

VALIANT IN FIGHT

A REVIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT

BY

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*"out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens. . .
They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom
the world was not worthy"
(Heb. xi. 34-38)*

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PREFACE

This book arose out of three informal talks which I was invited to give at the leaders Conference of University Evangelical Unions held at Leeds in September, 1936. The Committee of the Inter-varsity Fellowship kindly asked me to expand them for publication and the preparation of the book afforded me much pleasure. My purpose has not been to write a detailed or technical history, but to give some account of God's dealings with His people in the past in the hope that it might prove an inspiration to Evangelical sacrifice to-day, give encouragement to our witness, and afford guidance in our stand for Truth.

It is now some time since my publishers informed me of the exhaustion of the first edition of this book, although there seems to be a continuing demand for it. The popularity of the first edition surprised me, and I have been filled with gratitude to God for such abundant answers to prayer that was made when the book was written, especially for the news that at least two persons in widely separated parts of the world have been led to Christ through reading it.

The last chapter has become out of date, and has been replaced by an epilogue. Various minor changes have been made in the text of the refraining chapters to ensure greater accuracy, and it remains only to express my grateful thanks to the I.V.F. for their patience with me and for the privilege they have given me of carrying this book to a second edition.

My hope and prayer are that the book may help towards the recapture by Evangelicals to-day of that revival fire of the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which led the Apostle Paul both to withstand the Apostle Peter, when necessary, to his face, and also to impart his very life to those to whom God had sent him.

BASIL F. C. ATKINSON.
Cambridge 1947.

Valiant In Fight

I

The Conflict Begins

A.D. 33-303

(1) The scene selected by the first known church historian as the starting-point of the story which under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost he had to tell was that which took place on the Mount of Olives, when the disciples saw their Lord with the eyes of flesh for the last time. Scripture history and Scripture imagery are full of mountains. Moriah, Sinai, Carmel, all have their story to tell. The central act of all, itself deepest tragedy and most glorious of victories, took place on Mount Calvary. The Gospels are full of scenes that were enacted on the Mount of Olives. But this was the climax of all the strange history of Olivet. It was itself an end and a beginning. It was the end of the Saviour's work on earth. But it was the beginning also of the continuation of His ministry by those whom He left to represent Him on earth.

The Great Commission

(2) The Lord Jesus Christ had died and risen. There was a Gospel to preach, resting upon facts which could not seriously be disputed. He did not stay to preach it. He returned to the Father, and there sat down because His work was finished. He left in the world a little band of men to tell what He had done for its salvation, and this task He definitely committed to them at the moment when He was to be taken from them for the last time. "Go ye into all the world. and preach the Gospel to every creature" "Go ye and teach all nations." That is the commission of the church. That is the key to the conflict of the Christian age. To carry out that commission and for no other purpose the church is in the world. Not that the church is in being for no other purpose. The church is in being to be the dwelling-place of the Father's love and the very expression of His glory in Christ through eternity. But the church is in the world in order to carry out this commission. Its members are perfect in their standing before God in Christ. They are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" They could at any moment be translated to the divine presence away from the world and its evil. But they are left on earth. "He leadeth the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness that He may seek and find the one." "God is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "This gospel of the Kingdom must first be preached among all nations for a witness against them, and then shall the end come."

(3) The Gospel commission is the key to all problems of church history, large or small. It is the key to the success or failure of the many organizations built up to form the channels of witness to the world. Churches, societies, individuals, as we shall see, have concerned themselves with this or that theological problem. They have made worship central instead of the Gospel commission. They have concerned themselves with their relations with the state. They have concentrated on philanthropy and social service. Wherever they have done this and have forgotten the purpose for which the Master has placed them in the world, wherever they have lost the Master's vision of a perishing humanity, wherever they have become inattentive to the cry of spiritual anguish, the Spirit has passed them by, and when they have persisted He has extinguished the light of their witness. And the pages of church history are strewn with their wreckage. They may have shouted their loyalty to

Christ, they may even have suffered for Him. But if once they have forgotten that our Lord combined in a single phrase, "for my sake and the gospel's," devotion to Himself and loyalty to His commission, they have lost their influence and sunk into spiritual death.

(4) The departure of the Lord was associated not only with the commission. It provided the moment for a clear promise of His personal return. The disciples were still gazing after Him as He was taken up from them and disappeared into the clouds, when angelic messengers declared in plain tones the promise of His personal, bodily return. This was no new message. He had spoken of it when He had been on earth. He had told them that He would come again and receive them to Himself. But the association of the promise with the great commission and with the ascension emphasized to the disciples the goal of their labours and the hope that lay before them as they carried out the commission. And so they returned to the city, conscious that they were entrusted with the Gospel message which was the salvation of the world, and that at the end of their task they would again meet face to face the Lord Who had committed it to them. From that day to this, these two themes have been inseparable from health in the church. The church that is truly representing the Lord on earth is a church that is burdened with its indebtedness to proclaim the Gospel over the whole world, and a church in whose heart the hope of His personal return in glory burns with a fervent brightness. In the Apostle's words, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven."

(5) The disciples who had watched the ascension of the Lord, who had received the commission and been given the promise of His return, went back to Jerusalem to tarry, and there they waited for ten days. What a lesson this is, both to them and to us. Souls were perishing around them by the thousand. Their hearts were full of the Gospel commission. Yet they had to tarry. They were powerless in themselves. They had to await God's time, but above all God's power, with which they were mightily equipped when God the Holy Spirit filled them on the day of Pentecost. Here, then, is a third secret. The commission is not carried out by the church, but by the Spirit through the church. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." The individuals who compose the church must lend themselves to the Spirit without reserve, if they are to be effective instruments for Christ and the Gospel, and effective channels of living water to a dying world.

(6) On the day of Pentecost the Spirit came and the church's baptism of power took place, making this Holy Spirit in all His fulness once and for all available to every individual believer who asks for and appropriates him. The disciples stepped out into the streets of Jerusalem, and there preached the Gospel of the risen Christ to the crowds assembled for the feast. The great conflict with the devil for the souls of men had begun and in this chapter we are to follow its course for the first two hundred and seventy years.

Primitive Organisation

(7) For about the first thirty years of this period we have the Spirit's own inspired picture in the Acts of the Apostles. The Lord had told the disciples that they were to be His witnesses in an ever-widening circle which was to comprise Jerusalem; Judea, Samaria the uttermost parts of the earth. The Book of the Acts shows us this circle widening. It may be divided roughly into two sections, the first being concerned with the activities of the Apostle Peter, the second with those of the Apostle Paul. Though Peter was the first to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and to receive them into the church, his main work lay among the Jews, while Paul was the chosen missionary to the

Gentiles. The Book of the Acts shows us the organisation of the church, the Apostles attending to its spiritual needs, and deacons being appointed to look after the social and practical activities. Numbers were reached by open-air preaching, while house-to-house visitation went on constantly; and the first day of the week, the day of the Lord's resurrection, began from the first to be regarded as that one of the seven upon which believers assembled and partook of the Lord's Supper.

(8) The early days were days of miracle and supernatural gifts. These were prevalent in the days of the Apostles, but continued during all or most of the first two hundred and eighty years, according to the testimony of the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea who lived in the third and fourth centuries. Special miraculous powers possessed by the Apostles probably disappeared with them, but the gifts of healing and of tongues remained among the early Christians. Certain believers had gifts of healing and could recover the sick by laying their hands upon them accompanied by prevailing prayer, while others could speak, as the Apostles did on the day of Pentecost, so that listeners heard in their own language and not in that of the speaker. Faced by emergencies, the early church rushed to prayer. There are accounts of prayer meetings in the Book of the Acts which show the frequency with which they took place and the reliance that believers placed upon them. The control of the Spirit over the activities of the church is made abundantly clear in the Acts. The outbreak of persecution at Jerusalem, which must have appeared to be a calamity and which scattered the church, proved to be the means by which the Gospel was spread abroad. The hindrance to the Apostle Paul's plans for evangelising Bithynia was the means of bringing the Gospel to Europe. The weariness which caused the young man Eutychus to go to sleep and fall to his death gave birth to a great miracle which manifested the glory of God. The arrest and imprisonment of the Apostle brought him to Rome, which it had been his fervent desire to reach for years.

(9) Throughout the Book of Acts there runs an impression of ceaseless enthusiastic activity, not the wasted activity of the flesh, but the practical devotion of men filled with and controlled by the Spirit, doing "all things by prayer."

(10) The energy of the Apostle Paul was prodigious. In the space of less than thirty years he had founded churches in Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and on the Adriatic coast. He had visited Rome and possibly reached Spain. He had paid two or three visits to Jerusalem, and kept up a correspondence with his converts. During part of this time he supported himself by working at a trade, and during the whole time he never ceased to bear up the churches he had founded and their individual members in prevailing prayer before God. All this was accomplished in days when there was no regulation of the hours of labour, and when there were no swifter means of travel than the pack-horse and the sailing-ship.

(11) When the Book of Acts closes, a curtain descends upon the activity of the church, but we may conjecture its extent from its results. The evidence that we have of the early church is small and disjointed. It comes from the writings of Christian authors, known as the "Fathers", and from one or two glimpses through the eyes of heathen Roman governors and historians of the growing Christian church. For the period immediately following the apostolic period there is less of it than for the second and third centuries. Such as it is, it is concerned with the doctrine and worship of the church more than with its activities. We know nothing, except what we may conjecture, of the methods by which the Gospel was spread. We hear of organization for the relief of the poor, but of nothing approaching the missionary societies of our own day. We know nothing of preaching in the market

places, except what we read in the Acts, nothing of personal work or house-to-house visitation. Yet we may be certain that early Christians were in essentials like ourselves. They faced the same drawbacks, and their difficulties were greater than ours.

Extension of the Church

(12) Although we know practically nothing from evidence of the way the church extended, we know that in two hundred and eighty years the Roman Empire fell before it. It seems probable that by the year 300 a proportion approaching one twentieth of the inhabitants of the great cities were Christian. In Rome there were fifty thousand believers. The churches in Africa were large, those in Gaul quite small. But Christian churches existed from Britain and Spain on the one side to the Euphrates on the other, and beyond it throughout the Parthian kingdom which bounded the empire on the east. All this was brought about by the Holy Spirit of God working through men and women who regarded themselves as at war for Christ, who, in the light of the hope that lay before them, refused to spare themselves, but lived, worked and planned with the supreme object in view of witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ regardless of consequences.

(13) The organization of the great Roman Empire in which the Christian church was founded greatly assisted the spread of the Gospel. From Britain to Africa, from Spain to Armenia, the world was under one government. The various provinces of this great empire were connected with the centre in Italy by a system of roads superbly constructed and adequate, it seems, for the traffic that passed over them. Communication was easy. The existence of this great empire was not only the subject of Old Testament prophecy, but was undoubtedly part of the divine purpose for the spread of the Gospel. At the opening of the second century B.C. the city of Rome had emerged as a great Mediterranean power as a result of her conquest of Carthage. Her empire had spread eastwards, embracing Greece in the second century, Asia Minor, Palestine and Egypt in the first. Shortly before the birth of our Lord the supreme government of the empire had been concentrated in the hands of one man, and the republican constitution came in practice to an end. Already the language problem within the empire was becoming simplified. Greek came to be used as the common language of the eastern part, and Latin as that of the west. Greek was understood in Rome and normally spoken by many of its inhabitants, slaves and tradesmen from the east. A New Testament in Greek was therefore understood over a large section of the known world.

(14) There was only one direction in which the Gospel spread in these early days outside the Roman Empire. This was the east. Over the Roman frontier by the river Euphrates was the Parthian or Persian kingdom. The Parthians had been the enemies of Rome ever since they came in contact in the first century B.C. They had inflicted one irrevocable defeat on the Roman armies, and remained too strong to be subdued. A large number of Jews were settled in this region, many being the descendants of those who had been carried away from Palestine at the time of the Babylonian captivity or earlier. Numbers of these were present at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and many of them were converted and carried the Gospel back to their homes when they returned. The same enthusiasm and activity which characterized the church within the Roman Empire was a feature of the eastern churches as well. Christian congregations spread all over the Persian kingdom, and it appears that there was missionary activity beyond. The phenomenal activity in the far east of the Syrian church belongs to a later period, but it may well be that in these very early days the Gospel was carried farther than has been generally supposed. A Christian writer of the third century says

that evangelisation had taken place in India and China. This may be an exaggeration, but it is not an impossibility. There were regular trade routes to the far east, which later, owing to climatic changes, became closed. Of one thing we may be certain. The devotion, enthusiasm and practical self-sacrifice of the Christians of the first two hundred and fifty years remain a standing example and challenge to our own generation. Without state support, without swift transport, without facilities for advertising, without comfort in travel, without a printed Bible, at first probably without a New Testament that was bound up together, they carried the Gospel and won thousands of souls from a godless, heathen background over an area stretching from Spain to Central Asia and from Ireland to the Upper Nile.

Martyrdom

(15) An important method of witness was open to the early Christians, which in our own country today is comparatively speaking unknown, but which is already manifesting itself elsewhere. If we search the New Testament on the subject of witness we shall find four methods revealed. The first of them is that of suffering. If the organization of the Roman Empire assisted the spread of the Gospel, its government provided from time to time the opportunity for witness by martyrdom and suffering. For over two hundred years there was no deliberate policy of persecution against the Christians, and it is not possible to determine on the evidence at our disposal to what extent a Christian put himself outside the law by the simple fact of his profession of faith. Persecution was sporadic, and arose from two main causes.

(16) The first was the unwavering refusal of the Christians to conform in the slightest degree to the state religion. The mass of the population of the Roman Empire cared little for the heathen gods. Exotic cults from the east attracted worshippers, the most notable being Mithraism, which seemed in numbers and influence as if it might rival Christianity. The government did not care what religions the various subject peoples favoured, but its policy was to gather and head up, as it were, the various cults and the various deities into the supreme, if vague, worship of Rome and of the Emperor. Each Emperor on his death took his place among the gods. To offer incense before the statue of an Emperor, to sacrifice on any public occasion to the appropriate deity, was a necessary part of good citizenship. To refuse was disloyalty to the Emperor and to the state. This vague cult of Rome, this adoration of the Emperor, was a valuable instrument in the hands of the central government for binding together the very diverse peoples over which it ruled. To stand outside it was tantamount to an act of rebellion.

(17) The central government was often puzzled as to how to deal with Christians. There is extant a letter written in the first half of the second century by Pliny, the governor of Bithynia to the Emperor Trajan, asking for instructions as to what to do with the Christians in his province. He emphasizes their obstinacy and the dangerous nature of their beliefs. The Emperor replied that Christians were not to be sought for, but that if they made themselves a nuisance by stubborn refusal to recognise the state religion they were to be punished. To the honour of the early church as a whole be it said, that so far as heathenism was concerned they surpassed in exclusiveness any of the most exclusive denominations of the present day. Christians preferred death and torture to compromise and contamination. If our own generation of compromise were only to realise what it owes to the stand taken by the early saints and martyrs it might have a chance of regaining a little backbone.

Persecution

(18) The second reason for outbreaks of persecution against the Christians lay in the misunderstanding of their position by the people at large, and the exasperation which their witness, both negative and positive, produced among them. The people's anger was often fanned by the heathen priests, who felt that their status and livelihood were endangered by the spread of Christianity. There was scarcely a domestic occasion upon which a Christian true to his principles did not find himself in collision with others. If he was asked out to dinner with heathen acquaintances, the meal began with a libation poured out to the heathen gods. He was not only unable to take part in this, conduct which was considered strange and rude, but generally made use of the opportunity to protest against the recognition of the false gods and to bear witness to the truth. If an acquaintance sneezed in his presence and used the expression customary to the occasion, "Jupiter protect us," the Christian again seized his chance to witness for the true God against the false.

(19) The position and attitude of the early Christians can be understood with sympathy by their spiritual descendants, the Evangelicals of today. We all know the misunderstanding and the sneers that sometimes arise when we keep aloof from worldly amusements, or the anger aroused when we refuse to recognise a compromise with religious error. These things are of the same kind, but small in degree compared with the issues raised by the early Christian stand for the faith, a stand prompted by their firm and definite doctrinal belief, rich spiritual experience, deep sense of the holiness and majesty of God, and earnest desire to save their neighbours from sin and to bring them to salvation.

(20) The hostility and anger of the populace occasionally found vent in mob attacks on Christians, for which the Christians themselves were usually held responsible by the magistrates. Until the middle of the third century persecution was not systematic or universal. It broke out here and there at various times, and the church enjoyed periods of freedom and rest. The earliest government persecution on a large scale took place in Rome itself, under the Emperor Nero, not forty years after the Lord's resurrection. The city caught fire, and a large section of it was burnt. The populace suspected the Emperor, whose character was thought capable of such an action, of setting it on fire to make a dramatic background to a musical performance. Their anger was dangerous enough to cause the Emperor to look about for a scapegoat. The Jews, who might have been selected, were protected by high influence at court. The Christians, drawn almost entirely from the lowest classes, suspected and despised if not hated, possessing no interests to protect them, provided what was needed. Nero accused them of burning the city, and the fury of government and populace was let loose upon them. It is improbable that Christians beyond Rome itself were touched, but within the city a fiery trial took place. The Christians were herded in the arenas of the public theatres and thrown to the wild beasts. Others were covered with pitch and set alight to illuminate the Emperor's gardens at an evening party.

(21) One of the best known of the early martyrdoms is that of Polycarp, who was burnt alive at Smyrna during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. He was over eighty years old at the time. When the people demanded his death, he at first fled into the country, but was found and arrested. The usual test was offered him of sacrificing, and he stoutly refused. He declared his faithfulness to the Saviour Whom he had served all his life, and courageously faced the ordeal. He must have been one

of the last of those who had come into personal touch with the Apostles: he had been instructed by the Apostle John. His death is typical of that of many others. It may well be true that the number of Christians who suffered death was not in the aggregate large. Even so, the manner of their death was usually agonizing. Many who were not called upon to give their lives, suffered imprisonment, banishment or confiscation. Many Christians were slaves, and for them at any rate judicial examination was normally by torture. In spite of good government and comparative tolerance, human life was cheap, and human suffering was too often a matter of indifference. Pliny, to whom we referred above, thought nothing of submitting two Christian women to torture simply in order to discover from them what he could about Christian beliefs and practices. Though the majority of Christians, before the great persecutions of the third and early fourth centuries, escaped death, and there were always some who escaped any form of official persecution, the possibility of it was never absent. This was the cost of the stand for Christ in those days. How long would the Christian Unions in our Universities continue to function, if the fact of their existence placed their members beyond the pale of the law? Though complacent authorities might tolerate them, at any time there might be a policeman at the door to take the names of those who were attending a meeting. For the names on the list there would be the end of a University career, perhaps imprisonment; for the leaders, burning alive in the market place. Would a man allow himself under such circumstances to be elected president of a Christian Union? Would the membership be less than it is today?

(22) The early church welcomed these fierce trials as its opportunity for giving witness to the Master. Its members believed simply the statements of the New Testament that persecution was inevitable, and was, in fact, part of God's purpose for His people in order to refine their characters. Above all the endurance of suffering was itself a valuable opportunity for witness. One of the problems that they felt acutely was that of the position of those who had failed in these fierce tests. There were at all times many who could not face the ordeal, who sacrificed when ordered to do so by the magistrate. Later there arose the subterfuge of the purchase from the authorities of tickets vouching that sacrifice had been offered. This transaction was made not only by those who had once given way but also by many who had not sacrificed and did not intend to, but sought an easy way to escape the difficulty without facing the test. When the persecution was over, many of those who had failed sought recognition again as Christians. So great was the atmosphere of reality in which the early Christians lived that the problem, to which no definite or universally accepted solution was found, was whether those who had thus failed should never again be admitted to church membership or whether they might be readmitted once.

(23) This spirit of exalted devotion and defiance sometimes led believers into exaggerations. They went halfway to meet martyrdom. There was the non-commissioned officer, who at a mess gathering tore off his uniform with its heathen religious ornaments, declaring that he would no longer serve a heathen master seeing that he served the Lord Christ. Naturally he was condemned to death. Sometimes devotion to the Lord led to a wonderful triumph over the highest earthly affections. This was so in the case of the young mother who was arrested with her boy of three or four years old. The mother watched the child flogged to death, encouraging him the whole time not to give way, and comforting him with the hope of the reward awaiting him in heaven.

(24) There was one factor in the life of the early church which brings it very close to the circumstances of our own spiritual life today. It contended not only with the heathen world without,

but with varying grades of heresy and error within. The grasp of the early Christians upon the fundamental doctrines of the faith was firm and unwavering. One of the earliest heathen testimonies to the Christian faith is the letter of Pliny, the governor of the province of Bithynia, to the Emperor Trajan in the year 112. In this he asserts that the Christians sing hymns to Christ as God. Various attempts have been made to prove that the conception of the nature and person of Christ was in a state of flux in the early days and later became crystallized into a definite form. This is true in two senses only. First, it is quite obvious that converts from heathenism must have had incomplete notions of Christology until they had studied their Bibles and entered into deeper experience. In this sense the conception of Christ is in flux among converted people today. Secondly, almost our only evidence of the belief of the early church after the apostolic age (when it is clear as crystal) is derived from the few Christians who wrote treatises of apology or exhortation. These may have been less representative of the whole than is usually thought. In any case they were mostly scholars with philosophic or other training in the secular schools. They therefore made various attempts to explain intellectually the mystery of the God-head, attempts which can never reach a satisfactory conclusion and never have. None of these things altered the conviction of the early believers that Christ was God, or disturbed their faith in the statements of Scripture which told them definitely that this was so.

The New Testament

(25) The facts of the incarnation and redemption were clearly held by the early Christians, and what may perhaps be from our point of view of special interest and importance, they had a living practical hope in the personal return in glory of the Lord, the day of Judgment and the end of the world. They were keen students of prophecy. Their view of the Scriptures was exactly that of conservative Evangelicals today. They inherited from the Jews the conception of inspired, authoritative and inerrant Scriptures, a conception confirmed by the Lord and the Apostles, and shown to attach rightly to the three sections that composed the Old Testament, the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. It was natural that the apostolic writings should be placed in the same category. Statements that the canon of Scripture was not decided or recognised till the fourth century, so often made nowadays, arise from two reasons. The first is that in quite early times the whole New Testament was probably seldom contained within the same binding, and certainly never in a single roll. A substantial portion of the New Testament has quite recently been discovered in a single codex (book of the form we use now: as opposed to roll), dating from the second century. It is not likely that this was common. The various Epistles, and no doubt the Gospels also, were at first sent to single churches. Some may have remained for some time known only in the vicinity of the church to which they were first sent. Again, early doubts or disputes as to the acceptance of such and such a book, of which we have very little evidence, arose from the care of the church not to admit what was uninspired. This care arose, of course, from the recognition that there was a canon to be carefully guarded, and not from indifference or ignorance. In quite early days some churches may not have had more than a portion of the Bible, just as today many churches on the mission-field are in a similar position awaiting its translation. But this fact does not make any difference to the belief of those churches in the inspiration of the whole Bible.

(26) Although the grasp of the early church upon the fundamentals of the faith was clear, there was no slavery of thought as arose afterwards in the middle ages and as exists in Romanism today. There were differences of view on inessential matters, and freedom of interpretation was rightly

recognised as God's will. We have for example the evidence of Justin Martyr from the second century that different views existed among Christians on the matter of the millennial reign of Christ, or upon the state of the dead. So they do today. Recognition of, and respect for, the interpretation of others kept the church free from bitterness and sectarianism.

(27) She was, however, far from being free from the necessity of contention with heresy and error. No student of the New Testament can be ignorant of the difficulties with which the Apostle to the Gentiles found himself confronted when he taught that the Gentile Christians were free from the observance of the Jewish Law. It seemed difficult, if not impossible, for Jewish believers to realise that all the old observances and the old bondage were swept away in Christ. Sects of professing Jewish Christians, who would not entirely break away from Judaism, existed till the third century at least. Some were the descendants of the apostolic church at Jerusalem which fled across the Jordan to Pella before the destruction of the city. The more moderate seem to have been true believers and to have been recognised as such at the time, but to have clung to Jewish ritual observances. Some of their weaknesses may be referred to in the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Others had the loosest connection with Christianity. One of their sects, the Ebionites, not only denied the Virgin Birth, but based their teaching upon a medley of semi-heathen philosophical ideas, and their worship upon Jewish tradition and ritual. Later others arose known as Elkesaites. So far as we know, these communities were never recognised by any of the Christian churches as being truly Christian. They were the ritualists of the day, and against them the church maintained her witness to a spiritual, scriptural faith whose worship was what might nowadays be called Puritanical and whose external witness was to be found, not in religious observance, not even in organization, but in the changed spiritual and moral lives of believers. This Jewish legalism was the only ritualism professedly within or partially within her ranks with which the early church was faced. The heathen idolatrous system, contact with which she regarded as pollution, had not yet been assimilated into the church. No Christian doubted that the heathen sacrifices were offered to devils, nor that the erection and worship of heathen statues constituted a loathsome and defiling sin. Later generations were to be faced with all these things carried on in the Name of Christ, just as we are still faced with them in Romanism and Anglo-Romanism today.

Gnosticism

(28) One of the most remarkable attacks upon the faith and spirituality of the early church was made through the system of Gnosticism. This corresponded to the "modernism" of today, and in a few respects resembled it in a surprisingly close way. Within the loosely constructed Gnostic system there were as many opinions as there are among critics today. If we can conceive of a vague religion, combining the higher criticism, pantheism, doctrines of evolution and cults such as "Christian Science," we have an idea of what Gnosticism was. It professed to be a gnosis, that is to say, a knowledge, a higher means of contact with God, in contrast with which scriptural belief was crude. On a par with this are the pretensions of present day Liberalism, expressed in such phrases as, "No educated man now believes in the inerrancy of Scriptures. These pretensions today rest upon "science," which is only the Latin word for "gnosis." Identical with the critical outlook upon the Old Testament, held by the last two generations, was the teaching of the Gnostic Marcion in the second century. He called the God of the Old Testament crude and capricious, and refused to regard Him as the Father revealed by Christ. He sharply separated the morality of the Old Testament from

that of the New. Christ was an emanation from the Divine which came upon the man Jesus at the time of His baptism.

(29) The Gnostics attacked Scripture throughout. Marcion rejected finally all but some of the Pauline Epistles. They denied the scriptural doctrine of creation, as today it is so widely denied. They held instead various theories of what is now called evolution - that is to say, they rejected the Christian doctrine and went back to the pagan theories around them. They denied the visible personal return of Christ and the resurrection of the body, since they regarded what is material as essentially evil, and changed the moral antithesis of good and evil into a physical antithesis of spirit and matter. Their hope for the future was moral improvement and the shaking off of the shackles of materialism. They dispensed with any definite belief as being necessary to salvation and recognised as Christians all who professed a regard for Christ and gave evidence of following a moral standard. The force of Gnosticism seems to have been spent by the close of the second century, but the harm it did remained for two or three generations more. Gnostic ideas were still being expressed in writing during the third century. What a joy and encouragement it is to realise that the theories that trouble so many of us today were met by our spiritual forefathers and triumphantly overcome, though in many respects they were weaker than we are. Gnosticism died. It disappeared so completely that its present advocates do not realise that they have revived notions of the past, but regard themselves as "modernists." The Truth has gone triumphantly on.

Montanism

(30) Not only were the early believers hampered in their witness by the necessity of contending with heresies professed within their own ranks. They were faced with another phenomenon which is still familiar to us. This was the existence of what, if the term is permitted, we may call "stunts." Among believers today there arise here and there certain sections, which do not necessarily form themselves into separate communities, characterized by undue emphasis upon a single, or a single set of, scriptural truths. In some way or other these companies claim to have an extra measure of the gift of the Spirit, in comparison with which the Christian life of the ordinary believer is more or less of a failure. They generally exhibit an unbalanced enthusiasm and an ill-defined, half-conscious sense of superiority. They were represented in the second century by the Montanists, followers of Montanus, a Phrygian. The Montanists constituted partially a reaction against the growing slackness and worldliness of the church. They had prophets who had visions and revelations of their own, and they regarded the Lord's promises of the coming of the Comforter as being finally fulfilled in themselves. Their zeal and fanaticism also carried them in the direction of asceticism and celibacy. They preached that the end of the world was close at hand, and that the new Jerusalem would come down on to a mountain in Phrygia. Tertullian, a Christian leader and writer at the close of the second century, became entangled in Montanism. The Montanists after some seventy years separated themselves, or were half driven out, into a distinct sect, and the movement soon died out.

(31) We have seen something of the devoted activity of the early Christians, of their witness by suffering, and of the heresies with which they had to contend. There remains to be considered one feature of early church life which, unfortunately, is familiar to ourselves as well as to the first generations of believers. It may be summed up in the word worldliness. As we read in the Acts of the Apostles we can watch the formation of the local churches, each with its apostle, which simply means the missionary who founded it, and its regular ministry. These local churches, while

realising, of course, their unity in Christ, were independent of each other as regards organization. As we see from the opening verse of the Epistle to the Philippians, there might be at least two bishops in a single local church. The bishop was simply one who superintended the activities of the church and probably presided at and led the weekly worship. Groups of communities would naturally come to be associated, either by reason of geographical proximity, or because they owed their foundation to the same missionary, or for other similar reasons. An able bishop with a strong personality, or even for some purely spiritual reason, might find that his advice was sought by neighbouring churches, in addition to his own. However it happened, groups of churches came to be associated together under the direction of a single man. As the Gospel usually reached the towns first, and spread from the larger centres over the surrounding country districts, the presiding bishop naturally resided in the city. As soon as authority had been concentrated in each district in the hands of a single man, further steps were obvious and inevitable. A metropolitan was appointed over the various bishops of a district, and these presiding bishops met together to represent the churches under their care when it was necessary to confer. Conferences of this sort, later technically named synods, naturally became more and more necessary, as the churches increased in number and membership. This concentration of power, probably unprovided for in the primitive pattern, proved too great a strain on human nature. Individuals began to seek bishoprics as desirable positions in which to exercise power. Mutual jealousy naturally followed, and the very thing which the Lord had so clearly forbidden (Matt. xxiii. 8-12) began everywhere to take place.

Ostentation

(32) There was a second fact that added to the temptation with which those who strove for high positions were faced. The self-sacrifice of the early converts concentrated large sums of money in the hands of the ministers of the various churches. We have seen something of the spirit of reality which the early Christians possessed. As they were converted from heathenism, their hearts and their treasure were transferred to heaven. They often took literally the Lord's command to sell what they had and devote the proceeds to the relief of the poor. They regarded their money and property as belonging to the Lord to an extent little known in our own generation. There seem to have been few, if any, instances of communism in the Gentile churches such as existed in the apostolic church at Jerusalem. But Christians, if they did not quite impoverish themselves, gave largely and freely for the spread of the Gospel, the support of apostles and evangelists, or the maintenance of the elderly, helpless and poor. Naturally the bishops had the first word in the administration of these sums, and as soon as they proved unable to resist a lust for power, they found themselves more and more in the grip of a lust for wealth also. Too often the funds of the church were spent on ostentation. At times they were grievously misappropriated. This was the case with Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, 260-270. This man exercised wide political influence as an unofficial agent. of Queen Zenobia of Palmyra, who governed Antioch at the time. His income amounted to what would be between £1,500 and £2,000 a year in our money, and he spent it on luxurious living not untainted with vice.

(33) This development, which does not seem to have taken place in the eastern churches outside the Roman Empire until a rather later date, produced two evil effects, one immediate and the other cumulative. It accentuated the suspicion with which the Roman government regarded the rapidly growing numbers and influence of the church. Displays of worldliness like that of Paul of Samosata could only take place during intervals of freedom from persecution. These intervals were frequent

and sometimes of appreciable length. But the Roman Emperors saw growing up in the midst of their dominion a separate community with rulers, organization and funds of its own. It stood aloof from the state religion, which it regarded with detestation, and numbers of its members refused some of the normal duties of citizenship. The wonder is that persecution was not more continuous and more nearly universal. In the early days at least it seems that humanly speaking the Roman Empire could have swept Christianity out of existence in a sea of anguish and blood. But the One Who had sent His people forth as sheep in the midst of wolves was with them with them. And that One is Sovereign of the universe.

(34) The second effect produced by the church's giving way to worldliness is seen in the Emperor's establishment of Christianity in the fourth century. But this belongs to our next section. Before then, the history of the true church was more or less the history of the visible church: Catholic in the true and original sense of the word; Scriptural in the sense that the faith she held was the faith she derived from the Scriptures; Protestant in her tenacity for that faith and her rigid exclusiveness towards error, as in her undying witness to the truths committed to her; Evangelical in the emphasis that she placed upon personal salvation. No one can read the story of the early church with unbiased mind without recognizing that her spiritual counterpart is seen in the Evangelical missionary societies of today; in the stand for the truths of Scripture and the fundamental doctrines made by the Evangelical bodies today against medievalism on the one hand and Liberalism on the other ; and in the simple worship free from the sensuous appeal of art and ostentation, worship that depends upon nothing external whatever, worship in spirit and in truth such as the Father looks for, reintroduced to so many in Christendom by the work and martyrdom of the Reformers.

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II

THE BIRTH OF A NEW AGE

A.D. 303-500

(1) In our last section we have watched the growth of the Christian community within the Roman Empire and the natural suspicion and jealousy with which the government regarded it. We have also seen how the growing worldliness of the church justly increased that distrust. Now, when the church has been over two hundred and fifty years in existence and her numbers, so far as can be estimated, are equal to about one-twentieth of the whole population of the Empire, the time is ripe for a clash. At this point in her history the church is more closely associated with the fortunes of the Roman Empire than at any previous time. The reverberations of the crisis that took place at the beginning of the fourth century were heard in the distant east outside the bounds of the Empire, and the Christian communities there found themselves, as we shall see, seriously affected by it. The momentous action of the Emperor Constantine in taking the side of the church has left a mark upon Christianity which it bears to the present day. There are problems of Christian life which now face us that arise directly from it. No one who wants to follow the guidance of God of His flock throughout the centuries can ignore it. It is the explanation of the long mystery and bitterness of the middle ages. It explains the silence of the church and her neglect of her commission for a space of about twelve hundred years. In the case particularly of the Church of England clergyman at this present time it lies at the bottom of many of the problems that face him, and may be considered to be the first cause of much of the business that it falls to his lot to perform.

(2) The issues of the crisis that took place in the fourth century are so momentous that we need no excuse for devoting a section to the two hundred years which saw the greatest change that has ever taken place in the history of Europe until that which we are witnessing at the moment, and which affected the course of the testimony of God's people in the world to an extent that can be compared with the facts of the Lord's resurrection and the day of Pentecost themselves. Shortly after the time when this book was first published the coronation of the King took place. Parts of this ceremony have their roots in the action and policy of the Emperor Constantine. As we look at the true church today, we see it split outwardly into sections separately organised for the purposes of witness and worship, causing much overlapping and waste. The reason for this may be traced partially to the same cause. If we ask, for example, how it is that the Japanese have waited nineteen hundred years to hear the Gospel, we cannot give a conclusive answer with-out taking into consideration the action of the Emperor Constantine. In the two hundred years between the close of the third century and the close of the fifth the whole face of the civilized world was changed. A combination of factors was needed to bring this about. Looking back over a distance of sixteen hundred years, the mind is filled with admiration and the heart with praise at the unerring sovereignty and power of the Lord of the universe and Head of the church as, acting according to His will in the kingdoms of men, He brought about that combination of circumstances which carried His people into one of the strangest phases of their history.

(3) In the last section we saw that for two hundred years persecution of the Christians by the Roman government was not systematic but sporadic. It broke out here and there, depending upon the caprice of a provincial governor or the rage of an ignorant mob. The Christian profession probably

placed a man outside the law, but, as often as not, he was left undisturbed. Such an attitude was natural in a civilized government during the period of prosperity and toleration under the great Emperors of the second century. But, as the second century drew to its close, the satiability of the empire became threatened. With the growing political confusion the policy of the state towards the Christians underwent a change. The Emperor Severus (193-211), a man of cruel temperament, issued edicts against Christianity, but his laws expired with his death, and no persecution took place for nearly forty years. The great confusion into which the government fell, and which may be said to date from the accession of the Emperor Caracalla in the year 211, may partially or entirely account for this. Rival Emperors struggled with each other for power, and the proper channels of authority were overridden by the Praetorian Guard, a powerful military organisation in the capital. The increasingly unhappy condition of the Empire politically made little difference to the diffusion of the Gospel and the increase of the church. We may imagine that if, on the one hand, trade declined and the use of the roads became less safe, thus making the propagation of the Gospel more difficult, yet on the other, the growing sense of unrest and impending calamity would be likely to turn men's hearts to the rest and anchorage which it offered. In the systematic persecutions which broke out in the third century we can see the effects of political confusion and distress which added to the suspicions of the government and made them more reckless and violent. The heathen priesthood also, jealous and angry with the growing Christian church, may well have spread the notion that the increasing unrest was due to the displeasure of the gods. Thus the Emperor Decius, who succeeded in 249, made a systematic attack upon Christianity, and attempted to destroy the organisation of the church by the removal of the bishops by exile or death. Decius was killed in battle in 251 and again the church, generally speaking, had freedom and peace for a period of fifty years.

Church Buildings

(4) It was during these periods of rest that the worldliness of the church authorities most increased. The decline in spirituality within the visible church during the third century may be matched with her increase in numbers and power. It was about the beginning of the century that a great outward change took place, which had far-reaching results, and would not have failed powerfully to affect the watching heathen of the time. In primitive days Christian worship had taken place wherever it was possible for Christians to meet. In private houses, in the open air, among the tombs of those who had passed away, the prayers and praises of God's people had ascended to Him, the worshippers being quite indifferent to the locality in which they met, because they realized that their own bodies were the living temples of the Holy Ghost, and that the privilege of access was theirs to exercise at any moment and in any place. About the year 200 it became the custom, with the permission, if not approval, of the government, for the Christians to erect buildings in which to meet for worship. No one can doubt that the Christians were right in taking whatever advantage they could of increased facilities for freedom. No one can deny that the sight of a building, advertised as the property of the Christian community and open for inspection and worship, might constitute a powerful external aid to witness. No one will suppose that the ownership of a building by any Christian community, in which to carry out worship and instruction and to transact business, need be otherwise than a blessing. But there is evidence that during the third century two mistakes were made. The first was that, in the important cities at least, the buildings were unduly large in size, though not necessarily providing more than the required accommodation, and were erected

with an eye to ornamentation that always cost money and sometimes amounted to ostentation. Obviously the existence of such buildings became a further provocation to the heathen population. In the second place it seems that even in the third century an unspiritual clergy began to connect with their buildings the idea of sanctity that attached, in heathen society, to the temples of the gods. After the establishment of Christianity this idea was, of course, lifted bodily out of heathenism and transplanted into the Christian church so effectually that Protestantism failed to eliminate it, and there are few today amongst organised groups of Christians who show complete freedom from the idea. Only once has the author seen any indication of the scriptural position upon a building: over the door of a certain chapel were the words, "the meeting-place of the Baptist church." At this point it ought to be said that there is no evidence whatever that in the third century the interior of these buildings presented any other appearance than that which a Christian church ought to have. They were not yet mass-houses, nor were they like heathen temples, and copies of the Scriptures for public reading still occupied the central place.

(5) The prominence of the Christian church-buildings played a considerable part in the fiery trial that overtook the church at the dawn of the fourth century, as we shall see. In the year 284 the Emperor Diocletian succeeded to the throne. An able and far-seeing ruler, he set about the reorganization of the empire, racked by civil war, barbarian invasions, economic distress and violent outbreaks of pestilence. For thirty years there had been a division of the empire, one ruler governing in the west and another in the east. Diocletian was the eastern Emperor, but those in the west did not oppose him. His capital was at Nicomedia in the province of Bithynia. Among other reforms intended for the better administration of the empire, Diocletian appointed two assistant governors with the title of Caesar intending that they should succeed himself and his colleague in the purple. The eastern Caesar was named Galerius. This man conceived an implacable hatred for Christianity. The fact that he seems to have had trouble with insubordinate Christian soldiers in the army cannot, perhaps, entirely account for this. The Emperor was naturally tolerant. He recognised the strength of the Christian church, and realized the confusion that might result from an attack upon it. It seems that this strength was particularly noticed at this time by the heathen priesthood and by the conservative-minded in Roman society, who identified the heathen religion with the greatness and glory of the empire in the past, and were filled with alarm at the growth of Christianity. Galerius proved to be their champion. He persuaded the Emperor that the existence of the Christian community, growing in prosperity and numbers, was a danger to the stability of the empire, perhaps even to its existence. He urged that so long as it was allowed to continue, there could be no freedom from the anarchy and disquiet that had tormented the empire for three generations.

The Great Persecution

(6) Diocletian was sufficiently persuaded to attempt the experiment of suppressing Christianity, and on the 24th of February 303, the first edict against the church was issued, requiring the demolition of all churches and the handing over to the authorities of all copies of the Scriptures for public destruction. We have seen that a spirit of worldliness had invaded the clergy, and that church policy had already begun to go astray upon what were still comparatively minor points. But if this was so, the great persecution brought out the fact that the primitive spirit of reality had not deserted the rank and file of believers. Their faith in, and loyalty to their Lord, their zeal for witness, rose to heights of triumph that surmounted the trial and brought the efforts of the Emperors to nought. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not

their lives unto the death." Almost as soon as the edict was posted up in Nicomedia, a young Christian soldier tore it down. He was at once arrested and roasted alive over a slow fire.

(7) For ten years the persecution raged with varying force and varying duration in the different provinces of the empire. When once the government had embarked upon such a course, it was impossible not to proceed to the logical conclusion. Persecution could not, in the circumstances of the time, stop at buildings and books, but must inevitably proceed against the persons of those who used and read them. The day previous to the issuing of the edict, the church at Nicomedia, which stood in a conspicuous position on a hill, was rased to the ground. Throughout the empire the Christians offered less resistance to the destruction of the churches than might have been supposed. There was little that they could do. They showed a faithful and obedient spirit in submitting to this loss and humiliation, and in trusting to the providence and protection of the Lord. The story that at a small town in Asia Minor the congregation locked themselves in and allowed the church to be burnt over their heads may possibly be founded on fact, but does not rest on reliable evidence. Worse was to follow. Within a few weeks of the issuing of the first edict fire broke out in the Emperor's palace at Nicomedia on two separate occasions, and his advisers were not slow to fan the suspicion that these were Christian acts of revenge. The origin of the fires is unknown. There is no evidence that Christians had a hand in them. In the same year 303 two further edicts were issued and the fourth and last in March, 304. The second edict ordered the imprisonment of all clergy of whatever rank; the third directed the magistrates to convert them forcibly to paganism by torture; and the fourth widened the scope of the two previous edicts, making them apply to all Christian believers and not clergy only.

(8) These edicts ran throughout the whole of the empire, east and west, but their effects in the different provinces were very varying. In the west the Emperor Maximian carried them out with full force in Italy and Africa, but the Caesar Constantius, who ruled Britain, Gaul and Spain subordinate to Maximian, did what he could to lessen their effect. Within a year of the issue of the last of the edicts, Diocletian and Maximian by arrangement resigned, and their places were taken by Galerius in the east and Constantius in the west.

(9) Constantius could not repeal the edicts, but practically refrained from putting them into force, and when shortly afterwards he died, he was succeeded by his son Constantine, who immediately proclaimed himself the champion of Christianity. Constantine, however, was not firmly settled on his throne in the west until a considerable amount of fighting had ended a period of confusion. Meanwhile, in the east, Galerius, the enemy of God's people, carried on the persecution with the utmost rigour. Victory, though not quite the conclusion of the struggle, came after eight years. In 311 Galerius, disillusioned and oppressed by a fatal disease, issued a repeal of the edicts of persecution, asserting that they had been conceived in an attempt to bring stability to the empire, admitting that they had failed, and calling upon the Christians to pray for him. In Asia and Syria the persecution after a brief pause was carried on by Galerius' successor Maximin, but was finally ended in 313 by Maximin's defeat by the Emperor Licinius, at the time the colleague of Constantine.

(10) Our earliest account of the great persecution comes to us from Eusebius, the church historian, who as a young man had suffered in it. Eusebius is a serious historian: there is none of the wholesale invention and legend in his pages so common in the works of mediaeval ecclesiastics. Yet

he lived in an age whose standards of criticism were far below our own, and he seems to admit that he had weighted his scales in favour of the church in the account which he gives. Consequently we may feel certain that he exaggerates. Allowing for all this, however, we can have no doubt that what took place was terrible enough. The separation of families, the break-up of home life, the brutalities, the terror, the physical suffering, or at least the fear of all these things, must have been overwhelming. Christians were swept by the thousand into prison. Many were condemned to labour in the mines of Egypt. Men, women and children were subjected to hideous torture in the presence of the magistrates. They were scalded and roasted, their limbs pulled out of joint, their flesh torn with sharp instruments. There were many who failed to stand these fearful tests and, by conforming to the order to sacrifice, relapsed into heathenism. There were many striking cases of defiance of the law on the part of the heathen in shielding their Christian friends. There may not have been quite the same note of praise for the privilege of suffering that there had been in the primitive days. The church had become sufficiently earthbound to regard her trial as a "strange" thing, and indeed as an outrage. She seems also, generally speaking, to have forgotten another of the Apostle Peter's exhortations, to follow her Lord's example of patience and gentleness. Christians, when reviled, often seem to have responded with revilings. They reproached the magistrates for their injustice and cruelty, and invoked the vengeance of God upon them. But nothing could shake the constancy of the faithful Christians as a whole. They "endured as seeing Him Who is invisible." Like Stephen of old they looked up and "saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Their sufferings and example inspired many to throw in their lot with them. The scenes of horror and the emotions stirred by them had the opposite effect from that which the authorities intended. Those watching realized that divine power sustained the sufferers, and that the hope and the experience which were considered worth the endurance of so much must be substantial indeed.

(11) A story of the persecution typical of many is that of the martyrdom of Theodosia of Tyre, and is recounted in Eusebius' *Martyrs of Palestine*. Seeing two or three Christians being examined before the magistrate, Theodosia, a girl of seventeen, herself a faithful Christian, went up to them and asked them to pray for her. She was immediately arrested and herself brought before the magistrate, who seems to have been a savage tyrant and was naturally enraged at what she had done. He ordered her to sacrifice and was met with refusal. He then ordered the application of the *ungulae*, a sharp instrument by which the flesh was scraped from the sides. Half unconscious, Theodosia declared her joy at the privilege of being allowed to suffer and to share in the witness of those who were being persecuted, and asserted her certain hope in the reward that awaited her in heaven. Finding that further torture was useless, the magistrate ordered her to be thrown into the sea, and the sentence was immediately carried out.

(12) On the publication of Galerius' edict of repeal the prisons and mines were emptied of Christians, who returned to their homes singing praises to God. We can imagine the praise meetings and the rejoicing that took place. It is probably at this time that the hymn we call the Te Deum was composed. But the persecution was not to end, as had those previous to it, in a temporary period of rest overshadowed by the fear of another outbreak. Its close introduced one of the greatest crises that has ever occurred in the history of mankind. In the year 313 two hundred and eighty years after the day of Pentecost, or possibly two hundred and eighty years after the first preaching of the Gospel to a Gentile, the church's travail came to an end. The Emperor Constantine, who, since his accession, had constituted himself the champion of the Christian church, promulgated, in

conjunction with his colleague Licinius, the famous edict of Milan, which granted toleration to all religions in the empires removed all legal disabilities upon the Christian profession and restored the losses that Christians had suffered during the great persecution. This edict was shortly followed by others which gave Christians a position of ascendancy, and had the effect of establishing the Christian religion as the only one recognised by the state. The edicts were put in force throughout the whole empire without opposition. especially as (on the death of Licinius) Constantine shortly became sole Emperor of the reunited east and west.

The Visible Church

(13) The story of the next two hundred years, so far as the Roman world and the church within its boundaries are concerned, is a story of confusion, spiritual and material. They are marked by the adaptation of the visible church as a world power to world conditions; a fierce struggle against heresy in which scriptural doctrine would have been overwhelmed if the state had not come to the aid of the church; and thirdly, the collapse and dissolution of the western Roman empire before the invasion of barbarians from the north with resultant international chaos. From this point the story of the visible church and the story of the true church part company. Not that the two bodies have ever become altogether distinct. The true church became an invisible body hidden away in, and wrapped round by, the great professing body which has ever since gone by the name of the church. The position became almost the same as it was in Old Testament days. At that time there was a nation called Israel, visible to the world, bearing God's Name, with a worship centred in the Temple in Jerusalem. But this outward Israel was not the real Israel. From the days of Moses "their blot was that they were not His children," "They do err in their hearts." The true Israel was a "remnant according to the election of grace." In the days of Moses, Joshua and Caleb alone of the spies belonged to the true Israel; in the time of Elijah there were seven thousand true to God. When our Lord was on earth, Nathaniel belonged to this remnant, for he was "an Israelite indeed." From the fourth century onwards, the situation in the church has been the same as this. There has been a large visible body known to itself and to the world as the church of Christ. But the true church has all along been the elect remnant of those who are truly born again, visible to the world not as an organisation but as individuals whose manner of life has undergone a transformation through the power of God in Christ, and who have become channels of that power to a perishing humanity.

(14) We cannot deal with the story of this true invisible church without dealing also with the background against which her story is set, and which largely gives it meaning. Many important lessons and warnings for our own time would be lost if we did not follow the great changes that came over the visible church in the two centuries that followed Constantine. As we have already seen, many present-day questions find their answer in the events of the fourth and fifth centuries. And so, for the remainder of this section, we shall try to follow these events from the point of view of the true believer living in south-western Europe during these two centuries, a period that opened with his triumphant deliverance from bitter persecution and legal emancipation in an almost intoxicating spirit of thanksgiving and joy, and that ended with his facing the problem of where to worship and with whom to associate, while he was obliged to realise that the triumph that had seemed the fulfilment of so many hopes, if not the actual coming in of the kingdom itself, had turned to dust, and that he must part company with those who claimed with all plausibility to be the successors of the Apostles, and march out into the wilderness. " Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

(15) The circumstances in which the Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity seem to have been typical of the epoch that was to follow. They seem, as we look back upon them, to have been ominous. We may discount as fabulous the story of his vision of a cross in the sky with the legend, "By this conquer." It is the sort of story that was current during the middle ages and seemed plausible to men whose minds were steeped in superstition. More credible is the possibility that Christian soldiers under his command resorted to prayer when faced with difficulty, and that he realized that an answer was given. His motives could not have been altogether those of policy, because, in spite of the influence of the church, there must still have appeared great risk in coming out freely on the Christian side, especially at a time when the invincibility of the church during the great persecution had not yet been made manifest by the result. His reasons appear to have been due more to his temperament than to anything else. He was generous and tolerant, and he may have seen in the high standard of Christian ethics a potential force of value for the future stability of the empire. This much is clear. He was far from being a converted man. He postponed his baptism until his death-bed. He could see and admire the outward organization of the church, but he was blind to spiritual realities. He was typical of the kind of Christianity that his action brought into being, unspiritual, worldly, associated with superstition and legend.

Fall of Paganism

(16) The immediate effect of the change of religion and of the recognition by the Emperor of Christianity can be imagined. The heathen priesthood, which had been organised by Diocletian in what amounted to bishoprics in imitation of the Christian model was alarmed and angry, but impotent to resist the change. It feared that the tables would be turned, and that it might itself become the object of vengeance and persecution. These fears were without foundation. The Roman aristocracy and the conservative-minded citizens objected to the change, but there was no power in their dead systems of philosophy to enable them effectually to resist it. In spite of the attempt to revive it during the reign of the Emperor Julian, who reversed the policy of the Christian Emperors, heathenism fell into decay, and before the fourth century was over, its practice had been forbidden by law. This does not mean that the heathen were converted. What happened was that the Christian church enlarged and adapted itself in order to accommodate the mass of unconverted people, and thus lost its message, its distinctive witness, its power, and its vision of its mission to a perishing world.

(17) The message of Christ is to the individual. What took place in the fourth century constituted the greatest mass-movement in all Christian history, and ought to stand for ever as a warning of the danger inherent in all so-called mass-movements. The movement was determined by the policy of the government. The court became Christian. Posts of responsibility were filled by those professing the Christian faith. A social or cultural distinction began to arise, preserved in the word "pagan," which means "village-folk," evidence that heathenism came to be regarded as the backward cult of the ignorant and uneducated. The reaction of human nature to such a state of affairs is self-evident. It became respectable to be a Christian. Therefore masses of people thronged to enter the visible Christian church. We read of occasions when the roads were crowded with candidates for baptism, waiting in white robes till their turn should come. We can understand at once what this meant. The true church is entered by a spiritual experience, an operation of the Holy Spirit in the individual heart which gives him regenerate life in response to faith in God's Word. Those who composed the mass-movement of the fourth century (and many mass-movements since) neither desired nor

possessed this experience. They never entered the true church. They entered the visible church by the outward rite of baptism, meaningless in their case (as since in so many others) because they did not possess the inward spiritual grace of which the outward rite is essentially an evidence and seal. The absence of the spiritual experience made it necessary that something should be substituted for it, which should be considered as conferring those spiritual blessings of which the church still realized she existed to be the channel. And so a subtle change took place. The rite of baptism was substituted for the spiritual experience. The inward was exchanged for the outward. Baptism itself came to be regarded as bestowing spiritual grace by a kind of magic (although no such degrading word was ever mentioned in connection with a ceremony that now came to be thought of in the light of a "sacred mystery").

(18) This change in outlook probably took place nearly universally within a single generation, although we must remember that the spiritual outlook always persisted among a minority beside it. It was easy, indeed it was, inevitable in the circumstances, because it coincided exactly with the outlook among the heathen upon the sacred heathen rites. For generations the heathen had been accustomed to the sacred mysteries of initiation by which "regeneration" in the heathen sense was conferred, and the soul became purified from guilt and fit for the select company of the initiated with the privileges and knowledge that membership of this company conferred. These rites were not always unconnected with manifestations of so-called psychic power. Christian baptism now simply took the place of the heathen rite. This is the origin of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, to which modern Romanism and Anglo-Romanism are committed, and to which many of the clergy and laity of the Church of England, not extreme Anglo-Romanists, but unconverted and ignorant of the history of the foundation of their church subscribe in a vague way today.

(19) This change of view upon baptism, effected so easily, so naturally, under the circumstances of the day, lies at the root of the whole mysterious mediaeval medley of religion, which is heathenism poured into a Christian mould and covered with a Christian veneer. Two other changes followed as logical corollaries. The first was the natural transference of the new view from the one ordinance of baptism to the other ordinance of the Lord's Supper. This, from being a simple remembrance of the Lord's death, came also to be a rite charged with "spiritual," that is to say with "magic," significance. In the ordinance as scripturally ordained and carried out, the blessing lies in the obedience to God's Word involved in partaking, and also in the illustration given to the mind of what it means to feed day by day spiritually upon the heavenly paschal Lamb. In the new conception, grace was conveyed by the actual eating and drinking of the elements themselves, a notion which by a series of logical steps led on to the full doctrine of the mass, with which we shall deal in our next section. The second result that followed from the change in view as to the meaning of baptism was equally naturally a still further substantial increase in the authority of the clergy. We have seen that even in the third century the higher clergy had attained positions which do not seem to have been provided for in the scriptural pattern. They had become rulers in the worldly sense and enjoyed worldly power and sometimes worldly wealth. This, however, was nothing to the position which the change in outlook began to confer on them, although that position did not reach its logical development for some centuries more. When the ordinances came to be put in the place of the spiritual realities of which they were rightly only the evidence and seal, the position of the church, and notably in the circumstances of the clergy, naturally changed from that of the humble channel of the grace of God conveyed through the preaching and teaching of the Word to that of the bestowers

of grace themselves. A scriptural ministry declares that God's Word promises so-and-so, and affirms that belief in that Word will meet with and find God's supply of every spiritual need. A heathen or mediaeval priesthood itself supplied grace by the performance of a visible act, and could withhold God's grace at will by the simple refusal to perform the necessary act.

(20) And so, while the heathen priesthood ostensibly fell into decay and died out, it actually lived on. Its essentials were transferred to the clergy of the Christian church, who in reality though not in name, carried on its traditions and its practices. The root of all this lay in the change of view on baptism made as a natural accompaniment of the accommodation of the unconverted within the church. The process, of course, did not stop at the point we have described. Plank after plank of the heathen structure found itself once more in its place as that structure, after being pulled down, was rebuilt as it had been on different ground. But these things will be more conveniently treated in our next section, when we shall have reached a period at which the whole transaction had become a patent historical reality.

Monasticism

(21) There is another extraordinary feature of religious life which intruded itself at this period upon the Christian church and grew during the middle ages to immense proportions. This was monasticism. Its appearance does not seem to be logically connected with the tendencies which we have just described, but may be considered as part of the general drift away from scriptural spirituality and towards paganism which characterized the Christian church in the Roman empire during the fourth and fifth centuries. We have seen that certain extreme sects, professing more or less connection with Christianity, in the earlier centuries showed leanings towards asceticism. This was the case with the Montanists, and a certain kind of asceticism easily grew from the Gnostic teaching of the evil of matter. It is difficult to understand how anyone professing obedience to the Christian Scriptures can imagine that asceticism has any place in Christian life. The New Testament asserts that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, that abstinence has no spiritual value, that celibacy and abstinence were to be characteristic of a movement away from the Truth. It reveals the Lord "going about doing good," and describes His attendance at a wedding feast, at which He performed a miracle to increase the supply of wine. If the seventh chapter of 1 Corinthians is appealed to, the most that that chapter does is to teach that, in view of the pressing urgency of the world's need for the Gospel, a man or woman would do well to abstain from marriage, if it were likely to prove a tie or hinder them from giving their best and fullest service to the work of God. The New Testament declares the excellence of the married condition and the desirability of the church's having a married clergy. Yet so great was the drift in the fourth and fifth centuries that the eyes of the church were blinded to the significance of these directions. The spread of asceticism was probably aided by the influence of the curious Manichee religion, which was founded by a Persian named Mani in the third century, and exercised great influence in the west during the fourth. It was dualistic, dividing the spiritual world into two spheres of light and darkness, and had certain features in common with Gnosticism. It possessed in addition to its ordinary adherents a small company of "elect" from whom a strict morality of abstinence was expected, to which other members of the cult were not required to conform. Here at any rate is an idea parallel to that in Romanism, which imposes upon the "religious" a special standard of holiness not supposed to be intended for lay people. Egypt was the country in which monasticism began. Its sandy deserts provided suitable solitary retreats for those who purposed to retire from the world and its

temptations to a life of contemplation, which had at least the advantage of calling forth the respect and veneration of large circles of people who visited the hermit for advice or to request his prayers and who often kept him in food. It has been remarked that the standard of life of these recluses was little below that of the poorest Egyptian peasants of the period who maintained a meagre subsistence on the edge of the desert. Egypt was in touch by way of Syria with the east, where asceticism had been an essential part of the teaching of Buddha since the seventh century B.C., and where communities of Buddhist monks and nuns existed. The absurd lengths to which hermits went were exemplified later in the notorious Simon Stylites, who spent many years on the top of a pillar. As time went on the example of the solitary anchorites and hermits was followed also by whole communities of either sex, and the system of monasticism, that has proved a blight and curse to so many lives, overspread the mediaeval church and is still with us today.

(22) An incentive to monasticism was provided in the fifth century by the distress that accompanied the barbarian invasions and the political and social chaos that followed them. The fifth century was a time that appeared to the individual Christian of the day to be nothing less than apocalyptic. The judgments of God were everywhere in evidence. In the year 410 the city of Rome itself, unviolated by a foreign foe for eight hundred years, fell before the Goths. The civilization of centuries disappeared in ruins. The church searched the prophetic Scriptures as Christians do in the great world cataclysms of today. The effect of the downfall of Rome upon those who lived through it was greater than the effect of the last great war upon ourselves. The only parallel we can imagine would be the invasion of Europe by vast armies of Japanese, the destruction of governments and the permanent occupation of much of the land by the enemy. No wonder that many men and women, some of them Christian in name but not in heart, and therefore deprived of all the spiritual consolation that the true faith provides on such occasions, decided to leave the troubled world and retire to the seclusion of the desert. The introduction of the principle of monasticism into Christianity shows to what extent the church had forgotten the great commission with which she was entrusted at the beginning of her career. Instead of going to the world with her message, she secluded herself from it. Instead of exhibiting to the world scriptural holiness through the risen life of Christ she sought a false holiness through observance and abstinence. No wonder that her voice was silenced, her candlestick taken away, and that corruption descended upon her in a sleep of centuries.

Barbarian Invasion

(23) The chaos and distress of the fifth century produced a second effect upon the fortunes of the church, which was almost the opposite to the one we have described. We have seen the Christian church, even in the third century, beginning to shape itself as a great world community. With the increase of the power of the clergy this process rapidly developed during the fourth century. Thus, when the empire, and with it the central government of the western world, collapsed before the barbarian invasions early in the fifth century, the church found herself by force of circumstances driven as far as possible into the place from which the empire had disappeared. The clergy began to appear as the champions of civilization against chaos: and the church came to be looked upon as the one remaining link with the world that was past, and as gathering into itself all that it was possible to preserve of a culture that was gone. The church was stable in a world of change and anarchy. Thus, not only did the church represent Roman civilization and come to be identified with it as opposed to barbarian ignorance and crudity, but she seized the opportunity in a practical sense to

step forward and take up the reins of authority that had fallen from the Caesar's hands. In the middle of the fifth century when Attila the Hun had been ravaging Europe, and it was feared that he intended to make a descent upon Rome, it was Leo, the able and energetic Bishop of Rome, who was sent to northern Italy to interview Attila and to attempt, by bribery or persuasion, to dissuade him from his plans. Whether or not it was due to the effect that the bishop had upon him, Attila did not come, and the bishop scored a distinct success. We can well imagine how all this confusion, spiritual, political and social, must have bewildered the mind of the humble Christian of the fifth century. He would find the worldly preoccupations of the clergy, the crowd of unconverted professors, the increasing ritual and ostentation of worship, becoming less and less satisfying to his spirit. Spiritual fellowship would become rarer and rarer. He would scarcely know where to turn. Gradually, as we have seen, the true church set her face towards the wilderness, there, as it were, marvellously to be preserved by her Lord, until in the latter days the time should again be ripe for her work and witness.

Formulation of Doctrine

(24) There is another sphere in which confusion nearly obtained the upper hand during the fourth and fifth centuries, the sphere of theology. Indeed, it must have reigned supreme if the arm of the state had not been there to avert such an occurrence. When the church became an institution of the state, the forces of the state were used on the side of orthodoxy. It was to the interest of the state that the church should be a unity. During the fourth and fifth centuries the church set herself to be orthodox in the intellectual sense. It is only to be expected that in a world where confusion reigned the sphere of the intellectual could not escape. Consequently the church was assailed during these two centuries by a series of speculative heresies, which drove her to formulate her doctrine and leave it for future generations in summary shape. This was the age when the great creeds and formulae were composed. In other words, the church wisely considered it necessary that her members should *subscribe to a basis*. In this she was in the same position as Evangelical societies today, and she adopted the same course as they have done and for the same reason. We live today in an age of confusion of thought, and we are assailed by all sorts of speculative theories. Just as we have adopted bases to clarify our position, so did the church of the fourth century.

(25) The heresies that the church faced in the fourth and fifth centuries were rather different than those that had arisen in the second. The later ones with which we are at present concerned were by contrast heresies of interpretation. They mostly professed to base themselves upon Scripture and declared that the orthodox interpretation was incorrect. They resembled, roughly speaking, errors like Russellism, Seventh-Day Adventism, or Christadelphianism, in the sense that these profess to be interpreting the Scripture rightly as opposed to orthodox Evangelicalism. While they lasted, however, they were far larger in numbers and influence than these sects are today. It is fortunately beyond our scope to enter into an account of these heresies in detail. Our aim is to notice the effects that their appearance had upon the main stream of Christian doctrine. Generally speaking, in the east the questions at issue had to do with the nature and Person of Christ, in the west with the subjects of sin and salvation. The most important was the heresy of Arius, who denied the doctrine of the Trinity, and taught that the Son, though pre-existent to the incarnation, was originally a created being. The question was fiercely debated at the Council of Nicaea, called by the Emperor for the purpose in the year 325. The champion of the scriptural doctrine was Athanasius, then a young man, who maintained the struggle throughout a long life during which he experienced many

vicissitudes. In spite of the great strength and influence of Arianism, the orthodox doctrine prevailed after two or three generations, and Arianism died out of the empire after the exclusion of its adherents. It remained, however, flourishing among the barbarians until the eighth century, being the established religion of the Gothic and Lombard kingdoms, which were among those that arose from the ruins of the empire. The Arian kingdoms were finally destroyed by the pope and the King of the Franks.

(26) Then there were the disputes in the Greek East (for the empire after the death of Constantine was again divided into two, the eastern centre being at Constantinople) over the nature and Person of Christ. Were there two Persons in one Christ? If there were two natures, what was their mutual relationship? These disputes passed on into the fifth century. Others arising from them continued much longer and must be mentioned in our next section. As we have seen, these intellectual controversies forced the church to put down her beliefs in creeds and formulae, and this is the substantial advantage to future generations which their appearance brought. Another great effect that they produced was the separation of the churches of the east and of the west, a fact of importance for the history of the future.

Augustine, Bishop of Hippo

(27) In the west these centuries produced the Donatist movement, which was a kind of Montanism, fanatical and given to ascetic practices, and represented a sort of protest against the secularization of the church and its connection with the state. The Donatists grew to large numbers and set up a rival hierarchy of bishops, but were finally suppressed by the aid of the state. For about fifty years covering the second half of the fourth Century a movement somewhat similar, arising from the teaching of a layman named Priscillian, agitated the churches in Spain. The leaders of this movement were beheaded at the request of the orthodox bishops in spite of protests from Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and others. Their teaching has been disputed by their enemies: but it seems that they were no more than a scriptural company protesting against the teachings of the day. More important was the conflict with Pelagius, a British monk, who denied original sin and taught that it was possible for individuals to live without sin and thus to merit salvation and that there were cases in which this had taken place. The great champion of the orthodox faith in the western church in the last decades of the fourth century and the opening ones of the fifth was Augustine, Bishop of Hippo. He was a man of deep spiritual experience, some of which he reveals in his *Confessions*, and of great intellectual power. He combated both Donatists and Pelagians. Against the former he set forth a view of the church which cannot be said to be scriptural, to which the mediaeval hierarchy looked as a basis for their claims to world power and, what is more important still, their monstrous practices of persecution. Against the Pelagians, Augustine stood for the scriptural and Pauline view of salvation. He expounded original sin, moral guilt, predestination and salvation by the grace of God exercised by His sovereign power effectually towards those who are saved. This side of Augustine's teaching, being thoroughly scriptural, was misunderstood or neglected by the middle ages, and was not taken full advantage of until the Reformation. The downfall of Rome and the general political chaos formed the background for Augustine's great work, *The City of God*.

(28) The establishment of Christianity in the Roman empire had effects beyond that empire's frontiers. We saw that Christian communities sprang up all over the Parthian kingdom, to the east of the Euphrates, and that evangelisation was carried on by them in the far east. The Christians in these

regions had enjoyed comparative quiet, but this was now changed. In the year 277 a Persian dynasty, the famous Sassanids occupied the throne of Parthia. They maintained the hostility with Rome, inflicting one or two serious defeats upon the Roman armies. As soon as Christianity became established in the empire, it came to be regarded with hostility by the Persian kings, who looked upon it as the religion of their traditional foe. The result was that in the fourth century a fierce persecution broke out against the Christian churches in Persia, lasting forty years. The believers' sufferings were appalling, but the churches survived the ordeal. Bishops from the west intervened with the Persian kings to help the Christians and thus forged links between themselves and the eastern churches. The result was that the Persian communities altered their primitive modes of organization and fell into line with the church of the west in adopting the hierarchical system and raising the higher clergy to positions of eminence. Thus at the close of the fifth century after Christ we see the visible church throughout the world departing a long way from the model which Scripture had laid down, her heart lured away from her Master by the attractions of power and wealth, her mind occupied with intellectual speculation, her commission forgotten and her guide-book disregarded. Is our own generation ignorant of all these things? Can it discern the signs and hear the warnings that they provide?

Bibliography

Gibbon (E.) : as before, chaps. xx, xxi, xxviii and xxxvii.

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III

THE ENEMY IN THE SANCTUARY

A.D. 500-800

(1) We have followed in our last section the spiritual decline that took place in the visible church from the time that it was established as the state religion of the Roman Empire. In this section, which will cover the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, we shall see that decline brought to its logical conclusion one important tendency. First, however, it will be useful to look at the great expansion of the church which took place during these three centuries. When the period of confusion which we have described was past, missionary activity was resumed. It was not quite the same sort of missionary activity as that of which we read in the Acts of the Apostles, nor as that which took place in the primitive days. How could it have been? The church was tainted with worldliness, monasticism, increasing heathen corruption and lack of spirituality. Where she carried the Gospel, she carried also the marks of these things. She lost her sense of the importance of individual conversion and concentrated upon mass-movement. In spite of all this, however, knowledge of the Gospel to a greater or less degree was spread, and the opportunity of hearing the Saviour's Name and of reading the Scriptures was brought to many thousands.

(2) This expansion went on in several parts of the world. One of the most remarkable eras of missionary work was inaugurated at the beginning of this period by the churches outside the frontier of the eastern Roman Empire to the east. In the middle of the fifth century Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, had become involved in the Christological controversies which we mentioned in the last section. He was degraded and finally excommunicated by the orthodox party, and several of those who had been associated with him fled over the frontier into Persia and gave themselves to the work of strengthening the Christian churches there. This is the reason for the name Nestorian being given to these churches. The name contains a double fallacy. They had never been associated with Nestorius himself. Moreover, neither Nestorius himself nor these churches of the east believed or taught the special unscriptural doctrines about the Person of Christ which were attributed to them by the majority party and implied in the name Nestorian. The activity of these churches was not affected by the false name, which served if anything to keep them separate from the church of the empire and so turned out to be an advantage.

(3) We have seen that in quite early days the churches of Parthia had evangelised the far east. There does not seem to be evidence as to the survival of those primitive churches in the sixth century. Whether some of them were still in existence or not, the so-called Nestorians followed in the steps of their predecessors and reached as far China in the east, Siberia in the north and Ceylon in the south. By the eighth century there was at least one bishopric in China, there were Christians in Samarcand and along all the great trade routes to the east. Some of the churches in South India survive today, some in Ceylon were in existence in the fourteenth century, and it seems that many in Central Asia existed as long. Here and there, over the far east, inscriptions have been found which bear testimony to the activity of these missionaries. A Chinese document dating from the middle ages, which referred to them, was known to Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China. The churches in Persia were naturally weakened by the Moslem conquest in the seventh century, but the rise of Islam did not greatly affect these eastern churches as a whole. Their decay was due to the

seeds of corruption which had been sown by their founders in the same soil as the seed of the Word, and they almost all perished during the era of deadness that overspread Christianity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with which we shall deal in a later section.

Irish Missions

(4) The second stream of expansion at which we must glance started from the opposite quarter of the known world. In every generation it has been true that God has not left Himself without witness. While the civilization of Europe was perishing in confusion, overrun by the heathen from the north, there was an island in the west, isolated from the catastrophic events taking place on the continent, where the Christian church was free to develop in peace. This was Ireland. During the sixth and seventh centuries it could almost be said that Ireland was the only place in Europe where conditions of stability existed. We know nothing of the origin of this far-flung activity that broke out from Ireland during the sixth and seventh centuries. It appeared as a revival appears. The Gospel had reached Ireland in the third century, and during the following three hundred years had an extensive church grown up. The country was christianised and in close touch with the Welsh Christianity of Britain. It may be that the missionary activity of Ireland was stimulated by the invasion of Britain by the heathen English in the fifth century, and their settlement there, while they drove the British Christians into the mountains of the west. Corruption had made its way into the Irish church. Centralization was firmly established there, and there was a certain amount of monasticism. But the Irish monasteries when first established were little more than mission stations. They were enclosed with wails, not for religious purposes so much as for protection. The inmates were free to marry if they wished, and these stations were centres of active evangelisation among the heathen around. Irish missionaries established centres on many of the western islands of Scotland, the most notable being Iona. They spread to Scotland and the north of England, where they regained much ground for Christianity, but they did not stop there. They passed over to the continent, and the wild forests of heathen Germany and the mountains of central Europe became dotted with mission stations founded by Irish monks. Two of the best known are Bobbio and St. Gall, the latter, in north-eastern Switzerland, founded by the Irishman Gallus. As the middle ages advanced, these mission stations lost whatever scriptural simplicity they may have possessed at their foundation, and were absorbed into the full monastic system. The numerous superstitious legends that grew up around the activities of St. Columba and his followers, impossible tales of absurd miracles in true mediaeval style, need not prevent our believing that a real and widespread work of evangelisation was done by these early Irishmen, whose church, so long it was possible, maintained a healthy opposition to the claims of the Bishop of Rome.

(5) As soon as the barbarian invaders of the Empire began to settle down in the new kingdoms of western Europe into which the empire had split up, and the confusion which the fifth century had brought into all spheres of life showed signs of abating, the church of western Europe, now firmly settled under the overlordship of the Bishop of Rome, as we shall see shortly, began to take its share in the expansion that was going on. This was done by means of the planting of Benedictine monasteries among the heathen Germans of northern Europe. The Benedictine order had been founded by Benedict of Nursia towards the beginning of the sixth century, and his rule directed his monks rather away from pure contemplation to a life of practical activity. The Benedictine establishments were real monasteries, not semi-monastic mission stations as was the case with those founded by the Irish. They introduced Latin culture to the heathen and proved refuges for learning

during the barbarian age. They were active agents in the spiritual subjection of the surrounding districts to the authority of the Bishop of Rome. But of evangelisation in the scriptural sense we may say they did little or none.

(6) Naturally, as they spread northwards, the Roman missionaries came into collision with the Celtic. On the continent the latter were too weak to resist absorption, but in England a struggle took place. In the last decade of the sixth century Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, sent Augustine to christianise the heathen kingdom of Kent. He settled at Canterbury and seems to have had little difficulty in persuading the heathen king of the superior advantages of Christian civilization and of bringing about a mass subjection of the kingdom of Kent to the Roman church. Gregory and Augustine intended that this should be the first step in the christianisation of the whole island, and in the subjection of those parts which were already Christian to the authority of Rome. The Welsh had been Christian for generations, and the Irish missionaries had recaptured for the faith the kingdom of Northumbria, which extended from the Humber to the Forth. Augustine, therefore, sought contact with the British bishops. A dispute ensued which most chroniclers connect with the date of the keeping of Easter, but which obviously hung on far wider issues. The Synod of Whitby, by a majority, decided in favour of Rome, and the British bishops were obliged to give way. Ostensibly the authority of the Bishop of Rome extended over the whole island, but recent discoveries have shown that the resistance of the Celtic church was far greater than had been thought, and that Celtic ways and influences persisted in the north of England far into the middle ages.

(7) By the close of the eighth century we can say, then, that the Name of Christ was known throughout the world from Ireland in the west in an unbroken line, through Scotland and England, south-western Europe, Italy, the eastern Mediterranean Asia Minor, Persia, Central Asia to China, India and Ceylon. If this is so, how is it that it was necessary for the Protestant missionaries of the nineteenth century to start out to evangelise many of these regions afresh, and that so many of them are regarded as recently evangelised fields? What we have said already provides a partial answer. The remainder of this section and those to come will give the explanation. The question that matters more than any other is whether present-day missions will understand and take warning.

Rise of Papacy

(8) We have now to trace to its conclusion the rise of a phenomenon whose appearance and persistence is one of the most startling things in the strange history of the Christian church. Even back in the third century, the manner of life of a bishop such as Paul of Samosata must have raised questions in the mind of one acquainted with the New Testament. There we read that the Son of man had not where to lay His head, and that He said to His disciples, "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." We have watched the growth in influence, power and worldly wealth of the higher clergy in defiance of the New Testament ideal and direction. The three centuries under review in this section show the logical outcome of this concentration of power in the hands of a few men, the rise to supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome.

(9) We have already noticed the activities in the middle of the fifth century of Leo the Great, and his successful attempt to avert the invasion of Attila. This man had the vision which was fulfilled in the popes of the middle ages. He saw himself and his successors as the heads of Christendom, stepping into the place of the Roman Emperor, rulers of the new kingdom which the unscriptural outlook of

the day (and of many a day since) supposed that God had set up in this world. Leo was the first Bishop of Rome to claim to be the successor of the Apostle Peter. This pretension has been woven into the foundation of the papal claims and is supported by a distorted interpretation of the Lord's words to Peter recorded in Matt. xvi. 18. There is no certain evidence that Peter was ever in Rome. Though there is a sentence in his own writings that is most easily explained by supposing that he was, another explanation is possible, and there are many difficulties in the way of the conclusion that he was there. The period of his supposed bishopric in Rome is not thought to have ended till some years after the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans was written. In this epistle is a long list of Christians in Rome to whom greetings were to be given. This list must include either those with whom the Apostle Paul was acquainted or the most prominent members of the church, perhaps some of both; but the name of the Apostle Peter is not included. It seems most difficult to believe he was there. The truth or otherwise of his residence in Rome will never be settled unless contemporary evidence comes to hand. However that may be, the claim to represent the Apostle Peter served the popes well when it was first made and has served them well since.

(10) We have seen how the circumstances of the fifth century forced the organised church into the position of guardian and representative of the civilization that was falling. During the sixth century the Bishops of Rome consciously set themselves to attain to the supreme position of authority in the church. They did so by the forging and fabrication of documents, easily palmed off upon an uncritical age, in which false evidence was produced to prove that, from the beginning, the popes had legislated for the whole church. Augustine was appealed to, but falsely, to prove that the Apostle Peter had been in a position of primacy among the other Apostles. A contemporary anonymous work in which it was asserted that the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome had been declared by supernatural means was palmed off as the work of Dionysius the Areopagite, one of the Apostle Paul's converts at Athens, mentioned in Acts xvii. Meanwhile the activities of the popes became more and more political. They engaged in constant intrigues for or against the eastern Emperor at Constantinople. As a result the desired supremacy came to be confirmed and recognised by legal enactment. A decree to this effect was issued by the Emperor Justinian in the year 538. Rather more than fifty years after this Gregory the Great became Bishop of Rome. We have already met him as the one who dispatched Augustine of Canterbury to England. He was an able, large-minded man, whose interests seem really to have been as much religious as political. An incident with which he was connected is significant and interesting. The Patriarch John of Constantinople assumed the title of "universal bishop." The perennial jealousy between the ecclesiastics in Rome and Constantinople makes it far from surprising that this should have roused Gregory's ire. The interesting part of his angry rebuke is one of the statements made in it. He said that the very fact that a bishop should dare to assume such a title made it clear that the time of antichrist was close at hand. Three years after his death the Emperor Phocas, who was on good terms with the popes because of the support they had given to his accession attained by the murder of his predecessor, issued a set of decrees declaring Gregory's successors to be the universal heads of Christendom and the ordinary of all men, without obedience to whom no one could be saved.

(11) Thus the spiritual supremacy of the popes was consolidated. The eighth century brought them its complement, the position of temporal rulers. The dependence of the popes upon the Byzantine Emperors had grown less and less, as the Emperors became more and more involved in the east and relaxed their designs upon Italy. In the middle of the eighth century, in return for the pope's support

in his accession to the throne, Pepin, the new King of France, overthrew the last Arian kingdom, that of the Lombards, and presented territory in central Italy to the pope. The papal states, though at first their boundaries shifted from time to time, continued to be ruled directly by the pope until 1870 and, by every testimony, were the most miserable and shockingly misruled section of Europe. An attempt was made to gain the consent of the Byzantine Emperor to this transaction and to deceive the world by the production of a forgery known as the *Donation of Constantine*, which claimed to be a document drawn up over four hundred years earlier by the Emperor Constantine presenting territory in Italy to the Bishop of Rome. The western world believed in the genuineness of this document for many generations.

(12) By the eighth century we find, therefore, that the supremacy of a single man was finally established over the visible church of Christ. There is no palliation of this fact as there might have been, had this rule been either merciful or spiritual. It was a despotism of the most oppressive kind. Any sign of insubordination or disobedience to the pope was punishable by death and torture in this world, and, in intention, by everlasting torment in the next. A slavery of thought and conscience was established. No man might question the dogmas of the papal church. Individuals were liable to excommunication and whole kingdoms to interdict. Excommunication carried with it disabilities in the present world, because it cut its victim off from social and commercial intercourse. Interdict prevented the normal religious rites from being carried on, and played upon the superstitious fears of the inhabitants. Thought and education were discouraged, and indeed, compared with our own age, may be said to have been non-existent. Already in the tenth century we find the papal court corrupted by flagrant vices, a condition of affairs which was normal throughout the middle ages, and aroused protest within the church. The wealth of the European countries was severely fleeced in order to fill the papal coffers to provide for the lavish luxury of the court at Rome, the large sums spent in bribery and corruption, and the amounts consumed upon political intrigue. Persecution was constantly used to keep down freedom of expression of any sort, and in a later section we shall see something of this horrible side of ecclesiastical activity at its height. The triple tiara was assumed by the popes, so far as is known, in the seventh or eighth century. Its origin is lost in obscurity. Some suppose that it commemorates the victories over the three Arian kingdoms. For centuries it has been associated with the threefold title assumed by each pope at his coronation, "father of kings and princes, ruler of the world, and vicar of Jesus Christ." The arrogance of the first two titles is equalled only by the blasphemy of the third, by which a man assumes the place on earth which belongs only to the Holy Spirit of God. A review of the power and pretensions of the mediaeval papacy excites amazement. The thought that all this cruelty, oppression and vice were carried on in the Name of the Jesus Christ of the New Testament makes one wonder whether the depravity of man is subject to any limit, or his reason capable of blinding itself to the most palpable deductions and the most patent facts.

(13) Well might the scattered remnants of God's flock during the middle ages ask, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Is His mercy clean gone for evermore?" But God had not forgotten. As we look back upon the mystery of those long dark ages, we can discern, among others, three possible threads in the permissive purpose of God as it unfolded itself century by century. The first purpose is that of warning. Away back in the third century, or possibly even earlier than that, we saw that the church of Christ took steps which set her in a course that led her by degrees along a logical sequence to the final development in the papacy. And so the whole dread mystery teaches us that a

single step away from the Word of God may lead in time to a logical consequence more dreadful than the most far-seeing could come near to conceiving. If such a warning were ever needed, it is needed in the days in which we live. The second purpose is that of testing. If we allow the necessity, so clearly taught in Scripture, of any trial of faith at all, we cannot logically suppose that such a process need stop short of the severest lengths to which it is possible for it to go. In the condition of affairs in the middle ages we see every inducement that it is possible to imagine combining to make resistance to papal authority as difficult as anything could be. Every material consideration forbade it, for it entailed every sorrow and every torment that the body of man could suffer without hope of relief. In the sphere of the mind and spirit there is no plausible argument that can be devised which was not brought into play to convince the reason that the pope and his church must be listened to and obeyed. There may well have seemed to be no flaw in the historical continuity which appeared to connect them in direct descent with the Apostles. Lastly, in regard to the things of the spirit, the ecclesiastical authorities had the means of playing upon the deepest and most sacred feelings of the heart and of prostituting the most sacred instincts of man in the service of tyranny and oppression. In the third place, this great mystery of the past becomes to us, who contemplate it from the safe distance of our modern age, a reason for assurance, comfort and thanksgiving. If God brought His church safely through such an ordeal as that, an ordeal long drawn out, as fierce as can be imagined, in the midst of which the situation can only have appeared as hopeless, there is nothing through which He cannot bring her and will not bring her in the end.

Rise of Islam

(14) It has been necessary during the last few paragraphs to anticipate in order to draw out the final conclusions to which the aspirations of the Bishops of Rome in the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries led. We must now return to those centuries and look at the opportunities for martyrdom that they provided. At the beginning of the seventh century there arose unexpectedly a danger that might have overwhelmed the whole Christian church. In distant Arabia, which had not been christianised, the false prophet Mohammed imposed his religion upon a people who were stirred by it to excesses of fanatical zeal. In 632 the Saracen armies burst out of the peninsula to impose their faith upon an infidel world. The Byzantine empire was engaged in a struggle with the Persians, and both were weakened for this cause. Syria and Palestine fell to the Saracens in seven years and Egypt almost as quickly. Later Persia was subjugated, and during the second half of the century the Saracens swept through north Africa as far as the Atlantic, and in the year 710 crossed into Spain. The sudden rise of Islam, and the almost equally sudden cessation of the conquering career of the Arab armies that first propagated it, can only be explained as a judgment and a providence of God. The puritanical strain in Mohammedanism, which abhors idols, and the white-hot enthusiasm of its devotees, came as a rebuke and condemnation to the decadent and corrupt Christian church. Islam remains today, and it is a solemn thought that it constitutes a standing reminder of the departure from scriptural standards of those who professed Christ's Name.

(15) Everywhere the new religion was imposed at the point of the sword. The choice for all lay between conversion and death. The majority of Christians, to their honour, seem to have preferred death to betrayal of their profession. The churches of north Africa were wiped out of existence, and, with the exception of a few individuals hardly won by the devoted labour of Protestant missionaries during the last two generations, that region has never been regained.

Persecution by the Church

(16) It is during these centuries, as the visible church went farther and farther from the scriptural pattern and became more and more distinct from the true church, that there begin to appear traces of the communities of true believers keeping themselves separate from the great worldly church. Thus, in the seventh century, we find in the Taurus mountains companies known as Paulicians. No one knows why they were called by this name. They seem to have been people who determined to preserve scriptural simplicity in worship and practice, and to have been among the earliest known of those who protested against the corruption of the visible church and who continued in an unbroken line until the Reformation. In our next section we shall discuss them more fully. At present it is our purpose to see how the visible church resorted to persecution at this comparatively early stage of its career as the partner of the state. In the west, persecution broke out as early as the fourth century against Priscillian and his followers in Spain. The church called in the aid of the state to deal with "heretics." During the three centuries with which the present section deals there seems to have been no persecution in the west for the simple reason that there was no one in evidence to be the object of it. The general corruption was so great that none had the knowledge, or possibly the courage, to take a stand for the scriptural position. It has sometimes been said that the Greek church of the east differed from the Roman in the respect that she did not persecute. This is untrue. While her annals are unstained by such unspeakable horrors as filled page after page of the later mediaeval history of the west, in the early days, when communities arose within reach of her arm which had the courage to differ from her teaching and to refuse recognition to her hierarchy, she used the functions of the state to repress them ruthlessly. Thus in the year 684 the Byzantine Emperor issued an order for the execution of Constantine, a Paulician teacher. The general who was sent to stone him was himself converted when he saw the faithfulness and piety of these Christians. Later, the Emperor Justinian II, at the request of the ecclesiastical authorities, had a large company, including Simeon the converted general, burnt alive at the same time. This action had the opposite effect from that intended, for the courage of the martyrs was the means of the conversion of many to their faith. Until the accession of the Emperor Leo the Isaurian in the middle of the eighth century, the persecution and the suffering continued.

(17) We must now deal with a development that reached fulfillment during these three centuries, which it is necessary to understand in order to realise the extent and nature of the great unceasing conflict of the Christian age between the true church and the devil, and which has important bearings upon the day in which we ourselves are living. We have traced to its conclusion the wrong road taken by the visible church in temporal things, a road which ended in the exaltation of a visible head of the church as supreme ruler, and we may remind ourselves in passing that this phenomenon was prevented from reaching full fruition in the east by the continued presence of a Byzantine Emperor until the fifteenth century. If this had not been the case, there would have been nothing to restrain the metropolitan of Constantinople from aspiring to the position of pope, and it may well have been that internecine wars would have destroyed the whole visible structure of Christianity during the early middle ages. In our second section we noticed the spiritual changes that took place in the church as the result of her establishment in the fourth century, changes which were inevitable under the circumstances, and which reflected the accommodation of large numbers of unconverted people. We saw that the foundation of what occurred was the substitution of the heathen for the Christian and the resultant alteration in the view of view of baptism, the Lord's Supper and in the

position of the clergy. Logically, the development might have stopped there, but it did not. The influx of unconverted heathen into the church not only transformed the Christian ministry into a heathen priesthood, but brought into Christian worship the whole gamut of heathen ritual and heathen symbolism, until the mediaeval church became a museum of almost every phase of heathen idolatry that had arisen in the world. Our minds should be clear on the fact that in the mediaeval church there was a twofold corruption, the secular which turned the ministry into temporal rulers with a supreme head, and the spiritual which brought heathen worship, and we may add heathen morals, into Christianity. There seems to be no necessary direct logical connection between these two developments, unless it lies in the fact that the clergy could retain their hold over the minds and consciences of the people at large only by the fascination of a sensuous and ornate ritual.

Primitive Worship

(18) The primitive worship of the church was scriptural and of the simplest kind. In apostolic days Sunday, the day of the Lord's resurrection, replaced the Jewish sabbath as the day on which Christians usually met. As many members as possible of a local church came together and ate together a common meal, in the middle of which the bread and cup of remembrance were passed round while all stood in reverent silence. In sub-apostolic days the Christians met on Sunday morning, inviting the heathen to attend. The Scriptures were read and expounded, this earnest preaching of the Word proving by its results to have been a fruitful soul-winning ministry. After this, the heathen were asked to leave, and the meeting was thrown open to prayer, the presiding minister, apparently, generally leading with prayers that perhaps in most churches were liturgical, that is to say, set prayers. Any other man in the congregation might then lead in extempore prayer. If only our churches of today would adopt this simple combination of liturgical and extempore prayer during worship! After this the catechumens, whose presence had been welcomed at the prayer-meeting, were asked to leave, and those who had given evidence of their conversion by confessing Christ in baptism remained to partake of the memorial of the Lord's death. An account of this service given by Justin Martyr in the second century, in which he tells us that the deacons carried the bread and wine to those unable to be present, has been adduced as evidence that the "sacrament" was "reserved" in sub-apostolic days. This plea reads the theology of later times into primitive practice. The bread and wine were no more reserved by the early Christians than they are today by those who replace half a bottle of wine in a cupboard to wait for the following Sunday. There is no "reservation" where there is no "consecration" in the mediaeval sense, because there is nothing to "reserve." The early Christians simply emphasised the unity of all their company in wishing those detained from being present at worship to share the memorial feast literally in a touching and simple way.

(19) This was still the simple worship carried on in the prisons and labour-camps during the great persecution under Diocletian and Galerius. But following upon the changes we have already noticed in the fourth century a fundamental alteration took place. We shall treat of these heathen characteristics brought over into Christianity under four heads. First comes the change in outlook about the place of worship. We have seen that unscriptural ideas crept in almost from the moment when Christian worship ceased to be informal and the government allowed the erection of buildings for the specific purpose of worship. At first we can well imagine that these buildings were dedicated, a perfectly scriptural procedure. When heathenism came in, the churches were no longer dedicated but consecrated - that is to say, a particular service containing a particular form of words

pronounced by a high ecclesiastic was held in them, after which they were considered as being "holy" ground, places in which it was indecorous to carry on any activity but the liturgical or normal worship of the church. This is, in Christian shape, simply heathen magic conferring sanctity by a formula upon something material. It overspread the mediaeval church and is rampant in Romanism and Anglo-Romanism today. We often read of bishops "blessing" water, ships, motor-cars, aeroplanes and other objects. It survives in Protestantism in the narrowness and exclusiveness of the uses permitted to church buildings, causing waste of money and space in the erection of "church halls," where every other activity but worship must be carried on, as well as, for example, in the fact that a man takes off his hat on entering a church, simply because he is entering it, irrespective of whether worship is proceeding or not, and not only for the purpose of taking part in worship in which use such an action is scriptural. An immediate and surviving result of this view of church buildings has been that the heathen sense of religious mystery hangs about them, thus generating a force which exerts a powerful influence on the mind of the masses.

(20) The changed conception of the church building involved the shape of the building itself. Churches were first built with a view to conference. Later they were built in certain shapes because they always had been and because everything connected with the church, including its shape, became involved in the false sanctity which hung about it. Churches in the west have always normally been built in the shape of the Roman basilica, which was the name of any large hall intended for gatherings for public purposes, and contained a nave and two side-aisles. Since heathen ideas became associated with them, they have normally been built with the "sanctuary" towards the east, and the magical sanctity has attached especially to the east end for reasons which will fall into the scope of our next section. Again we have seen that, even in the third century, a certain ostentation was apparent in Christian churches, at any rate those in the large cities. After the establishment there was added to this ostentation the unnecessary ornamentation of the interior. Money, which in a scriptural church would be spent on the propagation of the Gospel and the care of the poor, was used instead in the accumulation of costly paintings and rich mosaics. Biblical and other scenes were carved upon walls and screens, and ornamented sarcophagi appeared in and around the buildings. The principal use of sculpture we reserve for treatment in a later paragraph.

Observance of Festivals

(21) The second heathen characteristic that was transplanted into Christianity during the fourth century was the observance of festivals and sacred days. In apostolic times the first day of the week was set aside for Christian worship. This was simply obedience to the fourth commandment adapted from Jewish to Christian uses. Before the fourth century it seems that special significance was given annually to the season of the Lord's death and resurrection. This might have been harmless, and in any case was natural. Now one of the most prominent features of heathenism was the observance of sacred festivals recurring at set times of the year, such as the spring festival, known in Greece as the Great Dionysia, the festival of the summer solstice, and the winter festival, known in Rome as the Saturnalia, which commenced on the 17th of December, lasted nearly a fortnight, and was characterized by the mutual giving and receiving of presents among relatives and friends. All these festivals were occasions when riot and immorality were always encouraged and occasionally organised by the religious authorities. Primitive Christians endured much suffering as a result of their resolute refusal of contact with these feasts. One would have imagined that the known danger to morals which these festivals provided would have been sufficient warning to the church of the

fourth and fifth centuries. Further, one would have imagined that acquaintance with such Scriptures as I Kings xii. 32, 33 or Galatians iv. 9-11 would have confirmed the church in the attitude of their primitive forefathers. Yet, so great were the corruption and blindness of the times, that the heathen festivals came to be incorporated bodily into the Christian church and clothed in a Christian dress. As the church expanded during the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries over northern Europe and the east, these festivals were carried with it as a normal part of its worship. In northern Europe the winter Yule feast, corresponding to the Saturnalia, was observed by all the Teutonic nations with the symbolism of log and fir-tree. It is still observed today, though only a small minority of those who observe it are acquainted with its nature and origin. Its transference wholesale with other similar festivals into Christianity made the christianisation of these nations less difficult and more convenient.

The Sacred Calendar

(22) In addition to the great festivals, the various deities of heathenism each enjoyed days in the year which were specially sacred to them. These days also became incorporated in what has been known since as "the church's calendar." This happened by the alteration of the names of the deities into the names of Christian martyrs who had suffered under the pagan empires. On the triumphant ending of the great persecution in the early fourth century it was natural and right that those who had given their lives in this and previous persecutions should be honoured by those who survived. It was not right that the honour shown should go to the lengths that it did. The tombs of the martyrs were turned into shrines and sanctuaries, and the dates of their martyrdom turned into sacred days. These dates must have been numerous, and many of them must have coincided with the sacred days of heathen gods. In such cases a simple change of the name of the being honoured was all that was necessary. When heathen days existed for which no martyrs were available, martyrs at a later date were invented. But the whole process was so clumsily undertaken that the origin of some of the new saints was not even concealed by a change of name. In the month of October when the vintage was gathered there had taken place from time immemorial the festival of the wine god. The Latin name of this deity was Bacchus. In Greece his name was Dionysus, and there were legends current of how on his had Dionysus way to Greece through Macedonia married the daughter of King Demetrius, whose name was the Gentle Breeze. In Latin the words meaning "gentle breeze" are Aura Placida. In view of this it is surprising to those who do not look below the surface to realise that in the calendar of the Roman church at the present day the names Bacchus, Denis (that is, Dionysus), Demetrius, Aurea and Placidus all occur in October within a few days of each other.

(23) The mention of the martyrs and of their sacred days leads us, by a natural transition, to the third characteristic of the heathen system that came over into Christianity and was developed so fully during the three centuries with which our present section deals. This was the interposition of a whole host of mediatory beings between the soul and God. The saints and martyrs among whom the Apostles and other New Testament characters naturally took a prominent place, the remainder being, as we have seen, re-christened heathen gods, came to be regarded as in a position in the other world to hear prayer and to intercede with the Father or Christ for those who desired any petition. The most prominent of these new gods and goddesses was the Virgin Mary. She took the place of the heathen "queen of heaven," under which name she is worshiped in the Roman church today, and assumed the characteristics and prerogatives of one or other of the heathen virgin goddesses. The growing asceticism and monasticism of the age played an important part in her elevation, as her

virginity was considered to be itself something of particular sanctity. It has been pointed out that her cult, her pictures and her statues provided a subtle if half-conscious appeal to the sexual instincts of her male devotees. In the fifth century she was referred to widely as "Mother of God," a title, in the Greek east rendered by the single epithet *theotokos*, which played a considerable part in the Christological controversies of these centuries. We do not hear later than the fourth century of anyone not regarded as heretical who believed or taught that Mary had children by Joseph, a fact implied in more than one New Testament passage. It was during these three centuries that the legend of her perpetual virginity passed into the dogma of the visible church. It should be remembered that the mediaeval church, as does the Roman church today, drew a technical distinction between the *worship* of God and the *adoration* of the Virgin, saints and angels. This distinction has never passed for much in practice, and its emptiness is at once seen when we remember that the Latin word for "worship" is *adoratio*. Later we shall consider these developments at their height, and notice the inevitable influence that they exerted upon doctrine.

Worship of Images

(24) The fourth heathen feature adopted by the Christian church during these centuries is so startling, that its very existence provides evidence that the Scriptures were forgotten and the illumination of the Holy Spirit extinguished in the visible church. This was the transplanting of the system of the erection and veneration of images from the heathen temple to the Christian church. This system had been inherent in heathenism from the early days of the world. It is forbidden by the direct command of God in one of the ten commandments of the moral law. The erection and use of any statue for religious purposes is therefore as fundamentally sinful as is murder or adultery. The primitive Christians protested against it with holy zeal and defiance. Pictures in churches grew into carved images in wood and stone. Images of Christ, then of the Virgin, then of saints and martyrs during these centuries increasingly filled the churches. Inside the churches, and in prominent positions on their roofs, stone or metal crosses appeared. This is the more surprising, as it must have been well known at the time, as widely as it is unrealized today, that the cross is a very ancient heathen emblem. Probably the instrument of crucifixion in the time of our Lord had no cross beam, but was simply an upright stake. The images may have been at first intended as no more than reminders of the persons represented, although many of the unconverted, crowding as they did out of heathenism into the church, must have regarded them from the first as objects of veneration, and identified them with the being they were intended to portray. It was not long before lights burned in front of them and prayer was made facing them. It is likely that in early times in official quarters the same apology for this flagrant disregard of moral law was made as can be read in the (Roman) *Catholic Encyclopedia* today. It is that the image itself is not the object of worship, but the being whom it represents. Apart from the fact that this theory was held by all intelligent heathen since the beginning of time, it is unmasked in Scripture, where we need proceed no further than Exodus xxxii. 1-6 (noting specially verse 5) in order to learn that to worship even the true God *under the form* of an image, much more any other being, constitutes the essence of idolatry.

(25) So flagrant and obvious a departure from Scripture was this use of images and eikons, that it did not pass into universal use in the mediaeval churches of either the east or west without protest. In the Byzantine church what is known as the iconoclastic struggle went on bitterly for over a hundred years. The Emperor Leo the Isaurian, who ascended the throne in the year 726, had been born and brought up in the region of the Taurus mountains. This was the home of the Paulicians,

whom we have mentioned, and it is surmised that Leo had been under their influence. He rightly denounced images as idolatrous and had them destroyed in all the churches. Though bitterly opposed by most of the ecclesiastics, he was strong enough to maintain his policy, which was carried on by members of his family who succeeded him. The struggle between Emperor and church, a struggle, be it noted, like others which have taken place since, in which the state stood for the scriptural Christian position and the church opposed it, went on with varying fortunes till it was ended by the Empress Theodora, who restored the images in the year 842. In the west, the Council of Frankfort, called by the Emperor Charlemagne in 794, pronounced against the worship of images, though permitting their use as ornaments, and, indeed, rejected other superstitions that had grown up in the western church.

(26) Allied to the worship of images was the preservation and superstitious veneration of relics of saints and martyrs and such like. This practice began extraordinarily early. The Empress Helena, mother of Constantine himself, brought from Jerusalem what was supposed to be a piece of the true cross. We can understand this lady's action if her adherence to Christianity was of the same nature as that of her son. Perhaps it was she who, by doing this, set a precedent for future generations.

Theological Disputes

(27) The theological disputes which agitated the eastern church, in which the Bishop of Rome was perpetually intervening, continued into the sixth and seventh centuries. They illustrate from a totally different aspect to what extent the church had departed from primitive scriptural simplicity. They are nothing more than philosophical speculation of the type of which the Greek mind had always been so fond, brought over into Christian society and spending its ingenuity upon theological subjects. The Christological discussions had resolved themselves into the question of the divine and human natures of Christ. The orthodox view taught that there were two natures in one Person. A large section of theological thinkers, known as Monophysites, fought for the theory that He had but one nature. The state of course intervened, sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other: till finally in the sixth century the majority party prevailed and monophysitism is not heard of openly any more in the Greek church. Disputes arising out of this question went on, however, well into the seventh century. It is significant and tragic that during the time that the Saracens were sweeping the churches of north Africa out of existence the pope was engaged in controversy with Constantinople over the question of monothelism - that is to say, whether Christ had two wills or one, a speculation that was absorbing much of the energy of either party. This was the extent to which Christian intellect had lost the spirituality that attached it to the exposition of Scripture and had launched out into barren speculation upon fine points that had no practical bearing upon the commission and witness of the church, penetrating to ground that lay beyond what God had revealed, which, for that very reason there was no use in traversing. The monophysite controversies, however, left permanent marks upon Christian history. In the first place, certain eastern churches, including the Armenian, Coptic and Abyssinian, were so much influenced by the minority party that they adopted its views and have retained them since. The recent prominence which world affairs have given to the Abyssinian church gives this fact a significance for our own generation. Again, echoes of them were heard at the time of the Reformation when the confessions of the Protestant churches were being composed. The articles of our own national church bear traces of this controversy in those statements which affirm the scriptural doctrine of the nature and Person of Christ.

(28) We have now traced the course of the visible church of Christ for almost eight hundred years since its foundation on the day of Pentecost. At the end of that period it had grown to dimensions which would have amazed Jewish Christians of the first generation. It had also changed to such an extent in character that not one of the Apostles would have recognised it for what it professed to be. Instead the Apostles, one and all, would have taken their stand with that tiny persecuted minority, which in secret places amid bitter suffering maintained the standard of truth in doctrine and the scriptural pattern in practice. Though the Apostles did not have the opportunity of identifying themselves with this little flock of God, there dwelt and walked One among them greater than the Apostles, Who had dwelt and walked with the twelve, Who never yet left His faithful people, and Who awaits the day when He will acknowledge openly each single one in the presence of the whole company of heaven.

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IV

IN THE WILDERNESS

A.D. 800-1350

(1) We have now reached a period when the middle ages definitely took shape, and from which they dragged on for generation after generation, an ecclesiastical hierarchy preying upon the very life, both spiritual and material, of the peoples of Europe, and the world outside waiting in darkness and anguish for the Gospel which was never brought. For convenience' sake, we may say historically that this mediaeval period began in the year 800 with the crowning by the pope of Charlemagne, King of the Franks, as the first monarch of the so-called Holy Roman Empire. Throughout the thousand years of its existence this institution was essentially German, and, contrary to the intentions of the pope at its foundation, provided some check upon the papal power. Otherwise it has little to do with the fortunes of the true church until the time of the Reformation. In this section we shall carry our story to the middle of the fourteenth century.

(2) The Teutonic nations of northern and western Europe were by this time entirely christianised, but there was one further field upon which expansion continued to take place after the end of the eighth century. The great migratory movements in Asia which had pressed the northern barbarians further and further towards and into the Roman empire had not yet finally settled down. During the ninth century bands of the people known since as Slavs descended from Russia into the Balkan peninsula, occupied Bulgaria and large tracts to the west of it and ravaged Greece. They were, of course, heathen, as the Teutonic barbarians had been. In the ninth and tenth centuries the Greek church set out to christianise these people. Its purpose was not one of individual evangelisation but of policy, the idea being that these nations, civilised and christianised, would be harmless, as turned out to be the case. An alphabet based upon the Greek was invented for them by Archbishop Cyril, containing several extra characters to accommodate the sounds of their language. The Scriptures and the Liturgy were translated into the language now known as Old Bulgarian or Old Church Slavonic, in which the Liturgy is chanted among them to this day, having been for generations unintelligible even if it were ever understood at the beginning. Politically and socially, this civilising mission was of benefit to Europe, but it had no relation to the true Gospel. The Scriptures were not circulated among the people at large, and apart from the presence in their midst of the Bogomil movement, which we are to look at later in this section, the Slavonic peoples of the Balkans had little chance of hearing the truth until the British and Foreign Bible Society began circulating the Scriptures among them in their own language during the nineteenth century.

(3) This was the last of the civilising and educative missions of the mediaeval church. Her dominion now stretched to the Atlantic on the west and over the Teutonic nations in the north. To the north-east she had christianised the Slavs. The whole southern and south-eastern shores of the Mediterranean were firmly in the grip of islam, and she was cut off from the Nestorian churches in the east, not only by her own refusal to recognise and co-operate with them, but by the encroachments of Mohammedanism in those regions and also, particularly from the close of the eleventh century onwards, by the assaults of the Turks. Pseudo-Christianity had now become a world system of religion comparable to Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam, and the confusion resulting

from the pouring of the new wine of the Gospel into the old bottles of worldliness and carnality rendered this Christian world religion, as might have been expected, the most corrupt of them all.

(4) The rise of the Turks in the east and their capture of Palestine towards the close of the eleventh century was the occasion for a still further and stranger alteration in the methods by which the mediaeval church undertook to propagate Christianity. The individual evangelisation and scriptural preaching of the Gospel which had marked the primitive Christians had gradually degenerated, as we have seen, into movements instigated by political motives which had in view the education and civilization of the heathen masses. We have seen the Celtic missions in the north, which still retained a measure of true evangelisation, supplanted by the Benedictine monasteries which brought Roman civilization but no Gospel message to the individual. We have seen these movements culminating in the civilising mission of Cyril to the Slavs. If the church had forgotten her commission and lost her message, we might have imagined that her very name and tradition would have obliged her to confine her methods of propagation to the social uplift of those to whom she went. But so far was she removed from what her Master intended His church to be, that she took a further, and that an important, step in the downward path. Faced by the overbearing conduct of the new conquerors of Palestine towards her pilgrims as they visited the Holy Land, she never dreamed of sending missionaries to the Turks with the Gospel. It did not even occur to her to make the attempt to establish monasteries among them with a view to introducing them to western civilization. Instead she put into practice the determination she had formed of propagating Christianity by war and wresting the Holy Land from the Turks by force of arms.

Crusades

(5) One of the most astonishing of all the strange phenomena of the middle ages is that of the crusades. Most of the crusaders came from France. The preaching of monks produced a religious fervour which, coupled with love of adventure and aided by the ecclesiastical machinery which freely granted all sorts of spiritual privileges to those who took part, and especially to those who fell, raised armies actuated by a fierce spirit of idealism and eager to plunder the wealth which they supposed would be found in the mysterious lands of the east. The first crusade set out at the request of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenus, but it rendered him no material aid against the Turks. It succeeded, however, in establishing a Latin kingdom in Palestine, which survived only till the thirteenth century. The third crusade set out in the year 1189, and is perhaps the most important and famous of all these strange expeditions. It was the last that ever reached Palestine, and was led by the German Emperor, the King of France and the King of England. These illustrious names did not prevent the armies following them from degenerating into what has been rightly described as an undisciplined rabble. Early in the thirteenth century a crusading army sacked Constantinople, doing more damage to the accumulated treasures of centuries of civilization than was done later by the Turks. Other crusading armies were led during the thirteenth century to Egypt and to the coast of north Africa, but the miserable failure of either expedition put an end to this form of Christian activity.

(6) The crusades bear witness to the utter spiritual degradation of the mediaeval church. The increasing confusion of secular and religious, of heathen and Christian, had produced so curious an anomaly that both to the scriptural Christian and to the rationalist the middle ages seem a period in which all the world went mad. The supposed representatives of the Christ of the New Testament,

without a thought being given to the directions there laid down, set out to subdue the enemies of the church by force of arms. The atrocities committed by the crusading armies had the blessing of the clergy. The men who composed these armies often enjoyed, among other pretensions to sanctity, freedom granted officially by ecclesiastical authority from all moral restraint. The extraordinary idealism which we call chivalry, that stirred such strange emotions and fed upon the romantic legends which the ignorance and superstition of the day made half real to those who heard them, was not without advantage in restraining and directing passions that in an age of such wickedness might have brought society to ruin. The extent of the force which this ideal possessed is shown by the fact that it has not entirely spent itself today. It was wholly unreal, and in some senses superficial. It was closely bound up with the so-called Christianity of the time, but we should have far to seek to find anything in common between it and the spiritual ideals that actuated the primitive Christians and that shine in the pages of the Bible. Yet this is the period to which we are nowadays sometimes asked, with a naïveté that betrays ill-considered propaganda, to look with envy as constituting the "ages of faith." If the crusades had any permanent result, it was to increase the contempt which Mohammedans had for Christians, and to harden them still more against the reception of the Gospel. It may be that the crusades have played their part in the difficulties with which Protestant missionaries are faced in working among Mohammedans today.

Recognition of Corruption

(7) It must not be thought that the anomalous position in the world of the Christian church escaped the notice of all thoughtful or religious people within her pale. The vice and corruption of the papal court, the Immorality and ignorance of the clergy, caused a reaction which began to evidence itself during the twelfth century and came to fulfillment in the thirteenth. The monk Joachim set himself to the study of prophecy. The prevailing ignorance of the age, the utter confusion of spiritual values that existed, prevented any intelligent result from accruing. This monk published treatises, however, upon prophecy, and many who read them were able to agree that the condition of the visible church was such that they were justified in regarding the era as apocalyptic. A great stimulus was given to the study of the Book of Revelation, and a large number of copies of it were made during the thirteenth century, adorned by illustrations of its visions depicted by an art which, if crude in conception, is often beautiful in design and colouring. The most prominent aspect of Joachim's teaching seems to have been that an era of blessing was to follow the then present corrupt age. A good pope was to arise who would lead the church back to purity, and apostolic bands engaged in works of charity would go out over the world. The influence of Joachim was considerable and lasted till the time of the Reformation, when there were some who recalled what he had said, and sought to find in the Reformers' work the fulfilment of his visions. The followers of Joachim constituted a loosely defined party within the church, made up of various elements who looked for a purification in the church at some future date. Individuals among them were from time to time suspect to the ecclesiastical authorities, but these people never separated themselves from the ecclesiastical body. They had neither the courage nor the insight to do so. They were ignorant of Scripture, and sincerely identified the visible church with the true. They were acutely aware of the evil and avaricious administration of the church, and felt that it must incur the judgment of God if a remedy was not found.

(8) A result of this reaction, largely influenced by the writings of Joachim, was the institution of the Franciscan and Dominican orders of Friars in the early thirteenth century. The former was founded

by that curious character, so typical of the age in which he lived, Francis of Assisi. The ignorance of scriptural teaching on the matter of salvation and justification, and the notion that merit attached to good works, cannot fail to render the purity of motive of this man and his followers suspect. We must, however, recognise that there was a true desire on the part of the early friars to alleviate the sufferings of their fellow-men. It is said that it was a passage of Scripture, the tenth chapter of Matthew, that first inspired Francis of Assisi to undertake the labours that he did. Inevitably there were absurdities and extremes in his outlook and practices. His attempts to preach to birds can only arouse ridicule, while his kissing of the wounds of a leper rightly produce disgust. Yet he had a wide vision. He seems to have attempted to reach the Turks in order to preach to them - a happy contrast to the methods of the crusaders - but it is difficult to understand what Gospel he intended to preach. He managed to get his order recognised by the pope, without which, of course, it would have been idle to proceed, and bands of friars began to travel over all the countries of western Europe. They were poorly, sometimes miserably, clad, and begged their way from place to place. They carried with them small thick copies of the Latin Bible, of which thousands were made during the thirteenth century, with the writing in a minute hand. Thousands flocked to hear them preach. Their preaching was moral and hortatory. They urged their hearers to win salvation by abandoning vice and following virtue. They emphasized the terrors of the day of judgment and the world to come. They exhorted men and women to lives of asceticism and abstinence, and were not afraid to denounce the worldliness and luxury of ecclesiastics.

The Friars

(9) In the friars of the thirteenth century we see the best side of mediaeval religion, and it is poor at that. There is a tragedy in the fact of thousands of people stirred in conscience and seeking peace with God, but pitifully ignorant of how to obtain it. Those who could tell them were branded as heretics, and any intercourse with them would have been a danger to life. Hundreds of sermons must have been preached in the vernacular during the thirteenth century. Many of them survive in contemporary manuscripts. This deeply religious spirit did not die out until it was satisfied at the time of the Reformation in those countries in which Protestantism was accepted. In our own country it was strong, and found partial vent in Lollardism. For the time being the friars magnified asceticism and stressed the mortification of the flesh in order to gain spiritual blessing. This was the age of flagellants, large companies of persons, including women and even children, who marched about half-naked, flogging themselves with whips "till the blood gushed out upon them." This foolish fanaticism arose in the first place from a troubled conscience. People were ready for sacrifice and suffering if only they could get right with God. The friars met with much opposition both from the secular clergy, who regarded them as stealing their flock, and from the regulars, whose great wealth, worldliness, luxury and immoral living were rebuked. Appeals were made to Rome, but the friars were never driven out of the church nor their orders suppressed. Individuals among them fell under the power of the Inquisition and were burnt alive, but a more subtle policy was followed by the authorities. Worldly-minded men were placed at the head of the orders of friars, and before Francis of Assisi died he saw his ideal crumbling. The rule of poverty and against the holding of property was slackened, and by the end of the century the orders had come to resemble the Benedictines and other older orders in worldliness and lack of care for spiritual things.

(10) This development holds a lesson and a warning. Shortly before the days of Francis of Assisi, Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons, had been moved by much the same ideals. Waldo, however,

perceived that it was impossible to carry them out inside the framework of the corrupt church. He founded the Waldensian body, which was an Evangelical church before the time. This church carried the witness triumphantly through the days of the Inquisition, became merged in Protestantism, and exists today. The distinct witness of the Franciscan friars was over in hundred years. The reason is that Waldo had learnt the scriptural lesson of separation, while Francis attempted to reform from within. The history of the Christian age proves that the spiritual laws involved in the principle of separation work with unerring constancy and accuracy, exactly, in fact, as they do in nature. Only the foolish would place or leave good apples in the same dish as rotten ones. If it is impossible to remove the rotten ones, the only course is to separate the good. And so it is in spiritual things. If Francis had understood this as well as Waldo, it may be that many souls would have found the peace which they seem to have been so desperately seeking. The attitude of separation from older bodies that have fallen into error, which is taken by most conservative Evangelicals today, is amply justified by history. The survival of our witness depends upon it.

Rolle's Commandment

(11) It might be of interest to quote here part of one of the current moral exhortations of the day. Here are a paragraph or two from a work of the popular English fourteenth-century hermit, Richard Rolle of Hampole near Doncaster. The work had no title, but is referred to in modern editions as "The Commandment," as these are its first two words. My quotation is taken from Miss H. E. Allen's edition of 1931:

(12) "And that thou may wynne til the swetnes of Goddes lufe, I sett here thre degres of lufe, in the whilk thou be ay waxind. The fyrst degre es called insuperabel, the secunde inseparabel, the thyrd singuler. Thi luf es insuperabel, when na thyng may overcome hit, that es, nowther wele ne waa, ese ne anguys, lust of flesch ne likyng of this worlde; bot ay it lastes in gode thocht, if it wer temped gretely, and it hates all syn, sa that na thyng may slokken that lufe. Thi lufe es inseparabel, when al thi thoghtes and thi willes er gederd togeder and festend holy in Jhesu Criste, swa that thou may na tyme forgete hym, bot ay thou thynkes on hym. And forth it es called inseparabel, for it may noght be departed fra the thocht of Jhesu Criste. Thi luf es singuler, when al thi delyte es in Jhesu Cryste, and in nane other thyng fyndes joy and comforth. In this degre es lufe stalwarth as dede, and hard as hell; for als dede slas al lyvand thyng in this worlde, sa perfite lufe slas in a mans sawle all fleschly desyres and erthly covaytise; and als hell spares noght til dede men, bot tormentes al that commes thar till, alswa a man that es in this degre of lufe, noght only he forsakes the wretched solace of this lyf, bot alswa he covaytes to sofer pygnes for Goddes lufe.

(13) "Tharfore, if the ltst lufe any thyng, lufe Jhesu Criste, that es the fayrest, richest, and wysest, whas lufe lastes in joy endles. For al erthly lufe es passand, and wytes sone away. If thou be covetose after gode, lufe hym, and thou sal have al gode. Desyre hym trewly, and the sal wante na thyng. If delites like the, lufe hym, for he gyfes delites til hys lovers, that never may perisch. Bot al the delytes of this world er faynt and fals and fayland in maste nede; thai bygyn in swettnes, and thair endyng es bitterer than the gall. If thou kan noght lyf withoeten felichip, lyft thi thocht til heven, that thou may fynd comforth with aungels and halows, the whilke wil helpe the til God and noght lett the, als thi fleschly frendes dos. Restreyn thi will a while fra al lust and lykyng of syn, and

thou sall have efterwarde al thi will; for it sal be clensed, and made sa fre that the lyst do nathyng bot that that es payng of God."

(14) The great problem of human inability to please God was recognised to the extent that later the one addressed is made to say, "I may" (*may* in the English of that time is the same as modern can), "noght despyse the worlde; I may not fynd it in my hert to pyne my body; and me behoves lufe my fleschly frendes, and take ese when it comes." To this unhappy plaint there is no answer but further exhortation to remember that those who loved the world are now suffering the torments of hell, and to love the Name of Jesus more than life. In this spiritual movement of the later middle ages we see souls seeking God without any knowledge of how to get right with Him or of Christ's saving and keeping power.

Mediaeval Doctrine

(15) The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were days when the dogma of the church was further systematized. The thirteenth century particularly was one of great intellectual activity, and it was at this epoch that the universities were founded. We have seen the church emerge successfully from the great doctrinal disputes of the fourth to seventh centuries. From the days of Nicea she had laid up her belief in creeds and formulae and she never abandoned the great creeds. On some points the doctrine of the mediaeval church was scriptural and correct. Her fatal mistakes were that she held this doctrine merely as intellectual belief, and made little attempt to relate it to practice, and also that she added to scriptural doctrine so enormous a quantity of tradition as quite to conceal the truth. On the question of the nature of God, the Trinity in Unity the church's teaching was scriptural and perfectly correct. The struggle with Arianism had settled that question, which was never reopened. Then the great Christological controversies in the east had forced the western church to a scriptural position upon the nature and Person of Christ. She believed and taught that Christ was both divine and human. She believed rightly about the incarnation.

(16) When we speak of the church's beliefs and doctrines, we must remember that, in the middle ages, these things were little more than matter for intellectual discussion and expression among theologians. The mass of the people was quite ignorant of doctrine. It was never intended that they should know. Many of the clergy could not write. Services were read in Latin, and though there was preaching, it was not, on the whole, doctrinal preaching but exhortation. No personal knowledge of God existed among the people at large during the later middle ages, unless they were dissociated from the church.

(17) The false traditions which the church added to Christian doctrine, and the superstition of the popular mind, reacted upon each other. In our last section we noticed the prominence attained by the Virgin Mary as a result of the accommodation with paganism in early days. In the middle ages the Virgin was approached and worshipped by the people at large far more than the Lord Himself. Hers was the popular cult. Sometimes the same language was used about her as was used about God. A large number of legends grew up around her and other saints, and countless miracles were attributed to her. Individuals put themselves under Mary's protection and cheerfully expected her to work miracles on their behalf. Some of these stories are preserved today in mediaeval manuscripts. Sometimes they were carved upon the screens of churches or painted on friezes. It is almost incredible, but true, that a set of these which had been painted in Winchester cathedral and

rediscovered in modern times were a few years ago painted up again by order of the dean and solemnly rededicated. The awful lessons of the middle ages fall today upon deaf ears.

(18) As regards the atonement, the mediaeval church believed and taught that Christ made a propitiatory atonement on the cross. There was room for barren intellectual speculation about details not revealed in Scripture. Until the twelfth century, when Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote a treatise on the subject, it was believed that the ransom paid by Christ was paid to the devil. The argument went on to unfold the view that the devil in agreeing to accept the ransom of the life of Christ was tricked by God, Who deprived the devil of the fruits of the bargain by raising Christ from the dead. This extraordinary theory provides an insight into the mediaeval mind. The dishonourable conduct attributed to God seems to have been received without a scruple and to have raised no protest. The dragging in of the devil where he is not mentioned in Scripture illustrates the prominence assigned to him during the mediaeval periods, a prominence only equalled by the distortion of the view of his nature. The mediaeval devil was a fiend with horns and tail, who took an active interest in the petty affairs of life and intervened constantly in them. Ignorance and superstition produced distorted views of the laws of nature. Disease and misfortune were attributed to the direct intervention of the devil. Devils waited to seize the souls of the dying, and, in all circumstances, their malicious purposes might be thwarted by the incantations of priests.

(19) The resurrection and ascension of Christ were accepted and taught by the mediaeval church, though no opportunity was lost of importing crudity into the representation of them. She believed in theory the facts of the Gospel. Where she was hopelessly astray was in her teaching upon their application. How could this fail to be so? A church that solemnly professed belief in one God, yet in practice worshipped countless minor ones, could quite well profess belief in the facts of salvation, yet go hopelessly astray in their application. The continent was filled with shrines erected to the Virgin or to saints. Each city had its local patron. Lists of saints appeared at the end of the litany, and these were chanted with the phrase *Ora pro nobis* after each. The mediaeval church's doctrine of salvation was semi-pelagian, as is that of the modern Roman church today. She revered Augustine of Hippo as one of her greatest teachers, and her theologians constantly read his books, but she never followed his doctrines of grace and predestination. It will be remembered that, in the fourth century, the British monk Pelagius collected a large following behind his denial of original sin. He had taught that men could live without sin and then could merit salvation. Pelagianism was resisted by the church but, though she taught original sin and the propitiatory atonement of Christ, she never understood their implication. She knew nothing whatever of the finished work of Christ or of the assurance of sins forgiven. Grace was bestowed by mechanical means. Regeneration came in baptism that is to say "by the will of man," in direct contradiction to John i. 13. But regeneration did not bring, illogically enough, assurance of salvation. The individual fell in and out of a state of grace, so that he might be saved one day and lost the next. These vagaries were governed in the first place by his conduct. Sin, or at any rate certain kinds of sin, caused him to cease to be in a state of grace. He could be restored by the absolution of a priest, and that is the important fact to remember. It was one of the chief supports of the exalted position and importance of the priesthood, and, in an ignorant and superstitious age, one of the chief means by which the clergy maintained their ascendancy over the souls and bodies of the people. This ascendancy brought them no little material advantage. A frightened soul, in order to obtain absolution, would do anything the priest demanded, and money could be extorted at will.

Salvation by Works

(20) So long as salvation depended upon merit, disadvantages of the sort we have described were not banished even by a movement such as that of the friars in the thirteenth century, although it showed reality in its search for true moral purity. Apart from such reactions as these, however, the conception of the mechanical, that is to say magical, conveyance of the grace of God reached its logical conclusion in divorcing the reception of grace altogether from morality. The priest was capable of conveying grace, quite apart from his own moral character. It might be well known that he kept a concubine. But this did not prevent him from pronouncing a valid absolution or regenerating a child by sprinkling water upon it, any more than a marriage would be illegal today if performed in church according to due form of law by a clergyman who was living an immoral life. It is therefore easy to understand that, if grace might be conveyed without reference to the moral character of the one who conveyed it, it might also be conveyed without reference to the moral character of the one who received it. This fact was made shamelessly clear at the time of the crusades. Men were persuaded to take part in these expeditions by being granted a kind of anticipatory absolution from all future sins. This left them free from all moral restraint. Merit was gained, not even by living a moral life, though this in itself, as we know, is teaching contradicted on every page of Scripture. It was gained by serving the ends of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, taking part in a crusade, or engaging in any scheme that pleased them, even if it included murder. What a commentary all this is upon the doctrine of salvation by works! The striving after holiness by effort, when it was believed that eternal issues hung upon success, if we allow that the striving was sincere, produced the utter breakdown of moral standards. A church that was always reminding itself of judgment to come lived as if there was nothing to live for but this world, or, at most, allowed a minority of its members to waste their lives in fanatical asceticism.

(21) For practical purposes the propitiatory atonement, in which the church professed to believe, might never have existed. Its implications were no more than the intellectual sport of theologians. It was regarded as doing away with the guilt of original sin and placing the soul in the position where it might start *de novo* and win salvation for itself, theoretically by a life of moral purity, actually in the ways we have noticed above. This privilege of starting again, won by the atonement, was applied in the first instance by baptism. Without this rite it did not obtain at all, so that infants who died unbaptized went to hell. Much ingenuity was expended by the theologians upon the discussion of their condition there. Some pictured the babies crawling about on the red-hot floor of hell. Others relegated them to a kind of department of their own called limbo, in which they do not appear actually to suffer but are outside the presence of God. This is the sort of fantastic nonsense to which departure from the Scriptures leads. The sufferings of Christ were, however, perpetually before the mediaeval mind. The crucifix was prominent in every church and every shrine. It was sometimes worn as a charm or mascot, as has always been the case, for instance, in south Italy with the notorious phallic crucifixes, whose heathen origin is undisguised. This ubiquitous idol wrought upon the emotions by the representation of suffering and goaded to the ascetic mortification of the flesh.

Torments of the Damned

(22) The event which, more than any other, was presented to the mediaeval mind was the day of judgment. It was represented in pictures and sculpture and described in sermons. The mediaeval

church knew no "blessed hope," because no individual had the assurance of salvation. It was very naturally presumptuous to assert that one was in a state of grace, since it depended upon one's own effort, and even if one had reasonable hope that one might be in such a state, it was only too possible to fall out of it tomorrow. The thought of the day of judgment was therefore a terror to all who took religion seriously, and there was no one who dared openly not to do so. The fears engendered by guilty consciences and the sense of the hopelessness of personal moral effort were worked upon feverishly by the priesthood, and proved one of the strongest chains by which men's lives and consciences were enslaved. The warnings in the Gospels of the destiny of the lost are solemn enough, and the solemnity is enhanced by the restraint with which the subject is treated. No such restraint existed in mediaeval teaching upon the subject. Horrifying details of the torments of the damned, needless to say utterly unwarranted by Scripture, were the theme of discourse and of art. Those acquainted with Dante's *Inferno* will know something of the range of this subject. The torments of hell are dwelt upon by Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest thinkers of the middle ages, who, in the thirteenth century, reduced theology to a logical system of philosophy. Hell began for the lost soul at death, the future day of judgment merely bringing about the resurrection of the body to join the soul in suffering. Bernard of Clairvaux reported a vision he is supposed to have seen, in which he stood beside the throne of God for one day and watched hundreds of souls come up for judgment. He was horrified to find that only half a dozen were saved. But a soul coming to the end of its pilgrimage without falling out of favour with the priesthood and in communion with the church, so that it might be given assurance on the word of man that it left this world in a state of grace, did not reach the end of its terrors. Though it might not be lost, it was faced with the torments of purgatory. The doctrine of purgatory dates probably from the fifth or sixth century. It teaches that a soul, though saved, is not fit at death for the presence of God in heaven, but must pass through a period of purification by fire which involved great suffering. The doctrine is a quite logical corollary of the belief in salvation by works, as it is obvious that no soul can attain a perfect standard. It arises, of course, from misunderstanding of the scriptural doctrine of regeneration, whereby the believer is made a child of God and fit at any moment to enter God's presence. It provided an extra scope for fear and threatening which the priesthood could exercise even upon the most submissive and faithful who came under their influence. All these terrors in a superstitious age kept a world, conscious of its guilt and a stranger to the knowledge of the love of God, at the feet of an unscrupulous priesthood.

Blasphemy of the Mass

(23) We have reserved until now what may be called the most important dogma of the mediaeval church, a dogma expressed in a practice in which the whole of her worship centred, and a dogma calculated more than anything else to exalt the authority of her priesthood. We saw how the heathen magical view of the rite of baptism extended logically to cover the other ordinance of the Lord's Supper. This developed gradually into the crude conception, contrary to elementary experience and common sense, that in spite of the fact that the elements remained in appearance exactly as they had been before, the words of consecrations pronounced by the priest, actually changed the bread and wine into Jesus Christ. Thus Christ's flesh was *literally* eaten by the priest and those who communicated, in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Gospel contained in John vi. 63. What is more, Christ was destroyed by the priest when he ate Him, and this destruction was the sacrifice of Him upon the altar, identical with the sacrifice of Calvary with atoning efficacy, not only for the

living, but also for the dead in purgatory. In the year 1215 the dogma of transubstantiation, which means the change of the elements we have described, was promulgated as binding upon the whole church by a decree of the fourth Lateran Council. Pictures in thirteenth-century manuscripts represent the priest at the altar elevating, in the act of consecration, sometimes a wafer, sometimes a small human form. This shows the popular belief. Later in the century the feast of Corpus Christi was instituted on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, in which the "host" (which means *victim*), that is to say the consecrated wafer, was carried about the church and streets to be worshipped by the people. In addition, there was not wanting a Thomas Aquinas to philosophize ingeniously about "substance" and "accidents" and to explain with a satisfying plausibility of logic that the substance or intrinsic nature of an object might be completely transformed, while its accidents, which conveniently included its external appearance, might remain the same as before. The critical moment during the celebration of mass was the elevation of the host at the time of consecration, when the change was supposed to take place. It was important for the congregation to watch this action, and when it took place a bell rang and the congregation fell on their knees or faces. The squints and the so-called lepers' windows in churches were intended to enable those in any part of the church as well as some outside its walls to see the elevation. Often, at the signal given, those working in the fields were expected to fall on their knees in unison with those inside the building.

(24) The impressive symbolism and magic mystery of this ceremony, carried out by persons adorned in gorgeous vestments in surroundings of artistic beauty and dignity, did not fail to impress the minds of those present with that awe with which it was intended to impress them. The authority with which it invested the priesthood can scarcely be exaggerated. Each priest was able by pronouncing a Latin formula to do what writers of the age did not hesitate to designate as creating the Creator. Moreover, when he had done that, he set about destroying the Creator Whom he had created. The consecrated wafer was "reserved" in aumbries upon the church wall. It was "exposed" at stated times for adoration, and it was carried about in a case known as a monstrance, which was something the shape of a baby grandfather clock, the place of the dial being taken by a transparent circle through which the wafer could be seen, surrounded by precious stones. The absurdity, blasphemy and idolatry of this belief and this proceeding are beyond expression. Masses were taking place by the hundred every day. The propitiatory sacrifice of Calvary, repeated at mass, was considered efficacious for those who were present, and its efficacy was extended to cover the dead in purgatory. Masses could be asked for to benefit individual souls, and the extent of their benefit depended upon the amount of money that those who asked for them were willing to pay. Here was a strong additional strangle-hold upon the wealth of the people exercised by playing upon their most sacred affections. No wonder that the articles of the Church of England, as we shall see, when they come to deal with the mass, substitute very strong language for their normal restraint of expression.

Paulicians

(25) During these long centuries of darkness were there none who understood the truth, none to protest against these things, none to hold out the Word of life? Thank God, there were. The true church was in the wilderness, the object of the scorn and hatred of the great organization that had usurped her place. Her sufferings were grievous, but by God's grace her faith and endurance never faltered. In our last section we saw something of the little companies of those known as Paulicians, whose centre was in the Taurus mountains, and who stood for purity of worship. Our knowledge of the real teaching and practice of these people is scanty, not so much because of the distance of time,

but because of the thoroughness with which their enemies succeeded in destroying any records that they might have left. Much of our evidence about them comes from hostile sources. The orthodox writers of the day accused them of Manichaeism and Gnostic error, a device that had been followed in the west in the case of Priscillian. They were also charged with gross moral wickedness. The last accusation is obviously untrue, because we have testimony to the contrary even from their enemies, and because it is inconsistent with the influence they exercised, their unflinching courage in persecution, and the persistence of their belief through so many generations. If the accusation of immorality is untrue, we cannot place reliance upon the statement made by their enemies about their doctrine. About fifty years ago there was discovered in a library in Armenia a manuscript of a treatise, which seems to date from the seventh century, called "The Key of Truth." It is a Paulician doctrinal treatise. It reveals the knowledge of Scripture possessed by these people, and shows how careful they were to make the Scripture their rule. They seem, however, to have held what is known as the adoptionist view about the Person of Christ and to have taught that at His baptism He was adopted as the Father's Son. This seems an echo of Gnosticism, and it is disappointing that these people, so faithful in their protest against the corruptions of the time, appear to have held these unscriptural views about the Person of the Lord. There seems, however, to be no doubt that they emphasized individual conversion. They protested against the cult of the Virgin and saints and the use of images in worship. It seems that, though their grasp of truth was not as strong as it might have been for reasons which cannot be determined because of our ignorance of their early history, we ought not to exclude them from the company of the true people of God, spiritually descended from the Apostles, and basing their church order and practice, so far as they were able, upon Scripture alone.

(26) While the iconoclastic Emperors were reigning in Constantinople, the Paulicians were, generally speaking, left in peace. When the controversy came to an end by the restoration of images in the year 842, the Empress Theodora commenced a violent persecution of the Paulicians. They were hunted from their mountains, beheaded, burnt and drowned. It has been estimated that within twenty-five years a hundred thousand of them were put to death. "The Key of Truth" shows that the Paulicians expected persecution. They remembered the Lord's words, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." They expected suffering and were prepared to meet it. They strengthened themselves in God, and realized that this was the way in which God had appointed them to witness.

(27) In the tenth century many Paulicians passed over into Europe and settled in the Balkans. Here they spread rapidly among the Slavs and became known as Bogomils - that is to say, Friends of God. Their sufferings were not over, for they were still in some parts of the Balkans in the power of the Byzantine Emperors. The Princess Anna Comnena, daughter of the Emperor Alexius, whose appeals for help against the Turks were one of the factors that produced the first crusade, gave some account of them in the memoirs which she wrote. A prominent leader among the Bogomils in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was a man named Basil, who practiced as medical doctor, spent forty years in preaching and teaching. In the year 1111 he was tricked by an invitation to Constantinople, in which the Emperor claimed to be an interested enquirer into the doctrines that Basil taught. He was invited to dine with the Emperor and to talk freely with him about what he believed to be the truth, but the conversation was taken down by a concealed shorthand writer, while the guest was suddenly seized and imprisoned, the notes taken at the interview being worked up into the substance of an accusation of heresy brought against him at his subsequent trial. He

spent eight years in prison, during which time attempts were made to make him recant. He continued to refuse and was burnt alive in the hippodrome at Constantinople before a large concourse of people that included Anna Comnena, who described the scene with equanimity and interest, calmly incorporating in her narrative details of the appearance of the prisoner and his reactions during the ordeal. If we assume that the doctrine of the Bogomils upon the important point of the Deity of Christ was sufficiently unscriptural to constitute evidence that their eyes were closed to saving truth, they were at least earnest pious men and women who clung so far as they were able to the Scriptures and were most definite seekers after God. What shall we say of a church, the professed followers of those commissioned to hold forth the Word of Life to a perishing world, that treated seekers after that life in the way described above? But the evidence of their simplicity and purity of life suggests that Basil and those to whom he had ministered were true children of God. In any case the mind dare not attempt to picture Anna Comnena and those who enacted this tragedy as they will appear on the day of judgment. And yet these things were as nothing to what was to take place later in western Europe, as we shall see.

Bogmils in Bosnia

(28) In the twelfth century begins one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of pre-Reformation Protestant churches. The events which took place in the western Balkans during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries go a long way to prove that the Bogomil teaching was scriptural, and that these people represented the true church in the wilderness during the ages of the preeminence of the enemies of the truth. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were the period of our own country's thickest darkness. There were few fully enlightened Christians among the inhabitants of these islands during those two hundred years. All was sunk in superstition and idolatry. Yet in the opposite corner of Europe there existed for about a hundred years a prosperous Protestant country fiercely resisting papal aggression and displaying to those who could see them the spiritual and material results of adherence to the truth of the Gospel. This country was Bosnia, whose capital, Sarajevo, attained notoriety in 1914 as the scene of the assassinations that provided the immediate occasion for the outbreak of the European War. The persecutions of the Greek church drove the Bogomils further and further west into Serbia and Bosnia and as far as the Adriatic coast. Their appearance in Bosnia during the twelfth century corresponded in time with the spiritual reaction in the west, which we have already noted, that instigated the prophetic studies of Joachim and later resulted in the formation of the Franciscan orders. We do not know the mutual relationship between these two events, but we may suspect that they had some connection. Before the year 1199 Kulin Ban (Chief) of Bosnia had been converted, as well as the Prince of the neighbouring region of Herzegovina and the Bishop of Bosnia, who had owned obedience to the pope. Scriptural worship was set up all over the country. Altars and crosses were removed, the distinction between clergy and laity disappeared, the priesthood of all believers being recognised. A fixed proportion of the believers' income was set aside, as in apostolic days, for the relief of the poor and the support of travelling evangelists. The blessing of God immediately resulted. The country enjoyed a period of such material prosperity that it was able to recuperate itself again and again during the wars with Hungary that lasted for most of the thirteenth century. In 1203 Pope Innocent III, with the aid of the King of Hungary, forced an agreement upon Kulin Ban by which he acknowledged the papal religion. From the beginning, however, the agreement was a dead letter. On the death of Kulin in 1216 the pope sent a mission to convert the people to Rome, but this ended in complete failure,

whereupon in 1222 he ordered the King of Hungary to invade the country, and a long period of war and devastation began. In 1291 the Inquisition was established in Bosnia, and the churches began to decline. Their subsequent history we shall follow in our next section.

(29) The same movement that produced such an earnest search for a higher spiritual level of doctrine and practice within the framework of the church as was seen in the Franciscan friars drew others who were more clear-sighted outside her limits. In addition to the remarkable Bogomil movement in Bosnia, two other communities claim our attention. The first is that of the Albigenses, who appeared in Provence during the twelfth century. The name is derived from that of the town of Albi, but is inaccurate, for the Albigenses had no particular connection with that place. Their movement seems to have been begun by missionaries from Bosnia, and their tenets to have been the same as those of the Bogomils and Paulicians. They clung to simplicity of worship and a high standard of moral conduct, and claimed to be guided by Scripture alone, although it seems impossible to absolve them from holding certain errors about the Person of Christ. In the opening years of the twelfth century one Peter de Brueys began to preach in Provence and collected a large following. He was burnt alive by the ecclesiastical authorities in 1126. With him was associated a monk of Cluny named Henry, who seems to have been a remarkable personality and to have possessed singular oratorical powers. This man attained such an influence in Provence that the authorities were alarmed. The great Bernard of Clairvaux was sent to oppose him. Bernard was alarmed at the extent of the heresy and made every effort to counteract Henry's teaching and to capture his person. Henry eluded him for some years, but was at last caught and imprisoned, and died, probably in prison, in 1147. We can admire the sentiments on Christian love expressed by Bernard of Clairvaux and appreciate the admirable hymns he wrote, of which there are a few in our modern hymn books, but it is difficult to forget that this was the man who hunted a pious man to a cruel death and spared no effort to overthrow scriptural teaching.

Foundation of Inquisition

(30) The Albigenses were protected by the ruling class in Provence and increased greatly during the twelfth century. The attempts of the pope to persuade the civil authorities to proscribe them failed, and at last in the year 1209 Innocent III declared a "crusade" against the Albigenses and ordered the King of France to carry it out. The same monstrous indulgences were made to those who took part in this persecution as had been granted during the crusade against the Turks. The crusade against the Albigenses is noteworthy for an event which had consequences and repercussions far wider than perhaps were at first foreseen. In 1210 in order to prosecute it more thoroughly there was established at the suggestion, and under the superintendence, of the monk Dominic, founder of the new order of Dominican friars, the so-called Holy Inquisition. This is the most monstrous instrument of barbarous oppression that has ever appeared in the known history of the human race. Its atrocities not only cannot be exaggerated, but no language be found sufficient to describe them adequately. The horrors of Dante's *Inferno* reflect something of what went on in the clammers of the Inquisition. The word "hell" is often used only too lightly today. Let the mind dwell upon that word for a moment in all its solemn seriousness; let there be added any conception by which the popular mind may have increased the awful solemnity that belongs to the word; let the mind face for one moment, so far as it is able, the despair, the darkness, the misery that that word conveys; and it will have added nothing to the appalling realities of the Inquisition except only the sense of eternal duration. And to those - and they were many - who spent life-times In the clutches of the devils of

the Inquisition even that may have seemed to have been added as well. It is in our next section that we shall be obliged to see something of the Inquisition at work. These facts must be faced in order that we may understand both something of the contrast between the light brought to us by the Gospel and the darkness of the ages that had rejected it, and something of the reason for the rationalist revolt today against a religion which a superficial knowledge of history intelligibly identifies with the cruelties committed in its name. At present it will be enough for us to notice that the Inquisition was established experimentally in 1210 in order to crush the Albigenses, and that it was made a permanent institution by a papal decree nineteen years later. This decree is important because it contained a clause forbidding the possession of copies of the Bible to the laity and charged the Inquisition with the duty of seeing that this prohibition was carried out. The crusade against the Albigenses was successful in the sense that it destroyed the culture and independence of Provence, which was attached to France. As soon as the Albigensian communities were thus deprived of protection the Inquisition quickly exterminated them.

The Waldenses

(31) There is one more community that rises to prominence during the twelfth century in which we may see, with greater assurance than in those we have already mentioned, an expression of the true city of God. It was that of the Waldensians. Their home was in the mountain valleys of Piedmont and Savoy. Their church continues to exist in Italy, and they themselves hold that their tradition goes back to the fourth century if not to apostolic times. The origin of the name Waldenses is not certainly known, but while we cannot directly deny the ancient existence and continuity of their church, there is no clear evidence to support it. The name is probably connected with that of Waldo, a merchant of Lyons, who lived during the close of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth. In the year 1160 he was stirred in conscience, and probably under Albigensian influence began to search the Scriptures. Thirteen years later he made over all his property to his wife, and determined to devote himself to spiritual work. Fortunately for the spiritual results of his labours, his request for the recognition of his work and following by the pope was indignantly refused, in contrast to the reluctant granting of recognition to the Franciscan friars a few years later. The next year Waldo started travelling and preaching. In 1184 he was excommunicated, and he died while on a preaching tour in Bohemia in the year 1217.

(32) As a result Waldensians appear at this time in many of the countries of Europe. In 1192 they were proscribed in Spain. In the thirteenth century we find many of them in Germany. It is, however, difficult to determine whether all those mentioned in contemporary records, which are usually accounts of their trials for heresy, were in direct communion with the churches of the Alpine mountains. The ecclesiastical authorities did not take the trouble to distinguish one kind of "heretic" from another, and we find everywhere names such as Bulgarians, Bogomils, Petrobussians, Albigenses, Cathari, Paterini, Waldenses, applied. It is therefore difficult to determine what doctrine was generally taught by the Waldensian churches at this time. They seem to have had no rigid rule of faith and to have allowed wide variations of interpretation. Differences of opinion on the question, for example, of infant baptism existed among them. They do not appear to have shared the dualistic tendencies nor the unscriptural views of the Person of Christ of which it does not seem that we can acquit the Paulicians, Bogomils, and Albigenses. Some had fallen into various mediaeval errors, but all were united in opposing the worldliness, idolatry and unscriptural doctrine and practices of the church of the day. Strangely enough it does not seem that during the thirteenth

century any systematic attempt was made by Rome to root out the Waldensian churches from their centre in the Alps. Their existence in these remote fastnesses almost escaped notice, or at least was not considered dangerous. Their trial was not to begin till about two hundred years after Waldo's time.

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V

LIFE FROM THE DEAD A.D. 1350-1530

(1) The two hundred years from the middle of the fourteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth are a period in which changes of a startling nature came over the face of the Christian church. Those born at the close of it were living under fundamentally different spiritual and social conditions from those born at its beginning. The great changes are confined to the second of the two centuries which it covers and the most important of them to the last forty years. It is a fascinating study to see the sovereign power of God at work during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The most delicately blended combination of circumstances was required in order to bring about the great revival known as the Reformation and to ensure its permanent success. As we look back, we can see all these factors, political, social, spiritual, moral, including in their range even the practical and mechanical, emerging one by one and being brought into that exact mutual relationship which was necessary. The skill and wisdom of the supreme Disposer of the hearts of men fill us with wonder as well as with encouragement, for if God has brought the Reformation out of the conditions that preceded it, there is no revival that He may not bring about. Conditions can never be darker in the world than they were in 1514, nor could any revival be conceived bringing greater spiritual blessing or wider in scope than that which broke out in 1517. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." God has His own times, but when the clock strikes, nothing can prevent His working and producing perfectly the results He has in mind.

Deadness of the Church

(2) There is only one word that adequately describes the condition of Christendom during the fifteenth century, the word *death*. The church had reached a state of corruption enough to make angels weep. Spiritually and morally, it is no exaggeration to say that it had reached a position worse than the heathenism which it had supplanted a thousand years before. Even the witness of the remnant that kept itself true to the Scriptures almost died out before the end. The intellect of Europe was increasingly active, but it was preoccupied with barren philosophical speculation cast in a theological mould. A corruption and a darkness, which deprived the ordinary man of all that gives life dignity and purpose, covered Europe. Outside, in the far eastern regions cut off by the Turk, the hand of death had settled down on the Nestorian churches. A few of them lingered in south India and Ceylon, but Christian witness had disappeared in China and central Asia, vast tracts that had been abandoned to heathenism, Buddhism or Islam. The Coptic church in Egypt and the church in Ethiopia both continued as oases in a desert of Mohammedanism, but the refreshment to be found in them was not the fruit of the tree of life. Tradition and ignorance reigned among the clergy and laity of these churches, the Scriptures were unknown and unread, and worship was corrupt. In the whole of the African continent there was not a gleam of Gospel light.

(3) In Europe whatever promise of spiritual life might have been contained in the Franciscan movement in the thirteenth century remained incomplete, and bore no fruit until it received the overwhelming answer of the Reformation. For three hundred years it carried on an unequal struggle against wickedness in high places. The work of Dante was inspired by a revolt from the worldliness and moral evils of the day. In England in the fourteenth century we have poems of protest against

the same things, such as *Piers Plowman* and the Latin and English works of Richard Rolle. The *Imitatio Christi* was a work of sincere piety, breathing the Franciscan spirit of tragic search after moral purity. We have seen that the strictness and sincerity of the early Franciscans did not last longer than two generations. By the end of the thirteenth century they had become involved in the general worldliness of the monastic orders. In strange contrast to the early asceticism out of which the monastic orders had arisen the monasteries were now among the wealthiest institutions in Europe. The abbots resembled feudal barons. The communities owned enormous tracts of land over which they exercised the rights of the feudal lord. The largest monasteries had magnificent buildings, fine libraries, and numerous servants. Rich fare was the rule. The fasts of the church and the rules of the various orders could be evaded by dispensation, which was freely granted. The ownership of so much land brought in a large amount of fines and dues, while rights of trial, imprisonment, and even of life and death were exercised. The monasteries provided free guest-houses and lavish hospitality and fed the poor and beggars. They combined something of the functions of the Victorian squire and the modern workhouse. But they often came into collision with the civil authorities, there being a clash of rights which aroused much rancour, while their luxury and worldliness brought them the criticism and contempt of the commercial and artisan classes. If this had been all, we can easily realise that not a single drop of Christian scriptural spirituality remained attached to such a mode of life. But, as may be well imagined, there was more. In spite of half-hearted attempts on the part of the visiting authorities to repress them, illicit connections took the place of the family life that was denied, and the religious houses earned a wide spread reputation for immorality.

Worldliness of the Popes

(4) Similar abuses were in the palaces of the rich bishops, and above all at the papal court at Rome. The fourteenth century witnessed the great schism when rival popes set up at Rome and Avignon, the one supported by half the countries of Europe, the other by the rest. The pope was a king, or rather more than a king, with a luxurious court and all the etiquette of magnificence. He was spoken of by such titles as "Our Lord God the pope," and it is said that, at least on one occasion, ambassadors were instructed to exclaim as they prostrated themselves in his presence "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." The successful pope was essentially a statesman. His mind was occupied with diplomacy, with the ordering of the affairs of the various governments. His interest in religion was usually confined to the extirpation of "heretics." Ambitious popes such as Gregory VII (Hildebrand) raised the status of the papacy by their remarkable diplomatic successes. Hildebrand occupied the papal throne towards the close of the eleventh century and is noteworthy for the humiliation he inflicted upon Henry IV, Emperor of Germany, whom he obliged under threat of excommunication to travel over the Alps in winter and to stand for a day or two with bare feet in the snow awaiting permission to enter the papal residence. The papacy reached its zenith in Innocent III (1198-1216), a man of untiring energy and ambition, whose activities against the Bogomils and the Albigenses we have already mentioned. It was during his pontificate that the Inquisition was established. To ourselves his reign is noteworthy because it was during it that King John did homage to the pope for the kingdom of England, and agreed to pay an annual tribute. No other English sovereign has ever stooped so low. Even so, the tribute soon fell into arrears and before long ceased to be paid. About the same time, however, the King of Aragon handed over his kingdom to the pope and received it back as a fief in exchange for papal protection.

(5) The pontificate of Innocent III marked the highest point of actual papal power, though by no means of papal pretensions. Contemporaries may not have noticed any appreciable decline through the thirteenth century, and yet as we look back we realise that the tide had turned, while the papacy was further weakened by the schism in the fourteenth century. The pope himself was often the last to take seriously, at any rate in private, the doctrines and practice of the religion of which he was the head. His example was followed by many of the clergy, both parochial and regular. Mass was conducted with irreverence and haste, in order that the celebrant might hurry off to the banqueting-table. Thus, the practice of a religion which was treated seriously enough when its threatenings were needed to terrify the ignorant into submission became a farce on the part of its highest officials, many of whom openly showed their contempt for it. After the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, an event whose far reaching consequences we shall later examine, what was preserved of classical literature became familiar to the west. The papal court became almost openly heathen, and in the case of some individuals, almost rationalistic. Its wealth was beyond computation, and in the last half of the fifteenth century it spent it upon amassing art treasures of all kinds. The glories of the Vatican museums still take one's breath away, even though a goodly portion of the costly objects were stolen by the Emperor Napoleon and are now to be found in the Louvre.

Immorality of Papal Court

(6) The diplomatic business of the Roman pontiffs was interspersed with activities of another sort. The private lives of the popes, as of many of the higher ecclesiastics, will not bear examination. Of all examples the greatest set by Rome was the example of vice. There are, of course, outstanding cases. Pope John XXIII was so flagrant that the Council of Constance took the matter up. In the end he was accused of piracy, murder, rape, sodomy and incest (see Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Vol. VII, p. 300 in Bury's edition). Other charges were dropped. The city and the court were the haunt of loose women. The popes kept mistresses as a matter of course, and took them with them when they travelled. Most of the popes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had illegitimate children, on whom they bestowed rich positions. When Martin Luther visited Rome, he saw the host being carried through the streets among a crowd of prostitutes. These statements leave untouched large fields of abhorrent vice habitually practised at the papal court and referred to by a recent Italian historian as "the regrettable tendency of the period." Few know anything of the history of the popes without having heard the name of Borgia, which has become almost a byword for abominable wickedness. This was a Spanish family, two or three of whose members became pope. The most notorious was Rodrigo Borgia, whose official name was Alexander VI (1492-1503). This pope's daughter, Lucrezia, was the mother of a child whose father there seems evidence to suppose was the pope himself, her own parent. As an example of what went on at court we will transcribe in Latin the account of what is known as "the chestnut supper," held in the pope's apartment on the 31st of October 1501. The quotation is from the diary of Johan Burckard, Master of Ceremonies at the papal court at the time (*Liber Notarum* II, p. 303, ed. Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* XXXII. I):

(7) "In sero fecerunt cenam cum duce Valentinense in camera sua, in palatio apostolico, quinquaginta meretrices honeste, cortegiane nohcupate, que post cenam coreaverunt cum servitoribus et allis ibidem existentibus, primo in vestibus suis, deinde nude. Post cenam posita fuerunt candelabra communic mense in candelis ardentibus per terram, et projecta

ante candelabra per terram custanee, quas meretrices ipse super manibus et pedibus, nude, candelabra pertranseutes, colligebant, papa, duce et domina Lucretia sorore sua presentibus et aspicientibus. Tandem exposita dona ultima, diploides de sorico, paria caligarum, bireta et alia pro aliis qui pluries dicta meretrices carnaliter agnoscerent; que fuerunt ibidem in aula publica carnaliter tractate arbitrio presentium, dona distributa victoribus."

(8) We need dwell no further on these unsavoury things than is absolutely necessary as a picture of the background against which the events of the Reformation took place. We may remind ourselves that we are not describing the court of a heathen oriental potentate, but that of one whose title was "Vicar of Christ." On one occasion at least, an arch was erected under which Alexander VI passed in triumphal procession, bearing the words, "Caesar was a man, Alexander is God." We shall seek far in the history of any nation to find monarchs at whose court vice was more prevalent than it was in fifteenth-century Rome. We shall find no instance where a title of such pretensions, itself blasphemous if joined to high moral virtue, was attached to such scandalous debauchery.

Activities of Inquisition

(9) Before we pass on to describe the bright beams of truth that illuminated this darkness during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, or the blaze that broke out in the sixteenth, we must give some account of an institution which for all time brands the mediaeval church as one of the most fearful of the forces that have enslaved mankind. We have once or twice mentioned the Holy Inquisition. We have seen its inauguration as an experiment for the extermination of the Albigenses of Provence, and that nineteen years later, in the year 1229, it was permanently established. The Inquisition was an organization whose activities were directed by Dominican friars with headquarters in a luxurious house at Rome. It became notorious during the thirteenth century when it was centred at Carcassonne in Provence. It rose almost immediately to a position of power which set it above the laws of every country into which it penetrated. Local bishops and even the pope himself came to be powerless against its agents. Once or twice a pope protested against the greatest of the atrocious excesses at Carcassonne, but the protests were ignored. They were not in any case very resolute. The Inquisition owned property in all countries in which it was set up. Its proceedings were above all civil and all other ecclesiastical law. It was extended from one country to another in order ruthlessly to exterminate all freedom of religious opinion. It was the last phase in the degrading sequence of methods of activity on the part of the visible church. We have seen the scriptural preaching of the Gospel give place to educative missions, these again to force of arms in the crusades. The official representatives of Christ now turned to the propagation of the faith by means of oppression and torture that manifested an utter disregard for fundamental human rights.

(10) The agents of the Inquisition formed a network throughout Europe. No one could escape them. A stranger who arrived in any town or district was noted and his antecedents enquired into. If he had succeeded in the difficult feat of escaping from the clutches of the Inquisition, he was tracked and recaptured. Civil and ecclesiastical authorities were obliged to assist the authorities of the Inquisition. None dared resist their demands. The Inquisition dealt not only with Christians, but also with Jews, and from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries was used against so-called witches, in the persecution of whom it was joined to their shame by many Protestant authorities, until the advancing light kindled at the Reformation put an end to the morbid fear of witchcraft. Arrests were

made without evidence on the flimsiest suspicion, which, as the records go to show, was often unfounded, and often with interested motives. Those arrested were herded in the prisons of the Inquisition. The female prisoners had, of course, separate quarters of their own, but there were no women officers or attendants of any kind. The women prisoners were entirely at the mercy of their male guards and of the inquisitors and their agents who had access to the prisons. The result may be imagined, and indeed outrages committed upon helpless female prisoners became so numerous, that orders were given for the women prisoners to be kept together and not in separate cells, in order that they might afford each other some mutual protection. In Spain, where the Inquisition was re-established by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella towards the close of the fifteenth century, and where its activities continued unabated until the eighteenth century, it was seen at its worst. In that country the arrest of pregnant women took place so often that it almost became habitual. These unfortunates were looked after in special accommodation until the time of their delivery, but many cases occurred in which they were not permitted the care of a midwife or of any female attendant, and as a result their sufferings were extreme and many lost their lives. The arrest of so many women in this condition was in line with the policy of the inquisitors by which, with astounding technique, they played upon and harrowed the most sacred emotions and affections of their victims.

(11) One of the most important factors of the administration of this outrageous institution may not be generally realized. The property of every suspected, that is to say arrested, "heretic" was forfeited to the Inquisition. Legal safeguards providing for the maintenance of his dependants, like other regulations of the kind, were commonly disregarded. The wealthy were therefore specially the objects of the inquisitors' attention. The property of no wealthy Jew in Spain was safe, or his person either. In some districts those who enjoyed incomes above a certain figure went in constant fear. Thus the victim of the Inquisition was not only subjected personally to its horrors and indignities, but knew that his wife and family, possibly brought up in great comfort, would henceforth, if they did not perish with him, be destitute without help or mercy of any kind.

(12) Those who had been arrested by the agents of the Inquisition and lodged in its prisons were subjected to an examination before the inquisitors, the object of which was to force from the prisoner the admission of what constituted in the eyes of the Inquisition guilt. Just as the crimes of the victims were at most the holding of religious opinions, and sometimes no more than the possession of wealth, so there was not even a figment of justice in the method and manner of their so-called trial. Every prisoner was assumed to be guilty. Christian men and women on many occasions declared their opinions and confessed their Lord. The majority of the prisoners were uneducated, and in consequence found themselves tricked in every word they spoke by the astute casuistry of their judges, who were versed in the theological and philosophical subtleties of the thirteenth-century Schoolmen. The prisoner quickly found himself out of his depth. Terrified or malicious witnesses gave evidence against him, which he was given no opportunity of rebutting.

(13) We must now follow the prisoner to the depth of degradation and horror to which he was subjected. The use of torture was the regular method of forcing from a prisoner admission of guilt and the inculcation of his friends or family. Nothing, of course, could have been more stupid or useless if it had been justice that was being sought. The supposed admissions of the agonised and terrified sufferers were valueless. If the prisoner had admitted his heresy, he was tortured in order to

force him to involve others. If he had proclaimed his innocence, he was tortured in order to enforce an admission of guilt.

(14) The use of torture was forbidden by the canon law. In the year 1252 Pope Innocent IV sanctioned its use in defiance of this rule and also granted dispensation for the inquisitors to be present during its application. During the pagan persecutions of a thousand years before, torture had sometimes been used as ruthless punishment at the order of the heathen magistrates. It was normally applied by the Inquisition to persons whose "trial" was in progress, and who might, and occasionally were, subsequently found to be perfectly innocent of the charge brought against them. Although in Spain the inquisitors did not normally employ forms of torture that were not used by the civil authorities, in Germany and the Low Countries after the Reformation every form that ingenuity could invent was brought into play. The most notorious was the iron virgin. This was a life-sized figure of the Virgin Mary, which opened on pressure of a spring, and embraced the sufferer, slowly crushing him tighter. the interior of the image being studded with sharp javelins six inches long, which pierced his eyes and his whole body at different levels. In a single chamber of the Inquisition there have been found instruments for gouging out the eyes, cutting off the ears, pressing sharp metal beneath the finger-nails, tearing the flesh with hooks and pricking the more sensitive parts of the body.

Use of Torture

(15) Mental as well as physical torture was a potent weapon in the hands of the inquisitors. Prisoners might be suddenly confronted by their relatives and friends begging them to recant or retract. Delays were frequent. Sometimes trials were not completed until several years after the prisoner's arrest. During this time they were kept in prison, sometimes in chains, sometimes on a diet of bread and water, sometimes with a barbarous iron instrument that forced the chin up, ignorant of their fate and of that of their families, and in an agony of apprehension. Torture was not allowed to be repeated more than once, but this rule was evaded by ordering its "continuance" with an interval sometimes as long as a month between its applications. In Spain the recognised torture was of two kinds. In the first the arms were bound tightly behind the back and the victim was lifted from the ground by a pulley with ropes attached to his arms and heavy weights bound to his feet, and suddenly jerked down. The ropes were bound so tightly as to cut through the flesh, sometimes to the bone. In the second the sufferer was strapped tightly by the arms, waist, thighs and calves to a trestle which had sharp rungs like the rungs of a ladder. The ropes were again bound so tightly that the flesh was lacerated. The trestle sloped so that the head was rather lower than the feet. The head sank into a declivity in the wood, and a piece of iron was placed across the forehead or throat in order to prevent it rising. The mouth was held wide open by an iron gag, and a linen cloth that conducted water was at intervals pushed down the throat. The sufferer lost his breath and nearly choked, and frequently also vomited. We must also realise that both men and women were stripped naked in order to undergo these atrocities.

(16) The surviving records describe these scenes in detail, calmly recording the piercing screams and heartrending cries and supplications that resounded through the torture-chamber. We have, for instance, the account of the wife of a wealthy Spanish citizen arrested during pregnancy. Her child was born in the prison of the Inquisition, and after some three or four weeks removed from her, never to be seen again. Soon after she was brought to the torture chamber and submitted to the first

of the two ordeals we have described, At the second application her body was broken, the blood pouring from her mouth, nose and eyes. She was removed to her cell, and died some days afterwards. When fatalities of this sort occurred, they were attributed to "accident." Then there was the English merchant illegally caught and arrested by the Inquisition in Portugal. He maintained his fortitude during the operation of the pulleys, and was also stretched on the rack till his limbs were almost pulled from their sockets. During the whole time a priest stood by his side urging him in soft purring tones to confess and recant, and reminding him that if by reason of obstinacy he lost his life during torture, the church regarded such an event as suicide which rendered the sufferer liable to the pains of hell. We can imagine the effect of such exhortations upon the minds of the ignorant and unconverted. The Englishman in question had his shoulder dislocated by the pulleys, and a surgeon was sent to his cell to put it right for him, an operation that was as painful as the dislocation. A woman of over sixty who was submitted to the trestle-and-water torture had her toe wrenched off and her arm broken. Both these facts were observed by the inquisitors present, but the torture was continued notwithstanding. In H.C. Lea's great history of the Inquisition is the heartrending account of a poor woman submitted to the same thing, her crime being that she had refused pork when invited to eat some on a Saturday. This laid her open to suspicion of being attached to the Jewish religion, though the real reason, as she seems to have repeatedly stated, was that the pork was too strong for her digestion. The long detailed account of the anguish, alarm and helplessness of this poor woman, begging between her screams, gasping and vomiting to be told what it was that she was required to say makes the reader ill. Present-day Roman Catholic propaganda is faced with the difficult task of minimising and explaining away these atrocities. The task is rendered less difficult than it naturally would be by the prevailing ignorance of the facts on the part of the present generation, but for those who care to know and take the trouble to find out, the answer is overwhelming. The records of the Inquisition remain today, and betray no sense of guilt or wrongdoing. No attempt seems to have been made to conceal what was done. In fact, while a few inquisitors were deliberately cruel and enjoyed the monstrous work, many were quite convinced that they were doing God a service and benefiting humanity at large. The horrors of the Inquisition stand as a permanent warning of the importance of what a man, a people, or a church believes. It was not the characters of the inquisitors that in the first place were at fault, but their creed. It was a logical creed, built up into a framework that seemed intellectually proof against attack. It was the culmination of the way taken by the church in the fourth century a way to the brink of which she had led herself even before. To this pass came a church that disobeyed (almost without realising it) the Word of God, and *accommodated itself to the world around in order to make it easy for the heathen to profess the Gospel.*

The Inquisition

(17) For those who escaped the vicissitudes of their "trial," sentence was at last pronounced. Perhaps those sentenced to imprisonment for life with or without chains were fortunate. It must be understood that scarcely ever was there an acquittal. The severity and continued application of torture prevented that, for to avoid it sufferers usually made false confessions. Those who recanted were sometimes granted their lives, albeit they were not to know another moment's happiness. Sometimes, however, they were only allowed the privilege of being strangled before being burnt. Those who did not recant, and here the majority were converted men and women, were burnt alive. Thousands of the saints of God in Spain alone bore their testimony in this way. The occasion of

each of these massacres was known as an *auto-da-fe*, that is to say, an act of faith! These were religious festivals, at which the central spectacle was the parading of the martyrs and their fellow-sufferers through the streets in a special uniform intended to degrade them, the piling up of faggots around them when they had been bound to the stake, and the setting of the whole alight. It is not always realized that the Inquisition continued in Spain till it was broken up by the Emperor Napoleon, and in the nineteenth century was actually temporarily revived. King Alphonso of Spain, after an official visit to the Vatican, declared his intention of reintroducing the Inquisition into Spain when a suitable moment arrived. It was stated during the Spanish civil war that the present Spanish government, should they succeed in obtaining the upper hand, would attempt to set it up again. Of all the countries of western Europe in the fifteenth century, England and Scotland alone did not experience the introduction of this barbarous and unjust institution.

Work of Wyclif

(18) We now turn from the dark background which we have been attempting to describe to a brave witness for God's Truth which threw a flood of light upon the blackness of the scene. As Englishmen we may be thankful that it was in our own country that the light broke out, though we must not forget the faithful Waldensians holding up the banner in the Alpine valleys. The leader of the great movement of protest against spiritual and doctrinal corruption was John Wyclif, a man of great intellectual attainments and spiritual clear-sightedness. No direct connection between Wyclif and the Waldensians appears to have been traced. Wyclif was a lecturer in the University of Oxford and held the living of Lutterworth, Leicestershire. He was a member of influential ecclesiastical circles, and at least on one occasion was sent with others on an embassy to treat with representatives of the pope. Before the year 1361 he had apparently become Master of Balliol. He was in the first place a philosopher, lecturing and writing upon the work of the thirteenth-century Schoolmen and their successors. He then came out in protest against the exactions of the pope and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and their claims to override civil law. Finally he took up theology, passing on from his exposure of the worldliness of the church to its doctrinal corruption. He denounced transubstantiation and practically every mediaeval doctrine. His great positive contribution to the progress of the Gospel was his teaching that the supreme authority lay in the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone. He wrote a large number of tracts and sermons explaining his views, but his greatest work was the translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into English. His translation was revised shortly after his death by his friend and follower Purvey.

(19) Wyclif's Bible was the first translation that the English people had had since Anglo-Saxon times. Back in the early eighth century Bede had laboured at Jarrow to give the people parts of the Bible in their own language. From the time of Alfred the Great the early English had been more or less familiar with the Gospels and Psalms, but when the Norman conquest came, darkness settled down. The church fell into the hands of continental priests and became more directly subject to Rome than had previously been the case. In the twelfth century the language underwent a change, which would have rendered the old English translations hardly intelligible. Until Wyclif's time only the Psalms had been translated into Middle English, and very few of the population could read them for themselves. On the continent there were occasional translations of the Bible into the various vernaculars. In France especially there were certain summaries and expositions which were quite popular. All copies were, of course, written by hand, and were owned exclusively by the religious houses, the ecclesiastical authorities and the wealthy. We have already noticed that the decree which

set up the Inquisition in 1229 at the same time forbade the circulation of the Scriptures among the laity. In the University Library, Cambridge, is a beautiful Italian Bible, written and illuminated in the year 1397, which belonged to a rich Florentine. It contains a note signed by the local agent of the Inquisition granting the permission of that institution to the owner to own and read the book. Hundreds of copies of Wyclif's Bible were made, mostly at Oxford, and circulated among the people by the preachers whom he organised and sent round the country. Here is the twenty-third psalm in the later edition:

(20) "The Lord governeth me, and no thing schal faile to me; in the place of pasture there he hath set me. He nurschide me on the watir of refreischyng; he convertide my soule. He ledde me forth on the pathis of riztfulnesse; for his name. For whi thouz Y schal go in the myddis of schadewe of death; Y schal not drede yvels, for thou art with me. Thi zerde and thi staf, tho han coumfortid me. Thou hast maad redi a board in my sizt; azens hem that troblen me. Thou hast maad fat myn heed with oyle; and my cuppe, fillinge greetli, is ful cleer. And thi merci schal sue me; in alle the daies of my lijf. And that Y dwelle in the hows of the Lord; in to the lengthe of daie's."

(21) Wyclif and his doctrines were popular throughout the country. Twice an attempt was made to bring him to trial for heresy, but though his works were condemned, the seizure of his person was frustrated by powerful political influence. On the second occasion an earthquake shook the country just as the tribunal had met, and the event had a serious effect on the minds of its members. The University authorities at Oxford refused to comply when they were ordered to expel Wyclif and condemn his writings. His preachers reached all parts of the country, and a strong following sprang up, those who adhered to him being known as Lollards, a name that in its origin was probably a term of opprobrium. Wyclif died in 1384, and his followers enjoyed immunity and even to some extent the royal favour for the next fifteen years. When King Richard was succeeded in 1399 by Henry IV a change took place. The new King, who was not the direct heir, had obtained his position by the assistance of the clergy, and was obliged to obey their behests. In the year 1401 ecclesiastical influence forced upon the statute book of England the law de comburendo heretico, and a persecution of the Lollards began. They were driven underground, but many were brought to trial and burnt. The faith had been embraced by several wealthy families as well as by the uneducated, and a noted Lollard hero was Sir John Oldcastle, who was hung up in chains and roasted alive. But Lollardry never died out in England. The people had acquired a taste for the Bible, and the assistance which Wyclif gave to the cause of the Reformation in this country is greater than has sometimes been supposed.

(22) The influence of John Wyclif was not confined to his own country, but had notable repercussions on the continent, especially in Bohemia. In 1382 King Richard II married a Bohemian princess: free intercourse between the two countries took place and Bohemian students came to Oxford. These carried Wyclif's writings back to their own country where they had a powerful effect upon John Huss, Rector of the University of Prague. The reforming movement within the church dating from the days of Joachim had been active in Bohemia, and the new teaching fell on prepared soil. A great scriptural movement sprang up in that country. Huss was condemned by the Council of Constance for heresy in 1415 and burnt alive, but he was regarded in the University as a martyr, and his movement gathered strength. It split into two sections, moderate and extreme, the latter being

known as Taborites, building a city for themselves which they called Tabor and regarded in the light of a New Jerusalem. They twice defeated in battle the forces of the King and papal authorities sent to suppress them. The particular protest of the Bohemian Christians was against the denial of the cup to the laity in the Holy Communion, and so strong did their movement become that they were invited to attend the Council of Basle (1431-49), where certain concessions were made to them. The Bohemian Christians were weakened by division and persecution, and suffered, as seems always to have been the case with Christian churches, from the fact that they took up arms to defend the faith. In the year 1500 it is estimated that there were about a hundred thousand of them, and this remnant passed over in the sixteenth century into the churches of the Reformation.

Hussites and Waldensians

(23) The Bohemian Christians were in close touch with the Waldensians. These faithful people first came under the notice of the Roman authorities in the year 1380, when the Inquisition was set to work in their valleys. In 1400 the persecution was intensified and in 1486 a papal bull was issued for their extirpation. They suffered fearful persecutions intermittently until the seventeenth century, when the threats of Oliver Cromwell stopped a war of extermination that the Duke of Savoy had begun against them. There are some valuable documents in the University Library, Cambridge, brought to this country by Samuel Morland, Oliver Cromwell's ambassador to them, in which some of their fearful sufferings are described. Again and again they were hunted from their valley homes by the soldiers of their oppressors, delicate women being driven along in the snow till they died from exhaustion. It was a frequent sight to see infants spiked on the soldiers' lances and carried along on them. There was also a practice of tying up the men with ropes and leaving them suspended in a manner which cannot be described in print, calculated to inflict the greatest injury and anguish. The wanton barbarities of the Spanish Inquisition were directed against Jews and free-thinkers as well as Christians. In the case of the Waldensian persecutions every sufferer was a saint of God, or at least a member of a Christian family. They have passed now beyond the need of the prayers of those who read of their sufferings, but can we doubt that the joy of the Father's home will be intensified by the welcome we shall be privileged to share in giving to these martyrs, and the satisfaction that will arise when we see exercised the triumphant privilege, which God has reserved to Himself, of wiping away the tears from all faces?

(24) One beautiful story, recently circulated by those nowadays in touch with the still faithful Waldensian church, is well worth recording. One dark winter's night the Waldensian pastor in a remote valley heard a knock at his door. On opening it he was surprised to see the Roman priest from the parish below. Regarding him suspiciously, he asked him his business in tones that could scarcely be said to convey a welcome. The priest begged to be allowed for a moment in the house, and the pastor reluctantly admitted him. When he was safely inside and assured that no one was in hearing, the priest informed the pastor that a band of soldiers was at the moment coming up the valley to destroy the pastor and his flock. The pastor shook him warmly by the hand, and they had only time for a word of prayer together, when the priest escaped back again in the darkness. Meanwhile the pastor had time to warn the Christians, who fled with what belongings they could gather, and thus saved their lives. This priest is not the only Roman Catholic who has risen above his dreadful creed.

(25) In the case of the Bogomils in Bosnia the Inquisition quite failed of its purpose of directly rooting them out. Its interference produced in the end, however, an unforeseen effect. Though it was established in Bosnia in 1291, we find King Tvrtko towards the close of the fourteenth century favourable to the Bogomils. The attacks of the King of Hungary at the instigation of the papacy continued. In 1415 the Bosnians appealed for aid to the Turks. For fifty years the struggle continued, persecution invariably breaking out whenever the papal party was in the ascendancy. At last the Bosnians could not endure the Inquisition any longer. They preferred Mohammedanism, and in 1463 they made over their country to the Turks, in whose power it remained until the beginning of the present century. The papal persecutions were therefore directly responsible for the handing over of a considerable district in south eastern Europe to Islam.

Fall of Constantinople

(26) The Turks at this period exercised a far wider influence upon the situation than was brought about by their absorption of Bosnia. For almost four hundred years they had been battering at the defences of the Byzantine empire. The fact that this empire, which was more degenerate than virile, had resisted them during this long period is surprising. It is strong evidence of the hand of God directing and restraining in order to bring His purposes to pass at the right moment. In 1453 the Turks captured Constantinople, and the Byzantine empire came to an end. The special significance of this fact was that this empire formed the last vestige of that ancient world of Greece and Rome, with which it was in touch by direct historical continuity.

(27) We have already noticed the effect upon the west of the revival of ancient literature occasioned by the escape to Italy of many Byzantine scholars and *litterateurs*. As well as the paganisation of Italy in the sense which we have noted, the chief result was a general stimulus to thought. Not only an interest in the heathen classical literature of the past was stirred up, but the minds of scholars were directed to Christian origins and to the Greek text of the New Testament.

(28) Contact with the thought and the art of the ancient world created an unrest in western Europe, a dissatisfaction with the ignorance and superstition of the times, which, in the long run, reinforced the protest against ecclesiastical worldliness that had existed since the twelfth century. This widening of outlook was intensified by the discovery of America towards the close of the fifteenth century. The intellectual effect of this discovery was not lessened by the fact that the New World immensely increased the wealth and influence of Spain, and thus indirectly of the papal authorities at Rome. The new intellectual movement, known as humanism, produced the great Dutch scholar Erasmus and his friend John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's. In lectures, sermons and writings men such as these passed on what intellectual enlightenment they dared, without coming into open conflict with the traditions of the church or the ecclesiastical authorities.

(29) This movement of thought was assisted by the invention of an art without which it might never have come to maturity. This was printing. The actual inventor is unknown, and therefore the lines of approach which led him to his discovery. For commercial reasons the early printers guarded their secret, and produced books to look as much like manuscripts as possible. However that may be, the outstanding fact of importance is that within three years after the capture of Constantinople the first book to be printed in Europe, the Latin Bible, came from the press of Gutenberg at Mainz in Germany. When the Reformation broke out, the printing presses were available to carry its message far and wide in comparative haste and at small cost. No moment in the history of Europe was more

opportune for the invention of printing than the middle of the fifteenth century, just as today one cannot but believe that the invention of speedy means of transport indicates an intention on God's part to have the Gospel carried to the remote parts of the world possibly by a single generation.

An Expectant World

(30) Thus, at the opening of the sixteenth century, we see a Europe restless, loosed from the moorings of generations, expectant of it knew not what. God's hour was soon to strike that would bring life from the dead. We see Him moving in divine majesty over the scene. He had waited long for the repentance and reformation from within that never came. "The iniquity of the Amorites," if we may so put it, was at last full. The inhumanities of the Inquisition used in the Name of Christ in defence of a regime of vice and crime had reduced morality, religion and Christianity to a mockery, and let loose hell in the world. And so at the right moment the Byzantine empire fell; the Mohammedans occupied south-eastern Europe, where they were unconsciously to play an important part in the ensuring of the success of the Reformation; the mind of Europe awoke; and the means necessary for the propagation of the Gospel were brought into being. In our generation there are certain similarities to this situation. For what is God preparing today?

(31) Spiritually things had gone from bad to worse. The Inquisition seemed to be succeeding in the work for which it was founded. By the year 1500 Lollardism in England had outwardly disappeared. It remained only in secret holes and corners. The Waldensian church was reduced to impotence, and its extermination seemed only a matter of time. The Turks had occupied the Balkans, and the Bosnian Protestants had been engulfed by them. In Bohemia a remnant of Hussites remained, but their influence was gone, and they were not expanding. The powerful protest made sixty years previously at the Council of Basle had vanished. Everywhere "heresy" seemed to be dying out. This fact was noted with triumphant congratulation by the Fifth Lateran Council, which met at Rome between 1512 and 1517. On the 5th of May 1514 all dissidents were cited to appear and plead before the Council, and an invitation was sent to the Bohemian Christians to do so. There was no reply. The orator of the Council was able to exclaim, "Now nobody contradicts, no one opposes." The same day an edict was passed for the perpetual elimination of heretics from the church, to all the horrible barbarities then in use against Christians being added the penalty of leaving their bodies unburied. In March 1517 the Council was dissolved, and, as a historian has expressed it, "the assembled prelates and princes separated with complacency and confidence, and with mutual congratulations on the peace, unity and purity of the apostolic Church."

(32) The failure to respond to the challenge of the Lateran Council issued in May 1514 seemed to indicate that the papacy was triumphant and that all Christian witness was dead. We pass forward three and a half years to the day that has been rightly called the most momentous as yet in the history of Europe, the 31st of October 1517. On that date a young doctor in the University of Wittenberg nailed upon the church door in the town a copy of the great Evangelical theses which formed the basis of Reformation doctrine. Their author was Martin Luther. The complacent authorities at Rome were blind to many signs of the times. But for ten years there had been going on something which they could not have been aware of, had they wished. This was the fierce spiritual struggle in Martin Luther's heart. God not only brought political and social factors to a crisis. When the time was ripe, He had His man ready. In the year 1503 young Luther found a Latin Bible in the University Library at Erfurt and began to study it. It brought him under deep conviction of sin. Year

after year his struggle for peace went on. The very meaning of the Scriptures had been distorted by human tradition. Thus Luther had been taught to believe that the expression "the righteousness of God" in the Epistle to the Romans referred to God's righteous judgment against sin. Gradually the Holy Spirit brought him light, and he came to realise that this was God's own righteousness available for him in Christ. He was helped by Staupitz, the Augustinian Vicar-General, and occasionally by other human friends in the monastery to which he had retired in a vain attempt to find peace of soul. Light dawned, but final assurance came when he was on a visit to Rome, and was struggling on his knees up the Pilate staircase. All that he had read in the Scriptures was now summed up, as it were, and brought to his remembrance by the Holy Spirit in the phrase which seemed to resound in his ears, "The just shall live by faith." The struggles, trials, fears and despair of so many years bore fruit in the peace and assurance that came to Luther's own heart, and all that anguish we can now look back upon as God's forging in an individual heart, by the fierceness of bitter testing, an instrument that would be the means of bringing salvation to countless millions. Humanly speaking, our own spiritual history and that of all those in every part of the world today who rejoice in the Gospel of salvation passed through the bottle-neck of the spiritual struggle in Martin Luther's heart.

Luther's Spiritual Struggle

(33) The immediate cause of the publication of Luther's theses was the sale of indulgences throughout Germany by Tetzel, the pope's agent. These indulgences increased in scope according to the price paid for them. Some of Luther's parishioners at Wittenberg had purchased indulgences, and proclaimed their intention of continuing sinful practices on the strength of them. This greatly shocked Luther, who had found the forgiveness of sins in Christ, and opened his eyes to the unspirituality and immorality of the practice of selling indulgences. He still believed that the Roman authorities would condemn Tetzel, and it came as a surprise to him to find that the pope identified himself with what was going on. Within six weeks the Gospel was known all over Germany, and Luther by continual preaching and writing for the press proclaimed the Gospel and his growing conviction that the pope was antichrist. In the autumn of 1520 the pope excommunicated Luther and condemned his writings as heretical, but Luther's reply with the support of the University and citizens of Wittenberg was publicly to burn the Bull and to publish his treatise, "The Babylonish Captivity of the Church." In 1521 Luther was summoned under a safe conduct to Worms before the Emperor Charles V to answer for his teaching. He stood firm by Scripture and refused to retract a syllable unless it was proved to him from Scripture that he was wrong. On his way back he was carried off by his protector, the Elector of Saxony, who feared his life was in danger, to the fortress of Wartburg, where he spent the following months in translating the Bible into German.

(34) The Gospel increased greatly in Germany and spread quickly to every country in western Europe. The Protestants were suppressed in Germany by an Imperial Decree, and in the Low Countries, which formed part of the Spanish dominions, the Inquisition was immediately put into operation against them. In 1532 however, the Turks advanced from the south-east and threatened Vienna. If that city had fallen, European civilization would have been in immediate danger. The Emperor realized this and rescinded the decrees against Protestants in an attempt to unite all Christendom against the common enemy. In 1534, 1542, and 1555 agreements were made which had the effect of establishing Protestants and Protestantism on an equal footing with Romanism in the German empire. Germany was henceforth divided into states where the Protestant faith was

established and those which adhered to Romanism. Meanwhile the Gospel spread to other countries and everywhere created a ferment. In our sixth section we shall deal with its expansion and some of its results.

Reformation in England

(35) We cannot close the present brief account of the beginnings of the great revival of four hundred years ago without noticing a fact that is of particular importance to ourselves as Englishmen and of special interest to members of the Inter-varsity Fellowship. We have said that the spiritual history of millions hung upon the conflict that went on in the heart of Martin Luther. His experience was by God's grace the source of that great Gospel river that has flowed on with increasing volume from that day to this. Yet, as the ice began to melt high up on the frozen mountains, there was at least one other trickle which merged itself in the stream that took its rise in Germany. This little trickle of the water of life actually appeared first.

(36) In the year 1516 Erasmus published at Basle his edition of the Greek New Testament, the first occasion on which the original text was available to any but a negligibly small minority in western Europe. Naturally Cambridge, with which Erasmus was so closely connected, was one of the first places to receive and study it. It was read by Thomas Bilney, a member of Trinity Hall, and brought about his conversion in the year 1516. Bilney gathered round him a company that resembled the Holy Club in Oxford over two hundred years later. These men discussed and studied the New Testament in the original, and as soon as the Reformation broke out in Germany got in touch with the Reformers. Among them were Thomas Cranmer, a student of Jesus College and Nicholas Ridley, afterwards to become heroes of the faith in England. These men owed their conversion to Thomas Bilney and the Greek New Testament. Bilney was martyred under Henry VIII in 1533. He was a small man of a timid disposition, made strong and enterprising by his new faith.

(37) Thus, while the waters of life burst out over western Europe in a great united stream, we may yet say that the truth in England may be traced to a source of its own, and that even if Martin Luther had never existed, reformation might possibly have taken place in our own country. This goes to show that though Luther, spiritual and intellectual giant as he was, was God's man for the moment, the real enlightening power did not lie in any human instrument at all, but in the Scriptures now made available and free to all who would come to them to drink the water of life. The study, dissemination and publication of the Scriptures brought to Europe in the sixteenth century life from the dead.

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VI

THE OPEN DOOR

A.D. 1517-1920

(1) The huge forces stirred up by the Reformation produced a situation which continued in the main unchanged till the beginning of the twentieth century. It was as if God arose to judgment to help all the meek upon earth. Harvest time had come. The Reformation is inseparable from the Evangelical revival and missionary activity which were its natural corollary. The spiritual and social upheaval, brought into being by the spark lighted at Wittenberg, took roughly two hundred years to settle down. The Christian church fought for the recognition of fundamental Christian doctrine and practice, and when she had won their recognition she set out upon her primary, long-forgotten task of carrying her rediscovered Gospel to the uttermost parts of the world. When we remember the great commission, the purpose for which the church is in the world, we shall make no mistake about the meaning of God's moving, as we have seen Him move, to bring about the revival of the sixteenth century. Its purpose was not social nor political. Its ultimate purpose was missionary. As the Holy Spirit strove with Martin Luther, He had in view the perishing millions of China, Africa or South America, and the great upheavals in national life which then took place throughout Europe were the preparation of a background from which the Gospel might be sent to the world. The Reformers rediscovered and formulated the Gospel for us, the missionaries of the Evangelical revival took that Gospel to those who needed it. For two hundred years, then, the Gospel was in preparing; for another two hundred the church enjoyed the opportunity of carrying it over the world.

(2) In the present section we shall look first of all at the expansion of the true church during the four hundred years following the Reformation; we shall then describe and explain some of the political results of the Reformation, then we shall examine the secret of the power of Protestantism and the fundamental Protestant truths; afterwards we shall glance at the formation and mutual relationship of the various Protestant churches.

German Protestantism

(3) The starting-point of the Reformation; as we have seen, was the 31st of October 1517. Within a generation from this day the Gospel was known and accepted throughout north-western Europe. During the next four hundred years the nations that had accepted it rose to a position of freedom, culture and enlightenment, some of them becoming the most influential nations in the world. These social conditions have fluctuated markedly in proportion as they have remained true to the Gospel of the Reformation or have discarded or lost it. On the other hand, those nations which rejected the Gospel, among them being some of the most powerful in Europe at the time, either sank into insignificance or passed through violent social upheavals. Another remarkable phenomenon is the harm done to Protestantism by those Protestants who, even under great provocation, took up arms in its cause, although they may have emerged victorious, and, in contrast, the great advances made by the Gospel as the result of the sufferings of the martyrs. From the time that Luther first became prominent at Wittenburg the Emperor Charles V spent his life until his abdication nearly forty years later in attempts to crush Protestantism. Every attempt resulted in a greater success for the cause he hated. He was foiled partly by the political constitution of the German states, many of which had independent sovereign rulers with whose internal jurisdiction the Emperor could not interfere. Thus,

almost at once, the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse protected Luther and recognised the Gospel in their dominions. Gradually toleration came. The Diet of Spire, which met in 1529, is remarkable for the great protest of the reformed princes, from which the honourable name of Protestant is derived. At the instigation of the Romanist princes and bishops, the Diet had passed an enactment, granting toleration to the princes and states that had already accepted the reformed religion, but forbidding its existence outside their boundaries. This would have meant, as it was intended to mean, the disappearance of the reformed religion in a generation. The princes saw this, refused to accept it, and drew up their famous protest:

(4) "We cannot consent to its repeal (*i.e.*, of the edict of toleration of 1526). . . .because this would be to deny our Lord Jesus Christ, to reject His Holy Word, and thus give Him just reason to deny us before His Father, as He has threatenedSeeing thatthere is no sure doctrine but such as is conformable to the Word of God; that the Lord forbids the teaching of any other doctrine; that each text of the Holy Scriptures ought to be explained by other and clearer textswe are resolved, with the grace of God, to maintain the pure and exclusive preaching of His Holy Word, such as it is contained in the Biblical books of the Old and New Testaments, without adding anything thereto that may be contrary to it"

(5) The year 1530 is noteworthy for the great Confession of Augsburg, drawn up by Luther's friend, the reformer Melancthon, signed by seven princes and the representatives of two free towns, and read before the Emperor and assembled magnates at the Diet of Augsburg. It sets forth in a series of articles the Protestant doctrine of God, of salvation, justification by faith, and the Protestant view of the church and the sacraments. It is Lutheran, not Calvinistic, and formed the basis for many of the subsequent confessions of the Protestant churches. It is a restatement of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith after their disappearance through generations except among a scattered and unrecognized remnant. In 1555, after fighting had taken place, an edict of full toleration and recognition was won at the Peace of Augsburg. The subsequent history of Protestantism in Germany is saddened by the occurrence of the terrible Thirty Years' War, 1618-48, which was, in the main, a war of religion. The Romanists, under the Emperor Maximilian, had almost won the whole of Germany, when the Protestant cause was saved by Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, who in 1630 invaded Germany and turned the tide of battle. The war ended in stalemate when the civilization of Germany had been almost wiped out and the country reduced to despair. Protestantism survived as the established religion in Prussia and several other states, but the deadness which descended during the eighteenth century on so many of the national churches overwhelmed the Lutheran church, and the contribution of Germany to the revival in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was small. The theology of her universities became corrupted by rationalism, and though this sort of theology was for the most part confined to Germany during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it gave birth in the 'eighties of last century to the popular higher criticism which has so much crippled the Gospel throughout the world.

(6) The second country which has had more influence on the course of Protestantism than any other is Switzerland. The two most influential centres were Zurich, where the Reformation was established in 1525 and led by Zwingli, and Geneva. At the latter place, Farel and other French Reformers had been preaching, but Geneva steps into prominence with the arrival in 1536 of John

Calvin. Calvin laboured in Geneva until his death in 1564. In leadership, influence, spiritual and intellectual power he was Luther's equal. The theology set forth in his "Institutes," an exhaustive and penetrating exposition of scriptural doctrine, forms the basis of the confessions of many of the Protestant churches. Before 1530 the cities of Berne and Basle had also firmly embraced the reformed faith. The Swiss Reformers differed from Luther in their teaching upon the Lord's Supper. They followed the Scripture to the logical conclusion that the ordinance is no more than a memorial feast, while Luther maintained the compromise doctrine of "consubstantiation," teaching that at consecration the body and blood of Christ were added to the elements, which, however, were not themselves transformed. To the sorrow of the Swiss a meeting between Luther and Zwingli failed to result in any agreement. The Swiss Reformers, under the guidance of Scripture, returned to primitive Christian simplicity of worship, while Luther was never able quite to rid himself of a veneration for images. The Swiss churches did not share directly in the Evangelical revival, and after its brilliant beginnings the energy of the Reformation in Switzerland seems to have been directed into social and cultural channels.

Reformation in England

(7) In our own country the establishment of the Reformation has led to incalculable results for the welfare of the world. We have seen how the Greek Testament brought light to Bilney even before the German Reformation had begun. But there was one factor in the English Reformation which differed from that of all other countries. On the continent the Gospel first came and was followed by the break with the papacy. In England King Henry VIII took the opportunity of breaking with the papacy in 1534 over the question of his divorce and suppressed the monasteries in order to appropriate their revenues, but remained to his life's end a staunch adherent of Romanist doctrines. During the last half of his reign he was the only Anglo-catholic King who has yet ruled England. He burnt to death Protestants for their faith and Romanists for their adherence to the pope. Yet he made concessions. In 1538, only two years after the martyrdom of Tyndale, the translator of the New Testament, he had a copy of the English Bible placed in every church in the country. On his death in 1547 Edward VI, who appears to have been a truly converted child of God, ascended the throne and reigned for six years. This reign is notable for the two editions of the Book of Common Prayer, the first in 1549 being a compromise and more or less of an Anglo-Catholic complexion, the second in 1552 being truly scriptural and Protestant and still today the only legal prayer book of the Church of England. At this time Protestantism was not popular in the country as a whole outside London, owing to dislike of the regency of the King's uncles. It needed the martyrdoms of Mary Tudor's reign (1553-58) to establish Protestantism in the hearts of the English people. About three hundred persons were burnt alive under the Statute of 1401, including Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, and Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester, and numbers of humbler folk of both sexes. "Now will I no more pray for you than I would for a dog," said the bishop to a Christian lad of Colchester whom he had sentenced. Without hesitation the boy answered: "But I will pray for you, my lord." The result of this attempt on the part of the pope and the Queen to destroy the reformed faith in England was the opposite to that which was intended. The people welcomed Queen Elizabeth to the throne in November 1558, the second Prayer Book of Edward VI was restored and the Protestant Church of England established.

(8) In the seventeenth century there came a partial reaction in the church led by the bigot Archbishop Laud and supported by King Charles I. Spiritual life left the church, to return only

partially at the time of the Evangelical revival. The Church of England became temporarily a persecuting church, though there was, of course, no approach to the horrors of the Inquisition. However, imprisonment and the loss of ears were included in Laud's treatment of Christians. The Reformation was carried to its logical conclusion in the country among the Nonconformist sects of the Puritans, whose religious movement brought England under Oliver Cromwell to great heights of power and prestige. The Puritans have been misunderstood and maligned. We have been too ready to believe the testimony of their enemies. The best Puritans were men of deep spirituality and practical common sense. They were no more "kill-joys" than are Evangelical Christians of today, though they are often called so by their enemies because they refrain from worldly amusements. Some of the Puritans were mistaken in attempting to impose Christian standards upon the unconverted by the force of law or of arms, but they are not alone in this mistake, and they came nearer to success in making England in a tangible sense a Christian country than anyone else before or since. They had not yet caught the missionary vision, but God's time had not come. Their marvellous grasp of Christian doctrine and their knowledge of the Bible are well illustrated by John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, a book whose spiritual value has been universally recognised and has been the means of spiritual uplift and comfort to thousands. A typical Puritan preacher and writer was Richard Baxter of Kidderminster (1615-91). He was ordained by the Bishop of Worcester about 1640, but left the Church of England at the Restoration in 1660. He lived and preached at Acton thenceforward so far as the oppressive laws would allow, and in 1681 was brought up before Judge Jeffreys and kept in prison for eighteen months. He lived to see the dawn of toleration and the Protestant succession. He wrote over two hundred works, which fill twenty-three volumes in the edition of 1830, expository evangelistic and controversial. Here is an extract from his *Call to the unconverted to turn and live*:

Baxter's Writings

(9) "Indeed, if you will needs believe that you shall be saved without conversion, then you believe a falsehood: and if I should preach that to you, I should preach a lie: this were not to believe God, but the devil, and your own deceitful hearts. God hath his promise of life, and the devil hath his promise of life. God's promise is 'Return and live.' The devil's promise is 'You shall live whether you turn or not.' The word of God is as I have showed you: 'Except you be converted, and become as little children, you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.' 'Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.' 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' The devil's word is, 'You may be saved without being born again and converted; you may do well enough without being holy. God doth but frighten you; he is more merciful than to do as he saith; he will be better to you than his word.' And alas, the greatest part of the world believe this word of the devil before the word of God; just as our first sin and misery came into the world. God said to our first parents, 'If ye eat, ye shall die.' And the devil contradicteth him and saith, 'Ye shall not die'; and the woman believed the devil before God. So now the Lord saith, 'Turn or die'; and the devil saith, 'You shall not die if you do but cry God mercy at last, and give over the act: of sin when you can practise it no longer: And this is the word that the world believes. O heinous wickedness, to believe the devil before God!

(10) "And yet that is not the worst: but blasphemously they call this a believing and trusting in God, when they put him in the shape of Satan, who was a liar from the beginning; and when they believe that the word of God is a lie, they call this trusting God, and say they believe in him and trust on him for salvation. Where did ever God say, that the unregenerate, unconverted, unsanctified shall be saved? Show such word in Scripture. I challenge you, if you can. Why, this is the devil's word, and to believe it is to believe the devil, and the sin which is commonly called presumption - and do you call this believing and trusting God? There is enough in the word of God to comfort and strengthen the hearts of the sanctified: but not a word to strengthen the hands of wickedness, nor to give men the least hope of being saved, though they be never sanctified.

(11) "But if you will turn and come into the way of mercy, the mercy of the Lord is ready to entertain you. Then trust God for salvation boldly and confidently, for he is engaged by his word to save you. He will be a father to none but his children, and he will save none but those that forsake the world, the devil, and the flesh and come into his family to be members of his Son, and have communion with his saints. But if they will not come in, it is owing to themselves. His doors are open; he keeps none back: he never sent such a message as this to any of you - 'It is now too late; I will not receive thee, though thou be converted.' He might have done so, and done you no wrong; but he did not; he doth not to this day; he is still ready to receive you, if you were but ready unfeignedly, and with all your hearts, to turn."

(12) If we contrast this beautiful scriptural appeal to the unsaved with the extract from Rolle, the fourteenth-century moralist (p. 87), we shall perceive at once the change from darkness to light brought about at the Reformation. The familiar ring of Baxter's words in our own ears today shows how faithfully our predecessors of the Evangelical revival have passed on to us the great truths of the Gospel rediscovered in the sixteenth century and beloved by the faithful in the days of Bunyan and Baxter.

(13) The Restoration in 1660 of the immoral and licentious King Charles II brought a reaction against the Gospel in this country. The court was vicious and the country followed suit. Yet, in the national sense, the Church was Protestant, as is clearly shown by the failure of James II to re-establish Romanism and his deposition in 1688. The Protestant succession was assured by the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement passed during William and Mary's reign, but the dead hand of worldliness had settled down on the church. Outwardly it was a Protestant church, but it simply regarded itself as a branch of the civil service and a sort of bulwark of tradition and respectability in the country. Yet, at the close of the seventeenth century, the repressive laws against Nonconformists were repealed, and forty years later we may date the beginning of the Evangelical revival.

Reformation in Scotland

(14) In Scotland the course of the Gospel was slower but encountered more severe difficulties. The first preacher was Patrick Hamilton, martyred in 1528 suffering for six hours at the stake owing to the dampness of the faggots; but, although the truth increased among the people, no substantial change took place till the days of John Knox, the apostle of Scotland, who came to the country in 1547 and spent henceforth much of his time there. He constantly prayed for the conversion of

Scotland. No great spiritual revival took place till King James VI left Scotland to succeed to the throne of England, although the Scottish Kirk had been organised by Knox in the days of Mary Stuart. In the seventeenth century Archbishop Laud failed in an attempt to force bishops and the Prayer Book upon Scotland, but this attack on the country's liberties was renewed at the Restoration in 1660. The Presbyterians resisted, and a severe persecution ensued lasting twenty-eight years. The Christians were known as Covenanters because they had signed a manifesto known as the Solemn League and Covenant. They were outlawed, their worship forbidden, and all who were caught were executed. Even the use of torture was not unknown. The Covenanters, hunted from hill to hill, lived very near to God. Their faith and power in prayer were amazing. The miracles of Pentecostal days reappeared among them, and there is at least one story of a young man being raised from the dead after an old Covenanter had prayed for thirty-seven hours by his body.* Their first martyr was the saintly Marquis of Argyll, hanged in Edinburgh in 1661. In 1688 relief came with the accession of William and Mary, and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland was re-established.

(15) The district where the Gospel encountered the greatest opposition of all before its final triumph was the Low Countries, which were part of the dominion of Spain. The first preacher and martyr was Jacob Spreng of Antwerp, who appeared in 1519, not two years after the publication of the Wittenberg theses. The Inquisition was let loose upon the Christians with the most appalling barbarities, that cause the mind to reel and beggar description. Historians have estimated that between 1523 and 1556 there were from fifty thousand to a hundred thousand martyrdoms. The smaller figure is likely to be nearer the truth, but so great was the carnage that the whole social life of the country was strained and the Government was obliged to call a halt. The Dutch took their Protestantism, as did Scotland, from Geneva, and large crowds invaded churches and smashed altars and idols to pieces. The repressive measures continued until the nation took up arms under William, Prince of Orange, and after years of fighting and suffering the nation won its freedom from Spain. But the Dutch church seemed to lose its spirituality by the close of the seventeenth century.

Protestantism in France

(16) In Scandinavia the Reformation was quickly established without persecution, the national churches being Lutheran. The Gospel made great headway in Poland, which for some time during the sixteenth century became a haven for the adherents of every religious view, there being complete toleration. But the country was won back to Rome by a deliberate Jesuit campaign, and subsequently lost its independence by partition between Russia, Austria and Germany. This was only restored at the conclusion of the last war. The recent sufferings of this country have probably been greater than they have ever been in the past. In Bohemia and Moravia the Jesuits obtained the expulsion of the Protestant pastors in the seventeenth century, and those districts lapsed to Romanism. In Spain and Italy the Inquisition succeeded in crushing the Gospel by the systematic massacre of all Christian people. In France Protestantism nearly took root. The Protestants, who were very powerful, made the mistake of taking up arms against the Government, and three fierce religious wars were fought. One of the outstanding atrocities was the murder, by order of the king, of all Protestants who could be found on the 23rd of August 1572, the eve of St. Bartholomew's day. The mutilated body of Admiral Coligny, the Protestant leader, was sent to Rome as a trophy, and the

* see J. Howie, *The Scotts Worthies* p. 293.

pope had a medal struck in honour of the massacre. In 1598 the Protestants won toleration in the famous Edict of Nantes. King Louis XIV at the instigation of the pope revoked the Edict in 1685, though its provisions had for long been disregarded. For some time, in fact, Protestants had been subjected to the visitations of the dragonnades: soldiers compulsorily billeted upon them, who occurred their homes, lived on their property, and outraged their women. Many Protestants escaped from France to England, many were imprisoned for life or condemned to the galleys. In the great prison fortress near Marseilles can still be seen the word "recistez" roughly carved in the stone, for the encouragement of her fellow-prisoners, by one of the Christian women imprisoned there for life.

(17) During the troubles of the seventeenth century various companies of English Puritans found some respite by leaving their country and settling in America. These companies took the Gospel with them, and it was in the American settlements that the first fruits of the Gospel in social life and complete toleration began to be seen. The Protestantism carried by the settlers to America laid the foundation of the liberties of the United States, and American Christians have been, and are, some of the most spiritual-minded and active in the work of God.

(18) In this country today, in spite of warning notes that are sounding ever more loudly from certain countries overseas, we take our religious liberty as a matter of course. It is not, however, a matter of course. Do we think of those who, under God, won it for us and the price they paid? Should we have paid a similar price? Do we think of the thousands who perished in the dungeons of the Inquisition? Do we remember the martyrs among our own countrymen, Tyndale, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, who perished in the flames, that the light of truth should never go out? The Scotch Covenanters, harried from moor to moor, torn from their families, sold as slaves, have made us their debtors. So have the faithful Puritans who left us such a literature, nowadays neglected and unread, and in days when danger was still great, stood for truth and righteousness. "Their works do follow them." They follow to this day Countless men and women, ourselves among them, will be able to tell them that the suffering, the toil and the anguish were not in vain, but by God's grace produced a great harvest. And among the questions that they will wish to ask us will be whether we guarded the truth of the Gospel which they suffered so much to win, whether we kept ourselves from being beguiled by the subtleties of their foes and ours, whether we passed on that same Gospel to our children unsullied by the traditions of men, and whether we were willing to pay the price that they paid for Christ's sake and ours.

(19) We have noticed that when the struggle with Rome was over, a kind of deadness settled down on the national churches. Our own country was no exception. During the eighteenth century the church was a state institution. The clergy cared chiefly for money. Preferment was what they sought after. Where they legally could, they held as many offices together as possible, in order to draw the emoluments. Rationalism and free thought were rampant. The reaction from the Puritanism of the mid-seventeenth century produced not only vice and worldliness but also infidelity. English rationalism was known as deism. It denied the Christian revelation. It reacted upon Germany, where it lay behind much of the rationalistic theology. In the eighteenth century infidelity increased in France, the most well-known figure with whom it was associated being Voltaire. It was this that constituted part of the driving-force behind the great revolution of 1789 and the succeeding years. Was the work of the Reformation to be undone?

Evangelical Revival

(20) God's answer was to produce in England and America the great Methodist and Evangelical revivals. In Oxford in 1729 John Wesley, rescued when a child only just in time from his father's burning house, founded with his brother Charles what was called the "Holy Club," a group of friends who studied the Scriptures and sought peace with God. Wesley was not converted till some time after he was ordained and had gone out under the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel as a missionary to American Indians. He determined to bring the Gospel back again to the people of England. Associated with him in his work were his brother Charles and his friend Whitefield. Wesley and Whitefield preached everywhere in the open air. The latter's favourite text was "Ye must be born again." When asked why he preached from it so often, he replied, "Because ye must be born again." The Methodist revival saved England from lapsing into infidelity or undergoing an upheaval such as the French Revolution. The revival met with contempt and opposition from the bishops and church authorities. Wesley did not intend to secede from the Church of England, but his followers were driven out and founded the various Methodist bodies, which some years ago were united in the single Methodist Church. The revival spread, however, rather later to the church, and as a result of it, a strong body of scriptural Evangelical Christians was formed within it. As so often in the days of revival the Spirit of God seemed to create an atmosphere in which it was natural for men to be converted. Many were brought to the Lord by themselves without any special appeal on the part of another. Thus there are instances of conversion through reading a devotional book, through the overhearing of a prayer, through dreams, through the words of a hymn, through a text displayed in a coach. Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, one of the great figures of the revival, was converted at an open-air meeting to which she stopped to listen. She maintained Wesley for many years as her chaplain and was in touch with all the Evangelical leaders of the day. Among these were Berridge, converted after being two years vicar of Everton, Bedfordshire, having been brought to realise the failure of his ministry by hearing what appeared to be a voice say, "Cease from thine own works"; Grimshaw, converted in 1739 shortly after Wesley; Henry Venn, vicar of Huddersfield; Romaine, the scholar; John Newton, a slave dealer and vicious man, converted on board ship, afterwards ordained; and Toplady, author of "Rock of Ages." An extract from John Wesley's Journal will illustrate the earnestness of their preaching and the power with which the Holy Spirit applied it to human hearts:

(21) "The next day, *Tuesday*, the 25th one in the town promised us the use of a large room; but he was prevailed upon to retract his promise before the hour of preaching came. I then designed going to the Cross, but the rain prevented; so that we were a little at a loss till we were offered a very convenient place by a 'woman which was a sinner.' I there declared 'Him' (about one o'clock) whom 'God hath exalted, to give repentance and remission of sins.' And God so confirmed the word of his grace that I marvelled any one could withstand Him. However, the prodigal held out till the evening, when I enlarged upon *her* sins and faith 'who washed our Lord's feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.' She was then utterly broken in pieces (as, indeed, was well-nigh the whole congregation), and came after me to my lodging, crying out, 'Oh, sir! What must I do to be saved?' Being now informed of her case, I said, 'Escape for your life. Return instantly to your husband.' She said, 'But how can it be? Which way can I go? He is above an hundred miles off. I have just received a letter from him, and he is at

Newcastle-upon-Tyne.' I told her, 'I am going for Newcastle in the morning; you may go with me. William Blow shall take you behind him.' And so he did. Glory be to the Friend of sinners! He hath plucked one more brand out of the fire. Thou poor sinner, thou hast 'received a prophet in the name of a prophet'; and thou art found of Him that sent him."

(22) A shorter extract will show the power of Wesley's preaching and the extraordinary effect it had upon his hearers:

(23) "Thur. 17 [Nov. 1743]. I preached at the Spen on Christ Jesus our 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.' I have seldom seen an audience so greatly moved since the time of my first preaching at Bristol. Men, women and children groaned and trembled exceedingly; many could not contain themselves in these bounds, but cried with a loud and bitter cry. It was the same at the meeting of the society, and likewise in the morning, while I was showing the happiness of those 'whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.' I afterwards spoke with twelve or fourteen of them severally; and found good ground to believe that God had given them to 'taste of the good word, and of the powers of the world to come.'"

(24) Up and down the country the people were aroused to a sense of sin and their need of personal salvation. Lady Huntingdon built chapels even in a fashionable resort such as Bath, and many great people, including the Prince of Wales and Horace Walpole, attended her meetings. Many scoffed, but others were gloriously converted, such as Lord Dartmouth and Lady Chesterfield. The Duchess of Marlborough asked indignantly if they really expected her to be saved like one of her own footmen. The bishops for the most part strenuously opposed the Gospel. "Church Methodism," said one, "is the disease of my Diocese: it shall be the business of my life to extirpate it." Mary Bosanquet, afterwards the wife of Fletcher, one of the Evangelical leaders, was turned out of her home when she was converted, and, after her husband's death, was refused communion by her husband's curate. Two or three generations elapsed before any Evangelical was appointed a bishop.

(25) In the second generation there were two great leaders. William Wilberforce, converted in 1785, was author in 1797 of a book which at the time made a great impression, *Practical View of the prevailing Religious System of professed Christians in the higher and middle classes, contrasted with real Christianity*. His great work as Member of Parliament was the abolition of the slave trade, accomplished in 1807, the first fruit in the social sphere of the Evangelical revival. The second great leader was Charles Simeon, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and Vicar of Holy Trinity Church there for over fifty years. He introduced Evangelicalism into University life, and to his life and work the various University Christian Unions, now affiliated in the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, can be traced. Further social results of the revival were seen in the activities of Lord Shaftesbury, who was the author of the first Factory Acts, converted as a child through one of his nurses. We may also mention Hannah More, the foundress of Sunday Schools, who was once met with the remark, "The lower classes are born to be wicked"; and Mrs. Fry, the heroine of prison visiting.

Finney's Preaching

(26) Later came the great American revivals between 1825 and 1858 the last spreading to Ireland and England; the foundation of the Salvation Army by William Booth in 1865; and the inauguration

of the Keswick Convention in 1875, as a result of the first visit to this country of D. L. Moody, the American Evangelist. Revival was by no means confined to the Church of England. Throughout the nineteenth century most Nonconformist churches shared it, and it is probable that in England and America alone more people were converted to God in the nineteenth century than in any other previous century throughout the whole world. A story from C. G. Finney's *Memoirs* will illustrate the remarkable scenes that took place during the American revival:

(27) "On the third Sabbath that I preached there, an aged man came to me as I was entering the pulpit and asked me if I would not go and preach in a school-house in his neighbourhood, about three miles distant, saying that they had never had any services there. He wished me to come as soon as I could. I appointed the next day, Monday, at five o'clock in the afternoon. It was a warm day. I left my horse at the village, and thought I would walk down, so that I should have no trouble in calling along on the people in the neighbourhood of the school-house. However, before I reached the place, having laboured so hard on the Sabbath, I found myself very much exhausted, and sat down by the way and felt as if I could scarcely proceed. I blamed myself for not having taken my horse.

(28) "But at the appointed hour I found the school-house full: and I could only get a standing-place near the open door. I read a hymn; and I cannot call it singing, for they seemed never to have had any church-music in that place. However, the people pretended to sing. But it amounted to about this: each one bawled in his own way. My ears had been cultivated by teaching church-music; and their horrible discord distressed me so much that, at first, I thought I must go out. I finally put both hands over my ears, and held them with my full strength. But this did not shut out the discords. I stood it, however, until they were through; and then I cast myself down on my knees, almost in a state of desperation, and began to pray. The Lord opened the windows of heaven and the spirit of prayer was poured out, and I let my whole heart go out in prayer.

(29) "I had taken no thought with regard to a text upon which to preach, but waited to see the congregation. As soon as I had done praying I arose from my knees and said: 'Up, yet you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city.' I told them I did not recollect where that text was; but I told them very nearly where they would find it, and then went on to explain it. I told them that there was such a man as Abraham, and who he was; and that there was such a man as Lot, and who he was; their relations to each other; their separating from each other on account of differences between their herdmen; and that Abraham took the hill country, and Lot settled in the vale of Sodom. I then told them how exceedingly wicked Sodom became, and what abominable practices they fell into. I told them that the Lord decided to destroy Sodom, and visited Abraham, and informed him what He was about to do; that Abraham prayed to the Lord to spare Sodom, if he found so many righteous there; and the Lord promised to do so for their sakes; that then Abraham besought him to save it for a certain less number, and the Lord said he would spare it for their sakes; that he kept on reducing the number, until he reduced the number of righteous persons to ten; and God promised him that if he found ten righteous persons in the city, he would spare it. Abraham made no further request, and Jehovah left him. But it was found that there was but one righteous person there,

and that was Lot, Abraham's nephew. And the men said to Lot, Hast thou here any besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place; for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.'

(30) "While I was relating these facts I observed the people looking as if they were angry. Many of the men were in their shirt-sleeves; and they looked at each other and at me, as if they were ready to fall upon me and chastise me on the spot. I saw their strange and unaccountable looks and could not understand what I was saying that had offended them. However, it seemed to me that their anger rose higher and higher as I continued the narrative. As soon as I had finished the narrative, I turned upon them and said that I understood that they had never had a religious meeting in that place; and that therefore I had a right to take it for granted, and was compelled to take it for granted, that they were an ungodly people. I pressed that home upon them with more and more energy, with my heart full almost to bursting.

(31) "I had not spoken to them in this strain of direct application, I should think, more than a quarter of an hour, when all at once an awful solemnity seemed to settle down upon them; the congregation began to fall from their seats in every direction and cried for mercy. If I had had a sword in each hand, I could not have cut them off their seats as fast as they fell. Indeed, nearly the whole congregation were either on their knees or prostrate, I should think, in less than two minutes from this first shock that fell upon them. Every one prayed for himself, who was able to speak at all.

(32) "Of course, I was obliged to stop preaching; for they no longer paid any attention. I saw the old man who had invited me there to preach, sitting about in the middle of the house, and looking around with utter amazement. I raised my voice almost to a scream, to make him hear, and pointing to him said, 'Can't you pray?' He instantly fell upon his knees and with a stentorian voice poured himself out to God; but he did not at all get the attention of the people. I then spake as loud as I could and tried to make them attend to me. I said to them, 'You are not in hell yet; and now let me direct you to Christ.' For a few moments I tried to hold forth the Gospel to them, but scarcely any of them paid any attention. My heart was so overflowing with joy at such a scene that I could hardly contain myself. It was with much difficulty that I refrained from shouting and giving glory to God.

(33) "As soon as I could sufficiently control my feelings I turned to a young man who was close to me and was engaged in praying for himself, laid my hand on his shoulder, thus getting his attention, and preached in his ear Jesus. As soon as I got his attention to the cross of Christ, he believed, was calm and quiet for a minute or two, and then broke out in praying for the others. I then turned to another, and took the same course with him, with the same result; and then another, and another,

(34) "In this way I kept on, until I found the time had arrived when I must leave them, and go and fulfil an appointment in the village. I told them this and asked the old man who had invited me there to remain and take charge of the meeting, while I went to my appointment. He did so. But there was too much interest, and there were too many wounded souls, to dismiss the meeting; and so it was held all night. In the morning there were still those there that could not get away; and they were carried to a private house in

the neighbourhood, to make room for the school. In the afternoon they sent for me to come down there, as they could not yet break up the meeting.

(35) "When I went down the second time, I got an explanation of the anger manifested by the congregation during the introduction of my sermon the day before. I learned that the place was called Sodom, but I knew it not, and that there was but one pious man in the place, and him they called Lot. This was the old man that invited me there. The people supposed that I had chosen my subject and preached to them in that manner because they were so wicked as to be called Sodom. This was a striking coincidence; but so far as I was concerned, it was altogether accidental.

(36) "I have not been in that place for many years. A few years since, I was labouring in Syracuse, in the state of New York. Two gentlemen called upon me one day: one an elderly man, the other not quite fifty years of age. The younger man introduced the older one to me as Deacon W--, elder in his church; saying that he had called on me to give a hundred dollars to Oberlin College. The older man in his turn introduced the younger, saying, 'This is my minister, the Rev. Mr. Cross. He was converted under your ministry.' Whereupon Mr. Cross said to me, 'Do you remember preaching at such a time in Antwerp, and in such a part of the town, in the school-house, in the afternoon, and that such a scene, describing it, occurred there' I said, 'I remember it very well and can never forget it while I remember anything ' Well,' he said, 'I was then but a young man, and was converted in that meeting.' He had been many years a successful minister. Several of his children have obtained their education in our college at Oberlin.

(37) "As nearly as I can learn, although that revival came upon them so suddenly, and was of such a powerful type, the converts were sound and the work permanent and genuine. I never heard of any disastrous reaction as having taken place.

Hymns of the Revival

(38) "A remarkable feature of the Evangelical revival was the outburst of praise, expressed in hundreds of hymns written by its leaders and poets. The hymns that we are accustomed to sing in church today date with few exceptions from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Evangelicals were the first to introduce hymns as a regular feature of worship in the Church of England, just as they were the first to introduce communion services at eight o'clock in the morning, in order to provide an opportunity for the growing number of converts to come. Charles Wesley wrote many hymns, of which some of the best known are "Christ, Whose glory fills the skies?" "Hark! the herald angels sing," "Ye servants of God," "O for a heart to praise my God," "Jesu, Lover of my soul," "Oh for a thousand tongues to sing," "Love Divine, all love excelling," "Soldiers of Christ, arise," "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," "Come, Thou long-expected Jesus." These were mostly written between 1737 and 1750. A faithful figure who bore witness for God in the dark days before the revival came, and forms a sort of connecting link between the Puritans of the seventeenth century and the Methodists of the eighteenth, was the Congregationalism minister Isaac Watts. He was the author of a large number of hymns, many of which are now unknown. Others are among the most familiar, such as "Before Jehovah's awful Throne," "O God, our help in ages past," "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun," "There is a land of pure delight," "Not all the blood of beasts," "When I survey the wondrous," "Come, let us join our cheerful songs." These were written between 1707 and 1719. They are echoes of the age of John Bunyan and Richard Baxter. The greatest poet of the

revival was William Cowper of Olney. He wrote, "Jesus, where'er Thy people meet," "There is a fountain filled with Blood," "Oh for a closer walk with God," "God moves in a mysterious way," "Hark! my soul it is the Lord" "Sometimes a light surprises." These were written between 1768 and 1779. Besides "Rock of Ages" A. M. Toplady wrote "Inspirer and Hearer of prayer" (1774-75). About the same time John Newton wrote "How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds," "Glorious things of thee are spoken," "Why should I fear the darkest hour," There were many minor hymn writers of the revival. The tradition was carried on in the nineteenth century by Bishop Heber, who wrote "Holy, holy, holy"; H. F. Lyte, author of "Abide with me"; Mrs. Alexander, a prolific hymn writer, whose best known is perhaps "There is a green hill far away"; and, later still, by Bishop Christopher Wordsworth, Horatio Bonar and Frances Ridley Havergal.

Advance of Missions

(39) It was the Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century that was the means used by God to turn the mind of the church to the perishing millions who had waited in vain for generation after generation for the Gospel light which had never come. Some of the American colonists preached the Gospel to the Indians, but the first systematic missionary efforts were made by the Moravian Brethren, founded in 1727 by Count Zinzendorf at Dresden. In a short time they established mission stations in widely distant parts of the world. In England, when the work of the revival had become established, the great missionary societies were formed all within a few years of each other: the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792; the London Missionary Society in 1795; the Wesleyan in 1796; the Church Missionary Society in 1799; and the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge had been founded about a hundred years previously, but seem to have made comparatively little advance. The hero of the B.M.S. was William Carey, a shoemaker of Leicester, who went out to India and did valuable translation as well as evangelistic work. The first to offer to the C.M.S. was Henry Martyn, Senior Wrangler at Cambridge, one of Charles Simeon's curates, who left behind him his fiancée, whom he never saw again, and went to India. No English boat would carry missionaries, and Martyn had to go in the capacity of chaplain to the East India Company. He was able to work among the Indians, however, and was the means of leading at least three notable converts to Christ. He died, seven years after he left England, in Asia Minor on his way home by land. In its earliest years the C.M.S. had money but few recruits, and it was long before any advance was made. The early missionaries had no furlough and lived and died at their posts. In these days of quick transport, regular furlough, sound medical care and attention, how much less does it seem that the sacrifice must be than was demanded of the pioneers! The L.M.S. first sent missionaries to the South Sea Islands, while the C.M.S. and the B.M.S. went to India. Their work was opposed by the British Government, and it was some time before they received recognition. In 1812 the B.M.S. went to Ceylon, and in 1813 to Jamaica, where the Moravians had been carrying on work since 1754. The C.M.S. were at first at Tinnevely in southern India and worked up the country to the north, reaching Amritsar in the Punjab in 1850. Both the C.M.S. and the B.M.S. sent workers to the west African coasts, the latter as early as 1795, this district having aroused special interest owing to the slave trade. The B.M.S. evangelized the Congo region, while in 1841 the C.M.S. advanced up the Niger. In 1875 the C.M.S. started the wonderful work in Uganda, which, after the martyrdom of Bishop Hannington, resulted within almost a generation in the conversion of the king and the recognition of Christianity in the country. The first missionary to China since Nestorian days had

been Robert Morrison, who went there in the service of the East India Company, and died in 1834 knowing of only three converts. After 1840 China became open to mission work proper, and both the C.M.S. and the B.M.S. went in. About 1850 the Gospel reached the northern districts of Canada, while between 1860 and 1870 Japan opened to the Gospel. American missionaries were the first to enter, and the C.M.S. followed about 1868. By this time the Gospel had encircled the world. Some countries remained closed, as one or two do today, and an immense number of individuals have as yet had no chance to hear the good news of salvation. The work was carried on at first in the face of opposition from authorities in church and state, among many difficulties and at great sacrifice. Yet the advance made during the nineteenth century was phenomenal. Towards the close of the century many smaller societies dealing with particular localities came into being as the conscience of Christian people awoke more and more to the need of obedience to the Lord's command. Among all the missionary effort of the nineteenth century there is one phenomenon that is perhaps the most striking of all. The prophet Isaiah mentions the Chinese by name in connection with the Gospel (xlix. 12) and thus it seems almost in direct fulfillment of prophecy that the China Inland Mission was called into being by God through Hudson Taylor in 1863. Its story is one of heroism and sacrifice, not, as in former days, forced upon those who embarked on it by persecution, but voluntarily undertaken at the Master's call in love for those in need. The first party to sail for China, in 1866, including women and children, travelled in a sailing-ship and were nearly overwhelmed in two cyclones through which they passed. The journey occupied some four months. Often during the mission's history its missionaries have been in great danger from natural disturbances, or from the hostility of soldiers, rioters and latterly Communists, notably during the Boxer riots of 1900, when all foreigners were obliged to travel from the interior to the coast under circumstances of hardship and peril. Several missionaries lost their lives. "They wandered about," not indeed in "sheepskins and goatskins," but often in disguise, hiding in barns and travelling by night, hungry and weary, "of whom the world was not worthy."

(40) Every activity of the mission has been undertaken in dependence upon God and in believing prayer. Money is asked for only from God. The result has been that the needs of every missionary and member of the mission have been supplied since the mission was founded. When the exchange became adverse the income rose in proportion and fell again when the exchange improved. Thousands of Chinese are rejoicing in salvation and thousands more have heard the Gospel or come in contact with it. Today there is witness in every province of China, although of course vast districts in some of the provinces are untouched, and there are still only spots of light in a wide area of darkness. And so we see the fruit of the spiritual anguish of the Wittenberg monk, of the heart-searchings in the library at Trinity Hall, of the overwhelming anguish of the fires at Oxford and Smithfield. The river of life spread to one European country after another, received eagerly by peoples parched after generations of drought. Dammed up in one country, it broke out with all the more strength in the next. When it had established itself in sufficient force, it passed on through channels of self-sacrifice, love and obedience to India, Africa, the West Indies, northern Canada, China, Japan, while, with the coming of freedom to do so, Christian missions and churches were established in the Romanist countries of Europe. In the course of this wonderful four-centuries revival we may observe one significant omission. The Reformation reached Poland in force (though it was afterwards destroyed by the Jesuits), and Bohemia; but it went no further east. The Turks barred its way to the south-east, but to the north-east was a large country, wrapped in the darkness

of the eastern Greek church. No ray of Gospel light penetrated to this region. It had not received the true Gospel when it was first christianized. It did not come under the influence of the Reformation. In the eighteenth century when Mennonites and Lutherans reached it, their message did not affect the Government or its general social life. That country was Russia.

Reformers' Attitude to State

(41) We now turn to look at another side of the Reformers' work, the results of their message in the political sphere. This aspect raises questions today. There are those who think that the Reformers should have concentrated entirely on doctrinal matters and left political ones alone. Moreover, certain situations that arose as a result of this side of the activities of the Reformation created difficulties for the Reformers. It is perfectly true that, scripturally and ideally, the church is the whole company of believers gathered out from, and independent of, all peoples, nations and tongues. The purpose of its existence is to preach the Gospel and win souls, not to usurp the place of the state in governing the world. But the Reformers were realists as well as idealists. The historical facts are that in each country in which the Government was won over to an external recognition or establishment of the true faith, the Gospel prospered, many souls were won in that country, and in some cases the church so established became the channel of missionary blessing to distant heathen parts. On the other hand; wherever the Gospel was opposed and refused by the Government, it did not make its way among the peoples. Even in France, where it struggled long for recognition, the outcome of the struggle depended upon the attitude of the Government. The Reformers were not alive to every aspect of the question, but the Holy Spirit Who guided them was. Their eyes were not opened to the full scriptural position of the church in relationship with the state, because at the time the attempt to strive after such a position would have wrecked the great revival which they were the means of carrying out.

(42) The reason for their attitude and the line which they took lies in the history of the previous thousand years. We have seen the mistake that the church made in the fourth century, and the logical result of it, which was that the church became a sort of super-state, concerned with temporal government, claiming, through the one man whom she recognised as her head, powers of rulership over all the Governments of the world. One result of this attitude naturally was that Governments were vitally concerned with religion. The time had not arrived when the preservation of freedom of conscience came to be considered as the governmental ideal. The Government considered the religion that it recognised to be binding upon all its subjects as part of their allegiance to the state. The Reformers were brought up in this position and accepted it. It did not occur to them to attempt to alter it. They were therefore concerned with two things: first, to reform the recognised religion from abuses and see to it that it was scriptural; and secondly, to rescue the civil government from the pope. If there had ever been an opportunity to ask the state for recognition without establishment, it had gone by twelve hundred years before. As it was, the only possible way in which to protect the Gospel and ensure its dissemination was to set the civil government in opposition to the pope, and place it in the position of guardian of the faith. The Governments which had felt the papal yoke an intolerable burden were glad to take the opportunity of throwing it off. Then again, the Reformers emphasized what was quite correct, that the truths they taught were not new, but the primitive scriptural Christian faith, which had been corrupted and distorted by tradition and accommodation for centuries. They also saw, though not readily, that the pope was identified, not, as Luther at least at first expected him to be, with the true religion which they taught, but with

the corruption of it. They therefore rightly and logically rejected and denounced the whole papal and mediaeval system. The Reformers believed that the scriptural faith was one, and that obedience to the Scriptures was binding upon all men, nationally as well as individually. They did not stand for freedom of conscience. They held that no man had a right to false beliefs, and that it was the duty of the civil power as the instrument of God to suppress it. Before we condemn them, we must remember two things: first, that if the Governments had not protected the Gospel, if before the Gospel was established anyone had been allowed to broadcast any creed, it is likely that the Gospel would have gone under amid the babel of tongues, and the pope would have come once again into his own if only on the ground that he provided stability. Secondly, we must remember that, though the Reformers did not realise it, there lay within their Gospel all the potentialities of spiritual and social freedom, which developed as the light spread and the Gospel took hold of the hearts of men.

Reformers' View of Church

(43) Luther, Melancthon and the other Reformers therefore acted, not only as prophets, evangelists, preachers and teachers of the Word, but as advisers in ecclesiastical matters to the princes who had accepted the Reformation. They worked out a theory, which was perfectly consistent with the Scriptures, to explain theologically the attitude they took. They regarded church and state as one, just as the Old Testament Israel was the people of God. Yet there were really two churches: the outward visible church, which was indeed a reality in the sense that it was recognised by God, Who, for example, might bless a nation with temporal blessings owing to the existence of the visible church within it. The outward church implied national recognition of God. But the Reformers did not confound the visible church with the true. Within the visible church of professors was the invisible church of the elect, consisting of the whole company of faithful people, those truly born again and justified, known to God, if invisible to men. Calvin taught that it was not necessary for the true church at any given time or place to be visible at all, and that in any visible church members of the invisible church might be found, "yea, even among the papists." The Reformers therefore occupied in this respect a position midway, as we shall see, between the Romanist position and that of the Baptist churches, known at the time as Anabaptists. The Romanists identify the visible church with the true, but do not teach that every member of the church, though he is a member of the true church, will be finally saved. The Baptists taught that there was only one church, as the Romanists do, but that the true church is the invisible church. They did not recognise the existence of the visible church, teaching that its members stood in a relationship to God no different from that of the heathen. Naturally, therefore, they did not baptise infants, but baptised those of responsible years as an outward sign of the true faith which they professed to have and which rendered them members of the true and only existing church. Many Evangelicals today will consider this last view of the church to be the right one. Yet we must remember that, though it might be difficult to find in Scripture any recognition by God of a visible church as opposed to the true, the New Testament often foretells and assumes the existence of a large body of unconverted professors who would attach themselves to the true church. All down Christian history this body of unconverted professors has as a fact existed. Since the Reformation, where the visible church has professed the true Gospel, its existence has been accompanied with social advancement and freedom for soul-winning in those countries where it has been established.

(44) If the recognition of the visible church and its establishment in the various countries was for the time being necessary and was in God's hands a means of the ultimate spread of the Gospel, it is

obvious that there were evils to which it could lead and to which, in fact, it sometimes did lead. In the matter of doctrine the line was not, as a rule, too narrowly drawn. In our own country the settlement under Queen Elizabeth was intended to be sufficiently comprehensive to include everyone, even Romanists. The articles of religion, which definitely set forth the doctrinal position of the church, were not intended to be subscribed by laymen but only by the ordained ministry. People were required by law to attend the parish churches and hear the Gospel. If it were possible always to ensure a supply of parish clergymen who knew and could preach the Gospel, such a regulation has much to commend it. And it must be said that the formularies of the Prayer Book and the requirements of the church as to ordination show that the utmost care was intended to be taken that there should be such a supply. The trouble is that these requirements have been commonly neglected. But obviously the established churches came directly in contact with those Christians who held different views on matters of church order from those recognised by the establishment, or, above all, who could not reconcile their consciences with the fact of an establishment at all. It would have been possible to allow these people to believe and worship as they thought right. They would have repaid kindly treatment by friendliness, and many of them would have been won for the establishment. In Poland there seems to have been complete freedom and toleration, and the country was happy and quiet. Instead, however, the Protestant establishments almost everywhere resorted to repressive measures. Queen Elizabeth imprisoned the Brownists, Independents and Anabaptists. Later she gave this up and banished them, and they found a refuge in Holland. At Zurich under Zwingli many Anabaptists were executed, often by drowning. At Geneva there took place the horrible tragedy of what has been termed "the one Protestant stake. The description is, alas! not quite true, for in England there were a very few sectaries burnt alive as late as the reign of James I. The Geneva case was doctrinal. Servetus, a Spaniard, the leader of what seems to have been a Unitarian sect, was condemned to death by the Council for heresy. John Calvin was required by law to examine Servetus' teaching, to pronounce on the question of its heresy, and to dispute with the writer. Calvin approved of the sentence of death, but begged the Council that it might be by beheading instead of by fire, but they refused to comply. Romanist propaganda today shamelessly asserts, even in supposedly responsible publications such as the (Roman) *Catholic Encyclopedia*, that Protestant persecution was equal in severity and scope to the Romanist, or even more severe. When we remember the dungeons and torture-chamber of the Inquisition, such statements make us smile. To take our own country alone, the fact is that, since the death of Henry VIII, not a single Romanist has been put to death in England for his religion. During the last thirty-three years of Queen Elizabeth's reign two hundred and ten Romanists were executed or died in prison, not because they were Romanists, but on the ground that they were engaged in helping to carry out the pope's orders to assassinate the Queen. The pope's very words are extant today, in which he states that anyone murdering Queen Elizabeth not only does not commit sin but actually gains merit. In less than three years during Mary Tudor's reign two hundred and eighty Christians were burnt alive simply because they were Christians. No question arose of disloyalty to the state. There is ample proof that Queen Elizabeth did not put Romanists to death for their religion in the fact that she placed in command of the fleet that met and defeated the Armada Lord Howard of Bingham, a Roman Catholic. During the time that the monstrous Torquemada was directing the Inquisition in Spain an average of one person in every two and a half days was burnt alive after undergoing the hideous brutalities that we have described in a previous section. Fortunately statistics are available for any who prefer evidence to propaganda. Add to this the fact that the early Protestants owed their

theories of persecution, as well as the very laws under which they were carried out, to the Romanism in which they had been brought up, while the advance of the Reformation Gospel carried Protestants further and further out of mediaeval darkness and customs. There is no Protestant church today that does not deplore any persecution of which her early members may have been guilty, while the Romish church looks longingly back to the days when she had the power to burn and torture, and forward to the opportunity when she will be able to put these practices into force again. Her only difficulty is in explaining to minds enlightened by the Protestant Gospel the barbarities of which she has been guilty in the past.

(45) We may readily admit that the eyes of the first generation of Reformers were not opened to the implications of the Gospel that they had rediscovered. We may be puzzled by inconsistencies in their policy. But we see that, in the providence of God, the establishment of the true faith as the recognised religion of so many countries produced a background for the advance of the Gospel.

(46) Further dangers, of course, arose in the eighteenth century when in most of the established churches spirituality disappeared. The churches forgot that they were organizations of Christian people for the purpose of evangelistic witness, and became branches of state service, occupied with the financial and legal aspect of their position. They became little more than an instrument in the state's hands for administering the religion which the state favoured, regarded as a means of preserving order and tradition. In spite of these evils, however, the background of Christian consciousness which the establishment of religion has created has meant the moral uplift of the nations and has made evangelisation easier because the fundamentals of Christianity were intellectually assumed to be true.

Reformers and the Bible

(47) We must now turn to look at the doctrines of the Reformers and assure ourselves of the source of their power. The truth brought to light at the Reformation may be summed up in two propositions. The first is that the Bible and the Bible alone is the source of all doctrine and the only guide to all practice. The second is that the mediaeval system with the papacy at its head is not only not the true church, but satanic in every aspect. The Reformation was the movement of the open Book. The church of Rome believed theoretically in the inspiration and authority of Scripture, but she qualified this belief by another which made it of no practical value. "Tradition" was of equal authority, and by tradition she meant the interpretation put upon the Bible by her own divines and the doctrines added on to Scripture during the course of centuries. By the decree of 1229, as we have seen, she refused the layman access to the Bible. He was not to be allowed to judge for himself whether his priest's teaching and interpretation was or was not in conformity with its statements. The underlying principle of the Reformation was that every man had the right of access to the Bible and the right of interpretation. He was not to be dependent on a priesthood for his spiritual food. The Reformers indeed believed that a trained and consecrated ministry was useful or necessary for the exposition of Scripture, and in this they were simply following the Scriptures themselves (see Eph. iv. 11, 12). Their persecution, in the first generation, of Anabaptists and other sectaries was an unconscious betrayal of the principle on which they rightly founded their belief, but we have seen that it did not take long for that principle to work itself out to its logical conclusion. The persecutions of the Presbyterians in Scotland and of the Nonconformists in England during the seventeenth century were carried on by men who had drifted out of the main stream of Protestant

light and truth. Yet, so strong was the principle of respect for the individual conscience set free at the Reformation, that in England the worldly church of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had neither the means nor the wish to imprison or execute Nonconformists, but did no more than treat them with disdain and bitterness. In other words, the persecution of Christians became social and ceased to be political.

Tyndale's Translation

(48) The Reformers' first care was to see that in every country that accepted the Reformation the Bible was translated into the vernacular and made accessible to all. Thus the reading and teaching of the Bible became the means of the conversion of thousands. Luther, as we have seen, employed his time in the Wartburg in 1522 in translating the Bible into German. The first translator of the New Testament into English was William Tyndale, who devoted his life to this work, and was obliged to carry it out in Germany and the Low Countries. He was finally martyred in Belgium on the 6th of October 1536. Several versions followed during the sixteenth century, and finally in 1611 came the great standard Authorised Version, still based to a considerable extent on Tyndale's work. Here is part of the third chapter of John's Gospel in Tyndale's version:

(49) "There was a man of the pharises named Nycodemus, a ruler amonge the Jewes. The same came to Jesus by night, and sayde unto him, Rabby, we knowne that thou art a teacher which arte come from God. For no man coulde do such miracles as thou doest, except God were with him. Jesus answered & sayde unto him: Verely, verely I saye unto the: except a man be boren anewe, he can not se the Kyngdom of God. Nycodemus sayd unto him, how can a man be boren when he is olde? can he enter into his mother's wombe and be boren agayne? Jesus answered: Verely, verely, I saye unto the: except that a man be boren of water and of the spirite, he can not enter into the Kyngdome of God. That which is boren of the flesshe is flesshe: and that whiche is boren of the spirit is spirite. Marvayle not that I sayde to the ye must be boren anewe. The wynde bloweth where he lysteth, and thou hearest his sounde: but canst not tell whence he cometh and whether he goeth. So is every man that is boren of the spirit.

(50) "And Nycodemus answered & sayd unto him: how can these thynges be? Jesus answered and sayd unto him: art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these thinges? Verely, verely, I saye unto the, we speake that we knowne, and testify that we have sene: and ye receave not oure wytne. If when I tell you erthly things, ye beleve not: how shuld ye beleve, yf I shal tell you of heavenly thinges?

(51) "And no man ascendeth up to heaven, but he that came downe from heaven, that is to saye, the sone of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lyfte up the serpent in the wyldernes, even so must the sone of man be lyfte up, that none that beleveth in him perisshe: but have eternall lyfe.

(52) "For God so loveth the worlde that he hath geven his only sone, that none that beleve in him, shuld perisshe: but shuld have everlastinge lyfe. For God sent not his sone into the worlde to condempne the worlde: but that the worlde through him might be saved."

(53) The great principle of access to the Bible brought with it far-reaching results in the social sphere. It is not the main purpose of the Bible to bring these about. Its object is to show sinners their

way back to God by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Social results are a by-product, and constitute a useful piece of evidence of its value. If a man and woman who are drunkards are converted, their house becomes clean and tidy and the outward circumstances of their lives rapidly alter. They were not led to Christ that this might be the case. They were led to Christ for salvation from sin and from God's judgment upon it in the world to come. The change in outward circumstances is evidence of the reality of conversion. This is what took place nationally on a large scale at the Reformation. Slowly the scope of education began to widen. People learned to read in order to study the Bible. The setting free of thought and the rise of education and knowledge began to banish mediaeval superstition. The high moral principles enshrined in the Bible began to take root in men's minds. In early days this was partly counteracted by the sense of freedom from restraint that arose from the throwing off of mediaeval shackles. The Elizabethan age in England, for instance, was a bold age of high adventure and strong language, vivid imagination and intellectual and emotional riot. These characteristics, however, were not the result of the Reformation but of the Renaissance which preceded it, and were due to the same causes as produced the paganism of the papal court and Italian cities at the end of the fifteenth century. And what a modification we may discern! Elizabethan England may have been bold and vicious. It was virtuous compared with the Rome of the Borgias, where hideous vices reached excesses that would be incredible were it not for the records of the facts. The reason was that in England the bold paganism of the Renaissance was arrested by the spreading knowledge of the open Bible. Later, the Puritans completed what the Reformers and translators had begun. And so, for four hundred years following the Reformation, the countries that knew and owned the open Bible became the progressive countries of the world: America, the British Commonwealth, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany partially. Education and enlightenment increased. On the other hand, France; whose Government after a long struggle rejected the truth, passed through violence, despotism and defeat into rationalism, having risen morally little above the standard of the middle ages; while Spain, under Rome and the Inquisition, remained in ignorance and darkness, still prevalent with manifest results today, and sank to the position of a third-rate power. We have not to go so far afield to find an example of the superstition in which the dominance of the Romish priesthood keeps a people. An Irishman was recently converted from Romanism at a Protestant meeting. His priest had told him that if he attended the meeting his legs would become paralysed. Several times during the meeting he pinched his legs to see if the threat was being fulfilled. He was also genuinely afraid of another statement of his priest, which was that he would be changed into a donkey.

Justification by Faith

(54) With the Bible itself the Gospel of the bible came back to the church at the time of the Reformation. Of the two great leaders, Luther was responsible for the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith and Calvin for its complement, the sovereignty of God. One of the earliest documents in which a Protestant confession was publicly drawn up was, as we have already noticed, the Confession of Augsburg, compiled for the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. Swiss confessions were also drawn up in 1523, 1532, 1536 and 1566. Two of the fullest and most lucid and scriptural of all Protestant confessions are the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England and the Westminster Confession of the Presbyterian churches, the latter compiled at Westminster at a meeting of Scottish and English Presbyterians in 1647. The Thirty-Nine Articles were completed in 1571 after they had undergone unsubstantial modifications from their first publication as Forty-Two

Articles in 1553 and as Thirty- Eight in 1563. Let us follow the great theme of justification by faith through the Protestant confessions. Here it is in the Augsburg Confession of 1530:

(55) "We teach, moreover, that we cannot be justified before God by our own strength, our merits, or our works; but that we are justified freely for Christ's sake through faith, when we believe that our sins are forgiven in virtue of Christ, who by his death has made satisfaction for our sins: this faith is the righteousness that God imputeth to the sinner. But we teach, at the same time, that this faith ought to bear good fruits, and that we must do all the good works commanded by God, for the love of God, and not by their means to gain the grace of God."

(56) The same teaching occurs in the Wurttemberg Confession of 1552:

(57) "We believe and confess that for the doing and practising of righteousness pleasing to God, these virtues are necessary, Faith, Hope and Love, and that no man can produce these virtues of himself, but receives them of the favour and grace of God, and that faith works through love. But we feel that the opinion of those who teach that a man becomes acceptable to God and is reputed righteous with God on account of these virtues, and must trust in the judgment of God to the merits of these virtues is greatly abhorrent to Apostolic and Catholic doctrine. For a man becomes acceptable to God and is reputed righteous with Him for the sake of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ alone, through faith, and in the judgment of God must not trust to any merit from those virtues but to which we do not possess, the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ alone, which is ours through faith. And since at the judgment-seat of God, where true and eternal righteousness and salvation are concerned, there is plainly no room for the merits of men, but only for the mercy of God, and for the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ alone, Who is accepted by us by faith; therefore we feel that our forefathers and ancestors rightly said, that we are justified with God by faith alone."

(58) Here is the doctrine of justification as expressed in the document known as the First Helvetic Confession, drawn up in 1536 under the influence of Bucer and Capito, reformed theologians of Strassburg, who were trying to reconcile Luther's teaching and that of Zwingli:

(59) "*Of Faith.* - This faith is the certain and undoubted substance and means of apprehension of all things to be hoped for from the benevolence of God. It produces from itself love and soon the brilliant fruits of all virtues. We do not, however, attribute to these functions, even when they appear in the pious, justification and salvation that is born of grace, but to faith itself alone.

(60) "And so the only true service of God consists of faith into which there enters no confidence in works, but which is itself very productive of works."

(61) The Second Helvetic Confession was drawn up by Bullinger in 1566 and was influenced by both Zwingli and Calvin. Its teaching on justification is as follows:

(62) "1. To justify signifies to the Apostle in his argument concerning justification to remit sins, to absolve from guilt and penalty, to receive into grace, and to pronounce righteous. For the Apostle says to the Romans: *It is God Who justifies. Who is he that condemns?* (Rom. viii. 33). To justify and to condemn are contrasted. And in the Acts of

the Apostles the Apostle says: *Through Christ is preached to us remission of sins: and from all things, from which you could not be justified through the law of Moses, through Him everyone who believes is justified* (Acts xiii. 38, 39). For in the law also and the prophets we read: *If a strife shall have arisen between any and they come to the judge, the judges shall judge them and justify the righteous, and declare wicked and condemn the wicked* (Deut. xxv. 1). And: *Woe to them which justify the wicked for reward* (Isa. v. 23).

(63) "2. It is moreover certain that we are all by nature sinners and wicked, and at the judgment-seat of God are convicted of wickedness and guilty of death. Moreover that we are justified, that is, absolved from sins and death by God our judge, for the sake of Christ alone, and by no merit or respect of our own. For what is more plain than what Paul said? *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Moreover they are justified freely through His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* (Rom. iii. 23, 24).

(64) "3. For Christ received upon Himself and bore the sins of the world, and satisfied the Divine justice. Therefore God is propitious to our sins for Christ's sake alone, Who suffered and was raised, and does not impute them to us, but imputes the righteousness of Christ on our behalf: so that we are now not only cleansed and purged from sins, and holy, but also granted the righteousness of Christ, and so absolved from sins, from death and condemnation, in short righteous and heirs of eternal life. In definite language therefore, God alone justifies us even so for Christ's sake, not imputing our sins to us, but imputing His righteousness to us (2 Cor. v. 21 ; Rom. iv. 24, 25).

(65) "4. But since we receive this justification, not through any works, but through faith in the mercy of God and in Christ, so we teach and believe with the Apostle, that man as a sinner is justified by faith alone in Christ, not by the law, or any works. For the Apostle says: *We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law* (Rom. iii. 28). Likewise: *If Abraham had been justified by works, he has something to boast of, but not with God. For what say the Scriptures? Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. But to him that worketh not, but believes in Him Who justifies the wicked, his faith is reckoned for righteousness* (Rom. iv. 2-4). And again: *By grace have you been saved through faith, and that not yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast, etc.* (Eph. ii. 8, 9). Therefore, since faith receives Christ our righteousness, and has attributed all things to the grace of God in Christ, so justification is attributed to faith, especially for Christ's sake, and not in such a way that it is our work. For it is God's gift. But the Lord shows us in many places that we receive Christ by faith, in John, chap. vi, where He puts eating for believing and *believing* for eating. For as we receive food by eating, so we partake of Christ by believing.

(66) "5. Thus we do not assign the benefit of justification partly to God's grace or to Christ, and partly to ourselves or to love or works, or to our own merit, but we attribute it entirely to the grace of God in Christ through faith." [This is a direct answer to the Council of Trent.] "But even as love and our own works could not please God, if they were done by the unrighteous; even so we must first be righteous before we love or do righteous works. We are made righteous, as we have said, through faith in Christ, by the

grace of God alone, Who does not impute our sins to us, but imputes the righteousness of Christ, and faith in Christ for our righteousness. Besides the Apostle most plainly derives love from faith, saying: *The end of the commandment: love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned* (1 Tim. i. 5).

(67) "6. Wherefore we speak in this case not of feigned faith, of vain or careless or dead faith, but of living and quickening faith, which for Christ's sake, Who is life and quickens, Whom it lays hold of, is living and is called so, and declares that it is living by living works. Thus James does not oppose this our teaching, when he speaks of vain and dead faith, of which certain boasted but had not Christ living in them through faith. He himself said that works justify, not contradicting the Apostle (otherwise he is to be rejected), but showing that Abraham had declared his faith to be living and justifying through works (Jas. ii). That which all the righteous do, who however trust to Christ alone, not to their own works. For again the Apostle said: *It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me. Moreover the life which I now live in the flesh I live through faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not despise the grace of God. Far if there is righteousness through the law: then Christ died in vain, etc.* (Gal. ii. 20 21)."

(68) Here is Article XI of the Articles of the Church of England:

(69) "*Of the justification of Man.* - We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justiication."

(70) The Homily referred to is that on justification in the now neglected book of Church of England Homilies, and sets forth clearly the Protestant doctrine.

(71) Lastly, here is the statement of the Westminster Confession:

(72) "Those whom God effectually calleth He also freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them, but for Christ's sake alone: not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith: which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces and is no dead faith, but worketh by love. Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet in as much as He was given by the Father for them, and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for any thing in them, their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect; and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless they are not justified,

until the Holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them. God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified ; and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance. The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respect, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament."

(73) It is very important to realise that the Articles of the Church of England form one of a series of several Protestant confessions that were being drawn up at the time, that they are connected with, and dependent upon, the others, and that, apart from the overwhelming evidence of Protestantism in the Prayer-Book, they set the Church of England in her place among the Protestant churches with a doctrine that is Calvinistic rather than Lutheran. In view of the statements of the Tractarians, which we shall mention later, and the pretensions of the Anglo-Romanists, it is very important to understand the history of the Thirty-Nine Articles. Those statements are easily refuted by those who know the history of the foundation of the church, but have gained wide currency owing to widespread ignorance.

(74) An important factor that shaped the emphasis and wording of the later Protestant confessions, including the Articles of our own church, was the promulgation of the decrees of the Council of Trent. This Council met in three sessions from 1545 to 1547 from 1551 to 1553 and from 1562 to 1564. It covered the whole range of doctrine and order that were in dispute at the time, and drew up and defined the Romanist attitude and teaching in a long series of canons, each of which ended with an anathema on those who did not conform. The Council of Trent constitutes the basis of the doctrine of the modern Roman church. Points which were in dispute during the middle ages were defined and made binding by the Council of Trent. This has not prevented the Roman church from promulgating additional binding dogmas in quite modern times and pretending that they represent what she has always taught and believed, although in some cases the teaching embodied in them has been contradicted by some of her most prominent theologians in the past.

(75) The Council of Trent and those drawing up the Protestant confessions kept an eye on each other, and sometimes deliberately answered each other. The Council, for instance, at one of its earlier sessions, was dealing with the power of the priest to absolve sins. It declared that he enjoyed authority to do so by virtue of his office, and that should anyone deny this and say that the priest had only authority to *declare and pronounce* (*declarare et pronuntiare*) the forgiveness of sins in God's Name, let him be anathema. The reply of the Church of England was to compel by her rubrics every one of her clergymen, when reading service, to assert twice daily, "Who giveth power and commandment to His ministers to *declare and pronounce* to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." Nothing could be more definite than this holy defiance of the enemy. Again, the earlier Latin draft of our Article XXXI had stated, "The sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were fables and dangerous deceits." In 1562 the Council of Trent anathematized the denial of the mass as blasphemous. The Church of England immediately added to her Article in 1563 the word "blasphema" and the Article has ever since run, "The sacrifices of Masses were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits."

Divine Election

(76) The difference between Luther and the Swiss Reformers on the significance of the Holy Communion was continued in the churches that followed them. Archbishop Cranmer was Calvinistic in this respect, and the doctrine of the Church of England follows him. In the seventeenth century there was a reaction from the Calvinistic view of divine election, brought about by the teachings of the Dutch theologian Arminius who died in 1607. He emphasized human responsibility. This controversy was of course older than the Reformation. It had been brought to a head early in the fourteenth century by Duns Scotus the Franciscan, who took a semi-Pelagian view, somewhat like the views which were later to be those of Arminius. He contradicted Thomas Aquinas the Dominican, who took the Augustinian view, resembling the views later associated with Calvin. Arminius was excommunicated by the Dutch church, but the controversy over free will and election continued among Protestants. It broke out rather acutely in England at the time of the Evangelical revival, Wesley and the Methodists being Arminian, most of the Evangelicals in the Church of England being Calvinistic. Charles Simeon sensibly believed in both responsibility and election. He is followed by most Evangelicals today and their position is well summed up by the great Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon of a generation ago, who declared that when he was praying he believed in election, and when he was preaching he believed in free will.

(77) Since the very beginning the Protestant churches have been divided into three main divisions, which remain in being today, and have given birth to various subdivisions. A taunt levelled by Romish propaganda today against Protestantism is that it is hopelessly divided into sects. Which church, it is asked, is the true church? The Protestant belief about the true church, which identifies it with no visible church, is of course a sufficient answer. While it is true that the churches have on the whole shown too sectarian a spirit towards each other, the division is a blessing. The church was never so corrupt as when it was outwardly a unity. The division of the churches provides a safeguard against error and a means of preserving balance.

(78) The first division is Lutheran. Martin Luther, the great pioneer of freedom and truth, did not go as far as other Reformers in his doctrine of the Lord's Supper, and retained a certain mediaeval ornateness in worship. The Lutheran churches contain statues, altars and candles. This fact makes no difference to their essential Protestantism. The national Protestant church of Prussia is Lutheran, as also those of the three Scandinavian countries. The Lutheran churches retained an episcopal system, and in this respect the Church of England followed them, and in certain externals must be classed with them. Some of the Methodist bodies, notably those in America, which broke off from the Church of England at the time of the Methodist revival, have also retained episcopacy. The retention of episcopacy was a source of deep division and has remained so. Evangelicals today do well to regard the matter as indifferent. The bishops of the first generation in the Church of England, some of whom were martyrs, proved magnificent and devoted leaders, and no doubt their leadership and stand for truth had much to do with the retention of episcopacy by the English church. After that, the bishops became worldly and occupied with politics. Archbishop Laud and his colleagues did what they could to ruin the church while professing enthusiastic loyalty to it. In the nineteenth century a few spiritually-minded Evangelical bishops, such as Bishops Ryle, Handley Moule, Knox and Crevasse, showed what a blessing bishops can be when they are converted men. The rise of the Anglo-Romanist party today might have been seriously handicapped if the church had discarded episcopacy at the Reformation. Speaking as a whole, apart from the Reforming

bishops and the nineteenth- century Evangelicals, the weight of the bishops has been thrown against the Gospel.

(79) The second great division of the Protestant churches consists of those which take their model from Geneva. Their emphasis may be said to be laid on Presbyterianism and predestination. They threw off episcopacy, regarding it as a part of the mediaeval system, and have thus made it difficult for their churches to become involved in controversy about apostolic succession or to become the prey of any parasitical Anglo-Romanist party. All their confessions emphasized Calvin's doctrine of the sovereignty of God. In this division are the Swiss Protestant churches, the churches of Holland and Scotland, the Waldensian church, and the Presbyterian churches of America. Their Christianity has, on the whole, tended to be of a severe type. The Independent churches, more recently called Congregational, may be said to fall into this type, though they differ from the Presbyterians in the matter of church government.

Baptist Churches

(80) The third great section into which Protestantism may be said to fall is that of the Baptist churches, in which we may include a body that during the last hundred years has become prominent in England and elsewhere, the Brethren. The Baptists really antedate the Reformation. They descend from the Cathari, Albigenses, Bogomils, and ultimately the Paulicians. They were persecuted with fury and bitterness during the middle ages, as we have seen. At the Reformation they took advantage of the establishment of Protestantism, but for some generations the advantage was not very great. Three of them had an interview with Luther, who would not associate with them because they pretended to visions and revelations of their own which were complementary to the Word of God. At the time they were known as Anabaptists, "ana-" having the force of "again," because they denied infant baptism. Those converted to their tenets were therefore regarded by the orthodox as having been rebaptized. There seems to have been a variety of opinions among the Anabaptists. They were agreed in disowning any connection between the church and the state, and persisted in their belief that the true church was entered spiritually by faith. In this belief they were perfectly scriptural. After the Reformation they increased greatly in Holland and Germany. At one time some of their number ran amok and ruled the town of Munster in extravagant disorder, pretending that their government was the kingdom of God. The persecution of the Anabaptists by the Protestant states is a blot upon the early history of the latter. They were usually people of simple piety, well instructed in the Scriptures and showing a high moral standard of living. Slowly toleration came to them. The Baptist churches came to be recognised as an integral and important section of Protestantism. Akin to them in certain respect: were the Quakers, who first appeared in England in the seventeenth century under the leadership of George Fox. They denied the use of both ordinances and emphasized the ministry of women. They refused military service and the taking of oaths. Their sincerity and godliness, which carried on the tradition of the Cathari and Albigenses, brought respect and recognition.

(81) On the continent the great Baptist church of the Menonites was founded in the sixteenth century by Simon Menno. Protected by one of the small German rulers, the church spread to Holland and Prussia, and at the close of the eighteenth century migrated almost en masse to Russia, where the Empress Catherine II offered it land. The Mennonites became wealthy in Russia and

declined somewhat from their high spiritual standard, but were the means of introducing the Gospel into parts of Russia. Little evangelisation, however, seems to have been done.

The Jesuits

(82) We shall be greatly mistaken if we suppose that the church of Rome sat helplessly by and allowed the Reformation to take its course. We have seen how she gathered her forces at Trent, defined her doctrine and hurled her anathemas at the Gospel and its preachers. We have seen how she submitted Christians to every conceivable barbarity and indignity, when it was in her power to do so; how she glutted her ears with the screams of despair in the chambers of the Inquisition, and her eyes with the flames that consumed the bodies of the saints of God. She did not fail to pursue them, and those governments that protected them, when they were safe from her immediate grasp. For the purpose of pursuing, destroying and undoing the work of the Gospel the pope recognised in 1540 an association with one of the most misleading names in history. It was called "the Society of Jesus," and was founded by lunatics Loyola and Francis Xavier. It was pledged to the propagation of the Romish religion, and for this purpose Jesuit missionaries reached Japan in the sixteenth century. Their conduct there so disgusted the Japanese, that the whole colony was finally turned out, the name of Christianity became execrated, and the work of the missionaries of the Gospel who reached Japan seventy years ago was at first severely hampered. The underlying object of this propaganda, as well as of all other Jesuit activities, was the destruction of Protestantism. In the sixteenth century the Jesuits succeeded driving the reformed religion from Poland and Bohemia and winning back both countries to the Romish church. They formed plots for the murder of Queen Elizabeth which at times put her life in real danger and required great vigilance. Their intrigues often made them the objects of the enmity of Governments, even in Roman Catholic countries, and they were sometimes driven away, but always persistently returned. In the eighteenth century the order was actually suppressed by the pope, but not long afterwards revived. Their agents were trained to the absolute submission of the will to their superiors, unhesitating obedience to orders, and methods of deceit and unscrupulousness that have made their name a byword.

Study of Prophecy

(83) The church of Rome, however reluctantly, could not fail to be affected by the Reformation. To some extent she put her house in order. Some of the worst extravagance of the indulgence traffic and the superstitious veneration of relics seem to have been discarded, and the excesses of immorality and vice that marked the papal court in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were modified or driven underground. The enlightenment and advance in manners that followed the Reformation could not fail to raise the whole standard of life in Romanist countries as well. But apart from these indirect influences, the direct light of Scripture was cast into her dark recesses. A natural result of the accessibility of the Bible was the revival of the blessed hope of the Lord's return and of the study of the great prophecies of Scripture. The Gospel of salvation through faith in the atoning merits of the Saviour everywhere won hearts. But it was assisted by a subsidiary message that was equally necessary for the success of the Reformation. The enquiring mind began to ask whether it would be really a fact that the true Gospel had been lost for so many centuries by the church. How could this have been? The Roman theologians were not slow to press the argument of continuity and to paint to the rediscovered Gospel as an heretical innovation. This question was answered by a burst of light from the prophetic Word. From the days of Joachim and even before

there had not been lacking voices crying in the wilderness that the papacy was so corrupt that it rather represented antichrist than Christ. The Reformers taught with one voice that the papacy was the man of sin of 2 Thess. ii and the wild beast of Rev. xiii, and that the church of Rome was the Babylon of the Apocalypse (Rev. xvii and xviii). What seemed so mysterious was explained by these prophecies. The mediaeval church with her celibacy and abstinence was the apostasy of 2 Tim. iv, her position, her pretensions, her supposed continuity constituting "the mystery of iniquity," which the Apostle had foretold. The chronological prophecies of Daniel were not neglected, the mysterious symbolic 1260, 1290 and 1335 days, and it was soon recognised that rather over twelve hundred years had passed since the days of Constantine. The church steadied herself and seemed to see in a flash her place in the prophetic scheme. The light from prophecy rejoiced and encouraged many hearts. Commentaries and expositions multiplied, differing on minor points, but at one in their assurance of the position in prophecy of the papacy and the church of Rome. It was not long before these barbs began to strike home. The Romish theologians were hard put to it to rebut them. And so the Jesuits took the matter up. Towards the close of the sixteenth century the Jesuit Alcazar produced the preterist system of interpretation, which places the fulfilment of the Book of Revelation in the past, and the Jesuit Ribeira invented the futurist system, which throws it into a short space of time at the end of the world.

(84) In the nineteenth century, after the Evangelical revival, interest in prophecy revived. To the Puritans, even to Bunyan, the return of the Lord had been an event far away in the distant future. Now, as the Gospel began to be carried to the uttermost parts of the earth, a cry seemed to ring in the ears of the church, "Behold, I come quickly." The great prophecies were expounded by Elliott, Dean Alford and Grattan Guinness, and a crescendo of books on the return of the Lord reached its climax in the eighteen eighties. Amongst the early Brethren in Ireland the futurist and literal system of interpretation had some vogue, and it was introduced into Protestantism with some curious accretions. They remain today as a prevailing view among Brethren and are regarded by some as a test of orthodoxy. This futurist interpretation has passed from the Brethren very widely into Protestantism, and is sincerely held by many who are aware of the Protestant historicity interpretation. It provides an excellent means of acquiring knowledge of the prophecies themselves, if it obscures the real enemy and the proportions of the fulfilment of the great prophecies from view. Quite apart from differences of interpretation, however, which ought never to divide Christians, the sense of the nearness of the Lord's return that came to the church in the nineteenth century has never left her. Events of the present day, as we shall see, have confirmed her expectation. The conviction is growing upon the church that she is near her journey's end. So she enters her last great test with high hope, a little bewildered, it may be, but with her eyes forward. If she can appropriate the courage available for her in her Master, if she can bring herself to complete dependence and obedience, if she can defy the enemy as she has defied him in the past, she will meet her Lord with triumph, and an abundant entrance will be vouchsafed her into the kingdom of her Lord and Saviour.

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 Schaff (P.): The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches.
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Wesley (J.): Journal.

Ryle (J. C.): The Christian Leaders of the Last Century.

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Broomhall (M.): The Jubilee Story of the China Inland Mission.

Epilogue

(1) We live today in a world that has changed and is still fast changing. Yet human nature remains unaltered, and the problems that face the Christian church in her relationship with the world are substantially the same as they have been during the course of her history. We saw how the high ideals and burning zeal of primitive days slowly gave way to worldliness as the church grew numerically and financially powerful. Few would disagree with the statement that the early fire has never been fully recovered. It has never been entirely quenched, and has flashed out from time to time during the pilgrimage of the church, notably in our own country during the eighteenth century. Yet if ever a situation called for a restoration of apostolic devotion we are witnessing such a situation in the world today. The church is faced by nothing less than a general repudiation by the world of the Gospel and the Christian manner of life. The pretence of its acceptance, which has so long persisted, now appears to be in process of abandonment, and the church begins to find herself in something of the same position as she was in at the beginning of her history. Nothing but the throwing over of all pretence on the part of the church and its individual members is likely to meet this situation and to prevent disaster.

(2) The Gospel has lost none of its power, but it is possible for much of that power to be dissipated in passage between its source and outflow by inconsistency of life on the part of individuals or by slackness and disobedience on the part of the church as a whole. The failure of those who hold the catholic evangelical faith to unite shows that matters of minor importance exercise a stronger hold upon many minds than the urgent need of the spiritually dying. It is not likely that we shall adequately meet the world situation to-day until we possess something of the passion and clarity of vision that characterized the Apostle Paul. A study of the manner in which the early church met the world situation in which she found herself and of the immense successes that she won in spite of hindrances without and within may thus afford us considerable help in the somewhat similar circumstances of today.

(3) In the course of our attempt in the preceding chapters to follow the church on her journey down the Christian age we have noticed the extensive place that the adjustment and maintenance of her relationship with the state have occupied in her history. She was born in a totalitarian empire which she crushed and transformed by the power of meekness and love. Her intense conviction proved too much for the genius of Roman government. We have seen that at the moment of her triumph she made a far-reaching mistake. The consequences of that mistake are still powerful in the world. The compromise between church and state which has lasted so long has not prevented, in these last days, the rise of a dangerous nationalism which panders to the state and has succeeded in recovering some of the religious flavour which entered into the individual's relationship to the state in the days of the Roman empire.

Church & State

(4) The view of the state as supreme has been seen in an extreme form in those aggressive countries whose power has so recently been crushed. But the danger of usurpation by the state of the rights of the individual, and even of some of the regard which is due to God alone, is not confined to the countries defeated in the world war. The reduction of the world to a unity by the revolution now proceeding in mechanical transport, the necessity for the maintenance of an increasingly high

standard of living, the appalling possibilities latent in the growing knowledge of explosives, the complications of modern life so often beyond the understanding of the individual, are features that combine to place power and responsibility in the hands of the state. The fact that power is being forced into the hands of the state by the operation of these tendencies, and that no immediate alternative to the extension of the sphere of the state appears feasible, does not make the situation less dangerous. It may be that the stage is being set for a second conflict between church and state, such as that won by the church in the early centuries of her history. The modern state is more dangerous to the church than was the Roman empire, because it has taken over and incorporated within itself some of the ideals which were first introduced into the world by the church. In addition to this, the centuries of compromise between the church and the state have deadened the church's sense of the essential character of the state. The appearance of the extreme ideologies of the state in our generation may therefore have had certain advantages in opening the eyes of Christian people to what the state can be and what it really is at heart. Not that we have been left without warning. The Apocalypse told us long ago. It is to be feared that there are Christian people who are inclined to suppose that the new world of social security and other schemes now visualized will, if it can ever be brought into being, be Christian in essence and capable of being transformed with some modification into the Kingdom of God. If a conflict is to begin again between two inconsistent ways of life, where are the Christians today sufficiently courageous and clear-sighted to win again the great victory of the early church but not throw it away as she did in the hour of triumph?

(5) The victory won by the early church was the more remarkable because she was continually hampered by disloyal or lukewarm elements within. As we saw, the general decay and corruption that marked the aftermath of her victory could not have developed as it did if there had not been already within the church ground on which it could find a foothold. It seems that compromise with that which should be eradicated has been one of the most persistent failings of the people of God throughout their history both in the Old Testament times and during the Christian age. We deplore the failure of ancient Israel to extirpate the Canaanites and we understand the tragic consequences that ensued, but we are slow to realise the presence in our midst of spiritual Canaanites more deadly than those whose influence brought ancient Israel to ruin.

(6) The path of such compromise is, of course, the line of least resistance, and to refuse it needs a courage which is more than that at the disposal of the natural man and can be obtained only from Christ by faith. Thus the same influences which corrupted the primitive church and brought about the tragic phenomenon of mediaeval ecclesiasticism have appeared again, as we saw in the reformed churches, and there is no reason to believe that, if they remain unchecked, they will not again in time stifle the true witness to the Gospel. Their appearance, though deplorable, is to be expected. Far more deplorable is the decline of faithful Protestant witness among true Evangelicals today and the extent to which we lend an ear to proposals of ecumenical ability which embrace the unreformed churches within their scope. This is another issue today which seems to be increasing in seriousness and about which we can learn much by a study of Christian history in the past. How few today know the issues at stake between the Council of Trent and the reformed churches, or the significance of those issues. Yet they should be known in detail by all Evangelical clergy, ministers and leaders just as the faithful remnant in ancient Israel knew and pondered the battles and deliverances of their past.

(7) Something of the intellectual deadness of the disputes of the schoolmen has been achieved by the barren liberal theology of the past century. In this direction; however, we are witnessing a welcome improvement. The cataclysms that have been sweeping the world have given the lie to the conception of progress upon which much of that theology is based. Liberal theologians have been thrown on the defensive, and there is taking place a quite startling conservative reaction which is carrying many of them back to views which were thought, two generations ago, to have been forsaken by scholarship for ever. We should make it our duty to guide this reaction and to prevent its exploitation by the enemies of the reformation as well as to welcome those theologians and others who are painfully making their way back to an outlook which is more consistent with that of the New Testament and the historic creeds. It may need an effort on our part to avoid a patronizing attitude, but this is a duty in which we cannot well afford to fail and in which we need to seek the love and humility of Christ.

(8) An aspect of the life of the Christian church which had been lost during the middle ages and was widely reintroduced only a hundred and fifty years ago is that of missionary activity and a world outlook. The signs seem happily to be that it will this time be permanent. At least there seems to be no indication at present that the church is losing it. There are two dangers that seem to have arisen to dog the missionary enterprise of the church. The first is the exploitation of the world outlook by those who do not preach the full Gospel with the problems connected with cooperation and separation that arise in regard to them upon the mission field. This is a difficulty which Evangelicals have shown some discernment in tackling, and their efforts to overcome it have not been wholly unsuccessful. The second danger is that the world outlook may become so commonplace as to lose its inspiration for the individual. It has been observed in recent years, for example, that Christian University students, while retaining a general interest in missionary activity, have lacked a sense of personal call to the field. The proportion of those who propose to devote their lives to work abroad is less than it was a generation ago. It is difficult to see a solution to this problem, the nature of which is not yet fully understood, but we may believe that God will reveal it and that it is not His intention at such a juncture in world history with its many great opportunities to allow the ardour of His people for the salvation of the millions who have never heard the Gospel to cool.

(9) We must pray and work for a great expansion of missionary activity during the years of reconstruction following the war. In every sphere of work at home and abroad men and women are needed whose passion is for souls, whose hearts and treasure are in heaven, worthy successors to the Spirit-filled slaves who met to worship and proclaim the Gospel in the fields of the Roman empire; to those who stood in the chambers of the Inquisition, agonised and bleeding, yet upheld by an invisible arm; to the faithful missionaries who, in utter dependence upon the Lord, pressed into the dangers of the interior of China and planted the standard of Christ. The call is for those who will make no compromise with the world, the flesh, or the devil; for men who will recognise mediaeval idolatry and the rejection of God's Word as sin, and boldly say so, in whose heart is the fear of God and no fear of man; for men who carry Christ and are carried by Christ wherever they go, whose hearts and minds are steeped in the Word of God and their lives governed by it, so that they can use it with powerful effect; for men and women contact with whom brings the needy to the gate of heaven.

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About This Text

This electronic text has been derived through scanning and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) of the printed text of *Valiant In Fight* by B.F.C. Atkinson, M.A., PhD., as published by InterVarsity Fellowship; reprinted in June, 1950.

I have found this little volume a great encouragement and a warning. This small volume provides a good overview of church history from the ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the early 20th Century. As such, it is a good introduction to church history. Dr. Atkinson constantly reminds us that the church today can easily repeat the errors of the past, particularly those that lead to the corruption of the church and the spiritual darkness of the middle ages. His voice has not been heeded in the half century since its publication. This warning needs to be heard again!

The text of this book would not be considered "thoroughly reformed". Some of Dr. Atkinson's comments a few in the reformed community may find disagreeable. The main thrust of Dr. Atkinson's warning must not be disregarded because of this. I do not agree with all that Dr Atkinson has written, but I find it on the whole very instructive.

I have done my best to ensure that I have not breached copyright by publishing this text. There is no copyright notice in the printed version of the book I have. I have also contacted InterVarsity Press (UK) who has stated that they do not hold the copyright to the work and do not know who does. If there is a copyright on this text, I ask those who hold it to contact me and I will request permission to publish or remove the text, as they wish. I do not claim copyright to the text of "*Valiant In Fight*".

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I would like to acknowledge the love, encouragement and patience of my wife and my children shown towards me during the many hours at the keyboard which this project involved.

The various forms in which I have published this text can be downloaded from my web site, [A Reformed Baptist's Disk](#).

Mark Smith,

January 2005.

[Updated, December 2017]