

**THE HIBBERT LECTURES, 1880; LECTURES
ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE
INSTITUTIONS,
THOUGHT AND CULTURE OF ROME ON
CHRISTIANITY AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

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The Hibbert Lectures, 1880; Lectures on the influence of the institutions, thought and culture of Rome on Christianity and the development of the Catholic Church by Ernest Renan

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ERNEST RENAN

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ON THE INFLUENCE OF
THE INSTITUTIONS, THOUGHT AND CULTURE
OF
ROME,
ON
CHRISTIANITY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY
ERNEST RENAN,
OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

TRANSLATED BY CHARLES BEARD, B.A.

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1885.

PREFACE.

THE "Hibbert Lectures" have been instituted for the purpose of providing a series of Lessons on the most important chapters of the History of Religion. It is in this connection that M. Max Müller has treated of the general development of religion in India, that M. Le Page Renouf has spoken of the religious function of Egypt. They form in some sort a Chair of the Comparative History of Religion, but a Chair which is occupied every year by a new Professor, who speaks only of that which he has made the subject of special study. I therefore felt myself deeply honoured when the Trustees of this useful Institution invited me to continue a teaching so worthily begun. I had long desired to see England, and to clasp the hand of my many English friends. I accepted the invitation; and certainly the kind welcome which I met with from a nation which has always inspired me with the greatest esteem and the highest sympathy, has been one of the rewards of my

life. The spectacle of a proud and strong people, in the enjoyment of the largest liberty which humanity has hitherto been able to make its own, has filled me with a lively joy, and has confirmed me in the conviction that the future of Europe, despite many a passing storm, belongs to an ideal of light and peace.

Our society is sceptical only in appearance: it has its own dogma, and that an excellent one, Liberty, respect for the mind. This dogma will conquer every other; only we must beware of believing that laws and decrees can assist its triumphs. Let Liberty alone: fanatics fear her more than they fear persecution: in her own unaided strength she knows how to overcome her enemies.

E. R.

PARIS, *June*, 1880.

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LECTURE I.

IN WHAT SENSE IS CHRISTIANITY
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IN WHAT SENSE IS CHRISTIANITY
THE WORK OF ROME?

It gave me both pride and pleasure to receive from the Trustees of this noble Institution an invitation to continue in this place a course of instruction begun by my illustrious brother and friend, Max Müller, a course the usefulness of which will become more manifest from day to day. A broad and honest idea always bears fruit. It is now more than thirty years since the venerable Robert Hibbert left behind him a legacy, intended to promote the progress of enlightened Christianity, which in his view was inseparable from the progress of science and reason. Wisely interpreted, this foundation has become, in

the hands of intelligent administrators, the occasion of Lectures upon all the chief epochs of the religious history of humanity. Why—the promoters of this reform have rightly said—why should not the method which has approved itself in all other departments of intellectual culture, be applicable in the domain of religion also? Why should the pursuit of truth, without care of consequences, be dangerous in theology, when it is accepted by all in the domain of the social and natural sciences? You have believed in truth, and you are right. There is but one truth; and it is to show ourselves something less than respectful to revelation, to confess that, in regard to it, criticism is compelled to modify the severity of its methods. No; truth can dispense with politeness. I have been happy to respond to your invitation, for I understand duty to the truth exactly as you do. Like you, I should think that I was insulting truth if I allowed that it was necessary to treat it with a certain indulgence. I believe, as you do, that the worship which man owes to the ideal is research,—scientific, independent, indifferent to results; and