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ARTICLE I.

LECKY'S HISTORY OF EUROPEAN MORALS.

*History of European Morals.* From Augustus to Charlemagne.  
By WM. EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY, M. A. Third Edition,  
revised, in two volumes. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

It may seem rather late in the day to notice this work of Mr. Leckie—a work which has been for years before the public, and has passed through several editions in this country as well as in England. But the fact that new editions are demanded is evidence that the book continues to be read, and if still read, its statements and arguments ought still to be subjected to critical examination.

Certainly it is no light undertaking which Mr. Lecky sets before himself. His history extends over a vast tract of time; and whilst it passes by changes merely political or social, it presents that aspect of the European world, the faithful portraiture of which requires of the historian the exercise of some of the noblest and rarest qualities of intellect and heart. To be satisfactory, such a history must embrace an accurate delineation of the moral facts which gave its own character to each of the successive periods constituting the whole term surveyed; and what involves far greater difficulty—it must explain these facts, bring-

ing to light their real, perhaps recondite, causes, and pointing out their significance.

It is of special importance that the historian of morals be himself possessed of a right theory of morals; thus only can he determine the correctness of the systems he reviews, or properly estimate the moral states of the ages he describes.

Now to some qualifications of a historian of morals Mr. Lecky can certainly prefer a just claim. His intellect is vigorous. His learning is extensive. To his views respecting what may be regarded as the foundation-principles of a moral system, we certainly will offer no dissent. But with all this, we must express the conviction that he has failed to give a satisfactory history of morals from Augustus to Charlemagne, that the tendency of his work is rather to evil than to good, to becloud the mind with error rather than to dissipate its darkness by the rays of truth.

In the natural history of morals Mr. Lecky informs us quite clearly what he regards as the foundation of moral distinctions, and what the faculty by which these distinctions are discerned. Contrary to the views of the great body of recent writers with whose estimate of Christianity he seems most nearly to agree, he holds that moral goodness consists in conformity to duty. Thus he says:

"Just as pleasure and pain are ultimate grounds of action, and no reason can be given why we should seek the former and avoid the latter, except that it is the constitution of our nature that we should do so; so we are conscious that the words right and wrong express ultimate, intelligible motives, that these motives are generically different from the others, that they are of a higher order, and that they carry with them a sense of obligation." (Vol. I., pages 70 and 71.)

Again, he gives, as one of the propositions maintained by the school with which he agrees, that our will is not governed exclusively by the law of pleasure and pain, but also by the law of duty, which we feel to be distinct from the former, and to carry with it the sense of obligation. (*Ib.*, page 99.) Now in these passages he implicitly condemns the Benevolence-theory of Hutcheson and of the New England divines, as well as the selfish system of Hobbes and Paley and the Utilitarianism of Hume and Bentham. Yet he does not directly reject the system of Benevo-

lence; and, indeed, counts its advocates as allies in the great contest with the utilitarians.

Almost as a necessary consequence of his doctrine concerning the distinguishing quality of moral acts, Mr. Lecky holds that the faculty by which moral distinctions are ultimately recognised, is an intuitive and not inductive faculty. On page 99, Vol. I., he gives us the second of the fundamental propositions embraced by his school:

“That the basis of our conception of duty is an intuitive perception; that among the various feelings, tendencies, and impulses that constitute our emotional being, there are some which are essentially good, and ought to be encouraged, and some which are essentially bad, and ought to be repressed.”

It is true, indeed, that in the attempt to reduce all schemes of morals to two generic theories, that of the Utilitarian and that of the Intuitive school, our author has fallen, perhaps unavoidably, into some ambiguities of expression, and into some inaccuracies of statement. For example, that school of moralists from whose views he dissents, he calls the inductive moralists; that school whose tenets he approves he calls intuitive moralists. As belonging to this latter class, he reckons Hutcheson, with Cudworth, and Reid with his followers, of the Scotch school.

But it is only through an ambiguous use of the term *intuitive faculty* that these writers can all be regarded as maintaining that moral distinctions are perceived by such a faculty. Discounting other acceptations of the term, the faculty of intuition sometimes means that power by which we directly perceive objective realities, whether external or internal, whether material or spiritual. In this sense, the faculty embraces the two powers of consciousness and sense-perception. But intuition sometimes designates the faculty through which we discern first or transcendental truths, sometimes called truths of common sense; such, for example, as that there must be a cause for every event, that the whole must be equal to the sum of its parts, etc. The first class are sometimes spoken of as empirical or real intuitions, the second as rational or formal intuitions. Corresponding to these two sorts of intuitions, writers who agree in maintaining that the science

of morals is not a mere science of induction, or indeed a science of mere reasoning of any kind, differ among themselves respecting the character of the intuitions by which its truths are perceived. Some, with Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume, maintain that they are discerned by what these writers call a "moral sense," distinguished from the external senses mainly by the difference of its objects. Others, with Cudworth, Price, and Dr. A. Alexander, hold that, underlying all recognition of moral distinctions, there is an intuition of reason, at once dissimilar from sense-perception and from reasoning or the elaborative faculty. With this latter class Reid ought to be ranked, though he does use and defend the *term* moral sense. Now if we understand him aright, Mr. Lecky not only denies, in opposition to the utilitarian school, that the faculty by which moral distinctions are perceived is simply the faculty of induction, but he also maintains that it is a faculty of rational or formal, as distinguished from empirical or real, intuition.

This view of the nature of moral goodness and of the faculty by which it is recognised, Mr. Lecky defends with real ability. The system of selfishness in all its forms he attacks with a logic of merciless severity. As might be anticipated, few, if any, of his arguments are entirely original; but arguments which have been employed by others he presents in a new light, and with fresh illustrations. He unveils the process through which the purely Selfish theory of Hobbes is transformed into the Utilitarianism of Bentham, and shows how it is enlarged and supported by the aid of Hartléy's doctrine of Association. Moreover, he shows most clearly that in none of its modifications is it free from objections the most fatal and conclusive. These objections must be passed by, as we have not space to exhibit them fully; and a bare enumeration of them would be of little interest. Indeed, to one moderately acquainted with the discussions of the system, such an enumeration would contain nothing new. But two points adverted to in this part of the work we will take time to present. One of these is the argument that utilitarianism in what the author calls its "theological form"—the utilitarianism which teaches with Paley that there is no intrinsic difference between

right and wrong, but that we ought to do good simply from a regard to our own everlasting happiness—that this utilitarianism is really subversive of natural theology. “Without the concurrence of a moral faculty,” he says, “it is wholly impossible to prove from nature that supreme goodness of the Creator which utilitarian theologians assume.” After much that is striking in support of this supposition, he gives in a note the statement of Coleridge: “The one great and binding ground of the belief of God and a hereafter is the law of conscience.” (Vol. I., pp. 54 and 55.) On the next page our author adds these impressive words:

“The lines of our moral nature tend upwards. In it we have the common root of religion and of ethics; for the same consciousness that tells us that, even when it is in fact the weakest element of our constitution, it is by right supreme, commanding, and authoritative, teaches us also that it is divine. All the nobler religions that have governed mankind, have done so by virtue of the affinity of their teaching with this nature, by speaking, as common religious language correctly describes it, to the heart; by speaking, not to self-interest, but to that divine element of self-sacrifice which is intent in every soul.”

In this estimate of what may be called the theological importance of conscience, Mr. Lecky has the concurrence of the soundest Christian writers.

At least as well deserving special note as the foregoing, is the reply given by our author to one of the most specious objections ever urged against the intuitional character of the moral faculty, an objection which may be urged with still greater force against the doctrine that moral goodness or virtue is an indefinable quality. Says the objector:

“If we possess a moral faculty through which we intuitively discern the difference between good and evil, and determine what it is which possesses the one character and what the other, then it follows that there can be no diversity in moral judgments—the act regarded as wrong by one man will be regarded as wrong by every man; and the act approved by one will be approved by all.

“But observation teaches directly the contrary—that there is no such uniformity in the moral decisions of men. We see gladiatorial shows regarded by the Romans of the early Empire as innocent and even praiseworthy, whilst we know them to have been horribly cruel and wicked.

Until very recently Suttee was practised in British India without a suspicion of its iniquity on the part of those who performed it. We know that theft was thought praiseworthy by the ancient Spartans, and incest innocent among the ancient Persians. Where then is this infallible teacher, this inward monitor which tells every man what is right and what is wrong?"

Now to this, the most formidable objection to intuitive morals in every modification of the system, many replies have been offered, nearly all of which possess some value, but nearly all fail of being completely satisfactory. Thus, it has been said, that the moral sentiments of men are often better than their deeds, and that it would be unsafe to suppose a people really to approve all the acts they constantly commit and even loudly defend. This is doubtless true; but there are manifestly wicked acts to the commission of which there appears no motive except the conviction of their goodness.

Why should the Hindoo widow expose herself to all the horrors of a death amid the flames of the Suttee, if she did not think her act righteous? Why should she be encouraged to perform the rite by the best and most loving of her relatives, unless they supposed this sacrifice of herself to be noble and praiseworthy? Again, it has been said by one of the wisest and best of men, that if all the circumstances of a proposed case were presented to a person whose moral faculty was in a sound condition, he would infallibly reach a correct estimate of its character. It may be sufficient to reply, that no man living is in such a moral state as to secure from him a right decision in every case of moral conduct in which his judgment might be solicited, however intimate his knowledge of the circumstances.

Once more. Some maintain that our moral decisions are only erroneous when the true bearing of the acts contemplated is not apprehended; that in every such instance the end proposed is right, and the error consists in a wrong selection of means for its accomplishment. When, for example, the heathen tortures himself with the hope of pleasing God by his sufferings, his readiness to endure bodily agony in order to please God is right. He only errs in supposing that a Being truly divine can be pleased at the self-torture of his creatures. When again, the Chinese kills his

infant daughter, his act results from the just conviction that it is his duty to seek the well-being of his offspring. His error lies in the belief that he has a right to employ murder as the means of effecting that end.

But the objection referred to, though partially removed by these methods, is far more perfectly met by the consideration urged by Mr. Lecky, that the doctrine of moral perceptions does not necessarily imply the existence of some mysterious agent, like the demon of Socrates, which gives specific and infallible information in individual cases. The gift of such information the author denies; but declares that writers of his school "contend that it is a psychological fact, that we are intuitively conscious that our benevolent affections are superior to our malevolent ones, truth to falsehood, justice to injustice, gratitude to ingratitude, chastity to sensuality, and that in all ages and countries, the path of virtue has been towards the higher and not towards the lower feelings." (Vol. I., p. 99.) We are persuaded that every man, accustomed to read his own consciousness, will recognise the truth of these statements. It may be confidently asserted that no human being of sufficient intellect to apprehend the meaning of gratitude, justice, and benevolence, would fail to see and acknowledge their superiority to the opposite dispositions. True, he may be unable to determine whether a certain act has been dictated by benevolence or by selfishness; whether in an individual case, the conduct recommended by benevolence ought to be preferred to the conduct demanded by a strict regard to justice; or whether in some one instance, veracity might not be properly sacrificed to expediency; but never, for one moment, would he hesitate to say that in our conduct we ought to observe the requisitions of gratitude, of benevolence, and of justice, in every case determining their relative claims through the consideration of the special circumstances of that case.

And here, by the way, we find the answer to the objection to the doctrine that moral goodness is an undefinable quality immediately discerned—an objection based upon the unquestionable fact, that moral science admits of progress; that there may be and that there has been an improvement in the moral sentiments

of mankind—an objection urged by Jouffroy with such force and speciousness against the moral system of Price. It is, indeed, hard to escape this objection, if we hold it to be the moral quality of individual actions that we intuitively discern. But if it be the moral character of dispositions which is supposed to be determined intuitively, there is nothing in the doctrine inconsistent with the progress of moral philosophy. As science advances, we become better informed with respect to the ultimate influence on human happiness of a particular course of conduct, and thus perceive that benevolence—regard to the good of others—prohibits acts at one time supposed perfectly consistent with its dictates. Again, as the relations of men and all that these relations involve become more perfectly known, the duties growing out of them are better understood, and justice is seen to require that to which she may at one time have appeared to present no valid claim; and so, when more perfectly acquainted with the feelings of our fellow-men and their conduct towards us, we may see that gratitude is due to some persons who had not been thought to deserve it.

But while the teachings of Mr. Lecky respecting the nature of virtue and the faculty by which moral qualities are discerned may be successfully defended, there are still important questions of morals his decision of which cannot be accepted. One of these is the notion of the moral superiority of a state of celibacy to a state of marriage. Another is the judgment, that certain practices, among them polygamy and gladiatorial shows, though “they may be wrong now, were not so once, and when an ancient countenanced by his example one or another of these, he was not committing a crime.” (Vol. I., p. 110.) The limits proposed for this article do not allow a refutation of these opinions—an omission to which we consent the more readily, as we presume that the views expressed by the author will hardly gain the assent of any of our readers. Indeed, in his advocacy of celibacy the author is well refuted by the principles laid down by himself. (Vol. I., p. 115.)

The following remarkable passage is quoted by Mr. Lecky from “*Anglican Difficulties*,” a work of Cardinal Newman :

“The Church holds that it were better for sun and moon to drop from



heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions upon it to die of starvation, in extremest agony, so far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say, should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one wilful untruth, though it harm no one, or steal one poor farthing without excuse."\*

This passage, with perhaps others of a similar import, suggests a question which we give in the words of our author, "whether the disparity between the different parts of our being is such that no material or intellectual advantage, however great, may be rightly purchased by any sacrifice of our moral nature, however small?" The question thus proposed is argued by Lecky at considerable length, but with no very satisfactory results. The whole discussion, we must say, betrays some confusion of thought—a confusion only partially concealed by ambiguities of expression. The above, the author tells us, is the question which divines express by asking whether the end ever justifies the means; and the negative of this question he appears to think identical with the proposition "that an undoubted sin, even the most trivial, is a thing in its essence and its consequences so unspeakably dreadful, that no conceivable material or intellectual advantage can counterbalance it" (Vol. I., pp. 110–111)—a proposition from which he unequivocally dissents. But this proposition and the negative of the preceding question are very different theses. That which is justified is no longer sinful. If in any case, therefore, the means are justified by the end, these means cease to involve sin even "the most trivial," and there is no "undoubted sin" committed. For that which, but for the end accomplished, would be an immoral act, in view of that end becomes moral. If then the end justifies the means—a proposition, however, which, in the sense of the Romish writers generally, we utterly deny and abhor—if the end justifies the means, then the means as justified are right.

When the author maintains, as he seems to do, that an undoubted sin, continuing to be such, may be counterbalanced by

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\*The above statement is reaffirmed by Newman in his "*Apologia pro Vita Sua*:" (p. 272); and understood as he probably understood it, the proposition admits of defence.

intellectual or material advantage, he may be conceived to intend either of two things: first, that an undoubted sin may be morally good even when it is an undoubted sin, by reason of intellectual or material advantages which flow from it; or he may mean that an undoubted sin may be followed by consequences, intellectual or material, so beneficent as more than to counterbalance any evil consequences, material or intellectual, which it shall produce. Now the first of these notions is a sheer absurdity. Sin and moral goodness are contradictories of each other—the one is a negation of the other. They, therefore, cannot be predicated of the same act any more than white and black can be predicated of the same subject. But if the author means to say that a greater material or intellectual good may, in a given case, come from the doing of an immoral act than from its omission, he utters a proposition that few would be so hardy as to deny, and few would think it worth while to assert. Certainly it is a proposition which no intelligent believer in the Christian Scriptures would hesitate to accept. Nay, if we receive the Scriptures we must believe that the highest moral good has been the consequence of the most immoral acts. The betrayal, the condemnation, the crucifixion of Jesus were necessary conditions of all the holiness existing among fallen men.

The most serious blot, however, upon the work of Mr. Lecky is not found in his decision of any question of moral science, but in the representation he gives of one of the chief agents in the production of the moral changes he describes. That agent is Christianity; and it is Mr. Lecky's estimate of Christianity—of Christianity in itself, in its evidences, and in its influence—against which we feel bound to protest. Not indeed that Mr. Lecky seeks to discard the religion of Christ. On the contrary, this religion seems ever to be before his mind, and its character as compared with other systems of religious belief, and its influence as distinguished from other principles, are matters which he seems to be constantly revolving. Yet Mr. Lecky is evidently no believer in Christianity. Not only does he rigidly abstain from everything which might be regarded as an expression of faith in our religion—in this respect appearing in favorable con-

trast with Hume and Gibbon, who, to the disgust of their readers, so often apply honeyed epithets to the faith they would destroy—but he indicates his disbelief, or at least his scepticism, in words that can scarcely be misunderstood. But though, as will presently be seen, we cannot acquit Mr. Lecky of responsibility for his religious opinions, it is not of his unbelief that we would now complain, so much as the want of fairness which seems to mark his portraiture of Christianity and the moral effect of its teachings.

True, Mr. Lecky tells us in his preface “that he has endeavored to carry into his investigations a judicial impartiality;” and perhaps he may have been guilty of no conscious want of candor in the formation or expression of his opinions; but that he has allowed himself to fall under the influence of prejudices unfavorable to Christianity, and that, whether consciously or unconsciously, these prejudices have gravely colored his representations, can scarcely be doubted by the attentive reader of his book. Mr. Lecky does not, indeed, forget that he is the historian of morals, and not the historian of the Church. He formally compares, then, systems of morals, and not systems of religion. Yet the tendency of his discussion is as plainly to destroy the confidence of his readers in the religion of Christ as in the philosophy of Epicurus; and it is hard to resist the conviction that in much of his reasoning he feels himself to be the champion of the religion of doubt rather than of the philosophy of moral intuitions.

Thus, a charge repeatedly alleged by Mr. Lecky against Christianity is, that it announces the doctrine that “theological error necessarily involves guilt.” (Vol. 1., p. 395.) The reception of this doctrine by Christians he regards as one of the main causes of the persecutions of which they have been guilty. Now necessarily to involve guilt Mr. Lecky would probably acknowledge to be a phrase of about the same significance as the phrase “necessarily sinful,” and if so, he charges Christians with holding that, in the entertainment of any theological error, in any circumstances whatever, the unbeliever or misbeliever is sinful. Now this doctrine, we make bold to say, has never been accepted by the Christian Church, Protestant or Roman Catholic. Chris-

tians do indeed hold that men are responsible for their belief, but they likewise hold that this responsibility is measured by the means within reach of each individual to secure freedom from error and to form a right belief. Men will not be held guilty for the failure to receive any doctrine of revelation, however important, if that doctrine has never been made known to them. There are no truths more important than those of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement; but does any one suppose that an American Indian, living before the discovery of our Continent, would be held guilty on the ground of not believing in a Triune God, in an Incarnate Saviour, or in redemption through his blood? The distinction between avoidable and unavoidable error is one which commends itself to the reason of man, and is recognised by the whole body of Christian people, Romish and Protestant. Thus it is held by Romish theologians, and even by those of the most extreme views. Probably no expositor of the doctrine of their Church is regarded as more authoritative by Romanists than St. Alphonso Liguori, and by no one is this distinction more clearly recognised than by this writer. Thus, in his *Theology*, Lib. I., Tract. 2, Cap. 4, in reply to the question, "*An ignorantia invincibilis excuset?*" He answers, "If invincible, it excuses; because no one sins except by a voluntary act, but this presupposes knowledge. But if vincible and culpable, it does not excuse."\* To the same effect see Lib. I., Tract 1, Ques. 5. Peter Dens, whose *Moral Philosophy* has long been a text-book in the Popish Seminaries of Ireland, when discussing vices opposed to the faith (Sec. 48), describes infidelity as "threefold: purely negative, privative, and positive or contrary. The first infidelity is also called involuntary, the two others voluntary. He asks further, "What is purely negative infidelity?" and replies, "It is the want of faith in him who has heard nothing of the faith nor been able to hear it, or to whom the faith has certainly not been sufficiently proposed." The 49th Section treats of the kinds of

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\**Resp.* "Si sit invincibilis, excusatur; quia nemo peccat nisi actu voluntario; hic autem cognitionem præsупponit. Si autem sit vincibilis et culpabilis, non excusatur; qualis est cum poteras et tenebaris scire aut discere et in mentem veniebat dubitare: nec studuisti intelligere."

infidelity which are sinful and the degrees of guilt to be attached to them. "Privative and positive infidelity are both sin. Purely negative infidelity is not sin. Thus the heathen commit no sin in failing to believe the gospel, as it is not possible that they should believe owing to their ignorance of it."\*

Among the very latest and certainly one of the ablest defenders of Romish doctrine is Cardinal J. H. Newman. This eminent writer extends the benefit of the above distinction even to a class of Protestants. In his work, "*Apologia pro Vita Sua*," 5th edition, p. 369, he says: "And so a baptized Christian external to the Church who is in invincible ignorance is a material heretic and not a formal." With such testimonies from Romish theologians to the non-culpability of invincible error, it may seem almost a work of supererogation to quote Protestant writers to the same effect. One testimony, however, of the latter class we will give. It is from the Moral Science of Dr. A. Alexander, pp. 66 and 67. "On this subject," he says, "our appeal must be to the unbiassed judgment of mankind; and we think the verdict will be that error which *might have been avoided* and *ignorance which is not invincible* do not excuse."

It seems then that the real doctrine of Christian moralists respecting theological error is not that all such error is sinful, but that that theological error which is voluntary, avoidable, vincibile, by whichever name you call it, may be justly regarded as sinful, or, as perhaps Mr. Lecky would prefer to express it, morally wrong. Now is there anything shocking or unreasonable in the doctrine that, in this sense and to this extent, men are responsible for their religious belief? So far from it, it is a doctrine that plainly commends itself to the common sense of our race. Whatever our theories, we are *obliged* really to hold men responsible for opinions the grounds of which it is in their power to examine. We are conscious of the conviction that men are as certainly bound to believe rightly as to act rightly. We are

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\*Not having access to the original work of Dens, I quote from "A Synopsis of the Moral Theology of Peter Dens, as prepared for the use of Romish Seminaries, and translated from the Latin of the Mechlin edition of 1833."

responsible for our actions because they are the expression of our characters—of the state and temper of our hearts. We are responsible for our opinions because they too are the expression of character, and are determined by our dispositions. A man's acts are not the *perfect* expression of his character; for they are greatly modified by his circumstances, especially by his ability or the contrary to carry out his inclinations into practice. So, a man's opinions do not perfectly reflect the dispositions of his heart, because they are modified according to the native strength of his intellect and to the degree of evidence that may lie within his reach. But so far, and only so far, as they are alike the result of the state of our hearts, are we responsible for our actions and for our beliefs.

And of all this we hold that every thinking man has an intimate conviction, though this conviction may never have been the object of distinct consciousness. And so, we often see the very men who at one time condemn this doctrine of responsibility for belief, not only as false, but as the source of dire evil, at another, affirming this same doctrine and establishing its truth. Of all this we find an illustration in Mr. Lecky. The tenet that theological error necessarily involves guilt is one of the two dogmas, to the combined influence of which he traces "almost all the sufferings that Christian persecutors have caused, almost all the obstructions they have thrown in the path of human progress." (Vol. I., p. 195.) And these obstructions he deems extremely great, and these sufferings extremely severe. Still this very Mr. Lecky asserts the responsibility of man for his opinions, and even specifies "two cases in which an intellectual error may be justly said to involve, or at least to represent, guilt. In the first place, error very frequently springs from the partial or complete absence of that mental disposition which is implied in the love of truth. In the next place, it must be observed that every moral disposition brings with it an intellectual bias which exercises a great and often a controlling and decisive influence even upon the most earnest inquirer. If we know the character or disposition of a man, we can usually predict with tolerable accuracy many of his opinions." (Vol. II., pp. 191-2.) Very

true throughout, and containing very satisfactory proof—though by no means all the proof at hand—that intellectual error may be sinful. But if intellectual error of any kind may involve guilt, why not that species denominated theological error? Why should error respecting the science of Theology be less sinful than error respecting the science of Sociology, the science of Anthropology, or any other branch of human knowledge? Theology is the science of God—in its wide sense, the science of the nature of God, of his relations to his creatures, and of the duties of his intelligent creatures consequent upon these relations. Surely one might be tempted to suppose this, of all others, the very science which it would be incumbent upon man to explore, and in which avoidable error would be of all error the most criminal and the most fatal. If such knowledge be attainable, ought we not most earnestly to seek the knowledge of that Being who alone possesses infinite excellence, to whom our obligations are the most varied and weighty, and to whom, as a necessary consequence of our relations, our supreme duty is owed? If avoidable error of any kind be criminal, must not theological error be criminal? We should think so, and thus, strange to say, thinks Mr. Lecky. Two dogmas he notices the very thought of which appears to fill him with intensest indignation, and which draw from him the severest denunciations.

These dogmas he regards as atrocious, for he declares “that in the form in which they have been often stated, they surpass in atrocity any tenets that have ever been admitted into any pagan creed.” “Such teaching,” as his representation of these doctrines, he avers, “is in fact simply dæmonism, and dæmonism in its most extreme form.” (Vol. I., p. 96–7.) Whence, in the opinion of Mr. Lecky, do such judgments proceed? Why, they come, not from a weak head, but from an evil heart. Thus, he says, the materials from which the intellect builds are often derived from the heart, and a moral disease is, therefore, not unfrequently at the root of an erroneous judgment. (Vol. II., p. 193.) It is not, then, the belief that intellectual error may involve moral guilt that the author regards as so blameworthy, for this is his own doctrine; nor, as we have just seen, is it even the tenet that

*theological* error may be of this character, that he would denounce; for in such a statement again he would condemn himself. Wherein then lies the difference between his own views on this subject, and that doctrine of the Church which he looks upon as so false and injurious? He and *Christian* writers alike admit that the theological error which can be referred to mental weakness or want of light, is guiltless. He and these alike maintain that the theological error which springs from an unsound state of the heart, is guilty. Where then, we repeat, is the point of divergence between their opinions concerning this question of responsibility? Why, just here: Mr. Lecky appears to think it inconceivable that any moral disease could produce in man the disposition to receive the notions on religious questions entertained by himself and his school, yet thinks that the supposed errors of Christians can be readily traced to such a source. The inclinations from which wrong belief proceeds, he tells us, are such as these: the love of ease, the love of certainty, the love of system, the bias of the passions, the asseverations of the imagination, as well as the coarser influences of social position, domestic happiness, professional interest, party feeling, or ambition. In most men, the love of truth," he proceeds to say, "is so languid, and the reluctance to encounter mental suffering is so great, that they yield their judgments, without an effort, to the current, withdraw their minds from all opinions and arguments opposed to their own, and thus speedily convince themselves of the truth of what they wish to believe." (Vol. II., p. 192.) No doubt the principles named above possess real potency; no doubt their influence has sometimes prevented men from entering upon a careful and candid investigation of the grounds of their belief, and led them to smother doubts which at the moment they could not summon the evidence to dissipate. Possibly all this may, in some cases, have prevented merely speculative believers in Christianity from throwing away their dead faith and passing over to the camp of the infidel. This mode of retaining one's hold on Christianity we do not defend, nor do we believe that the universal adoption of such a method of dealing with doubt would be favorable to Christianity. Christianity—the pure Christianity of the Scrip-



tures—is not wholly or chiefly on the defensive; she is not merely guarding her own entrenchments, but with firm tread and banner displayed, she is advancing into the territory of the enemy. Her weapon is the truth; and to be effective that weapon must find its way through the intellect to the heart of man. Just so far as the bias of passion, love of ease, or any other of the forces enumerated by the author, hinders this penetration of truth into the soul, it impedes the progress of Christianity and delays her triumph. But may not men nurtured in the bosom of the Christian Church and early instructed in the doctrines of the Christian creed, be brought by the power of principles, at least as discreditable as those above enumerated, to renounce the faith of their fathers? May not intellectual vanity, the desire to appear a bold and original thinker, or intellectual pride, the desire to *be* such a thinker, have their influence? Nay, is it not possible that a darker feeling than either of the foregoing, lurking low down in the depths of the heart, perhaps even beneath the region of distinct consciousness, a feeling of enmity to the religion of the Bible and to the God of the Bible, may be “the moral disease which lies at the root” of this unbelief? In the language of another, may they not be “against religion because religion is against them”? May they not say in their hearts, “I cannot believe the God of the Bible is the true God, for I cannot accept him as my God.” Now, upon the theory of the Christian, if you choose to call it theory, the theory that the God of the Bible is the true God, all-perfect, ever blessed and glorious, our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, must it not be sinful to reject the revelation given by this God because our hearts and our lives are opposed to his law and his character? Must it not be moral disease of a hideous kind which lies at the root of *this* unbelief?

Closely connected with the charge that Christianity regards theological error as sinful, is the further imputation, that “in Christian times the theological notion (has prevailed) that the spirit of belief is a virtue and the spirit of scepticism a sin.” (Vol. I., p. 366.) Again, in Vol. II., p. 194, the author says: “Exactly in proportion, therefore, as men are educated in the inductive system, they are alienated from those theological systems

which represent a condition of doubt as sinful, seek to govern the reason by the interests and the affections, and make it a main object to destroy the impartiality of the judgment." (See also Vol. II., p. 189.) It is rather hard to say whether Mr. Lecky brings this charge of impeding the progress of knowledge by the inculcation of a spirit of credulity against the Christianity of all ages and of every shade of doctrine, or against Romish and Mediæval Christianity only. If the latter, we do not feel specially called on to controvert the accusation. We believe, indeed, that within those limitations there is some ground for it, and moreover, that the enmity betrayed by the Romish hierarchy, alike to scientific and to theological investigation, tended powerfully to excite that revolt against its authority which assumed the name of Protestantism. Still, even in Mediæval times and among devoted sons of the Church, individuals were not deficient in the spirit of cautious inquiry even as to the claims of Christianity itself. Thus the old monkish historian, William of Malmesbury, speaking of Edwin, King of the Northumbrians, says: "He was inferior to none in prudence: for he would not embrace even the Christian faith till he had examined it most carefully; but when once adopted, he esteemed nothing worthy to be compared with it." (Eng. Chronicle, p. 46, Bohn's ed.)

If, however, Mr. Lecky means to say that the Bible or those who receive the Bible as their sole rule of faith, inculcate a spirit of blind credulity, discourage investigation, and have thus impeded the progress of true science, we utterly deny the charge in all its parts. Not a verse of Scripture can be adduced which, properly interpreted, would be seen either to discourage the use of reason in the formation of our beliefs, scientific or theological, or to favor the reception of a faith at the bidding of blind credulity. On the contrary, we find the writer of the book of Acts commending the Bereans "as more noble than those of Thessalonica" because they searched the Scriptures daily to see whether the teaching of an apostle was true; and so the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, exhorts them to "prove," that is to test, "all things, and to hold fast that which is good." (Thess. v. 21.)

Protestant divines of the highest character are found constantly to encourage men to look well to the grounds of their faith. They maintain that we must not accept our religious opinions on trust, but that we are bound to subject even those long entertained and received from parents or most trusted friends, to searching examination. Thus, Dr. A. Alexander declares that "No doctrine can be a proper object of our faith which it is not more reasonable to receive than to reject. If a book claiming to be a divine revelation is found to contain doctrines which can in no way be reconciled to right reason, it is a sure evidence that those claims have no solid foundation and ought to be rejected." (Ev. of Chris., Chap. I. See *ib.*, Chapter III.)

The same excellent writer says in his *Moral Science* (Chap. IX., p. 67): "Suppose a man to have been educated in a wrong system of religion and morals: he is responsible, because when arrived at the years of maturity he should have brought the opinions received by education under an honest examination. The more difficult it is to divest ourselves of prejudices thus imbibed, as it were with the mother's milk, the more necessary it is that, under the influence of a sincere love of truth, we should with impartiality, diligence, and resolution, endeavor to do so. The prevalence of error in the world is very much owing to the neglect of this duty. This neglect arises from culpable indolence, from a desire to remain in agreement with the multitude or with our parents and teachers, from aversion to the truth, and an unwillingness to deny ourselves and incur the inconvenience and persecution which an avowal of the truth would bring upon us. But none of these reasons will justify us in adhering to opinions which are detrimental to ourselves and others or contrary to our moral obligations." So the illustrious Butler (*Analogy*, Part II., Chap. VII.), after advising his readers to write down all the facts and arguments within their reach, favoring the truth of Christianity, adds these words: "Nor should I dissuade any one from setting down what he thought made for the contrary side."

In perfect agreement with the views of the eminent divine just quoted, we may safely declare are the recorded opinions of the great body of Protestant writers. It is the doctrine of these

writers generally that God has given to man reason to enable him to discern the truth ; that a necessary condition of the exercise of reason in the cognition of truth is the presence of evidence, even as an indispensable condition of bodily vision is the presence of light ; that the man who believes without adequate evidence and the man who disbelieves in despite of adequate evidence, are alike unreasonable. These statements, indeed, we suppose will be denied by few thoughtful persons, Romish or Protestant. And certainly we may draw from them the important corollary, that the Christian has no special interest in claiming for credulity a place among the virtues. If the evidence of the truth of Christianity is adequate, and the contrary must not be assumed gratuitously, it is the unbeliever who is the credulous man. A very moderate acquaintance with the principles of logic will make this evident enough. For by these principles credulity and incredulity are obviously but phases of the same intellectual vice. By the laws of logical opposition the disbelief of a proposition is tantamount to the belief of its contradictory ; then if of two contradictories the more probable be denied, the less probable is affirmed, and the man who incredulously rejects that which is proven, credulously accepts that which is not proven. In the words of Archbishop Whately, "To deny or to disbelieve a proposition is to assent to or to believe its contradictory, and of course to assent to or maintain a proposition is to reject its contradictory. Belief, therefore, and disbelief are not two different states of the mind, but the same, only considered in reference to two contradictory propositions. And consequently credulity and incredulity are not opposite habits, but the same, in reference to some class of propositions and to their contradictories." (*Logic*, Book II., Chap. II., Sec. 3.) The Archbishop adds in a note, "And there may even be cases in which doubt itself may amount to the most extravagant credulity. For instance, if any one should doubt whether there is any such country as Egypt, he would be in fact believing this most incredible proposition : that it is possible for many thousands of persons unconnected with each other, to have agreed for successive ages in bearing witness to the existence of a fictitious country without being detected,

contradicted, or suspected." All this commends itself to the common sense of mankind. And in the light of the principle involved we can at once explain a fact often regarded as the result of some mysterious law of human nature—the fact that the most pronounced unbelievers are not unfrequently among the most credulous of men. One illustration our author himself gives us. "It was the belief of the Romans," he tells us, "that the stroke of lightning was an augury and its menace was directed especially against the great. Augustus used to guard himself against thunder by wearing the skin of a sea-calf. Tiberius, *who professed to be a complete free-thinker*, had greater faith in laurel leaves." (Vol. I., p. 367.) Indeed, it is very hard to determine whether the famous Augustan age was most remarkable for superstition or scepticism.

And on reflection we shall find that we call the same mental act an act of credulity or incredulity, as we have regard to the evidence in view of which a judgment is accepted or to the evidence in opposition to which its contradictory is rejected. Some hundred years ago Lord Orford (Horace Walpole) published his "Historic Doubts concerning Richard III." The purpose of the treatise, as we remember it, is to show that the popular notions concerning Richard are highly erroneous—that he was not only a prince of great courage and capacity, but also a man of fair moral character, fully equal in this regard to the average of English sovereigns. Walpole supports his view with very specious and ingenious arguments—arguments which might lead a weak and incautious reader to the adoption of his conclusions. A man is incredulous in the refusal to acknowledge the sufficiency of proof which nine-tenths of the sane men in the world declare abundantly sufficient: He is credulous in yielding conviction to evidence which by an equal portion of our race would be regarded as wholly unsatisfactory. Is it not a possible thing that the man who rejects the claims of Christianity may be thus equally obnoxious to the charge of credulity and incredulity?

But suppose this credulous unbeliever as to the crimes of Richard, when referred to certain alleged facts in proof of the monstrous wickedness of the king, proof which had been declared

by men of the keenest intellect and most thorough acquaintance with English history to be perfectly irrefragable, coolly to reply that facts of this kind ought to be regarded "as more properly a subject of derision than of argument"; that recorded as they were in the reign of princes of the House of Tudor and by friends of that dynasty, "this very circumstance would be full of proof of a cheat, and sufficient, with all men of sense, not only to make them reject the fact, but even reject it without further examination." (See Hume's *Essay on Miracles*.) Now what would be thought of the mental fairness of such a reasoner, and what the value of his judgment respecting the character of Richard? Would not every one regard the temper thus exhibited as affording the most satisfactory explanation of the credulity or incredulity, call it which you will, of the historical critic? Yet a striking parallel to all this may be found in the treatment given to the argument from miracles by that prince of sceptics, David Hume, some of whose words, though with a new application, will be recognised by many of our readers in the above extracts. This argument from miracles, most effective as it has been counted by very many of the ablest and best men whose lives illustrate a long course of ages, is based upon facts which Mr. Hume thinks should be rejected, and rejected without examination. In all which our author seems to agree with Mr. Hume. In the course of a discussion of what he himself styles "the broad question of the evidence of the miraculous," he describes the "common attitude of ordinary educated people" on this subject, and describes it as "an attitude not of doubt, of hesitation, of discontent with the existing evidence, but rather of absolute, derisive, and even unexamining incredulity." Now we do not say that Mr. Lecky explicitly asserts that the miracles of Scripture are among the reported wonders which are regarded with this derisive incredulity, nor do we say that he declares in so many words his participation in the incredulity described. Still, we are persuaded that few can read what he has written on this topic without the conviction Mr. Lecky means to include himself among the incredulous, and these miracles as among the proper objects of such incredulity.

This incredulity which shuts up the mind against all evidence, which declares that evidence regarded as amply sufficient by Bacon, by Newton, by Butler, and by very many of the best and ablest men of our generation, to be the proper subject of derision rather than of argument—this incredulity seems to our author, as to Hume, very philosophical when applied to a belief in miracles. But should some doctrine of the new philosophy become its object, would it not at once be transformed into the grossest credulity? Suppose, for example, the Darwinian doctrine of development to be proposed for the first time to a community of Christian people; suppose the scientist advocating the theory not only to repeat the argument so often given to the world by Mr. Darwin and his friends, but in addition, to offer evidence such as they have never pretended to possess; for example, the evidence afforded by a succession of fossil remains of beings in every stage of development, from the mollusk to the man—fossils which the lecturer professed often to have seen and examined; suppose the statements of this scientist corroborated by men of known intelligence and veracity, who should declare that though they had never seen the fossils, they had satisfactory evidence of their existence. But the persons addressed listen to all this with the most stolid incredulity, utterly refusing even to inquire into the evidence proposed, while they justify their contemptuous indifference by declaring that neither they nor their fathers had ever seen such fossils as those described, but that they had seen lying lecturers, that the theory bore absurdity on its very face; for that man is too unlike a monkey, not to say a mollusk, ever to have descended from him, and that, finally, the notion advocated is contrary to Scripture, and therefore must be false. Now it may be safely asserted that an incredulity of this type would be regarded by the whole tribe of scientists as but another form of the grossest conceivable credulity. But let us compare it with the credulity of those who regard the Christian miracles as “proper subjects of derision rather than of argument.” For convenience sake, let us take but one of these miracles, and it shall be that one, the evidence of which is most patent to all, and in determining the character of which the learned and the comparatively unlearned,

the believer and unbeliever, possess most nearly the same advantages. Let the *phenomena* presented in the past history and present condition of the Jewish people be accepted as the matter of this miracle. Now we say that only a monstrous credulity could receive the acknowledged facts of this case as the result of merely natural causes, and regard the hypothesis that they have been brought about by an extraordinary exercise of divine power as the proper "subject of derision rather than of argument." He must be a very ignorant man who does not know thus much about the Jews, that for nearly two thousand years they have lived without a country, without a polity, without a head; that during this period they have been scattered throughout all nations, yet have never been swallowed up and never lost their distinctive character; that during all this period they have been everywhere the objects of scorn and contempt; a by-word and a hissing, and during a great part of it have been the objects of fierce hate and of ruthless persecution; and yet, that so far from being wasted away or destroyed, they have, unlike the burning bush on Sinai, put forth fresh leaves and branches in the midst of the flames; that thus, this day they are more numerous, more wealthy, and more powerful than in that fatal time when they first placed themselves in battle array against the armies of Vespasian. Now we conceive that Mr. Lecky might find it rather hard to account for all this and for much more that concerns this strange people, except on the hypothesis that the God in whom it seems Mr. Lecky believes has exercised over them a special oversight. He must be, indeed, a very credulous man, if he believes that the history and present state of the Jews can be accounted for by a simple reference of such causes as seem ordinarily to determine the events which make up the life of a nation. But suppose him successful in swallowing all such improbabilities, even then the trials of his credulity have only begun. On any theory that Mr. Lecky would be willing to accept, the anomalies presented in the state and history of the Jews are, indeed, inexplicable in themselves, but the difficulty of their solution is increased tenfold by their relation to another kind of facts. This class of facts belongs to the miracles of prophecy. Very rightly does David



Hume say, towards the close of, his celebrated "Essay on Miracles," "Indeed, all prophecies are real miracles, and as such only can be admitted as proofs of any revelation." Now we feel quite confident that Mr. Lecky, if questioned, would himself admit that very much more is predicted in our Scriptures concerning the Jews than what we have stated above; that these predictions were made previously to the days of Titus and of Adrian, when the Jews were dwelling at peace in their own land. Nay, he would probably admit that some of them were uttered more than a thousand years before the first stone was hurled by the catapults of Titus against the walls of the Holy City. And is Mr. Lecky credulous enough to believe that these wonderful facts—facts in themselves almost as wonderful as any miracles of Scripture, and many of them before their occurrence seemingly inconsistent with each other as well as separately improbable—can he believe that these facts were foreseen and predicted by any wisdom less than divine? Surely it is the infidel rather than the Christian who ought to assign to credulity a high place among the virtues.

In one respect the belief of Mr. Lecky bears favorable comparison with that of Hume. If we understand him, Mr. Lecky believes in a God. Hume seems to have had no such faith. Indeed, speculatively he believed in nothing but in the consciousness of the passing moment. Hume, therefore, did not accept the possibility of the miracles, for he did not acknowledge the existence of an Author of nature who by a mere change in the mode of his operations could effect what we call a miracle. Mr. Lecky believes in a God, and, accepting the logical consequence, declares that miracles are not impossible. Believing, then, that miracles are possible, with such evidence as that to which we have just referred, existing much of it, as it were, before his eyes, he believes that no miracle of prophecy has ever occurred. Now we cannot help thinking the infidelity of Hume somewhat less unreasonable, though somewhat more criminal, than the infidelity of Lecky. Admit the existence of a God of infinite perfection, and you have relieved revelation of its chief difficulties, both as to evidence and to matter. Then you have admitted the existence

of a cause most adequate to produce miracles; and the occurrence of miracles is a question to be determined, as other facts, by the evidence to be adduced in each supposed case. Admit the existence of a supreme God, and you admit that the existence of the phenomena presented in the condition and history of the world is reconcilable with the assumption that the God ruling the world is infinite in every perfection; and thus you are obliged to admit the utter futility of objections brought against revelation from its recognition of certain principles of the divine administration which alike appear in nature. This last statement, as our readers know, is the foundation of the argument of Butler's immortal work. An incident narrated of his father by John Stuart Mill we regard as eminently illustrative at once of the logical consistency of the elder Mill and of the irresistible cogency of the argument of Butler. It seems that early in life James Mill was a Presbyterian and orthodox. But on the ground that some of the doctrines of Scripture were irreconcilable with his notions of God's character, he became a Deist. After this change, he read Butler's *Analogy*, and was at once convinced that the objections to our religion on which he had relied, were as potent against Deism as against Christianity. The result was that he became an Atheist, and as an Atheist lived and died. Certainly in this last change he was logically consistent; and yet who can be an Atheist without doing utmost violence to the very laws of his nature? Certainly one might say with Bacon, "I would rather believe all the fables of the Talmud and Alkoran than that this universal frame of nature exists without a Creator."

We have already transcended the limits proposed for this paper without touching on many topics suggested by Mr. Lecky, and on which we wished to say something. Eminent among these is his general treatment of Christian evidence in its several departments. Thus much we are willing to admit in conclusion, that while the evidence of Christianity, internal and external, ought to be convincing to every rational mind, it is still possible for men really to doubt and even really to disbelieve. If there exist that "moral disease" of which we have spoken; if through its power men desire to find that the Scriptures are false; if they

occupy their minds with the difficulties rather than the evidences of revelation; if they cavil against God's word and government, and seek to bring their fellow-men to hate them both, they may be given up to "strong delusion to believe a lie." Thus is the Bible a test of our moral condition as well as a medium of the mind. So Grotius, as quoted by Butler, says: "Ut ita sermo evangelii tanquam lapis esset Lydius ad quem ingenia sanabilia explorarentur."\*

There is a sense, indeed, in which those words of Hume, intended to convey a sneer, suggest a mournful truth. "Our most holy religion," he says, "is founded on faith, not on reason." Not, as we have already seen, that our religion does not commend itself to the highest reason—to reason unclouded by sin. But as the vision of the diseased eye may fail to see what ought to be most apparent, so the reason of the sin-sick soul may fail to discern that truth of Christianity which the veriest child, if enlightened by God's Spirit, would recognise.

J. M. P. ATKINSON.

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\*This term "Lydius lapis" had been applied to the Gospel by Calvin in his Commentary on Acts, Chap. xvii. 11.