

Christians to death. According to St. Augustine, they assembled by thousands and destroyed themselves by leaping from overhanging cliffs upon the rocks below, believing that was a kind of martyrdom which would render certain the salvation of their souls. Notwithstanding the condemnation by the Fathers of the pagan view, that there were circumstances justifying suicide, the Church did not hesitate to canonize women who committed suicide to protect their virtue.

The condition of slaves under the Christian system remained essentially the same for two hundred years. The abolition of the punishment of crucifixion and the law forbidding the separation of families of slaves were beneficent measures. There were others, however, of a different character. For instance, if a slave and his mistress had improper relations, the woman was executed and the slave burnt alive. Under paganism the woman was simply reduced to slavery. Another bad law was that of Gratian, which was to the effect that any slave who accused his master of any offence, high treason alone excepted, should be burnt alive, without any inquiry into the justice of the charge. Slavery was formally and distinctly recognized by Christianity, and it encouraged docility and passive obedience on the part of the slave. None of the Fathers condemned it as the Essenes did in the first century. It is true that the Church, by creating a new relation for the slave, by allowing him to participate in the religious service, and by giving prominence to the servile virtues which were encouraged by monastic life, did something to mitigate the hardships of slave life, yet the system continued under Christianity eight hundred years from the time of Constantine, and the number subject to it, historians have declared, was greater in the Empire under Christianity than under paganism. Shall we be told that a religion under which slavery flourished for nearly a thousand years led to the abolition of the institution?

During the reign of Christianity, no doubt, admirable institutions for the poor were founded, and monkish corporations were formed and devoted to deeds of love.

To a great extent this was due to the same pure benevolence which had its source in the human soul wherever civilized man is found, and which had prompted to similar efforts on a less extensive scale, perhaps, in Egypt, India, Judea, Greece and pagan Rome. The credit of founding lunatic asylums, so often claimed for Christianity, belongs to the Mohammedans of the seventh century. No lunatic asylum existed in Christendom until the fifteenth century, and then in places in close proximity to the Mohammedans.

Just as the gratuitous distribution of corn was among the prominent causes of idleness and corruption in pagan Rome, so the charity of the Church, by multiplying beggars and promoting indolence, had an exceedingly injurious influence in the Christian Empire. Consider the thousands without means withdrawn from the fields of productive labor, the multitudes of saints wandering about the country begging money to