It would be ridiculous to compare the chivalrous warriors of the Crusades, the saintly Tancred, the unselfish Godfrey, the brave, fearless, and devout Edward of England,† the pious, but unfortunate Louis himself, with the bloodthirsty savages who had desolated Europe five or six centuries before. What had brought about the change? What had tamed these fierce barbarians, had taught them obedience to law, had intro-

* Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, c. 38, admits that Clovis was sometimes restrained by "the milder genius of Rome and Christianity," though four pages further on he asserts that "he was incapable of feeling the mild influence of the Gospel."

† Pearson, *Hist. Eng.*, vol. ii. p. 490, speaks of the religious character of Edward I. in the highest terms. He is generally acknowledged to have been a good son, a clement and just monarch, a man of the strictest integrity, and a devout Christian.

duced among them the principles of social order, had bridled their passions, had led them at least to show some sort of reverence for duty and for God? What, if it were not Christianity? Corrupt as the Christian religion had become in the Middle Ages—and this corruption was no more than might be expected from the state of society in which it existed—it was still, even in its worst days, a power for good. We may take exception to the principle of monasticism, but the virtues of monasticism were precisely those which were best calculated to strike the imaginations of the rude people in those uncultivated times. Lingard has told us how, to the rude barbarians, “in whom the opportunity of gratification had strengthened the impulse of the passions, a life of chastity appeared the most arduous effort of human virtue,” and how “they revered its professors as beings of a nature superior to their own”;* and Hume † and Gibbon, ‡ though in the contemptuous mode of speaking of mediæval piety which was in their days the fashion, admit the truth of the statement. We may object to the doctrine of Papal supremacy, but few will venture to deny that in times of ignorance it was the only possible counterpoise to brute force, that it supplied the place of that enlightened sense of truth and justice before which ambition and violence are wont in our times to bow their heads. § We may complain, and justly complain, of the evils attendant upon superstition, yet we may admit that in those times even superstition had its uses; that an abject terror of the powers unseen was at least better than no belief whatever—than the absence of all which might keep violence and wrong in check by the fear of a future retribution. One bright feature marks a vast distinction between the worst of mediæval times and those which had preceded them. The Christian religion in mediæval times was at least able to produce the grace of penitence. Remorse, that which in ancient times supplied its place, had almost ceased to be heard of during the later ages of the Roman Empire, and the greatest monsters of iniquity descended to their graves without the least sign of the

* Lingard, *Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. i. p. 181.

† Hume, c. 2, Edred, and c. 3, Edward the Confessor.

‡ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, c. 37. “They soon acquired the respect of the world which they despised, and the loudest applause was bestowed upon this Divine philosophy, which surpassed, without the aid of science or reason, the laborious virtue of the Grecian schools.”

§ Southey, a very anti-Papal writer, has an eloquent passage in his *Book of the Church* to this effect, vol. i. c. 10. The fact is now generally admitted by Protestant historians of the highest reputation.

dread of the world beyond. Such was scarcely the case even with the worst criminals in the mediæval annals. The most guilty seldom failed, if not before, at least when death stared them in the face, to admit their guilt, and then they did their best to avert the punishments in store by the restitution of their ill-gotten plunder, by works of piety and charity. The infamous Brunehaut trembled before the rebukes of Columbanus, and suffered him to go his way without let or hindrance.* Even Frédégonde, whose wickedness far surpassed hers, was known, under the pressure of sorrow and remorse, to recall some of her violent acts.† Agilulf, king of the Lombards, at the instance of Gregory the Great restored what he had plundered from the churches, replaced the bishops in their sees, and raised them from a condition of the deepest degradation to dignity and power.‡ We may complain of the penitential system of the mediæval Church, but it at least served, however feebly, to keep alive the remembrance of two truths which heathenism could not be said to have grasped—the justice and the mercy of God; His justice, in that He must needs punish sinners; His mercy, in that He was willing to forgive them. A moral standard of some sort was thus kept up before men's eyes, while at the same time they were not allowed altogether to forget that God was “not extreme to mark what is done amiss.”§ Thus, imperfect as was the Christianity of the Middle Ages, far as it had declined from the doctrine proclaimed by Christ and His Apostles, it was still the salt of the earth. External as religion too often was, it produced at least, to use the words of a German writer, “submission to law and the acknowledgment of spiritual inferiority,” it “implied self-subjection, self-conquest, self-sacrifice.”|| In fact, it has been as true since the promulgation of Christianity as it was before, that “the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.”

9. Nor must we, in carrying on, however briefly, an inquiry such as this, fail to remark on the influence of the Crusades upon the mind of Christian Europe. At first sight a war carried on professedly for Christ's sake, and it alone, would seem to be a dangerous infraction of the spirit of His saying, “My kingdom is not of this world.” But on a closer examination of the facts, we find that here as elsewhere the rule holds good, that whatever is done for conscience' sake, however ill-

* Milman, *Latin Christianity*, book iv. c. 5.

† Guizot, *Hist. France*, c. 8. The story is told by Gregory of Tours.

‡ Milman, *Latin Christianity*, book iii. c. 7.

§ See some remarks in Milman, *Latin Christianity*, book iii. c. 5.

|| Cited in Milman, *Latin Christianity*, book iii. c. 5.

informed that conscience may be, will in the end be productive of good rather than evil. The final result of the Crusades was to temper war with the spirit of Christianity. Clemency to the vanquished, principles of honour, a high sense of the duties which attached to the knightly character, have made war ever since those times quite a different thing to what it was before. The fantastic institutions of chivalry may provoke a smile; its code may have been sullied by sensuality; its literature may often have ministered to vice; but at least it raised the standard aimed at by the warrior; it introduced a spirit other than brute force into the world, it made tenderness to the weak no longer a reproach on manhood, but, on the contrary, the highest and noblest duty of a man. True, in the Middle Ages this ideal was confined to those in high station, but at least it was something to have produced among the descendants of the rude barbarians who had made England their own by conquest, whose highest virtue was ferocity, whose most contemptible weakness was soft-heartedness, an ideal of the "very perfitte, gentile knight" which describes him, brave as he was, as "of his port as meeke as was a mayde," and notes among his chief characteristics that he "no vilanye ne sayde."* Again I ask, what produced this ideal in Chaucer's age if it be not Christianity?

10. But we can best see what influence Christianity has had in moulding men's lives and characters by confining our observations to a more limited space. The history of our own country shows in a very remarkable manner the effects of the introduction of Christianity. The Saxons and English when they first invaded this country were what I have just described them, pitiless and ferocious beyond description. War was their chief delight, peace the one thing which was intolerable. They sacked the cities, massacred the inhabitants, and reduced the few whom they did spare into the most cruel and degrading servitude.† When they had done fighting with the natives they turned their arms against each other; and for the first hundred and fifty years of their sojourn here we read of nothing but battles, conspiracies, assassinations, and disorders. Mark the change which was effected by Christianity. It was not until the West Saxons had become Christians that they effected

* Chaucer, Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*.

† Mr. Freeman adopts the view that the massacre was almost universal. Mr. Pearson inclines to the idea that the Britons were frequently enslaved. I cannot, I confess, understand the introduction of so many British words into the English language except on the latter supposition. But if the former be the correct view, it only strengthens the argument in the text.

the reduction of Devonshire.* And then we find that the conquerors, instead of slaughtering the vanquished without mercy, allowed them equal rights with themselves, so that in a few years the victors and vanquished were blended into one people. Again, while England was still divided into six or seven kingdoms we find the genius of Christianity, ever tending to unity, had already created a National Church under the great Archbishop Theodore, and had thus anticipated the time when the people of these islands should dwell peaceably together under one sceptre.† The Penitentials of Theodore and Bede were the forerunners of the laws of Ina and Offa; and the spectacle now often seen of kings renouncing the vanities of pomp and power for a life of contemplation and piety, paved the way for the highest ideal of all, the saintly monarch who practised renunciation of self without relinquishing the kingly crown. The life of Alfred, a life simply impossible to Hengist or Horsa, to Ælla or Cerdic, is itself a proof of what just four centuries of Christianity had done for this country. At once unaffectedly pious and severely just, as free from superstition or prejudice as he was from ambition or selfishness, he not only rid his kingdom from foreign foes, not only restored learning and protected religion, but he displayed to the world the first example it had ever seen of a community in which the first object was the maintenance of peace, and in which equal justice was secured between man and man, on the foundation of the best and highest of all moral codes, that which was proclaimed by Jesus Christ. Nor, in the most rapid glance at our history before the Conquest, ought we to omit all reference to the marvellous transformation effected by Christianity in the character and principles of Cnut. And when England, corrupted by prosperity, and needing purification, had fallen under a foreign yoke, what was it once more that lightened the burden of the Conquest, and made Normans and Saxons feel that there was a common bond which united them together? It was the Christian Church. "The clergy," says Professor Stubbs, "felt their vows and spiritual relations to be a much more real tie than mere nationality."‡ They had in former

* Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, Introduction.

† The Saxon Chronicle records how Synods of the whole Church were to be held yearly. See also the Canons of the Council of Hertford, in Haddan and Stubbs' documents. See also Stubbs, *Constitutional History*, vol. i. p. 245.

‡ Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, vol. i. p. 223.

days striven to supplant provincial jealousies by a feeling of nationality; now they quickened the national religious life, which was dying out in its isolation, by new and worthier ideas from without, and by their fearless opposition to royal lawlessness they did much to improve the condition of the enslaved English people. It was the succession of patriot prelates in mediæval English history that did most to organize a national feeling, to convert the "*sic volo hoc jubeo, stet pro ratione voluntas*" of the kings into the rudiments of our present English Constitution.*

11. But I must hasten to bring this historical review to a close. The time would fail me were I to attempt to enumerate all the triumphs Christianity has achieved over the lawless passions of humanity. But what Christianity did for the Middle Ages she is doing still. Then she evolved order out of chaos; she tamed the savage, she imposed laws on him who knew no law but his own will. And she has not ceased in her mission of mercy. Nothing is more remarkable, more startling in our own time, among much to sadden and depress us, than the extraordinary strides which the love of our neighbour has made among us here in England within the last century. We have seen slavery abolished, duelling put down, drunkenness banished, at least from among the upper and middle classes. If war exists, it has lost half its atrocity. The spirit which once was confined to nobles has seized on the common soldier; and pity for the helpless and the vanquished, moderation in the hour of triumph, a respect for law and order even in times of war, are elementary principles of humanity recognized by all Christian nations, though, it must be confessed, they are as yet but imperfectly carried out. Where the wounded were once left to groan in misery upon the field of battle, to seek such succour as chance might afford, the Society of the Red Cross is now to be found, tempering by its gentle influences the horrors of war, enlisting in its service man's skill and woman's tenderness and sympathy. And we may add to this the reluctance which nations now feel to enter into deadly conflict. War, which at one time could be produced by causes of the most insignificant kind,—the ambition of one king, the jealousy or irritability of another—is now avoided wherever possible, and nothing but the clash of opposing principles, as held by large masses of men, principles which seem to permit of no other arbitrament than the sword, are capable in our times of precipitating the strife which all men

* Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, vol. i. p. 632.

dread so much. It is impossible to deny that Christianity, which has implanted in our breasts a strong repugnance to the infliction of suffering, has brought about a strong feeling of the guilt of war, of the crime and sin of being responsible for the frightful amount of misery which the most humanely conducted war is sure to produce.* And if we grant that a part of the indisposition to war is produced by the commercial pursuits to which mankind are now for the most part addicted, to an impatience of the expense, the burden of taxation, the interference with trade, which are its invariable concomitants, we may still place these facts to the credit of Christianity. For what else has weaned mankind from those warlike pursuits in which from the earliest ages it has taken delight, but the influence of the Christian religion? Hume tells us, almost in a tone of complaint, of the decline of military enterprise produced by Christianity among our Saxon forefathers;† and no candid person can deny that the weight of Christian influence from the first century of the Christian era to the nineteenth has been, on the whole, exerted in this direction.

12. Were we to stop here, we should have enumerated no small number of triumphs which Christianity has obtained over the passions and weaknesses of mankind. But the list is not yet exhausted. We should not be justified in leaving the subject without alluding to the immense growth of mutual kindness and consideration which it is the object of Christianity to produce, and which it has produced to so amazing an extent among us at the present day. Compare the state of our prisons now with their state as described in Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, or at the time when Howard and Sarah Martin and Mrs. Fry devoted themselves to an amelioration of the condition of prisoners. Compare our penal code now with the penal code of fifty years back, when men were hanged for forgery and sheep-stealing. Can we help acknowledging in these facts the working of such Christian principles as were laid down by Sir Thomas More in the beginning of the sixteenth century,‡ though

* It is interesting to observe how this spirit works, even among those who are hostile to Christianity. A newspaper well known for its sceptical tone has lately been deprecating the warlike tendency shown by many of the clergy. But its arguments are entirely Christian in their tone and spirit, and it succeeds best in pointing out the deep antagonism between Christianity, properly understood, and the infliction of pain and suffering.

† *Hist. of Eng.*, c. 1. The Kingdom of Wessex.

‡ Sir T. More, *Utopia*, book i. "There are dreadful punishments enacted against thieves, but it were much better to make such provisions as would

they hardly bore fruit till nearly the middle of the nineteenth? Study the condition of the workhouse poor as depicted in Crabbe's poems,* and compare his stern and almost hopeless tone of indignation with the state of things in the present day, when, if a pauper be deprived of his daily allowance, or is huddled with indecency to his grave, all England rings with it, and an immediate reform is imperatively demanded.† We remarked on the care of the sick and dying displayed in early ages, but what was that compared to our organizations for their care in these days, when not only the utmost attention, the tenderest consideration is shown them, but every appliance for their comfort is provided, and that by the voluntary offerings of Christian people? Look, again, at our arrangements for the relief of the poor. Not only are our workhouses—there were no workhouses, remember, in heathen times—abodes of comfort and almost of luxury compared to what they were, but every parish has its district visiting society, which strives to supplement by voluntary offerings and voluntary efforts the provision made for the relief of the poor by the State. So far has this been carried that the complaint of the indifferentist has even taken the form, that Christian charity violates the laws of political economy by removing the punishment by which the order of nature herself is wont to punish extravagance or idleness. The country is studded, again, with reformatories, refuges, lunatic asylums, orphanages, and innumerable other institutions for the temporal, moral, spiritual well-being of the people. Even our political system is dominated by the principle enunciated by Christ—"Love thy neighbour as thyself." Whatever some may think of the tendency of legislation in the present day, of Reform Bills and

enable every man to gain his own livelihood, and so be preserved from the fatal necessity of stealing." "If by the Mosaic law, though it was stern and severe, men were only fined, we cannot imagine that in this new law of mercy, in which God treats us with the tenderness of a father, He has given us greater liberty to be cruel than He did to the Jews." Sir T. More's practice, like that of many other Christians, was far below the standard set up in the "law of mercy," which in his conscience he believed to be the law of God.

* Crabbe, *The Poor and Their Dwellings; The Parish Workhouse, &c.*

† As an instance of this, I may remark on the complaint of "Veta" in the *Times*, during the month of October, 1876, and the care taken in investigating and refuting it by the Secretary of the Charity Organization Society. The assailants of Christianity would find it difficult to produce a parallel to this state of things in a non-Christian country. The *Times* of November 24th gave an additional column and a half to "Veta," on no other ground but that he was poor and friendless, and was bringing a charge against an organization established for the relief of the poor and friendless.

Ballot Acts, of the disestablishment of Churches and the legalization of Trades-Unions, we are forced to admit that the motive force of such legislation, whether rightly or wrongly applied in any given instance, is the desire to do to others as we would have them do to us, the desire to remove any grievance which is supposed in any way to press unfairly upon any member or members of the body politic.

13. And if it be denied that this growth of kindly feeling and mutual consideration is due to Christianity, we may safely ask the question to what else is it due? Not to civilization, for a high civilization existed in a very early period of the world's history; and it ever tended, not to progress, but to decay. Not to philosophy, for ancient philosophy found its highest realization in the doctrines of Plato, and they have been found incapable of regenerating the world; while modern philosophy owes the best of its doctrines to the Christianity which it endeavours so vainly to supersede, while it has only just begun to attempt to emulate Christian beneficence. Not to a law of progress impressed upon humanity, for the onward movement in Egypt, in Assyria, in Persia, in Greece, in Rome, carried with it the seeds of its own destruction, and the last collapse, that of the Roman Empire, seemed the most final and fatal of all. Not to any rival form of religion, for Buddhism, Brahminism, Confucianism, Mohammedanism, have all had their turn of regenerating the world, and they have all been conspicuous failures. Men may sometimes for their pleasure maintain the paradox that Christianity has failed to produce better men than heathendom; but we may safely ask them whether it is to China or to Japan, to India under Akhbar, or to Turkey under her present rulers, that they would point us for an example of what humanity should be. Heathendom has, at best, produced but the stagnation of the whole and the wretchedness of the many;* at its worst, it has produced vice in its most hideous aspects, and misery in its saddest and most degrading forms. Whereas Christianity has never for a moment faltered in its onward advance. From the moment when it assumed the control of man's destinies to the present time—a period of eighteen centuries—it has never ceased to produce a steady progress in everything which tended to the true welfare of man. But, at last, it is threatened with a rival. Positivism, or, as it is called, the religion of humanity, has ventured to contend with Christianity on its own ground. It is the first system of doctrine beside Christianity which has made the welfare of

* As in China.

mankind its object. But at present Positivism has promised much, and performed little. It is not likely as yet to drive Christianity from the field. For, first, its motives to action must be feeble, since they are derived from a world which, as far as we are concerned, soon ceases to be; next, it depends upon conceptions external to the man himself, not upon an influence within him to impel him to self-sacrifice and love; and lastly, while Positivists have been talking, Christians have been acting. Positivism, so far, has been content with creating an ideal; Christianity has translated that ideal into fact. In every city, in every parish, have Christian hearts been devising and Christian hands executing the numberless schemes for the benefit of their fellows which now exist among us. Sceptics and infidels may, and do, join in the good works that are being carried out. But can they tell us how much or how little of the principles of beneficence they avow is due to the religion which they affect to despise? They find a ready audience for their schemes of political and social improvement. Will they explain to us from what source that readiness is derived? They appeal to the maxims of benevolence and justice among their hearers. Where did their hearers learn those maxims, and under what sanctions have they come to be recommended to them with a force confessedly unknown except where Christianity is received and believed? Even of the sceptic himself we may well believe that his heart is better than his head, and that the heart often responds to the teaching of the Master Whom the head fancies itself called upon to reject. It was a significant confession which fell from the lips of the well-known unbeliever lately dead, in his latest work, that a man who made it a rule to think, say, and do what he believed Jesus Christ would have thought, said, and done in his place would have realized the true ideal of human perfection.* We may depend upon it that John Stuart Mill was near the truth. Consciously or unconsciously, the standard of perfection not only theoretically taught, but practically exemplified, in the life and death of Jesus Christ is the real source of every good thought, word, or deed to which men are inspired.

14. In what I have said I have been looking rather at the corporate than at the individual life of Christianity. I might have taken altogether a different view. I might have enlarged upon the immense influence of Christianity upon the individual. I might have referred to the grand array of saints which

* Mill, *Three Essays*, p. 255.

Christianity has produced, and have asked whether any other influence could be potent for well-doing as this. I might have pointed out the effect of our religion in the conversion of the worst and most abandoned, its power to rescue them from the lowest depths of evil to the utmost height of purity and self-control. I might have laid great stress upon Mr. Lecky's admission that Christianity has suffered from the fact that the sphere in which its superiority over other religions is most incontestable is precisely that which history is least capable of realizing.* I do not wish to underestimate the importance of this point. I believe that the influence of the Christian Church as a whole is due to the influence of the Spirit of Christ upon every individual member of it. Yet we may recollect that the Apostles would seem to teach us that even the spiritual life of the individual is to be cultivated for the general good. They teach us, moreover, that this life of the individual is no special gift, to be enjoyed and cherished by himself apart, but it is a common life—common to him and to his brethren, the life of the Son of God.

15. It has been the object of this paper to indicate—the limits to which I am confined forbid me to do more than indicate—the nature of the progress the world has made under the auspices of Christianity; I say under the auspices of Christianity, for no one can deny that since the Christian religion has been preached there has been an extraordinary change in the condition of mankind. Nor can it be denied that the condition of Christian countries at the present time is immeasurably superior to that of heathen countries. I contend that it is to Christianity that the difference is owing, and that, because the religion of Christ introduced a mighty transforming power into the world, capable of moulding men's lives into conformity with the type which Christ Himself exhibited when He dwelt upon earth. Christianity is not merely a system of doctrines, it is not merely a code of morals of the purest and loftiest kind; it is a power. A Spirit has been introduced into the world, convincing men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. A kingdom of righteousness has been set up in the world, and men are daily becoming more fully able to direct themselves by its laws. Those who reject Christianity may misrepresent the effects which the Christian religion has brought about. Mr. Greg may ask, as he has done lately in the pages of the *Contemporary*

* *Hist. of Christian Morals*, vol. ii. p. 156.

Review, whether “the kingdom of heaven which Jesus intended and foresaw” bears “even a recognizable resemblance to the proud, cruel, crushing, darkening, oppressive despotism which has for ages held sway in His name from the chambers of the Vatican? or even to the mitigated and modified travesties which reign, or have reigned, at Lambeth, Geneva, or Byzantium?”* But Mr. Greg has mistaken the scum on the surface for the stream—deep, rapid, and pure—which runs beneath. He has forgotten that the leaven works at first below, and that it invariably comes to the top last of all. And we may convict him out of his own mouth, if not of error, at least of partiality. He is obliged, to make good his charges against Christianity, to avail himself of the scandals of the past. To point a taunt at the Christian Church he has been obliged to refer to a condition of things which she has obviously outgrown. Jesus Christ not only “foresaw” that His Name would be used to support a state of things of which He disapproved, but what Mr. Greg would find it less easy to grant, He *foretold* it. He prophesied that many should arise in His Name, and say, “Lo! here is Christ; and, lo! there”; † but He warned His disciples not to believe them. He told them how Satan would robe himself as an angel of light, and would deceive, if it were possible, even the elect themselves. ‡ He knew that the powers of evil would do their utmost not only to oppose, but to misrepresent the gospel He had come to preach. But though “the kings of the earth” should “stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and His Anointed,” He knew that “He that dwelleth in the heavens” would “laugh them to scorn, the Lord” would “have them in derision.” § He knew that at His touch one moral disease after another would fly from among mankind; and that, the evil spirit once departed, they should sit at His feet clothed and in their right mind. He knew that when the earthquake of inward conflict shook the nations as His Church “filled up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ,” || the candid and earnest seeker after truth would be constrained to cry with the centurion—“Truly this was the Son of God.” ¶ For He was in truth the Word of the Father; the only-begotten Son, whose function it was to make *Him* known to mankind, “Who dwelleth in the Light that no man can approach unto, Whom no man hath seen or can see, to Whom be honour and

* *Contemporary Review*, November, 1876.

† St. Matt. xxiv. 23.

‡ St. Matt. xxiv. 24.

§ Ps. ii.

|| Col. i. 24.

¶ St. Matt. xxvii. 54.

power everlasting.”* Well might He have worked a moral revolution of the most unheard-of kind in the condition of humanity. For there is but one explanation of the matter, and it is this:—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”†

The CHAIRMAN (Rev. R. THORNTON, D.D., V.P.).—I am sure that I may tender your thanks to Professor Lias for his extremely interesting and well-written paper. After the reading of two communications the discussion will open.‡

The following letters were then read:—

Aberdeen, January, 1877.

The paper by the Rev. Professor Lias is very excellent. It deals in a thorough manner with the subject in hand, and contains such evidence in favour of the good effects of our common Christianity as cannot on any just ground be gainsaid. It is, indeed, an able defence of the faith. The Professor makes a good analysis of history, and selects many points which speak eloquently in favour of our Christian religion, and which, when combined, constitute a bulwark which can never be assailed with any real success. This is all the more creditable to the good sense and wise selection of the writer, because Christianity is not a system of mere externals, as other religious systems mainly are. Its noblest trophies and triumphs are in the heart, the region most hid from human eye, and where alone true moral reform obtains. Its noblest work, therefore, is not always patent to the view of him who would describe it. Professor Lias believes that those aspects of human life or forms of religion, through which Christianity was manifested in the past ages of our Christian era, did service in their day in helping on the cause of God. And in this, I presume, few enlightened Christian men will differ from him. But it must be ever kept in mind that these were no parts of Christianity proper, that they were in no way required by it, but only by the imperfections of the people in whose minds they had a place. It is of very great importance to state this clearly at the present day, because the moment we speak of those adventitious elements of religion which were associated with Christianity in past ages as if they were parts proper of that system, that moment we give the infidel the opportunity of seizing on the failings of inconsistent professors of Christianity, and of holding them up to contempt, saying, “This is your Christianity!” Is not this the great fallacy

* 1 Tim. vi. 16; St. John i. 18.

† St. John i. 14.

‡ As a reply to one communication containing an objection to the paper, Professor Lias remarks: “That Christianity is a revelation from God in a sense which cannot be predicated of other religions, and that it maintains its course in the world under a superintending Providence: these are propositions involved in the very idea of Christianity itself.”

that runs through a recent work by Dr. Draper? Professor Lias expresses very clearly the distinction I refer to in sec. 15 of his paper, when he says—"Mr. Greg has mistaken the scum on the surface for the stream—deep, rapid, and pure—which runs beneath." I very cordially endorse this paper in its main line of argument throughout.

A. STEWART.

January 15th, 1877.

As I start this afternoon for the North of England, and shall not return for two or three days, I take this means of expressing myself on Professor Lias's paper, which is to be read this evening at the Institute. The paper appears to me to occupy just that ground of general defence of our religion which is so suitable to the position of the "Victoria Institute." What I should have said, had I been able to be present, would have been rather in the way of supplement to the remarks of the learned and discriminating essayist. The estimate which he well makes of the moral power exerted, on the whole, by Christianity is not disputed by the generality of unbelievers in the present day. Even Mr. Lecky, in his *European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, concedes as much as Professor Lias asks. In the notes to my own *Bampton Lectures*, referred to by the *Edinburgh Review* for the true description of the moral state of the empire as Christianity found it, I have given an extract from M. de Pressensé on the "first three ages" of Christianity, which also exhibits the same state of facts from the point of view of a French Protestant of some learning. But I would now observe that the controversy of the nineteenth century with our Religion is not so much against the moral power of its teaching as against the distinctive features of it as a *Revelation*. Even the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, criticising Strauss, defends for itself the title of "Christian," as indeed the right of all who are ready to admit that Jesus Christ is an illustrious "moral factor" who cannot be ignored in our modern estimate of civilization. The case is this: the Primitive Christianity, as represented in all the early writings, regards Jesus as Son of God, who took our nature, died as a man, and rose and ascended to heaven bodily after His resurrection; recognizes that He said, "I will build My Church"; that His followers set up a Society, and organized a social system, with rules and rulers of its own; shows that that organization prevailed in large parts of the Roman world as a separate organization, and then made terms with the imperial organization; and that since then, the joint organization has gone on as one. The nineteenth century is getting rid of the Christian part of the organization, and yet hopes to retain the leading moral improvements jointly effected in society. Christians feel that the original organization of a "church," a "new creation," cannot thus really be set aside without also disputing the original facts of the life of Emmanuel, "God with us." Thus it is Christianity as an organic whole, and not simply the moral influence of certain of its principles, that will have to be defended in the times before us.—Was our religion to be a "new creation," on the grounds taken by the Apostles and those who succeeded them?—or is it to terminate in a moral amendment of the "old creation"? and then, is the world to supersede the sacred organization and faith of the first ages of our Religion—and just to criticise its former literature, and subject its "evidences" to strict proof,—leaving individuals to accept it,—society as a whole doing without it?

WILLIAM J. IRONS.

Rev. J. KENNEDY, M.A., D.D.—Dr. Irons has said with great truth, that any criticisms made on this admirable paper must be rather in the way of supplement than in the way of correction or of opposition. It struck me, as I heard the paper read, that a great deal of it would be admitted by those who deny the supernatural origin and character of Christianity—those, in fact, who deny the very essence of our faith; but if they do make these admissions, we have a right to ask of them that they will explain the acknowledged superiority of Christianity. How comes it to pass that Christianity has wrought, and seems capable still of working moral changes in the world which no other system has worked, or seems capable of working? How comes it to pass that the character of our Lord has so transcended the character of all other professed reformers or teachers, as is admitted by the opponents of the Christian faith? I do not think they can give a sufficient answer to this question. In order to find an answer, we must ask wherein consists the moral power of Christianity? That it has a wonderful power, and that it has produced great changes and effects is indisputable; but wherein consists its moral power? Is it to be found simply in the beautiful moral character of its Founder, or in the beautiful moral precepts of its Founder? We are prepared to say that it is not in these; and here I think we should take our stand, and say—"It is not enough for you to admit that certain practical effects have been produced by Christianity; you must find the root and source of those practical effects." When we ask this question, we, as Christian teachers, are prepared to show, that from the very beginning Christianity was the supernatural thing, if I may use the expression, which it is to-day; and that that supernatural element was not something superinduced upon an earlier and simpler faith, but was the very essence of the earliest form of Christianity. Then we may proceed to show that it is in its wonderful Essence that its real moral power consists, and that no other sufficient and adequate explanation of that moral power can be found. When I speak of that wonderful Essence, I refer to the person of our Lord, as the Son of God, to His character as a Mediator and a Saviour in the work of redemption, and to the Holy Ghost, to which we as Christians ascribe the great influence which has been exerted in the world by the Christian faith. I know how imperfectly I state the matter, but I have at all events indicated where I think we ought to take our stand. Then I am not quite sure that the learned Professor sufficiently meets the objection raised by Mr. Greg. His answer is a figure, and figures in matters of logic are not good weapons: they are capable of different interpretations, and they convey different ideas to different persons. Professor Lias says—

"Mr. Greg has mistaken the scum on the surface for the stream—deep, rapid, and pure—which runs beneath. He has forgotten that the leaven at first works below, and that it invariably comes to the top last of all."

But I confess that I do not exactly know what the Professor means by that

statement. Mr. Greg appeals to the notorious fact, that for certain ages Christendom was scarcely better than old heathendom, and the Professor admits it. The question comes, How was it that Christendom, having that faith, which we say came into the world from God Himself for the world's redemption—how comes it to pass that that faith had become so inefficient that it had plainly lost its power, so that the very nations which possessed it were only on a moral level with nations that had not possessed it? I believe that there is a sufficient answer to this question, but I do not think that the learned Professor has brought it out. I think Mr. Greg does honour to Christ when he speaks of "the kingdom of heaven which Jesus intended and foresaw," as distinguished from "the proud, cruel, crushing, darkening, oppressive despotism of the Vatican, or the mitigated and modified travesties of Lambeth, Geneva, or Byzantium." There we meet Mr. Greg, and say "You admit that Jesus Christ did not intend such a state of things, that it is contrary to His idea, and mind, and will. It may be a mystery to us how it was that Christianity should have fallen—that is, the outward and visible forms of Christianity—into a condition so low as it did. We feel that that is a mystery, but we go back to the beginning, and we say, "Admit the mystery; make of it what you can; but there is the fact, that Christ not only intended a different state of things, but foretold that that loving purpose of His would be frustrated somehow or other in the world." This is a consideration which we cannot overlook. Then, while admitting the mystery, we can say that Christianity, when it was received by the world in its purity and integrity, did work those marvels which the Professor describes in this paper, and which cannot be denied by the most sceptical. And we can take this further ground, that Christianity is working marvellously in our own times in heathen countries, to which it is sent from this England of ours. In this way I only indicate—and I feel that I should apologize for doing it so imperfectly—the ground on which I think we may meet Mr. Greg. I would take my stand first of all on this: the moral power of Christianity is not to be found simply in the beauty of the character of Jesus Christ, wonderful as that is. We may say that we cannot account for that character on other principles; but it is not on that character alone, nor on the beautiful moral precepts of our Lord, that His moral power rests. His moral power is found in this—He is the revealer of God's love, whereby He seeks to restore us spiritually to Himself. The Christianity of the Bible, for which alone Christ and Christianity are responsible, works to-day the same moral marvels which it has worked before, and is as mighty now as it ever was. I hope the President will excuse me for making these remarks, which I should not have made but for the reticence of the meeting. (Cheers.)

Mr. L. T. DIBDIN.—I should like to make a few remarks, not by way of criticism, but by way of asking two or three questions. If our papers possess any defects, it is better to find them here in the armoury than to let

them be discovered when they have gone out into the world. In his second paragraph Professor Lias says :—

“Canon Kingsley has told us his belief, that the literature and philosophy of Greece were as much a part of God’s design for man’s elevation as the law of Moses, and I have no wish to contradict him.”

Now, in a sense, of course, this must be true. Granted that God has any great design in His government of this world, and of course everything that happens must conduce to that end more or less ; but, in the special sense in which I suppose this passage is written, I apprehend that the literature and philosophy of Greece had nothing to do with that design. Then, in the 3rd paragraph of the paper there is a syllogism which is a little inverted. The object of the paper, Professor Lias says, is—

“To show that Christianity has made good her pretensions ; that she has actually introduced into the world the most effective instrument for the moral and spiritual improvement of man which has ever been brought to bear upon him, and since that which elevates the individual cannot be without its effect upon the race, it will satisfy all the conditions of the inquiry if we show that Christianity has actually produced an extraordinary change in the condition of the world.”

Now, it does not follow that, even if Christianity has produced “an extraordinary change in the condition of the world,” it has produced a change in each individual. The proposition, that what influences an individual must influence the race, may be true, but it does not follow that what influences the race influences each individual. Of course if, as Professor Lias says in his 4th paragraph, “the most cursory glance at history” is sufficient to prove all that is stated in that paragraph, it would not have been necessary to write this paper. In his 6th paragraph, Professor Lias makes a point of the rapid promulgation of Christianity, as if that were peculiar to the Christian religion, but I may remind the members of the Institute that, in a paper, which was read before us some time ago by Bishop Claughton, on Buddhism, it was stated that Buddhism had spread as rapidly in Asia as Christianity. Then, in a note to the 7th paragraph, Professor Lias draws a distinction between the immorality of Messalina and the conduct of Theodora. They were neither of them very creditable specimens of womankind, I should think. But Professor Lias says :—

“Theodora is not accused, even by Procopius, of disgracing the Imperial throne with the vices of a Messalina, as described in revolting terms in the sixth Satire of Juvenal.”

But if the stories told of her can be believed, before she ascended that throne she at least equalled her predecessor in vice. Then, in the 9th paragraph of the paper I find a proposition of a startling character. Professor Lias says :—

“We find that here, as elsewhere, the rule holds good, that whatever is done for conscience’ sake, however ill-informed that conscience may be, will, in the end, be productive of good rather than evil.”

That struck me both as novel and startling; for we must all admit that almost all the persecution that ever happened in the world, has been done most strictly "for conscience' sake," and yet it would be difficult to find what good it has been productive of. With regard to the Crusades, it was new to me to learn that the spirit of chivalry which was, no doubt, developed in those Crusades, was in any way due to Christianity, because I have always understood that that spirit of chivalry was imbibed from the Moors and Saracens, with whom we then came in contact, and it was in the Crusades, and in consequence of that contact, that "the gentil knyght," so far as he had any existence at all, first came into existence. We know that civilization and the arts and sciences had left Christendom, and were only to be found among the Arabs, principally in Spain, and when the Spaniards began to get back their country from the Moors, they began to learn from them their knowledge, and to be imbued with their spirit, and, as I have always understood, what we call chivalry then came into existence in Europe. For instance, Saladin was a fine specimen of the perfect "gentil knyght," although he was a Moslem. Then, in the 11th paragraph of the paper, we have a very beautiful description of the state of the world as it is now, but it is one which, if we read some chapters of contemporary history, we should hardly recognize. For instance, we are told that "drunkenness is banished, at least from the upper and middle classes." However that may be, it certainly is not banished from those who are below them. Then Professor Lias says that war is very much mitigated in its horrors, and that it is never now produced "by the ambition of one king or the jealousy or irritability of another." But my mind goes back at once to the war of 1870, which I think it is right to say was caused by no conflict of principle, but simply by ambition. As to the improvement in our prisons and workhouses, no doubt that is very marked, but it is difficult to say that that is due to Christianity, because, as Professor Lias himself says, Christianity has been operating in the world for eighteen centuries, and it is only during the last fifty years that our prisons and workhouses have been in that improved condition. It may well be asked, "How is it that it is only so lately that Christianity has begun to tell upon these particular features of society?" Then, in his 13th paragraph, Professor Lias seems to draw a distinction between what Christianity has done, and what China, Japan, India, or Turkey would do. Well, look at the atrocities which have been perpetrated by us in India, and Russia in Turkey in the name of advancing Christianity. In the general scope of his paper, Professor Lias has shown very eloquently how some things have improved, and how gross immorality is much less than it was before Christianity was introduced, but there are developments of immorality which are peculiar to, or which are much aggravated in the days in which we live. There are forms of vice with which, particularly in the profession to which I belong, we are brought in daily contact, and it is impossible to deny that these forms of vice are lamentably on the increase. I allude especially to commercial fraud and bad faith. Then, in

the domain of general history, the dreadful outbreak of the French Revolution was as awful, in its way, as anything that ever occurred in the heathen ages. The good, then, which Christianity has, no doubt, brought about, is not altogether unmingled with evil, which, though not necessary to Christianity, has been developed along with it. (Cheers.)

Mr. LEACH, a visitor.—I should like to say a few words, as an advocate for the opponents of Christianity, and I will begin with a small criticism. Professor Lias says, in a note to his 7th paragraph :—

“Theodora is not accused, even by Procopius, of disgracing the imperial throne with the vices of a Messalina.”

But I believe that the Professor is rather sceptical as to the evidence of Procopius in the case of Theodora. Now it seems to me that the evidence of Tacitus in the case of Tiberius is even more open to doubt, for I think the latter was much libelled. Then Professor Lias says, in his 5th paragraph :—

“Tacitus, at a loss how to shame his countrymen into decency, holds up before them in his despair, the half-naked barbarians of Germany as a model of what Romans ought to be.”

Now it is a question whether the object of Tacitus in writing the *Germania* was to show up the Romans. It seems to me that if an author of the present day were to write a paper on a savage tribe, like the Patagonians, for instance, and were to point out how different the Patagonians were from ourselves, it would be rash to maintain that he therefore contended for their superiority over us. It is not true that Tacitus wrote of the Germans with that meaning ; at all events I cannot discover that meaning in his book. As to the distinction drawn between Theodora and Messalina, there was so little difference that it is a matter of very slight importance. As to the stories of Procopius, I never heard anything so bad said of any one. As to the defence that these things were not done in public, I can only say that they were of a more strictly public character than anything ever said or done in modern society. In the 10th paragraph of the paper, Professor Lias tells us :—

“While England was still divided into six or seven kingdoms we find the genius of Christianity, ever tending to unity, had already created a national Church under the great Archbishop Theodore, and had thus anticipated the time when the people of these islands should dwell peaceably together under one sceptre.”

I question whether the tendency to unity which is thus noted was one of which we have reason to be glad. It was simply a tendency to treason. The tendency of the Church to unity in those times meant allegiance to the Pope, and meant a foreign power set up in this kingdom against the home power, and I do not think we need praise that. Further on in the same paragraph we have a quotation from Professor Stubbs :—

“‘The clergy,’ says Professor Stubbs, ‘felt their vows and spiritual relations to be a much more real tie than mere nationality.’”

I hardly think that Professor Stubbs meant that as a matter to be proud of. Then, in the 13th paragraph of the paper, we are told :—

“Ancient philosophy found its highest realization in the doctrines of Plato, and they have been found incapable of regenerating the world.”

But I deny that position altogether. Plato was a dreamer, and at Alexandria the neo-Platonists were considerably tinged with Christianity. However much they diverged from Plato, they owed their spirit to him, and that spirit was based upon an ideal existing in the upper world of which all bodies in this world got some share. I should say that the highest realization of ancient philosophy would be found in Aristotle, who adopted the scientific method, in going by the processes of induction, instead of by those of deduction. He wanted to do as Bacon did—to make a great national history, and to lead us up from particulars to generals, instead of going by the other way, and that is the same spirit which now pervades modern science, with all the benefits which it has conferred upon us. I come now to the real difficulty of the paper, where I cannot feel that it has quite given us a solution. Professor Lias says, in his 13th paragraph :—

“Heathendom has, at best, produced but the stagnation of the whole and the wretchedness of the many ; at its worst it has produced vice in its most hideous aspects, and misery in its saddest and most degrading forms, whereas Christianity has never for a moment faltered in its onward advance, from the moment when it assumed the control of man's destinies to the present time—a period of eighteen centuries—it has never ceased to produce a steady progress in everything which tended to the true welfare of man.”

Now that is a strong statement. Christ came when the Roman Empire was on the wane and fast breaking up. So far from Christianity tending to stop its decay, it did nothing of the sort. I will not say that it tended to hasten it, though I have no doubt that it was one of the many elements which hastened the break-up of politics and of society, but I want to know why it did not cure it. The Romans were a people who had shown great nobility of character and great capacity for good, and many of them, who had adopted the Stoic doctrines, were people of whom Christianity might have been proud. I want to know why Christianity did not stop the state of corruption which was going on and put things right again.* One answer to that may be that Christianity, for some reason or other, adopted a spirit of enmity to all knowledge. We find bishops and fathers of the Church decrying knowledge as Pagan, and as leading to doubt and infidelity, and we find St. Augustine saying that it is an immoral thing to suppose that there could be any antipodes, because the people who lived there could not see Christ when He came down to the judgment, for the earth would be between Him

* It was not generally adopted ; and even where adopted, it was too often rather in the spirit of Paganism, instead of that of *true* Christianity.
—Ed.

and them. Knowledge must have been at a very bad pass indeed when that was said by a father of the Church. I want to know why Christianity, instead of encouraging science, always opposed it.* Then I raise this further question : Is this progress which we have undoubtedly made in morals as well as in other things due to Christianity or to civilization ? Civilization, of course, is a term which we should all find it rather difficult to define, and I will not attempt to define it, but it seems to me that it is a great question whether Christianity and progress are to be considered as cause and effect. If we want to prove scientifically that one thing is a cause and another the effect, we ask, "Do we find the two things together, and when one is absent is the other absent ?" Apply that test, and we find that though Christianity and civilization are together with us at the present time, there was a previous time when Christianity remained and civilization disappeared ; and for nine centuries out of the eighteen during which Christianity has existed, we find Christianity present and civilization absent ; therefore I do not think it can be taken as proved that progress in morals is caused by Christianity. Of course the real fact may be that Christianity may be a development of civilization, and not civilization a development of Christianity ; and certain it is, that with the progress of civilization there has also been a progress in Christianity, which is far purer now than it was in the days of Justinian or of Charlemagne.

The CHAIRMAN.—I am glad that the paper has been so narrowly criticised, but it strikes me that whilst Professor Lias's opponents were doing their worst, they were with him all along. While I leave the Professor to defend himself generally, I would suggest to Mr. Dibdin that he will find that the Arabs never invented anything. All their science and art was traditional. They worked at it very hard indeed, but most of it came from Greece, and a little from India, and though they elaborated it they had no creative intellect, no power of originating ; this is my impression on the subject of Arabian science and literature, and I believe Professor Lias will concur with me. With regard to the criticism upon Tiberius I certainly incline to what Mr. Leach said, for I have always thought that one of the most touching portions of Roman history was the account which Suetonius gives of the emotion of Tiberius when he was compelled to divorce the wife whom he had loved so much. He was badly treated, and no doubt, had he been allowed to live with her, he would have been a very much better man than he was. I quite agree that he must not be looked upon as a person originally brutal and sensual ; but when he returned to Capri, no doubt in consequence of ill-treatment, he was what Professor Lias calls him. I would make one suggestion of my own to supplement the paper, and that is, that

* And yet we find that the Church was often the only organization which maintained learning. The monastic libraries in every country have tended to do so. We owe much to the learning of the clergy in all ages.—Ed.

Christianity, in the main, is more, perhaps, of a preventive than of an active force. Again, one does not see all the effect of Christianity at first ; it is only when you come to look into it that you find its real character and the real nature of the work it has done. Christianity must be judged not only by what it has done, but by what it has prevented from being done ; if we look at what humanity without Christianity became, and then look at what humanity, with all its native evil, has really become under the influence of Christianity, then, by comparing the two, we find a vast difference. Humanity, both with and without the influence of Christianity, has arrived at unsatisfactory results, but in the one case it is horrible, and in the other it is simply blamable. We must regard Christianity as the power which prevents the great mass of humanity from becoming corrupt. Civilization, if we look at it in the widest acceptation of the word, may certainly exist, and does exist, without Christianity : it is the full recognition of a man's being not only an individual but also what Aristotle calls *πολιτης*, a member of the community. It is to his social rather than individual capacity that civilization belongs. Now, Christianity introduces a higher civilization than any other. We have had Roman civilization, Chinese civilization, Arabian civilization, and Mussulman civilization, and we find the social as well as the individual character of the man recognized in all these ; but Christ gives us a better and higher society, and therefore the grandest form of civilization which the world has yet seen. Thus, though deplorable effects have sometimes been produced by the innate evil of humanity, yet I conceive that on the whole Professor Lias is right in his conclusion that the result of Christianity and its effect upon human civilization, have been far higher and better than the effect of any other system which the world has yet known. (Cheers.)

Rev. J. W. BUCKLEY.—I must say that I totally differ from our Chairman in the observation that Christianity is merely a preventive system. It appears to me that it is exactly the contrary ; it seeks to bring the heart of man truly and entirely into subjection to the will of God and Jesus Christ. It is true that Christianity fails to some extent, because the excessive corruption of man constantly rebels against it, and because Christianity has not yet got to its maximum ; but you take a very erroneous view of Christianity if you say it is merely a preventive system. It is a system to crush man's sin, and bring man's will back into subjection to the will of God.*

Mr. BUCKLEY.—I agree with what has been said about its failure ; for while man is what he is that must be so. Christianity has only done part of its work, but the rest will come in time. I say that Christianity is meant to correct all the evil in the world, and it will do it. The object of Christianity is to bring man's heart back to God, from Whom at present it is separated.

The CHAIRMAN.—I think you have quite misunderstood me. I never was guilty of anything so preposterous as to suppose that Christianity

* What law of civilization can we break without breaking a precept of Christianity?—Ed.

was not an active force. I should think it most monstrous if I had said anything of the kind. What I intended to say was, that I would supplement the paper by suggesting that we do not look so much as we ought upon Christianity as a preventive force, and that this character of Christianity ought to be distinctly brought out. Professor LIAS speaks of Christianity rather as an active force : I ask this Institute to look upon it as a preventive force also ; for I think the salting power of Christianity to preserve from corruption is a very important part of its influence upon humanity. But as to saying that Christianity is not an active force, I never had any idea of such a thing. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. R. W. DIBDIN.—You meant, in fact, that it has a negative moral force as well as an active force ? [The CHAIRMAN.—Yes, precisely.] I think that some of the observations which have been made to-night seem rather to have disparaged the effects of Christianity, but, speaking for myself, and probably for some others who are present, I repudiate any such interpretation of my views. It is quite possible that some of those who adopt the views of the Professor, may look at the world as at present existing, from rather too favourable a point of view, and may shade down some of the worst instances of vice and heighten up some of the virtues, so as to make the result more startling. But we emphatically deny that Christianity has failed. (Cheers.) Christianity has influenced all mankind in a marvellous way. It has not yet leavened the whole lump, still its results are visible everywhere. It is very important to remember that the great object of Christianity is to deal with individuals rather than with large masses of men, and that in so far only as the individual is touched, will the large mass be materially influenced. We find in the teaching of Christ Himself, that He addressed it much to individuals ; and we find the Apostles constantly writing to men who professed Christianity not in a general and wide sense, but impressing upon them its *personal* importance. Take the case of a drunkard, who has been the terror of his neighbourhood and the curse of his family : in how many cases have such men been reclaimed by the influence of Christianity, and been led to be respectable and honourable members of society ! Christianity has done a great work here, which is not lessened because there are other drunkards unreclaimed. The case of nations where there are only a few really Christian people and the great majority are indifferent, or are absolute disbelievers in the doctrines of Christianity, simply shows that Christianity has not had its full power there, and its influence has not been thoroughly brought to bear upon the population. I believe that Christianity has not failed in what it has done, and that it will not finally fail in what it will do in the future, and I think that something was needed to be said in the course of this discussion, to show that we do not think there is any reproach attaching to Christianity because its indirect effects, though admittedly great, have not been greater. (Cheers.)

Professor LIAS.—I have to thank those who have been performing the

part of the opponents of Christianity ; for one of the great advantages of discussion here is, that we all wish, as Christian men and women, that nothing should go forth as our defence of Christianity which is not capable of bearing the test of criticism and of the severest examination. With regard to the remarks that have been made, I think it would be best for me to notice them *seriatim*.

Dr. Kennedy complains that he does not understand my metaphor in answer to Mr. Greg. Let me, therefore, explain that I referred to the fact, that Christianity has all along been slowly leavening the mass through the life of the individual ; that the result has been a gradual rise in the tone of Christian society ; that this rise, in accordance with the teaching of Christ, was due to the secret and hidden influence of the Spirit, who comes we know not whence, and goes we not whither, and is, therefore, not, as a rule, to be looked for in public, among those in high office, even in the Church, but rather among those who lived lives of retirement, until the often repeated influence of such lives has leavened society as a whole, and has been thus able to mould the characters of those who live in the world, and occupy its high places. I should not be disposed to admit that it was a "notorious fact, that, for certain ages, Christianity was scarcely better than old heathendom." I should be disposed to say, that at its very worst, as Mr. Lecky admits, it was infinitely superior to the heathen world at its very best.

Mr. L. T. Dibdin has raised some objection to the fact that I referred to the late Canon Kingsley as "an earnest and vigorous defender of our religion." I was not referring to *Yeast*, in which perhaps it may be said that he was, to a certain extent, an unbeliever ; but I do feel much indebted to him for my knowledge of Christianity, especially in what he wrote in *Hypatia*, where he shows that it was doing a great deal of good in the world. I ought not to omit a reference to his *Phaethon* and to his Sermons, with their vigorous, manly, Christian tone. As I read my paper this morning before coming down to the Institute, it struck me that that passage in the second paragraph which has been referred to, was capable of misconception, that it almost made it appear as if I thought that the philosophers and sages of Greece had done as much as Moses for the elevation of man. Now I did not mean it in that way. What I meant to say was, that it was as certainly a part of God's education of the world as any other part of His education of the world ; but of course I admit that the phrase "as much" is liable to misinterpretation. The same observation may apply to the passage taken exception to in the third paragraph of the paper. As to the question whether Tiberius was sensual or not, that does not affect the situation in any appreciable degree. Our chairman has anticipated my reply to a great extent, but I may add that two sides can be taken of every character. Some people think that Henry VIII. was a very good man, but that is not an opinion which is generally held by English society. No doubt there were features in the character of Tiberius, his emotional character and the elevated and

noble sentiments he expressed at times, which make it very easy for one to say that Tacitus was very hard upon him ; but the fact is, that that is a matter of pure detail. I can only say that I am very glad I did not live in the reign of the emperor Tiberius. With regard to Tacitus, I would simply remark that many thinkers of eminence have been of opinion that the *Germania* was written to shame Rome. That may not have been the case ; but either way, that, again, is a matter of pure detail. Then, with regard to the empress Theodora, we are threatened with a discussion, the reverse of edifying, as to whether she or Messalina was the worst ; but that is beside the point I wished to bring forward. My point was that Christian society would not allow a Theodora *on the throne*, to indulge in the vices which were not even rebuked in the case of Messalina, which shows that Christianity had become a very powerful moral force in the course of a few centuries, even in the depraved atmosphere of Byzantium. Then I have been accused of making a startling statement, when I said that " whatever was done for conscience' sake, however ill-informed that conscience may be, will, in the end, be productive of good rather than evil." I adhere to my statement. " The blood of martyrs " has ever been " the seed of the Church " ; and even religious persecution, if it has had no other good effect, has never failed—(1) To deepen and purify the faith of the persecuted ; and (2) to attract others to it. Even if the persecuted faith should be in some respects in error, yet it is the truth, and not the error mingled with it, that gives strength to stand the test ; it is the truth, and not the error, which attracts men to it. The next point I come to is, as to whether chivalry was due to the Moors. I am aware that many of the Moors were persons of polished manners and of a character superior even to many of the knights of the West who combated them ; but a careful examination of the history of chivalry and of its connection with the Crusades will, I think, justify my opinion, that the war undertaken under the Crusades, though under a mistaken view of what Christ's service demanded, had the effect of bringing Christianity to bear on the usages of war ; and no one can possibly deny, whatever individual instances of atrocity may be brought against it, that war, as carried on in the nineteenth century, and as carried on centuries ago, are two very different things ; and to what can that difference be attributed, if not to our religion ? Then again, with reference to the same speaker's remark, that chivalry was due to the Moors, I would reply that the institution of chivalry, as known in Christian Europe, was deeply tinged by Christianity ; and I would venture to maintain that Saladin, though courteous, cultivated, and honourable, fell very much below the ideal of manly virtue which the chivalry of Christian nations held up before its votaries. Then I was told that the Franco-German war was due solely to the jealousy and ambition of the sovereigns who engaged in it. Now I think that statement I may venture distinctly to controvert. It was not simply the ambition of a king, on one side or the other, but what I have called the clash of opposing principles, as held by large masses, which led

to that war. I do not believe the Franco-German war would ever have taken place, but for the concealed irritability of the two peoples who met in that deadly conflict. In the Middle Ages one man could throw Europe into a state of war, while now, it is only the antagonism, not of rulers but of peoples, that can bring it about. However this, after all, is a mere matter of opinion, and if anybody likes to strike that passage out of my paper, it leaves the position as it was before. As to the question of workhouses and prisons, there were many organizations for the relief of distress in our monasteries much more than fifty years ago. Then I come to the point about Russia and Turkey, and all I would say is, that while there are sure to be differences of opinion on the subject, I would rather live in Russia than in Turkey, and I would prefer to live in England, to being in either of those countries. There is this to be said for Russia, that with all her faults and all her absolutism, she has emancipated her slaves within our memory, and to what has that been owing except the influence of Christianity, which, even in Russia, is a great controlling power? (Cheers.) As to India, I would only refer to the efforts being made to put a stop to the famine, to show that the most beneficent, the wisest, and the best Government for India, has been that of its Christian rulers. As to the question whether, in commercial morals and good faith, we are worse now than we were before, I do not know that this is the case. We are all prone to exaggerate existing evils, and if you take the *Times* of fifty, sixty, or seventy years ago, you will find plenty of records of commercial dishonesty. I never said that Christianity had eradicated evil from the world, but I do point to the country in which we live, as showing us the best and most glorious development of Christian principles. We cannot help admiring, for instance, the conduct of our working men who are on strike now, when we compare it with what they would have done thirty-four years ago, for it shows what Christianity has done, to make its principles felt among those who a little time ago would have risen in violence and indignation, whenever arrangements were made of which they did not approve.

A visitor (Mr. Leach) states that poor Archbishop Theodore was, somehow or other, instrumental in bringing the Pope into England. He was sent here by the Pope, no doubt, but when here he did not choose to obey the Pope; he simply ignored his interference in the ecclesiastical affairs of this country, as much as the Archbishop of Canterbury would now. It was not until the Norman Conquest that the Papacy was really brought here; but Archbishop Theodore brought the various parts of the country into a kind of ecclesiastico-political union, and so paved the way for one ruler with one sceptre, and for putting an end to the war, strife, and murder to which we had been condemned since the invasion. Now, I come to that unfortunate 13th paragraph in my paper, where it seems I have committed the terrible blunder of using the name of Plato instead of the name of Aristotle! But any one who does not like my argument can substitute the one name for the other to suit himself. Then Mr. Leach asks why Christianity did not

stop the decay, and arrest the break-up of the Roman empire. To that it would be enough to remark, that God both could and did choose to bring about the regeneration of society by other means. But a fuller answer can be given. The Roman empire was doomed, like other empires, to decay, because, like them, *it was founded upon a falsehood*. Its principle was the deification of man as man, with all his imperfections on his head. We learn from the prophecy of Daniel that the "stone made without hands" had long been destined, in the providence of God, to destroy that evil, that idolatrous principle, and to substitute for it the deification of man by personal union with God. The dissolution of the Roman empire, with its *Divus Imperator*, its sacrifices to his *genius*, must first take place, before society, constructed upon its only true basis, could advance to her true perfection. Mr. Leach next inquires, why Christianity, in times past, instead of encouraging science, always opposed it. In the first place, his remark is true of physical science only; for, as was remarked (to me) in the course of the discussion, we owe all our other knowledge to the mediæval clergy, who cultivated it, as far as possible, in their monastic retreats, when the world outside was in too disturbed a condition to pursue it. In the next, we have to remember that one great truth of Christianity was this, "To the poor the Gospel is preached." The old philosophies exalted the intellect; they had no message for the poor and degraded; they had descended, in and after the Apostolic era, to mere displays of disputation and rhetoric. The Gospel came with an emphatic proclamation of the principle, "not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Whether the world has been, on the whole, a loser by the fact, that this foundation has been made secure, before men were permitted to build the temple of knowledge upon it, I will not argue. But I think that the gradual nature of God's dealings with man has been entirely lost sight of by the objectors to my line of argument. He who, so far as modern science would lead us to conclude, formed the visible universe by processes extending over periods of vast duration; who took ages upon ages to prepare this earth for habitation by man; who permitted mankind—assuming the truth of Christianity—to live for thousands of years without its light, can hardly be complained of, if He allowed some centuries to elapse before the influence of Christianity upon the world had reached even its present stage of development. Christianity has done wonders in the past; in the future it has, I believe, still greater triumphs in store. Mr. Leach asks whether our present progress is due to Christianity or civilization. In reply, I would simply point to the fact, that without Christianity, civilization, whether in Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome, Arabia, India, has been the parent of decay. It has secured permanence only when allied to Christianity. This fact decides the question, whether we owe to Christianity or to civilization the blessings we now enjoy.

With regard to the idea of Mr. R. W. Dibdin, that I was, to a certain extent, reflecting the whole influence of Christianity, and heightening the lights and darkening the shadows, I do not think my paper is justly chargeable

with that, because it has simply dealt with facts as they are. My argument was not that Christianity has succeeded in driving away all vice from the world, because I could not live a week or a day without finding something that would conflict with that view ; but what I say is, that vice existed before Christ came, and that Christianity has restrained it, and is restraining it to a great extent, and therefore it is so far clear that Christianity comes from God. Then I have been told that Christianity exercises an influence rather upon individuals than upon the world. If Mr. Dibdin will turn to the 14th and 15th paragraphs of my paper, he will see that I have made that observation myself, but I cannot of course carry it out at length in so short a paper. I must leave my audience to bear something in mind. I have taken it as my starting-point, that if Christianity has produced, as we know it has produced, a marvellous influence upon the lives of individuals, that influence will make itself felt throughout the world, that you or I, so far as we are influenced by the spirit of Christ, exercise a restraining influence upon all around us, and do our best to raise the moral tone of the whole of society. Then as to drunkenness, the same speaker seemed to say that it was not banished from the lower classes, and that is what I said myself ; but I say also, that it is my firm belief, that the efforts now being made by Sir Wilfrid Lawson and others will not be many years without bearing fruit, just as the agitation under the great Wilberforce for putting down slavery bore fruit. Some of us may not live to see it, but I believe that others now in this room will live to see drunkenness banished from all classes, simply and solely through the influence of the Christian religion.

Finally, I would like to make one remark about the letter of Dr. Irons. Dr. Irons seems to think that I have not given enough effect to the doctrines of Christianity as apart from its moral power. Perhaps I have not dealt with that point so clearly as I wished to do, but what I wished to bring forward was that the moral power of Christianity was inseparable from its doctrines. Christianity could have had no moral power whatever if our Lord had only preached the Sermon on the Mount, or only talked wisely and well, and done nothing more. But what I have said in the paper, though I confess that I have not laid sufficient stress upon it, is that Christ gave us the power to carry Christianity into effect : He not only gave us the purest and best morality that the world has ever seen, but the means of carrying it into our lives and our souls ; and that the spring of all virtue and all morality is Christ Himself. When we say that a moral power has been introduced into the world which will compare with any influence brought to bear on us before, we say in effect that we believe that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (Cheers.)

The Meeting was then adjourned.

* * *This discussion is given verbatim, as many popular objections are treated on therein.*