

THE TRUTH OF THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL

Study 20: The Witness of the Works of the Living Christ

SECOND DAY: THE BIRTH OF PHILANTHROPY

1. "The great characteristic of Christianity and the proof of its divinity is that it has been the main source of the moral development of Europe" (Lecky). "There can be little doubt that for nearly two hundred years after its establishment in Europe, the Christian community exhibited a moral purity which, if it has been equalled has never for any long period been surpassed (Lecky, "European Morals," II. 11).
2. "There can be no question that neither in practice nor in theory, neither in the institutions that were founded nor in the place that was assigned to it in the scale of duties, did charity in antiquity occupy a position at all comparable to that which it has obtained by Christianity. . . . Besides its general influence in stimulating the affections, it effected a complete revolution in this sphere, by regarding the poor as the special representatives of the Christian Founder, and thus making the love of Christ, rather than the love of man, the principle of charity. . . . A Roman lady, named Fabiola, in the fourth century, founded at Rome as an act of penance, the first public hospital, and the charity planted by that woman's hand overspread the world, and will alleviate to the end of time the darkest anguish of humanity" (Lecky, II., 78, 79, 80).
3. Along with this has gone the mitigation of cruelty and an increase in the regard for human life. The lot of woman has been improved, and the sacredness of the family and of marriage greatly enhanced. Unquestionably this is to be traced to the influence of the gospel. Slavery also from being softened, as it was at once with the introduction of the gospel, came to be regarded as an outrage on the Christian conscience, and its overthrow in Great Britain, at least, may be traced almost directly to men whose motives were inspired by the strongest evangelical conviction (see Morley's "Gladstone," I., 202, note).
4. These ameliorations of life were naturally confined at first to the home and the nation, but as time went on the principles of the gospel asserted themselves in the wider life of humanity. "International law is based on Christian principles. . . . Grotius's *De Jure* was an endeavor to present in orderly and codified form the customs and maxims which had grown out of the appreciation of Christian principles" (article "Christianity," "Encyclopædia Britannica," Ed. 10, 1903). To-day the problems of human life are still numerous, but progress is visible in the direction of the extension of the principle of arbitration both to international and industrial activities.
5. It is a patent fact that of all the forces which in the past have wrought towards these beneficent issues, and which are active in the present, none have been greater than the Christian Church. Indeed how many communities are there which do not depend for their most untiring workers in philanthropy to a great extent upon the devoted members of the Christian Church? (See Loring Brace's "Gesta Christi").