

Protestantism inculcated the direct relation of each man to his Maker without the intervention of priest or sacrament. It favoured, therefore, individualism in practice as well as in theory; and threw on each man and woman the responsibility of obeying or neglecting the inspiration of the spirit towards good works. To that extent it discouraged co-operative effort on the part of the Church, in directions which had previously been regarded as its special province. Hospitals have since then been supported by the state or by voluntary contributions of the charitable. Secular education has been almost universally dissociated from ecclesiastical control; and no Protestant Church has assumed the burden of supporting the whole parish poor out of its ecclesiastical funds, the English vestry system of administering the Poor Laws being the last reminder of what the old Church recognized as its duty.

Of late, however, the Protestant Churches have begun to act upon the theory that the world cannot be reformed by sermons only, and that a healthy body and therefore healthy surroundings are conducive to good morals and a religious life. Therefore gymnasias, baths, social clubs, and secular entertainments form as integral a part of the organization and attractions of a large, modern congregation as prayer meetings and distinctly religious functions. Even the emotions are being less appealed to, and material inducements are more and more brought to bear as subsidiary influences leading up to a well regulated life. What effect the elimination of the distinctly religious motives and the devotional aspirations will have on the religious life of the future seems to be but dimly perceived by the ecclesiastical leaders, who must obey the popular impulse.

The movement may be said to have received its first impulse from Maurice, and Kingsley, and the group of men nicknamed "muscular Christians" half a century ago; but in its more modern phases it has developed into an intricate system, whose tendencies are towards social betterment rather than distinctly religious propagandism, either doctrinal