

lic men, as magistrates or ambassadors, often have in their hands large sums of public money, the obligation of their oath suffices by itself to keep them in the path of right. In other nations you seldom find official purity; among the Romans you as seldom find official corruption.'

Roman religion, like that of Hellas, succumbed, and to forces similar in the main, though the philosophic and scientific scepticism was not native, but an importation from Hellas. Practical good sense probably played a more important part in the overthrow of superstition at Rome than in Hellas, and strategy would soon find it necessary to set the auguries at defiance. Contact with a great variety of religions, the toleration of which was prescribed by policy, must have bred a cynical indifference in the administrators and soldiers of the empire, as contact with the religion of the East undermined the Christian orthodoxy of the Templars. The result, at all events, was general scepticism, or indifference, and the decay of the reverence for the gods, in which Polybius saw the main-stay of Roman virtue. At the same time a tremendous strain was laid on public morality by the circumstances of the empire. There ensued a cataclysm of selfish ambition, profligate corruption, and murderous faction, which left to society only the choice between chaos and a military despotism. In the case of Hellas, also, the fall of liberty follows closely on the decay of religion. We must be careful, of course, in assigning the causes of the deterioration of public character, in Hellas as well as in republican Rome, to allow a due share to the pressure of external circumstances, such as the fatal rivalries of the republics and the growth of the Macedonian power. But upon the decline of Catholicism a similar lapse of Europe from the imperfect liberty of the feudal era into general despotism ensues; and after the second great collapse of religion in France comes the empire of the Bonapartes, an avowed reproduction of that of the Cæsars. Be the significance of the fact what it may, a fact it seems to be that hitherto only men with a religious belief, and a sanction for morality which they believe to be divine have been able to live under a government of law; and if any one doubts that there has been a certain thread of connection between the eclipse of faith and

the need of a government of force to keep men from mutual destruction and rapine, let him turn once more to the Leviathan of Hobbes. A political religion, to be sure, Hobbes has, but it is political indeed.

The last effort to reform the Roman republic and save what, with all its maladies and evils, was at least a government of law, was made by religious men; for Cato and Cicero were believers, not in the auguries, but in a supreme power of right, while Cæsar and his party were followers of Epicurus. When morality rallied, it was on a religious basis, at Rome not less than in Hellas, as any one who is acquainted with Roman Stoicism must know. Not only are the writings of Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, and Epictetus theistic; they are in some respects thoroughly pietist. It is not surprising that this philosophy and the law, improved in humanity, which Stoic jurists moulded should have been claimed as the offspring of Christianity. Christian ideas, especially the Christian idea of human brotherhood, were no doubt in the air.

Proof will not be required of the fundamentally religious character of life and society in the Middle Ages. Witnesses enough present themselves in the works of that religious art which has almost carried captive to the faith whereto it once ministered the reason of a later and more enlightened time. The creed of the Middle Ages, it is true, was once derived from a preceding civilization. It was the creed of the later Roman Empire, which, however, it had failed to transform, mainly through the repellent influence of slavery; Christian brotherhood, and purity, at the same time, remaining unattainable so long as one portion of mankind was given up to the tyranny and the lust of the other portion. Still it was evidently from the gospel transmitted through the Christian clergy that the new nations drew the ideas of a universal Father, a brotherhood of mankind, of humanity itself; that they learned to believe in a society embracing all races, a common effort and a common hope, international relations modified by those beliefs, the indefeasible sanctity of human life, mercy, humility, charity, the spiritual equality of the sexes, purity, the value of virtues other than military, the spiritual worth and dignity of the weak things of this world. There are those who call medieval Christendom and Christendom al-