THE

Heritage of the Indian Christian

The Story of the Christian Church and the relation to it of the Church in India

BY

A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF INDIA

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DEDICATION

TO

The Church of God
which is in
India, Burma and Ceylon
even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus
called to be Saints
with all that call on the Name
of our Lord Jesus Christ
in every place
their Lord and ours

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INTRODUCTION

The Indian Christian finds himself through no fault of his own, in a very unsatisfactory position indeed with regard to his Church membership. He, or it may be his parents or grandparents, were brought into union with Christ through the labours of some particular western missionaries, and so through Baptism into fellowship with other Christians of that denomination; but he finds himself unaccountably debarred from full fellowship with large numbers of his fellow-Christians by age-old barriers and feuds that he has had nothing to do with, and for the most part cannot understand.

When he begins to think about this situation, and rightly finds it intolerable, he can take up one of several possible attitudes to it. He may decide to identify himself completely with the denomination of which he finds himself a member, study its particular principles and customs, and cling to those as being true, without much considering any others. This is what Roman Catholics usually do by the nature of their training, but we also sometimes find Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Anglicans and others who are just as certain that their position is the best possible, and that it would be better for all to be like them.

Actually very few thinking Indian Christians take up this attitude. More often we find them so disgusted with the differences and restrictions, that they either cut themselves altogether loose from any particular denomination, and join any group of Christians indiscriminately for public worship; or they keep a nominal membership of one group, but refuse to acknowledge differences, or to submit to a discipline which forbids them to communicate with members of other groups. Others again feel a strong desire to discover what they would call a truly Indian expression of Christianity, rejecting western traditions altogether, and substituting for them customs and ideas taken from their Hindu heritage.

There remains another way, which it is part of the aim of this little book to commend. This is that we should humbly and patiently accept this painful situation, just as we accept the mixed heritage of good and bad that comes to us through our membership of any particular family, race or caste, and give ourselves to the study of our whole Christian heritage, so that the Spirit of Truth may enable us to 'take forth the precious from the vile,' to show us what in it is truly and abidingly *Christian*, and therefore must not be tampered with, and what is of this or that nation or period only, and may rightly be supplanted by something more native to the Indian mind.

Indian Christians are for the most part either Roman Catholic or Protestant, and, because of the uncompromising attitude of the Roman Church there is between these two a great gulf fixed: it is difficult for Roman Catholics and Protestants to have any kind of sharing with one another. This book is not likely to be read by any Roman Catholics, and this introduction is therefore addressed primarily to Protestants. It is an appeal to them to realize that just in so far as they are Protestants they have entered into only a part of their full Christian heritage: they are, through no fault of their own, the children of a revolution, and a revolution is always a one-sided affair.

There is one great corrective to this one-sidedness, that is, the study of Church History, and especially of the period of the building up of the Church into one strong, undivided, articulated body, that is, the first three or four centuries. But we need also to study the later history, and the condition of the different divisions of the Church as they are to-day; for in this way we shall come to see where wrong turnings were taken, so that we may be warned against them ourselves; we shall see also how the sad unhealed divisions came about: but more important, we shall see how rich and varied our heritage is, and how much richer it might be if the whole Church were united.

Besides the Roman Church, there are three directions in which the Indian Christian may turn in order to understand and appreciate that part of his heritage which goes back

to the time before the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. There is first the Syrian Church of Malabar, and other remnants of the ancient Church of the East, of which the Indian Church was once itself a living part: there is the Orthodox Church of eastern Europe, of which the Russian is the greatest and most living representative, now going through a fiery time of purification both in Russia and in exile in Paris: and there is the Anglican Church, which has itself in the last hundred years become more and more alive to its Catholic as well as its Protestant heritage and is reviving the old emphasis on the Sacramental life and on the outward continuity of which Episcopacy is the symbol and safeguard.

If Christians in India are to unite in some form of Episcopal government, as is being proposed in south India and elsewhere, it is of great importance that this should be no mere matter of expediency, but that they should understand that the adoption of Episcopacy will bring the Indian Church into line with the ancient tradition of the unbroken Church in east and west, as well as into a far wider fellowship at the present day, with the possibility of future union with the scattered and broken Churches of the East. These Churches can no longer be considered dead or dying; rather they are stirring into new life. But a purely Protestant Indian Church will never be able to enter into full fellowship with them, neither can they grow into their fullest and richest life unless they can share in what the Protestant Churches have to give, their emphasis on freedom, on inward personal religion and on the inviolable sanctity of the individual Christian conscience.

This book then, does not aim at being a complete outline of Church History, but rather at reminding the Indian Christian of what his heritage is; it deals especially with those events and tendencies which seem to have some direct application to the Indian Church of to-day, or to have had special influence on its history in the past. There has in particular been a special effort to hold the balance fairly as between the eastern and the western Church, and not to present, as most Church histories written by westerners do, a constantly narrowing stream which is considered to be the

main line of development, from the undivided Church, through the Roman Church of the Middle Ages to the post-Reformation Churches of Europe and America.

In studying Church History it is well to keep always in our minds Our Lord's parables about the Kingdom of God, especially those that are grouped together in St. Matthew xiii. The Kingdom, He says, is like a grain of mustard seed, which is less than all seeds, but which grows into a great tree: it is like a little lump of leaven (yeast), hidden in a large quantity of flour, so that the flour becomes entirely transformed into dough: it is also like a fisherman's drag-net, which is thrown into the water, and draws up fishes of every kind indiscriminately, good and bad: and lastly, it is like a field of good seed, in which an enemy sows tares, which at their first growing up look so much like the wheat that it is unsafe to try and root them out before the time of harvest, when the wheat ears become full and ripe, but not the tares, and so there is no longer danger of rooting up the good wheat with the tares. If we meditate on these and bear them in mind as we read the story of the Church through the ages, we shall be able to trace two things through its history: (i) How the Gospel has always been acting in that hidden, fermenting silent way like yeast, gradually changing the world's standards of judgment, and codes of morals and ideas about God, as we can see particularly plainly in the history of religion and morals in India since the coming of the European missionaries in the last hundred years or so; and, (ii) How the Enemy has continually been at work in the Church itself, trying to corrupt and destroy it, so that its life has constantly to be renewed by God through reform, revival, re-conversion, just as our individual lives have to be.

If we keep these two facts in our minds, we shall not be disturbed and depressed when we find that a good deal of Church history makes very sad reading: and we shall not be tempted to do, what reformers have so often tried to do, to cut it off the stem and begin all over again. That way does not really help, as the divided Church to-day shows. Rather we have to obey Our Lord's command to

let good and bad grow together until the harvest, that is, until God's own good time of judgment, and meanwhile to do our own best in prayer and faithfulness to keep from corruption that part of the Church in which God has set us. Besides this, we must continually turn our eyes to the lives of the true saints of God who have come out of every age and every nation and every sect, even when times were at their very worst; remembering that these saints are becoming an ever-increasing body in heaven, a stronger and stronger spiritual force on God's side against evil, offering themselves ceaselessly with our ascended Lord to make intercession for His Church on earth. 'I believe in one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church; I believe in the Communion of Saints.'

PART I.

THE GROWTH OF THE GOOD SEED: THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES.

CHAPTER I

The Soil for the Gospel Seed

One of the fundamental things that distinguish the Christian religion from all others is its attitude to history. In no other religion (except the Jewish) is history considered really important, because no other religion sees in it the working out of a purpose of God. We shall realize the truth of this if we consider for example how impossible it is to get a clear, connected view of early Indian history, simply because there are so few trustworthy ancient records. The Hindus were simply not interested in it: according to their deepest philosophy what happens in the world is of no particular importance, there is no purpose of God in it. The Greeks were interested in history because they believed that everything in nature and human life was interesting and important, and that by studying it they would arrive at the truth of things: but history told them nothing about God, because they had no faith in a God with a will and purpose, by which to interpret it, only an outgrown polytheism which their thinkers rejected. The only people in the ancient world who interpreted history as the manifestation of the will of God were the *Hebrew Prophets*. They started from a belief in a God with a Character and a Purpose, who had deliberately chosen to make Himself known to their people by delivering them from Egypt, and they gradually learnt to interpret all their history with reference to the revelation of His will for their nation and for the whole world. So that when God Himself in Christ entered human history as Man, He did so amongst the Jews, the people who would be most capable of recognizing His action; and the first Christian thinkers were ready to re-interpret all history

anew in the light of this great event of the Incarnation. Thus, secular historians may say: 'Jesus Christ chanced to be born as a Jew in the Roman Empire, at a time when Greek culture was spread over all that part of the world, and in the development of Christianity we can trace the result of the meeting of Jewish religion, Greek thought and Roman organisation.' But the Christian says: 'It is no question of chance; God had been preparing the world for milleniums for just this event, that His Son should become incarnate of a Jewish mother at a time when the Hebrew and Greek were meeting one another, held together in the firm grasp of Rome.'

In other words, we believe that God controls history. Not that everything that happens is His will: but that in the rise and fall of nations, in the expansion and collapse of empires, He is giving nation after nation opportunities to further His one good purpose in the world. Nations can take or miss these opportunities, just as individuals can. They do miss them often, and there are bad set-backs, for example the Jews' rejection of Christ, the collapse of the eastern Church before Islam, the splitting up of the western Church at the time of the Reformation. But when there is a failure on one side, God provides a new instrument on another, and the main march of His purpose goes forward.

This is a part of our faith as Christians, and it is a particularly important part for us in India to hold fast to, because it will help us to see that we cannot ignore or repudiate the history of the Church in the ages before us, and in other lands, because all Church history is the story of God in Christ gradually remaking human nature into His own likeness, which is what the New Testament tells us is His purpose.

So let us now try to trace something of the providence of God in the early years of the Church through the historical situation of the Roman Empire. This should indeed be a particularly illuminating study for Indian Christians because in many ways the situation in the Roman Empire in the first two or three centuries was strikingly like that in modern India, and we need not

feel that we are dealing with something very foreign and remote from ourselves.

If we look at a map of the Eastern Hemisphere, with the boundaries of the Roman Empire marked on it, we may at first think that after all it was only a very small part of the world: in what way was it really more important than the ancient empires of Egypt, Persia, the Mauryas, or the brilliant achievement of Alexander the Great? It was certainly larger in extent than any of these, but far more important is the fact that it actually held together for a longer period of time a much more varied collection of peoples, giving them a far higher measure of peace, ordered government, just law and material prosperity than any empires which had preceded it. From the point of view of the history of the Church, it gave a well-fenced, well-tended plot of ground for the new plant of the Gospel to grow in. For instance, it provided St. Paul with good and on the whole safe roads for travelling, with an efficient postal service to carry his letters to the Churches he founded, and, by no means least, with a system of law that he could trust so far as to appeal to its highest court against his unscrupulous Jewish opponents (see Acts xxv. 9-12).

Secondly, the Roman Empire had a great tradition of culture. This was not Roman, but Greek, and the credit of spreading it over the Mediterranean lands is not due to Rome, but to Alexander and his successors. It is however, to Rome's credit that she preserved and fostered this culture, after she had conquered Alexander's empire; there was none of that barbarous wiping out of an alien culture such as was done later by northern barbarians and Turks. Greek art and philosophy had passed the age of their greatest achievements, it was true. But the Christian Church came into a great heritage. On the one hand there was the Greek language, which was as widely known and used throughout the educated part of the Roman Empire as English is in India; and on the other there was Greek philosophy, which is still acknowledged to be the greatest achievement of the mind of man in its search to understand the world in which he lives. We shall see later how the

Christian Church used this noble tradition of thought and its expression in exact and beautiful language, when she needed to think out her new experience of God in Christ.

Another fact we must notice about the Roman Empire shows how necessary it was to have sound and clear thinking in the Christian Church. This is the great mixture of religious and philosophical ideas and practices that was the inevitable result of the mixture of races, European, Asiatic, and North African. Before the days of the Roman Empire it was taken for granted that religion was a communal matter. A man naturally professed the religion of his city or tribe or country, performed its customs and kept its rules. Hardly anyone ever imagined that a man could think out a religion for himself, or deliberately choose to follow one rather than another, though he might of course be forced to adopt that of his conquerors. This is what makes Zoroaster and Buddha such strange and lonely figures in the ancient world. Most people would not even know that there were any other religions than their own, and if they did, it would seem to them the most natural thing in the world that everybody should stick to his own. For apart from the Jews there was no people in the world who believed that there was only one divine Being to whom worship should be paid. No other people minded how many gods and goddesses were given divine honours, though they might claim that their own particular ones were the mightiest, or, as in India, might hold that they only represented different ways of conceiving of the one Eternal Spirit.

But when the Roman Empire brought all kinds of people together, without insisting on any one exclusive religion, the religions got mixed too, and it became fashionable for people to choose their own. Very often they belonged to several, because they thought the more gods they got into favourable relations with the better. The pious man of the Roman Empire would perfectly well understand the modern Hindu who puts up on his walls side by side pictures of Krishna, Kali, Buddha and Christ, and worships before them all quite impartially.

He would well understand too, the little groups of listeners round some famous Sadhu or Guru, for in his day it was common for philosophers of all kinds to travel round teaching good ways of life. Some of these, especially the Stoic teachers, upheld a very high standard of conduct, and their influence on European philosophy and morals is still strong. Nor were Indians out of the picture, though India was not part of the Roman Empire. But in the great cosmopolitan city of Alexandria in Egypt, the centre of trade between East and West, they knew of Hindu Yogis, of the speculations of Indian philosophers, of the doctrines of Karma and rebirth, most probably too of the Buddha and his way of salvation.

So the soil in which the little mustard seed of the Kingdom of God was cast was no empty plot. Just as in India to-day, so then, it had to grow and become its true self amidst a welter of other religions and philosophies, some of immemorial antiquity, some, like Theosophy, new attempts at combining elements from all religions, some, like the modern Samajes in India, attempts to simplify and purify one or other of the old systems.

And yet, with all this ferment of religiousness, there was a rotten core to the Roman Empire. 'The world through its wisdom knew not God,' and men were not for the most part trying to please Him by doing His will, but only to buy over what they believed to be supernatural powers to be on their side. In Romans i. 18-32, St. Paul gives a terrible picture of this moral rottenness, and we know that only too much of it is true of India, as it is of any country in East or West, in which the true God is either unknown or denied. Stoicism might appeal to a few earnest and idealistic souls, but it could not change the heart of sinners, and none of the old systems of religion was able to build up *character*; the kind of character that can keep sober, humble, steadfast, selfless, amidst all the temptations of power, lust, greed and hatred that surge like a tide around the ordinary man and woman. There was no one sure standard by which men could judge of what was good and true; it all seemed relative, shifting, uncertain.

Lastly, we must notice the position of the Jews in the Roman Empire. For this there is no true parallel in India, though the position of the Mohammedans, a severely monotheistic people amongst the prevailing polytheism, has a faint resemblance to it. But the Mohammedans in India are dispossessed conquerors, with a world-wide religious connection, whereas the Jews in the Roman Empire were a small stubborn race who had lost their political independence, and were dispersed as exiles or colonists throughout the Mediterranean lands. Because they were good colonists and traders, and therefore, a source of wealth to their masters, and also because they were a terribly hard people to subjugate utterly, they were given quite a number of political and social concessions, which made them a separate group wherever they were. And they alone of all the mixed peoples of the Empire utterly refused to acknowledge anybody else's gods or goddesses, or to join in any corporate religious acts of the State, because these involved some worship of images. The Jews' God had no image: that was another extraordinary thing in those days; but He had given them a Law which many of them would die rather than break; they would not eat with members of any other race, nor intermarry (though there were certainly exceptions to this rule). These things are familiar enough in India, but they were not so in the Roman Empire, and the Jews were disliked and mocked at for their peculiarities, though often feared and respected for their great abilities. There were many Gentiles too, who were drawn by the severe but noble faith of the Jews, and their superior moral standards, and who became hearers or proselytes. (In the book of Acts these are often alluded to as 'the devout' or 'those that feared God.')

The importance to the Christian Church of these settlements of Jews all over the Empire is clear from the book of Acts. For wherever the Christian missionaries went they appealed first to their own countrymen, and almost always found a hearing amongst the groups of proselytes. But of far more lasting importance was the fact that the Christian Church received from the Jews the Scriptures, with their

unique testimony to the one true God, Creator and Ruler of all things and all men, who reveals Himself and His will through chosen Prophets, and 'in these last days hath spoken unto us in His Son,' who was born of a Jewish mother, in fulfilment of the Old Testament promise of the Messiah. The more we study the Old Testament alongside of the sacred books of other religions, and in the light of Christ, the more we shall come to realize the quite unique position of the Jew in the history of religion. God has indeed spoken 'at sundry times and in divers manners' to those in all nations who would listen to Him, but their testimony and the knowledge of God that they reveal is not to be compared with that of the Hebrew Prophets. 'Salvation is of the Jews' (John iv. 22), and it was no mere accident that God became incarnate in that race of all the races of the earth. This is why the Christian Church in whatever land it is founded, can never afford to neglect or supplant the Old Testament in favour of the ancient scriptures of any other people, however much it needs to interpret and correct the Old Testament in the light of the New. We are still the children of Abraham, and can be proud to call ourselves 'the Israel of God.' (Gal. iii. 7; vi. 16).

CHAPTER II

THE BURSTING OF THE JEWISH SHEATH

THE precious seed of the Gospel had been produced from the plant of Judaism, and the first thing that had to happen to it, as to all fruitful seeds, was that its old husk had to be burst by the new growing life within. The story of this is told in outline in the book of *Acts*, and is illustrated by some passages of St. Paul's epistles. *Acts* does not by any means give a complete history of the first years of the Church, but a series of very vivid pictures of the early days, full of a sense of abounding spiritual power and joy and enthusiasm, so that we sometimes wish that we could go back to those first days, and recapture their spirit. This was indeed the aim of the Protestant Reformers in

the sixteenth century, who wanted to cut themselves out of the great tree of the medieval Catholic Church, and go back to 'Primitive Christianity'. But what they actually produced was something very different from the Church of the New Testament: for the wish was no more practicable than the wistful longing of the grown man for the innocence and joy of his childhood. The Church of the New Testament is not meant to be the model of the Church for all ages; it was a childhood, beautiful indeed, but which had to be outgrown. And the story of *Acts* is the story of the first stage of that growth.

The Christian Church began by being an entirely Jewish community, which had accepted Jesus as being the long-expected Messiah, Lord and Judge of the world, and which lived in daily expectation of His return in glory (see Acts i. 6; iii. 13-21). They still kept the Law of Moses, and attended daily worship in the Temple (Acts ii. 46; iii. 1): but they also met by themselves in the houses of some of their members, and there they celebrated the rite the Lord had given them 'until His coming again', which they called 'the breaking of bread' (Acts ii. 42, 46), and also prayed, men and women together (Acts i. 14). When new members joined they were admitted by Baptism 'in the Name of Jesus Christ' (Acts ii. 38), and also, at any rate in some cases, by 'laying on of hands' or Confirmation, through which the gift of the Holy Spirit was believed to be transmitted (Acts viii. 14-17). They all looked to the Apostles as their leaders and teachers (Acts ii. 42; v. 12), and these seem all to have had equal status and authority, though more is told about Peter than any other, and he seems to have a kind of natural primacy as spokesman and leader of the band, just as he does in the Gospels. A little later James 'the Lord's brother', not one of the Twelve, is spoken of as having some kind of principal position in the Church at Jerusalem. (See Acts xii. 17; Gal. i. 15-19; ii. 9.)

This first phase of the history lasted for something under ten years, and then appeared the first signs that the new life given by Christ through the Spirit was bursting the Jewish husk. At the beginning of the movement,

there had been a rather faint-hearted attempt at its suppression on the part of the Jewish authorities (Acts iv and v. 17ff.). But it was quite unsuccessful, and a little later we read that many priests were converted to the new faith (Acts vi. 7). With *Stephen* however, a new epoch begins. He was not a Jew of Palestine, but a 'Hellenist,' that is, a Jew born and brought up in a foreign country, where many Jews were settled, and where he would mix with Gentiles, and perhaps attend a Greek University. These 'Hellenist' Jews would often have a more liberal outlook than the home-born ones, and like some 'Europe-returned' Indians they would come back to the old country full of new ideas and sometimes of criticisms and desires for reform. Stephen had become a Christian, and a very earnest one, who won a reputation as both a holy and a learned man (Acts vi. 5, 8-10). We gather from the charge brought against him, and from his unfinished defence at his trial that he saw that the new faith must eventually break out of its Jewish bonds and become independent of the Temple, the Law and the priesthood; and because he was brave enough to preach this belief he aroused the Jewish authorities to fanatical fury, so that in defiance of the Roman law which forbade them to put any man to death, they stoned him for blasphemy (Acts vii).

It does not seem as if the Jerusalem Church as a whole agreed with Stephen's interpretation of the faith, perhaps not even the Apostles, because we find that in the persecution that broke out after Stephen's death, they remain in Jerusalem unmolested, while Philip and others are driven away (Acts viii. 1-5). So that here we see the first signs of a division of thought in the Church, and of the appearance of two parties, the conservative one that clung to its Jewish heritage, to the Temple and the Law, and the liberal one, started by Hellenist Christians, who saw a wider implication in the belief in Christ. This cleavage of opinion can be clearly traced all through the story of St. Paul's life, both in Acts and Epistles. It only ceases after the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A. D., when the Temple was rased to the ground, and the Church in Judea weakened to a little remnant

which quickly lost all influence over the Church as a whole.

The rest of the book of Acts shows how the Gospel spread step by step from Jews, first to Samaritans, who were half Jews, and kept the Law of Moses, and so to an Ethiopian eunuch, a Roman centurion, and, through the work of the greatest 'Hellenist' convert, St. Paul, to Gentiles of all kinds; until it was recognized that the Gospel was for all, and that in Christ 'there cannot be Greek and Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, free man.' (Col. iii. 11).

Yet before this could be fully accepted, with all that it meant, another issue had to be faced. Stephen's position had been theoretical only; he *argued* that Temple and Law were to be superseded. But the presence of Gentile converts brought up a practical point: were they to be circumcised and obliged to keep the Jewish Law? It seems so obvious to us now that they ought not, that we find it hard to realize what a difficult and revolutionary idea it was to the Jewish Christians. The observance of caste by converts from Hinduism, or of the rites of ancestor-worship by Confucian converts in China are the nearest parallel to it in modern times: and if we study the history of Catholic and Protestant Missions in India and China we shall see that there have always been two opinions amongst Christians on these vexed questions. But even these cases are not strictly parallel to the situation in the primitive Church; Indian and Chinese Christians only wanted to be allowed to keep their immemorial customs themselves, whereas the Jewish Christians wanted to bind their law on all, believing that it had been given by God, and that observing it was the only way to please Him. On the other side St. Paul was insisting that the very idea that we can please God by keeping a code of laws and observances is fundamentally unchristian. The Gospel of Christ is that God saves us by what *He* does for us and in us, and that we cannot be saved by anything that we do ourselves.

The story of the 'Circumcision Controversy,' as it is usually called, can be read in any life of St. Paul. In Acts

xv. St. Luke records the decision of the Church on the subject at the Council of Jerusalem, and in St. Paul's letter to the Galatians we can see something of the bitterness that attended the controversy. The whole story, if we will read between the lines, and remember that human nature in those days was exactly the same as it is now, will show us a good deal about the way in which the leaven of God's truth works in the Church, and of the difficulties that are put in its way by men's passions and prejudices. Over and over again in the Church's history the situation repeats itself. Some individual, like Stephen, Philip and Paul, believes that God is inspiring him with some new interpretation of His mind and will, or to make some new venture of faith. He preaches his message or begins to act upon his new belief, and at once there is a clash of opinions in the Church. Men's passions are aroused, there is more or less bitter controversy, hard things are said, the 'brethren' divide into parties. Then the leaders of the Church must act: they take counsel together, both sides are heard, a decision is arrived at. Perhaps, as in this case, the new teaching, the new action, is recognized as a leading of God. Even so, it is only gradually that the whole body of the Church comes to approve and assimilate it: time must be allowed for deeply-rooted prejudices and conservative misgivings to be overcome. And then there will almost certainly remain a 'die-hard' minority, which refuses to accept the Church's decision, and forms itself into a separate body.

This is what happened in this case. The Church's leaders had sufficient humility, charity and faith in God's guiding Spirit to be able to rise above their natural Jewish prejudices and their fear of new departures, and of the very real danger of arousing the fanaticism of the non-Christian Jews. St. Paul won his case, and the Church of Christ was freed from its Jewish bonds: the 'die-hards' continued to hate St. Paul and to do their best to undo his work: they remained a separate, narrow, self-righteous little sect, who in time lost their hold on the belief in our Lord's divinity, and so fade gradually out of history.

We cannot be too thankful for the faithfulness of the

Apostles and Elders of the Church in this crisis. For only too often we shall find in later times, that Church leaders, both Catholic and Protestant, like the priests and Pharisees who rejected Christ, failed to recognize God's leading in a prophet who came with a new vision and message; fearing the weakening of their authority if they accepted the new teaching, they have condemned, excommunicated, persecuted and even put to death such prophets, believing as our Lord foretold, that 'in so doing they offered sacrifice to God' (John xvi. 1). And on the other hand, these prophets, to whom has come with great force a message from God, have too often lacked the humility and patience to wait until the truth of their teaching should gradually come home to the Church as a whole, and so have violently set themselves up against its authority, and formed sects of their own. We can only surmise what St. Paul would have done if the Council of Jerusalem had gone against him. Some of the expressions he uses in the Epistles to the Galatians and Corinthians show that humility and charity towards his opponents by no means came easily to him: yet when we read his passionate appeals for unity, brotherly love, self-subordination to the whole Body, and his beautiful hymns on love and on the self-emptying Spirit of Christ (1 Cor. xiii; Phil. ii. 1-11), can we believe that he would count the present victory of any principle for which he contended worth the rending of the Body of Christ? (See e.g. 1 Cor. i. 10-iii. 23; Eph. iv. 1-16). Would he not rather be so confident that the Church was indeed the Body of *Christ*, the organ of His Spirit, and no mere man-made society, that he would believe that in time the truth must prevail if men were but 'diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' and to 'do nothing through faction'? One of the sad results of Church divisions is that men no longer have this faith that the Holy Spirit guides the Church as a whole, and not only its individual members; so, when their own consciences come into conflict with Church authority they think they have no other course than to separate themselves, and make a new sect. But if we would constantly think of the Church not as an institution, a kind of ecclesiastical State, but as a Body,

whose members must move in harmony with one another, or as a Family of persons advancing together in love, the strong and quick tenderly adapting themselves to the pace of the slow and weak, we should have the right corrective to this habit of mind.

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH'S FIERY TRIAL

THE first chapter in the Church's history concerned its relations with Judaism: the second marks its relations with the imperial power of Rome. All through the book of Acts the Roman authorities appear as tolerant and on the whole just and beneficent: St. Paul is proud of his Roman citizenship, and appeals confidently to Cæsar to see justice done against his Jewish enemies.

But even before the end of the New Testament we find a change. If the Beast in Revelation xiii is to be truly interpreted as symbolizing the Roman Empire, then already it has become a bitter foe, in league with the 'old serpent, Satan, to make war with the saints and overcome them'. (Rev. xiii. 7.)

How is it that the Church came into collision with the most tolerant and just power the world had yet known? The real answer is not because the Roman Empire was intolerant, but because the Christian religion is intolerant. If the Christians had been content to be a quiet, harmless sect, doing good to their neighbours, not 'proselytising,' but tolerant of other people's religions, they would no doubt have been left in peace. This is what many thoughtful non-Christians want them to do in India to-day, and it is a real temptation to peace-loving people.

But the Christians could not keep quiet. They had the leaven of the Gospel within them, and it is the nature of leaven to be a ferment, to change what it is put into. They had to proclaim their Gospel, and Christ as the only way to the Father: they could not compromise with idolatry: they refused to join in the public ceremonies of the State because that would mean paying divine honours

to the Emperor. They were not content like the Jews, to have an exclusive racial religion to themselves, but they must seek to make disciples of all nations. And so many joined them that the trades of those who made images of the gods, or supplied victims for the many sacrifices that all other religions required, were suffering serious loss (see e.g. Acts xix. 23ff.). Also they were breaking up family life by encouraging individuals to forsake their ancestral religion and customs. Besides all this they held secret meetings of their own, with mysterious rites that were somehow connected with blood. The thing Rome could not stand was secret societies. There were a lot of queer religious cults about, whose members met in secret, and some of them had got a bad name for immorality, human sacrifices and such things. The attitude of the Roman Government to these things was not unlike the attitude of the British Government in India in the last century to such customs as Thuggee, Sati and human sacrifices. Not unnaturally the Christians began to be suspected of such sinister practices. We can understand for instance, how a dreadful misunderstanding of the Lord's Supper might arise in the minds of people who had never been present at it (and no non-Christian was allowed to be present), but who merely heard vague rumours of the eating of flesh and drinking of blood. And certainly the Christians' bitter enemies, the Jews, would do their best to foster these suspicions.

But it was some time before the Roman Government definitely decided that Christianity was an illicit religion, dangerous to the public weal, which must be suppressed: and even then, though persecution lasted for a period of over two hundred years, it was by no means continuous, and the years of peace were actually many more than the years of persecution.

To begin with there were two quite short, sudden and local attacks made; one in A.D. 64 by the Emperor Nero, who accused the Christians of being responsible for the great fire of Rome in that year, and put many to death with fiendish cruelty. According to tradition both St. Peter and St. Paul were killed in Rome at this time. The

other was about thirty years later under the Emperor Domitian, who was enraged to find followers of the hated sect amongst his own relatives. It may have been at this time that the John who wrote the book of Revelation was exiled to the convict mines at Patmos.

It was some years after this, we do not know just when, that Christianity was definitely put on the list of forbidden religions, and to be found guilty of professing it was to be punishable by death. But this law would be very variously applied in different localities and by different governors. Sometimes there would be a particularly zealous one who would make a determined effort to stamp out the sect in his province. A more easy-going one would wait until definite charges were brought against particular persons: and if the Christians themselves were quiet and not aggressive, they would be left in peace for years together. But it did mean that at any time anyone who had a personal grudge against a Christian could denounce him and set the law in motion against him. This is what happened to the twelve-year old martyr Agnes, who was brutally threatened by a local magistrate because she would not be persuaded to marry his son. He then denounced her as a Christian, and, as she would not deny the charge, she was beheaded.

A correspondence between the Emperor Trajan and one of his provincial Governors shows that the real crime of the Christian in the eyes of the Roman Government was 'pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy', and a despatch of the next Emperor, Hadrian, shows a wise and just Emperor's dislike of the working of this law. He says no Christians are to be punished merely on popular outcry, or on a malicious accusation, but only where they can be proved to be guilty of definite crimes. Indeed by this time the steady increase of the number of Christians made it impossible to enforce the law thoroughly without wholesale massacres, which was not the Roman way of doing things.

So things went on, and the Church's roll of Martyrs (those who died for their faith) and Confessors (those who suffered imprisonment or some other penalty short of death) grew steadily, and conversions increased, till with the

Emperor Severus (A.D. 200-211) the last and worst phase was entered upon. Now there was a series of imperial edicts forbidding conversions and deliberately striking at the heads of the Church, the great Metropolitan Bishops of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, *Patriarchs* as they were called. By this time there was another reason for the hostility of the Roman Emperors. The fact was that the Church had become such a large body, so well organized within itself on inter-racial and inter-provincial lines, that the Roman Emperors could not tolerate such a 'State within a State', which seemed to encroach on its own authority, especially as the Christians made no secret of the fact that their loyalty to Christ the King came before their loyalty to Cæsar.

The most serious of these attacks was under the Emperor Decius (A.D. 250-253). This time the Christians were hunted out and put to the test, often under torture, by being required to sacrifice to the Emperor's statue. Those who did so were given a certificate of pardon. It was such a little thing to do—to scatter a few grains of incense before the statue—often no words even were required. It is small wonder that great numbers failed at the test, and bought their safety by this silent denial of their Lord. We have to remember that by this time the Church contained many who were Christians not by personal conviction, but, as in India to-day, by birth and upbringing; and we know how easy it is for such a 'Church to lose its first love, and so to get slack and unfaithful. We may well ask ourselves in fear and trembling how *we* should stand if such a fiery trial were to come upon the Church in India in our own time. This Decian persecution was indeed the first separation of the good from the bad fish that the draw-net had brought up (Matt. xiii. 47, 48). It was no more than our Lord had foretold when He said that some of the Gospel seed would fall on rocky ground, the hearts of those who have 'no root in themselves . . . . but when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, straightway they stumble.' (Matt. xiii. 20, 21.)

On the other hand the Church has gloried and still rightly glories in 'the noble army of Martyrs' and Confes-

sors who did stand firm in spite of terrible sufferings. This is the way in which the 'canonization' of saints began in the Church. The Martyrs' names were read out at the altar at the celebration of the Eucharist; churches were built over their graves, and special memorial services were held there on the anniversaries of their death; so that in time it became the regular custom to have some relic of a saint buried under the altar of a new church, and to dedicate it to his or her memory. In this way the unbroken 'Communion of Saints' in heaven and on earth was made more real to the whole body of Christians, though undoubtedly there came later to be grave abuses connected with these practices.

At last the Roman emperors came to realize the futility of trying to stamp out this vigorous religious society, and in 313 the Emperor Constantine proclaimed an edict of toleration, which put a final end to the official persecutions. More than that, he realized that the Church might be made a strong ally instead of an irrepressible enemy, and so encouraged and patronized it, until Christianity became the most favoured religion in the Empire: Constantine himself was baptized on his death-bed. So ended the Church's great baptism of fire.

One of the chief results of this long period of persecution was to draw the whole Church into a very close unity. Churches which had lost their leaders turned for help and support to those more fortunate, so that there was continual coming and going between different parts of the Church. Indeed in those years it was more truly one and catholic than it has ever been since. It would be well then to go on now to see how it was built up into this strong united body.

CHAPTER IV

The Body of Christ organizes itself

We saw in Chapter II that one of the results of the bringing together of different races in the Roman Empire was that the idea came to be entertained by men's minds that any individual could judge between religions and choose

his own, and that this paved the way for the preaching of the Gospel as a call to the individual to be converted, that is, to repent of his sins and turn to God through Christ for forgiveness and salvation. Yet it is very clear from the New Testament and the earliest Christian writings we know, that it was never supposed by anyone that an individual converted Christian could be a Christian all by himself without membership of the Church. After conviction and conversion, he was in every case baptized. This symbolized two things: first that by it he was brought into mystic union with Christ (Rom. vi. 3-10): and secondly that by it he was also made a member of the Body of Christ, and so brought into a mystic union with all other members (1 Cor. xii. 12-27): this was an actual fact, whether these fellow-members were good or bad, congenial or uncongenial. Each of these kinds of union came about by the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, who first descended on the whole body of disciples, when they were 'all together in one place' (Acts ii. 1-4), and then imparted Himself to each newly-baptized member. In two cases we are told that this was through 'Confirmation' that is, the laying on of hands by the Apostles. (Acts viii. 14-17; xix. 5, 6.) The modern idea which we meet so often in India and other lands, that a man can be a Christian without Baptism, membership of a Church, or partaking of Holy Communion, certainly has no support in the New Testament.

It was St. Paul who more than any other New Testament writer, was inspired to understand and explain to others the nature and meaning of the Christian Church. He sees it as the new creation, a new beginning of the human race under a second Adam (1 Cor. xv. 45-49), in whom all distinctions of race, caste, sex are harmonized into one new Man (Gal. iii. 27, 28; Eph. ii. 14, 15). Again and again he uses metaphors and similes which show as forcibly as possible the essentially corporate nature of this new creation. Thus he calls it the Body of Christ, with many different members all closely dependent on one another (1 Cor. xii); the Temple of God, made up of many parts all carefully fitted together, so that all are necessary to one another (Eph. ii. 19-22); the Bride of

Christ (2 Cor. xi. 2: he is clearly speaking of the whole body of believers at Corinth, not of individuals). And in one place he even speaks of its taking the whole Church to grow up into the fulness of Christ, as one great Human Being 'a full-grown man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Eph. iv. 13).

There is no part of the New Testament teaching we so sorely need to meditate upon as this, because the divisions of the Church have so sadly obscured its truth from us. Nor is St. Paul the only champion of this idea of the Church; it meets us more than once in the teaching of our Lord according to St. John. To become a Christian is to be born again into a new spiritual life (John. iii. 3-8); and this must mean to be born into a *Family*; only foundlings and bastards have no family to grow up in. Again 'I am the vine, ye are the branches' (John. xv. 5); could there be a closer symbol of corporate unity? And most deep and wonderful of all, in the prayer of Christ before His passion, the unity between His members and Himself is compared to the mysterious eternal unity between the Persons of the Godhead: 'I pray . . . that they may all be one, even as we are' (John. xvii. 11, 21).

Now I think we may say that the whole of Church history up to the present time can be considered as the story of the one Body of Christ on earth striving to find the way in which its true spiritual unity is to be expressed in outward form. Every kind of creature we know on earth, from an atom to a human being has a kind of unity in itself, that which makes it *itself*, different from every other thing. And this unity is expressed in its outward form, its body, which is organized and functions according to the nature of the creature. And the higher we go in the scale of creatures, the more complicated these unities become, until we find the body of man is the most complicated organism in the world, so that it takes far longer for a human being than for any other creature, to become 'harmonized', that is to gain self-control over all his limbs, and come to his full physical and mental growth.

But the Church on earth, the Body of Christ, is even more complex, for it is made up of an infinite number of

individuals of all types, who already belong to all kinds of social groups, families, tribes, nations, states. We should expect, therefore, that only very slowly would it come to its full growth, and that it would not all at once understand what kind of organization it was to develop. And we shall find that it has made constant mistakes, chiefly by letting itself be too much influenced by purely worldly types of organization, such as kingdoms, empires, republics, clubs, and other voluntary societies. One of the chief causes of division amongst Christians still is that they hold different opinions as to what form of organization it is proper for the Church to have: so that no one can write a Church History without raising controversial questions, or inevitably showing a bias to one or other side of the question. It would be well, therefore, to explain here the standpoint from which this outline of history is written, so that the reader may not feel that important questions have been begged.

The writer believes that:—

1. The Church is the Body of Christ and spiritually one in Him: but because it is living in this present world, where there is no such thing as disembodied spirit, therefore it must and should have also an outward unity of organization, however much variety there may be room for within that unity. Hence questions of Church organization are not unimportant.

2. The Church is not a man-made society, but the creation of the Holy Spirit who dwells within it, therefore its outward unity must not be according to men's ideas and preferences, but according to God's will and purpose. We may expect to find the germ of that organization in the New Testament, in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, and this ought to be used as a test for all later developments.

3. The Church is a divine society, in which the Spirit of God has dwelt continuously, as the spirit of a man indwells his body, and therefore the outward organization ought to show unbroken continuity, just as a man's body does from the embryo in the womb to his death. Those who deny this and deliberately separate themselves

from the historic body, or who force others outside of it, are guilty of the sin of schism: and it does not seem that any existing body of Christians can claim to be entirely guiltless of this sin.

4. But neither can we say that any existing part of the Church has been deprived of God's holy life-giving Spirit, or has failed to show the fruits of that Spirit in holiness and faithful service; so that in spite of outward divisions we must believe that we are all still members of one spiritual family; just as when a natural family is broken and degraded by bitter dissensions between brothers, they cannot cease to be members of it. Therefore the Holy Catholic Church must be all of us, or it is none of us, and no one body of Christians has the right to claim to be the only true Church; though it may reasonably claim to have preserved more of the truth, or to be truer to our Lord's mind and to the Apostles' tradition, than others. We ought therefore not to be content to be merely Roman Catholic or Anglican or Presbyterian, or whatever it may be, but to try as far as possible to enter into our whole heritage.

This then is the standpoint from which we will go on to consider the way in which the Body of Christ first began to organize itself. At first there seemed to be no hesitation about the form it took. The Apostles were naturally accepted as leaders and teachers (Acts ii. 42), and in the Gospels they are represented as having been solemnly and deliberately chosen by our Lord from among His many disciples and carefully trained by Him for the fulfilling of three chief functions: (i) that of witnessing to Him as preachers of the Gospel to all the nations, (ii) that of ruling His Church, the new Israel, 'sitting on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel', and 'binding and loosing', that is, administering discipline, and (iii) feeding His flock like good shepherds, with spiritual food. It seems that the office was not restricted to the original Twelve, as besides the appointment of Matthias to fill the place of Judas, St. Paul and St. Barnabas are also called Apostles.

Besides these, the Church very early took over the Jewish system of appointing Elders in the local Churches,

who were associated with the Apostles in the government of the Church (Acts xi. 29, 30; xiv. 23; xv. 1-6, 22, 23). The Greek word for Elder is Presbyter, which has been shortened to Priest in English, so elder and priest originally meant the same person. Also at least in the Church of Jerusalem there were men set apart by the laying on of the Apostles' hands for a special work of almsgiving (Acts vi. 1-6). This may or may not have been the origin of the office of Deacon mentioned later in the New Testament (Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 8): the Greek word means 'servant' or 'minister', and in its verbal form is the word our Lord uses of Himself in Mark x. 45. It seems that preaching, evangelizing, taking part in prayer meetings and probably baptizing, were at first undertaken also by those not specially appointed, by 'laymen' as we should say; and it was recognized that some members both 'lay' and 'ordained' had a special gift of prophecy, that is of receiving and making known to others special messages from God: This gift was very highly prized in the Church, and St. Paul puts Prophets next to Apostles in his list of the Church's ministers (1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11).

Now what happened immediately after the death of the Apostles it is not possible to say exactly, because there is not clear and unmistakable evidence. Episcopal Churches believe that there is sufficient evidence in the tradition of the Church for an unbroken succession of bishops in each Church, of whom the first ones, like Timothy and Titus, were consecrated by one or other of the Apostles to take their place after their death, and who thus inherit their functions of witnessing to the truth, administering discipline and exercising pastoral care. Presbyterians claim that the evidence is at least equally good for bishops having been sometimes appointed by presbyters, and so being of equal status with them, and not a separate order, and therefore not necessary to the Church. Other Protestants see no argument against discontinuous ministries, because they hold that any group of Christians has the right to appoint what officials seem convenient to them, just as democratic peoples appoint their rulers. The historical question will probably never be settled beyond

possibility of dispute: but it at least seems clear that some kind of authorization was considered necessary in every Church to enable a man to administer sacraments and discipline, and that that authority was first transmitted from the Apostles, as they believed our Lord had meant them to do (Matt. xviii. 18-20; 1 Cor. v. 3-5; 2 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 10).

And actually, before the middle of the second century, that is, only about 50 years after the death of St. Peter and St. Paul, we find that a uniform system had become established. According to this every local Church had a bishop at its head, who had been consecrated by the laying on of hands of other bishops. Generally this was done by more than one bishop, in order to show that he was receiving authorization from the whole Catholic Church, not from just one local or national Church. He might be elected by the laity, but could never be deposed by them, as his authority came from our Lord and not from the people, once he had been solemnly consecrated. The bishop alone had the authority to ordain presbyters and deacons, and only such episcopally ordained presbyters had the power to preside at the Eucharist in the bishop's absence, as his delegates. In the important cities of the Empire, Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Rome and later Constantinople, the bishop was called Patriarch (Father-Ruler), and had a primacy over the other bishops in that province, though not a supreme authority: similarly the Patriarch or Pope of Rome had a primacy of honour amongst the Patriarchs, just as Peter had amongst the Apostles, because the bishops of Rome were believed to have derived their apostolic authority from our Lord through St. Peter. The whole Church was held together by meetings or synods of bishops, assisted by presbyters, both in their own particular provinces and also from time to time in 'œcumenical', or as we should say, international councils. Persistent refusal to accept the bishops' rulings in faith and conduct resulted in excommunication, and to be out of communion with the bishop meant to be temporarily cut out of fellowship in the Body of Christ, for Communion was always thought of as the act of our Lord Himself in His whole mystical Body, the Church, and the bishop was the symbol and guardian

of the unity of the whole Body. It was in fact through this system of Episcopacy that the outward continuity of the Body of Christ was preserved, much as the continuity of the People of God in the Old Testament had been bound up with the God-given dynasty of David.

This system was accepted without question throughout every part of the Church for nearly 1500 years. There might be disputes between bishops, which led them to excommunicate one another, or some bishop's election might be disputed, and so there be two rival bishops in one See: but no one ever suggested what has now become so common an idea, that groups of Christians could separate themselves altogether from bishops, and set up different systems of government, with ministers who were not in the 'Apostolic Succession' as it was called. Indeed one writer early in the second century, the martyr Ignatius, even goes so far as to say 'Without the bishop there is not even the name of a Church'. It is this long unbroken tradition which makes members of some Episcopal Churches doubtful whether Free Church ministers have received the same fulness of authority to teach the Christian faith, administer the Sacraments and discipline the members of the Church, as their own bishops and priests have received, and therefore why they cannot take the Holy Communion from their hands without seeming to be unfaithful to their Lord's intention.

But on the other hand we see that the actual powers and functions of bishops, their degree of authority and its relation to that of other clergy and to the laity, and their position in the world, vary enormously from one age and one part of the Church to another. And a very great part of the revolt against bishops in the western Church at the time of the Reformation was caused not so much by the idea of Episcopacy itself, as by the great abuses of the bishops' power and function that had grown up in the Church, and particularly against the claim made on behalf of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, to supremacy over all Christians, including all other bishops. The idea of a bishop in the early Church was certainly not that of a great prince, but of the father of a family, or the shepherd

of a flock. There were not large dioceses as there are now, but each town of any importance had its bishop, whose flock was therefore small enough for him to 'call his own sheep by name', and be on personal terms with all. Moreover it is most true, as Protestants claim, that the authority of the Holy Spirit in the Church lies with the whole body of believers, of whom the bishops are the appointed officers for discharging certain functions, so that episcopal government need not and should not be despotic. This truth has been best preserved in the eastern Orthodox Church, where the theologians hold that no doctrine or custom can be binding on the Church simply as the result of the decision of the bishops, but only after it has had time to work its way into the common mind of the whole body of believers, and been approved by them. This conception has become largely obscured in the west, and we may hope that Indian Christians may study it and bring it again to the front, as they seek prayerfully to build up their own Church in the fullest possible Christian life. The bishops are indeed first and foremost the guardians and transmitters of the Church's tradition, those who have a right to declare what is 'the mind of the Church'. And when Christians say 'I believe in the holy Catholic Church', they profess their belief that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Body of Christ, to guide it into all the truth, and that He will not allow the whole Order of Bishops permanently to be led into serious error, but will Himself find the means of correcting them, without tearing the Church to pieces, as man does in his short-sighted impatience and anger. It is well to remember too, that episcopacy did not originate in the west any more than in the east, but is common to both. To this day except for a few small Protestant groups, all the eastern Christians, Orthodox, Jacobite, Nestorian, are episcopal, and cannot unite in communion with any groups of Christians who are not so. We have in India, in the Syrian Church of Malabar, one of these ancient episcopal Churches which is neither Roman, Greek nor Anglican, so we cannot afford to ignore or minimize this stubborn episcopal tradition.

This then was the first form that the Body of Christ on earth took: we might perhaps liken it to the bony skeleton of the human embryo, which is gradually formed in the womb, in such a way that it is a different thing from any other kind of animal body, although it is in some ways, so much like them. It is in this very likeness of the Church to other kinds of human association that the danger of false development lies, and we shall see in later chapters that it was not kept entirely free from such false developments. The episcopal type of Church order, which depends on a certain unbroken external succession, is often criticized by Protestants as being mechanical. But to be mechanical is not necessarily to be unspiritual; it only means that it depends on a regular hidden law of God independently of men's changing ideas, characters and feelings. God uses mechanisms all the time in His world, in nature, in human bodies and minds: and there is nothing unworthy about the idea that He should also use it in the spiritual sphere. On the contrary, it is an immense help to episcopal Christians to realize that no moods or feelings of their own, and no personal unworthiness of the minister, can take away from the reality and value of God's spiritual gifts in the Sacraments, which are safeguarded by the regular system of ministry. Just as a child receives God's good gift of life and nourishment through the regular 'mechanism' of conception, birth and suckling, even though its parents may be bad, and may have come together in a sinful way, so God's gifts of forgiveness of sins, new life and the Body and Blood of Christ, are truly received through the 'mechanism' of the Church's Ministry and Sacraments, even though the ministers may be themselves men of unholy life.

This does not mean that God only works through these means. He has undoubtedly another way of working, which to the Protestant seems to be the more valuable, that is, through the consecrated personalities of holy and righteous men, such as those to whom we have already alluded as 'Prophets'. There ought not to be any conflict between these two kinds of ministry, but actually we find that quite early in the Church's history there

appeared signs of such a conflict. There arose in the second century a sect of Christians called *Montanists*, who wished to revive what they believed to have been the practice of the primitive Church in setting the authority of specially inspired prophets above that of the ordained ministry. They did not indeed want to abolish bishops, but they did not believe that the chief authority lay with them, but with certain men and women who were believed to be prophets, because they had the power of going into trances and ecstasies, in which they claimed to receive special revelations from the Spirit. The chief revelation given was that the return of Christ was very imminent, and that the Church must prepare for it by the most rigorous separation from the world; all worldly occupations were to cease, marriages were to be dissolved, and severe asceticism to be practised. But the very extravagance of these claims shows just where the danger lies of trusting only or chiefly to the special inspiration of individuals, and not to a regularly constituted ministry, whose business it is to 'try the spirits whether they be of God'. We know well in India how apt people are to mistake the outward signs of great mental excitement, trances, 'speaking with tongues', visions etc. for spiritual revelations: but all the great masters of Christian spiritual life, from St. Paul downwards, have warned us that this is not so. They *may* be signs of intense spiritual life, as the 'speaking with tongues' was on the Day of Pentecost: but they may also be no more than signs of an over-excited mental condition and may be very gravely misleading. Hence the need for some wise and universally recognized authority to save men from being 'like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine'. What we need to pray for is both that God will send us prophets who shall make known His will for each new generation, and also that the Church may be so 'ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors' that it may not fail through formalism and rigidity to recognize and receive such new messages from God when they come.

Meanwhile we may close this chapter with thankful remembrance that it is due in great measure to the long

centuries of a uniform system of faith and order that the foundations of the Christian faith were well and deeply laid before the Church began to be split up into those pieces which are still apart. So that even nowadays, in spite of the years of schism and controversy we find that when men of all Churches meet together to discuss their differences in a spirit of charity, as at Lausanne in 1927, they still find a large solid body of agreement from which to start their discussions.

CHAPTER V

The Eucharist in the Early Church

The universal episcopate was not the only bond of union in the early Church, nor even the most important. Episcopacy was developed not in order to make the Church one, but in order to preserve and give form to its real principle of unity, which is the divine life given to Christians by the Holy Spirit; just as a man's body, with its skeleton, nervous system and blood circulation is developed to give form and expression to the mysterious personality that is the real principle of its unity. When the unity of the body is impaired by dislocation, disease, mutilation, the personality suffers loss and becomes weakened and ineffective, but it cannot become utterly destroyed, even by death. So the life of the Church, the Body of Christ, has been sadly weakened by its dislocations and disharmonies, but it cannot be utterly destroyed, for it is *God's own life*, given through the risen, exalted Lord by the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament we get glimpses of ways in which the primitive Church expressed the sense of its oneness *with* Christ and its oneness *in* Christ. One way was by a sharing of all worldly goods (Acts iv. 32-35) and (when this later proved impracticable for the Church as a whole), by emphasizing almsgiving and care of the poor as a duty of all Christians. Another way was by the common fellowship meal, or *Agape* (Love-feast), as it was called, which was a special development of the Jewish

custom of *Kiddush*. The Kiddush was a semi-religious meal held by families, or by groups of friends or by a Rabbi and his disciples, especially on the eve of the Sabbath or of feasts, where, as part of the ritual of the meal, bread and wine were solemnly blessed by the host or someone else appointed to do it, and were partaken of by all as a symbol of unity. Now the Christians felt themselves to be all one big family, whatever their race and nation; they were all of one caste, as we should say in India, and it became the custom for every conveniently situated group of Christians to meet in one another's houses for the Agape, the feast of fellowship.

But our Lord had put quite a new meaning into the Kiddush when He held it for the last time with His Apostles on the eve of His Passion. It is very unlikely that that 'Last Supper' was the Passover meal, for St. John says that our Lord was crucified on the day on which the Passover lambs were slain, so the Passover meal would have been eaten on Friday, not on Thursday evening. We can then be pretty sure that this Last Supper was the Kiddush that it would be natural for our Lord to hold with His little circle of intimate friends on the eve of the Passover feast. But this time, when He took the bread and blessed and broke it, and also the cup of wine, He said something quite new, which changed the whole meaning of the rite. He said 'This is my body . . . this is my blood . . . eat and drink . . . do this in remembrance of me'.

In the first three Gospels, which tell of this incident, we find no explanation of it, and indeed it is hardly likely that the Apostles understood at the time what our Lord meant. But from the writings of St. Paul and St. John we can understand what it had come to mean after Pentecost. It is clear that when the Christians held their Kiddush or Agape, they also made this solemn memorial of the Lord's death, repeating His words over the bread and wine; and it is quite certain that they would be commemorating no absent Lord. They had His promise 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them', and also His mysterious words about

the bread and wine 'This is my body . . . my blood'. So that it came to be believed among them that the blessing of the bread and wine in their fellowship feast did actualize the presence of Christ in a new and special way; and that when they ate the bread and drank the wine, they were really and truly taking into themselves spiritual food, the life of Christ Himself, His flesh and blood. Certainly this is the teaching that appears in St. Paul's words in 1 Cor. x. 16, 17, and also in St. John vi., where it goes back to our Lord's own words about His flesh being 'given for the life of the world'.

We can see how the important thing about this Eucharist, as it was called to distinguish it from the ordinary food also eaten at these Love-feasts, is that it was not just a feast of fellowship between *men* who shared a common faith, but a feast of union with *Christ* and with one another *in Christ*; more than this, it was an actual renewing and re-inforcing of that union by a fresh imparting of the 'spiritual food of His body and blood'. This inner meaning of the Sacrament was held without dispute by all Christians from the New Testament times up to the Protestant Reformation. And all through that time it was round the Eucharist that the whole worship and devotion of the Church was centred. It was always the principal service on Sundays and holy days, and was looked upon first as a great corporate act of the whole Church, the offering of a spiritual sacrifice to God. There was first of all the commemoration of Christ's own offering of Himself upon the cross; and in union with that the Christians offered their gifts, the bread and wine and alms for the poor, their praises and thanksgivings, and their own selves for the service of God. The very name for this service still preserved in the Syrian Church of Malabar, *Kurbana*, means the Offering, that is, the Sacrifice.

In a later chapter we shall have to see how this Sacrament of unity came to be degraded into the chief sign of disunion between the different parts of the Church. Here let us try if we can, to get behind all the controversy and dogmas and denials of dogma that are so blinding to our minds, and see what the primitive undivided Church was

doing when Sunday by Sunday, it celebrated the Eucharist in the early morning. For that early Eucharist was full of rich meaning, and the tragedy of our divisions is that we have split up its rich harmony, and each sect of Christians has gone off with some particular aspect or aspects of it and rejected or forgotten others, with the result that we have all been impoverished in our conception of it.

Listen then to this description from a writer in the middle of the second century, Justin the Martyr:—

'Having ended the prayers we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine and water: and he, taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and gives thanks at considerable length for being counted worthy of these things from Him. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying "Amen". And then those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the Eucharistised bread and wine, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion. And this food is called among us Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing for the remission of sins, and for regeneration, and who is so living as Christ enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, took both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is Eucharistised by the prayer of the Word from Him, and from which our flesh and blood by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the Apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called "Gospels" have thus delivered that it had been so enjoined on them: that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks said, "Do this in remembrance of me, this is my Body"; and

that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said "This is my Blood", and imparted it to them only . . . . .

'And they who are well-to-do and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours orphans and widows, and those . . . in want, and those in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us . . . And Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly.'

And here is another testimony, from St. Irenaeus, a little later:—

'Now the Church alone, offers the pure Oblation to the Creator, offering to Him with the giving of thanks, the things from His creation . . . Our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion. For we offer to Him His own, proclaiming consistently the Fellowship, confessing the union of flesh and spirit. For as the bread which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but the Eucharist . . . so our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of resurrection to eternity.'

Lastly, here is a beautiful thought from the great Augustine, a couple of centuries later still:—

'If then you are the Body of Christ, and His members, then that which is on the altar is the mystery of yourselves; receive the mystery of yourselves. You hear what you are, and you answer "Amen", and confirm the truth by your answer; for you hear the words "The Body of Christ" and you answer "Amen". Live as a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be truthful.'

Commemoration, thanksgiving, sacrifice, the mystery of communion with Christ, and the mystery of communion with one another in Christ, all these are represented in these three quotations, showing without a doubt how this richness of meaning was a vital part of the common tradition of the whole Church both in east and west. May we not hope that the Church in India will be content with no one-

sided and impoverished conception of the Sacrament, but that it will rather try again to incorporate all its many aspects into one noble and worthy rite, which shall be neither merely eastern nor merely western, but really and fully Christian?

This presentation of the primitive Eucharist brings out another marked characteristic of the early undivided Church, which like so much else, has been partly obscured by our divisions. This is its essentially sacramental character. By this I do not mean merely that it possessed certain rites which were called Sacraments, and on which great emphasis was laid, but rather that its whole life was interpreted sacramentally. The Church was always thought of as a double thing, what the Eastern theologians call a 'Dual-entity'; and everything about it partakes of this dual character. It is a union of divine and human, spiritual and material, heavenly and earthly, just as our Lord's own Personality is a mysterious union of God and Man. The Church is a human society, but not merely human, because the life in it, the principle of unity in it, is not merely human, but divine-human; it is God's own life poured into the human. The Sacraments are outward signs, material things, but not only signs, because by the word of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they are made the actual channels through which the spiritual gifts they symbolize come to us. They are not only 'outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us', but they are also, by Christ's own ordinance, made 'the means whereby we receive that grace, and a pledge to assure us thereof' (Catechism from the Book of Common Prayer).

When men are content to believe this simply on our Lord's word and the word of His Apostles, all is well. But when their restless minds begin to probe into the mystery and say 'How are God and Man one in Christ?' or 'In what sense exactly are the bread and wine of the Eucharist the Body and Blood of Christ?', then difficulties arise; because no theory of men's minds can adequately explain the mystery. Consequently, when any theory is put forward, someone else is sure to deny it, and factions

arise. There are two ways in which they may cause schism in the Church. Either the inventor of the theory and his followers are so sure they are right that, even though the Church authorities may reject their theory, they insist on teaching it as the only true one, and so form a *heresy*: we shall have to note some examples of this in a later chapter. Or the Church authorities themselves accept one theory and make it into a dogma binding on all, as the Roman Catholic Church has done with the theory of transubstantiation. The result of this is that men whose minds and consciences are offended at this dogmatism are driven into revolt and schism, as happened at the Reformation; and this nearly always means that in denying the inadequate theory they deny also the mystery it tries to explain. But if only Christians would remember that our Lord in the Sacraments deliberately gave us common *acts* to unite us, and not common *opinions*, we should be able to hold together in faith and love, while at the same time allowing great variety of opinion and practice. There will doubtless always be some Christians whose spiritual life centres round the Sacraments, and who are moved to express their sense of the presence of their Lord in the Eucharist with all manner of outward beauty and dignity of ceremonial, music, reverent gesture: and there will always be others who prefer the simple inward adoration of the heart, and who fear the danger of formalism wherever an outward rite is given the place of chief importance. Neither need condemn or despise the other, and both will be losers unless they can come to understand and appreciate each other's ways. For above all things we need to recover the belief that the Eucharist is the corporate act of the Church acting as one whole, and not just a private relationship of each individual with his Lord. 'We are all one bread, one body, for we all partake of the one Bread.' We may well hope that in India, which has always shown a special genius for perceiving and holding to the spiritual unity that underlies all outward differences, the true balance and harmony may be found between unity of faith and great variety of custom, in this matter of the Church's Sacraments.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHURCH THINKS OUT HER FAITH

CHRISTIANITY is not a creed or a system, but a great experience, individual and corporate. But it is an experience of the whole man, his mind and body as well as his heart and spirit: therefore it is something that has not only to be lived but thought about, so that man may grow in wisdom and understanding as well as in goodness and holiness. Besides this, the experience has to be explained to others, so that they may share it; as St. John says 'That which we have heard and seen declare we unto you also, that ye may have fellowship with us' (1 John i. 3): this means that it must be clearly thought out.

The Christian experience is an experience of *God*: it is the result of a revelation, a showing forth of Himself by God, of His nature, character and purpose: therefore all Christian thinking is centred about the idea of God, that is, it is *Theology* (this is a Greek word which means thought about God). Christian theology is an inexhaustible subject, and one which is never allowed to rest. It began as soon as ever the first disciples of Christ asked, or tried to explain to others, who was that wonderful Being who had appeared among them, and what exactly was His relation to the one supreme holy God, the Lord of the whole earth, in whom the Jews had learnt to put their faith.

We find the beginning of the answer in the writings of St. Paul, St. John and the unknown author of the epistle to the Hebrews, and they all teach that Christ is the eternal Son of God made man: that He existed as Son of God before His birth in the world, and He exists as man as well as God ever since, but with a new glorified humanity freed from all our limitations (see e.g. John i. 1-18; Heb. i. 1-4; Col. i. 12-17; Phil. ii. 5-11). But the Jews were not a people who were much given to speculation, asking how and why things are what they are. It was when the Gospel spread amongst the Greek-educated part of the Roman Empire, that it acted as a ferment in men's minds, and they started speculating about it. 'How

can God have a Son? . . . How can God become man? . . . How could God die?' and so on.

Now it is important to realize that the leaders of the Church did not first think out a theology, and then declare it necessary for all Christians to believe it, and excommunicate as heretics all those who refused to accept it on the Church's authority. What actually happened is something like this:—Some Christian, or possibly even a non-Christian, who liked thinking things out, produced a theory about the nature of God or the person of Christ or the way of salvation, which seemed to him to be true. He then taught it publicly and won followers. If he were a conceited person, or if his followers were unwise, they preached it as if it must be the only true one, and everybody who did not agree with it was a fool or worse. That naturally started controversy, and bitter things were said on both sides, perhaps there were excommunications and appeals to the bishops.

Then the bishops act. They examine the man's teaching and generally take counsel together about it, perhaps writing to bishops of other provinces for their opinion. If the teaching does not seem to them to be a true interpretation of Scripture and of Christian experience, they say so.

That is the test of the teacher. If he is a humble, loyal man, even if he may still think he is right, he submits to the judgment of the Church, believing that in time the Holy Spirit will either convince him of error or lead the bishops into the fuller truth. But if he is conceited and self-willed, he resists the decision, and with the more hot-headed of his followers continues to preach his own interpretation. The bishops may then proceed to excommunication, and then the teacher and his disciples may separate themselves and become a sect, which may go on for many years or die out in a few.

It is of course also a test of the wisdom and charity of the bishops. They may judge hastily: they may not give the accused teacher time to explain his position properly; they may be mistaken and tyrannical, trying to force him against his conscience to confess himself in error. But

these dangers were minimized by having a number of bishops of joint authority and responsibility in all parts of the Empire, so that a teacher who felt himself unfairly condemned by one bishop or provincial synod, could appeal to others, and then at an œcumenical (general) council he might be acquitted. As long as the Church was a truly international body, this system worked well: it was later, when religious questions were complicated by all kinds of national and racial considerations, that abuses crept in. In this early period, because Rome was the chief city of the Empire, the Bishops, or Popes, of Rome came to be appealed to more frequently than any other by those who thought they had been unfairly condemned, and we find that nearly always they dealt wisely, tolerantly and justly. This is certainly one of the things that helped to give the Papacy its extraordinary prestige.

During the first three centuries, when the Church was being persecuted by the Roman Emperors, these consultations of bishops were informal and there were no œcumenical councils. But after Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Empire, he himself called œcumenical councils of bishops to decide theological controversies, and they then became the recognized way of expressing the mind of the Church. These old controversies have left such a tragic heritage of bitterness in Christendom, that it is well to remember just why that was. Controversy in itself is good and necessary; it is the way men are stimulated to think, just as in our student days we learn to think through discussions and debates. But in this good field of fertile thought and desire for truth, the Enemy sows the tares of pride, self-will, overbearingness, uncharitableness, envy, slander, factiousness, so that it becomes almost impossible for the ordinary person to distinguish between what is true and false, and the rank and file of men line themselves on one side or the other according to their own private prejudices or loyalties. And, as has been already said, after the Emperor came into the field as the convenor of councils, and the enforcer of their decisions, the whole matter was still more confused by

political and racial questions; and we in India know only too well what that means.

In this chapter we are going to deal only with the time before Constantine, when it is possible to see more clearly what the Church was contending against. We will first see what some of the false teachings were which obliged the Church to think out her faith; and then go on to consider the way in which she met the challenge. Nor are we dealing only with 'old unhappy far-off things, and battles long ago', for there is not one of these misinterpretations of Christianity which is not living in a modern form amongst us now in India.

The first noteworthy difficulty was with people of Greek education, who said that if Christ was God He could not really have died. (You remember how St. Paul had said that the Gospel of Christ crucified was 'foolishness' to the Greek—1 Cor. i. 23). So these people taught that He must merely have *seemed* to die; hence they were called *Docetists* (from a Greek word meaning to seem). Some of them wrote new 'Gospels' in which His passion and death are represented as a kind of make-believe, the sufferings of a dummy figure, into whom the Son of God had temporarily entered at his Baptism, and which He left again before the Passion. This unwillingness to believe in a suffering, dying God is not uncommon amongst Hindus, to whom pain is a kind of weakness in a truly great and holy man, while the idea is so abhorrent to Moslems that Mohammed himself teaches the Docetic idea of Christ's death in the Koran. I have also heard a Theosophist in India deny the reality of our Lord's suffering. But we can see how this view of Christ not only disregards all the New Testament teaching of His atoning death and life-giving resurrection, but also drags Him down to the level of the many stories in Greek or Hindu mythology of gods who come for a time to live among men in human form, but who are always very careful to display their supernatural power if any one takes a liberty with them. No Docetist could say of Christ what St. Paul does in Phil. ii. 5-7 or St. John in 1 John iv. 7-10.

Then there was an interesting man called *Marcion*, who lived about the middle of the second century. He attempted to deal with what has often been a problem to men's minds in modern times. How can the loving Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be the same as the vengeful, stern, punishing Jehovah of the Old Testament? For his solution he seems to have found a suggestion in the Persian religion, Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Parsees, a form of which was having a good deal of influence in the Roman Empire at that time. In that religion it was taught that there were two great superhuman powers, a good God and a bad spirit, between whom there was continual strife, though it was believed that the good God would win in the end. We can still see the influence of this religion in the popular idea of Satan: but Marcion put forward the very bold theory that the two spirits were represented by the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New. He teaches that Jehovah was an inferior spirit, the creator and ruler of this world, jealous and vengeful, who delighted in wars and ruled the world by a rigid law, punishing severely those who transgressed it. But Jesus came from the Father-God, who is greater than Jehovah, and He was sent to do away with the Law, and all the works of the God of law.

The really important thing about Marcion is that he obliged the Church to say authoritatively what was and what was not 'Scripture'. Up to this time there was no universally recognized New Testament. There were a great number of Gospels, Epistles and Acts of Christ and His Apostles going about, some true, some merely romances; and though there was special authority attached to the four Gospels that we know, and to the epistles of St. Paul, still it was not at all clear what if any of the other books were equally authentic. Besides, in an age when there was no printing, but all books had to be copied by hand, it would be far more difficult to stop the circulation of erroneous copies, or even to decide definitely which were erroneous. The result is that heretics not only made new 'Gospels' and 'Epistles' to propagate their own ideas, but also made mutilated copies of those that already

existed, so as to leave out everything that did not fit in with their ideas. Marcion did this with particular cleverness and skill, so that the Church leaders had to do something to counteract his work. The full list of New Testament books as we now have them was not completed until about the fifth century, for there was for long a difference of opinion over certain books, notably the book of Revelation, and the Epistles of James, Jude and Peter, and also some other books which are not now in the New Testament but which were at first sometimes included in it. We have an interesting list coming from the Church in Rome shortly before 200, which is almost the same as our New Testament, and which speaks of two 'letters forged under the name of Paul 'to suit the heresy of Marcion'. Another list is given by the historian of the Church, Bishop Eusebius of Cæsarea, in the 4th century. Eusebius mentions a number of disputed and rejected writings and expressly says: 'We have felt compelled to give this catalogue in order that we might be able to know both these works and those that are quoted by the heretics under the name of the Apostles . . . which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings.' By the 5th century practically all the Churches had the same list, and at a general council in 691 this 'canon' or list of scripture was given the authority of the whole Church.

We must not think that these writers of false Gospels were evil men, deliberately trying to deceive. They were quite sincere in their beliefs, and their works can be compared to the large number of 'lives of Christ' that have appeared in our own day. These are often stimulating and suggestive to convinced Christians; but they cannot give us more than one man's interpretation of the Perfect Life, and no one man can give the whole truth: and some of them, which deliberately reject the traditional interpretation of the life of Christ, and suppress stories of miracles or of the Virgin-birth or the empty tomb, can be as misleading as the 'heretical' Gospels of the early days, and ought to be used with great caution.

As to Marcion's main point, that the God of the Old

Testament and the God of the New are two different beings, it does I think give a challenge to us to take care that we never fail to interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New. An enormous amount of harm has certainly been done in the past, and still is done, by people taking the Old Testament as equal in value to the New, and in every word inspired by God. Men have cursed their fellow-Christians with Old Testament curses, they have made 'holy wars' in imitation of the Old Testament: they have frightened children away from the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by teaching them to fear an angry, vengeful God who may strike them dead for all manner of little faults. But we must not take Marcion's way out of the difficulty. It is not *God* who has changed or is divided: it is men's minds that have only gradually been able to recognize Him for what He is and always has been. The full light is in the character of Christ: 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.'

The opinions of Marcion really belong to a whole class of teachings which were rife both within and without the Church in the second and third centuries, but I took him separately as he has some special characteristics of his own. This class of heresies is called *Gnosticism;* and Gnosticism is in many ways so very much like Theosophy, that it is valuable for us in India to study it. We can see very clearly how it arose, and why it attracted people so much; also why the Catholic Church had to work so strenuously against its subtle influence. Gnosticism was the direct result of religious syncretism, that is of the mixture of religions. It comes of the very natural desire to believe that all religions are true, and that there is a large fund of beliefs and practices common to them all, while the differences are either the result of false ideas or they just do not matter and can be ignored. This is a very common attitude of mind nowadays all over the world, but particularly in India. Gnosticism and Theosophy however go one step further than this, and work out a philosophy which will harmonize all the seeming contradictions of the different religions, and make one great 'Religion of religions'. This is what is claimed by some

modern teachers of revived Hinduism, the Ramkrishna Missionaries for instance.

Secondly, Gnosticism, like Theosophy, comes from intellectual people, who look on religion as rather a way of knowledge than a way of living. (The word Gnostic comes from a Greek word meaning Knowledge). It does not begin with preaching a Gospel to the poor, sinful, needy and outcast, but teaches that salvation comes by knowing something about the nature of God and man, and this knowledge is a secret revelation given only to those who have been 'initiated', i.e., who have undergone some long course of discipline or secret learning. This again reminds one of the discipline of Yoga required for the Gnana Marga in Hinduism. Indeed the Gnostic systems, like the Theosophical, came originally from the East, perhaps from Buddhism. We have seen how the port of Alexandria was the great link between the Roman Empire and the East; it was also a great centre of learning and culture, and it was from Alexandria that some of the principal Gnostic teachers came.

The third thing to notice about Gnosticism is that it teaches that evil is seated not in a wrong will, but in the conditions of physical life. The spirit of man is good, a 'spark' from God; but it is imprisoned in a gross body, from which it must be set free: 'the body is the shell of the soul.' The pure spiritual God cannot Himself have created matter: that has been produced by a series of 'emanations' each grosser than the last. Thus the Gnostics denied that God was 'Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible'. And when they tried to fit Christ into their scheme, they presented Him as a Saviour, not from *sin*, but from *flesh*. So naturally, they could not think of His Incarnation as real, as 'the Word made Flesh', nor His death and resurrection. All Gnostics were Docetists.

The contempt and abuse of the body which the Gnostics taught was not new. It is a very ancient kind of false teaching, and we know it well in India. It is an idea that many Christians have never quite succeeded in getting away from, for example, those extreme ascetics who

have neglected and tortured their bodies, or Puritans, who have feared their natural bodily instincts and appetites and looked upon them as shameful. The proper corrective to this teaching is the Catholic belief in the Incarnation of the Son of God: 'hereby know we the Spirit of God; every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God' (1 John iv. 2). God created our flesh, and God in His Son took that flesh on Himself, and so sanctified it and all its instincts and faculties: and our flesh, our bodies, are to share in the glorious life of the children of God, just as our Lord's body was also glorified and taken up into union with God in heaven. 'I believe in the resurrection of the flesh.'

Gnosticism is older than Christianity, and Gnostics were not at first Christians. But when they came into contact with Christianity they tried to fit it also into their scheme for harmonizing all religions, and many Christians were led astray. For like Theosophy it would bid a man start from his own religion, and persuade him that he did not have to cease to be a Christian to become a Gnostic, but that Gnosticism would bring him into a higher knowledge of the truth. This is a kind of teaching which is very attractive to people who have active intellects, especially if they have not had a sound scholarly education. Deeper learning and philosophical training, if it is based on reverence for historical and scientific fact, shows how untrue it is that all religions are the same, and how purely imaginary the Gnostic speculations are.

How did the Catholic Church answer the challenge of these mistaken teachers? Her first great champion was *Irenaeus*, Bishop of Lyons in South France, from whom we quoted the passage about the Eucharist in the last chapter. He lived from 133 to 203 and wrote and lectured for years in Rome against the heresies of the Gnostics. His book is still the standard work of reference for those who wish to study the subject. Irenaeus has one main line of answer to give the Gnostics; that is to insist upon the Apostolic tradition of the Church and the testimony of the Scriptures. He is the first to appeal to an unbroken succession of

bishops from the Apostles, and though we cannot accept his account of these as quite certain, still we have already seen how the Church gained in truth and unity by the universal establishment of this episcopal order, with its outward continuity.

We must remember too that the tradition to which Irenaeus appeals is not a tradition of opinions or dogmas, but primarily a tradition of *facts*, historical events, of which the Apostles were eye-witnesses. The Church Fathers do not appeal to the Apostles' opinions as Theosophists to Madame Blavatsky, or Christian Scientists to Mrs. Eddy, or Hindus to this or that Swami: they appeal to them as witnesses of the facts of Christ's life, death and resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit: and the record of these things, and of God's preparation of the Jewish race to receive them, are to be found in Holy Scripture. This is what is called in the Epistle of Jude 'the faith once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3), and it gives us a test for all new and old interpretations of the Christian faith. The first question to be asked is 'Does this agree with what the Bible says?' And, because people can interpret the Bible in any way that suits them, there is a second question 'Does this agree with the teaching of the Fathers of the Church?'

However, it is very clear that one reason why Gnosticism had such a hold on people's minds was that the Church had not been appealing enough to men's minds. Unless the Church can give good reasons for her teaching, and keep abreast of modern knowledge, thinking men and women are bound to go after this or that attractive modern theory, or to make up ones of their own. The first Catholic Christians to grasp this, and to try to give thinking Christians a *Christian* 'Gnosis', that is, a Christian philosophy, in place of the Gnostic one, were a group of men in the university town of Alexandria in the third century. Alexandria was at that time the most famous centre of pagan learning in the Roman Empire. The dominant philosophy was that of Plato (who lived in the fifth century before Christ): but it had become mixed with mysticism from the East, most probably from India, and is

usually called Neo-Platonism (i.e., the New Platonism). As we have seen, Alexandria was also a great centre of Gnosticism. About the year 100 Bishop Pantaenus boldly founded a Catechetical School, or, as we should call it, a theological college, in Alexandria, and deliberately taught Christian philosophy and theology to counteract the influence of pagan learning. The names of the two greatest lecturers in this College are *Clement* (150-213) and *Origen* (185-254). These men frankly used Platonist philosophy to interpret Christianity, and by so doing they brought into the Church an entirely new attitude to pagan learning, and cut the ground from under the feet of the Gnostics. It is much as if the Church in India should found a theological college in Benares, and there teach Hindu philosophy with a Christian interpretation. These great Christian scholars realized that there was a great store of truth and wisdom in the writings of the Greek philosophers, and they believed that God who had prepared the Hebrews through the Prophets for the coming of Christ, had also in great measure prepared the Gentiles through the wise men of Greece. Ever since the days of Clement and Origen the influence of the two greatest Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, has been very strong in the Christian Church; we may even think that there has been too exclusively Greek an influence on Christian theology, and that perhaps there needs to be a new interpretation of Christian experience in terms of Indian and Chinese thought, when it shall please God to send us a Clement and Origen to do it. But it must be remembered that both these great thinkers were firmly Christian in insisting that faith is the true way to knowledge, and salvation does not come by knowledge, but by 'faith working in love'; firmly Christian too in their loyalty to Scripture and to Apostolic tradition. They were not like the Gnostics trying to fit Christianity into a pagan philosophy; rather they were testing and judging that philosophy by the standard of Christian faith, rejecting whatever was inconsistent with it, and entirely reinterpreting what seemed by that standard to be true. So too in the last resort, the test of any future Indian

Christian theology will be not how *Indian* it is, but how *Christian.*

The Church had to go on dealing with heretical teaching for another three centuries before her faith was formulated in the Creeds; but this was after Christianity had been made the official religion of the Empire and so belongs to the second part of this book.

CHAPTER VII

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

WE have seen how the Church grew into a body which was more and more One, Catholic and Apostolic; but what about its *holiness,* for this is undoubtedly the most important of all its characteristics? 'If the salt have lost its savour, it is fit for nothing'. St. Paul and the other New Testament writers constantly told their converts that they were 'called to be saints', that is, to be holy; for that word 'saint' means consecrated to God. This is what the Old Testament means by being 'holy', and the Hebrews were taught that they must be holy because God is holy (see Lev. xix. 2 and 1 Pet. i. 15, 16).

We have unfortunately come to restrict the meaning of 'saint', so that we take it to mean somebody who is already perfect in character, quite different from ordinary people, and therefore not something that every Christian is called to be. It would be good if we could get back to the New Testament meaning of the word, especially in its corporate sense, and think of the Church as 'a holy nation, a people for God's own possession', holy because it belongs to God, has been bought by God, and is indwelt by God's Holy Spirit, so that all its members are 'saints', consecrated to God (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17).

But we can see how even in St. Paul's day, the holiness of the Church was continually being spotted by human sin and frailty: yet as long as its members abide in the Body of Christ, and do not cease to strive for greater purity and love, so long can they truly be called saints: 'for He which began a good work in them will perfect it' (Phil.

i. 6). Therefore what we must ask of each period of Church history is not whether all the members of the Church were faultless imitators of Christ, which we know they have never been in any age, but was the Church in the main, and as compared with those outside it, on the side of holiness and righteousness? In this chapter we are again only going to ask this question of the first three centuries. Was this new society, so strong, so united, so steadfast under persecution, truly the salt which preserved the world of that day from utter corruption?

Christianity is the only religion which teaches clearly that piety and morality are absolutely dependent on one another, so that it is impossible to please God except by being good, and impossible to be good except by the power and grace of God. This is because in Christianity the ideal of goodness is not man's own ideal for himself, nor is it a code of conduct, as in Mohammedanism; but it arises out of the revealed character of God Himself, as Justice, Purity, Love. In other religions morality may be and is preached, and here and there very high standards may be attained; but they are not based on the character of God, and so have no firmer foundation than man's own changeable mind. Meanwhile people still go on thinking that they can please God in some other way than by a good life, by rituals or sacrifices or bodily asceticism, or that they can be good of themselves without the grace of God given through the death of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In the Roman Empire of the first four centuries there were many teachers of good life, but their teaching was not based on religion, i.e., on the character and will of the one holy God. Religiously inclined people were joining the various 'Mystery religions', which may be compared to the inner circles of the Bhakti sects in India, each devoted to some particular devata or swami; from these they got exciting and uplifting emotions, but no real purification of life, or stimulus to good conduct. The mass of the people were going on with the formal religions of their race or tribe which were bound up with public life, the welfare of the crops or the state or the city, and had little

or no connection with private morality. Meanwhile the mixture of races and religions that produced syncretism and Gnosticism on one hand, worked on the other to break down old accepted standards of right and wrong, so that there was widespread moral degradation, especially sexual impurity. People delighted in the cruel shows given in the circus, the places of public entertainment:—men fighting to the death with other men or with wild beasts, torturing of criminals, and so on. Many of the Christian martyrs suffered in this way as part of a public entertainment, being thrown to lions, or burnt alive, or tortured to death. There was also a widespread fashion for the long-drawn out, luxurious public baths, with hot and cold water, steam, massage, perfuming of the body, which all helped to make people soft and sensual. Above all there was the universal custom of slavery, and no law to prevent evil masters from using slave women and boys for impure purposes, and no check on the cruel punishments which might be inflicted on slaves.

Now it is quite clear not only from Christian writings, but from non-Christian ones as well, that the Christians came quickly to be noted for two outstanding virtues, Philanthropy and Purity. From the first they followed our Lord's commands and example in ministering to the poor, the sick, prisoners etc., not only amongst their own members, but amongst the heathen as well. The churches quickly became sanctuaries for all kinds of poor and oppressed people, runaway slaves, widows, orphans. And Christian philanthropy did not stop, as heathen kindness generally does, with merely giving occasional alms to beggars, but it gave personal service, actual nursing of the sick, regular doles and pensions for the destitute, homes for the waifs. There were definite attempts made too by Church leaders to reform some of the worst social abuses. Slavery strange to say, they do not seem to have denounced, nor even to have forbidden to Christians; but the influence of the Church directly brought about a mitigation of the cruelty with which slaves were treated. We find that when Christianity was made the official religion of the Empire, the bishops had acquired such

moral authority that the Emperor gave them legal authority also in certain cases, for example, to prevent selling and kidnapping of children and the selling of women as prostitutes, to set free slaves whose masters had outraged them, to supervise prison conditions. And it was owing to the influence of the Church that in 315 crucifixion as a punishment was abolished.

Secondly, Christian purity was the wonder of the ancient world. That world was familiar with the practice of celibacy by individuals who aspired to live what was called 'the philosophic life', secluded from the world, and devoted to the study of philosophy and spiritual things. But the idea of continence as right and possible for all, both men and women, before marriage, and of self-restraint and absolute faithfulness in marriage, for men as well as women, was new and wonderful. So also was the spectacle of numbers of consecrated 'virgins', men and women, who voluntarily abstained from marriage, in order that they might be more 'careful for the things of the Lord, how they might please the Lord' (1 Cor. vii. 32).

The Christian ideal of chastity both within and without marriage, as founded on our Lord's own teaching, is indeed so high and so unique, that the Church itself has found great difficulty in grasping it. It has been continually pulled by heathen influence towards a lower ideal of marriage on the one hand, and on the other towards the idea that celibacy is in itself a higher state than marriage. This was taught by Gnostics and other heretics, as it had been taught earlier by Buddhists and other eastern teachers, and naturally Catholic Christians did not want to seem to be surpassed in sacrifice and earnestness by heretics and heathen. The Church certainly always insisted that marriage was holy and a vocation from God, but from very early days there was a tendency to treat virgins as holier than married people, and also to demand celibacy of the clergy, though this was not made a binding rule in the western Church until late in the Middle Ages, and in the eastern Churches it has been required only of bishops, who are therefore always chosen from among the monks.

All through its history the Church of Christ has had to try and keep its ideal of holiness pure from laxity on the one hand, and too narrow a strictness on the other. There have always been groups of Christians of all denominations who have grown impatient with the slowness of the leaven's working, and who have tried to insist on every member of the Church conforming to some one rigorous standard of conduct. Thus they have at various times tried to make all Christians celibate, vegetarian, teetotallers, pacifists; to forbid them the theatre, the dance hall, the race-course, to make them all dress in the same severe way; to refuse them absolution for certain sins. But on the whole the general mind of the Church has rejected these Christian Pharisees, as not showing the true spirit of the Gospel, and echoed St. Paul's cry 'With freedom did Christ set us free . . . All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any' (Gal. v. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 12). One of the first splits in the Church came over a question of discipline, whether those who had denied Christ in order to escape persecution, could be received back into communion with the Church if they repented and were willing to do penance to show their sorrow: and in this case, as in most others, those who separated themselves were the rigorists, and the Church as a whole followed the more merciful policy.

In the first three centuries the general tendency of Church discipline was however a good deal more strict than it afterwards became. Grave sins had to be atoned for by public penance, often lifelong, and for certain sins absolution was not permitted more than once after Baptism. In every case in these early centuries, the power of excommunication and of absolution was in the hands of the bishops, as the successors of the Apostles, to whom our Lord had said 'Whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained' (John xx. 23).

This strictness had two unfortunate consequences. In some parts of the Church it was ignored because it was felt to be too impossibly heavy a yoke, and so these

Churches fell into grave laxity: and on the other hand many individuals put off their Baptism until late in life, or until some serious illness made them fear death, because they did not believe that they could keep their baptismal vow unbroken. These abuses led to many modifications of the system, and especially to the practice of private confession to priests to whom the bishop delegated his authority to pronounce absolution, so that penitents were spared the scandal and shame of public penance except for very grave open sins. And in time this practice of confession became the normal recognized way of preparing to receive Holy Communion, in all the Churches both of east and west, as it is to this day in most episcopal Churches.

One of the constant sources of perplexity to Christians in those early days was that of their relation to the public life of the heathen state. Because in those days any kind of public function always had a religious side to it. The Roman gods and goddesses were sacrificed to, the 'Genius of the Emperor' was worshipped, idols were generally present at state banquets, the very food sold in the bazaars had often been first offered in idol temples. What was a Christian to do? Was he to keep apart from public life altogether? The following quotation from Tertullian, Bishop of Carthage in North Africa about the year 200, shows at once the difficulty, and the kind of way in which one of the more strict of Church leaders met it:—

'A Christian may without endangering his salvation, assume the honours and title of public functions, if he does not offer sacrifices, nor authorize sacrifices, if he does not furnish victims (i.e., for the sacrifices), if he does not entrust anyone with the upkeep of temples, if he does not take part in the management of their income, if he does not give games (i.e., the public gladiatorial shows, with their cruel practices, as described above) at his own or at the public expense, if he does not preside at them, if he does not announce or arrange any festival, if he avoids all kinds of oaths, if he does not act as a judge, or put people into prison nor inflict torture upon them—But is all this possible?'

Amongst the uneducated of the Christians, and we must remember that this would be the larger number of them, the danger was one of dropping back into heathen customs and superstitions that did not seem to be harmful, and which they saw their heathen neighbours doing. We know well the kind of thing that here in India village Christians are continually being tempted to do—going to Hindu festivals and jatras for the fun of them, using charms and mantras, calling in sorcerers and astrologers, and such things. Another great problem was marriage between Christians and non-Christians: was it to be allowed?

On all these matters we find that there were usually two opinions, one more and one less strict. But when we study the period as a whole we find that as regards any kind of compromise with paganism, the discipline tended to be strict and uncompromising; but as regards the sins of ordinary human frailty, the tendency is for the merciful and forgiving spirit of the Lord to prevail. And this certainly seems to be true to the principles of Scripture: for all man's hope of living a good and holy life depends on his keeping absolutely intact the first Commandment, 'Thou shalt have none other gods beside Me' with our Lord's expansion of it 'Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy soul and with all thy strength'. The true mark of the Church's holiness is not a Pharisaic strictness of moral life, but a heartwhole loyalty to her Master, which would in time inevitably result in the forming in her children of this likeness as the leaven did its work.

PART II

'THEN APPEARED THE TARES ALSO': A THOUSAND YEARS OF MIXED GROWTH

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST GREAT SET-BACK

THE Gospel seed had been set by God to grow first in the comparatively ordered and peaceful garden ground of the Roman Empire. But now the time had come for it to spread and take root in the world beyond. And what a fierce and turbulent world it was! At that time besides the Roman Empire there were three other centres of civilisation in the world:

(1) *China*, which had reached great unity and prosperity under the Emperors of the Han dynasty, and at the beginning of the Christian era had extended its power as far as the River Oxus, and was trading with the Mediterranean lands. It was during this time that Buddhism was introduced into China.

(2) *India*, where the Mauryan dynasty had come to an end, and there was at this time great political anarchy, though the Hindu-Buddhist culture was well established.

(3) *Persia*, the nearest neighbour and chief rival of Rome, which attained fresh strength during the third and fourth centuries, and had its own fine ancient culture to preserve, and its national religion—Zoroastrianism.

But outside these patches of light was a great realm of darkness in which seething hordes of warlike uncivilized tribes wandered to and fro in restless waves, seeking better lands, places to settle in, and above all *loot*, that they knew was to be found in abundance in the royal palaces and religious temples of the civilized states. Thus there was not one of these civilized states that was not continually harried and terrorised by invading barbarians—Scythians and Huns in India, Turks and Mongols in China and Persia, Huns, Goths, Vandals and other Teutonic tribes

in Europe, Arabs in South-west Asia. From time to time a large number of barbarian tribes would be united under some chieftain with special gifts of leadership, like Alaric the Goth or Attila the Hun, and, not content with mere looting expeditions, would overrun, conquer and settle down in some of the more civilized lands, and in time would assimilate their culture themselves.

The history of the Christian Church for the next thousand years and more is closely bound up with these migratory waves of barbarians. It was one thing to put new life and salt into the dying civilisation of Greece and Rome, and quite another to face these fierce untamed tribes with the gospel of the love of God. Unless we remember what a stupendous task the Church was confronted with, we shall not be able to appreciate its achievements, and may be perhaps inclined to be too hard upon its failures and mistakes.

When Constantine became Emperor of Rome in A.D. 312, the Roman Empire had begun to be very seriously menaced by the barbarian tribes from the north and north-east, who were eventually to overthrow its power in the west altogether. Constantine did two things which were to have a great effect on the history both of the Church and the world: he established Christianity as the official religion of the Empire; and he abandoned Rome, and built himself a fine new city on the Bosphorus, the narrow cleft between Europe and Asia, and called it after himself *Constantinople*. For the next thousand years Constantinople and not Rome, was the centre of the imperial power, and of the ancient Greek civilisation, with its treasures of literature and art. This culture which centred in Constantinople is called *Byzantine*, from Byzantium, which was the former name of the city which Constantine rebuilt. Italy was left to the barbarians and the Christian Church.

The patronage of the Christian Church by the Emperors after the long years of persecution, brought it to a second great test, the test of prosperity, when the good seed was threatened with suffocation from the thorns of 'Worldly cares and the deceitfulness of riches and lusts of other

things' (Mark iv. 19). For the first time it paid to be a Christian from a worldly point of view. And inevitably all kinds of people came crowding into the Church from motives of worldly gain and advantage, without any real conversion of heart or any intention of accepting the high standard of Christ. To the 'nominal' Christians who were so only because they had been born and baptized and brought up in the Church, were added these new numbers of nominal 'converts'.

Besides this, the Christian Emperors considered themselves to be the lawful heads of the Church on earth, and they could see no reason why conformity to the doctrine and morals of Christianity should not be enforced, as Emperors and rulers had always enforced conformity to certain beliefs and rules of conduct. So begins the era in which Christians attempted to get the will of God done through the power of the State—an era from which Christendom is not yet fully set free. The teaching of the New Testament that God will force no man to obey Him, but will go to all lengths of loving self-sacrifice in trying to win him, was forgotten, and the fierce teaching of parts of the Old Testament that God rules by law and punishment seemed to have taken possession of men's minds. The tragic thing is that there does not seem to have been any protest from the leaders of the Church against this use of secular law and force to coerce men's beliefs and behaviour. We have to wait until after the Protestant Reformation twelve centuries later for this, and even then it is a protest raised at first only by the smaller sects who were never strong enough to use force themselves, but suffered much from persecution, which perhaps in part accounts for their belated belief in toleration.

And so we find that almost as soon as the Christians were themselves freed from persecution, they turned upon their late enemies and began to persecute them. That part of the Roman Empire which still remained pagan was forcibly christianized. There were imperial edicts against temples and sacrifices: pagans of important rank who refused to be baptized, were dismissed from office, their lands confiscated, themselves often sent into exile. True

there is not the same savagery in their punishments as had been used against the Christians; there was no torture, no death penalty. But we listen in vain for the raising of a Christian voice against this mistaken and unchristian policy. Even the greatest saints of the age, Bishop Ambrose of Milan, or Augustine of Hippo, justify it by reference to the saying in our Lord's parable of the great supper 'Compel them to come in' (Luke xiv. 23). So that not only was the Church flooded with nominal Christians who came for gain, but even by unwilling ones, blaspheming in their hearts. The mass of the people, ignorant villagers for the most part, were persuaded to change their religion by allowing them to keep many of their old festivals and holy places, only substituting the names of the Lord's Mother and other Christian saints for those of the gods and goddesses that they had worshipped there before. That is why in southern Europe there are still such strong emotions and superstitions centred round this or that shrine or image, Our Lady of this and Our Lady of that, or some holy well or rock or tree, and why in most countries of Europe there are all kinds of more or less harmless pagan survivals in the celebration of the great Christian festivals, for example, the mistletoe, yule log and Christmas tree. How thankful we may be in India for the stout Protestant conscience that has gradually commended itself to almost all parts of the Church, by which before even the humblest enquirer is admitted to Baptism some signs of personal acceptance of Christ and understanding of His claims, and of repentance and desire to live a new life are required of him.

Constantine's policy had another bad effect on the Church. Not only did its leaders tend to become too subservient to the Emperors, but they themselves became tainted with despotism. In these centuries the Church no longer appears as one great inter-racial family, held together by the councils of its Fathers in God, the bishops: now the Patriarchs of the five metropolitan sees, Jerusalem, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople, more and more tend to become despotic rulers over all the bishops under them—to become Popes in fact. The natural result was

the increase of local and national feeling, and rivalries and jealousies between the different prince-bishops. Especially the position of Constantinople, the new Patriarchate, which enjoyed the special patronage of the Emperor, caused difficulty, because hitherto the Pope of Rome had always been given first place amongst Patriarchs, whereas now the Patriarchs of Constantinople began to challenge this tradition, and to show a desire to be first: and this the other sees of Antioch and Alexandria were no more willing to grant than was the Roman Church, for they were more ancient than Constantinople.

Does this not all too sadly remind us of a certain scene in the Gospels? 'And there arose a contention among them which of them should be accounted the greatest. And Jesus said unto them "The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them . . . but it shall not be so among you" ' (Luke xxii. 25). An inevitable result of this growing despotism of the Patriarchs was a tendency to revolt among their subjects, and we find some groups of Christians separating themselves from their Patriarchs and setting up Metropolitan bishops of their own, as the Church of England separated itself from the Pope at the time of the Reformation. This is schism without breaking the continuity of the Apostolic Succession.

Besides this, there had always been a strong nationalist feeling in Syria and Egypt against the absolute dominion of the Roman Emperors, and when all the people of these lands had become at least nominally Christian, this nationalist feeling naturally also affected the Church.

With this background we can go on to consider the second great mistake made by the Christian Emperors and acquiesced in by the Church. This was the attempt to enforce orthodoxy, right belief, on all members of the Church. At the beginning of the fourth century, the Church was rent and distressed by a particularly bitter controversy over a certain theory as to the nature of Christ's person, put forward by a priest of Alexandria, Arius by name. This was the most serious dissension that there had yet been, and the Church was so divided by it, that the Emperor Constantine conceived it to be his duty

to make peace. He therefore summoned the first Œcumenical Council of Bishops to *Nicaea* near Constantinople in 325, at which Arianism was denounced as false teaching and Arius himself excommunicated. But unfortunately Constantine was not content to leave him and his followers to ecclesiastical discipline. He exiled him by imperial decree, and ordered that the decisions of the Council should be binding on all Christians. A disastrous mistake! For from this time on there were a series of theological controversies all hopelessly confused and embittered by imperial intervention. Sometimes the Emperor was on the side of the heretic, and the orthodox were persecuted; for example the great bishop of Alexandria, *Athanasius*, was at one time almost alone in upholding the decision of the Council of Nicaea. Worse than this, the Emperor's policy roused that fierce demon the nationalist spirit, which as we have seen was always latent in Syria and Egypt. The two chief theological schools of the Christian Church were at Alexandria, the chief city of Egypt, and Antioch, the capital of Syria. And the principal heresies to be condemned after Arianism arose in one or other of these two centres. When the Emperors tried to enforce orthodoxy, large sections of these two countries rallied round their persecuted bishops and theologians, and made their cause far more a political than a religious one. Thus the Orthodox party which remained in Syria and Egypt came to be known as Melkites, that is, 'the King's men', and to resist them was considered a sign of patriotism. The direct result was not only the splitting of the Church into parts that remain separated to this day, in Egypt, Syria, and Armenia, but the weakening and disunion of all the eastern part of the Roman Empire, so that it fell an easy prey to the Mohammedan advance in the 7th century.

Here then all too clearly we can see the first crop of the Enemy's sowing in the field of God. First came the lowering of the standard of holiness in the Church, by the policy of forced and mass conversion, then the wrong kind of dependence of the Church on the civil power, so that Emperors and not Bishops were allowed to give judgment on matters of Christian doctrine, and to enforce their

decisions; thirdly wrong ideals of the Church's unity gained possession of men's minds, so that instead of its being thought of as a unity of spiritual life given through the Sacraments ordained by Christ, it became assimilated to the unity of an earthly empire, or the narrower unity of a nation. This crop of tares still grows in many parts of the Church; and the result of the attempts of the Protestant Reformers to uproot them shows very clearly how necessary is our Lord's warning 'Let both grow together until the harvest . . . lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them'.

What are we to say to these things? 'Did God cast off His people? God forbid' (Rom. xi. 1). And if we look beneath the surface we shall indeed find many traces of His loving Providence and of the working of His Holy Spirit in spite of men's sins and failures. First, as we look back now over those sad controversies, we can see that the Church was being led into the truth. The theories condemned as heresies were sometimes condemned too hastily, and individual thinkers by no means always fairly examined; the theological question was obscured by horrid slanders, bitter personal recriminations, even physical violence on the part of Church leaders. And yet the corporate mind of the Church still holds that those theories were wrong, and that the great œcumenical councils were right to reject them. The histories of these heresies and councils has been so often written that I do not propose to repeat it here, but merely to point out how this was the period at which the Church drew up its formulas of faith—the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian creeds. Though these creeds as they stand are not accepted nor used in the same way in all Churches, the faith which they were designed to guard and express is still substantially professed by almost all bodies of Christians. God did overrule man's sin; 'the fierceness of man shall turn to Thy praise'.

For it was an age of really great and deep Christian thinking, and we can still go back to the writings of these 'Fathers' and 'Doctors' of the Church, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory, Augustine and others, for the understanding of

the meaning of our Christian faith. Above all things they were contending for the truth that Christ was and is eternally really and truly *God*: that no one less than God Himself 'came down from heaven . . . and was made man . . . and was crucified for us'. And on the other hand that He became really and truly *Man*, putting Himself in man's power, and suffering the worst that man's sin could do to Him, in order that He might redeem man from sin. Arius had denied both these truths, and taught a Christ who was a kind of intermediary being, neither God nor man: the later 'heretics' who were condemned by the great Councils, were not indeed denying either our Lord's humanity or His divinity, but they were trying to get the whole Church to tie itself down to saying in what particular way the divine and human natures were united in Him. The Nestorians in Antioch had one theory, and the Monophysites in Alexandria had another, and each school was quite convinced that its theory was the true one. The œcumenical councils put forward no counter theory; for how indeed can any one theory conceived in men's limited and changeable minds be true for ever as the explanation of such a mystery? What they did was to deny that either the Nestorian or the Monophysite theory was true to the facts of Christian experience and the Apostolic tradition; and simply to re-iterate that 'The right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God is God and Man . . . Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by the taking of the Manhood into God. One altogether: not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person' (The Athanasian Creed). If only, instead of excommunication and anathema (cursing), they could have said to the teachers of these theories 'Your explanation does not seem to us to be true; will you not go and think more deeply, praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that He will lead you and us into all the truth? And meanwhile, lest ignorant men be led astray, will you cease from teaching these theories of yours publicly?'—instead of letting political and racial and ecclesiastical rivalries blind their eyes and drive love

from their hearts, how different might have been the history of the Church and of the world.

Then again, we can see the Providence of God in the comparative steadiness of the Church of Rome throughout this period. As we have seen, this was the time when the western part of the Empire was being over-run by barbarians from the north. By the Emperor's removal to Constantinople Italy was left more exposed to the barbarian raids, and it was the Church and Bishop of Rome who stood for order and civilization and humanity in that lawless time. At one time the Pope Leo I was actually able to save Rome from being sacked by the Goths by his personal appeal to their leader Alaric.

The Church of Rome by this time spoke Latin, not Greek, the language in which the controversies were carried on and the creeds written; and it was far less given to theological speculation and debate than the eastern, or Greek half of the Church. So during the period of controversy it remained somewhat detached and impartial and could therefore judge of the questions concerned without such distorting passions as were swaying the east. Both sides continually appealed to Rome, and generally found a just and wise hearing. Rome stood steadfastly and faithfully by the Apostolic tradition and resisted the new heresies less by debate than by this reasonable appeal to tradition. So that more and more the Church of Rome came to stand for something stable and reliable in an increasingly unstable world. The result was, as we shall see in a later chapter, that while the eastern part of the Empire completely broke up and went down before Islam, the Roman Church stood firm against the northern barbarians and was able gradually to civilise and christianise them.

But we must not suppose that it was only in the west that God was being faithfully served. The period of the controversies was also a great period of missionary work in the east. Because many of these known and unknown missionaries belonged to separated parts of the Church, Arian, or Nestorian or Monophysite, we must not deny them the honour of their achievement. For one thing is

certain, that many humble individuals become embroiled in controversy and are found through no fault of their own on what is afterwards seen to be the wrong side, because their minds are not able to follow the theological issues at stake, and they are simply being loyal to some leader, or national tradition, or whatever it may be that they have found trustworthy, and will not forsake at the bidding of an emperor.

So we may honour *Ulfilas* the Arian, who spread the Gospel among the Goths, and even translated the greater part of the Bible into their language; and the heroic missionaries of the Nestorian Church in Persia, who penetrated to far China and India and founded or reinforced Churches there which endured for centuries; we may honour too the Monophysite Egyptian Christians who evangelized Abyssinia and left it to be to this day a little centre of Christian tradition between heathen and Mohammedan Africa.

And lastly through all this period of controversy and division, God never lacked His saints, great souls completely surrendered to Him, through whom He could manifest His holiness and purity and goodness. Some we have already mentioned; others will come into the story of the next chapter, in which we will trace how God Himself provided the way of renewal for His fallen Church. The Body of Christ had allowed itself to become assimilated to the body of a still pagan-hearted empire; but God was preparing another smaller body within it, with which in His own time He would cleanse the whole body of the Church.

CHAPTER IX

The Way of Renewal

As far back as we can study man's spiritual history, among whatever people, we find that from time to time individual men and women have felt an irresistible urge after a purer and more single-minded pursuit of the things of the spirit than is found among the mass of their contemporaries.

To this end they have stripped themselves with amazing courage and persistence of all that most men hold of value—wealth, comfort, home life, social intercourse—and gone to live apart the life of hermits or wanderers; or in the determination utterly to subdue the body, they have denied it all the delights of the senses until it is able to bear the most astonishing rigours and pains. In India we are very familiar with these Sannyasis, Sadhus, begging Buddhist monks and religious recluses of many kinds.

It seems clear that very early in the history of Christianity there appeared a similar desire on the part of certain men and women for a life more completely devoted to prayer and meditation than was possible if the ordinary business of life was carried on. Such men withdrew into huts in their own gardens, or to hermitages in the country, just as in India a man may retire into semi-seclusion and devote himself to meditation and the study of the Hindu sacred books. In India such a man has usually spent many years first in active life as a *grihastha*; but it seems that amongst Christians the life of religious retirement almost always involved celibacy, and from the earliest times the Christian Church gave an honoured place to consecrated virgins, both men and women. The women either lived a secluded life in their own fathers' houses under a rule of life approved by the bishop, and wearing a veil as a distinctive mark, or they lived in groups under the guidance and control of an older woman.

Now when bad days fell on the Church after the Edict of Constantine, and it was debased and weakened by the flood of nominal Christians who were brought into it by imperial edicts or the hope of worldly gain, it was this deep desire of man's heart for a pure spiritual life that God used to purify and renew its life. By that time the number of Christians who had withdrawn from ordinary life had greatly increased, because at the time of the great persecutions many, especially in Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor, had fled from the cities into the remote fastnesses of the desert, forests and mountains, where the Emperor's officials would not pursue them. There they lived very austere lives of religious devotion, eating very simple and

very little food, clothing themselves in coarse garments, and occupying themselves by basket-weaving, mat-making, and other humdrum tasks, that would not distract their minds from meditation and prayer.

After the persecutions had ceased, and the Church had begun to be tainted by the world, more and more of those who were trying to uphold the Christian standard, despairing of doing so in ordinary life, withdrew themselves to the deserts and jungles, and joined the colonies of monks already there. These hermit-colonies lived a very loosely communal life, not unlike that in Hindu *maths*, where sannyasis associate together on a voluntary and temporary basis, not accepting any particular rule or authority, except where they paid special deference to some outstandingly holy personality, such as the famous Antony, and desired to be guided by him. Individuals imposed on themselves, or accepted from some such chosen *guru*, their private rules of prayer, silence, fasting, etc. and usually remained in their own separate cells except for occasional meetings for public worship. There was no community of goods, each supporting himself by the labours of his own hands.

Now the story of the renewal of the Church is the story of how through a series of great and holy leaders, these colonies of earnest souls were led on by God into a form of religious life which was more truly and distinctively Christian than these first desert beginnings, and so developed into the great monastic communities of the Middle Ages.

To begin with, the greatest of the old hermits, 'The Fathers of the Desert' as they are called, as they gave themselves in their solitudes to prayer unceasing and to wrestling with temptations of body and mind, had learnt to probe very deeply into the human heart, and to understand much about the secret springs of its actions. At first they had supposed, as the ascetics of other religions had always thought, that holiness was to be attained chiefly by severe bodily austerity and the utter subjugation of the desires of the flesh. But as the principal object of their meditations was God as He is revealed in Christ, it was inevitable that in time they would come to see that

the highest virtues are those most characteristic of their Lord—humility, patience, love. They thus soon discovered how easily the man who was capable of appalling feats of physical endurance might be rotten at the core with pride, self-will and contempt of others. These, not the flesh, were the real enemies. For, as one of these 'Fathers' says, 'The rest of the vices are well known to be of a single form, and a simple nature, but pride is manifold, of many and various shapes . . . The more completely a man has escaped from the world, the more resolutely does this vice attack him'.

After this it could not be long before holy and sincere men would be led to see that these great virtues of humility, patience and love could only be fully exercised in common life, not in seclusion. And the history of Christian asceticism from 300 to 500 shows this realization gradually gaining ground, until that truly and uniquely Christian thing, the *corporate* religious life of prayer and service was firmly established in the Church.

In this development three names stand out as those of pioneers and founders:—

(1) Somewhere about the year 315, that is two years after the Edict of Milan, *Pachomius*, a monk of the south Egyptian desert, organized some of the colonies there into a regular common life, in which the main principle was obedience to a rule and to a superior who administered it. These monks held their goods in common, ate together, and attended regular daily hours of corporate prayer and worship, founded on the old Jewish system of observing the third, sixth and ninth hours for worship in the temple, as well as those of early morning and evening (see e.g. Acts iii. 1; x. 9, 30).

With regard to bodily austerities the rule was made sufficiently elastic 'to make sure that even the little ones (i.e., the weaker members) keep the rule and are not afflicted', while at the same time those with a call to greater efforts in this direction might be free to follow it, but under the supervision of superiors, as a safeguard against spiritual pride. Convents of nuns were organized on similar principles and there was some interdependence

between them and the monasteries. The monasteries formed self-supporting colonies, with all the essential industries undertaken in them, i.e., tailors, smiths, carpenters, weavers, tanners and others. About seventy years after Pachomius' death, *Palladius*, a bishop from Asia Minor, visited these Pachomian monasteries and found them still flourishing. He reckons that there were some 7000 monks living in them. 'They work' he says, 'at every kind of craft, and with their surplus output they provide for the needs both of the women's convents and the prisons'.

(2) Shortly before Palladius wrote his account of the Egyptian monasteries, another future bishop from Asia Minor, *Basil*, had also visited them and had come away particularly impressed with their common life. On his return to his own province, and especially after he became a bishop, he set about organizing the sporadic and loose forms of religious life in that province into proper monasteries on the Pachomian model. Again the fundamental principle was a life lived in common under obedience to a rule and superior. In St. Basil's writings on the subject he gives considerable space to answering the question 'Should the man who has withdrawn from those who are contemptuous of the commandments of God live privately by himself, or join with like-minded brethren', and on the highest grounds he chooses the latter. He tells us that he aims at producing a common life which should uphold and exemplify the true ideal of Christian unity, to be 'the Body of Christ and severally members thereof', so that 'the thing which must be secured before all else is that all have one heart and one will and one desire . . .' It follows the pattern of the first saints of the Lord, of whom it is written 'all that believed were together, and had all things common'. And the means by which this unity was to be maintained was obedience, mutual submission in love; 'no monk ought to think of himself as his own master . . . we must obey one another'; for obedience was the mark of our Lord's own life, 'who became obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross'.

St. Basil introduced a new note of his own into this community life by requiring his monks and nuns to under-

take service for the world, in the form of schools, hospitals, guest houses, orphanages and so on. Thus they were by no means so withdrawn from the world as the Egyptian desert dwellers were, but lived near the high-roads or the big cities. St. Basil did more than any other man to build up a truly Christian monastic life in the eastern part of the Church, and it is a matter of great thankfulness that this was done before that half of the Church fell apart over the doctrinal controversies and the struggle between Emperor and Nationalists in Syria and Egypt. It must however be admitted that eastern monasticism never really assimilated St. Basil's spirit in the matter of the honour given to the common life over that of the solitary, and in the undertaking of practical works of mercy on behalf of other men. The monks of the east have tended to become recluses rather than consecrated servants of humanity, and it has always been the tradition among them to consider the solitary life as the higher, the life for advanced souls, and the common life as the lower, a necessary training for the other. On the other hand they have been looked upon as the recognized masters of spiritual life, and the laity have gone to them for counsel and help in prayer and all manner of spiritual and moral difficulties. Besides this it has been and still is the custom in all the eastern Churches for bishops to be celibate, which means that they are chosen from among the monks. In these ways a certain connection is kept with the world, and the monks have definite services to perform for the rest of the Church. It is noteworthy that in a recent book on the Holy Orthodox Church by a Russian theologian,[1] he declares that in that Church there is no such distinction between the normal ideals of the monk and those of the ordinary layman, as grew up later in the western Church, but that the ideal of abnegation, love and humility set by the monks has impressed itself on the whole body of the Church.

In the last few years there has been a revival on a small scale of monastic life for both men and women in the Syrian Church of Malabar, with the rule of St. Basil as their guide. All Indian Christians who feel the attraction

[1] Bulgakov: *The Holy Orthodox Church.*

of 'ashram' life, ought to know St. Basil's wise counsels; for in them they will find the true Christian salt which must be added to the traditional Indian form of religious life, as it comes to them not from the west, but from a fellow Asiatic. Especially important is it to note his insistence on common life, and on obedience: for there are signs that a religious life modelled on that of the wandering Hindu Sadhu, alone, and answerable to no man, is more attractive to Indian Christians; a natural inclination much strengthened by the holy and heroic life of Sadhu Sundar Singh.

In St. Basil's day the condition of the ascetic life in the eastern part of the Church made his insistence on the common life as the more truly Christian form of religious life particularly necessary. For it was especially in Syria that the ascetic life amongst Christians had become almost entirely a matter of rivalry as to who could endure the most painful penances; some lived for years on the tops of high pillars, loaded their bodies with heavy iron chains, or fasted almost to death. These things remind us of Hindu ascetics far more than of Christian saints, and show us how necessary it is to have the religious life properly regulated and controlled; for this false asceticism has always lurked around the history of Christian monasticism. But it has been the healthy and truly evangelical teaching of Basil and his great western brother Benedict to which the Church has given its official sanction, and which has kept the Christian religious life on the whole pure and wholesome and true to the spirit of its Lord.

(3) What Basil attempted to do for the east, *Benedict* the Roman did with more success for the west. He was born at Nursia in Italy, about 100 years after St. Basil's death, at a time of great distress from the invasions of barbarians. He first followed the earlier tradition of the hermit life, and lived for several years in a cave, inflicting severe pains on his body as a means of conquering temptation. But many earnest men flocked to him there for spiritual help and guidance, and he was led to abandon that way of life, and devoted the rest of his life to organizing and ruling monasteries for the common life after the pattern of Pachomius and Basil.

The chief new thing that St. Benedict did was to ensure the welding of each of his monasteries into a strong permanent unity by requiring his monks to take a vow of stability, that is, to stay for life in the monastery that they first joined. Up to this time monks had been free to go as they pleased from one monastery to another, or they might leave the monastery altogether and take to a hermit life. This is still the practice in all eastern monasticism, and unfortunately it gives countenance to the mistaken idea which Basil and Benedict both deliberately rejected, that the solitary life of contemplation and austerity is higher than that lived in community and in the active service of men. Benedict went further than Basil had done by making each group of monks a permanent family, bound together by close bands of supernatural love and common interest, and all owing obedience to an Abbot, that is, a Father, who held his office for life. And even more clearly than his forerunners he insisted that the very core of this common life is the principle of obedience. It may indeed be said that for the Benedictine monk asceticism consists essentially in the renunciation of self-will. 'For thee whosoever thou be', St. Benedict says at the beginning of his Rule 'my words are intended, who, giving up thy own will dost take the all-powerful and excellent arms of obedience to fight under the Lord Christ, the true King'. Thus in Benedictine monasticism physical austerity is far less prominent than the spiritual mortification of man's natural pride and self-will.

With St. Benedict the foundation of Christian monasticism was complete. When he died, the eastern Church had already been split up into irreconcilable sects; and the western Church was barely holding its own against the flood of uncivilized heathen barbarians. But God's instrument was ready. And it was the Benedictine Order, perfected by the discipline of prayer, stability and obedience, which was called to undertake the heroic labours of Christianizing and civilizing the whole of northern and western Europe. Bands of monks and nuns settled down amongst savage tribes far from their natural homes, and there they cultivated and improved the land, baptized,

guided and restrained kings and chieftains, taught and tamed the people, trained up native priesthoods, served the poor through schools, hospitals and almsgiving, and upheld on the whole a standard of purity, uprightness and holiness that gave light to the whole of those 'Dark Ages'.

In later chapters we shall see how again and again the spiritual life of the Church in the west was revived by a new development of this way of the consecrated religious community. This has continued to be so without a break in the Roman Catholic Church, and it is impossible to over-estimate the strength and depth it has gained from its many religious Orders, both old and new. The eastern Churches do not show the same history of development; amongst them the religious life still remains what it was in the fourth and fifth centuries; but it has remained amongst most of them continuously as a witness to the things of the Spirit. It is one of the sad uprootings of wheat with the tares in the Protestant revolt, that all these special forms of the consecrated virgin life were ruthlessly abolished, and in our own day this is becoming increasingly realized. In the Anglican Church there has been a remarkable revival of religious community life in the last hundred years, and several of the Anglican Sisterhoods and Brotherhoods that are doing missionary work in India are training the small beginnings of such communities amongst Indian men and women. Besides this one finds all over the world today that Protestants are feeling after some form of corporate religious life. In India, it manifests itself in the present widespread desire for Christian *ashrams*. May the Indian Church be so truly grounded in prayer, self-denial and love, that it may learn what is God's will for it in this matter, and have grace to go forward in the life of consecration according to that will.

CHAPTER X

The Church of the East is trodden under foot

We can now no longer in this outline treat the Church of Christ as a visibly united body, holding the same faith,

drawing its life from its Lord through common Sacraments, bound together by the one Episcopate. The unity indeed was there, hidden in the counsels of God, to be manifested in His own time and way; the Episcopate was there, so were the Sacraments and the Faith, apart from certain differences in explaining it to men's minds. The Spirit and the Life were there, as a man's spirit and life may remain in his body, though it may be terribly mutilated or diseased. We may note here that one great difference between the Nestorian and Monophysite sects and those that formed round earlier heresies, e.g., Judaizers, Docetists, Montanists, Arians, is that while these earlier ones have all completely disappeared, the Nestorian and Monophysite Churches still remain; and if God has so manifestly not cut them off, how can man dare to do so? But these Churches have had a very sad and rather terrible history, of which we must now give some account.

There was one branch of the early Christian Church which had never been part of the Roman Empire. This was the Church in Persia, one of the earliest to be founded. Persia, as we have said before, was the great rival and enemy of Rome, the one large civilized state on its borders that Rome had never been able to subdue. It had its own ancient established religion, Zoroastrianism, of which the Parsis in India are now the only adherents;—and at the period of which we are speaking there had recently been a great official revival of this religion on nationalist grounds. When the Roman Empire under Constantine and his successors became officially Christian, immediately the Christians in Persia became suspect, as being the friends of Rome; for at this time the Catholic Church was still united. That is, the Persian Christians were in a position not unlike Indian, Chinese or Japanese Christians nowadays. We know how Christians in those countries often have to bear the bitter taunt that they are denationalized, friends of the white man, imperialists. So it was with the Persians. But more than that, they passed like the western Church, through a long fiery trial of persecution at the hands of the Persian rulers. These persecutions did not begin until after those of the Romans had ceased,

and from the fourth to the sixth centuries four great waves of persecution beat upon the Church in Persia. One result of this was that the Persian Church, anxious to show that it was not pro-Roman, organized itself as a separate Church from the western, with its own Patriarch, or *Catholicos*, as he was called. Though not out of communion with the west, it thus had a rather separate life, and kept aloof from the bitter controversies over theology that were rending the Church of the Roman Empire. This may seem to have been an advantage; but unfortunately, when the Nestorians were driven out of the Roman Empire by the persecuting policy of the Melkites, most of them took refuge in Persia, and their superior learning and influence, combined with the natural anti-Roman tendency of the Persians, soon brought the whole Persian Church definitely into the Nestorian sect and therefore cut it off completely from the west. This is the kind of thing we can imagine might happen if so strong a wave of nationalist and anti-European feeling swept over the Churches of India and China, that they separated themselves entirely from connection with any western Church, and became purely national. They would doubtless gain much thereby in internal unity, but at the cost of complete spiritual isolation; and spiritual isolation means stagnation, if not death, as the subsequent history of the Nestorian Church shows.

At first that history contains much that is glorious. Just as persecution only helped to strengthen and purify the western Church, and to arouse its zeal, so it did in the east, and the Persian Church has a noble record of missionary work during this period of its history, both within and without the Persian dominions. It was almost certainly from Persia that the Christian Church in Travancore and South India, and perhaps also in North India, was, if not actually founded, at least reinforced and greatly extended. There are many indications of a widespread knowledge of Christianity in South India at this time: for the Christian historian it hardly seems mere coincidence that it was after this period that there occurred in India the great age of Bhakti religion—that aspect of Hinduism

which is most nearly akin to the spirit of Christianity and makes the best preparation for it. Then there were also missions to China and to the Turks and Huns near the river Oxus. We have only to look at a map of the world to see what a very small task the western Church had in Christianizing Europe, as compared with the vast regions of Asia that the Church of the east was confronted with.

But now we come to another of the tragic setbacks in Christian history. We have seen that the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire brought two very unchristian principles into the Church;—forced and mass conversions, and the use of secular power to enforce orthodoxy. And we have also seen that the result of this was to split the Church of the eastern part of the Roman Empire into three main divisions, largely on political and nationalist lines. Thus, there were the so-called *Orthodox*, the Melkites or King's Men, who were the Emperor's party, and naturally tended to be imperialist; there were the *Monophysite* Churches of Syria, Armenia, Egypt and Abyssinia (these are also sometimes called *Jacobite*); and there was the *Nestorian* Church of Persia and the east.

Now just at the time when the Benedictine monks were setting out on their missionary labours among the barbarians of Britain and northern Europe, there arose the great religious movement of the Arabs under Mohammed and his successors, which gave an impetus to the Empire of Islam and which has had such an immense influence on the history of the Christian Church. Mohammed's great zeal for pure monotheism arose in a land as yet unchristianized. He had met both Jews and Christians, and it is quite obvious to any Christian reader of the Koran that from them he had learned many of the stories of God's dealings with men in the past, that he has incorporated in it. It is also quite obvious that he had never been taught the real meaning of the Christian faith. He is like a good many Hindus and Moslems in this country who have been to Christian primary schools but have had no later Christian teaching. Their minds are stored with scraps of Bible stories and Christian doctrines, but they have no mature

understanding of what they have learnt, so that their little knowledge is more misleading than helpful. The result in Mohammed's case was to make him deny with a fierce fanaticism that central fact of the Christian faith which he never came near to understanding, the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Within thirty years of Mohammed's death his followers had conquered the whole of the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, as well as Persia. Mohammed has often been accused of preaching conversion by the sword; but this is unjust both to him and to his Arab successors. They believed, it is true, in subjugating adherents of other religions, exacting taxes from them, and giving them no political independence: but they did not as a rule try to force them to become Moslems; this was the method of the Mongols several centuries later. Indeed we find that one reason why the Arabs were able so quickly to conquer the eastern provinces of the Empire was that the Christians in those countries welcomed their rule as being preferable to the cruel persecutions of the Melkites. Truly a sad reflection on the loss of Christian charity, and the poison of schism.

Persia was brought into the Empire of Islam by 652, and the Nestorian Christians, like the Monophysites, were inclined to welcome them as liberators from the two persecuting powers, Christian Rome and Zoroastrian Persia. Nor were they badly treated by the Arabs, and were able quickly to come to terms with them. Indeed many of the Christians rose to high position in the state, because in culture, learning and business capacity they were far ahead of the desert-bred Arabs. So they were able to go on with their far-flung missions and trading stations in India, China and the lands of the Turks, though forbidden to make converts within Moslem dominions. It appears that Nestorian Christianity was spread quite as much by traders as by monks, though these certainly went out in great numbers, and at one time there were some 20,000 of them in China. But the weaknesses of eastern monasticism that we have already noted, its tendency to overvalue bodily asceticism and the solitary hermit life, prevented it from being as

strong a missionary instrument as it had become in the west. We have also to remember that the eastern Church was confronted, as the western Church was not, with two other strong and well organized religions, also claiming to be universal—Buddhism and Islam. Buddhism had spread over Central Asia and into China, and Buddhism also had its monasteries and its impressive liturgies, even a Saviour and way of salvation. Islam had an immense strength from its simple creed, its regular discipline of prayer and fasting imposed on all its adherents, and its spirit of brotherhood amongst all Moslems of whatever race. Against these two, a Christian Church divided, and weakened by the taints of worldliness and imperialism, had not sufficient strength to prevail.

This weakness was made manifest when the Empire of the Arabs passed, after a century and a half of Turkish rule, into the hands of the Mongol Tartars. This race shares with the Assyrians of the Old Testament and the Huns of the third century A.D. the reputation of being the most cruel and ruthless conquerors the world has known; yet for all that they were the founders of three great empires in China, Central Asia and India. They came from the vast uncultivated plains of central and northern Asia, nomad tribes, dwelling in tents, travelling on horseback and living principally on the milk of mares. They come into history through their great chieftain Genghiz Khan, who at the beginning of the 13th century overran the eastern part of the Turkish empire, and for the next 200 years he and his successors became the overlords of the Nestorian Christians, in China, Persia and the lands between.

This was the great day of testing and opportunity for the Nestorian Church. The Mongols were for years open to conviction to the three competing religions of Asia, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity. Moreover in the west the Khans (as the Mongol rulers were called) were for a long time inclined to favour Christianity, though unfortunately on political rather than religious grounds. For these were the days of the Crusades, when armies from Europe were trying to drive the Turks out of the Holy Land. The Mongol Khans also wanted to capture Jerusalem, and

for some years embassies passed between the Great Khan Kublai, Emperor of China, and other Khans of the nearer east, and the courts of Constantinople, France and Italy, trying to effect an alliance. There is no more romantic story than that of the two Chinese Nestorian monks who were sent on such a mission by Kublai Khan, one of whom was made Patriarch of the whole Nestorian Church at Bagdad, because his Mongol blood and intimate knowledge of the Mongols' language and customs made him a valuable go-between. And indeed the influence of this man, *Yabhallāhā*, who seems to have been truly holy and wise, was great on the rough Khans, and the Nestorian Church reached the zenith of its power at this time. Yet in the end it was Islam that won, and before the end of the thirteenth century the western Khans declared themselves Moslems, and a determined attempt was made to wipe out Christianity altogether by oppressive edicts, massacres, and the destruction of churches and monasteries.

The havoc thus begun by the western Khans was completed at the end of the fourteenth century by Timur or Tamerlane—that most appallingly destructive of all conquerors, whose method of warfare was simply to massacre all infidels wholesale. The Nestorians were reduced to a small remnant which still exists in the highlands of Kurdistan north of Irak. It has suffered continually up to our own times from periodic massacres by the fierce Moslems by which it has been surrounded, yet there it still is as a remnant, and in the last few years its plight has been sympathetically considered by the western nations, and various attempts made to find it a new home somewhere in the world, where it can enjoy peace and security for the first time in its long and tragic history.

And what of the Indian branch of the Nestorian Church? Naturally the complete collapse of the main part of that Church, added to the conquest of India itself by the Mongols some years later, caused the Indian Church to be entirely isolated, and it dwindled down to the small body still remaining sheltered behind the mountains of Travancore and Cochin, tolerated by its Hindu rulers,

but able to do no more than just preserve its own life. The subsequent history of this Church must be told in a later chapter.

Can we say why the Church of the east was thus all but wiped out? Certainly one of the chief causes was the dividing of the Church by imperialism and enforced orthodoxy; so that the rest of the Church must share with the Nestorians the burden of blame for its failure truly to Christianize Asia. Another reason was the racial character of the Nestorian Church in the Moslem Empire. At first, as we have seen, the Christians had the advantage of education over the Moslem Arabs, so that they obtained all the important posts, political and social, for which learning was required. Especially they acquired great prestige as doctors. This had two results: on the one hand it tempted the Christians to become worldly and intriguing, and to use the civil power to further their communal interests, and even to settle their internal disputes. On the other hand, when Moslems also began to get education, and so to covet the posts filled by Christians, very bitter jealousy and rivalry was aroused between the two communities, and we have a situation very much like that in India between Hindus and Moslems, resulting in continual riotings, murders, looting and so on. When the Khans finally declared for Islam, little check was put on these communal riots, and numbers of Christians were massacred, and their churches and monasteries burnt and looted by Moslem mobs, inflamed, as so often in India, far more by communal hatred than by any real religious feeling.

But one of the most recent writers on these last days of the Nestorian Church, Dr. Laurence Browne, in his book *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia*, gives as the principal reason for failure the lack of spiritual power in the Church; and in the last resort must we not agree with that verdict? For no truly spiritual Church can be stamped out by however terrible a persecution, as the story of the martyrs not only in the Roman Empire and Persia, but in many another land since, has testified. It does indeed appear that spiritual life was at a low ebb

in the Nestorian Church, even when outwardly it was most prosperous. Especially Dr. Browne points out how both the Moslems and Christians appealed to worldly success as the test of the truth of their religions, and it was on these grounds that the Mongol Khans decided for Islam. They saw the European crusading armies defeated and falling out amongst themselves, while the Turks flourished, and they concluded that the Turks' religion was the stronger. And it does not seem that any Christians protested that Christ's Kingdom was not of this world, and was not to be established by the sword.

We must now go back to the Monophysite Churches, and consider their fate under their Moslem conquerors. Their history has been neither so illustrious nor quite so tragic as that of the Nestorians. Their only great missionary achievement was the evangelizing of Abyssinia by the Coptic Church of *Egypt*. Under the Arabs this Church enjoyed comparative peace and protection, but we look in vain for the rise of any spiritual missionary movement into Arabia, the home of the Moslem faith, or into the heart of black Africa, though Moslem missionaries and traders were able to penetrate thither. On the contrary, the Egyptian Christians could not even revive the ancient and glorious Churches of north Africa, that had been plundered by both Goths and Arabs.

In *Syria* the Monophysite Church was never a strong body, and always terribly torn by schisms; the Melkites always had a large group there. If they expanded eastwards, they came into collision with the Nestorians, and the policy of the rulers of Persia was to tolerate only one sect of Christians, and that one the Nestorian, so that the Monophysites never gained much hold in that direction.

The Church of *Armenia* has had perhaps the most unhappy history of all. Tossed and torn for years between Rome and pre-Moslem Persia, it was later the special object of hatred to the Turks, and like the Nestorian Church, it has been subjected to continual massacres up to recent times. The Armenians are now a people without a country, like the Jews, and like the Jews their sense of national solidarity and their religion are inextricably

bound up together. This is indeed a characteristic of all these remnants of the eastern Church, for it is the natural result first of the attempt of the Roman Emperors to force them into orthodoxy, and secondly of their peculiar position in the Turkish Empire as more or less tolerated, but always disliked and repressed, communities. This intensely communal spirit seems completely to have obscured in their minds the vision of the Church universal, and makes them exceedingly suspicious of any attempts of western Christians to help them. This suspicion has been increased by the deliberate attempts made by both Roman Catholics and Protestants to proselytize them. In every one of these countries there exists a body of these Christians who have submitted themselves to the Pope, and who are allowed to keep their own liturgies and many of their distinctive customs. Such bodies are called *Uniat* Churches. But this policy only serves to antagonize the others more strongly. Of late years the Anglican Church has been able to enter into rather more friendly relations with them, because it refuses to proselytize, and aims rather at helping the Churches to help themselves and reform themselves from within, particularly in raising the standard of education and training of the clergy, and in study of the Bible and of Church History.

'If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.' It seems as if this terrible condemnation did indeed fall upon the Church of the East. Yet I do not think we ought to suppose that God has rejected any part of His people, or that we need no longer take any account of these ancient remnants of the Christian Church. Today there are everywhere signs of hope and renewed life. The smoking flax is not quenched, and a new breathing of the Spirit through contact with other Christians can fan it into life. A good deal is being done at the present day both through study and through sympathetic contact, to heal the sad old breaches that need never have been, and to cherish and develop the life that is so feeble but not utterly extinct. A friend of mine who lived for some years in Australia

once told me of an incident that may well be taken as a parable of the story of the eastern Church. For three years there had been serious drought in that part of Australia and the ground was completely dry, hard and brown—not a blade of grass nor a green leaf to be seen. Then one day the rain came, several hours of it. When my friend looked out of her window the next morning, she could hardly believe her eyes: for in one night the brown fields had turned to green, all over the dry baked earth were springing up the young green shoots that had been waiting through the long months of drought for the quickening showers from heaven, not dead, but sleeping. May it not be so at any time with the ancient Church of Asia when it pleases God to send His showers of blessing upon it? In that most fascinating book *Something Happened* describing the evangelistic journeys of three great-souled women into the interior of Central Asia, once covered with Christian churches and monasteries of which there is now no trace, they say how frequently they found the hearts of the people wonderfully prepared for the Gospel message. May it not be that the Christian seed is lying there still from the Nestorians' sowing, buried through all these centuries in the hearts and memories of men and women, to be quickened some day into new and vigorous life?

'He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass,
As showers that water the earth.'
'Amen; come, Lord Jesus!'

CHAPTER XI

The Church of the West becomes an Empire

While the Church of the East was being subjugated and stifled by the Empire of Islam, the Church of the West was having a very different development. We have already seen that the Roman Church was becoming the most steady and united body in a world that was anything but steady and united: that through the Benedictine monasteries, and the Celtic monks of Ireland and Britain

who followed an earlier form of the monastic life, it was gradually christianizing and civilising the barbarians of Gaul, Germany, Britain and the rest of Europe. But we have now to record another mistake that has set its mark on all later Church history in the west. The Popes of Rome were not content with being themselves the virtual successors of the Roman Emperors in western Europe; still unable to grasp the full meaning of our Lord's words 'My Kingdom is not of this world', they wanted the actual power of an earthly empire to protect and further the Christian cause as the Emperors at Constantinople were doing in eastern Europe. They could not see how disastrous this policy was proving in the east, by causing the break-up of the Church, and opening the way for the advance of Islam. Rather they wanted a strong secular empire to withstand the advance of Islam in the west. For by the 8th century the Arabs had overrun the whole of north Africa, and, crossing the narrow outlet of the Mediterranean Sea, had taken possession of Spain. Here they were met and defeated by Charles Martel, the king of the Franks. These were a group of barbarian tribes who had settled on the Rhine and in Gaul, and so became the founders of modern France, and they had been among the first of the barbarians to accept the faith of the Catholic Church. So the Pope of Rome believed that God had in these Frankish kings raised up champions for His Church, and when Charles Martel's grandson, *Charlemagne*, came at the Pope's call to deliver him from the Arian Lombards in north Italy, the Pope crowned him at Rome as 'Holy Roman Emperor', the Christian successor of the Cæsars, with dominion over all western Christendom.

We may well ask what right he had to do any such thing, when there was a lawful Roman Emperor already at Constantinople. But indeed the power of this emperor had been hardly more than nominal in Italy for many years, its real lords being the Arian Lombards already mentioned. Moreover for some years before the coronation of Charlemagne, the eastern Empire had been again torn by religious controversy. This time it was over the right

or wrong of having pictures and images of our Lord and His saints in Christian churches, and paying outward reverence to them by bowing and burning incense and candles in front of them. A series of emperors denounced this as idolatry, and ordered all such pictures and images to be destroyed. But the greater part of the Church both in east and west, was against these 'iconoclastic' emperors, and there resulted what was practically civil war between the Emperor and his satellites on the one hand, and most of the clergy, especially the monks, and of the laity on the other. The Pope had taken the side opposite to that of the Emperor and had therefore little hesitation in appointing a substitute for him in the west in the name of Christ. By the time the tumult in the east had subsided, and the Church's will had finally prevailed, it was too late to hope for any recovery of the Emperor's prestige in the west.

At first this new policy of the Pope seemed a wise and successful one. It brought rescue from barbarian and Moslem invasions; and it helped greatly towards the civilizing of Europe, for Charlemagne's court became a centre of Christian learning for the whole of his dominions. Later too, when in the 9th and 10th centuries, this new young civilisation of Europe was in grave danger of being wiped out again by another great wave of barbarians from the north, the dreaded Danes or Northmen, the greater unity and strength that had been gained by Charlemagne's empire enabled it to survive, and to bring these fierce and turbulent people also under the control of Christ and of the Pope.

Yet in this new departure there were the seeds of tares which showed themselves plentifully in the following centuries. First, there was the inevitable competition as to who was to be emperor; for the office was elective, and did not remain in the hands of the Franks. Still more serious was the continual friction between Pope and emperors: for the Popes claimed to have the right to make and unmake emperors, and the emperors and other rulers when they were strong enough, claimed to make and unmake Popes and Bishops, so that there was no end

to the discord and faction and rival ambitions. On the whole the Papacy came off victor in this long struggle, for it stood for a wider and deeper unity than the emperors did. The emperors were continually coming into collision with the ambitions of lesser kings and princes in Germany, Italy, France, and England, who never whole-heartedly accepted them as overlords. On the other hand nearly all Christians throughout the Middle Ages felt that the unity of the Church under the Pope was of great importance, and that in the last resort the Church was mightier than any kings or emperors. So in England Thomas à Becket lost his life for standing for the rights of the Church against the King, and all England honoured him as a martyr and a saint. And indeed we can see now how this strong centralized unity of the Church did mean that there was an international law and standard of morals, at least acknowledged, if not always obeyed, by all; and it is just for the lack of such a law and such a standard that modern Europe is in danger of returning to chaos, in which each nation does that which is right in its own eyes.

But what was the result of this enormous increase of power on the Church? That it became more and more like a great empire itself. Its Popes, Bishops, and even the Abbots of the great religious houses owned vast lands and property, and were feudal lords like the princes and barons. Too often they lived, dressed and acted like them. In the 10th and 11th centuries the Papacy sank into great degradation, and there was much unashamed worldliness and immorality amongst both the higher and lower clergy. At this time, when the Church had again become imbued with worldliness, occurred the tragic mistake of the Crusades. Instead of meeting the Moslem conquerors with martyrdom and evangelism, the Church of the west took up the sword in defence of her Master. Instead of trying to recover His spirit of humility and love, she tried to recover with armies the land in which He had lived and died. The story of the Crusades makes sad reading. Just as in the great world war of 1914-1918 hundreds and thousands of young men gave their lives for what they

believed to be a righteous cause, and were betrayed by the selfish ambitions of nations and the shortsighted policy of statesmen; so too all the chivalry and idealism of Europe was put into the 'Holy War' against the Saracens, and found itself exploited and betrayed by jealousies and rivalries between kings and barons, and between eastern and western Christians.

For by this time the Popes had definitely put forward that claim to absolute supremacy over all Christians, which is now an integral part of the faith of Roman Catholics. They thus came into renewed conflict with the Patriarchs of Constantinople, who claimed to be at least equal if not superior to the Roman pontiffs. There had been several times already when this rivalry had resulted in a separation lasting for some years. Now in 1054, forty years before the first Crusade, there occurred the final breach between the Greek-speaking Church of the eastern Empire, with its centre in Constantinople, and the Latin-speaking Church of western Europe, held in a firm unity under the rule of the Pope of Rome. This schism is still unhealed. The result of this breach was that at the time of the Crusades eastern and western Christendom were at loggerheads. The westerners set up a rival kingdom in the part of the Turkish Empire that they had conquered in the first Crusade, and so bitter was the hatred between eastern and western Christians that the last Crusade was actually turned into an expedition of westerners against the eastern Empire, when the Crusaders sacked Constantinople with a barbarity that not even Turks exceeded, and set up their own Latin kingdom in it. It was undoubtedly this stroke inflicted on the Empire by fellow-Christians, that left it so weak that it was finally subjugated by the Turks in the 15th century. It is certainly unfair to put the whole blame for these shameful events on the western Church: rather they are another crying example of the terrible results that may come from the loss of Christian charity and of the true spiritual ideal of the unity of the Church.

If the nemesis on the eastern Church was its subjection for centuries to the Turk, that on the western was its

break-up at the time of the Protestant Reformation. For that Reformation can more truly be called a *Revolution*, and it would hardly have turned out as it did if the Church of the west had not become so much like an earthly empire. There was certainly a widespread and earnest call for reform throughout the Church at the time, and when the division came by no means all the reformers were on the Protestant side. The Church of Rome did indeed reform itself of the worst absues of which the Protestants accused it. But the work of the reformers was exploited, and their followers forced into schism largely by political circumstances. Thus, if the Pope had not been trying to force Italian clergy upon the English, and wringing taxes from them, Henry VIII would not have found the necessary support from the English Church to enable him to break off the connection with the Papacy when he had determined to divorce his wife: if the German princes and people had not been disgusted with the long destructive feuds between Emperor and Pope, and the ambitions of the emperors in other parts of Europe, they would not have supported Martin Luther against both Pope and Emperor, and so set up Protestant national Churches of the German people. Again we may say that if the bishops and abbots had not become so like worldly princelings, that they had ceased to bear any resemblance to the humble apostles of the Lord, the Protestants on the Continent, and Non-conformists in England would not have rejected the historic Episcopate and the monastic life altogether as no part of the mind of Christ for His Church.

Our story seems to be getting sadder and sadder. Does it make us think that we would rather have nothing to do with a Church which has so miserably failed to represent the mind of her Lord? Yet indeed it would be very wrong to entertain any such despairing thoughts. Rather let us remember first what a stupendous task Christ is performing in His Church:—nothing less than the remaking of mankind in His likeness. We see on the one hand how slow His work is in ourselves; how often we fail Him and slip back, how continually we misunderstand and take wrong directions; how our young Church in India struggles

and seems feeble, and its light fitful: and yet, on the other hand, we know how in spite of all setbacks the work of Christ is going on in ourselves and in our Church; that saints are being made, lives are being transformed, age-long customs are being broken, and the nations are slowly coming to His light. And then we look back on those 'Dark Ages' of medieval Europe, and understand something of the terrific power of evil and ignorance with which the Spirit of God in the Church had to contend; what a vast accumulation of false ideas, ancient superstitious customs and deep-seated evil habits the truth of the Gospel had gradually to bring to light and destroy. Surely this could not be the work of one day or of many generations.

And then let us fix our eyes on the main stream of pure spiritual life that flowed through the Church in the west; on the multitude of faithful souls, known or unknown, who were the true salt, preserving it from corruption. For it certainly cannot be said of the western Church as of the Church of the east, that it lacked spiritual life, even in the darkest ages, and though its leaders were often unworthy. What permanent treasures we have received from the Medieval Church:—Pope Gregory the Great, St. Benedict, the heroic missionaries, Cuthbert, Aidan, Columba, Boniface,—the lovely lives of Queen Margaret of Scotland, of King Louis IX of France, of Queen Elizabeth of Hungary: Hilda the great Abbess of Whitby, the Venerable Bede, St. Bernard, who made men love the name of Jesus, and how many another, who, though they are heroes of European, rather than of Indian history, are yet our pioneers and fellows in the one Communion of Saints.

And just as when in the days of Constantine the Church ate poison, of which she soon fell deadly sick, God provided in the monastic life an instrument for the renewal and cleansing of her diseased body; so now, before the calamity of schism fell upon the Church of the west, there was again a time of renewal and of progress in the knowledge of the way of Christ, which we must go on to tell of in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII

The Thirteenth Century Renewal

By the tenth century the chief work of the Benedictines was done: all western Europe was at least professedly Christian and Catholic, united under one Patriarch, the Pope of Rome. The monasteries therefore were everywhere settling down into an all-too-comfortable life, they had gradually amassed great lands and wealth, the gifts of pious benefactors or conscience-stricken sinners. No longer did the monks all work with their own hands to provide for their needs, but employed large numbers of lay brethren and even serfs to do it for them, while they gave themselves to study and the copy of manuscripts and the development of Church music. Many joined without any real vocation to the religious life, attracted by a life of leisure and peace, which in those turbulent days was to be found nowhere else but in the cloister. A further cause of decadence was a very bad custom that had grown up of kings and princes appointing their own relatives or favourites as Abbots and Abbesses of the great religious houses; sometimes these were not even monks and nuns, except in name, and they did not live with their monastic brethren, but like great lords and ladies in separate houses.

There were several notable reforms of monasticism during the tenth and eleventh centuries, which did great and often lasting good. Especially memorable is that of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1113-1153), whose holy life of devotion to our Lord had an enormous influence on the whole of western Christendom, for he was constantly referred to by Popes and Kings for counsel in most important matters.

But it was becoming clear that what was needed was a new kind of religious life altogether, one less withdrawn from the world, and less liable to the temptations of luxury and worldliness. So God raised up His new instrument in *St. Francis*, 'the little Poor Man of Assisi', the one Christian saint, perhaps, who is loved wherever he is known, in west or east, by Catholic or Protestant. There is no need here to re-write the story of

that lovely life:—his gaiety and freedom from worldliness; his generous sympathy with all poor, sick and down-trodden souls; his disarming gentleness with hardened sinners; his feeling of kinship with all created things; his complete identification of himself with the Passion of his Lord: that story is easily obtained and can be read by all. Here we can only notice what, besides the example of his own life and character, he was used by God to do for the renewal of the Christian Church. Three chief things he did: first, he brought his followers out of the sheltered comfort of the cloister, and sent them out two and two into the dark places of the world, leper asylums, plague-stricken cities, poverty-stricken villages, to preach the love and passion of Christ and nothing else. They were not monks, though vowed to the celibate life, and were to be called Friars Minor, that is the 'Lesser Brothers'.

Secondly, he cut away the temptation to luxurious and comfortable living, and to the leisurely life of the scholar, by forbidding his friars to hold any property whatsoever, not even books and houses. They were to accept as their daily bread whatever was offered them, and to labour with their hands, not in their own fields and workshops, but in their neighbours', and that for pure love, not for reward. Like the early communism of the Christian Church pictured in the first chapters of Acts, this ideal was held to be impracticable when the Order of Friars Minor had become a large international body, and there was grave danger of scandal from a multitude of such wandering beggars, who, far away from their central authorities, might turn out to be only thinly disguised rogues or wastrels, like so many of the professional 'holy men' of India. So even in the lifetime of Francis, though sorely against his will, it was ordained by the Pope that Franciscans must have proper convents and that their rule of absolute poverty must be modified. This in time led to the Order becoming assimilated in many respects to the older monasticism, devoting itself as the monks did to the pursuit of learning and art. But the original Franciscan life of absolute poverty and service still remains as a lovely ideal which has haunted the minds of devout Christian souls ever since, and has

in many ways influenced the whole later development of the religious life.

But probably the most important contribution of St. Francis to the development of the spiritual life of the Church was his creation of a 'Third Order' of men and women who desired to devote themselves to God while living an ordinary life in the world, as married folk, peasants and artisans, business and professional men, even as kings and rulers. For one result of the rise and growth of monasticism and of the wild condition of half-civilized barbarian Europe had been the widespread idea that the devout life was impossible outside the cloister. But now Francis and his great contemporary and brother-founder Dominic, made it possible for such laymen and women to devote themselves to God and the service of their fellow-men; living each in his or her own natural circle in the world, but all under obedience to a common rule of life which was a modification of the Friars' own rule. Instead of absolute poverty they pledged themselves to such detachment from worldly wealth as to live very simply themselves, and to devote their surplus to the good of the poor. They also undertook definite kinds of personal service for the poor and sick, such as nursing plague-stricken patients or lepers, burying the dead, teaching poor children to read and write and say their prayers and so on. At this time there were already growing up in certain parts of Europe religious associations of laymen and women which were heretical and anti-clerical in character. The influence of the Franciscan and Dominican Tertiaries (that is members of the Third Order) was great in helping to keep the laity faithful to the Church's teaching and ministry; still more incalculable was their influence in paving the way for the great religious movement of the laity which was the strongest spiritual force behind the Reformation.

Before we leave St. Francis we must mention one other of his noteworthy deeds, though one which appeared to bear but little fruit in his own time. As far as we know his was the only voice which was raised against the Crusades, and in favour of missions of the love of God to

Moslems. He himself, with one other friar, actually travelled to the Holy Land at the time of the Crusades and had an interview with Saladin, the famous general of the Turks. Saladin received them courteously and gave them safe-conduct back again. But what could two little preachers of Christian love do against the constant preaching of hate by the armies of the west? As far as we know Francis had only one follower in this matter, Raymon Lull, born the year after Francis died. Lull, though he knew and loved the Order, was not a Franciscan; but he devoted his whole life to trying to rouse the Church to undertake missions to the Moslems. He himself made an exhaustive study of the Moslem religion, working by voice and pen for the conversion of the Moors in Spain and north Africa, where he was finally martyred by them. Yet it was not for another five centuries that the Church was really to awake to this call to meet Islam not with the sword but with the Gospel.

To return to the story of the thirteenth century; the western Church having thus had new life brought into it by the Friars, blossomed out in this and the next century into a great revival of both intellectual and spiritual life. This was the age of the rise of the chief European universities, Bologna and Salerno in Italy, Paris in France, Oxford and Cambridge in England. It was the age of Gothic architecture and the beginnings of the great age of Flemish and Italian painting; the age of the poet Dante, one of the first in Europe to break away from Latin, and write one of the immortal poems of the world in his native Italian. It was the age too of the first School of Christian philosophy since the days when Clement and Origen had christianized Plato in Alexandria. This philosophy is usually called *Scholasticism,* and its greatest exponent is St. Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican Friar: it became the fashion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to pour scorn on Scholastic philosophy, and certainly it declined very sadly after the time of Aquinas, chiefly because the Church's fear of heresy put a stop to any real freedom of thought; but it still remains the only European philosophy which can be called fully and professedly *Christian,* and

there are signs today of a renewal of interest in and respect for it, not only in the Roman Catholic Church.

As regards spiritual life, this was also the age of the spread of the study and practice of mysticism in the western Church, and some of the great classics of Christian mysticism were written at this time; the writings of Ruysbroeck and Thomas à Kempis the Flemings, Eckhart and Tauler the Germans, Catherine of Siena in Italy, and in England Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich and the unknown author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. These may be new names to some of us, but they represent a rich treasury of spiritual wisdom and experience to which we may still return with profit and delight.

It must however be admitted that in this revival of mysticism there lay a real danger; for a good deal of its inspiration came not from the Christian Gospel, but from pre-Christian oriental mysticism, handed down through Neo-Platonist teachers (see Part I, Chapter 6). It thus had a strong vein of pantheism in it, and a tendency to belittle all action, even the service of others, as inferior to the negative way of complete detachment from the world for a life of contemplation and mystic union with God. We have seen this to be a weakness of eastern monasticism, where this kind of mystical teaching was always strong; now it was introduced into the west, and though it is noteworthy that the greatest mystics of the west always remained securely rooted and grounded in Christ, there were often great excesses on the part of the more ignorant, with outbursts of hysteria and morbid asceticism. We must remember that at this time the Bible was an unknown book to most Christians, for it had not yet been translated into any European vernacular, and as a rule only the clergy knew Latin, and not even among them was there much study of Scripture. The lives of the Saints were better known than the life of Christ, miracles and visions were valued more than holiness and the loving service of men. So we need to read these medieval mystical books with caution and reserve, testing them severely by the Gospel teaching and ever ready, like Julian of Norwich, to refuse 'to come to heaven otherwise than by Jesus . . .

I answered inwardly, "Nay, I may not; for thou art my heaven. Me like no other Heaven than Jesus, which shall be my bliss when I come there" '. Especially is this caution necessary in India, which is the very home of non-Christian mysticism, so that we may expect to have a continual pressure brought to bear on the Indian Church by its Hindu environment to follow ways of spiritual life which are not fully Christian. Here as always the test must be congruity with the Holy Scriptures and with the constant tradition of the undivided Church as to the nature and meaning of the Christian experience of God.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHURCH OF THE DYING ROMAN EMPIRE

THE Roman Empire at the height of its power and glory presented a very fruitful combination of the Latin gen[illegible] for organization and rule and the Greek genius for thoug[illegible], art and literature. We have seen how God chose this combination for providing the best conditions in which tl Gospel seed, sprung from the Jewish plant, could be sown. So the Christian Church entered into both these heritages. But when Constantine moved his capital from Rome to the Bosphorus, and both Church and Empire fell apart, that which God had joined together was put asunder by man, and while the western Church proved itself to be the heir of the Roman power of rule, the eastern remained as the guardian of the Greek intellectual tradition. Thus with the exception of Tertullian and St. Augustine, who were natives of Carthage, in north Africa, and so neither Romans nor Greeks, all the great theologians of the Church were easterners. This Greek stamp,—the stamp of profound philosophical reflection, and a more transcendent attitude to the things of this world, remains to this day upon the daughter Churches of Constantinople; in this respect they stand midway between East and West spiritually as well as geographically. They have not had the same eventful history of development, setbacks and revivals as the Church of the west shows: on the other hand they have not

suffered from the stagnation and formalism of the Churches further east. They call themselves collectively the *Holy Orthodox Church*, and claim to be the only guardians of the uncorrupted traditions of the primitive Church. On the one hand they blame the eastern Churches for taking from the Faith by their heresies, and on the other the western for adding to it, by such doctrines as that of Papal Supremacy and Infallibility. That is they abide by the decisions of all the truly Œcumenical (universal) Councils of the undivided Church. And because, since the Church became divided, no truly œcumenical council has been possible, they admit no decision of any Church since in faith and morals, as binding on the conscience of all Christians. One cannot but feel that in this as in other respects, they have maintained more faithfully the true spiritual ideal of the unity of the Church, which we have seen to have been obscured by Papal imperialism. If you will turn back to Chapters 4 and 5, in Part I of this book and read again what was said of the New Testament ideal of Church unity, and of the place of the Eucharist in it, you will be able to appreciate better that for which the Orthodox Church has stood for nearly two thousand years. It is true its Patriarchs have not always been free from the temptation to make themselves overlords of the Church of Christ as the Roman Popes have done; yet this despotic idea has never been accepted by the Orthodox Churches as a whole, and they remain to this day far less dominated by their clergy than any other of the episcopal Churches. On the other hand, their firm grasp of the essentially corporate idea of the Church, has saved them from falling into the opposite excess of individualism, which is the chief weakness of Protestants. Does it not seem that the Indian Church would have much to gain from a closer association with this ancient part of the Body of Christ?

The Orthodox Church has a fine record of missionary work. One of the results of the Mohammedan conquest of all the eastern provinces of the Empire, was to make what remained of it stronger and more united. By this time another great wave of barbarians, Slavs, Bulgars and others, had settled in the Balkan provinces and laid the

foundations of what are now the little kingdoms of Bulgaria, Yugo-Slavia and Roumania. Behind them were the huge spaces of what was later to become the Holy Russian Empire, the greatest bulwark of the Orthodox Church. From the seventh to the ninth centuries, these people were being christianized and civilized by the Orthodox, as the west of Europe was by the Roman Catholics. And here we must note that the Orthodox Church, has never, like the Roman, sought to impose one language on all its adherents. Western Europe was Latinized as well as christianized, but the Orthodox practice was to give to each newly converted nation the Scriptures and the beautiful and ancient liturgies in its own tongue. In some cases this meant giving them first an alphabet and a written language, as has so often been done for aboriginal and backward peoples by modern Protestant missionaries.

But a large part of the Orthodox Church has been for centuries a Church in bonds. After the Nestorian and Monophysite schisms, small groups of the Orthodox (the Melkites) were left in Egypt and Syria, and there are still Orthodox Patriarchs in Alexandria, Syria and Jerusalem besides the heretical ones. These remnants suffered severely under their Moslem conquerors, because they were pro-Roman, and therefore won less favour than the nationalist Nestorians and Monophysites. But the great trial of the Orthodox Church came when in the eleventh century the Arabs were replaced by the Turks in western Asia, while at the same time the growing imperialism of the western Church, and the Crusades, brought the Emperor and Patriarch of Constantinople between two fires. The Turks were far more oppressive rulers than the Arabs had been, and the Crusades had naturally increased their hatred and contempt for all Christians. For another two hundred years after the last Crusade the dying flame of Byzantine power flickered feebly, while the young kingdoms of Bulgaria and Servia grew in power. But in 1453 the end came, when the Turks captured Constantinople, and 'the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome' were trampled upon and scattered abroad like the embers of a dying fire. Within a very few years the whole of the new Balkan

States were subjugated, and Turkish armies were menacing western Europe.

And what of the Church? In the old imperial provinces and the Balkans it suffered the same fate as the eastern Churches had done, that is, of being reduced to small, barely tolerated and severely repressed communities within the Moslem State. The Patriarch of Constantinople was the nominal head, civil as well as spiritual, of all Christians in the Turkish dominions, and the Sultans took care to see that only those were elected to the office who would be in no way a menace to their rule. The clergy became sadly ignorant; the languages of the Scriptures and liturgies grew out of date, and were no longer understood by the common people, or even by many of the clergy themselves, who learnt the prayers off by rote; but no one cared to revise them. This state of affairs lasted right up until the nineteenth century: indeed even to the time of the great European war, when the Balkan States, one after the other threw off the Turkish yoke, and with them the Church also obtained its freedom.

But meanwhile the Providence of God had watched over His Family, and when the Church of Constantinople was put in bonds, it was the Church of Russia which took its place as the centre of Orthodoxy. The Russians had first been evangelised at the end of the tenth century, and Christianity had gradually spread over the country. Then in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (the period of the Franciscan revival in medieval Europe), the people and Church of Russia suffered terribly between the Mongol Tartars (Moslems) on their south and east and the Catholic States of Lithuania and Poland, the most bitter rivals to the growing Russian State, on their west. Indeed for many years the Russians were actually subject to one or other of these unfriendly neighbours.

But ten years after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, the Russian Grand Prince Ivan defeated the Mongols and Lithuanians, and obtained recognition as a sovereign ruler from the states of western Europe. Ivan married the niece of the last emperor of Constantinople, thus deliberately making himself the successor of the Roman

Emperors, as Charlemagne had done in the west; and with him begins the real foundation of the Russian Empire. His successors called themselves Tsar, that is the Russian form of Cæsar.

The history of the Holy Orthodox Church of Russia really belongs to the period which is to be covered by the third part of this book. But as that history will not again cross the history of the Indian Church, it may be better to finish the sketch of it here. Right up until modern times it suffered from its isolation from the rest of Christendom and from the hostility of the Catholic west, and the encroachments of Papal imperialism. But on the east it nobly tackled the mighty task of winning for Christ the vast regions of Siberia. Not content with this, it established in more recent times flourishing missions in Japan and Alaska. At the present time its adherents in Japan are more numerous than those of any other Christian body in that country.

The monastic life has always flourished in Russia, though of the eastern hermit type, not the western life of active service. But its great monasteries have often been centres of genuine spiritual life, and have also been bulwarks against the waves of Islam and heathenism from the Mongols of the east. The Church has its own long list of saints whose lives are held in the people's memory by the universal practice of venerating their pictures (Ikons as they are called). In every Russian Church there is a screen across the sanctuary, upon which figures of Christ, His Mother and His Saints are depicted; and every pious Russian home, before the Revolution, had its ikon in the corner, towards which all turned for daily prayer and grace before food.

Before the Revolution! Yes, alas, for in our own time the Russian Church is passing through a particularly fierce and searching trial, which must either destroy or greatly purify it. Its enemy at home had always been the bad Byzantine tradition of too much control by the civil power: and that was indeed a large part of the cause of the violent reaction against it that came with the Communist Revolution. It was the Church of the Tsar, and of the hated old

regime: therefore it must go. Besides many of its parish priests, who were peasants themselves, had shared in the deplorable ignorance and down-trodden condition of the Russian peasantry, and the Church's appeal to the better educated and progressive classes had grown weak.

It is difficult to judge from the conflicting reports one hears, just how much of the old religious life is actually left in Russia, underground and secret as it must needs be. But there are abundant signs that amongst the exiles, of whom the greater part are settled in Paris, and who represent the better educated portion of pre-revolution Russia, there is a genuine revival of spiritual life centring round the Orthodox Church. Moreover this exile is bringing that Church for the first time for nine centuries into close and sympathetic contact with Christians of the west; not only with the Roman and Protestant proselytizers it has long been familiar with in its own land, but with live national churches, German, Swedish, English and others. Not only so, but the freeing of the Balkan Churches from the yoke of Turkey, has made it more possible for members of different parts of the Orthodox Church to meet with one another. Unfortunately, there are between some of these old quarrels, largely political and racial in origin, which are still unsettled, but there is every hope that the renewal of contact and the general raising of mental and spiritual life which is taking place in all these Churches, will in time bring about a restored unity.

Equally important is the influence on Protestants and Anglicans of contact with this ancient Church, so conservative of the traditions of the undivided Body of Christ, so deep and spiritual in its theology, so rich in its life of worship. This last indeed, seems to be the chief glory of the Russian Church, and that which we in India perhaps most need to learn from it. For there is much in the spirit of the Orthodox Church which seems more akin to the spirit of the East than of the West, and it may yet be a 'bridge Church' between Asia and Europe, as its geographical position and its history, both suggest that it is meant to be. We may also most profitably study the Orthodox vision of the Catholic Church as a number of

truly national Churches, each having *swaraj*, and its own language and customs, but all united in one communion and fellowship of Faith and Sacrament, and held together by the œcumenical councils of its Fathers in God, the Bishops and Patriarchs. This vision, never fully realized, largely owing to political difficulties, has never been entirely lost in the Orthodox Church; and it both appears truer to the primitive custom and also, may we not say, truer to the mind of Our Lord, than either the Roman conception of one imperial Church, or the Protestant one of a number of independent groups.

In the final section of this history, this great eastern branch of the Church drops almost out of sight, and we have to restrict our view for the next two centuries to the Church in western Europe, to which the Indian Church owes her more immediate heritage. We should try however, in studying that period, not entirely to forget the existence of the Orthodox Church, for it is certain that in the future its importance and influence in Christendom will be greatly increased; and it should never be left out of account in planning any scheme of union between Churches, such as that at present under consideration in South India.

[Readers who would like to know more about the Church of eastern Europe are referred to the following two small books, published by the British S.C.M. *The Eastern Orthodox Church*, Zankov; *Mysticism in the Eastern Church*, Arseniew. *The Holy Orthodox Church*, a larger book by the Russian refugee theologian Bulgakov, is also full of information and interest.]

PART III

'LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER UNTIL THE HARVEST': THE LAST FOUR CENTURIES

CHAPTER XIV

THE BREAK-UP OF THE POPE'S EMPIRE

WE have now to thread our way through that tangled skein of the Church and the world, the period of the Reformation, so as to trace in it God's ever-guiding hand, His constant over-ruling of men's sins and ignorance, and His continuous generous bestowal of new spiritual life, wherever His erring children have turned to Him in penitence and faith. It is the most difficult period of Church history to write of fairly and truly, for the emotions and passions aroused by the controversies of those days, and their horrible accompaniment of persecution, still bear their evil fruit in our minds as unconscious prejudices and misunderstandings, even when we most desire to be just and charitable to all. It is indeed only from within a reunited Church that a really true history of Christianity can be produced. Yet we must try to understand this period, because for us Christians of India it is our more immediate heritage, and accounts for our present divided condition. The full rounded heritage of all Christians had already been impoverished by the break-up of the eastern Church, and its separation from the western: now that western heritage was to be still further split up amongst different sects through the divisions of the Reformation. We in India have therefore the painful but truly noble, task of gathering up all the scattered fragments which have been cast up on our shores, in order that by the grace of God and His life-giving Spirit, they may again be united in one Holy Catholic Church of India.

In Chapter XI we referred to the Reformation as being to a great extent a political revolt against the medieval imperial system. But it would be most misleading to

suggest that the only or even the chief causes of the Reformation were political. There was behind it a great movement of spiritual life, and it is significant that it was a movement of lay people, not of clergy and monks. This links it on to the work of the Franciscan and Dominican Friars, who, as we have seen (Part II, Chapter XII) did so much to quicken spiritual life amongst ordinary lay people, as well as on to the more anti-clerical associations of lay people which helped to weaken allegiance to the Pope and bishops. But because the western Church in the later middle ages had become indistinguishable from a political empire, the religious movement became a political one, and reform became revolution. We must look first then at those things in the medieval Church which barred the way to spiritual advance, and forced so many of its most earnest children into rebellion.

First, there was the perversion of the Episcopate. The primitive idea of the bishops as guardians of the apostolic tradition, elected by the voice of the Church, and ruling it as Fathers and Shepherds, had been almost entirely lost, and with it the spiritual idea of the Church's unity. The bishops had become great feudal lords, exercising civil as well as ecclesiastical power. Their rule may have often been milder than that of other princes and barons, but too often it pressed more hardly, because a bishop could bring the dreaded punishments of excommunication and interdict to bear on his rebellious subjects; and to the ignorant peasants this was a real terror, for they believed firmly in the undying fires of hell for those who died under the Church's ban. Moreover the bishops were themselves subject to a foreign overlord, the Pope, and they were quite often foreigners themselves: the people had in most cases no say at all in their appointment, and if they withstood them they might arouse the whole power of the Papacy against themselves, often backed up by the civil power. Bishops too held most of the important offices in the various European states, because for centuries only the clergy were sufficiently educated for such responsible work. Much dissatisfaction and bitterness was caused too by the exemption of all clergy, even those in quite

minor orders, from being tried for crimes in the civil courts. Thus a layman who had a legitimate grievance against a priest felt that he was in an utterly unfair position.

Another cause of rebellion against the Church was that its great wealth excited the greed and jealousy of other princes. This was certainly one of the principal causes of the dissolution of the monasteries and convents, for it was in these that much of the wealth was collected. On the other hand, the discontent of the masses was aroused by the Church's avaricious grasp of more. It was because the Pope wanted money to build the great Cathedral of St. Peter in Rome, that there was the widespread sale of 'indulgences' which first aroused Luther's protest, just as the earlier attempt in England to collect 'Peter's pence' roused a storm of popular indignation against the Pope.

Again, in its jealous fear lest its power should in any way be weakened, the Church had come to be a tyrant over men's minds. The Catholic Faith thought out by the great Church 'Fathers and Doctors' and safeguarded in the Creeds, had been meant to be a guide and inspiration to men's thoughts, as maps and signposts are to a traveller; but the medieval western Church had turned it into a hard and fast system of dogma, which held men's minds in a fetter and made it almost impossible for them to think at all, for thought which is not free is not true thought. In the fifteenth century the Inquisition, that most terrible of all the Church's weapons, had been set up in Spain. Actually it was founded by the King, not by the Church authorities, and its primary purpose was to hunt out and get rid of the Jews and Moslems, of whom there were large numbers in that country, and who were a menace both to Church and State. (Until the middle of the fifteenth century the Moslem Moors had been in possession of a large part of Spain.) But the Church soon realized what a powerful weapon the Inquisition was, and it later spread to other countries, and was used to root out heresies and sedition of all kinds. It was at this time that the practice of burning heretics alive was begun, and the burning of John Hus, the Bohemian reformer and patriot, in 1415, kindled a fire in men's hearts that has never since been put out.

The Inquisition has been connected in Protestant minds with fiendish tortures and horrible imprisonments. But these things were the common methods at that time for extracting evidence and punishing crime; they were not used any more by the Inquisition than by all States and overlords. These facts only serve to remind us that Europe at that time was in reality still a continent of half-civilized barbarians; for many of them Christianity was a mere veneer, a formal discipline that kept them from being as lawless as they otherwise might have been. The Church was never more cruel than the world, in many cases less so; yet it remains a cause of deep shame that it did not refuse to use the torture-chamber and the stake for what it believed to be the cause of Christ. But for the men of those days the real horror of the Inquisition lay not in these things, but in its system of secret information, by which anyone whatever could inform against another person as a suspect heretic, under cover of strict sec[illegible]. Thus at any time any men or women however holy, m[illegible] suddenly be taken off to be examined before the Inquisitors as to their teaching or writings, and though they were very often acquitted, it might mean months or even years of imprisonment before their case was finally decided.

The story of the sixteenth century is first of all the story of the setting free of man's mind and spirit, and the awakening of his conscience; secondly, it is the story of the breaking up of the Imperial-Papal system by kings, princes, and democracies. Religiously, it was the revival of personal religion; politically, it was the rise of the modern European States, and the beginning of the long struggle between peoples and their rulers, and between rival States, of which the nations of Europe are still trying to find a stable solution. And the Christian Church could not but partake of the political confusion of the times. The wheat and tares were growing up together, and were still hardly distinguishable one from another.

The liberation of men's minds came with the *Renaissance*, or re-birth of learning. This came chiefly through a revived study of the old Roman and Greek culture, which had been all but wiped out by the barbarian inva-

sions of the Roman Empire from the third to the tenth centuries. This revival received an immense stimulus from the scattering through western Europe of the Greek scholars from Constantinople after it had been taken by the Turks in 1453. Almost at the same time came the invention of the printing-press, and a new era began. Imagine what it would mean that learning and the copying of books should no longer be almost a monopoly of clergy and monks. For the first time since the collapse of the Roman Empire the ordinary laity began to be educated. They read books, non-Christian books as well as Christian ones; they began to think, to enquire, to criticize. Much the same thing has been happening to India in the last 150 years, since the coming of western education broke down the Brahmins' age-long exclusive privilege of learning, and opened the door of knowledge to all.

The Renaissance in itself could not have produced the Reformation, for in many respects it was an anti-religious, or rather non-religious movement. The classical writings which were its inspiration were the work of non-Christians; yet in what they wrote was much that was noble and true. Thus it was no longer unthinkable to be anything but a Christian at least in name. Man in himself, apart from Christ, was seen as a noble animal, capable of great things. 'How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!'. This new enthusiasm for the natural man, which Shakespeare has thus so finely expressed through the mouth of Hamlet, is usually called *Humanism*, and it has remained an important part of European culture ever since the Renaissance. It has indeed produced very mixed fruit. On the one hand, it is the parent of modern agnosticism, materialism, and secular education: but on the other, where there has been a union of the best pagan thought with the teaching of the New Testament that all men are God's beloved children, born to be free and made brothers in Christ, it has given birth to the whole great tradition of 'liberty,

equality, and fraternity' which has inspired European life at its best, during the last four hundred years.

In thus rousing and quickening the mind and spirit of man, the Renaissance made a newly fertilized soil congenial to the growth of the Gospel seed. But that seed itself did not come from Greece or Rome, but from where it ever comes, its original home of Judea. 'Salvation is from the Jews', and the Gospel of salvation is mediated through the Scriptures given by the Jews to the world. The scholars of the sixteenth century were not only studying Greek and Latin authors, but the Bible, which had been so much neglected by the medieval Church. The printing-presses were turning out new and carefully revised editions of the Bible re-translated from the original Hebrew and Greek. Vernacular versions of parts or of the whole Bible were being issued: in England, this had been done by John Wyclif as early as the fourteenth century. And those who read and studied inevitably began to contrast the Church of the New Testament with the Church of Rome, the prince-bishops with the Apostles, whose successors they professed to be, the Mass with the Lord's Supper of the Gospels, the conduct of the clergy with the teaching of Christ. Everywhere went up the cry for reform. Men and women, both clergy and laity, were meeting in groups, to study the Scriptures, to try and regulate their own lives by the teaching of Christ, to discuss the burning question as to how the Church was to be renewed in her first love. But, alas! the system was too cast-iron, too deeply rooted in self-interest and love of power, to be changed by peaceful reform from within. The would-be reformers gained very little sympathy from the great ecclesiastics, in whose hands the power lay. So in the end, the whole system was blown up, as happens to all systems that are too rigid to be changed; and the man who acted the part of the match thrown into the powder magazine was that fiery soul *Martin Luther.*

Luther himself had no intention of breaking up the Church system. He was concerned with one thing only, to bring back into men's hearts and consciences the real core of the everlasting Gospel, the reconciliation of the

souls of sinful men with God through Christ. This was no new teaching: he himself had learnt it from his own confessor, who was a monk, and he found it confirmed by his later study of the Bible and Church Fathers. In every age there had been humble and devout men and women believing it and living by it. But for the mass of nominal Christians it had become overlaid and forgotten in the emphasis laid on penance for sins, and on the awfulness of Christ as Judge. To many people Christianity was merely a law, a form of discipline to which they submitted; the performing of penances and the doing of good works were looked upon as means of ensuring personal salvation after death. Luther's watchword was 'Justification by faith', and he insisted that man has no merit at all of his own, but is only accepted by God as righteous through faith in Christ's atonement: this acceptance is God's own act of grace and love, and not at all due to anything man can do. He thus brought into question the whole teaching of the Church at that time as to penance and forgiveness. This teaching rightly distinguished between the guilt of the sinner, which is forgiven by God, and his own fitting acts of restitution and penance by which he shows the genuineness of his repentance. But along with this, there had grown up a rigid doctrine of penance, according to which every sin brings a necessary penalty or penance that has to be paid even by the forgiven sinner, if not in this life, then in the fires of Purgatory hereafter, in order that the justice of God may be satisfied. The Church claimed that the Pope had power to remit or lessen this penalty by an 'indulgence' to any sinner who gave some adequate proof of true penitence; much as a judge can shorten the sentence of a prisoner who shows good conduct. This practice, however, had been terribly abused, until it had become possible to obtain 'indulgences' remitting part of the penance of Purgatory, not only for oneself, but for one's dead relatives, merely on payment of a certain sum of money to the Church. When the Pope wanted money very badly for building St. Peter's Cathedral, he proclaimed a special sale of such indulgences; and it was Luther's protest against this

abuse that first brought him into conflict with the Church authorities. He did not deny the doctrine of Purgatory, or the Pope's power to give indulgences; but he wanted the whole question brought into the open air of discussion and cleared up once for all. The Pope, however, saw in such a demand not only a questioning of his authority but a threat of stopping his profitable sale of indulgences. He therefore refused to allow Luther to discuss the question publicly, and when Luther disobeyed, he excommunicated him. Luther burnt the Papal Bull of Excommunication publicly: that was the act that set fire to the powder. Henceforth it was not really Luther who carried on the revolution, but the kings, princes, and peoples of northern Europe, who had been given courage by this one man's bold act of defiance, to throw off the hated yoke of the Pope and his underlings.

Luther seems to have been lacking in organizing ability: his whole interest was in the individual soul. Once his central doctrine of justification by faith was accepted, he was willing to retain anything in the Catholic system which did not seem to be expressly forbidden in Scripture. He was not, therefore, a Church builder, and he had no better scheme for the protection of his doctrines and of the rapidly forming groups of his followers, than to substitute the lordship of secular princes for that of the bishops. He defended this policy by asserting that all Christians were priests, and as the civil government was ordained by God, there was no need for any special ecclesiastical rulers. Luther was a German, and at that time Germany was not a single nation, but a collection of small principalities owing nominal allegiance to the 'Holy Roman Emperor.' The Emperor at that time was a Spaniard, and a staunch supporter of Catholicism, but many of the German princes championed Luther, revolted against the Emperor as well as the Pope, and established Lutheranism in their little States. Thus the old mistake of Constantine was repeated without even the safeguard of the historic Episcopate to mitigate the control of the Church by the civil power. This subservience of the German Church to the State has been a clog on its develop-

ment all through its history, and it is only in these days that the definite challenge of Nazism is forcing it to decide, once for all, between Christ and Cæsar.

Luther's teaching spread rapidly over Northern Europe. In Denmark and Sweden, where it found favour with kings as well as people, the kings were strong enough either to win over or to subjugate the bishops. Sweden like England, retained the Apostolic Succession of its bishops; but Denmark deliberately broke it off, and created a new line of so-called 'bishops' who were to be merely superintendents of the pastors, but had no power of consecration or ordination. Norway and Iceland were under the rule of Denmark, and were forced to follow suit.

Meanwhile, in other parts of Europe, where Luther's doctrine was not so acceptable, his act of defiance was imitated. The Swiss of Zurich, who hated their foreign bishop-overlord, revolted against him under the leadership of the priest *Zwingli*, and organized Church and State in accordance with their own democratic spirit, and what they believed to be New Testament teaching. Less creditable was the action of Henry VIII of England; when he failed to get a dispensation annulling his marriage with Catherine of Aragon, who had borne him no heir, he made use of the new spirit of revolt to deny the Papal supremacy over the English Church, and had himself proclaimed instead as its Supreme Head. It was for refusing to admit this claim that *Sir Thomas More*, one of the greatest of Englishmen, at once a keen humanist and a deeply religious man, and the saintly Bishop Fisher, were beheaded.

The last national revolt was that of Holland, which was part of the Spanish Emperor's dominions, and which suffered terrible persecution before it won its political and religious independence, and was established as a Protestant Republic. Meanwhile in France, though the Protestant movement never captured the King or the majority of the nation, there was a large and influential body of Protestants which persisted in spite of relentless and cruel persecutions. This group was to give to the cause of the Reformers another of its great leaders in

John Calvin, whose work we must consider in the next chapter.

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Pope had lost all northern Europe except Poland and southern Germany. Roman Catholicism still remained the established religion in France, Italy, Austria, Spain and Portugal. But since the French Revolution, it has ceased to be so in France, though still the religion of the greater number of Frenchmen. In the nineteenth century the Pope's temporal power was further weakened by the uniting of Italy into one nation and kingdom and the restriction of the Pope's rule to the Lateran Palace: while the present century has seen the disestablishment of Roman Catholicism by revolutions in Austria, Portugal and Spain. There is no longer a 'Holy Roman Empire'.

In another chapter we must see how in spite of, or perhaps, because of, this loss of worldly power, there was a great renewal of spiritual life in the Roman Church. But before that let us turn to the other side of the Reformation, and try to see what spiritual gains and losses Protestantism has brought to the whole Church of Christ. One great loss this chapter has already made clear, the complete eclipse of the idea of the Church as an international, or rather *super*-national society. Lutheranism and the wars of religion that followed on the Reformation, brought a strange new principle into Christendom, that the form of religion should follow the lines of division between States. 'To each region its own religion' was the slogan: and this was interpreted to mean that the religion of the country was to be settled by its rulers, who would then try to enforce conformity within their own realms. It is obvious that such a settlement would not satisfy the consciences of many, and we shall find later how a new crop of difficulties grew out of it. Meanwhile we can see only too clearly in modern Europe, with its desperate groping after a principle of unity that all States will acknowledge, how bitterly it has suffered from the loss of the supernational outlook which was undoubtedly one of the strongest features of the Catholic Christendom of the Middle Ages.

CHAPTER XV

The Religion of the Protestants

We have sketched briefly the external and political events of the Reformation which resulted in the complete break-up of the great Papal-Imperial system of the Middle Ages. We must now try to understand the religious changes that it introduced. As has already been said, Luther's message was not a new one, merely a re-emphasising of something that had always been a part of the Christian faith, but that had been neglected and forgotten. Luther was a great man and in many respects a true prophet, but he is a striking example of how impossible it is for one man to grasp the whole truth of the Gospel in its true proportion, and therefore how necessary it is to have the teaching of individual prophets balanced and moderated by such a sober body as the Synod of Bishops in the undivided Church originally was. Luther based all his teaching on his own individual experience: but God leads men to Himself in many ways, and no one man's experience is sufficient on which to build the faith of the whole Church. Nor indeed is that one man competent so to explain his own experience as to make it a safe guide even for himself apart from the richer and more varied experience of the whole Body. The New Testament is not built upon the experience of any one man, but on that of the whole first generation of Christians, and that corporate experience has been interpreted with great variety and richness by the different New Testament writers. But Luther, like Marcion in the second century (see Part I, Chapter VI), brushed aside all testimony but that of St. Paul, because only in St. Paul's writings did he find his doctrine of justification by faith explicitly taught: he therefore judged the value of all other books of the Bible according as to whether or no that doctrine was found in them. Similarly, he paid very little attention to the teaching of any of the 'Fathers' of the Church, except St. Augustine, because only in him again did he find a congenial soul. The result could not but be one-sided, even though the teaching was not actually false.

It is not surprising therefore, that not all the Reformers entirely accepted Luther's doctrines, for they did not all share his experience: and even his own followers later modified his teaching a good deal. But he had introduced a principle into the Christian religion that has been characteristic of the Protestant habit of mind ever since: the principle that any individual can decide from his own experience and interpretation of Scripture what is the true Gospel, independently of the accumulated wisdom and experience of the whole Church, and that he can form a new 'Church' or assembly of Christians on the basis of his own particular experience and interpretation. This state of affairs was, of course, the inevitable result of violent reaction against the abuse of authority by the medieval Church, and like all violent reactions it swung too far in the opposite direction. The consequence of Luther's example and of the complete break-down of the authority of the Church, was that there was no longer any clear, universally recognized standard of what was and what was not the true Christian faith. All kinds of teachers arose each with his private interpretation of Scripture, each sure that he was right, and each refusing to join in communion and fellowship with those who disagreed with him. It was the history of the doctrinal controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries over again. But whereas then it was still possible to hold an œcumenical council and so to get a more or less authoritative expression of the Church's mind, that was no longer possible, for there was no one authority which was acceptable to all. Luther himself was intensely intolerant, and would come to no terms with Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer, though his milder and more scholarly follower, Melancthon, was eager to make peace all round, not only with other Protestants, and with the Catholic Church, but even with the Eastern Orthodox. Luther, however, was not to be moved from his position that his interpretation of the Gospel was the only true one; so that almost at once the bulk of the Protestants became divided into two hostile camps, 'Lutheran', and 'Reformed', as the Swiss party was called, besides several lesser sects, who agreed with

neither. Lutheranism remained the religion of most of the northern German States, and of the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway): while the Swiss, French, Dutch and a considerable section of German and British Protestants became followers of the Reformed religion.

About twenty years after Luther's act of defiance of the Pope, this latter section of Protestantism was immensely strengthened by the acquisition of a new leader, *John Calvin*. Calvin was a Frenchman; that is, he belonged to that section of Protestantism which was least corrupted by political aims, and which had suffered most grievously at the hands of its Catholic overlords. He was a man of brilliant mind, and had in great measure those gifts which Luther most conspicuously lacked, the sense of the essentially corporate nature of Christianity, and the organizing ability necessary for building up a strong institution which should express that corporate life. He is the deviser of the *Presbyterian* system of Church government which he deliberately put forward as a substitute for Episcopacy, believing it to be the primitive Christian system. In the sufficient Testament he found the words Presbyter (=Elder) and Bishop (from the Greek Episcopos = Overseer) used in a way that suggested they were different words for the same office (see e.g. Acts xx. 17-28; Phil. i. 1). He therefore treated them as being the same, and brushed aside as false the whole development of bishops as a separate order from that of ordinary presbyters, whose special function was to carry on the office and authority held in New Testament times by the Apostles. In the Presbyterian Churches, elders are of two kinds, 'Teaching Elders' who are themselves ordained, and have the power of ordaining others, and 'Ruling Elders', who are laymen, elected for a period, and who do not have authority to teach and administer the sacraments, but are associated with the Teaching Elders in the oversight and government of the Church.

There are obviously some great merits in this system, which has proved its adaptability to the conditions of many different peoples. It appears to have some support in Scripture; it provides a sober, reasonable and regularly

constituted Church authority which is not, as in the Lutheran and Anglican Churches, complicated by a somewhat cramping relationship to the civil government; and it has restored the democratic principle which has until recently been so sadly lost amongst episcopal Churches, by permitting the laity to have a voice not only in the election of those who are to rule over them and to minister to them, but also in the counsels of the Church. It is noteworthy that the scheme for union put forward in South India expressly aims at preserving what is valuable in the Presbyterian system and combining it with the restoration of the historic Episcopate.

But the ultimate authority behind the Calvinist Churches was the Bible. It was one of the cardinal principles of all the Reformers that the people should be given the Scriptures in their own languages, and perhaps the greatest gift of Luther to the German peoples was his translation of the whole Bible into a noble German that made it, like the English Bible, at once a great literary classic and a book that the common people could understand. Yet, as we have seen, Luther handled the Bible in a very free and most individual way, rejecting without scruple what did not seem to be consistent with his own interpretation of the Gospel. The attitude of Calvin and his followers was very different. It has been said that 'the genius of Calvinism was to sacrifice everything which Scripture did not directly sanction and justify; while the genius of the Lutheran Church was to spare everything that Scripture did not expressly forbid'. This meant that the Calvinist came to set up the Bible as an infallible authority in place of the infallible Catholic Church: but this was entirely to ignore the fact that the Church was in existence before the Bible, and that it was by the express authority of the Church through its bishops that the books of the New Testament were selected and declared to be authoritative (see Part I, Chapter VI). It also ignored the truth that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the writers of Scripture dwells continuously in the whole body of the Church, in order to fulfil our Lord's promise of leading it into all the truth, and so into a clearer and deeper

understanding of the Scriptures. Belief in the authority of the Bible, and belief in the authority of the Church therefore really stand or fall together: if the Church is not infallible, neither are the Scriptures: if the Scriptures are infallible, the Church must be also. In a later chapter we shall have to see how nearly all parts of the Church are gradually coming to realize that the living Word of God in the Scriptures, just like the living voice of the Spirit in the Church, comes through the minds of fallible men, who can only receive it as they have capacity, so that there is no absolute guarantee against error in either the one or the other.

There is another danger lying in this early Protestant attitude to the Bible. If it is put into the hands of all Christian people learned and unlearned, as being equally inspired in all its parts, nay, dictated word for word by God, it is only natural that many will tend to form their minds on the Old Testament rather than on the New, because it is so very much the larger part of the whole book. So that the result of the Protestant restoration of the Bible was not always to bring to the forefront the portrait of the holy, loving, incarnate Son of God of the Gospels; but often the fierce Old Testament ideas of God as God of battles, and Avenger and Destroyer of His enemies, in whose name Protestants stiffened themselves against their Catholic oppressors. This shows how needful it is to have a trustworthy guide to the meaning of the Bible so that the teaching of its different parts may be held in the right proportion, and Christ be seen as the key to the whole. This has, of course, been recognized by countless Protestants, but the fact remains that there is among them no such universally recognized guide as Catholics have in the Creeds and the voice of the Church, and there is no safeguard against grave error. For instance, we are familiar in India with a small sect of Christians who set aside the Christian tradition by which from the very earliest times the first day of the week, Sunday, was observed as the chief day of worship, as a memorial of the Lord's Resurrection, and who go back to the Jewish observance of the Sabbath on Saturday,

because our Lord never expressly said that His disciples need no longer observe it. The existence of this sect has given rise to one of the most needless divisions there are in the Church in India, and is the cause of great confusion in the minds of simple uneducated villagers.

Calvin himself however, was well aware of the danger of this perversion of the Scriptures by ignorant men, and he took great pains to ensure that both the ministers and laity of the Reformed Churches should be well grounded in sound knowledge of the Scriptures, according as he and his fellow scholars understood them. It is not the least of his achievements that he made Geneva, the city in which he ministered, a centre of education and of the training of ministers, to which Protestants came from many countries, and which did more than anything else to draw together all the Reformed Churches, and enable them to withstand the forces of reaction. It was in this school that *John Knox* was trained, the man who implanted the teachings of Calvin in Scotland, and made Presbyterianism the dominant form of Christianity in that country.

Another outstanding characteristic of the Reformed Churches was their insistence on a high standard of conduct for all their members. One of the most urgent causes of reform had been the low standard of morality prevailing among the clergy. The Reformers believed that the chief cause of this was the enforced celibacy of all priests, and in every one of the Reformation Churches the marriage of clergy and ministers was not only permitted, but deliberately encouraged. They believed too, that the separation of those who felt called to a high religious life into monastic orders, made for a lowering of the general standard, because ordinary people did not think they need aspire to the full standard of Christian life; besides this, there was undoubtedly much laxity and corruption in the monastic houses, which was making them a scandal instead of an example to the laity. Accordingly they too were abolished in every reformed Church.

Lutheranism tended to be lax in matters of conduct, because it laid so much stress on God's acceptance of man as righteous for the sake of Christ that it tended to minimize

the seriousness of sin; but the Calvinists were stern moralists, and sought to bind a rule of life upon all Christian people almost as strict as that of the early monasteries, regulating even their dress, expenditure, and amusements, as well as dealing severely with actual sins. The city of Geneva under Calvin's rule became a kind of model Church-State in which it was the business of the city rulers to keep strict watch over the faith and morals of all, punishing sins and erroneous doctrines as sternly as any Spanish Inquisitors. Thus the Calvinists are the founders of *Puritanism*, that attitude of mind that seeks to separate Christians from the world and looks frowningly on all recreations, amusements and indulgences in which there may be a temptation to sin,—theatres, dancing, drinking wine and spirits, gambling, smoking, reading novels, etc. In a strongly democratic setting such as Geneva was at that time, this system can only exist in so far as the people willingly bear its yoke and co-operate in the discipline. But it can very quickly produce an unlovely form of Pharisaism, encouraging people to be hypocritical and censorious, and proving a veritable tyranny to those who are not ready to submit to it willingly. Indeed Presbyterianism has come little short of Catholicism in intolerance and persecution of those who differed from it. On the other hand, we may most thankfully acknowledge that the Calvinists did a noble work in arousing the conscience of Christendom, and in persuading men to take the moral teaching of the Bible seriously as well as its promises. The sad thing is that this moral witness should have been separated from its true complement, the witness of mystical worship and sacramental life, which the Catholic Churches have maintained.

The loss of this latter witness arose out of the reformed idea of the Church, and this again was a logical outcome of the teaching about grace and salvation. Both Luther and Calvin stressed to an exaggerated extent the truth that man is a fallen creature, so much tainted with sin as to be incapable of any good action. Over against this utterly sinful man, was the perfectly holy, good and just God. Man could only be saved by the free grace of God, and

that grace operated irresistibly in those whom God willed to save, without their being able to contribute anything towards their salvation except a blind faith. According to Catholic teaching, God's way of saving men was not so utterly opposed to their own nature: rather it was a gradual transforming and renewing of that very nature by the gift of supernatural divine life conveyed through Sacraments. So to the Catholic the Church is a divine-human society into which all kinds of souls, good and bad, are brought even in infancy, in order that they may be trained and helped to know and respond to the love of God. But to the Calvinist it is the exclusive society of the elect, those whom God has willed to save; a fellowship of like-minded souls who share a common experience, and help to keep each other up to a certain standard, expelling those who fall below it. It is easy to see that in such a conception there is no room for Sacraments in the Catholic sense, as the channels of supernatural life, nor for a priesthood making a continual memorial of the sacrifice of Christ, and offering up with it the whole of His mystical Body on earth, as a 'reasonable, holy and living sacrifice'.

The Reformers did not reject the Sacraments altogether, but they gave a very different interpretation of them from the Catholic Church. We saw in Part I. Chapter V, what a rich and varied meaning there was in the Eucharist in the early Church—commemoration, thanksgiving, sacrifice, a fellowship-meal with one another, and a partaking together of the mystical life of Christ—all these had a place in it, without any of them being exactly defined. But in the Roman Church of the Middle Ages this many-sidedness had been lost, and one aspect, that of *sacrifice*, had come to be stressed above all others. It had come to be believed that the sacrifice offered by Christ on the Cross was not merely commemorated, but re-enacted in the Mass, when the priest broke the bread and poured out the wine; and the presence of the Lord's Body and Blood in those holy elements for the purpose of being adored and offered in sacrifice by the worshippers had been stressed so exclusively, that other aspects of the Eucharist were almost completely neglected, especially that

of its being a fellowship-meal; the actual partaking of communion too, had become very rare, especially among the laity, and Masses were often offered by priests alone, without any other worshippers present, as a propitiatory sacrifice on behalf of souls living or dead. Indeed the saying of such Masses had become a chief means on the part of the poorer clergy of augmenting their incomes.

One of the most universal reactions of the Protestants was against this distortion of the Eucharist. But instead of being able to look dispassionately and reverently behind the medieval distortion to the rich balanced Eucharist of the early Church, the Reformers, blinded by the bitter prejudice and hatred of Rome that had been so long growing in intensity, merely over-emphasised another aspect of the service to the exclusion of the rest, rejecting with fanatical fury all that Rome held as important. Because the Romans taught a distorted view of the sacrifice of the Eucharist, the Protestants denied that it was in any sense a sacrifice: because the Romans had, in the doctrine of transubstantiation, defined the exact way in which the Body and Blood of Christ were present in the bread and wine, most of the Protestants, though not Luther himself, denied that there was any special presence above that expressed in our Lord's words 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them': because there was undoubtedly a great deal of formalism as a result of the Roman emphasis on external rites and ceremonies without adequate teaching, the Protestants ruthlessly abolished from their services whatever appeared to savour of such formalism;—the observance of feasts and fast-days, the use of set forms of prayer and of kneeling, bowing, making the sign of the cross, all the outward adornments of worship, pictures, images, lights, incense, vestments. Instead of their church-buildings being Temples, enshrining the Lord's presence, and centering upon the altar, they were made plain Synagogues in which men might conveniently come together to hear the Word of God read and expounded.

The Protestants' attitude to the Eucharist was not merely

negative. They did indeed revive the much neglected element of the Love-feast, the fellowship-meal of believers, and it came to be the most important aspect of the rite among them. They did much also to revive the regular practice of communion, by refusing to have any celebration of the Lord's Supper at which no one but the minister partook of communion. Yet it cannot be denied that the whole service has lost among them its position as the central act of the Church's corporate worship, the most important service, a position that it had held in all parts of the Christian Church for sixteen centuries. Inevitably too, the abuse of excommunication in the past, and the dividing of the Church into sects, resulted in the loss of the primitive idea of the Sacrament as the divinely-given means of holding together in love. It became a badge not of true Catholicity, but of sectarianism. There is in the Indian Church today a growing impatience with this state of affairs, and a great desire to make communion fully 'open', at least amongst all but Roman Catholics. If this movement is going to gain ground, it is all the more necessary that the history of the Eucharist should be studied, especially during the period of the undivided Church, so that the Sacrament may be restored in all its fulness and free from either Roman or Protestant distortions. Here again the testimony of the Eastern Orthodox Church, which has not been weakened by controversy over the Eucharist, is of inestimable value.

There are few students of Church History who would now deny that what happened at the time of the Reformation was a very mixed blessing. It seems inevitable that the medieval Church system should have to be broken down, but like all revolutions, the Protestant Revolution in the violence of its reaction destroyed much that was good with the bad. Luther indeed, would fain have kept much of the old tradition, and that more conservative attitude is still to be found in the Churches called by his name. The Church of England, as we shall see in the next chapter, actually managed to keep a very large part of it. But the immediate result of the Reformation was nearly two hundred years of so-called 'religious' wars between

Catholics and Protestants, and the persecution in nearly all States of the minorities who refused to conform to the particular form of the State religion. Inevitably therefore, the temper of every section of the Church, old and new, was hardened and narrowed into its own partial presentation of the truth, and the ideal of the whole Church as the 'City of God, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven' became a mere dream-city, with no visible embodiment on earth.

Yet we cannot close this chapter without recalling with deep thankfulness the one thing that was most certainly achieved by the Reformation and all its troublous circumstances; that is, the awakening in the ordinary man and woman of the sense of responsibility before God for his or her own conscience. To believe in the inviolable sanctity of conscience is not the same thing as to believe in its *infallibility*; nor is it the same thing as to believe in the capacity of the individual *mind* to grasp the whole truth of Christ. But it is to believe that whether in error or not, no man ought to allow himself to be coerced, frightened or bribed into acting against his own conscience. He should indeed be willing to be shown where his conscience may be in error; he should be willing to submit to the common discipline, and even to endure injustice patiently, 'committing his cause to Him that judgeth righteously'. But in no case ought such pressure to be brought to bear upon him that he is made to say or do what he is all the time convinced is false or wrong. Multitudes of both Catholics and Protestants were tortured and put to death as martyrs to conscience in this unhappy period; and by their stubborn resistance even to a very horrible death, they did in time convince men's minds that the cause of God was not to be furthered by compulsion and persecution, but that men must be left free, as God made them free, to choose whom they will serve. May we not believe that the blood of these martyrs from all parts of the Church, has been united with our Lord's all-availing atonement for the sins of those who from the time of Constantine onwards have sought to make men Christians without their free and reasonable consent?

CHAPTER XVI

The Church of England and its Dissenters

We must consider the results of the Reformation in England separately, because in that country it followed a peculiar course unlike that on the Continent. The actual breach with Rome was made by King Henry VIII in a way that does not reflect much credit on either King or Church; but it is very certain that Henry would not have been able to get the English Church to follow him, unless there had been in that country also, a wide-spread desire for reform, a great and growing hatred of Papal pretensions, and a sympathy with Luther's action in defying the Pope. Henry however, had no intention of setting up a Protestant Church like those on the Continent. All he desired was to substitute his own absolute authority for that of the Pope; in that respect only was he a Lutheran. For Luther's doctrines he had no liking, and he kept not only the succession of bishops, but the old faith, services and customs unimpaired. He did indeed dissolve the monastic houses, but this was far less the result of reforming zeal, than of greed for their wealth, and also fear of allowing what would have been a large conservative body of Catholics to remain as a danger to his supremacy.

There was however a growing body in England who wished to go much further than this, and to bring the English Church into line with the Protestant Churches on the Continent. When Henry died, power fell into the hands of men of this party, and they did their best to Protestantize the Church of England. It does not seem however that they carried the majority of Englishmen with them, and their excesses in abolishing the Mass, defacing churches, and trying to make English Church life conform to the model of Calvin's Church at Geneva, so antagonized the people, that when Mary came to the throne a few years later, she was able in a wonderfully short time to restore the whole Catholic system, and even reconcile the English nation to the Pope. But the introduction of the Inquisition into England, and the ruthless persecution of the Protestant minority who would not go against their

consciences, caused another revulsion of feeling, and finally, under Queen Elizabeth, the Church of England settled down into a characteristic compromise between the old and the new. On the one hand it was true to the new Protestant principles in its authorization of a vernacular version of the Bible, its use of English instead of Latin for all its services, and the large place it gave to lessons from the Bible in its daily services; in permitting marriage of the clergy, and disallowing the monastic life under vows of celibacy; in abolishing private confession as an obligation, though it retained it as a good custom for those who were moved of their own free-will to practise it. On the other hand, it carefully preserved its Catholic Order by keeping the bishops, whose succession had providentially remained unbroken all through these troublous times; it kept also the Catholic doctrine of Sacraments, and though it repudiated the Roman doctrines of the sacrifice of the Mass and of transubstantiation, its theologians all insisted on their belief in the real presence of the Lord's Body and Blood in the Sacrament of Holy Communion; it drew up its own liturgy, which was a modified form of the ancient Catholic ones, but, like other Protestant Churches it greatly encouraged more frequent communion, and forbade celebrations to be held unless two or three at least were present to partake; it kept also in a modified form the Church's calendar of Saints, its fast-days and days of special commemoration, while abolishing all veneration of saints' relics, and prayers and masses for the souls of the departed. One of its greatest gifts to Christendom, next in importance perhaps to the Authorised Version of the Bible, is its Book of Common Prayer, a treasury of corporate devotion gathered out of the old Latin service-books, and translated into the incomparable English prose of the sixteenth century. Neither Luther's nor Calvin's one-sided teaching as to justification by faith, election for salvation, and the denial of all freedom to man's own will, was accepted as authoritative in the Church of England. Nor was appeal made only to Scripture; for the Anglican theologians gave more pains to the study of the early Church Fathers, and the decisions of the great

Councils, than was done by the Continental Protestants. In this way the Church of England was saved from too narrow and rigid an interpretation either of the authority of the Church or of the Bible, and maintained its outward and inward continuity with the undivided Church of the first three centuries.

Its position however, had some grave drawbacks. Like the Lutheran Churches it was far too closely bound up with the State, even with a particular form of it in the monarchy. True, Elizabeth had the wisdom to give up the obnoxious title 'Supreme Head of the Church in England' that Henry VIII had arrogated to himself. But the history of the Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shows us how its fate continually swung backwards and forwards according to the particular religious sympathies of its kings and other rulers; while even as late as the eighteenth century, when Parliament became more powerful than the kings, it was by no means uninfluenced by party politics. Of late years much more freedom has been granted to the Church, but its connection with the State still makes it impossible for it to appoint its own bishops, or even to revise its Prayer Book and forms of worship without an act of Parliament, though in that Parliament there may be many who are not Anglicans, or even professing Christians.

Another peculiar difficulty of the Church of England is that just because it has tried to take a middle position between extremes, and so combines in itself many different opinions and practices, it has a constant tendency to divide into parties, who try to pull it in this or that direction. Thus there is a Romanizing party, who try to introduce almost everything Roman, except the supremacy of the Pope; a Protestantizing party, who wish to get rid of whatever in it is a barrier to union with non-episcopalians; a 'Fundamentalist' party who want it to be committed to a Calvinistic attitude to the Bible, and a 'Modernist' party, who wish to abolish all credal and dogmatic tests. This tendency, though good and healthy up to a point, because it makes for a rich variety of life, makes any kind of discipline of either clergy or laity very difficult. At first such discipline was exercised rigorously enough by the

State; but this method does not find favour in modern times, and the Church of England has not yet obtained sufficient freedom or sufficient unanimity to work out its own system of discipline, such as Presbyterians and other Protestant Churches possess. We can see the unfortunate results of this party spirit in India in the differences between C. M. S. and S. P. G., which represent broadly a 'Low Church' and a 'High Church' attitude to Church authority, worship, and discipline. Though there is a large number of Anglicans in India and elsewhere, who take no extreme view on either side, yet these differences are sometimes so great as to cause real confusion in the minds of those who are not capable of understanding the history that lies behind them.

Again, when the State attempts to enforce conformity to one particular form of religion, it is inevitable that there will be some whose consciences will not allow them to submit. The English Parliament tried to bind the whole nation down under an Act of Uniformity to the use of the Prayer Book and to certain outward forms of worship. This policy was by no means peculiar to the Church of England. When the Presbyterians came into power during the period of the Commonwealth, they were just as determined to enforce conformity, and in Scotland, where Presbyterianism was the established religion, it was the Episcopalians who were persecuted and harried. We must remember that the Church of England had at least this excuse, that both Papists and Presbyterians were determined to take the slightest opportunity, not simply of winning toleration for themselves, but of establishing their own form of religion as that of the country. The result, however, could not but be that there should grow up in England quite large bodies of earnest Protestant Christians who would submit to the authority of neither Pope, Bishop nor Synod of Presbyters, however much backed up by Kings and Parliaments. These nonconformists called themselves 'Independents', and are the ancestors of the *Congregationalists*. Their system differs from the Presbyterian in that they hold each separate congregation of Christians to be independent of any other

control, and answerable only to Christ. They expressly reject all authority of Councils, Fathers and Creeds, and apparently hold that the office of the Apostles died with the original Twelve and that they have no successors. Amongst them the congregations appoint their own pastors and can also dismiss them; nor is it essential that a specially ordained minister shall administer the Sacraments. The chief glory of these Independents is that they were the first Christian body to stand for toleration and freedom of conscience, and their steady protest against all forms of coercion in religion undoubtedly did much towards the ultimate attainment of toleration for all. Their most illustrious member in the seventeenth century was Oliver Cromwell, but unfortunately he was never strong enough to be able to establish religious toleration against the will of the Presbyterians, who were in the majority in Parliament.

The Congregational system is the most democratic of any, and it depends for its working on a keen sense of responsibility being developed in all its members, as well as on maintaining a high standard of life and conduct. As one of its modern spokesmen, Dr. Selbie, says 'The Congregational system is one that requires a truly Christian standard of conduct, if it is to be successfully maintained. Where this is absent, it invariably breaks down'. Thus the Congregational Churches can never become cumbered with so large a number of merely nominal members as the established Churches, whose members make but little contribution to the support of their Church and ministers, and have no responsibility for its management: and it is significant that this aspect of Congregationalism is coming back into the Anglican Church, both in England and India, through the system of parochial councils and increased responsibility on the part of the laity for the support of the Church. Yet we can see that such a system of small independent local churches would be specially liable to separatism, the dividing off of small groups of malcontents. Complete absence of any clear guide as to doctrine would also be a drawback, especially in a country like India, where there would always be the

danger of shading off into a Hinduized Christianity which would lose its distinctive witness.

One of the earliest separations from the Independents in England was the community of the *Baptists*, formed in the seventeenth century. These have followed out more logically than other Protestants the consequences of the doctrine that the Church is the society of the 'saved', that is, of the consciously converted. If that is so, and if Baptism is merely the outward symbol and seal of this conversion, and not the Sacrament of a new birth from God, then it is certainly neither necessary nor right to baptize unconscious infants. Other Protestants kept the practice of infant Baptism chiefly for conservative and sentimental reasons, but they have tended more and more to look upon it rather as a dedication ceremony by the parents than as an incorporation of the child into the Body of Christ, so that it may unconsciously absorb the influence of that spiritual family, just as it does that of the natural family into which it is born. But Baptists deny that such infant Baptism is true Baptism at all, and will therefore sometimes even re-baptize those adults who join their society from others. They also practise baptism by the immersion of the whole body in water, as was the primitive custom, and do not allow the custom of pouring water only on the head, which grew up for practical reasons, in cold climates or in the case of delicate children. One of the most illustrious members of the Baptist Church in the seventeenth century was *John Bunyan*, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, which probably shares with *The Imitation of Christ* the honour of being the most widely translated and read Christian book next to the Bible itself.

Another important group of dissenters from the Church of England is the *Society of Friends*, commonly called *Quakers*. This sect also arose in the seventeenth century, during the period of the Commonwealth, and began as a revolt against what seemed to them the formalism and hypocrisy of the Presbyterians, who were then in power. This revolt was led by a strange man, *George Fox*. In his fierce and unsparing denunciation of men's sins to their face, he was more like a Hebrew prophet than a Christian

saint; though in his amazing patience and fortitude under cruel persecution and imprisonments, and in his forgiving attitude to his personal enemies, he showed himself a true follower of his Lord. He also possessed gifts of organizing and ruling power, that welded his followers into a strong united body, able to survive the repeated attempts of Government to suppress it. Fox's main teaching was in sharp contrast to the Lutheran and Calvinist doctrine, that human nature has become completely evil and vitiated through the Fall; he taught that in every man, however depraved, there is a 'seed' of spiritual life implanted by God, and that he can if he will hear and obey God's voice speaking through the Gospel and from within his own soul. There was need for neither church nor minister, bishop nor presbyter, nor for ordinances of any kind. Religion was a purely spiritual matter, without any visible embodiment. The Quakers have no ordained ministers, no rites or sacraments; all members, both men and women, are free to preach or pray as they feel moved by God's Spirit. Their great contribution to the Christian Church lies in their practice of corporate silence in the presence of God, waiting for the moving of the Spirit. They may sit for as much as an hour or more in their meetings in perfect silence, broken only if some member present feels the impulse to speak or to pray aloud. This discipline of silence has indeed always been well understood by Catholic teachers of spiritual life, but through the Quakers it was brought back into Protestantism, and combined in a unique manner with freedom of preaching and praying. They have also borne a special kind of witness in their literal observance of certain parts of the Lord's teaching, particularly in regard to swearing, (they will take no oaths of any kind, even in courts of law) and to all use of force: at a time when all Europe was rent by wars of religion, this sect was steadfast in its refusal to countenance war of any kind. The story of the early Quaker meetings, which were continually being broken up in a rough and brutal way by government officials, recalls the *Satyagrahis* of India, who allow themselves to be beaten and forcibly removed by the police without offering any resistance.

The Quakers have always remained a small body, and in many respects seem more like a religious community with a special vocation of witness than a Church, and it is a sad thing that when the Church of England was restored on the accession of Charles II to the throne, it was unable to come to terms with these earnest and unoffending Christians, but went on harrying them and other Nonconformists with Conventicle Acts, by which meetings for worship other than those prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer, were forbidden, and Test Acts, by which attendance at Communion in one's parish church at least three times a year was made a necessary qualification for the rights of citizenship.

It was the persistent stand of the Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers against the coercion of the State that in the end won complete religious toleration in England by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since then the position and attitude of Nonconformists and Anglicans toward one another has inevitably changed, and a new atmosphere has arisen in which it is possible to discuss differences and schemes for co-operation and unity in a spirit of Christian charity and earnest desire to understand and appreciate one another's principles. Many of the old causes of controversy have practically disappeared. In the last fifty years or so there has been in the Church of England an increasing demand for greater spiritual freedom in its relation to the State. It has now a number of sister and daughter Churches, in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, America, and the Dominions Overseas, which have one after the other become completely independent of the British or any other Parliament: they remain in full communion with one another and with Canterbury, but have power to arrange their own internal affairs. It is becoming customary to speak of this large group of self-governing episcopal Churches as the *Anglican Communion*, and it is a matter for great thankfulness that by the Enabling Bill of 1928, the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon was set free from Government control, and became a free member of this group. Each Indian diocese has now its representative assembly of both clergy and

laity, which appoints representatives to the Provincial Council meeting at regular periods; it has power to nominate its own bishops, though this nominee has always to be accepted by the whole episcopate, and then solemnly consecrated to his office by other bishops. The supreme control in matters of faith and discipline is in the hands of the whole synod of bishops. This is a real attempt to return to the primitive ideal of the Apostolic Church, and it is also proving a means of drawing closer together the different parties in the Church and of helping them to understand one another's points of view, and to share in each other's gifts.

On the other hand there has been a marked tendency in the Nonconformist Churches in recent times to draw their independent congregations into a closer unity by forming national Congregational and Baptist Unions, and developing a system of district superintendents, who fulfil at least part of the function of bishops. Besides this, the non-episcopal Churches of the British Isles have drawn closer together through the Free Church Council, in which all are represented, and through which they are able to express a common voice and policy in the nation's life.

The Church in India owes her spiritual life, under God, to Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Nonconformists, and she has no desire to repudiate any part of her heritage. The last three chapters should at least have made it clear that no one part of the Church can claim to be the only true one, but that all alike, both Catholic and Protestant, have suffered and are still suffering from being separated from one another. It is to the shame of the Christians of Europe that they have been able to hand on to India only this divided heritage: yet if the result is to be a richer and more truly spiritual unity, the agonies and shame of the centuries of schism will not have been in vain. Meanwhile we may rejoice that the Indian Church has the supreme privilege of being the first to devise an actual scheme of union which, whether or not it is realized in its present form, has at least roused respect and stimulated a desire for imitation amongst Christians all over the world.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH OF ROME

ONE of the most striking things in Christian history is the rapidity with which the Roman Church recovered from the severe set-back of the Protestant Revolution, and the depth and vigour of the renewal of its spiritual life. This in itself is sufficient witness that the zeal for reform was not confined to those who overthrew the old order, and that there remained in the Catholic Church a plant of true spiritual life which was soon to put forth new and healthy buds.

The principal instrument in God's hand for the renewal of the Church was again a new religious Order: and it is noteworthy that the first movement came, this time, from Spain—that very Spain which had founded the Inquisition, which had attempted to crush the new national spirit in Holland, and threatened that of Elizabethan England with the Great Armada. In 1540, that is only twenty years after Luther had burnt the Papal Bull excommunicating him, and just at the time that John Calvin was organizing his commonwealth of saints in Geneva, the Pope gave his official approval to a new Order called the *Society of Jesus*, founded six years before by a converted Spanish soldier, *Ignatius Loyola*, and half a dozen earnest companions, of whom the name of one at least—*Francis Xavier*—is well-known in India. This was the beginning of the Order of the *Jesuits*, which did more than anything else to reform the Roman Catholic Church, and to restore the authority and prestige of the Pope in a considerable part of Europe, besides winning for him a new empire overseas.

The Jesuits, like the Franciscans, mark a definite advance in the conception of the nature and work of a religious community. They were not monks, and did not live a cloistered life. The great cry of the day was for a reform of the clergy, and a raising of their standard of teaching and preaching, as well as of moral conduct. All Ignatius' disciples were priests, and committed to a life of active ministry among ordinary men and women, preaching, hearing confessions, giving direction in spiritual and

moral life. They took special pains, as the Dominican Friars had done, to equip themselves intellectually for the work of preaching, and they soon became the most influential expounders of the Church's doctrine, and later the principal educators in the Roman Church.

The most distinctive note of the Jesuit life and training was that of absolute unreasoning obedience to authority; not the family obedience of the Benedictine monks, but rather the obedience of an army on active service. They delighted to call themselves the Pope's Militia; and it was a peculiarity of their society that its members put themselves, by a special vow, entirely at the Pope's disposal, to be used where and as he would, for the beating back of the advance of Protestantism, or the extension of the Church's sway abroad. We can see how this principle carried out consistently might make it easy for unscrupulous Popes or Superiors to exploit the obedience of the rank and file Jesuit priests for ends which were not always worthy. And indeed, the Jesuits came in later years to have a bad name amongst Catholics as well as Protestants for political intrigue, lax morality and compromise with worldly standards: so much so that by request of the governments of several Catholic countries the Society was actually suppressed by the Pope in 1773. But it continued to hold together secretly, and outside Papal dominions, until in 1814, after the Church had been further devastated by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, the Jesuit Order was welcomed back to pursue its work of consolidating and centralizing the Papal power and authority.

The great glory of the Jesuits was their zeal for missionary work. We shall have to notice this more fully in connection with India in a later chapter. The Order has a truly amazing roll of heroic names, and their labours in many parts of the world ought to be better known by Protestants. Recently the work of some of these great pioneers has been commemorated in a very illuminating and by no means unsympathetic book called *Six Great Missionaries*, by the Anglican David Jenks.

We cannot deny however that the result of the Jesuits'

influence was to narrow and harden the Church of Rome into an intransigent sect, despotic in its government, and utterly refusing to consider union with any other Christian body except through its entire submission to Papal supremacy. It was almost entirely owing to Jesuit influence that when the reforming Council of Trent was called by the Pope in 1545, it was there made an essential part of the Roman Catholic faith that the Pope's authority was above the authority of a General Council of the bishops of the Church. Moreover the insistence on obedience to authority as the chief virtue above all others for all Christians, tended in the exactly opposite direction from what we have seen to be the best and truest effects of the Renaissance and the Reformation, that is the setting free of men's minds to think honestly and independently, and the setting free of their consciences to accept full responsibility before God for their actions. The result of the tendency in the Roman Church towards greater authoritarianism was a great increase in the practice of direction, that is, the detailed guidance of souls in their personal religious and moral life by priests to whom they choose to make themselves known. This practice, and the whole Roman system of centralized authority, undoubtedly makes for strength and unity within that Church itself, and we can well understand how it attracts many souls who are wearied and puzzled by the conflicting voices of the rest of Christendom. But it is the unity of an army in the field, and it is yet to be seen whether it would have any reason for continuing to exist if the rest of Christendom, Eastern, Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, were to become united and so charged with a new authority.

The Jesuit Order is important in another direction. The oft-repeated assertion of St. Ignatius that his Order was founded 'for the glory of God and the salvation of souls' at once shows that a new emphasis had appeared in the consecrated religious life. The monks, even though God gave them great tasks to perform for the benefit of men, always cherished as their primary aim the pursuit of their own perfection, that is, their personal union with God. But from the time of the Jesuits, though the older

Orders continue to exist to this day, and have been again and again reformed and revived, the main development of religious life has been in the founding of a large number of new Orders of men and women, *Congregations* as they are called, for the special purpose of undertaking active service for their fellow-men; preaching, teaching, reclaiming the fallen, running schools, orphanages, hospitals, refuges for all kinds of destitute and derelict souls, foreign missions and so on. We find many representatives of these in India, and know how to be grateful for their self-denying and devoted labours. This particular emphasis on work for the poor, sick and needy, was, however, not the work of the Jesuits, so much as of a French priest in the seventeenth century, *Vincent de Paul*, who was a peasant by birth. This one man, of deep saintliness and sanctified common sense, did more than anyone else to lay the foundations of many different modern forms of Christian philanthropy, such as orphanages, hospitals and work amongst prisoners and galley slaves. His most striking innovation was the formation of a Sisterhood, at first composed chiefly of uneducated peasant women, who should visit and tend the sick in hospitals or in their own homes, and do other charitable works. These were really the first 'Sisters of Mercy': until that time it had been held impossible for women dedicated to the religious life to remain uncloistered, and St. Vincent's 'Daughters of Charity' mark the beginning of a new era of women's work in the Church.

We cannot be mistaken if we attribute this new development to the fresh impetus to the study of the Gospels given by the Renaissance of learning and the Reformers' popularizing of the Bible, made so much easier by the new invention of printing; and particularly to the greater importance that the study of the life of our Lord Himself was coming increasingly to take in the minds and hearts of Christians. This realization that the imitation of our Lord's life of loving service is the most truly *Christian* form of religious life marks a real advance on what had gone before.

Besides giving birth to the Jesuit Order, Spain in the

sixteenth century was the home of a noteworthy revival of mysticism, which was to have great influence on the whole Church. Its greatest names are those of two members of the Carmelite Order, one of the oldest monastic Orders that were devoted entirely to prayer and austere living, in strict enclosure. First of these was *St. Teresa*, who combined in a rare way the qualities of a great contemplative and mystic, exploring the varied ways of prayer as few have done, and those of a very active founder and builder of religious houses. The other was her disciple, *St. John of the Cross*, whose exhaustive analysis of mystical states, and the ascent of the soul to God by prayer, still remains the chief classic on the subject. Through the example, writings and followers of these leaders, there came flowing back again into the common life of the Church a rich deep stream of spiritual life, pouring through the channels made by the Jesuits to the rank and file clergy and laity outside the monasteries. It is particularly the glory of the French Church in the seventeenth century to have produced a series of saints, who combined this deep knowledge and experience of the things of the spirit with an outstanding gift for the direction of the souls of others, a gift which had in those days become so necessary to the Roman Church. We have already mentioned one of these, St. Vincent de Paul, in connection with the founding of societies to undertake works of mercy; he was equally notable as a man of prayer himself, and a wise director of others. But before him had come the third of the great Francises, *St. Francis de Sales*, who was Bishop of Geneva, the very stronghold of Calvinism, from 1608 to 1622. A man of very great holiness, he won back many Protestants to the Catholic Church by the sheer beauty and attractiveness of his life and gentle methods. He also carried still further what St. Francis of Assisi in his Third Order had begun, and the Jesuits furthered, the encouragement of men and women living in the ordinary occupations of the world, to give themselves to a life of devotion to our Lord. His little manual on 'the Devout Life', and his letters of counsel to his spiritual children, are still prized as classics of devotion by many; they are a mine of

wisdom not only in the things of God but also in the subtleties of the human heart; St. Francis and his fellow guides of spiritual life have little to learn from the modern psychologists in this respect. Indeed I think the rest of us must acknowledge that in the science of spiritual life, that is, the knowledge of the ways of prayer and of the ways by which souls grow in holiness, the Roman Catholic Church is still a long way ahead of us. Protestantism has concentrated so much upon *conversion*, the entrance of the soul into a Christian life, that it has not given sufficient attention to the study of spiritual *growth*. For it, there are practically only two types of soul, converted and unconverted. The loss too, in Protestant Churches, of the habit of commemorating and venerating the saints, has helped to obscure the fact of the infinite variety of types and grades of Christian holiness, and the need for individuals to be helped to find the particular way along which God desires to lead them. This helping of souls to grow is the good side of the system of direction, and it is for lack of some such wisely controlled system that men and women have been led astray so often into false and semi-Christian ways of mysticism. This is a matter in which it is not safe simply to trust one's own private judgment or one's natural attraction to some spiritual teacher, who may or may not be qualified to guide others.

In spite however, of this renewal of her holiness, we have sadly to acknowledge that at present the Church of Rome seems to be no nearer abandoning her claim to be the one infallible voice of Christ in His Church. And so she goes on her solitary way, winning respect and admiration for the holiness and true greatness of her many saints, yet repelling by her imperialistic spirit, her tendency to political intrigue, and her apparent acquiescence in a very low standard of conduct, and a vast amount of superstition and heathenism, in large masses of her more ignorant children. Yet God who has again and again renewed her life, has not taken His Holy Spirit from her; and it may be that the destruction of the last vestiges of her political and temporal power, which we are witnessing in these days, will mean in God's own time the setting free of her

true self from that false imperialism which has clogged her spirit for centuries, and so make possible her reunion with the rest of Christendom.

CHAPTER XVIII

Revival in the Anglican and Protestant Churches

When we look at the development of spiritual life amongst those Christians in Great Britain and on the Continent of Europe, who had broken away from the Papal system, we shall find that we cannot trace the same broad stream of renewal, spreading through the whole body, as we have traced in the Roman Church. The condition of these Christians, divided into many mutually exclusive groups, makes this impossible. What we find is a number of rivulets, rising now here, now there, influencing the various Churches to a greater or lesser degree, but tending rather to the forming of select groups within them, and even of new sects separated from them, than to permeating them as a whole, as the influence of the Jesuits and the French spiritual directors permeated the Roman Catholic Church. Yet the Spirit and the Life were there in every part of divided Christendom, and whenever hearts were growing cold, and religion a mere matter of forms and customs, there has come a new breathing from God into the dry bones, and a quickening of them into fresh life and zeal for service in the Kingdom of God.

In the first part of the seventeenth century there was such a quickening in the Church of England, checked alas, by the tragedy of the civil war, and the confusion between the cause of the Church and the cause of the King. Yet before that happened, the Church of England had time to think out and give noble expression to her 'Middle Way' between Papalism and Protestantism, to give to the English-speaking world her beautiful version of the Scriptures, and to establish her characteristic system of worship. Time also to produce souls of true holiness and beauty of life, such as Launcelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester, whose 'Private Devotions' have been an inspiration to many

in their daily prayers; Archbishop Laud, who however mistaken may have been his efforts to enforce conformity, was a truly devout, humble and upright Christian; George Herbert, the devoted and self-effacing country parson, and writer of delightful religious poems; Nicholas Ferrar, who turned his whole household into a kind of religious community, dividing their time between prayer, sacred study and works of charity. This tradition of spiritually-minded High Churchmanship has remained ever since as one of the strands in the life of the Church of England, though often obscured and overshadowed by other elements in that Church; and it re-emerged in the Anglo-Catholic Revival of the last century, of which we shall have more to say in a later chapter.

Meanwhile the mystic tradition was being kept alive in Protestantism by many earnest souls, who turned away in disgust from the clash of doctrines and clamour of controversy over forms and ceremonies with which all western Christendom was resounding, and longed for more intimate personal communion with God. These 'Seekers', as they loved to call themselves, were partly fed by such books as *the Spiritual Guide* of Molinos, the Spanish mystic, the writings of Madame Guyon in France, and the strange medley of deep wisdom and theosophical speculation in the writings of Jacob Boehme, the German shoemaker-mystic. None of these was quite a reliable guide, for all over-emphasised certain tendencies in the mystical life that in the great Catholic mystics were counterbalanced by their humble loyalty to the common life and discipline of the Church, and their willingness to have their own private experience submitted to its judgment. Both Molinos and Madame Guyon were Catholics who were condemned by the Roman Church, rather unfairly, as we may think. More important for the history of the Church was the gathering up of large numbers of these 'Seekers' in England into the Quaker Society, by George Fox, who was himself of a mystic tendency. Of the special gifts and witness of this sect of Christians we have already spoken.

A little later a somewhat parallel movement started on

the Continent of Europe, which is usually called *Pietism*. This was essentially a revival of personal religion, but whereas the mystics laid their chief emphasis on union with God, and the life of Christ *in* us, the Pietists laid it on faith in God's love and mercy as shown in Christ's work *for* us, in the Atonement. The chief centre of Pietism was in the University of Halle in Germany, a name which Indian Christians have cause to remember with gratitude, for it was from thence that the first Protestant missionaries were sent out to India, Ziegenbalg, Schwartz and their companions. It has however often been pointed out as a weakness of Pietism that it laid too much stress on *feeling* in religion, and so tended to sentimentalism. It was content too, to gather together little groups of pious people for mutual edification, and held too much aloof from wider human interests, so that it was never able to permeate the whole German Church with its spirit. One of these Pietist groups is deserving of special mention, that of the *Moravian Brethren*. These were a remnant of the followers of John Hus, who kept themselves together as a separate community, preserving their episcopate in independence of the Pope, like the Swedish and Anglican Churches. Under Pietist influence this little Church had a remarkable revival in the early eighteenth century, and organized itself as a kind of religious community especially dedicated to missionary work. The Moravians sent a mission to India in the eighteenth century, which for one reason or another was a failure; at the present time they occupy an outpost at Ladakh in Lesser Tibet.

A more widely influential revival of personal religion arose in England in the middle of the eighteenth century amongst a group of earnest young Anglicans at Oxford, led by the brothers *John* and *Charles Wesley*. It was a time of coldness and deadness in the established Church, and the Wesleys, and their equally eminent contemporary George Whitefield, very rapidly drew to them a great number of those who had a hunger for more nourishing spiritual food than their parish churches were providing. The leaders themselves were all powerful and persuasive

preachers, and they not only toured the country themselves, but later organized bands of lay preachers for this work: especially they gained a hearing amongst the poor people in the villages of England and Wales, upon whom neither Anglican, Puritan nor Quaker had as yet made much impression. As usual amongst uneducated people, the revival was accompanied by outbreaks of emotionalism and hysteria, and this amongst other things made it disliked and suspected by the Church authorities. It is another of the sad things in English Church history, that this movement was so sternly discouraged by the majority of Anglican bishops and clergy that its members lost their faith in the Church, and became a new sect, that of the Wesleyans or *Methodists*, as they prefer to be called. John Wesley himself never formally separated from the Church, and to the day of his death protested strongly against such separation; but the existence of a large well-organized society within the Church, furnished with many lay preachers unlicensed by any bishop, and looked upon with disfavour by those in authority, made it inevitable that a separation would come in time.

Wesley shared with Calvin and the founders of the Catholic Religious Orders, the gifts of the organizer and ruler of men; but he was essentially an autocrat, and it was not until after his death that his followers developed their characteristic system of government and ministry. As a matter of fact there were divisions over these questions, and over questions of doctrine, and there existed until recently four or five separate bodies of Methodists: happily, these have now been reunited in one body. The American Methodists have kept the name of bishop for their superintendents, but there has been no intention of investing them with the powers and character of the Catholic Bishops, so that the title 'Methodist Episcopal Church' is rather misleading.

In doctrine and worship the Methodists have remained closer to the Church of England than any other Nonconformists, and still use the Communion service in the Book of Common Prayer, though this is not obligatory. Their principal emphasis has always been laid on the

necessity for a real conversion of the heart to God as the beginning of the Christian life, and this has made them from the first a keenly missionary body. Wesley owed a good deal of his inspiration to the Moravians, with whom he came into contact before he had begun his career as a preacher, and much of the Moravian whole-hearted missionary spirit has been inherited by the Methodists. John Wesley himself claimed the whole world for his parish, much as Francis of Assisi, or Francis Xavier might have done.

Conversion has however been too often understood among the Methodists as meaning only one particular type of experience, that of acute conviction of sin, and the throwing of oneself in faith upon the mercy of God through Christ's atonement on the Cross. Wesley, like Luther, made 'justification by faith' his watchword. Yet there are other ways in which men's hearts become turned to God, ways which often involve no perceptible crisis in the life. For example, the mystic's sense of joyous release when he realizes, as George Fox did, the truth of Christ indwelling the soul, is as truly an experience of conversion as is that of the Methodists, though it may be accompanied by no special sense of sin and forgiveness. And it is possible to do grievous harm to young souls by attempting to force them along one way of spiritual advance.

Though the Methodists left the Church of England, their influence was great both on that Church and on other Nonconformist bodies, and it bore fruit in the *Evangelical Revival* of the early nineteenth century. This is only another name for the continually renewed movement towards deeper personal religion, and towards making outward conduct conform more closely to the high standard of religion professed; we have seen this to have been always the heart of Christian religion, whether it appears amongst the hermits of the Egyptian desert, the Benedictine monks, Franciscan Friars, Puritans, Anglicans or Quakers. Yet the Evangelical revival has its own especial glory in that it gave an impetus to two important Christian movements of the nineteenth century, foreign Missions and

works of philanthropy and humanitarianism. The great pioneers of British Protestant missionary work in India were men whose hearts had been quickened and inspired by the Revival—William Carey the Baptist, Henry Martyn the Anglican, Alexander Duff the Presbyterian, and after them a whole generation of devoted workers. So were the pioneers in all kinds of social reform at home —the improvement of prison conditions, abolition of the slave trade, the establishment of schools for the children of the poor etc.

Since then there have been many similar revivals on a smaller scale arising from time to time in England, America and the Continent. Some of these have resulted in the formation of new sects, such as Plymouth Brethren, Seventh Day Adventists, Church of God, Disciples of Christ, the Salvation Army—all of which have planted their seedlings in the already variously-stocked nursery-garden of the Indian Church. At the present time we are experiencing a new wave of revival in what is usually called the 'Oxford Group Movement', which originated in America, and which is having an influence on a wider scale than any other revival since that of Wesley.

These movements, though differing in detail, all have much in common. Their inspiration is drawn almost exclusively from the Bible, the close and prayerful study of which alone or in groups, is for them the chief means of building up spiritual life. Their whole spirit is intensely personal and individual; they generally show a tendency to disparage outward forms and sacraments, Church tradition and authority, and to draw people into little groups, having a great sense of fellowship amongst themselves, but apt to be out of touch with others, and to deny or belittle the value of types of Christian experience other than their own.

The result of this is twofold: on the one hand they have produced a number of small sects, which show a very narrow spirit, with tests of orthodoxy as rigid as any Inquisitor's; and on the other they have inspired the forming of undenominational and international societies such as the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., in which the sense of

denominational differences is almost lacking, and personal devotion to our Lord is all that is required for membership. The international character of these Associations and others similar to them in spirit, is indeed one of their most valuable contributions to the Church, and they have in this matter done much to pave the way for the modern movements for Church union. The spiritual life of Evangelicals has been fed partly by outstanding preachers, partly by such spiritual 'power-houses' as the Convention held every year at Keswick, in the English Lake District. This convention still draws hundreds of young men and women from the Continent as well as the British Isles, and inspires them to dedicate their lives to the service of Christ at home or abroad.

In India we have much for which to thank the Methodist and Evangelical Revivals. Owing to the fact that the greater part of missionary work in this country in the nineteenth century was begun and carried on under the inspiration of these movements, their influence is still strong in the Indian Church. It is doubtless due to this influence that there has been in the Indian Church that emphasis on the need for individual conversion and personal acceptance of Christ, which has so far prevented India from being Christianized as Europe was Christianized, by the baptism of masses of uncomprehending illiterate folk, blindly following their leaders. St. Francis Xavier's method was to baptize whole villages, teaching them merely to repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Apostles' Creed like parrots, with only the vaguest notion of what they meant. He trusted to the discipline and sacramental life of the Catholic Church to do all that was necessary in building up Christian character, quite apart from the individual's understanding, or even inner acceptance of Christian teaching. And this on the whole has been the method of Roman Catholic Missions. To most of the rest of us, it seems a strangely inadequate method. Yet must we not acknowledge that Evangelical Missions have erred in the opposite direction in throwing the whole emphasis on the individual's personal religion, and neglecting to arouse the sense of membership in a

great body, continous with the past, and including in its fellowship the uncounted mass of saints triumphant, as well as those on earth? The sacraments are not valued by Evangelicals as the bonds and channels of this corporate life, through which the Church's holy communism in spiritual gifts is made a reality:—

> There the gifts of each and single
> All in common right possess:
> There each member hath his portion
> In the body's blessedness;
> So that he, the least in merits,
> Shares the guerdon none the less:—

rather they have been looked upon as the badge and expression of fellowship between souls who have had a similar type of Christian experience. Thus Evangelicalism makes for an undenominational religion which has lost the sense of the whole Body of Christ as a *visible* Body, filled with the Spirit, and held together in a new type of unity, whose true analogy is not on earth but in heaven. As an eminent English Congregationalist has said:—'The Evangelical Movement contributed to the extinction among Congregationalists, and I think among Baptists and Presbyterians, of that solicitude for an ideal Church organization, which had so large a place in the original revolt of the Nonconformists.'—(*Nonconformity*—Selbie.) And we may add that the same thing was happening in the Anglican Church, and very much weakening its sense of Catholic order and Catholic tradition.

Now this is a spirit and temper that is very common in the Indian Church to-day; and it is part of the aim of this book to win its readers to think more seriously about this attitude, and to ask whether it really makes for true Christian unity as much as it seems at first to do. Would a union of all Protestants in India, attained by a simple affirmation of what they hold in common, and the ignoring as unimportant of all the points upon which they disagree, really bring us nearer to the ideal of the 'holy temple in the Lord, in whom each several building is to be fitly framed together', its different parts supplementing one another (Eph. ii. 21)? The renewal of the Roman

Catholic Church resulted in its being drawn more closely together into one kind of unity, that which depends on a strongly centralized authority, and is exclusive of all others. Revival in Protestantism has tended towards another kind of unity, that of a loose fellowship of disciples of Christ, in which all differences of faith, order and practice are treated as of no significance. Is either of these the true unity of the Body of Christ of which the New Testament gives us the vision and the germ?

CHAPTER XIX

A New World for Christ

It is time for us to look again at the Christian Church against the wider background of the world. At the beginning of Part II we saw how the Gospel seed was scattered broadcast over the whole world: but at its close we were looking at a Christendom very much smaller in extent than that which had been in the preceding centuries. Indeed it presented the appearance of a beleagured fortress, hemmed in on two sides by the Empire of Islam, and on the others by the uncharted ocean and the Arctic ice. And all through the stormy period of the Reformation, while the inmates of that fortress fell out amongst themselves, their whole existence was continually being threatened by the advance of the Turks in southern and eastern Europe. The Mediterranean was full of Moslem pirates; Sicily, South Italy and a large part of Spain were in the hands of the Moors; Venice and Vienna were constantly being threatened; Russia was held under the heel of the Moslem Mongols.

Then suddenly the prison walls opened out. Men were sailing the hitherto uncharted seas, and making amazing discoveries. Behind the Moors in North Africa stretched a vast continent of uncivilized black-skinned people; a continent down whose coast one might sail for days, and then, rounding its stormy southernmost cape might eventually reach the rich lands of the East, to which the Turks

had cut off the old access by way of the Mediterranean and overland routes. More amazing still, men sailing west in the new faith in the calculations of the astronomers that the earth was round, and hoping so to find a route to India and China from the west, discovered another huge continent, or rather two continents, the southern one rich as the Indies, and having its own ancient centres of civilization; the northern one only sparsely inhabited by nomad tribes, and offering unbounded opportunity for settlers who would develop its natural resources.

Columbus discovered America in 1492, that is, nearly forty years after the Turks had taken Constantinople; five years later Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and reached the west coast of India. Within a few years of these momentous events the Turks had been decisively repulsed from Vienna by the Emperor (the same who tried to suppress Lutheranism), and no further advance was made by them; already some years before, Russia had won its independence, and begun to build up its national life and its national Church; about the same time the Spanish, united under strong kings, were able by war and the Inquisition to drive out or subjugate the Moors, and make Spain the chief stronghold of Catholicism.

From this time begins a new era, that of the gradual domination of the whole world by the European peoples, an era which now in our time seems to be coming to an end. And this expansion of peoples who were at least nominally Christian, meant inevitably that the Christian religion was carried in one way or another into every country of the world. In this chapter we are to tell how the new world of the Americas was Christianized, and so a new Gospel plant grew up, which in time made its contribution also to the Indian Church.

First in the field, both in empire and evangelism, were the Roman Catholic countries. The Portuguese and Spanish were the first to acquire settlements in the rich lands of South America, Africa, India and the islands further east. The Pope claimed all the newly discovered lands for Christ, and with a magnificent disregard for

practical realities, divided them between his two good children Spain and Portugal.

Thus it was the fixed policy of the governments of these nations to Christianize their new subjects. Though we may praise the religious zeal which prompted such a policy, the history of Roman Catholic Missions during this period shows that grave abuses lurked in it, and large masses of ignorant people became nominally Christian through an unsparing use of bribery and coercion. But the Franciscans and Jesuits through whom the actual missionary work was done, were in many cases men of outstanding holiness, devotion and heroism, truly showing the love of Christ to those whom they led into the fold of the Church: and whatever has been good and permanent in the fruits of their labours is due to this personal showing forth of Christ, rather than to the system with which they were identified.

The power of the Spanish and Portuguese empires was soon rivalled and surpassed by other European nations, notably the Dutch, French and British, and these all made settlements in North America, carrying with them their respective interpretations of the Christian religion. Several of the British colonies were founded by English Nonconformists, in order that they might enjoy in the new world the freedom of conscience that was denied them in the old. Unfortunately, they were not always willing to extend the same liberty to those in their new territory who disagreed with them. But by the end of the eighteenth century, after the War of Independence which severed their connection from the English Crown, the United States proclaimed complete religious freedom for all, and no form of Christianity was 'established' by the country at large, or by any State within it. Thus early in its history all forms of Christianity in America were completely freed from state aid and control, a thing unheard of since the days of Constantine.

Then followed a period during which America was invaded by wave upon wave of immigrants from all the countries of Europe, for whom it had become a land of hope and freedom. The large majority of these have come

from Ireland, Italy, and eastern Europe, and are Roman Catholics, so that that Church is numerically the largest in the land. But the strongest stuff in the make-up of the American nation is that of the pioneer farmers who moved westward and ever westwards across the vast and lonely grasslands, ploughing and sowing the wilderness, and peopling it with new homesteads and country towns. These are chiefly of British and North European origin, and it is obvious that the more simple and democratic types of Church organization would be able most quickly to propagate themselves in this new soil. Consequently the predominant religion of America became definitely Protestant. The type of character produced by this pioneer religion at its best is seen in such a man as Abraham Lincoln, son of a poor farmer on the western prairies, who rose to be President of the United States, with the heavy task of steering his nation through the horrors of the civil war between the northern and southern States. The Anglican Church in America was seriously hampered for years by the refusal of the British Parliament to allow bishops to be consecrated for the overseas colonies, and it was not until after the War of Independence that the first American bishop of the Anglican Communion was able to obtain consecration at the hands of the bishops of the little minority Episcopal Church of Scotland.

America was much influenced by the Methodist Movement. Both Wesley and Whitefield undertook preaching tours in what were then still the British colonies on the east coast; and the Methodist Church is at the present time one of the largest denominations in the United States and Canada. Since that time 'Revivalism' has been a marked characteristic of American religion, and waves of religious enthusiasm have from time to time passed over the country. These revivals have often been very hysterical in character, and narrow and crude in their moral and intellectual outlook, for in a new country where religion was largely taught and controlled by half-educated farmers and small traders, there would naturally be a low level of scholarship; and though knowledge is not religion, it is very necessary in order to distinguish false religion from

true. But in the pioneer days, history, theology, Church tradition, were matters few had leisure to study, and very few cared much about. Moreover the complete absence of any central standard of reference or any authoritative control, meant that any kind of doctrine, however wild, could be preached by anybody who could get a hearing. One result of this has been a continual tendency in American Protestantism to split up Churches and form new sects on the most eccentric theories or the most trivial differences of doctrine or practice. As the settlers became gradually more civilized and educated, these extravagances were of course toned down and balanced by the rise of reputable universities and theological schools; and some of the revivalist preachers, such as Dwight L. Moody, or in our own day Frank Buchman, have been men of outstanding personality and power for good, who have won an international reputation. But the infinity of eccentric sects persists, and many of them have complicated the situation in India by sending missionaries to propagate their own particular interpretations of the Christian faith.

Another characteristic of American Protestantism has been its strongly Puritan morality, and its emphasis on the practical side of religion. Total abstinence from strong drink has been and still is an essential part of Christian living to the large majority of American Protestants, and they have devoted much energy to preaching it abroad. The American Churches also took a strong stand against the selfish and inhuman treatment of the native 'Red Indians' by the white settlers who had dispossessed them. Unfortunately the civil war and the difference of opinion over the question of slavery, caused a division in several of the American Churches, which in some cases still remains.

One result of the tendency of American Protestantism to subdivide into small and intolerant sects, has been that a counter-movement for unity has arisen in reaction against it. It is in accord with the practical genius of the American nation that this movement should be undenominational in character, and directed rather towards co-operation in action than towards agreement in faith and order. The

undenominational societies which were the outcome of the Evangelical Revival, the Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A., grew rapidly in America, and attained a position of influence in the life of the country which they have never had in Europe, as institutions for the general social and religious welfare of young people of all classes. More striking still was the founding in 1908 of the *Federal Council of the Churches of Christ*, in which thirty denominations have combined in order to make a common Christian witness in public affairs. It is to America too, that we chiefly owe the modern emphasis on the 'Social Gospel', that is the attempt to make the Christian Church effective in the social and political sphere and not only in the purely personal one. This is to bring back into Protestantism that sense of the responsibility of the Church for public life which was very strong in the Middle Ages, but which was largely lost in the disintegration of the Church at the time of the Reformation.

Americans have shared to the full in the modern missionary movement, their first pioneers in India being only a few years behind those from England; and India has profited greatly by their excellent educational institutions, and hospitals, and genius for pioneering and courageous experiment. The general tendency of American religion however, as the recent report of the commission of the Laymen's Missionary Council shows, has been more and more in the direction of social service and works of philanthropy, and very little in that of the upholding of Christian truth, and the reverent and discriminating study of Christian history and tradition. In matters of faith and practice there is an almost unrestrained individualism, and a tendency to accept nothing but what the individual has himself consciously experienced and explained in a manner satisfactory to his own mind. Thus the most important work done by Christian scholars in America has been not in the sphere of theology, but in that of psychology, the study of religious experience from the human side. This has no doubt been undertaken by many in the belief that an analysis of various kinds of religious experience will eventually show what is unique in Christian experience,

and therefore what is normal and authoritative, upon which the faith of the Church can be built. But the actual result, as the most eminent of American psychologists, William James, realized, has been to show how impossible it is for the psychological study of religion to establish anything with regard to the truth and reality of what is experienced. 'Man cannot by searching find out *God*.' Thus the way has been cleared for a new assertion of Christianity as above all a *revelation* from God; not the fruit of man's search, but the result of deliberate action on the part of the eternal and incomprehensible Creator of the universe.

> 'God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers (of the Jewish race) by the Prophets;
> Hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son'. (Heb. i. 1-2.)

It is this to which the Christian Church is pledged to witness, and no philosophy or psychology can either prove or disprove its truth. Psychological analysis only shows man's varying capacity for receiving that revelation, and what happens to him if he does receive it; it says nothing as to its truth.

American Christianity as an indigenous growth, is very little older than Indian Christianity (not nearly so old, when we remember the Syrian Church of Malabar and the early Nestorian period). It has not therefore fully found itself as yet, and a new development of any kind might arise within it at any time, more easily, perhaps, than in the European Churches, with their greater conservatism, and their tendency to harden as the result of years of controversy and persecution. We may expect that in the providence of God the Churches of India and America will have much both to give to and to take from one another, and much also to contribute to the united Church of the future. But if that contribution is to be the best possible, neither can afford to neglect the wider and more ancient tradition from which both have derived their heritage.

CHAPTER XX

India Receives the Gospel

We have now traced the origin of the chief strands of Christian life and thought that have been woven into the fabric of the Indian Church. It remains in this chapter to show briefly how they were brought to this country. We have already seen in Chapter XIX how the modern missionary movement was closely associated with the expansion and world-domination of the European peoples from the sixteenth century onwards. We may not approve of the spirit and methods of this European imperialism; we may also doubt the benefit of the close association of the Gospel of Christ with an aggressive and dominating race. Yet we cannot deny facts; and when we compare the comparative ease with which St. Paul evangelized the Roman Empire, owing largely to its unified and on the whole just and tolerant system of law and order, with the immense obstacles that confronted the Nestorian missionaries in the ever-shifting political changes of the far East, we shall readily agree that had it not been for the power and prestige of the states of Europe behind their backs, the modern missionaries to Asia and Africa would not have been able so quickly to plant the Christian Church in almost every country of the world. Let us remember again that it is part of our Christian faith that God controls history, and the rise and fall of nations, whether or not they are consciously giving themselves to be the instruments of His purpose. This must be as true of the empire of Islam and of the modern European empires as of the empire of Rome. We may not yet be able fully to trace how they have furthered God's purpose: but something we can see, and we can adore His providence without necessarily approving His instruments. We can and must believe then that it is no more an accident that the Indian Christian derives his heritage from nearly all the sects and countries of Europe, as a result of their urge for power and expansion, than it was an accident that Our Lord was born in the land of Judea and under the Roman rule. And we may be sure of one thing, that God will

not preserve any civilisation or empire in being any longer than it is useful to Him for the furthering of His purpose for mankind. Wrong things have doubtless been done in the name of Christ in India as everywhere else in the world: but in and through and over-ruling all is the good purpose of God. In the beautiful words of George Fox: 'I saw the power of God was over all, and the love of God shone through all'.

Christianity first came to India very early indeed. The tradition that it was preached originally by St. Thomas the Apostle is not altogether a wild one, and some scholars of repute have accepted it as probable. Certainly there was a Christian Church in Malabar before the fourth century, and there are many indications that it extended its influence over the whole of south India. Then, when the eastern group of Churches, to which it belonged, separated from the rest of Christendom over the Nestorian controversy, and was later almost completely crushed by the Moslems (see Part II, Chapters 8 and 10), the Indian Church was for several centuries isolated from the rest of the world, and inevitably dwindled into a small body, barely able to keep its candle alight, yet never letting it be entirely extinguished.

The next comers were the Roman Catholic Portuguese, who obtained a settlement on the west coast early in the sixteenth century, and proceeded to follow their usual policy of rapid Christianization of the Indian people under their immediate influence. Thus Goa remains nominally Christian to this day. But this incident in Indian history is chiefly important because it provided *St. Francis Xavier* and his fellow Jesuits with an opportunity for evangelistic work in south India. The Portuguese soon discovered the Nestorian Christians in Malabar, and immediately sought by all possible means, fair and foul, to bring them under the obedience of the Pope, and to a profession of the orthodox faith. By dint of wholesale employment of force, bribery and trickery, they succeeded in subjugating the larger part of them. The remnant, prevented by circumstances from getting their Catholicos (Archbishop) consecrated by the Nestorian Patriarch in Babylon, turned

in desperation to the Monophysite Patriarch in Antioch, and so held together in what is now called the Orthodox or 'Jacobite' section of the Syrian Church. But the Church of Antioch was itself a broken, persecuted and degraded community under Turkish rule, and the Patriarch has too often looked upon the Malabar Church as a source of gain to himself, rather than as a daughter Church, to be tenderly cared for; consequently there have been revolts and factions and lawsuits which are to this day distracting that Church.

Then more than two centuries later, in the nineteenth century, Anglican missionaries discovered this group of Christians, and endeavoured to help them, chiefly by raising the standard of education and spreading a knowledge of the Bible in the vernacular. But they were of a markedly 'Low Church' type, with little sympathy with or understanding of the ancient customs and ceremonial of the Syrians; and the Syrian authorities, though at first welcoming them, later came to view them with suspicion, fearing another attempt to absorb their Church into a European one. Unfortunately at this time a considerable number of the Syrians, zealous for reform, but unwilling to be swept into the Anglican fold, formed a new sect, that of the *Mar Thoma Syrian Church*, preserving its Apostolic succession of bishops, but in independence of Antioch and of everyone else. This Church for some years took the lead amongst Travancore Christians in missionary, social and educational work: but there has recently been a revival of life amongst the Jacobites, though alas, another section of these, despairing of peace in their faction-torn community, have submitted themselves to Rome as a Uniat Church. On the other hand relations with the C. M. S. have become friendly again, and the fear of absorption into the Anglican Church has been dissipated. It is very greatly to be hoped that this Church may before long become reunited and purified, and so take its true place in India as that body through which the Indian Church may realize its continuity with the primitive Church of the East.

Before we leave the Roman Catholics, we must mention

the extraordinarily courageous, though somewhat dubious experiment of the Jesuit, *Robert de Nobili* and his successors in attempting to commend Christianity to the Brahmins of the Hindu State of Madura. Deliberately repudiating all connection with the much-hated 'Feringhis' or Portuguese (de Nobili was himself an Italian by birth), they tried to live and act as much like Brahmins themselves as possible, living in strict seclusion as very holy men, and endeavouring to clothe their message in an Indian form. The story is well told in Father Jenks' *Six Great Missionaries*, and it is deserving of careful study by any of those who desire that as much as possible of the Indian Christian's Hindu heritage should be brought into the Christian Church.

It was not until some fifty years after de Nobili's death that the first Protestant missionaries came to India. By that time the French and British were already ousting the Portuguese from their position of advantage, and had started on the long rivalry between themselves which eventually ended in favour of the British. Meanwhile the Danish and Dutch had also acquired settlements on the east coast of India, and it was from *Denmark* that the next missionary move was to come. The spiritual impetus came from the German Pietist Movement, but actually three countries share the honour of establishing this first Protestant mission in India; Denmark, Germany and England. The original impulse came from the King of Denmark, and it was in the Danish settlement of Tranquebar that the mission was first planted. But he could not find men of his own land willing to offer themselves for service, and the first missionaries were Germans, of whom *Ziegenbalg*, who arrived in India in 1705, and *Martin Schwartz*, who came forty-five years later, are the most illustrious. A great deal of the financial help was supplied by the newly formed Anglican Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (S. P. C. K.). In those days the Church of England supplied its overseas settlers most inadequately with chaplains, and the German missionaries of the Danish Mission were welcomed into the British settlement of Madras to minister to the British

as well as to evangelize the non-Christians. To this day there is a large Lutheran Church in south India, built up by Danish, German, Swedish and American missionaries, which can trace its descent from these pioneers of the eighteenth century. The influence of these missionaries extended before long to north India, when Kiernander the Swede was invited by Clive to come and act as chaplain to the newer British settlement of Calcutta.

Kiernander was coming to the end of his long and devoted life when the next wave of missionary enthusiasm arose as a consequence of the Evangelical Revival in England. Through its influence a series of priests of the Church of England were led to offer themselves for service as chaplains in Calcutta. The first of these, David Brown, was the leader of a group of enthusiasts who drafted a scheme for an Anglican missionary society; and this resulted a few years later, in 1799, in the founding of the C. M. S. by which a great impetus was given to missionary work in India and Africa. The S. P. G. had been in existence already for nearly a century, but it was not until 1821 that it sent its first missionaries to India.

The most famous of the Evangelical chaplains of Calcutta was *Henry Martyn*, who devoted a short and fervent life to translating the Bible into Urdu, Arabic and Persian. Like Francis Xavier, Martyn was one of those who 'burn themselves out for God' and the value of whose witness cannot be estimated by statistics or any other merely human standards.

Already thirteen years before Martyn arrived in Calcutta, and six years before the founding of the C. M. S., the Baptist Church in England had sent out its magnificent pioneer, *William Carey*. It was not however the policy of the East India Company at that time to encourage missionaries other than its own chaplains; and Carey had first to live for some years as an indigo planter while he learnt the language of the country. He then joined two other Baptist missionaries, Marshman and Ward, who were by that time working in the Danish Settlement at Serampore, until his mastery of the Bengali language brought him an invitation to come to Calcutta to teach it

in Lord Wellesley's new college. The coming of Carey has always been held to mark the beginning of a new era in Christian missions. He was a man of statesman-like mind, as well as of fervent evangelistic zeal and amazing mental capacity; and he laid the foundations of most of the modern Protestant missionary methods with which we are familiar, notably the widespread dissemination of the Scriptures in the vernaculars.

The London Missionary Society, an undenominational mission founded chiefly by Congregationalists, sent their first missionaries to Calcutta a year before the C.M.S. was founded; but they had to retire to Dutch territory in Chinsura until a more favourable opportunity occurred. Later other missionaries of this society did some important pioneering work in south Travancore. Twelve years later the first Americans, Congregationalists, came into the field; they were ignominiously expelled from Calcutta by the East India Company, whereupon one, Judson by name, went to Burma to pioneer, and two went back to Bombay to found the American Marathi Mission there.

Meanwhile the Church of England was waking up to its official responsibility in India. By its relation to the State, it could form no new dioceses (that is, the area over which a bishop has jurisdiction) and appoint no new bishops in English dominions without the consent of Parliament; and it was not until 1814, that the House of Commons was persuaded to appoint a Bishop of Calcutta, who should include in his charge the settlements of Bombay and Madras. This gave him an utterly impossible task, which involved constant travel over the whole country under the most trying conditions, in order to visit chaplains and missionaries, consecrate new churches, and confirm baptized converts. Some years later some relief was afforded by forming new dioceses in Bombay, Madras and Colombo, and making the Bishop of Calcutta Metropolitan, that is, principal bishop of India. Daniel Wilson, the first Metropolitan, was the first bishop to make a determined stand against caste in the South Indian Church, not without much opposition, as it had until then been tolerated not only by Roman Catholic, but by

Lutheran and Anglican missionaries. There are now seventeen Anglican bishops in India, Burma and Ceylon, three of whom are Indians, yet all of them have dioceses many times larger than any of the English bishops.

In 1818, the Wesleyan Methodists began work in South India, and in 1830, three years before Wilson was made Bishop of Calcutta, the Presbyterian Church in Scotland sent out its great pioneer, *Alexander Duff*, also to Calcutta: Duff, with his fellow Presbyterians, Wilson in Bombay, and Anderson and Miller in Madras are especially memorable for their great services to higher education in India.

By this time the country was becoming gradually pacified and unified by British ascendancy, and as communications improved and conditions became more favourable, one after another the different British, European and American Churches, Catholic as well as Protestant, sent out missionaries to all parts of the country. This led on to the next stage in the history of the Indian Church, that is the establishment of that agreement between members of different missions which is known as 'Comity of Missions'. According to this the area within which each mission shall pursue its work is defined by agreement with others, and all pledge themselves not to encroach upon one another's, or to interfere with one another's systems of discipline. Most non-Roman Catholic Missions observe this courtesy. It certainly marks an advance on the policy of unrestricted competition, which inevitably led to overlapping and friction: but it is not very satisfactory from the point of view of the Indian Christian, who first has his Church affiliation chosen for him by geographical circumstances, quite independently of religious convictions: and, if later he moves out of his home area, unless in the large cities, he probably has no choice as to his Church membership in the new place to which he goes. These are some of the practical considerations that lie behind the present demand for a united Church: and already in south India an important step forward has been taken by the combining of the Presbyterian and Congregationalist Churches to form the South India United Church.

The movement for co-operation and friendly relations between missions went steadily forward, and it became the practice for missionaries of different Churches in the same place to meet together regularly for conference and prayer. In 1872 the first all-India Missionary Conference was held, and soon became a regular event. Meanwhile the history of the Church in India was being more or less paralleled by that of the newly planted Churches in China, Japan, Africa and other lands. And the next stage in the history of the Church Universal is the awakening of these Churches to self-consciousness. An important date in this connection is that of the *World Missionary Conference* in Edinburgh in 1910. There, for the first time members of the new Churches of Africa and the East met with Europeans and Americans of many different Churches (Roman Catholics were as usual excepted), and surveyed the situation together. And it was here that it was clearly recognized that the aim of the missionary enterprise was not merely to convert individuals and gather them into little select groups in dependence upon foreign missionaries, but to found 'such independent native Churches as shall support themselves out of their own resources, edify and govern themselves by their own powers, and forward mission work of their own accord'. One very practical result of this conference was the setting up of a Continuation Committee to forward missionary co-operation all over the world, and give the new Churches an increasing opportunity of making their voices heard. Another direct result was the transforming of the old 'National Missionary Conferences' in India and elsewhere into 'National Christian Councils', in which the nationals of each country should have the greater representation and a leading voice. In India, this Council has an important place in helping to form a common Christian mind in India, and in co-ordinating and improving missionary methods all over the country. A second World Conference held at Jerusalem in 1926, showed how much progress had been made since Edinburgh. Moreover the Indian Church has shown that she is prepared to take seriously her task of evangelizing her own land by the founding in 1910 of the

National Missionary Society which is supported and staffed almost entirely by Indians of various denominations, and which pioneers in parts of India as yet unentered by foreign missionaries.

We have now sketched in very brief outline the way in which the Church in India has come to be what it is. It is no part of the purpose of this book to give a history of Christianity in India, nor to enumerate the names of the saints and heroic souls that the Indian Church has already produced, though these are indeed a part of the heritage of the Indian Christian today. Rather we want to look at that movement towards the recovery of the unity of the universal Church which is the most unmistakeable sign in our day of the presence of the Holy Spirit of God among His faithful people in all lands, and to see, if we may, what part the Church of India is playing and has yet to play in it. But before that we have still to glance at two other important movements in the western Church during the nineteenth century, which are still having an influence on the Church in India.

CHAPTER XXI

The Nineteenth Century Renewal

Ever since the Renaissance of learning in the fifteenth century, a new spirit had been gradually making its way through Europe. This is the spirit of *Humanism*, the belief in the competence of man's natural powers, especially his reason, to discover truth for himself and order his life in accordance with it. It was this spirit that gave the impetus to the remarkable advance in science that has been so specially characteristic of the last three centuries. Man set out to explore the whole realm of nature, including human nature, to lay bare its secrets, to understand its workings, and make use of it for his own purposes, often with little or no reference to God. This spirit and this advance of science affected the Christian Church in various ways. In so far as it encouraged a belief in man's independence of God, it was radically opposed to the Christian

revelation of man as a fallen creature, needing to be redeemed and recreated in Christ by God's own act, if he is to escape complete ruin. Accordingly, many Christians looked at it askance as a dangerous atheistic tendency from which Christ's disciples should keep themselves unspotted. But others, in taking up a less narrow attitude, allowed their minds to be too much affected by its influence, and tried to smoothe out of Christianity all that did not seem compatible with it. In other words, they ceased to believe in the Christian religion as revelation and redemption from God, and came to look upon it as an achievement of the human reason and the human will. This rationalistic spirit was fostered by the break-up of the Church into a number of intolerant sects; for this produced the same kind of disgust and distrust in the minds of thoughtful men as had been produced in the fifteenth century by the decadence of the Medieval Church. Leaders of thought began to encourage men to think out a 'rational' religion for themselves, or even to discard religion altogether, as being an obstacle to man's true development. The comparative study of religions, and the study of the history of religion helped to increase this sense of the relativity and uncertainty of all man's knowledge of God, and it seemed unreasonable that any one religion should claim to be based on an absolute revelation. This Rationalist and Secularist movement became especially strong in the Church of England in the eighteenth century, and in France at the time of the Revolution, when Christianity was disestablished and officially repudiated by the State; in Germany it produced widespread scepticism and a 'humanized' Christianity, which have lasted to the present day, and are bearing fruit in the present pagan revival: in Russia it appears at present to be completely triumphant, and we know how terribly strong it is becoming in India and other countries of the East.

But our study of Church history, brief though it has been, has, I hope, prepared us to look at once for the 'counter-offensive' of God in this new situation. Nor shall we look in vain. We may point first to what we have already dealt with in Chapter XVIII, the widespread

influence of the Evangelical Revival in Europe and America, both in kindling in countless hearts fresh faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and also in spreading the Gospel throughout the world, so that there is now almost no country in which there may not be found a people of God, knowing His love in Christ, and trying to live by His grace.

Yet the Evangelical Revival had two grave limitations which made it unfitted adequately to counteract the rising tide of Secularism. It paid too little attention to sound learning, and ignored altogether those great movements of man's mind in science and philosophy, which were giving Secularism its power; and it tended too much to individualism. Secularism has more and more organized its forces into strong States, Republican France, Communist Russia, Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany. And against these Christianity cannot now oppose a united body, visibly one in the power of a supernatural life, the model of a new kind of society, such as it appeared to the Roman Empire in the first three centuries. In the story of the nineteenth century we shall see how the Holy Spirit of God was working through two new movements, one intellectual and the other ecclesiastical, to supply these deficiencies.

The point at which the advance of science came into conflict with the Christian Church was the Bible. The teaching of Darwin and other scientists as to the evolution of species, and the origin of man, and as to the way in which the world has come into being through countless ages, seemed to conflict with what was written in the Bible as to the creation of the world and the place of man in the universe. Besides this, the new historical method of study had laid hands on the Bible itself, and it was being examined and tested like any other ancient writings. Thus it was declared to be not an infallible Word of God, but the work of many human minds, extending over several centuries, and by no means always accurate in matters of fact, or consistent in its witness.

Evangelical Christians were seriously alarmed at this new trend of thought. For most of them the Bible was what the voice of the Church is to Roman Catholics, an

infallible guide in faith and conduct; but in order to be this they felt it was essential to believe that every statement made in it was literally true, and directly inspired by God. Gradually however, there grew up in most Churches a body of courageous and honest men who realised that the facts made plain by scientific observation and by historical investigation ought to be received with as much respect and faith as the facts of religious revelation, for as has been nobly said 'All facts are God's facts.' As this movement gained ground, it came to be seen that man's increased knowledge, far from destroying faith in God and in the Bible as the revelation of His nature and purpose, supplemented that revelation by greatly deepening our understanding of the way in which He has as a matter of fact created the heavens and the earth, and as to His ways of working in the world. It showed too that His inspiration of the Bible does not mean that He dictated it word for word in a miraculous manner, but that faithful and devout men who lived in close communion with Him were given from time to time such revelations of His character and will as they were able to receive, and they then imparted what they had learnt to their fellowmen. Because they were men, their record was not infallible, and all parts of the Bible cannot be held as of equal value and authority. Even the Gospels and the recorded words of our Lord, because they have come to us through the minds of imperfect human beings, have to pass through the rigorous testing of the historical and literary expert. Yet on the whole we can welcome this 'Higher Criticism' as it is called, as being to the great gain of the Church. For believers the Bible is still, what it ever was, the Word of God; but it has become a more *living* book than ever before; its writers and the characters in its stories appear to us as real flesh and blood men like ourselves, presenting the same mixture of faith and doubt, of good and bad; and we see God making Himself known, and incarnating Himself amongst and building up His Church out of ordinary human beings living in the ordinary world. The result of this 'liberal' movement in the Christian Church has been a great

deepening and widening of theological study in the light of the new knowledge of nature and history, comparable indeed to the work done by the Christian Platonists of Alexandria in the third century, and by the Fathers and Doctors of the age of the Œcumenical Councils. And in spite of the divided condition of the Church, there has been a very great deal of influence of different schools of thought upon one another. The teaching of such an inspired interpreter of Scripture as George Adam Smith, the Scottish Presbyterian, such a reverent and illuminated scholar as Bishop Westcott, the Anglican, and such a profoundly Christian philosopher as Baron Von Hügel, the Roman Catholic layman, is becoming part of the common treasure of students of theology in all denominations; while more recently, a remarkable movement on the Continent of return to traditional Christianity, in reaction against an excessive rationalism, is making the names of Karl Barth and others in Germany, and of the Lutheran theologians of the University of Lund in Sweden known throughout Christendom.

Yet undoubtedly there is a grave danger in the modern attitude to the Bible. When men's belief in its absolute authority was broken down, as belief in the absolute authority of the Church was broken down at the time of the Reformation, there was little left them in the way of a sober guide to right faith and conduct, and they were liable to be 'tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.' Men with only a very superficial knowledge of the findings of sober Christian scholarship, and with little reverence for the centuries of Christian tradition, claim to decide for themselves what in the Bible they will and will not accept. One rejects all miracles, another St. Paul's interpretation of the person and work of Christ, another the authenticity of the Gospel of St. John. Any number of 'Lives of Christ' or rewritings of early Church history are produced by such people, each bearing the mark of his own private sympathies, prejudices and ignorances. There is a general lack of any one recognised standard of truth: men believe what they like, what appeals to their own reason or emotions; they no longer

look for an authoritative Voice of God outside their own minds.

In India this tendency has a special danger in that it weakens the Christian's sense of the uniqueness and finality of the Christian revelation. The same 'liberalizing' of thought that made for tolerance and largeness of view amongst Christians of different Churches, also broke down the hard and fast lines between Christianity and all other religions. The honest search for truth, and the study of other religions soon led men to see, as the great Christian Platonists of Alexandria in the third century had seen, that God had indeed been revealing Himself 'in divers portions and in divers manners' through those of all religions who 'fear Him and work righteousness'. So little by little the attitude of Christians, and of missionaries in particular, has changed from one of uncompromising hostility to sympathetic and respectful study. And here if anywhere there is grave need for some clear recognised authoritative standard of truth, in order that the non-Christian religions may be tested, not by this or that man's subjective standard of what he thinks Christianity means, but by the eternal truth into which our Lord promised that the Holy Spirit should lead His Church. It is so easy to forget that men may be most sincere and truly good, and yet in very great error; the evil fruit of the error may not appear in their own lives, but sooner or later it will show itself in the lives of those lesser souls whom they have influenced and misled.

Now in the New Testament the Church is expressly called 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (1 Tim. iii. 15). And St. Paul in one of his most eloquent passages shows how essential for the maintaining of this truth is a united Church, with a ministry given by God, and acknowledged and accepted by all, as truly representative of the whole Body, not merely of this or that group within it (see Eph. iv. 1-16). It is not then, surely, an accident that following on this movement for the liberation of men's minds and enlarging of their sympathies, there should come one recalling them to the primitive ideal of the one united Church 'built upon the Apostles and Prophets'.

This movement began about 1830 in the Church of England amongst a group of men in Oxford, which gives it its usual name of the *Oxford Movement* (not to be confused with the Oxford Group Movement, which originated in America, not in Oxford). But its true character is better shown in the name 'Catholic Revival', and its influence has been felt far beyond the Anglican Church. Broadly speaking its aim has been to revive an ideal of the Church which it believes to be that of the New Testament and also of the centuries before division began, as a God-created supernatural society, corporately indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and therefore justly claiming to be an authoritative (though not infallible) guide to religious truth. Its authority has been gravely impaired by division; but there still remains a vast storehouse of tradition, founded upon centuries of experience, which constitutes 'the Mind of the Church'. Individual experience and inspiration can be confidently submitted to this corporate mind to be tested and supplemented; not by the old bad method of inquisition and compulsion, but by the voluntary submission of the humble Christian to the whole Body.

There are three points especially in the primitive tradition which these 'Anglo-Catholics' as they call themselves, desire to see re-emphasized throughout the Church.

1. Belief in the *Incarnation* of our Lord as the foundation doctrine of the Christian religion; that is, the belief that He is truly God made man, remaining eternally both God and Man, and that through union with Him man becomes 'partaker of the divine nature'. (2 Peter i. 4.) This truth has always been somewhat overshadowed in Protestantism by the special emphasis laid on the atoning death of Christ, and faith in it has tended to become weaker and weaker, so that it is possible to find a large number of Protestants, even influential Church leaders, who are frankly unitarian in their theology, and hold Christ up as a human model to be followed, rather than as the One through whom we are lifted up into union with God.

2. Belief in the *Sacraments* as an essential part of the Christian religion; that is, that just as the divine and human are mysteriously united in Christ, so, by God's

own action, the spiritual and material which form the two parts of a Sacrament are mysteriously united, and thus together and inseparably they are the means by which we receive from Christ the new divine-human life of sonship to God. Thus Anglo-Catholics have laid great stress on restoring the Eucharist to its original place as the chief service of the Church, and celebrating it with as much outward beauty and dignity as possible. They have also had an immense influence throughout the Anglican Church in increasing the practice of Communion, and the frequency of celebrations, even where their special teaching and their revival of ceremonial has not been followed.

3. Acceptance of the *Historic Episcopate* as the only form of Church Government which can truly claim to be primitive and apostolic, and to be representative of the whole Church, inasmuch as it was for fifteen hundred years the only recognised form both in east and west. Anglo-Catholics do not deny that the ministers of the various non-episcopal Churches have a true commission from God to preach and minister; but they range themselves with all the ancient Churches of east and west in holding that the only possible basis for union is the acceptance of the Episcopate by all. That is they hold that only those ministers who have been formally commissioned by the bishops of the Church, through the apostolic Sacrament of the laying on of hands, are truly representative of the whole Body of Christ, as the sinews and ligaments which bind it together. It is therefore a matter of principle with them to refuse to take the Holy Communion from the hands of any minister not episcopally ordained.

There have arisen parallel 'High Church' movements to this Anglo-Catholic one in the Churches of Sweden and Germany. But the movement has by no means been only along these theological and ecclesiastical lines. It has meant a real revival of spiritual life in the Anglican Church. This is shown partly in a widespread desire for help and guidance in prayer, resulting in the great increase in 'retreats' and 'quiet days', not only amongst Anglo-Catholics; it is shown also in the remarkable revival of the practice of sacramental confession (that is, confession

made privately to a priest). This practice had never been officially repudiated in either the Anglican or Lutheran Churches, though in neither was it any longer made an obligation, so that its revival in the Anglican Church is an entirely voluntary movement on the part of thousands of men and women who have found it a valuable help to sincerity and growth in spiritual life.

One of the most noteworthy results of the Catholic movement in England and America has been the revival of the monastic life for men and women in the Anglican Communion, and the remarkably rapid rise of a number of different types of Community. It is chiefly through members of these, such as the Society of St. John the Evangelist (Cowley Fathers), the Wantage Community of St. Mary the Virgin, the Oxford Mission Brethren and Sisters of the Epiphany, and others, and also through the missionaries of the S. P. G., that the movement is influencing the Church in India. Its influence has not as yet had time to penetrate very deeply into the life of that Church; and probably to a good many Indian Christians the Anglo-Catholics are merely an uncomfortable group of people who are chiefly concerned to protest against inter-communion between Anglicans and Free Churchmen.

It is true that the influence of Anglo-Catholics has been deliberately used against what seem to them to be hasty schemes of union, that are not based on a sufficiently deep understanding of the principles involved. Yet it would be equally true to say that no body of Christians cares more passionately for the cause of unity, or is more anxious that that unity when it comes shall be in accordance with the mind of Christ, and not merely with the mind of man. On the other hand it cannot be denied that there is within the movement a tendency to a distressingly stiff and unsympathetic attitude to Protestants, and also a tendency which seeks without much discrimination to copy everything it can from modern Roman usage. Moreover in their zeal for the restoration of their Catholic heritage, and their keen realization of the significance of the Church of England's unbroken continuity with the past, Anglo-Catholics are apt to forget or to belittle the inestimable gains won

both by the Protestant Reformers and by the Evangelical Churchmen of the 18th and 19th centuries. There exists however a large, and we believe a growing body of Churchmen within the Anglican Communion throughout the British dominions and America, who are learning to appreciate and to hold together both sides of their heritage, and to maintain what the late Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, called 'the thoughtful and deliberate comprehensiveness of the Church of England'. It is with these that there lies the hope of the Anglican Communion to be used by God as a 'bridge-Church' between Catholic and Protestant, between those who uphold the absolute authority of the Church, and those who believe in unrestricted freedom for the individual.

CHAPTER XXII

TOWARDS UNITY

THE history of the Church from the fourth to the eighteenth century is largely a story of divisions. The Body of Christ had not found its true outward expression, and had organized itself round various worldly and human principles of unity, like empires, kingdoms, republics and other such groupings; and before the true unity could be recovered these false kinds of union had to be broken down, and their insufficiency exposed. But in several of the later chapters of this book we have noticed how during the nineteenth century a counter movement towards reunion was appearing along various lines. There was the tendency of the Evangelical Revival towards a breaking down of denominational barriers; there was the strong drive of the missionary movement for co-operation and friendly relations; there was the practical demand in America and elsewhere for united Christian action in the face of the growing power of secularism; and there was the natural impatience of the new Churches of the East to have done with differences which to them seemed largely meaningless.

These all helped to prepare the way for the very

striking advance of the last twenty years. This new movement has a markedly different standpoint from that of the ones that preceded it, a difference that is very fairly symbolized by the use of the word *inter*denominational instead of *un*denominational to describe the position of those in different Churches who are working for co-operation and union. Instead of trying to find a minimum basis of agreement, and ignoring differences as unimportant, the new spirit aims at comprehensiveness. It welcomes the frank presentation of different points of view, and sets itself to understand and appreciate, even where it cannot wholly accept. There is a growing belief that truth does not lie wholly with one side or the other, but must somehow include both in a wider synthesis, that man's mind is as yet unable to grasp.

Probably no society has done more to further this new attitude than the *Student Christian Movement*. This began like the Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A., with which it has always been closely connected, as an undenominational Protestant society, the child of the Evangelical Revival. But as it aimed at sound study as well as evangelism, and as it expanded into a world-wide Federation, which included not only Protestants of all kinds but also Orthodox, Anglo-Catholics and even Roman Catholics, it was led further and further from the old unthinking content with an untheological Christianity, and called its members to the arduous but splendid task of exploring their whole Christian heritage, testing their traditions, uprooting prejudices and earnestly seeking for the full truth as it is in Christ. The World Student Christian Federation has adopted as its motto the words from our Lord's prayer 'Ut Omnes Unum Sint', 'That all may be one'.

Moreover it was old members of the Student Christian Movement, following the call of God to them through that Movement, who became leaders of the missionary enterprise, and so were the driving force behind the Edinburgh Missionary Conference: It is S. C. M. members, John R. Mott, J. H. Oldham, William Paton, Visser 't Hooft, who have become Christian world statesmen, devoting themselves to the cause of mutual understanding and right

co-operation between the Churches in East and West. It is through the S. C. M. that some of the leading members of the new Churches, K. T. Paul of India, T. Z. Koo of China, Kweggir Aggrey of Africa, have found an opportunity of making their voices heard as representatives of their own people.

A new influence of incalculable importance came into the S. C. M. and into the Church as a whole, when after the Russian Revolution, great numbers of Russian students took refuge in Paris and other Continental universities, and a revival of spiritual life in the Orthodox Church arose in their midst. For the first time for centuries this Church came into close contact with the Churches of the West, and that at a time when each side was more ready than it had ever been to learn from the other. Many continental and British Protestants became conscious for the first time of this ancient Church, completely other in spirit from Rome, and yet as venerable, and as strongly rooted in the traditions and customs of the Apostolic age. And so we find in England a Fellowship springing up between Russian and Anglican students, with an annual conference at which the standpoints of the two Churches are frankly discussed, and each learns to take an intelligent part in the other's worship: we find a Bulgarian Professor lecturing to Lutherans in a German university on the Holy Orthodox Church:[1] more significant still, we find a Dutch Protestant, the General Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation, writing a most sympathetic and illuminating little book on 'Anglo-Catholicism and Orthodoxy' in order to explain these two types of Churchmanship to his fellow Protestants.[1] The W. S. C. F. Quarterly, *The Student World*, is a rich mine from which to study this interdenominational fellowship and sharing of points of view.

Meanwhile a similar move towards understanding and sharing was coming from the official leaders of some of the Churches. The Lambeth Conference, which is the meeting of all the bishops of the Anglican Communion

[1] Zankov: *The Eastern Orthodox Church.* Visser 't Hooft: *Anglo-Catholicism and Orthodoxy.* Both published by S.C.M.

throughout the world, which occurs once in ten years, at its meeting in 1920 gave a courageous lead in issuing an 'Appeal to all Christian People . . . to unite in a new and great endeavour to recover and manifest to the world the unity of the Body of Christ for which He prayed'. The bishops declared expressly 'We do not ask that any one communion should consent to be absorbed in another', and 'We desire frankly to confess our share in the guilt of crippling the Body of Christ and hindering the activity of His Spirit'. This appeal has been followed up by various talks and discussions, some official and others unofficial, with Orthodox, with Free Churchmen at home, and even with Roman Catholics. The policy of establishing friendly relations with the ancient Nestorian and Monophysite Churches has also been pursued with renewed vigour, and attempts made to help them without in any way interfering with their autonomy as Churches, or their immemorial rites and customs. The Anglican Church has also been having close contact with the Swedish Church and with the 'Old Catholics' who are a community of continental Catholics who separated from the Pope because they were unable to accept the dogma of his supremacy and infallibility; and the Church of England is now in restored communion with both these episcopal Churches.

Another move came from the Episcopal Church of America, which planned and carried through a World Conference on Faith and Order, held at Lausanne in 1927; this was attended by 500 delegates representing 87 communions; and it appointed a Continuation Committee to carry on the work of educating the Churches in the cause of union. One of the most encouraging things about this conference was the very large measure of agreement that was reached in matters of faith.

Another great worker for unity was the late Lutheran Archbishop Söderblom of Upsala in Sweden. He was the originator of the idea of holding a Universal Conference on Christian life and work, which was held in Stockholm two years before the Lausanne Conference; this Conference was prepared for in England by an interdenominational Conference on Politics, Economics, and Citizenship, which

was another courageous attempt to come to a common Christian mind on the burning questions of our day.[1]

Lastly, and most interesting to us in India, representatives of the South India United Church and of the Anglican Church in South India, began about sixteen years ago to meet together, in order to draw up a scheme for a united Church in which the principles for which each of the separate Churches contends shall be included. This is the first scheme of its kind to have won serious consideration from all the parties to it, both in India and abroad. It is still under discussion, and it would be out of place to say more about it here; but it is already being taken as a basis for similar negotiations in Burma and England, and it may lead on to something of universal significance.

In all these events we can most surely trace the movement of the Holy Spirit of God. But discussions and negotiations between groups of Christians, or even between Church leaders, do not themselves bring unity. Even if the leaders were able to come to a common mind, there would still be need for the hearty consent of the rank and file of Church members before such union could become a reality. It is therefore of the first importance that while our leaders take counsel together, we ordinary Church members should be devoting ourselves to earnest prayer for God's guidance, to study of our Christian heritage and of what Church union would mean, and above all to a deep penitence for the sinfulness of man by which the Body of Christ has been torn asunder. Penitence! does it seem unreal to call the Church of India to penitence for the sins of Christians of other lands in the past, for which she cannot be held responsible? Yet is it not just here that the inner meaning of our inescapable unity in Christ is disclosed? For He, the spotless Lamb who 'made His soul an offering for sin' on behalf of all mankind, has so ordained it, that we may offer with Him as members of His Body, and on behalf of one another, our burden of sorrow and shame for the collective sin and failure of

[1] Since going to Press, further Conferences on both Faith and Order, and Life and Work, have been held at Edinburgh and Oxford respectively (1937).

our race; a burden to be accepted with the same sense of family solidarity as that with which a son assumes his father's debts, or a brother shares in a brother's disgrace. Perhaps it is just for some such sacrificial offering of forgiving love on the part of the Church in the East, that the torn and distracted western Church is waiting. 'If I, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.'

And when we have done all that is in our power to do, we need to remember that the unity of the Church cannot come by man's desire or man's efforts. Such a unity would be merely a matter of expediency, the result of human common-sense and wisdom, like the unity of a State. But the true unity of the Church for which we look is of a totally different kind. It is a spiritual unity, and its pattern is not on earth, but in heaven, where Three are eternally One. That means it is a unity which only God Himself can give, and the manner of which only He sees clearly. We believe He will give it, because it was Our Lord's own prayer that His disciples should be one as He and the Father are one. But it will not come by our discussions and negotiations, by the balancing of conflicting interests and opinions between Churches and nations. All this coming together for frank discussion in a spirit of love and humility most certainly helps to prepare the way for unity, for it helps to remove from our minds the moral and intellectual hindrances that prevent us from receiving God's gifts. But the actual fusing of the Church into one can only come by an act of the creative Spirit of God, as He will and when He will: and when *He* is ready, 'in the fulness of the times', He will act. It does however depend on *our* readiness whether we are able when He acts to recognize and accept His action, or whether we blind our eyes to it, and prefer to go on in our own set ideas, like the Jews who rejected Christ, or the Catholic Church leaders who rejected the movement for reform in the sixteenth century.

Nor must we be impatient. 'One day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.' And we may fittingly close this book with a quotation from

one of the most challenging thinkers of our own day, Dr. Inge, late Dean of St. Paul's. He says, in 'Speculum Animae' :—

> The divine in humanity is, it appears, a leaven which very slowly transforms the whole lump, and is not less divine because it operates very slowly. The Incarnation, though in one sense it came in the fulness of time, was in another sense very premature. Not only was Christ rejected by the large majority of His own contemporaries, but His message was soon so swallowed up in the 'three measures of meal' that it was to all appearance almost lost. We cannot suppose that the forms which Christianity has so far assumed—Jewish-Christian Messianism, the paganized Christianity of Western Catholicism, the fossilized Christianity of the East, the disrupted and fissiparous Christianity of the North—are any better than caricatures of what Christ meant His Church to be . . . . And yet our Lord, it appears, calmly and deliberately acquiesced in the slowness of the process . . . . He will wait patiently till the leaven has done its work. And this, if we believe that Christ is God, must be the only method of working for and with God which God approves. He who took a million years to mould a block of old red sandstone, is willing to take a good many thousand years to mould humanity to His own likeness.

This is well and truly said. Yet we may remind ourselves, that imperfect and inadequately leavened as the 'lump' of Christ's Church is at present, it is yet these very Churches of East, West and North, caricatures, as Dr. Inge calls them, which, such as they are, *are* the lump. We cannot take the leaven out of them, and say 'We will make a new beginning, a new Church, a new lump'; for once the leaven has begun to do its work, it is not possible to separate it from the dough; and the only way for us in our turn to share in the virtue of the leaven is by remaining in the old lump, even as it is.

So we do not know when God will give His Church the unity for which she is beginning to long: we do not know just what outward form that unity will take. There

may be, indeed, may we not say there must be, severe trials yet before the Church, before she can rise sufficiently above worldly ideas and worldly methods to fulfil her true vocation. There are signs in our day that she is being little by little set more free from her unwholesome entanglement with secular power than she has been since the days of Constantine: it may well be that in the near future she may be faced with opposition from that secular power throughout the world, on a larger scale than she has ever yet experienced. God grant that that trial if it come, may result in her purification and renewal in the 'Unity of the Spirit'.

> 'As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be in the consummation of the age: the Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire . . . . Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'
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> (Matt. xiii. 40-43)

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light, look favourably on thy whole Church that wonderful and sacred mystery: and by the tranquil operation of thy perpetual providence carry out the work of man's salvation: and let the whole world feel and see that things which were cast down are being raised up, that those which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are returning to perfection through Him from whom they took their origin, even Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Amen.

INDEX OF NAMES OF PERSONS MENTIONED IN THIS BOOK

Note: Those marked * have been 'canonized', i.e., given the title of Saint, and commemorated in the Calender of the Western Church.

NON-CHRISTIAN AND SEMI-CHRISTIAN SYSTEMS MENTIONED

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