

a life unquestionably involved a sacrifice of many of the advantages of culture and was certainly unfavorable to the breadth and catholicity of thought, it drew the devotees more closely together, developed feelings of friendship and fraternity, and naturally made them watchful and careful of their conduct, lest an unguarded word or a thoughtless act should furnish the pagans with weapons against their faith. In the purity of the early Christians—although, as Mosheim frankly admits, it has been greatly exaggerated—there is nothing remarkable. And they who judge Christianity simply from the moral purity of the men who first embraced it use an argument by which many a false and injurious system could be made to appear of beneficent tendency quite as plausibly as the Christian system. If we would judge inductively the worth of any system we must wait until it has been tested by being brought in contact with the corruptions and temptations of social life; for its true value consists in its power to instruct men in the right and to furnish motives to impel men to the love of truth and the practice of virtue.

As we have examined the condition of Rome under paganism, when paganism had, for hundreds of years, been the established faith, and when there had, consequently, been time for the development of all its powers and tendencies, it is but fair to glance at the Empire when it was under Christianity, when all other religions were obliged to succumb to its irresistible march, when for more than ten centuries every opportunity existed for it to demonstrate its power to elevate the mind of man.

As we have seen, the gladiatorial games were the worst features of the old pagan society. Religious liberty was one of the very best. As Mr. Lecky has remarked, it was the nobler part which in the Christian Empire was first destroyed. Theodosius the Great, who suppressed all diversity of worship throughout the Empire, and who was very much under the influence of the clergy, compelled his barbarian prisoners to fight as gladiators. These disgraceful exhibitions were kept up fully a century after the establishment of Christianity. Combats of men with wild beasts were continued till the end of the seventh century. Only when these amusements had become almost obsolete through the difficulty of obtaining wild animals, were they formally condemned by an ecclesiastical council. That the denunciation of the gladiatorial exhibitions by the Fathers assisted in creating a sentiment against them is not to be denied, however.

The practice of the sale of children, which was condemned and prohibited under the pagan Diocletian, although censured by the Fathers, was encouraged and authorized under Constantine and continued long after the time of Theodosius, "nor does any Christian emperor appear to have enforced the humane enactment of Diocletian."

From the first, Christian writers condemned suicide, yet thousands were encouraged to undermine their constitutions and to shorten their lives by strange austerities, and we read that in the fourth century they challenged and insulted assemblies of pagans to provoke them to put

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