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## THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON CIVILIZATION.

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### I.

THE advocates of Christianity commonly represent, and the masses under the sway of their teachings sincerely believe, that to the influence of their system is justly ascribable the civilization of the nineteenth century. But for the enlightenment which has come from this faith, they tell us, we would to-day be in a state of darkness and degradation, but little, if any, superior to that of the savages whose condition we so much pity and deplore. Let the light of this religion be extinguished, and, we are assured, nothing but another intervention of God could prevent the relapse of the civilized nations of the world into a state of barbarism. Only where Christianity has shed its benign influence, it is said, have nations attained to real greatness, or individuals been able to discover the true principles of moral duty. A contrast between the nations of the world in which the blessings of this faith are enjoyed, and those to which Christianity has never extended, or in which it has been replaced by some other religion, should, we are told, satisfy any candid mind, of its elevating and enlightening power. And, still further say its defenders, in view of the manifold evidences which attest its beneficent tendency, opposition to it, or denial of its divine character, can proceed only from a perverted mind or a depraved heart. These are common representations. If the most able and distinguished advocates of Christianity do not set them forth in the manner in which I have stated them; if some of them qualify their claims so as to somewhat weaken their force, and give the opponents of their faith less cause to question their fairness, they yet generally allow these popular assumptions to remain uncontradicted—fearing, perhaps, that by destroying belief in them they might weaken confidence in the system itself, so intimately are they associated in the popular mind; while the majority of the Christian clergymen who speak directly to the people, and of Christian writers who fill up the orthodox papers, and whose writings constitute the cheap and popular religious literature of the land, take essentially the position I have stated, and in language not much unlike that which I have used. So familiar are the people with these representations, so frequently are they repeated by men respected for their supposed learning and candor, that to raise a question concern-