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FROM CHRIST TO CONSTANTINE

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FROM CHRIST TO CONSTANTINE

THE RISE AND GROWTH OF
THE EARLY CHURCH

(c. A.D. 30 TO 337)

BY

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I DEDICATE THIS WORK TO
THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

in remembrance of the twelve years (1896-1908)
spent in its service as its first Lecturer in History,
and in recognition of the Hon. Doctorate conferred
on me by its Senatus.

*Floreat Academia,
Venerabilis et Dilecta.*

PREFACE

THIS volume is a continuation of two previous works, "The Historic Jesus" and "The Gospel in the Early Church." The former reviewed the mission and message of the Founder of the Christian community, from which the Church took its rise; the latter the development of the Gospel as it took shape in the religious experience and thought of the apostolic and the subapostolic periods. In this volume—the third of a trilogy on early Christianity—I have attempted to delineate the process by which the primitive community founded by Christ developed, in the course of the three centuries (*c.* 30-337 A.D.) from His death to that of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, into the universal and highly organised religious association known as the Catholic Church.

A distinctive feature of this process is the gradual religious conquest, through spiritual conflict, of a large part of the Roman Empire. Though this conquest was far from complete at the death of Constantine, its ultimate realisation was practically assured. Constantine's conversion finally secured to the Church the toleration for which a long series of Christian apologists had pleaded, and under his successors toleration ultimately led to dominance. From small beginnings in its primitive Jewish Christian stage, the Christian mission ere long penetrated from Palestine throughout the Mediterranean lands as far as Rome, even in the apostolic age. Henceforth its expansion up to the beginning of the fourth century seems to have been steady and continuous, if not, as a rule, traceable in detail, in spite of recurring attempts to repress it. Early Christianity was one of those vital

movements in which spiritual forces proved superior to the organised antagonism of even so vast a power as imperial Rome. The expansion of the Christian mission in conflict with this formidable antagonism, throughout these three hundred years, is one of the most heroic and impressive things in ancient history, even if this heroism appeared to a Marcus Aurelius nothing more than pure obstinacy and fractiousness. I have accordingly devoted considerable space to the various stages of it, and to the persecution which it provoked in the recurring attempts of the Roman Government to arrest and suppress it. In the Introduction I have attempted to elucidate the various factors in the civilisation of the Græco-Roman world that tended to facilitate it.

The Christian mission involved the organisation of the Christian communities that grew out of it. This organisation appears from the outset and undergoes a gradual development until the Catholic Church emerges, from about the beginning of the third century onwards, as an ecclesiastical Empire within the Empire, with a graded ministry, of which the Roman bishop is already found tentatively claiming to be the head. As the result of this development the ecclesiastical constitution, which shows the influence of historic conditions, of imperial institutions, acquires a definite form. In the course of it there appear separatist tendencies within the Church, which lead to the formation, on ecclesiastical and religious grounds, of dissenting Churches, associated more particularly with the names of Marcion, Montanus, Novatian.

The Christian communities develop a communal life which finds expression in a common worship, discipline, and service. Connected with, yet distinct from it, is the individual Christian life, which is conditioned by an elevated and exacting Christian ethic, and expresses itself in the practice of the Christian virtues in the relations of the individual believer with his fellow-believers and with the pagan society in which his lot is cast. The ascetic conception of it is exemplified both within the Church and in

sects like the Encratites, and towards the close of the period, in the incipient monastic movement in Egypt.

Similarly the doctrine of the Church develops as its teachers seek to interpret the more primitive Gospel in speculative fashion. The Gospel becomes a theology, which varies with the individual theologian, and shows more or less the influence of Hellenist on Christian thought. Under this influence, Christianity, though primarily a product of Hebrew religious thought, becomes to a certain extent a syncretistic and, in its own distinctive fashion, a mystery religion. This influence appears in its extreme form in Christian Gnosticism, which the Catholic Church ultimately repudiated. At the same time, apart from the common profession of faith embodied in the so-called Apostles' Creed, there is, even within the Church, diversity of theological opinion, which shows itself in recurring theological controversy and culminates in the Arian controversy towards the close of the period.

These are the main themes which I have endeavoured to elucidate in this work. Its basis is the course of lectures on early Church History delivered, at stated intervals, during the twenty-one years of my tenure of the Regius Chair of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Edinburgh. These lectures were addressed to students in the Faculty of Arts as well as that of Divinity (Ecclesiastical History being included in the courses in both Faculties). Owing to lack of time only the gist of portions of them was actually delivered. For the purpose of publication I have revised, enlarged, and extensively rewritten these lectures in the belief that the experience of an old teacher might be of some service in guiding, through the printed book, a new generation of students in this field of study. Such is the force of habit that, in rewriting them, I have continued to address, in imagination, the audience in the old lecture room which advancing years compelled me to vacate five years ago. If the flesh has become somewhat weak, the spirit is still active, though its activity must now be largely confined to the study.

Many are the books on the subject in English and other modern languages in the form of textbooks or larger works. Even so, I have ventured to add one more to the number. Perhaps this addition may be found to be not altogether superfluous. It is not a mere textbook, but a reasoned and critical survey of the evolution of the Early Church. Its standpoint is that of the independent historian, who examines, ascertains, judges, and interprets. This independence is not always conspicuous in the case of the purely ecclesiastical historian. In spirit, treatment, and content it may be found to have sufficient individuality to attract the notice of those for whom it is intended, who include the cultured reader, whether cleric or laic, as well as the student.

The rise and growth of the Early Church is by no means solely a matter of antiquarian interest. It is the evolution of a living organism which was destined to survive the Roman Empire and mould Western civilisation in both its mediæval and modern forms. In this evolution there is an *élan vital*, a vital force at work, such as operated in no other organism, religious and secular, in the ancient world. It has continued to operate throughout the centuries, and its operation is still active on a vaster scale in our modern world. It is a vital link between these worlds. The Roman Empire perished. Other political combinations have risen and fallen since its disappearance. Unlike them, the Christian Church, in its various forms, in spite of periods of degeneration, has proved immortal. It has evinced a wonderful power of renewal, at times, out of temporary degeneration. Assuredly a striking evidence of the vitality of spiritual as compared with material power, which those who seek to mould the destiny of nations, and are apt at times to ignore, would do well to bear in mind.

The history of the Early Church contains much that is obscure or uncertain, though the sources are, in part at least, fairly full and have been capably edited, and the modern literature on it

is enormous. Hence the difference of judgment on the problems with which it fairly bristles. Conjecture and fancy have a wide field for their exercise, while there is the temptation, to which the dogmatic type of mind in particular is liable, of reading into the sources ecclesiastical assumptions and prepossessions instead of seeking to envisage the period in its own light. All of us are more or less exposed to this subtle, if unconscious influence, which is by no means confined to the sphere of ecclesiastical study. The best we can do to counteract it is to strive to become conscious of and curb it in the pursuit of historical truth. The student will, therefore, do well to walk warily, to be content to "know only in part," to strive to go no further in his conclusions than the available evidence seems to warrant.

I am indebted to the Carnegie Trust for the Scottish Universities for the offer of a guarantee, not exceeding a specified amount, against possible loss from the publication of the work.

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FROM CHRIST TO CONSTANTINE

PART I

INTRODUCTION

THE GRÆCO-ROMAN WORLD

CHAPTER I

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

THE PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIANITY

“THE time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.”¹ With this proclamation Jesus began His mission in Palestine. Paul also saw in His advent, “the fullness of the time.”² For Paul, it appears, all previous history had been a convergence towards this event. This is a religious judgment, based on a subjective survey of Hebrew religious history, which, in his view, contained the promise of Christianity from the outset, particularly from Abraham onwards, in whom and in his seed all nations should be blessed. The rabbinic reasoning with which he strives to prove this proposition is by no means above question, and from the objective point of view it would be risky to affirm that the advent of Jesus was the focus of the previous history of mankind. Universal history is too wide and complex to admit of a subjective generalisation of this kind. At the same time, it may be forcibly contended that, from the religious point of view—and it is from this point of view that Paul envisages it—the advent of Jesus was the focus towards which the religious history of mankind had been converging. At all events His appearance in the reign of Tiberius may be regarded as the unique culmination of the moral and spiritual uplift of humanity, of its aspiration Godwards, its striving to realise the perfect Good, the highest life. In this sense His appearance was epochal. With Him something new in the ethical and spiritual sphere entered into the Græco-Roman world

¹ Mark i. 15.

² Gal. iv. 4.

—something that was destined to exert, in this sphere, a moulding influence on it, and through it, on the world of the distant future. Ultimately, if not immediately, it became the focus of the religious history of the Græco-Roman world, and was to become the focus of that of a world much vaster than even the Roman Empire. In this sense Paul was justified in speaking of “the fullness of the time.” The phrase is by no means purely visionary. As a Jew of the Diaspora or Dispersion and a Roman citizen, he knew the Græco-Roman world, and his knowledge of it doubtless tended to strengthen his conviction of the timeliness of the advent of Jesus. In important respects it had been prepared for the Christian Gospel and the Christian mission.

In the political sphere, for instance, the Empire had welded a large area of the ancient world into a political unity, guaranteed order and security within this area, and furthered intercommunication between the diverse races and peoples embraced by it. Roman military power, Roman administrative capacity, Roman commercial enterprise had paved the way for the expansion of Christianity. They were necessary adjuncts of the Christian mission. Similarly, in the intellectual and religious spheres there were points of contact with Christianity which were fitted to facilitate the reception of the Gospel message. There were, indeed, in the intellectual and religious conditions of the age, hindrances as well as helps to the reception of this message. It is a mistake, too often made, to represent the Græco-Roman world as irresistibly predestined to welcome the Christian Gospel. It is only necessary to mention the long, if intermittent, persecution of Christianity by the Roman government, the protracted antagonism of the various philosophical schools, the long drawn-out struggle with polytheism, the difficulty of leavening pagan society with the spirit of the Gospel, to realise how imperfect was the preparation of the ancient world for it. This preparation was at most only a relative one. This is true even in the case of the Jews, who were looking for the advent of a great national king and a Jewish hegemony of the world, not for a Messiah who came to found a purely spiritual kingdom, and whom they crucified, instead of acclaiming. On the other hand, “the fullness of the time” is no mere dogmatic generalisation of the theologians. Christianity did ultimately win its way to the religious supremacy of the Græco-Roman world. Apart from its inherent merits and its power of appeal as a Gospel of redemption, there are certain salient facts in the political, intellectual, and religious life of the age that contribute to explain its rise and its progress to the religious conquest of the Empire.

ROMAN DOMINATION

The most striking feature of the age is the far-reaching rule of Rome. At or about the advent of Jesus the Roman dominion already embraced a large part of the ancient civilised world. During the last two pre-Christian centuries its expansion eastwards had resulted in the incorporation into the Republic of Greece and Macedonia (148-146 B.C.) the greater part of Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt. Under the early Empire the eastern boundary was extended as far as the Euphrates. During these centuries it gradually absorbed the whole of North Africa, from which it had earlier ousted the rival Carthaginian power. Westwards the sway of Augustus reached to the Atlantic, northwards to the Danube, the Rhine, and the shore of "the German Sea" (*Mare Germanicum*), as far as the mouth of the Elbe. By the middle of the first Christian century southern Britain had become a Roman province.

In relation to the expansion of a movement like Christianity, the Roman conquest of Palestine, in particular, was prospectively of the utmost importance. This strip of territory along the eastern Mediterranean shore was admirably situated as the starting-point of such a movement. It was a highly important link between the East and the West. The region between the eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf was geographically the centre of the ancient world. From this centre the Gospel could radiate in all directions with comparative ease and swiftness. Geography as well as missionary zeal explains the fact of this expansion. The geographical situation would, however, have availed little without the political conditions which enabled the Christian missionary to take advantage of it and which the far-reaching rule of Rome provided.

Such a vast dominion in the ancient world was not peculiar to Rome. That of Alexander had reached much farther east than that of the Roman Emperors ever attained, though its western boundary was limited by the Adriatic. That of the Persian conquerors extended from the Indian Ocean to the Ægean Sea, while the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians had each, for a period, dominated vast Oriental territories containing a variety of conquered peoples. But the empire of Alexander was an experiment that failed, and the Oriental empires do not compare with that of Rome in respect of political organisation or far-reaching civilising effect. "The heterogeneous collection of provinces won by force of arms or by diplomacy," says Ferrero, "became a

single body inspired by one soul.”³ What distinguishes the rule of Rome is not only its extent, but the fusion of a great variety of peoples into a political unity in virtue of the Roman genius for government on a vast scale. The small city-State of an earlier time, of which Greece furnishes the classical example, and the monarchies of the Near East which had succeeded the evanescent, far-flung monarchy of Alexander were alike ultimately replaced by a highly though variously organised Empire that extended from the Atlantic to the Euphrates. What Alexander had contemplated but failed permanently to establish—a world-State with a common authority, a common nationality, a common interest—Rome effected for five centuries. The ancient world became a unity in a sense hitherto unknown in spite of the fact that it was composed of a great diversity of subject peoples. The nearest parallel to it is the modern British Empire with its motley races welded in a common imperial nationality.

Unlike the British Empire, which, in virtue of the principle of self-government, is largely a union of practically sovereign States, under a common Head, it was ruled by a centralised government, embodied in the Emperor and the Senate. The government functioned through a hierarchy of imperial and senatorial officials (*legati, proconsules, procuratores, præfecti*, etc.), who were appointed by the Emperor or the Senate, according as the particular province was subject to the one or the other. These officials wielded very large powers, though responsible for their exercise to the central government.⁴ At the same time, this centralised government skilfully made use of the inherited institutions of the conquered peoples and combined centralisation with a certain measure of local and provincial autonomy, exercised by the municipalities, in various degrees, and by the provincial assemblies.⁵

The Roman dominion was founded on force. It was the fruit of persistent aggression in the interest of the Roman populace. For hundreds of years Rome carried on a ruthless warfare from this motive and perpetrated many atrocities such as the destruction of Carthage and Corinth in the middle of the second pre-Christian century. It had no regard for the rights of other peoples when its own interest was at stake. Its spirit was utilitarian, not humanitarian. It was actuated by the lust of power, the acquisition or the control of the means of wealth in the possession of other

³ “Greatness and Decline of Rome,” v. 346 (Eng. trans., 1909). On the factors of this organic unity, in contrast to the Oriental monarchies, see p. 349 f.

⁴ Pelham, “Roman History,” 378-386 (3rd ed., 1900); Bury, “Roman Empire,” 74 f. (5th ed., 1908); Staerk, “Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte,” i. 47-56 (1907).

⁵ Concilium, Κωνόβη.

peoples, on which power in the utilitarian sense depends. The growth of its dominion is thus a long process of aggrandisement for utilitarian ends. The lust of dominion nurtured in the Roman character a brutal and cruel strain which made it indifferent to suffering, and even made a sport of it in the arena. Roman conquest was the fruit of a thoroughgoing political realism, to which the interest of the State is the supreme consideration; bloodshed and devastation are legitimate expedients. From the humanitarian point of view, there is much to shock and repel the moral sense in the spirit and method which created the Roman world-State. It has given the moralist, both ancient and modern, ample scope for criticism and animadversion. One thinks, for instance, of Tacitus' dictum, "They make a wilderness and call it peace." Even from the practical point of view, one is rather dubious about the ultimate effects of power exercised from purely political utilitarian motives. Even the Roman Empire ultimately crashed, and the crash was, in part at least, due to the neglect of the higher moral values, with which the worship of force cannot in the long run afford to dispense. Too many historians in their estimate of the Roman Empire are apt to minimise or overlook this side of its history, and indiscriminately "cheer for the big battalions." It has, indeed, its ideal side, and the ideal side of the Græco-Roman world-State has been finely depicted by Ferrero: "For ten centuries the ancient civilisation had worked untiringly to create a State which should be perfect, wise, human, generous, free, and just, and which should cause beauty, truth, and virtue to reign over the world. That perfect State had been the supreme ambition of Greece and Rome, of Republicans as well as Imperial Rome."⁶ The reality was, nevertheless, often far from corresponding to the ideal, because, as Ferrero forgets to say, it had often enough been stained by bloodshed and crime even in the great period of Roman history, and discredited by moral laxity, oppression, and slavery. And already in the third century, as Ferrero vividly pictures, it was culminating in appalling demoralisation. "And in what way? In the most appalling crisis of anarchy and disorder which was ever produced by the violent and corrupt despotism of brutal force, despoiled of all moral authority; in the destruction of the most refined civilisation, and with the obligation of kneeling before a despotic Asiatic sovereign as before a living God, and all for the purpose of rescuing that part of the old world and of its treasures which could still be saved."

On the other hand, not a little can be said from the utilitarian

⁶ "Ruin of Ancient Civilisation," 78 (trans. by Lady Whitehead, 1921).

and even the moral point of view in vindication of the Roman dominion. It may be said that the political conditions previously prevailing in the ancient world rendered it desirable, if not always justifiable. It was the inevitable and salutary outcome of the faction strife which brought the Roman Republic to the brink of ruin. It put an end to the rivalries of the eastern Hellenist monarchies in Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, which kept the western portion of Alexander's evanescent Empire in a chronic state of war. It defended the civilisation of the Mediterranean world from the constant menace of Oriental and barbarian invasion. It preserved and disseminated Greek culture—the most precious heritage of the ancient world—and gave to the western peoples, on whom it imposed the language, laws, and institutions of Rome, a higher civilisation. It ensured the benefits of order, security, stability, over a vast area. Except in the more remote regions in the east and in the north, where race consciousness or restiveness under conquest was keen, the Roman Peace, the Pax Romana, reigned from Spain to Syria. On the Euphrates and the Rhine there was frequent disturbance to keep the legions busy. Throughout the more central provinces on either side of the Mediterranean the strong and effective rule of an Augustus and his more capable successors was justly celebrated as the revival of the golden age. The subjects of these great Emperors even went the length of deifying them in the exuberance of their gratitude for the boon of the Roman Peace.

Not the least serviceable was the legal system which the practical Roman genius developed to meet the needs of a universal rule. The administration of Roman justice was superior to the Greek administration by popular assemblies, whose decisions were often a travesty of justice. It was based on the Stoic Law of nature, the law common to all peoples,⁷ "the consensus of mankind," which, theoretically at least, gives expression to certain general principles of rectitude, applicable to human conduct apart from race or class. "The Roman lawyer and the Greek Stoic," says Mr Glover, "had been made by God for one another. The Stoic brought him two great conceptions embodied in two famous words—nature and conscience. From the very foundations of the Twelve Tables the Roman lawyer had been feeling his way to general principles of law, and when he cast his eyes over a wider field than the civil law of Rome, he found 'the law of races.'"⁸ The law of nature might be a philosophical inference, without real historical validity, and the actual law,

⁷ *Ius Gentium*, Κοινὸς νόμος.

⁸ "The World of the New Testament," 78 f. (1931).

including the so-called Law of Nations, or races, which recognised and sanctioned slavery, was a bad travesty of the doctrine of the natural freedom and equality of mankind. Theoretically, at all events, it paid homage to a higher ideal of humanity than obtained in the practical Roman conception of government and social life. The prevailing inequality of class and sex might give the lie direct to this legal theorising. Slavery remained all the same as a canker of social and economic life. What Mr Tarn says of the pre-Christian Hellenistic period, *i.e.*, the last three centuries B.C., applies to a certain extent to the period of the Roman Empire: "To see Hellenistic society as it existed, the slave background must never be lost sight of; and such aspirations as freedom and brotherhood—even the very revolutions—too often convey a sense of unreality when it is remembered that a large part of the population was, by most people, excepted from their scope."⁹ But the increasing practice of manumission,¹⁰ the growing tendency, under stoic influence, towards a higher conception of the place of women in the social system¹¹ evince the presence of a more humane spirit in the cultured and governing classes. The freedmen were a numerous and growing class. Many of them acquired wealth and eminence, and Augustus contributed to enhance their status by their election to the rank of *Augustales* (a sort of municipal knighthood) in the provincial municipalities.¹² In the political sphere the humanist tendency is observable in the gradual widening of the Roman franchise until, in the beginning of the third century, Roman citizenship was bestowed by Caracalla on all the free inhabitants of the Empire. The motive of this liberal policy might be mainly a fiscal one. None the less it marks the material advance of the conception of Roman solidarity, the larger citizenship than that which had long been confined to the city of Rome and its Italian incorporations.

INTERCOMMUNICATION

This solidarity was further advanced by the use of a common language and by an elaborate system of communication by land and sea. The widespread diffusion of Hellenistic Greek provided a common medium of intercourse for the educated and commercial classes from Syria and even farther east to Marseilles. "Greek," remarks Mr Tarn, "might take a man from Marseilles

⁹ "Hellenistic Civilisation," 4 (2nd ed., 1930).

¹⁰ On this practice in the first two Christian centuries, see Barrow, "Slavery in the Roman Empire," 173 f. (1928).

¹¹ Wendland, "Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur," 17-18 (1912).

¹² Bury, "Roman Empire," 67-68.

to India, from the Caspian to the Cataracts.”¹³ Like Latin in the Middle Ages, Greek was the language of culture all over the Empire, even in Rome and the larger cities of the West, with the exception of North Africa, which became predominantly a Latin province in consequence of the gradual Romanisation of its Punic inhabitants.¹⁴ This supremacy it retained till well into the third century, when Latin began to assert itself as the common medium in the West. Greek was the language of commerce¹⁵ as well as culture, and thus materially contributed to the spread of the cosmopolitan spirit.

Intercourse was further facilitated by a magnificent system of roads throughout the empire. The Roman conquest of Greece and Asia Minor, for example, resulted in a marked improvement in the wretched roads which had made communication difficult, in the pre-Roman period,¹⁶ in the regions which St Paul later penetrated with such remarkable facility. This improvement applies to the provinces of the Empire generally. Communication by land, if not by sea, was highly developed. It was the policy of Augustus to make Rome the centre of a great system of highways stretching out to the farthest outposts of the Empire, and placing her in speedy communication with them.¹⁷ The same policy was pursued by his successors, especially by Trajan. The Roman engineers performed, comparatively speaking, as great achievements as their nineteenth and twentieth century successors. The Roman legions were expert roadmakers. Highways ran from the capital over mountain passes and through desert and trackless forest, as well as fertile plain, to the utmost bounds of the Empire, with interlinking water carriage where necessary. Besides the main highways there were innumerable connecting roads throughout the provinces. The disuse and ruin of many of these roads after the collapse of the Empire led to the age-long isolation of many of these regions, and this fact renders it difficult to realise the facility of transit in the age preceding the barbarian invasions of the fifth and later centuries. Nothing like this system of communication was available in a large part of Europe, in Africa, and Asia till comparatively recent times. “ Travelling throughout

¹³ “ Hellenistic Civilisation,” 3. On Greek as the *lingua franca* of the Græco-Roman world, see also M. Cary, “ History of the Greek World,” 322 f. (1932).

¹⁴ Harnack, “ Expansion of Christianity,” ii. 411.

¹⁵ Schürer, “ Die ältesten Christengemeinden,” 5 (1894).

¹⁶ On the lack of passable roads in Greece and Asia Minor in the pre-Roman period and the prevalence of brigandage and piracy, see Tarn, “ Hellenistic Civilisation,” 85-86.

¹⁷ Charlesworth, “ Trade Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire,” 230 (1924). See also Nilsson, “ Imperial Rome,” 211 f. (Eng. trans., 1926).

most of the Roman Empire," says Friedländer, "was easy, swift, and secure to a degree unknown till the beginning of the nineteenth century."¹⁸ Travel maps and lists of halting-places were provided to guide the traveller to the capital from the most remote regions. For the imperial officials there was the State post; for other travellers the private stage coach, or other vehicle.

In virtue of this facile communication there was an extraordinary commingling of peoples in all the great centres of population—at Rome, Alexandria, Carthage, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus. Provincials from far and near poured into the capital, and wandering Jews, Greeks, and other foreigners are found over the length and breadth of the Empire, in Gaul and the West as well as in the East. The Orontes, it was said, overflowed into the Tiber. Military service also led to the constant commingling and movement of men of various race. The levies raised in the various provinces not only served, but settled in distant frontier regions, far from their native places, as the remains of the Roman settlements on the Rhine, the Danube, in Britain, for instance, show. In this way numerous Roman colonies established Roman civilisation in the outlying districts of the Empire.

This movement was greatly intensified by commerce which was unfettered throughout the Empire. The trader frequented all the great highways and sea routes. We hear, for instance, of a merchant of Hierapolis in Phrygia who made seventy-two voyages to Italy. There was trade by sea between Italy and Britain, and even Ireland, long before the Roman conquest, and overland with the Baltic. Horace pictures the ubiquitous merchant trafficking from the Arctic zone to the Tropics, venturing beyond even the Roman sway to Caucasia, Arabia, Ethiopia, India. Trading caravans carrying Roman goods penetrated to China. Roman prestige afforded protection to these merchant adventurers far beyond the bounds of the Empire. According to Cicero the magic words *Civis Romanus* meant security for the Roman traveller even among the remote Indians and Persians, though murders and massacres took place occasionally. In addition, Roman ships of war kept the sea clear of pirates, and detachments of Roman

¹⁸ "Roman Life and Manners," i. 268. Cf. Skeel, "Travel in the First Century" (1901); Charlesworth, "Trade Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire." Travellers by land ordinarily covered between 40 and 50 Roman miles a day. The imperial post, going day and night, might average about 120 miles in the twenty-four hours (Skeel, 69 f.). The rapid intercommunication within the Roman Empire, which these writers emphasise, is, however, only to be relatively understood. There is, of course, no parallel in the ancient world to the rapidity of travel by road, sea, and air in the twentieth century, as the result of recent mechanical invention.

soldiers stationed on the highways afforded the merchant protection against robbers. "Under her imperial rule," says Mr Warmington, "commerce became less an armed force than it had been before, and the first two centuries of it, like the nineteenth century of our era, were an age of great discoveries. Without the art of the compass, of steam, of electricity, the Roman subjects made full use of their means, with the encouragement, if not with the assistance of the Emperors, and trade flourished from Spain to China."¹⁹ At the same time, the protection of commerce depended on the efficiency of the government for the time being. Under the less capable Emperors, travelling and trading had their dangers by road and sea. Paul reminds us of these dangers when he mentions among his many trials "perils of robbers."²⁰ "The maintenance of public order and security," says Ramsay, "and the suppression of brigandage on the public roads were far from thorough and satisfactory."²¹

In addition to the merchant class what we call the professional class also travelled much. Philosophers, rhetoricians, sophists, grammarians, moved from city to city, from Pergamum and Tarsus to Marseilles, as well as to Athens, Rome, and Alexandria, which were only the most eminent among the large number of universities or schools of learning. Artists, authors, athletes, quacks of various description as well as renowned physicians were ever on the move. Students, too, wandered from school to school to sit at the feet of some distinguished teacher, and religious festivals, such as the Eleusinian mysteries, or the cult of Isis and Serapis, or Sarapis, at Alexandria, drew crowds of pilgrims from far and near. Tourists bent on sightseeing added to the crowd of travellers, especially in the eastern half of the Empire. The Acts of the Apostles give us a vivid picture of this incessant movement. The apostles who tramped the roads from Jerusalem to Rome are symptomatic of the *Wanderlust* which, from a variety of motives, crowded the Roman highways and sea routes.

Roman imperial rule is thus a marvellous monument of the Roman practical genius. However open to criticism in some respects, its fusion of races and peoples under a common government, its wonderful gift of organisation and administration, its maintenance of the Roman Peace in the wide area adjacent to the Mediterranean, its developed system of law, its interlocking

¹⁹ "The Commerce Between the Roman Empire and India," 321 (1928).

²⁰ 2 Cor. ii. 26.

²¹ "Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament," 268 (1915). See also Skeel, "Travel in the First Century," 71 f.; Nilsson, "Imperial Rome," 206 f.

of the ancient world, its use of a common language in the service of culture and commerce form a marvellous achievement. This achievement marks an enormous advance on previous conditions, a far-reaching contribution to human civilisation. Whilst Tacitus and other ancient critics find reason enough for criticism, writers like Strabo, Philo, the elder Pliny justly celebrate the Roman Peace and all that it implied for the world. To Pliny it was a boon given by the immortal gods to mankind.²² Among modern English writers Mr Glover, who discriminates between the light and shade of the picture, pronounces the Roman government to have been "better at all events than any government the Mediterranean world had ever had."²³ The world was certainly ripe for the strong ruler and it got it in Augustus and his more capable successors, even if reservations must be made in the case of the incapables whom the Principate also produced. Mr Charlesworth, writing from the purely political and economic point of view, wholeheartedly, if too unreservedly, appraises the beneficent policy of the Emperors in maintaining peace and prosperity throughout the first two Christian centuries, and fostering trade and industry, and with them the well-being of their subjects.²⁴

SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE CHRISTIAN MISSION

Whatever our judgment of its merits and demerits, it is obvious that the Roman domination of the ancient world was, in many respects, a preparation for the Christian mission. It was in truth indispensable for its effective progress. Apart from the providential aspect of the question, on which the theologians lay stress, this preparation is writ large in historic fact. The welding of the peoples into a political unity was the concrete embodiment of the Christian conception of a spiritual kingdom without limitation of race or frontier. There is, in fact, some ground for inferring that Paul's conception of Christianity as a universal religion owed something to the fact of the world Empire of which he was a citizen. It familiarised the mind with the idea of the unity of humanity which formed an essential of the message of the Christian apostle as well as of the Stoic teacher, as the Discourse

²² Glover, "The World of the New Testament," 120 (1931); cf. 108-109 for the judgment of Strabo.

²³ "Christ in the Ancient World," 12; cf. 76 (1929).

²⁴ "Trade Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire," 238 f. Like Mr Glover, Prof. Angus is more discriminating in his estimate of its merits. "Environment of Early Christianity," 201 f. (1914). On the Principate as established by Augustus and its merits in securing good government, see also Holmes, "The Architect of the Roman Empire," i. 179 f. (1928). On his achievements as a ruler, *ibid.*, ii. 125 f. (1931).

at Athens shows. "All that fostered the idea of universal citizenship and a wider Roman policy," says Sir William Ramsay, "made for Christianity unconsciously and insensibly."²⁵ The political unity which had displaced the plurality of small states, the fusion of peoples and races which it fostered, freed a large part of the world from the desolation and misery of war. There was peace within at least the more central provinces, and peace was essential to the widespread activity of the Christian missionary. He could move from Antioch to Marseilles without being hampered by a single hostile frontier. "The Romans," says Irenæus, "have given the world peace and we travel without fear along the roads and across the sea wherever we will."²⁶ The Christian doctrine of brotherhood was fitted to appeal all the more powerfully to those who were free from the baneful influence of mutual hatred and conflicting interests. As Origen²⁷ points out, it would have been a far harder task to go and teach all nations had these nations not been welded into a unity by Roman rule. The Pax Romana was, from this point of view, the effective ally of a Gospel that proclaimed peace and goodwill to men. Moreover, the order and security maintained by Roman rule afforded the Christian missionary, in the earlier stage of the Christian mission, protection and justice against his antagonists, whether Jew or Gentile, as is evident in the case of Paul on more than one occasion. Again, the spread of the Greek language provided a medium for the preaching of the Gospel as well as the diffusion of culture and commerce. In the cities in particular, if not always in the rural districts, to which Paul and his fellow missionaries brought the Gospel, they could speak to cosmopolitan crowds of Jews, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Syrians, in a common tongue. They could move with comparative ease and rapidity from city to city and from province to province. Paul's missionary journeys would not have been so extensive without the labours of Roman engineers and legionaries. The unremitting movement along the great roads and sea routes of traders, soldiers, teachers, and travellers of various description also contributed to carry the Gospel to remote regions to which the apostles did not penetrate. It is certain that in course of time the spread of Christianity owed much to this informal missionary activity. It was in virtue of the activity of these nameless and forgotten missionaries that it is ultimately found taking root in Britain and other remote regions,

²⁵ "The Church in the Roman Empire," 10 (1893).

²⁶ "Adv. Haer.," iv, 30, 3. The translation is Mr Moore's, "Religious Thought of the Greeks," 299 (1916).

²⁷ "Contra Celsum," i, 30.

though we have no accurate information by whom the seed was sown in this distant soil.

On the other hand, whilst the external conditions of the ancient world under Roman rule thus favoured the prosecution of the Christian mission, the adverse side of the situation should not be overlooked. The mission had ere long to reckon with the recurring opposition of the Roman government, and the fact that it took nearly 300 years to overcome this opposition conclusively reminds us that, in this respect, the preparation of the ancient world was far from complete, and is only relatively to be understood. This adverse factor might not be materially operative in the early period, when Christianity was regarded as a mere sect of Judaism, and Judaism enjoyed the protection of the Roman government. But the disruption between it and Judaism ere long revealed it in its true light as a distinct and aggressive religion, which appeared to menace the stability of the State. Its professed allegiance to another king in addition to the Emperor, its refusal to recognise the State cult, its unsocial and otherworldly character, seemed to make it politically dangerous. It appeared to be a challenge and a menace to the State. Hence the suspicion and protracted hostility of the government, which found expression in recurring persecution, and ultimately in systematic attempts to repress it. There might be Roman roads for the missionary to travel and carry his message far and wide over the Empire, but ever and anon there was the Roman sentinel by the way, in the person of the Roman official, to challenge and block his progress. Even so, the antagonism of the State proved a blessing in disguise. Persecution was a spiritual tonic which periodically renewed the strength of the movement and contributed to its ultimate triumph. In this sense even the antagonism of the State was a preparing of the way to the spiritual dominion of the Empire.

CHAPTER II

GREEK THOUGHT IN RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY

HEBREW-CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

CHRISTIANITY was an evolution from Hebrew religion, in which both Jesus and His disciples were nurtured. The teaching of Jesus was, indeed, a new departure in the long development of Hebrew religious thought. But whilst Himself unique both in

His teaching and personality among the religious leaders and seers of Israel from Moses onwards, He was of Hebrew race, nurtured in the Hebrew religious atmosphere, and deeply versed in its religious literature. He was heir to a rich spiritual and ethical heritage and drew on this heritage in His proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom, whilst, like the householder of the parable,¹ bringing out of His treasure things new as well as old. This is also true of those of His disciples who handed on and developed His teaching, especially of Paul and the authors of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Johannine writings, though, in contrast to His teaching, the influence of Hellenist thought on this development is more or less apparent.

Characteristic of Hebrew religious thought, as expressed in the lofty religious conceptions of the great prophets and apocalyptic seers of Israel, is its strict monotheism. This monotheism marks a distinctive advance on the earlier henotheistic conception which seems to have recognised the existence of the gods of other peoples alongside Yahweh, the God of Israel. In consequence of this advance, the sway of Yahweh the one, the sole God, is extended not only over Israel, but over all mankind, to the exclusion of all other gods, whose existence is utterly repudiated. Hence the radical antagonism of the prophets to the polytheistic conception of Deity, the insistence on the unity and spirituality of the one and only God. This strict monotheism is, moreover, essentially ethical. Yahweh is a holy and righteous God, the perfection of moral personality. Hence the conviction of the fundamental distinction between good and evil, though not in the Persian dualistic sense of two coequal antagonistic powers in the government of the world.² Hence, too, the sense of sin or, in equivalent terms, unrighteousness, iniquity, transgression, etc.,³ as a defection from the one holy and righteous God. Hence, again, the conception of man's moral capacity and obligation, as created in the image of God, who is the inexorable upholder and director of the moral order of the world, if He is also ready, in the exercise of His love and grace, to forgive the repentant sinner. From this double conception of Him springs the idea and the hope of a divine redemptive purpose, which, in virtue of the providential conception of history, will ultimately compass the destruction of evil and the establishment, by divine intervention, of the universal rule of God.

¹ Matt. xiii. 52.

² This dualism appears only in late pre-Christian Jewish literature. E. Meyer, "Ursprung und Anfänge des Christenthums," ii. 97 (1921).

³ Girdlestone, "Synonyms of the Old Testament," 76.

This redemptive purpose centres in the figure of a Deliverer, a Messiah, the divinely commissioned instrument of the Redemption of Israel, and through Israel, of mankind. In 2nd Isaiah He becomes the Man of Sorrows, the Suffering Servant, who personifies Israel itself and later takes a supernatural individual form. In this form He becomes the pre-existent Son of Man of the second pre-Christian century apocalyptic seers, who wrote the Book of Daniel and the Book of Enoch, and transferred to the Messiah the character of the pre-existent Wisdom, the emissary and agent of a transcendental God, as depicted in the Book of Proverbs and other Jewish Wisdom literature. With these and other late apocalyptic seers appear, too, probably under Persian influence, the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and a resurrection to a future life, in contrast to the earlier tendency to limit the view to this life and the earthly experience of the Hebrew people.⁴ The ancient Hebrew Sheol, the realm of shadowy existence, from which the element of personality was largely eliminated, gave place to the belief in a resurrection, bodily or spiritual, according to the individual seer, and a life beyond the grave, for which the tribulations of this life are only a preparation.

This train of Hebrew religious thought Jesus took over, if He also transformed it, to a certain extent, in the mould of His own religious experience and intuition. From this experience and intuition He derived His vocation as the bearer of a fresh revelation of God and the Founder of His spiritual Rule over Israel and ultimately "all nations." As the result of His mission, on behalf of it, for which He gave His life, and which His disciples continued and expanded into the Græco-Roman world, Christianity came into contact with the Greek mind.

POINTS OF CONTACT

In the intellectual sphere there were, in some important respects, points of contact between Greek Thought and Christianity. In the approach to and the apprehension of the divine, the Greek thinker, indeed, differs greatly from the Hebrew prophet and apocalyptic seer. He sought to attain a knowledge of God by way of the rational and moral nature of man, by abstract thought, philosophy, not, like the Hebrew prophet and seer, by revelation under the influence of inspiration by the Spirit of God. The prophet and the seer receive their knowledge of God and their

⁴ Bousset, "Religion des Judenthums," 478 (3rd ed., 1926); Clemen, "Primitive Christianity and its Non-Jewish Sources," 22 (1921); E. Meyer, "Ursprung und Anfänge," ii. 53 f., 95 f.

divine message to man from a self-revealing Deity by inspiration, not by reason. "The Semitic mind," in the words of A. B. Davidson, "is simple and emotional, without capacity for speculation and metaphysical thought."⁵ Divine inspiration was, indeed, a familiar feature in the Græco-Roman world, as the Sibylline books and other oracular utterances remind us. Even Socrates believed that the gods hold intercourse with men, and was wont to appeal to the Daimon, the divine voice within.⁶ Some of the Greek thinkers occasionally rose to an elevation of thought and expression that remind us of the prophets. "The Stoa," remarks Norden, "created, in marked dependence on Plato, a style of theological expression, which, in its grandeur and solemnity, impresses even the modern reader."⁷ But, generally speaking, the method of Greek Thought in its search for the truth is the dialectic one—the method of rational inquiry, not that of a supernatural revelation under divine inspiration. Thus it came about that, if the Hebrews were the chosen people of God in the sphere of religion, the Greeks were the chosen people in the intellectual sphere. This method proceeded on the assumption of the capacity of reason to attain to the knowledge of God, and of the right of freedom of thought in the pursuit of it. Such knowledge was not among the Greeks, as among the Hebrews, the monopoly of a prophetic or priestly class, and did not, therefore, assume a specifically religious character. Even so, the Greek speculative genius, in its progressive thinking about God, man, and the universe, was, in its own way, a revelation and served a distinctly religious end. Even Paul recognised the revelation of God in the human mind, attainable by the exercise of the rational faculty—"the law written in heart and conscience"⁸—though to him the wisdom of the Greeks was in general "foolishness." To Clement of Alexandria philosophy was a schoolmaster to bring the Greeks to Christ, as the Law was to the Jews.⁹ Justin Martyr went even further. "Those who lived with reason were Christians, even if they were accounted godless. And such among the Greeks were Socrates, Heraclitus, and others like them."¹⁰

If the political conditions in virtue of the rise of the Roman world-State favoured, in important respects, the spread of Christianity, Greek Thought provided the intellectual atmosphere in which the Christian Gospel could take root and grow. That

⁵ "Theology of the Old Testament," 250 (1904).

⁶ Glover, "Progress in Religion," 174 (1922).

⁷ "Agnostos Theos," 126 (1913).

⁸ Rom. ii. 15.

⁹ "Stromateis," i. 5.

¹⁰ Apol. i. 46.

there was a certain affinity between them is apparent from its influence, in varying degree, in the writings of Paul, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Gospel. Moreover Greek Thought furnished the mould in which Christian Thought in its more developed form was shaped. There were thus points of contact, if also disparities, between the two which afford at least a partial explanation of its spread.¹¹ It is not without significance that it was first in the wide region bordering the Mediterranean, where Greek culture flourished, that Christianity ultimately won its way to supremacy even against a persecuting State. The explanation lies, in part at least, in the relative affinity between Greek and Christian ideas, which tended to secure a hearing for the Gospel, if also largely to transform it. So remarkable is this affinity that the later Christian Fathers naively believed that the Greek philosophers borrowed from the Hebrew Scriptures.¹² "What else is Plato than Moses speaking Attic Greek?"¹³ This belief was quite fanciful,¹⁴ though Greek science owed not a little to "the wise men" of Egypt and the East.

Such points of contact are discernible in the monotheistic tendency of Greek Thought, its Logos doctrine, its doctrines of Providence and the immortality of the soul, its conception of the ethical value and end of life, the growing consciousness of the moral degeneration of the world, and the need for an effective remedy.

MONOTHEISTIC TENDENCY OF GREEK THOUGHT

The monotheistic tendency is discernible in the striving to find "an absolute principle of unity in the universe."¹⁵ This principle or power Greek Thought called God, and though the Greek thinkers might combine with it, to a certain extent, the polytheistic belief in a multiplicity of Gods, the tendency was to emphasise the unity of God. They tended, too, to invest this principle with a rational nature. In Greek Thought God ultimately became the absolute, eternal Reason manifesting itself in the visible world. For Anaxagoras, for instance (fifth century B.C.), reasoning, it would seem, from the fact of human intelligence,

¹¹ For a detailed treatment see E. Caird, "Evolution of Religion," i. 49 f. (1899); Hatch, "Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church," 127 f. (1890).

¹² Clement of Alexandria, "Stromateis," i. 1; Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," 1, 2, etc.; "Præparatio Evangelica," bks. X.-XII. (text and trans. by Gifford, 1903).

¹³ Numenius, quoted by Eusebius, "Præparatio Evangelica," xi. 10.

¹⁴ For the refutation of this later Christian belief, see Burnet, "Early Greek Philosophy," 15 f. (1920); Moore, "Religious Thought of the Greeks," 297 (1916).

¹⁵ Caird, i. 61.

God is the omnipotent and omniscient mind,¹⁶ distinct from matter, who creates the cosmos out of chaos or unformed matter. For Socrates, who argued from the evidence of design in the world, God is also the supreme intelligence, controlling and directing all things.¹⁷ For Plato the visible world is the image, the manifestation of the ideas in the mind of its Framer and Creator,¹⁸ who is the embodiment of the idea of the Good, the supreme idea in which all others have their source,¹⁹ the perfection of rational, sovereign Being. He even rises to the conception of a personal God,²⁰ which was lacking in his predecessors.²¹ His conception of the highest Good is not merely the idea of it in the mind. It implies personality and is the object of religious emotion. For Aristotle God is the transcendental prime cause, the self-existent intelligence, which moves all, but is itself unmoved—eternal, unchangeable, incorporeal. For the Stoics, on the other hand (Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus), who also believe in the principle of unity, God is the immanent, all-pervading energy in the world, from which it springs and by which it is maintained. This energy is not purely material. It is also rational and they speak of it as the Logos, or World²² Reason, manifesting itself in the order, harmony, and beauty of the world. They call this World Reason God and conceive of it, indeed, in a pantheistic sense.²³ But in the later Stoic teaching the tendency was towards a more theistic conception of the World Reason, which is God.

The monotheistic tendency of Greek Thought does not betoken pure monotheism in the Jewish-Christian sense of the one and only God. There is a polytheistic element in it. In its mode of expression it breathes the polytheistic atmosphere of the age. The philosophers, disbelieving in and, in some cases, even attacking

¹⁶ *νοῦς*. Adam, "Religious Teachers of Greece," 256 f. (1908). Socrates, according to Plato, complained that, while Anaxagoras did well in emphasising mind as the ultimate cause, he fell back on material causes. See the passage in the "Phædo." Cornford, "Greek Religious Thought," 171 f. (1923); cf. Glover, "Progress in Religion," 162 f. (1922); Burnet, "Greek Philosophy," 267.

¹⁷ Adam, 347 f.

¹⁸ *δημιουργός, Ποιητής*.

¹⁹ He calls it *μέγιστον μᾶθημα*.

²⁰ Adam, 446; Temple, "Plato and Christianity," 28 f. (1916); Taylor, "Plato," 441, 489 f. (1929). There are, however, some objectors. Morgan, for instance, strenuously denies it. "The Trinity of Plato and Philo-Judæus," 27 f. (reprinted by Camb. Univ. Press, 1853).

²¹ On this lack see Cornford, *Intro.*, 10 f.

²² *λόγος σπερματικός*.

²³ Caird, "Evolution of Religion," ii. 79 f.; Moore, "Religious Thought of the Greeks," 192 f.; Bevan, "Later Greek Religion," 17 (1927), who gives the passages from ancient Stoic writings containing the Stoic teaching, as collected by Von Arnim, "Stoicorum Vetera Fragmenta."

the polytheism of the early poets and the popular superstition, habitually speak of the gods in reference to the divine power in or beyond the universe. Though this may be in part due to convention, or the attempt to convey truth by way of symbol or allegory, they are unable to free themselves entirely from the polytheistic caste of thought. There is, too, a certain indefiniteness in their conception of the divine personality. Even so, their monotheism, such as it is, was fitted to facilitate the transition to the Christian conception of a God, who, whilst pure spirit, is not only self-conscious, but is capable of revealing Himself to man, and with whom man can hold direct communion.

DOCTRINE OF THE LOGOS

For Plato, and also for Aristotle, God is transcendental. He exists above and apart from the visible world, and is not immanent in it, as in Stoicism. He is, indeed, for Plato, its ultimate Creator. But He exercises His creative power through the medium of subordinate agents or gods, through whom the ideas in the divine mind realise themselves in the visible world, though only imperfectly, owing to the element of evil, which is inherent in the unformed matter out of which the visible world is framed.²⁴ Chief of those subordinate agents is what he calls the world-soul, which is "the image of god," "the only begotten,"²⁵ and stands to God in the relation of a Son to the Father. It is the rational, animating power in the world, the divine intermediary between it and God, "a perceivable God,"²⁶ distinct, though emanating from, the highest God, immanent in the world, not, like Him, transcendental. This immanent world-soul is the Platonic equivalent of the Stoic Logos or World Reason, though Plato himself does not designate it by the term Logos. It was this Platonic conception of the world-soul, combined with the Stoic Logos, of which, as we shall see, Philo of Alexandria, three centuries later, made use to denote the Hebrew Word or Wisdom of God as the medium of God's creative activity. To it he applies such epithets as "the image of God," which he also derived from Plato. From Philo it passed into Christian teaching as the specific designation of the divine Christ, as in the Fourth Gospel, who thus becomes the intermediary between God and the world, the agent of His purpose in creation and redemption. The missionary significance

²⁴ Taylor holds that the doctrine that matter is intrinsically evil and the source of evil is wholly un-Platonic, and only appears in the popular Platonism of later times (Plato, 492).

²⁵ εἰκὼν, μονογενής.

²⁶ Θεὸς αἰσθητός.

of this conception of Christ as the embodiment of the Logos conception is obvious. It was fitted both to make Christ more intelligible to the Greek mind and to secure for the Gospel a hearing among the cultured class in the Græco-Roman world.

DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE

The Greek conception of God further involved that of a divine providence.²⁷ For Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics, as for the older poets (Pindar, Æschylus), the universe is the manifestation of the divine will and purpose. They were impressed by the contemplation of the order as well as the unity of the world. They saw in this order the evidence of designing, controlling, ordering intelligence. For Socrates this providence is no mere philosophic generalisation. As in the case of Heraclitus, he sees in the constitution of nature and man the overwhelming proof of an infinite wisdom and benevolence, which has deliberately planned the scheme of things, has adapted it to man's existence, and thereby ministers to his well-being both individually and collectively. He even cherishes the belief, which found expression in Christian theology, that everything was created for the sake of man, for whom, in spite of the evil to which he may be exposed, God cares. "For the good man there is no evil either in life or after death, nor are his interests neglected by the gods."²⁸ Plato substantially shares this view, though his conception of providence is based not so much on the adaptation of nature for the benefit of man as on the good of the whole creation, which is the ultimate end of its existence. "The ruler of the universe has ordered all things with a view to the excellence and preservation of the whole, and every part, as far as may be, has an action and passion appropriate to it."²⁹ God, as the Idea of the Good, can, in fact, only purpose and seek to realise the perfect good. In this purpose man is His co-worker against the power of evil, which seeks to thwart it, in the attempt to realise the divine government in himself and, as far as possible, in the world.

In Stoicism the conception of a divine providence takes the form of the working out of the absolute divine law to which man and all things are subject. The Stoic is a determinist, a believer in the divine necessity, destiny which absolutely works its purpose

²⁷ *Προνοία*.

²⁸ Adam, 121, *cf.* 347 f.; Zeller, "Grundriss der Griechischen Philosophie," 104-105 (9th ed., 1908).

²⁹ Adam, 449.

in the universe and the life of man.³⁰ The world is governed by this divine destiny, and this term rather than providence properly denotes its operation, though the Stoics also use the word providence in speaking of the divine order of the world. But this destiny is not a blind fate and it does not exclude human freedom within certain limits at least. It is not conceived in a mechanical sense. It is the expression of the activity of the universal or World Reason, and man, as a partaker of this reason, is the organ of the divine will as far as he lives in accordance with, in obedience to reason. He is capable of determining himself towards the good, fulfilling the will, the dispensation which directs both nature and human life. Stoicism was imbued with a deeply religious spirit, and in the religious sphere (as in the hymn of Cleanthes) gives expression to the active self-determination of the individual in seeking to realise the all-determining will of God. It is characterised by an elevated optimism, and it is significant that, in its religious aspect, it evidently had a fascination for and exercised no little influence on the thought of Paul. Man, he told the Athenians, is of divine race and lives and moves and has his being in God. Again, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, He is the "one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." This is the Stoic providence interpreted and taken over into Christianity. At the same time, there seems to be a jar in Stoicism between the idea of God, an inexorable destiny, and free self-determination in co-operation with an all-wise and all-directing Father. This thought of necessity and destiny, force and fate, from which God or the gods is not exempt, colours more or less Greek Thought (even Platonism) as well as Greek piety, and it is difficult to bring it into complete harmony with the Christian idea of the Father God and His providential working. For Epicurus and his school, on the other hand, the universe is a machine which shows no trace of divine design or guidance. It is the result of the fortuitous play of the atoms (molecules) of which, in accordance with the theory of Democritus, it is composed. The gods exist. But they have nothing to do with nature or human life, and the worship of them is a nefarious superstition based on ignorance and fear, from which it is the business of a materialist philosophy to emancipate mankind. The demonic powers, which were supposed to shape and control human destiny and terrorised men's souls, as Paul's Epistles so luridly depict, were but figments of the imagination over which there was no need to worry.

³⁰ ἀνάγκη, εἰμαρμένη. Aall, "Geschichte der Logosidee," 130 f. (1896-99).

DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY

In its doctrine of immortality Greek Thought presents another point of contact with Christianity. In the early poets this belief does not rise beyond the idea of a shadowy, phantom-like existence in Hades, as in the case of the early Hebrew conception of Sheol, the ghostly region of the dead. It attained to a more definite conception in the mystery religions, and especially in Pythagoreanism, and with it is connected the doctrine of retribution in the other world. This belief becomes in the philosophers, especially in Plato, the subject of dialectic discussion, is "elevated from the emotional to the intellectual plane."³¹ There is much difference of opinion over the question whether Heraclitus held the doctrine of personal immortality, and there does not seem to be room in his system for it. Democritus and the Sophists denied it. Socrates held that it could not be proved. "No one knows but God," though he cherished the conviction of a future life and hopefully confides the issue to God.³² Of the idealism of Plato it was a cardinal truth. For him the spiritual world is the grand reality, of which the material is but the sensible reflection. For him, as for St Paul, the things seen and temporal are but the manifestations of the eternal, perfect, spiritual reality which is God. The soul is immaterial and immortal. It has in it a divine element—the rational element. This divine element pre-existed, as in the Orphic and Pythagorean theory from which he borrows. It comes from the ideal world and has kinship with the eternal God. He based the argument for its immortality mainly on this conviction. From the ideal world it has come, and to it, except in the case of those who have vitiated it by their persistence in evil, it returns as to its true home, its inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away—to describe it in Christian terms. Moreover, what is best in us constitutes our true nature and what is irrational—the merely sensuous part of us—is not our true being, which ends not with sense. From the imperfections of sense the soul passes through a purifying, retributive process of transmigration. For Plato also emphasises the idea of a judgment, a retribution in the other world. "Three of his great dialogues—the 'Gorgias,' the 'Phædo,' and the 'Republic'—end with a myth concerning the passage of the soul from this world to the other; and each contains a vision of judgment."³³

³¹ Adam, 114.

³² Taylor holds that he firmly believed in immortality (*passim*), Plato, 138.

³³ Temple, 84. On the affinity between Platonism and Christianity in this respect, see Livingstone, "The Greek Genius," 195 f. (2nd ed., 1915). "Plato was a Christian born out of due season." "In Plato we have a forecast of the coming of Christianity" (p. 246).

To those who had read Plato and to whom the Christian eschatological message of a retribution and a judgment came, this message would certainly be the more easily understandable. "When Christianity came to the Græco-Roman world," says Professor Taylor, "it found the general conception of the soul which it needed already prepared for it by philosophy."³⁴ And when the collapse of the western Roman Empire eventually intervened, his conception of an ideal spiritual world, of which man is the heir, helped Augustine to hold fast to the idea of the eternal City of God which passeth not away.

The Platonic doctrine of immortality is far more definite than that of Aristotle who believed in the immortality of spirit, but not of the individual spirit. It is immensely superior to the Stoic conception of the continued existence of the soul after death only until the general conflagration of the cosmos, when it shall be dissolved, along with it, into the primal fire. The Jewish-Christian idea of the resurrection of the body is, however, alien to Greek Thought which only conceives of spiritual immortality, and for which the body is the prison house of the soul. Whilst Paul in his teaching of the spiritual resurrection body ultimately veered towards the Greek spiritual conception, it was the crasser doctrine of a bodily resurrection which intruded itself into the Christian creed, and in this respect Christianity found it difficult to make itself intelligible to the Greek mind.

ETHICAL ASPECT OF LIFE

Greek Thought further approximates to Christianity in the importance which it attaches to the ethical aspect of life. For it, as for Christianity, life has an ethical value and an ethical end—the realisation of the Good, the development of the divine element in the soul in the pursuit of it. The great problem is the attainment of this end in the individual and society—the problem, in its own way, of what in Christianity is the establishment of the Rule or Kingdom of God. The problem is, however, largely an intellectual one. For the Greek thinker virtue is distinctively concerned with knowledge—the knowledge of good and evil, though it has also its practical side. For Socrates virtue is knowledge, enlightenment, wisdom; vice is ignorance, error. The virtuous man is he who, having been taught what is good and knowing it, acts accordingly, and thus attains happiness, well-being. It is, however, not knowledge in the exclusively intellectual sense, but knowledge as influencing the will and the character.³⁵ He

³⁴ Socrates, 133 (1932).

³⁵ Adam, 328.

gave, too, a place to religion in the ethical life, to prayer and piety, to the inward monitor or daimon, which he regarded as a revelation of the gods. For Plato virtue is the harmony, the health of the soul. He does not limit it exclusively to wisdom, though it is only by philosophy that the highest form of it is attained. It is, therefore, the monopoly of the highly educated, the ruling class, the wise man, since the mass can only attain to the lower form of it, which is concerned with the control of impulse. The slave class seems to be left out of account. Within this limit, however, his moral ideal is a lofty one. It involves the strenuous struggle to attain the harmony with God which the soul enjoyed in its pre-existent state, and which contact with matter has disturbed. He seems, in fact, to anticipate Paul in his striving to emancipate it from its subjection to the body, the passions in the pursuit of the Good, to assimilate it to God.³⁶ Life is a process of death. This strikingly reminds us of the Pauline conception of death with Christ and resurrection to new life. At all events, it might easily lead over to the specific Pauline ethical and religious conception. Reminiscent, too, of Paul is the conception, in the Republic, of a city in heaven, of which we may even now be citizens.³⁷ He has, however, no adequate sense of moral evil in the Christian sense of sin.³⁸ Evil is what is morally inexpedient rather than what is morally wrong. Sensuality, intemperance, for instance, are to be eschewed, not because they are incompatible with a pure conscience, the will of a holy God, but because they are contrary to a well-regulated life. We miss, too, the Christian emphasis on love, beneficence as the cardinal virtue.

Aristotle rejects the Socratic doctrine that virtue consists in knowledge and takes into account the complex nature of man as animal and rational, the fact of the passions, which, unlike Plato, he regards as wholly irrational, immoral, and which are to be eliminated. For him, therefore, the ethical life is the direction and discipline of the passions by reason—the life according to reason. This consists in the habit of observing the mean, to be determined by reason, between any particular virtue and its opposite vice (practical virtue) and in the full development of the

³⁶ ὁμοίως τῷ θεῷ. He taught something resembling the Pauline distinction between the spirit (Πνεῦμα, *vous*) and the flesh (σῶμα, *sarx*) in Paul and the conflict between them, though he does not advocate an ascetic view of life, and leaves room for the higher emotions of the soul. On likeness to God as the end of the normal life, see the passage in the "Theætetus," Cornford, "Greek Religious Thought," 208.

³⁷ Temple, "Plato and Christianity," 94 f.

³⁸ Prof. Taylor thinks that "his sense of sin is as genuine as Pascal's or Kant's" ("Platonism and its Influence," 59). It depends on what we mean by sin.

powers of the mind in the life of contemplation or philosophy (intellectual virtue), on which he lays the chief stress.³⁹ Here, also, the ideal of the virtuous life is a high one. "As far as it is in him, man should make himself immortal and do everything with a view to living in accordance with the best principle in him."⁴⁰ But this striving towards the immortal life leaves too much out of account the emotional side of life, which is to be systematically rationalised rather than utilised. Moreover, Aristotle's virtuous man does not include humility, gentleness, charity in his list of virtues. "He does not consider the slave as capable of either virtue or happiness, and a poor man is handicapped in the exercise of his moral and intellectual energies."⁴¹

The intellectual element also enters strongly into the ethics of the Stoics. The Stoic is the wise man *par excellence*. This wisdom consists in living according to nature,⁴² to the law of the universe as embodied in the divine or World Reason, not merely the rational faculty, pure reason, as in Aristotle. As in Aristotle, it involves the subjection of the passions by reason in the Stoic sense. But it is not a matter of observing the mean between any particular virtue and its opposite vice. It demands complete conformity to reason as the divine law of the world; complete self-repression; complete freedom from all that disturbs its rule; independence of pleasure and pain, of fortune and suffering; complete serenity of soul.⁴³ Moreover, this conformity to nature is attainable by all, apart from class or race, in whom the World Reason operates—by barbarian as well as Greek, the slave as well as the free citizen, women as well as men. It is concerned with the individual, with man as man, not with man as a member of any class or political association like the Greek city-State. In this respect it differs markedly from the ethical teaching of Plato and Aristotle. The Stoic philosophy belongs to the period of the decline of the city-State, of the transition to the world-State of Alexander and later of the Roman Empire. It is, accordingly, both individualist and cosmopolitan—humanitarian. It offers the attainment of the higher life to all of whatever class, or race, or nation, who strive after the things of the spirit. Stoic pantheism, perforce, involved the unity of humanity and tended to universalism. Since God is immanent in all things and all things are the manifestation of the divine reason, the life according to nature, reason

³⁹ On his ethical teaching see E. Caird, "Evolution of Theology," i. 305 f.

⁴⁰ Alexander, "Short History of Philosophy," 74 (1907).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴² ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν. Zeller, "Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics," 214 f. (1880).

⁴³ ἀπαθεία.

is common to all. The true state is the Cosmos. What differentiates mankind is not political or social conditions, but virtue, character. It is a noble ideal and served, to a certain extent, as a moral tonic in an age of moral declension. It gave to the Græco-Roman world some of its greatest characters in the sphere of morals as well as statesmanship. Through its humanitarian teaching it influenced Roman Law, which it contributed to make more humane. It emphasised purity and righteousness, the necessity of living in communion with and obedience to the divine will. In its best representatives it found expression in a genuine humanity based on the presumed natural equality of mankind, in the recognition of the rights of the weak, the outcast, the slave, in the love of even enemies.⁴⁴ "Reverence the gods and help men" was the motto of Marcus Aurelius.

SIGNIFICANCE IN RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY

There was thus in the best Greek ethical thought—in its emphasis in the ethical value of life, its elevated moral ideal, in its striving to develop the spiritual element in man—a real affinity with Christianity. Its conception of an eternal reason beyond or in the universe was not merely a theoretic one. It had a real significance in relation to human conduct, since to it man must conform his life. In virtue of his rational nature, he is akin to God. Life has a moral basis and meaning, and must be ordered in accordance with this fundamental fact. The Platonic "likeness to God," the Stoic "conformity to nature" alike involve the highest ethical effort. Both are, we may say, next door to Christianity. So near was the Stoic Seneca to the ethical teaching of Paul that he was later, though on insufficient grounds, asserted to have been a Christian convert.

On the other hand, its narrow intellectualism tended to interpose a barrier between it and Christianity, which appealed more to the heart and the conscience than to the intellect. Its moral ideal might be a lofty one, but it did not sufficiently realise the weakness of human nature or furnish the necessary inspiration in the struggle with ignorance and vice. Something more was needed than the Stoic preaching of an austere morality in accordance with the dictates of reason. The austere ideal, which ignored too much the emotional side of human nature, and went the length of inculcating voluntary suicide for its sake, was, as Cicero pointed out, an impossible one even for the Stoic wise man.⁴⁵ Its rationalism lacked the power of a living religious faith which is

⁴⁴ Zeller, "Grundriss," 239 f.

⁴⁵ Zeller, "Eclectics," 163 (1883).

essential for the regeneration, the moral uplift of humanity. Greek ethical thought was, moreover, defective in its sense of sin, of the weakness of reason and will to attain the highest spiritual life, without faith in a personal God and "the Grace of God" in Christian phrase. It did not sufficiently realise the dependence of morality on religion. Stoic self-sufficiency is no adequate substitute for this essential of the higher life, which must begin in the sense of human insufficiency "for these things," and overcome it in the strength of a living faith. "The Greeks," as Mr Livingstone puts it, in a striking comparison between Plato and Paul, "had no real sense of sin. They regarded their offences as shortcomings and called them *hamartiai*, bad shots."⁴⁶ It is only in later Greek Thought that we discover a tendency to question the adequacy of reason to attain the higher life, or lift the cloud of pessimism that was settling over the ancient world. A characteristic note of this later period was the sadness of life, the longing for the assurance of a better life to come, the yearning for a fuller revelation of God. *Assidua de Deo quaestio est*. Even Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius are found emphasising the need of prayer to the gods, the dependence on faith as well as reason for the satisfaction of this quest for God and the higher life. Despite its confidence in reason, philosophy was discovering that life is too unsatisfactory even for the best, too small for the aspiring spirit of man, without the power of religious faith to lift it out of the shadows of this mortal existence. Pure rationalism is too abstract, too indeterminate in the face of the enigma of life and death to dispense with the adjunct of religious faith, the innate intuition of God and the eternal verities, which, while springing from reason, ventures beyond it. In this pessimistic mood, which seems to have been widespread, Christianity could find a fitting soil for the seed of the Gospel.

POPULARISING GREEK THOUGHT

Apart from some reservations, there were, then, not a few points of contact between Greek Thought, both speculative and practical, and Christianity. Nor was the knowledge of it confined to the schools or the cultured class. It was being disseminated in Paul's time to a wider public, if in rather a superficial form, through the popular exponents of the various systems, especially

⁴⁶ "The Greek Genius," 24 f.; cf. Glover, "Progress in Religion." Prof. Angus, on the other hand, discovers in later Greek thought, "a heightened sense of sin and the consciousness of the need of divine grace, and the new attitude of self-abasement"—"Religious Quests of the Græco-Roman World," 43 (1927).

of Stoicism, and the popular tract for the time. A characteristic figure of the age is the wandering moralist and preacher, the precursor after a fashion and the contemporary of the Christian missionary, who strive to educate the mass in higher things. The aim of this popular philosophy was practical. In the vivid scene at Athens depicted in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul comes into contact with those "babblers," or, more literally, "pickers-up of bits of knowledge," as a bird picks up seeds,⁴⁷ whom the professional philosophers despised, and among whom they were disposed to reckon the Apostle himself. "To judge from the frequent mention of them in literature," remarks Wendland, "the number of those who, as popular preachers and missionaries of morality, devoted their lives to the service of the whole of humanity must have been enormous. In the market-place and in the streets, in everyday life and in festive assemblies they appear on the scene, just as the Salvation Army missionaries in England, wherever they find attentive or curious listeners, and when they have sowed the good seed seek a new sphere of activity."⁴⁸ One of the most famous of them in the first Christian century was Dion Chrysostom, in part a contemporary of Paul.⁴⁹ Another was Apollonius of Tyana.⁵⁰

The significance of this popular practical movement for the Christian mission is obvious. It provided the ordinary man, at least superficially, with the knowledge of a train of thought partially akin to the Christian Gospel, and facilitated the appeal of the Christian missionary on its behalf outside if not inside the schools.

ANTAGONISM OF THE SCHOOLS

On the other hand, whilst affinities between Greek Thought and Christianity undoubtedly existed, the various schools and the educated class in general were for long antagonistic. Not many "wise," as Paul reminded the Corinthians, were among those who were ready to exchange philosophy for the Apostolic preaching. Apollos and the authors of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Johannine writings were at first very exceptional in the first century. In the second the exceptions became more numerous. In the third they became still more so. For long the

⁴⁷ *σπερμιολόγοι*.

⁴⁸ "Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur," 46; see also Bevan, "Hellenism and Christianity," 69 f. (1921).

⁴⁹ See the account of him, with samples of his sermons, Livingstone, "The Mission of Greece," 106 f. (1928).

⁵⁰ See his "Life," by Philostratus, ed. and trans. by Conybeare, Loeb Class. Lib. (1912); also see Schubert, "Outlines of Church History," 10 f. (Eng. trans., 1907).

Christian apologetic appeal to the philosophers evoked only a comparatively meagre response. Generally, they were hostile, and some of them, like Fronto, the teacher of Marcus Aurelius, and Celsus in the second century, attacked it as a contemptible superstition. The Stoic Marcus Aurelius himself was among its persecutors. There were, in fact, obstacles in the Christian faith itself to its ready acceptance in cultured circles. To the Greek mind its doctrines of the Incarnation, the Cross, the bodily Resurrection were a real stumbling-block. To the Platonist it was very difficult to believe that God could assume a material body, which, to him, was the prison-house of the soul.⁵¹ Still more so that He could surrender Himself to suffering and death on the Cross. Moreover, its propaganda among the ignorant, the social outcasts, undoubtedly repelled a large proportion of the intellectuals. Despite affinities, it was only very gradually that Philosophy became a schoolmaster to Christ within the schools, though it contributed to make the Christian message more intelligible outside them. The real strength of the Gospel lay in the religious rather than in the intellectual sphere, in its appeal to the heart and the conscience as a religion of redemption and regeneration. In this sphere, also, there was at least a relative preparation for its message.

CHAPTER III

GRÆCO-ROMAN RELIGION IN RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY

GREEK POLYTHEISM

IN the religious sphere it may seem, at first sight, that there was little in common between Christianity and the religious cults of the Græco-Roman world. The common feature of these cults is their polytheism. In its original lower form it was a species of animism, springing from a belief in spirits in the things worshipped, from fear¹ and the desire to obtain possession of the powers and qualities embodied in the object worshipped.² This

⁵¹ Dean Inge thinks that the Greek thinker had no difficulty with the Incarnation, but only with the Cross, since "an incarnate God ought to be impassible"—"Legacy of Greece," 53 (1921). I doubt whether a Platonist found no difficulty with the Incarnation. Why, for instance, the attempts of Christian gnostics to explain away the human Christ in a Docetic sense?

¹ *δεισιδαιμονία*.

² Miss Harrison, "Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion," 71 (2nd ed., 1908); Murray, "Four Stages of Greek Religion," 32 f. (1912); Nilsson, "History of Greek Religion," 105 f. (Eng. trans., 1925).

lower form was gradually displaced by the tendency to personalise or humanise the objects worshipped, which ultimately found literary expression in the religious mythology of the older Greek poets—Homer, Hesiod, Theognis. This mythology marks a distinct advance on the cruder religious notions and observances of the more primitive age, and also in Greek civilisation, as reflected in the social life and organisation of the Greek city-State.³ This development was not a purely Greek creation. It was derived from the non-Greek Minoan-Mycenæan people of Crete and the pre-Greek and Asiatic mainland.⁴ Thus came into existence the immortal gods. The gods embodied in a higher form the powers and qualities of the mortals over whom they ruled as far as Fate, Destiny, to which they were subject, would allow. At the head of this hierarchy of divinities and demons, and figures half human, half divine, ruled Zeus, king of heaven, father of gods and men. To it was rendered a sensuous worship associated with divination and magic. A similar development is discernible in the ancient religion of Rome, though the ancient Roman had not the creative gift of the Greek religious imagination. His divine hierarchy was for long a very limited one till he ultimately assimilated that of the Greeks.⁵

Greek polytheism, as reflected in the poets, was largely artificial, though behind it was the religious instinct⁶ which seeks to express itself from age to age in characteristic concrete form. It was, too, crassly anthropomorphic, or, to use a simpler word, human. It invested the gods with human vices as well as virtues. These semi-human gods, by embodying the rational and moral qualities of human nature, might be an advance on the animistic cult of the primitive age. They might embody the principles of justice and righteousness, mercy and benevolence. Their worship might, from this point of view, have an uplifting and wholesome moral influence, as Dr Farnell maintains.⁷ At the same time, such a religious mythology, by reflecting the lower as well as the higher passions, was capable of working harm, as Dr Farnell also admits. Like human nature, the divine nature

³ Farnell, "Higher Aspects of Greek Religion," 5 (1912).

⁴ See Nilsson, 9 f., and the critical examination of this view by von Willamovitz-Moellendorf, "Der Glaube der Hellenen," i. 116 f. (1931).

⁵ See in detail Warde Fowler, "Religious Experience of the Roman People" (1911) and "Roman Ideas of Deity" (1914); Halliday, "Lectures on the History of Roman Religion" (1922).

⁶ This instinct, as expressed in Greek religious mythology, is glowingly and imaginatively set forth in Mr Zielinski's recent work, "The Religion of Ancient Greece" (Eng. trans., 1927). The writer does not strengthen his case or beget confidence in his historic judgment by irrelevantly obtruding his antipathy to Protestantism.

⁷ "Higher Aspects," 130.

is a mixture of good and evil, and the evil is there naked and unashamed. Mr Adam concludes that it is only too true "that Greek Philosophy had reason to fall foul of the Homeric gods."⁸ "In respect of their lower as well as their higher qualities the Homeric gods are magnified men."⁹

ATTACK ON POLYTHEISM

It is not surprising, therefore, that to the serious mind their existence became a matter of doubt and ere long of disbelief, and that the philosopher ultimately followed the Hebrew prophet and anticipated the Christian apologist in their sceptical attack on the Homeric hierarchy. Euripides infused his scepticism into his dramas; Plato and Aristotle into some of their philosophical works,¹⁰ though, for political reasons, they would not go the length of abolishing the old cults, and there is in Plato's thought, with its subordinate gods, a polytheistic element. To the serious mind by the time of Plato "the traditional religion was, if taken, at its face value, a bankrupt concern."¹¹ The Cynics were thoroughgoing negationists, and the Epicureans, though not denying their existence, maintained that they had no concern and no connection with human life. To them the current religion was a silly superstition. The Stoics were more conservative. They valued the traditional religion in so far as it tended to nurture the sense of the divine in all things, whilst rejecting and denouncing its grosser features and striving to explain them away by allegoric interpretation.¹² According to Euhemerus in the early third pre-Christian century, the gods were originally men, who had been raised to deity in virtue of their deeds.¹³ Thus among the educated class towards the beginning of the Christian era there was a pronounced tendency to substitute for the old crass mythology and the popular cults a more philosophical and ethical conception of religion.

The critical, sceptical spirit, owing in part to the prevailing social and political demoralisation, partly to the influence of Greek philosophy, had also begun to make its influence felt in the late Roman Republic. By the second century B.C. the observance of

⁸ "Religious Teachers," 66.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰ Adam, 293 f.; Bury, "History of Greece," 388 f.; Zeller, "Grundriss," 154, 212.

¹¹ Murray, "Four Stages," 107.

¹² Zeller, "Grundriss," 242; "Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics," 325 f.; "Eclectics," 49 f.

¹³ Following Hecataeus, he propounded the theory of the God-man, which subsequently had a wide vogue. Wendland, "Hell.-Röm. Kultur," 70 f.

the Roman State religion had become purely formal, "religiously destitute," to use the phrase of Mr Warde Fowler.¹⁴ Indifference and even scepticism were taking the place of the old Roman "Pietas." "The safety of the state," says Mr Gardner, "was supposed to be involved in the exact performance of certain rites handed down from antiquity. . . . But it was a matter of indifference whether the officiating magistrate believed in the deities to whom he was sacrificing. The post of Pontifex Maximus, the headship of Roman religion, was held by such men as Sulla and Cæsar, who were complete sceptics."¹⁵ The gradual introduction of the Greek gods might seem to betoken an intensifying of the religious spirit. In reality it had the opposite effect, for those exotic gods had no real place in the religious experience of the Romans. They only aggravated the religious formalism at the expense of the religious spirit.¹⁶ "Religion was effectively divorced from life and morality." Moreover, in the train of the Greek gods came ere long Greek philosophy and with it the critical, sceptical spirit. Epicurean scepticism found expression in Lucretius, who died about the middle of the last pre-Christian century, and manifested his contempt for "superstition" in no measured terms. "To Lucretius," says Dr Masson, "the state religion could only appear an organised system of hypocrisy and deceit."¹⁷ Plautus seems to have professed the same philosophy and ridiculed the gods in his comedies. Varro accounted them "human institutions," politically serviceable, and on this account feared the extinction of some of them from neglect. Cicero shared this conviction, though, in true Roman fashion, he thought their worship necessary for the maintenance of social and political order. So glaring was the discrepancy between profession and practice that the younger Cato could only wonder how two augurs could meet in the street without laughing.

Thus throughout the Græco-Roman world towards the advent of Christianity the widespread philosophical scepticism had created an atmosphere among the educated class favourable to the Christian attack on the polytheistic principle itself. The later Christian apologists could, with no little justification, quote the philosophers as well as appeal to the Christian Scriptures in support and vindication of Christian monotheism.

¹⁴ "Religious Experience," 357 f.

¹⁵ "Growth of Christianity," 148. See also Wendland, 84.

¹⁶ Fowler, "Religious Experience," 288.

¹⁷ "Lucretius," 31.

THE AUGUSTAN REVIVAL

With the age of Augustus came a reaction from the scepticism and anarchy of the preceding age. Its reaction was characteristically utilitarian. Roman religion even in its more vital stage was concerned with the practical weal of the individual and the State—the obtaining from the gods of certain benefits for both by appropriate means. This strain runs right through it to the days of Constantine, in whose conversion to Christianity, as we shall see, it played an important part. In this consisted its main value for the practical Roman mind. The Roman reputation for “piety” among other peoples was due to the prominence of an elaborate official cult, and the Romans themselves in the more robust age of faith attributed the growth of their power to the favour of the gods obtained thereby. The gods ruled the world through them, sanctioned and blessed their wars. Their worship was, too, a serviceable expedient to keep the people in order. A return to this old, efficacious “piety” might well seem to Augustus highly desirable after a period of disorder and degeneration. The reform which he contemplated, and Virgil envisaged in the “Æneid,” was not exclusively political, as has sometimes been asserted. It had also its ethical side. Religion should both strengthen the new imperial system and should sanction and sanctify the principate which Augustus skilfully veiled under the forms of a Republican government, and at the same time regenerate the demoralised Roman people. Without the worship of the gods the weal of the individual and the State could not be effected. Though characteristically utilitarian, it was none the less a serious attempt to effect a real reform of the body politic.¹⁸

To this end Augustus himself assumed the office of Pontifex Maximus, or supreme head of the State religion. He revived or patronised the various ancient priesthoods, such as the Arval Brethren,¹⁹ and repaired the fallen temples and built new ones (including the magnificent one to Apollo, his favourite god). He renewed the old festivals and added to their number. He inaugurated a new era of faith and prosperity by the celebration in B.C. 17 of the *Ludi Saeculares*²⁰ with elaborate ritual and befitting pomp, in which Apollo and Diana were invoked in a hymn composed by Horace and sung on the occasion. He raised the *Divus*

¹⁸ Fowler, “Religious Experience,” 431; Glover, “Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire,” 5 f. (4th ed.).

¹⁹ *Fratres Arvales*.

²⁰ Celebrated every one hundred years or so (*Sæculum*) at the beginning of what was deemed a new departure in the history of the State. Bury, “Roman Empire,” 62 f.; Fowler, “Religious Experience,” 438 f.

Julius, of whose memory he was the vindicator, to a place among the gods, and thus paved the way for the imperial cult.

THE IMPERIAL CULT

The introduction of this cult was a new departure in Roman religious history. Though an innovation in the West, the deification of rulers was common in the East and was practised by the Greeks long before it found expression in Cæsar-worship. Alexander was worshipped as a god, and his successors, the Seleucid and the Ptolemaic kings, claimed and were accorded divine honours.²¹ This deification was the fruit of the tendency to deify the hero who had proved the saviour of the people in times of stress and danger,²² and in whose deeds gratitude as well as servility saw the operation of a divine power. At bottom its significance was political rather than religious. On the part of the ruler it was a serviceable device for welding his subjects together and maintaining his power over them; on the part of his subjects the recognition of the benefits conferred by his rule. The tragic experiences of the closing period of the Republic had prepared the way for the reception of this conception in Rome itself. To an age which had long experienced the miseries of faction and civil war, the restorer of order and stable government appeared as the heaven-sent saviour of the people, the founder of the Golden Age of the Sibylline prophecy. The title Augustus,²³ which was conferred on him in B.C. 27, was in itself significant of the religious reverence of which he was the object, and the adulation of the poets—Horace, Propertius, Virgil, Ovid—who celebrated him as Jupiter or Apollo, and did not hesitate to confer on him the title of god (*deus*) in the poetic sense at least, gave expressions to the spirit of the age as well as to poetic extravagance. The deification of the dead Julius Cæsar was the preliminary to that of Augustus himself and his successors. In the West it did not at first go beyond the worship of the genius of the living Emperor, and reserved full divine honours for the dead ruler, who was exalted to the rank of a god. Augustus himself was too sensible and too wary to claim full divine rank in his lifetime, and Tiberius, his successor, expressly rebutted the assumption that he was more than mortal.²⁴ But in the East even the reigning Emperor was

²¹ Wendland, 74 f. On the rise of this king-worship under the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, see Tarn, "Hellenistic Civilisation," 46 f. It was in connection with this tendency that the theory of Euhemerus, that the gods were originally men who had been raised to deity in virtue of their great deeds, became so significant.

²² σωτήρ Saviour, εὐεργέτης, benefactor, ἐπιφανής, the God-manifest.

²³ σεβαστός.

²⁴ Fowler, "Roman Ideas of Deity," 87.

accorded divine honour. At Ephesus even in pre-imperial days Julius Cæsar had been worshipped as a god-manifest, and the worship formerly accorded the Seleucid and other kings was transferred to some of the Roman governors.²⁵ In the West the worship of the living Emperor as a *præsens deus* ultimately became familiar enough. Domitian took his divinity very seriously. Aurelian did not hesitate to proclaim himself *Dominus et Deus*.²⁶ Nor was it entirely due to servility. The Emperor stood for the unity and well-being of the State, and the honour paid to him was regarded as a due expression of loyalty to the State as well as his person.

OBSTACLE TO THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY

The imperial cult and the religious revival out of which it grew were undoubtedly obstacles to the progress of a monotheistic religion like Christianity. It was this cult that perhaps contributed most to retard the Christian conquest of the Græco-Roman world. It gave rise to the long-continued attempt to repress Christianity by persecution. It materially helped from the time of Nero to that of Diocletian to range the Government, as a rule, on the side of its opponents. The religious revival gave, too, a new lease of life to the traditional cults which had continued to wield their sway over the uneducated masses, especially in the rural districts,²⁷ though they had been so seriously undermined among the educated class. Behind polytheism there was the force of custom, tradition which often baffles for long the efforts of the enlightened reason to dislodge them. With this force the Christian missionary had to struggle right through the period of conflict for supremacy, and even after the Empire became officially Christian, it took several centuries to finish with the old gods. Moreover, polytheism had on its side the influence of art, which had enshrined it in many noble monuments, majestic temples, and magnificent sculpture, whilst there was nothing in early Christianity to satisfy the artistic sense. The polytheistic element which the philosophic religion had retained was also an adverse influence. In the Neo-Platonist revival this influence was by no means a negligible one.

THE QUEST FOR GOD AND A HIGHER LIFE

At the same time the sceptical spirit was by no means exorcised by the Augustan religious revival. In Horace and Ovid, for

²⁵ Tarn, "Hellenistic Civilisation," 52.

²⁶ Wendland, 93.

²⁷ See Masson, "Lucretius," 401 f.

instance, the gods are not taken very seriously. The imperial cult itself tended to overshadow their worship and reduce them to a subordinate place in the State cult. Moreover, the deification of the Emperor and the imperial cult was so artificial and superficial a device that it could hardly secure the whole-hearted acceptance of serious minds. The man-god theory and the man-god worship, even if the man embodied the State, especially if he was personally so worthless as in the case of too many of the emperors, tended in its turn to become largely a formal profession. The real religious revival did not lie along this way, but in the moral and spiritual sphere, in the individual quest of God and the higher life of the soul. This tendency had produced the sceptical attitude towards the old cults and had found vent in the ardent quest for God through philosophical reflection, which was acquiring an increasingly religious character, especially in the later Stoics. It was, too, groping its way to God and the higher life through the mystery religions—both Greek and Oriental. The age of the advent of Christianity was, in fact, the age of a quickening of the religious instinct in the higher sense. In Judæa it took the form of an intensification of the Messianic hope, coupled to a certain extent with a reversion to spiritual religion in reaction from Jewish legalism. In the Græco-Roman world it took the form of a deepening interest in religious reflection, as in Cicero and Plutarch, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, and in the mystery religions of Greece and the East in reaction from the formalism of the traditional cults and the Roman State religion. It was in this direction that Christianity could find a rich soil for the seed of its gospel of revelation and redemption, though the philosophic religion might prove a hindrance as well as a help, and the mystery cults might become dangerous rivals of the Christian propaganda.

CHAPTER IV

THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS

THE MYSTIC TENDENCY IN GREEK RELIGION

THE individualist mystic tendency in religion goes far back into Greek religious history. Early Greek religion was a matter of political and social rather than of individual concern. It was concerned with the relation of the State, the tribe, the *gens*, the family, rather than the individual, to the gods. Its object was to

foster the social and political virtues and duties as exercised in the communal life of the State and the family. In the course of time, however, we discern the presence of a deeper religious sentiment, which showed itself in the aspiration of the individual for a more personal religion, a higher spiritual life than that represented by the State or family cults. This aspiration found expression in the Eleusinian mysteries and the Orphic and Pythagorean brotherhoods in the sixth century B.C.

The inspirer of this mysticism was Orpheus, who, while borrowing from, purified the cult of Dionysos, with its idea of possession by the Deity.¹ "Orpheus," says Miss Harrison, "took an ancient superstition deep-rooted in the savage ritual of Dionysos and lent it a new spiritual significance."² Its root idea is the divine origin of the soul. In man there is an incarnation of the divine and therefore the possibility of attaining the divine life in spite of the impurity and limitation of this material existence, which is regarded as the prison-house of the soul—"an exile and a wanderer from heaven." The Olympian gods, though made in the image of men, were yet a separate and higher race in the view of their worshippers, and mortals could not become gods. The gods were, in fact, jealous of any attempt of men to become like unto them. "Beware," says Pindar, "seek not to become a god." Of the Orphic creed, on the other hand, the divine origin and ultimate deification of man was a cardinal belief. "Already thou art a god" is the Orphic conviction. "Seek to be reunited with the gods." Man is not only immortal. His soul was originally divine, though it lost its divinity by reason of ante-natal sin, before descending into its prison-house, the body. He may become a god again, may rise to divine rank once more. Not only so, but the great object of the Orphic worshipper is to attain, as far as possible, to deification now by the consecration of his whole being to the life of "holiness and purity." This consecration is the preliminary to its full realisation in the life beyond after passing through a lengthy period of probation.³ Hence the initiation into and the maintenance of this higher life by mystic sacramental rites, which betray the primitive idea of rending and eating the raw flesh of the animal regarded as a god in order to possess the life of the god. Hence the asceticism by which the higher life is fostered. Hence also the religious brotherhoods,⁴ in which the initiated

¹ See Miss Harrison, "Prolegomena," 464 f. (1908).

² *Ibid.*, 473.

³ Harrison, 473 f.; Adam, "Religious Teachers of Greece," Lecture V.; Kern, "Die Religion der Griechen," i. 146 f., 268 f. (1926), and "Orphicorum Fragmenta" (1922). On Orphism in connection with early Christian symbolism see Eisler, "Orpheus the Fisher" (1921).

⁴ θλασσι.

associate together in the pursuit of it. Hence, finally, the eschatology and the apocalyptic literature describing the bliss of the ultimate divine life and "the Restoration of all things."

This mystic tendency in Greek religion attracted many who were dissatisfied with the conventional cult of the gods and felt the need of individual communion with Deity. It betokens a craving for inwardness in religion, for purity of heart. It shows at least an approach to the conception of evil as sin, the striving for elevation above the life of sense, though in the realisation of this ideal it laid stress on rite of a more or less crass kind, and was mingled with a large amount of fantastic religious mythology.

It gave rise in the same century to the formation of another association on similar lines—that of the Pythagoreans—which Pythagoras founded at Croton in southern Italy, and which combined the philosophic quest for truth with the religious quest for redemption,⁵ salvation from the life of sense. The movement was revived in the last pre-Christian century under the name of Neo-Pythagorism,⁶ whose great exponent in the first Christian century was Apollonius of Tyana.⁷ Plato himself, who intellectualised it, was greatly influenced by it, and it is obvious that its doctrine of a divine incarnation in man and of a moral retribution after death, its conception of a brotherhood for the pursuit of the higher life, its sacramentalism, its universalist spirit, which opened the brotherhood to all irrespective of class or nationality—to barbarian as well as Greek, to bond as well as free—its eschatology and its apocalyptic were, in spite of their crassness, fitted to facilitate the reception of Christianity among its votaries.

Though the Pythagorean movement originated in the Greek colony in southern Italy, it seems to have exercised no influence on the Roman religion for several centuries after its inception at Croton. But the increasing formalism of the State cult was bound to beget a certain reaction in an individualist direction, and towards the end of the third century B.C., in the midst of the excitement of the war with Hannibal, the presence of such a reaction is observable in the introduction of the mystery cult of Cybele, the Magna Mater of Phrygia.⁸ Three decades later that

⁵ *λύσις*.

⁶ On Pythagorism and its revival, see Carcopino, "La Basilique Pythagorienne de la Porte Majeure," 153 f. (1926); Cumont, "After Life in Roman Paganism," 20 f. (1922); Adam, "Religious Teachers," Lecture XI.; Fowler, "Religious Experience," 380 f.; Dill, "Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius," 398 f. From the sixth century onwards many other brotherhoods of this kind came into existence. Farnell, "Higher Aspects," 136.

⁷ See his "Life," by Philostratus, and his "Epistles," text and translation by Conybeare, Loeb Classical Library (1912).

⁸ Fowler, "Religious Experience," 329 f., 341.

of Dionysus in its Greek form followed. Its questionable character and pernicious effects on the morals of its votaries (the Bacchanalia), led the Government to attempt to stamp it out as a "depraved superstition" (*prava superstitio*), though it was ultimately forced to tolerate it on certain conditions. About the same time there is evidence to show that Neo-Pythagorism had its votaries in Rome,⁹ and in the last century B.C. the circulation of pseudo-Pythagorean writings shows that it was making some headway and exerting an influence on the philosophic and mystic side of the religious revival of the period. This influence is apparent in the writings of Panætius and Posidonius, and through them of Cicero and others, and even to some extent in the religion of the common people.¹⁰

THE ORIENTAL MYSTERY CULTS

It is, as we have noted, in this mystic individualist tendency that the real religious revival of the Augustan and post-Augustan period is to be sought. It was more particularly in this direction that the Oriental cults, including Christianity, could find a fertile soil for their propagation in the Græco-Roman world. The tendency of the age was towards religious syncretism—the disposition to find a place for the cults of the East alongside the old cults, to combine their characteristic ideas and observances in a sort of religious-symphony. The invasion of Italy by the Greek gods was the forerunner of this more developed syncretism. The belief in the identity of the gods of the various peoples favoured it. Additional motives for the cult of strange deities were furnished by the possibility of obtaining a new revelation and the anxiety arising from the fear of neglect, which led to the worship of even unknown gods.¹¹ The *assidua de deo questio*, of which the elder Pliny speaks, told powerfully in this direction, even in the popular sense of this quest.¹² "An all-embracing syncretism," as Dill says, "offered the hope of illumination from converging lights."¹³ Moreover, the cosmopolitan spirit of the age in itself paved the way for the mingling of cults in the Græco-Roman world.¹⁴ The tolerant spirit of the Roman government, which grew up with the expansion of the Roman power, afforded complete freedom

⁹ Fowler "Religious Experience," 344-349.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 381 f.

¹¹ ἄγνωστοι θεοί.

¹² See Staerk, "Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte," i. 73, and the illuminating chapter on the Philosophic Theologian in Dill, "Roman Society," 384 f.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 397. See also Reitzenstein, "Die Hellenistischen Mysterien Religionen," 28 f. (3rd ed., 1927).

¹⁴ Wendland, 77-78.

for the exercise of any cult not deemed politically dangerous. This process was already powerfully operative in Greece and the East before it took hold of Rome and the West, and in the first Christian century, and onwards till the end of the fourth, it became a striking feature of the religious life of the whole Empire. Hence, in spite of the initial antagonism of the Senate, the growing cult in the West not only of the Phrygian Cybele and Attis, whose worship had been celebrated on the Palatine since the beginning of the second century B.C., but of the Egyptian Isis and Sarapis (Osiris-Apis) and the Persian Mithras, whose doctrines and rites showed such an affinity, in some respects, to those of Christianity. If the West, in the person of Alexander and later the Roman conqueror, brought the East under political subjection, the East subjugated the West in the religious sphere.

In these Oriental mystery religions we have the culmination of the mystic individualist tendency, initiated among the Greeks by the Orphic and Pythagorean brotherhoods. Characteristic of all of them in greater or less degree is the old striving to attain the regeneration and salvation of the soul, an eternal, divine life, deification by union and communion with Deity. Redemption of the soul from evil and death is more or less the keynote of them. To this end there is a ritual initiation of the neophyte into the new knowledge and life which they profess to assure, and which are perfected by participation in a regular worship, with its special sacramental rites and its festivals. For the maintenance of these there is a graded priesthood with temples and altars, whilst the members associate in guilds for mutual help and edification.

CULTS OF CYBELE AND ATTIS, ISIS AND SARAPIS

The cult of the Phrygian Cybele and Attis was originally nothing higher than a species of nature worship.¹⁵ But ultimately it developed into a mystery cult, though it retained, in its bloody, orgiastic ritual, the trace of its savage origin, and came to symbolise higher religious and moral ideas. The restoration of Attis to life, which the priests of Cybele celebrated at Rome with dramatic rites on the return of spring,¹⁶ was symbolic of the power of life over

¹⁵ Cybele was the earth goddess, the great mother of all things, and Attis, her lover, was the principle of vegetation. Attis is unfaithful to the goddess, who is filled with intense grief at his lapse. In his penitence he mutilates himself under the pine tree, and is ultimately found by the goddess and joyfully restored to full life. The myth originally represents a worship associated with the dying of vegetation in autumn and its revival in spring.

¹⁶ See the detailed description in Cumont, "Les Religions Orientales dans le Paganisme Romain," 69 f. (2nd ed., 1909). Cf. Dill, "Roman Society," 549 f.; Kennedy, "St Paul and the Mystery Religions," 90 f. (1913).

death, of the immortality of the soul.¹⁷ The taurobolium or blood baptism—another characteristic rite which also points to a savage origin, and which consisted in the slaughter of a bull and the drenching of the votary in a trench below the sacrificial platform with its blood—symbolised the purification and regeneration of the soul. “Reborn to eternal life”¹⁸ was the formula in which this symbolic rebirth was expressed.¹⁹ The sacred meal at which the initiated appear to have eaten and drunk in a sacramental sense was regarded as the nourishment of a new spiritual life in communion with the Deity.²⁰

More refined was the Egyptian cult of Isis and Sarapis, which the first of the Ptolemies constructed from political motives out of the old cult of Isis and Osiris or Sarapis.²¹ The powerful influence wielded by the Ptolemies in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean paved the way for the spread of the cult in the Hellenist world. It had already penetrated to southern Italy in the second century B.C., and it gained a hold at Rome in the first pre-Christian century in spite of the repeated efforts of the Senate to repress it on political and moral grounds. In the first two Christian centuries it had spread to the remotest regions of the West.

Its attraction lay in the power to appeal to the monotheist aspiration, whilst yet satisfying the lower polytheistic instinct. “The great power of Isis,” says Dill, “was that, transfigured by Greek influences, she appealed to many orders of intellect and satisfied many religious needs and fancies.”²² She is “the one who is all,” the queen of heaven and the underworld, the earth, and the sea. She is “Isis of myriad names,” and stands for all that the gods represent. Sarapis, too, is the universal lord, and concentrates in himself all the Godhead.²³ The cult had a special attraction for women, who saw in the divine Isis, as later generations saw in the Virgin Mary, the ideal of womanly love and goodness, and who were even admitted into the priesthood.²⁴ Its accommodating morality, at any rate in the early period of its expansion westwards, also helped to swell the number of its votaries, though its developing doctrine of a retribution and a

¹⁷ Cumont, 73.

¹⁹ Cumont, 81-84.

¹⁸ *In æternum renatus.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

²¹ “Sarapis seems to have been a hellenised double of Osiris, which Ptolemy, with the co-operation of an Egyptian priest, Manetho, and Timotheus of Eleusis, created in accordance with his policy of uniting by a common worship the Egyptian and Greek races under his sway.” Cumont, 91 f.; Tarn, “Hellenistic Civilisation,” 320 f.; Erman, “Die Religion der Aegypter,” 383 f. (1934).

²² “Roman Society,” 569; cf. Erman, “Die Religion der Aegypter,” 426 f.

²³ Cumont, 109.

²⁴ Dill, “Roman Society,” 569 f. and 580.

judgment in the life to come seems gradually to have stiffened its moral standard.²⁵ Above all, the cult held out the promise of immortality to its votaries in the most assuring fashion. The belief in a future life and the means taken to assure the continued existence of the departed soul was a fundamental feature of ancient Egyptian worship, and this belief remained an integral part of the modified cult of Isis and Sarapis. "When under the Republic," says M. Cumont, "the Alexandrian mysteries spread in Italy, no religion had yet brought to man such a formal promise of a blessed immortality, and it was this especially that communicated to it an irresistible power of attraction. In place of the fluctuating and contradictory opinions of the philosophers on the destiny of the soul, Sarapis offered a certainty founded on a divine revelation and corroborated by the faith of innumerable generations who were devoted to it. What the Orphics had caught a confused glimpse of through the veil of legend and taught to Magna Græcia, viz., that this earthly life is a state of trial which prepares for another life, higher and purer, that the happiness of the life beyond the grave can be assured by rites, observances revealed by the gods themselves—all this was now proclaimed with a confidence and definiteness hitherto unknown. It is especially by these eschatological doctrines that Egypt conquered the Latin world, and, in particular, the crowds of miserable beings on whom the weight of all the iniquities of Roman society bore so sadly."²⁶

The guarantee of this future life is, as in the cult of Cybele and Attis, the death and restoration to life of a god, Sarapis (Osiris). By initiation the votary becomes possessed of this eternal, divine life. By baptism in the sacred laver (instead of the crass taurobolium of the Cybele cult) he is regenerated. He attains, further, a mystic esoteric knowledge, and in the final act he has a vision of the celestial world and the gods themselves, whom he worships face to face.²⁷ In addition to the rite of initiation there are the daily morning and evening worship and the stated festivals and processions, especially the celebration of the death and resurrection on the third day of Osiris-Sarapis, to nurture the religious life. This complicated ritualism is maintained by a regular priestly hierarchy, which is the indispensable intermediary between the god and his worshippers.²⁸ The

²⁵ Cumont, 110-113.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 122-123.

²⁷ See the description of the goddess and her cult and the account of the initiation of one Lucius at Cenchræ given by Apuleius in "Metamorphoses," bk. XI. 3 f. (Latin text and translation by Gaselee, Loeb Classical Library, 1915); cf. Dill, 576 f.; Kennedy, 100 f.; De Jong, "Das Antike Mysterienwesen," 47 f. (1909).

²⁸ Dill, 580.

pronounced sacerdotalism of the cult is further emphasised by the exact performance of the ritual down to the minutiae of a word or a gesture, to which a magical virtue is ascribed.²⁹

THE CULT OF MITHRAS

The third mystery cult which ultimately took a firm hold in the West was that of the Persian god Mithras, whose monuments are found from the Euphrates to the Solway, with the exception of Greece and western Asia Minor, where it seems to have made little impression.³⁰ Like Christianity it was a propagandist religion, though without its exclusiveness. As in the case of the other mystery cults, its votaries could recognise the worship of the conventional gods.³¹ Like Christianity, too, it was pre-eminently a humanitarian religion, and at first drew its recruits from the ranks of the poor, before attracting the higher classes. Next to the soldiers, its most effective propagandists were slaves. Another secret of its ultimate widespread progress lay, as in the case of the cult of Isis and Sarapis, in its composite character. Whilst retaining its essentially Persian individuality, it absorbed elements of thought, belief, and rite drawn from the early Aryan, the Babylonian, the Phrygian religions and mythologies. It was an evolution in accordance with the progress of the god from the distant east to the farthest west.³² As a result, it gave expression, in its highest form, to the symbolic mysticism which had been associated with Polytheism since the time of Orpheus and Pythagoras.³³

Its basic idea is the dualism between good and evil, between Ormuzd, the god of light, and Ahriman, the god of darkness. The function of Mithras is to achieve a deliverance from the power of evil. This conception and the cult to which it gave rise

²⁹ Cumont, 114-117.

³⁰ Cumont, "Religions Orientales," 179, and "Les Mystères de Mithra," 77 f. (3rd ed., 1913). Mithraism was originally common to India and Persia. In India Mithras was combined with Varuna; in Persia with Ahura Mazda. From Persia it spread from an early period to Babylon, Syria, and eastern Asia Minor, and it ultimately became, in the imperial period, the favourite cult of the Roman army, and was carried by its Eastern contingents to the remote regions of the Western Empire. The standard work on the subject is Cumont's "Textes et Monuments Relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra" (1899), in which he has reproduced the inscribed remains of the cult and elucidated its character. He has republished, in a separate and an amended form, his "Conclusions" under the title of "Les Mystères de Mithra."

³¹ Reitzenstein, "Die Hellenistischen Mysterien Religionen," 166 (3rd ed., 1927).

³² Dill, "Roman Society," 597 f.; Cumont, "Mystères de Mithra," 16 f.

³³ Dill, 599; Cumont, "Religions Orientales," 172 f., and see the recent work of Saxl, "Mithras, Typengeschichtliche Untersuchungen."

in the course of its long development show remarkable resemblances to Christianity. As in the Greek Logos theory, Mithras is "the mediator" between God and the world, of which he is the creator or demiurge. He is born miraculously from the mother rock (*petra genatrix*) and shepherds adore and bring him offerings. He slays the bull, from whose body and blood spring a new and richer life. He is the conqueror of evil and death, and his victory guarantees to his votaries the final triumph over both. Like the other mystery religions, his worship has its rites of initiation which include baptism, or at least lustration, with holy water. It has its sacramental meal at which the higher grades of the initiated partake of consecrated bread and wine mingled with water, and to which a supernatural virtue is ascribed. It has its graded priesthood, its daily services for prayer and sacrifice, its weekly holy day, and its great annual festival on the 25th of December. It believes in the existence of good and evil angels or demons. It even teaches the doctrine of a second coming of Mithras as well as a resurrection and a final judgment, which will consign the soul to heaven or hell according as Mithras shall decide. It lays the utmost stress on moral purity, and even excludes women from the mysteries. The god himself is the relentless foe of evil. He is the god of truth from whose all-seeing eye nothing is hid, who cannot be deceived. Unlike Cybele or Isis, he is the personification of chastity, the holy one (*sanctus*), and those who devote themselves to continence are his favourite votaries. The dualism between good and evil leaves no room for compromise with the lower passions. It demands sustained individual effort towards the realisation of a high moral ideal. It was in this respect essentially a virile religion, which sought by active individual effort to establish the reign of Ormuzd over the demons. The disciple of Mithras is his co-worker in the divine plan of the purification and perfection of the world. In this conflict he is the helper of his disciple, and after death shields the departed spirit from the power of Ahriman and conducts it to heaven. At the end of the world he will resurrect the body and complete the bliss of his votary by its reunion with the spirit.³⁴

In the judgment of M. Cumont, paganism reached its highest level as a religious and moral force in the Mithraic religion. "The Mithraic religion, the last and the highest manifestation of ancient paganism, had for its fundamental dogma the Persian dualism. The world is the theatre and the play of a struggle between the good and the evil, Ormuzd and Ahriman, the gods and the demons, and from this original conception of the universe

³⁴ Cumont, "Religions Orientales," 189 f.; "Les Mystères de Mithra," 141 f.

flows a strong and pure morality. Life is a combat. As a soldier placed under the orders of Mithras, the invincible hero, the faithful must constantly oppose himself to the enterprises of the infernal powers, who everywhere sow corruption. This imperative ethic, the source and agent of energy, is the character which distinguishes Mithraism from all other oriental cults."³⁵

RESEMBLANCE AND DIFFERENCE

From this rapid sketch it is evident that these mystery religions reveal a common fund of religious ideas and practices. They are the reflex of a universal tendency and aspiration, of which Christianity itself is the expression. Religion is alike an evolution and a synthesis, and Christianity is no exception to this law. Apart from the question of borrowing, which figures in the Christian apologists and has been warmly discussed in our own time, it is clear that Christianity as a redemptive religion possessed no monopoly of the ideas underlying this conception of religion. The similarities appear to be due to their common Oriental origin. At the same time, it is equally clear that there is a fundamental difference between it and these Oriental mystery cults. Unlike them it was a historical religion. Its sublime central figure is a historical person, who is the highest embodiment of the divine in the human, not a mere myth. Originally, at least, it was untrammelled by the crude symbolism, the astrological beliefs and magic which burdened these cults. In its more primitive form it was a spiritual message, and its appeal was more direct and arresting. Its moral and spiritual level, as reflected in the life of its founder and the lives of his followers, was higher than that of any of its rivals. In striking contrast to them,³⁶ it utterly rejected the polytheistic principle, and refused to accommodate itself to the polytheistic cults, though it later showed a tendency to absorb polytheistic beliefs and usages, and became itself a syncretistic religion. From the outset, therefore, it was not only their rival, but their antagonist in the struggle for the religious conquest of the Græco-Roman world, and it achieved this conquest on the strength of its sterling merits. At the same time, it owed to them to some extent, and apart from later State intervention in its favour, its ultimate triumph. They contributed materially to familiarise the Græco-Roman world with beliefs and conceptions,

³⁵ "Religions Orientales," 240.

³⁶ For a detailed comparison between the mystery religions and Christianity, see Angus, "Mystery Religions and Christianity," 235 f. (1925).

which have a striking affinity to its own, and thus to smooth the way for the Christianisation of the Empire.³⁷

CHAPTER V

HELLENIST JUDAISM

DIFFUSION OF GREEK CULTURE

IN virtue of the diffusion of Greek culture, Greek Thought ultimately became the dominant influence in the intellectual life of the Roman Empire. By the advent of Christianity it had taken possession of Rome and the West as well as a large part of the East. As this diffused, it is known as Hellenism, *i.e.*, the cosmopolitan culture of the Greek-speaking world in the last three pre-Christian centuries. "Hellenism," says Mr Tarn, "is merely a convenient label for the civilisation of the three centuries during which Greek culture radiated far from the homeland."¹ Its theological and ethical ideas thus spread far beyond the bounds of Greece. The Greek city-State might ultimately prove a failure. But it rendered an inestimable service to the larger world beyond as the focus of an intense and highly developed culture. Rome gave law and political cohesion to Greece and the East; in return Hellenism invaded and took captive Rome and the West.

The harbingers of this Hellenist movement, which had taken so powerful a grip of the ancient world by the first Christian

³⁷ Most recent writers are agreed on the affinity between the mystery religions and Christianity and their importance as, to some extent, a preparation for it. They disagree on the question of their material influence on early Christianity. For the affirmative, see Reitzenstein, "Die Hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen," 68 f. (1927); Böhlig, "Die Geisteskultur von Tarsus," 97 f. (1913); Angus, "The Religious Quests of the Græco-Roman World," 83 f., 205 f. (1929); Dieterich, "Eine Mithrasliturgie" (1910); Pfeleiderer, "Early Conception of Christ," 153 f. (1905); Wilson, "St Paul and Paganism," 82 f. (1927); Inge, "Outspoken Essays," 227 (1919), and "Legacy of Greece," 47 f. (1921); Beth, "Die Entwicklung des Christenthums," 172 f. (1913). For the negative, Clemen, "Einfluss der Mysterienreligionen auf das älteste Christenthum," 82 f. (1913); A. Schweitzer, "Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus" (1930); Deissmann, "St Paul" (1912); E. Meyer, "Ursprung und Anfänge des Christenthums," iii. 393; Kennedy, "St Paul and the Mystery Religions" (1913); Deissner, "Paulus und Die Mystik," 18 f. (1921); Patterson, "Mythraism and Christianity" (1921); Glover, "Christ in the Ancient World," 6 (1929). It must suffice here to emphasise the need for caution in treating of this question, in view of the uncertainty as to the date of the expansion of Mithraism in particular in the Græco-Roman world, and the materials from which inferences can be drawn. On the subject in more detail, see my "Gospel in the Early Church," 112 f. (1933).

¹ "Hellenistic Civilisation," 2 (2nd ed., 1930).

century, were the early Greek colonists, who had carried Greek culture and institutions to southern Italy and southern Gaul. It found a mighty protagonist, in the second half of the fourth century B.C., in Alexander, whose aim was not merely the political conquest of the ancient world, but its subjection to Greek civilisation.² If Alexander failed to establish a universal State, his ideal of the transformation of the world by Greek culture ultimately proved a reality. The Greek settlements which he encouraged throughout his phantom Empire in Persia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt³ (the Greek Diaspora), became centres of an ever-expanding Greek civilisation until, in the era of the late Republic and the first four centuries of the Empire, Greek was the language of culture at Rome as well as Athens, and Latin literature was largely modelled on that of Greece. Latin retained, indeed, its supremacy as the language of law and government, but in the sphere of ideas and the intercourse of East and West the medium was Greek.

At first the Republic was hostile to this spiritual invasion, and the Senate attempted to stem it by edicts, such as that of 161 B.C., decreeing the banishment of Greek philosophers and rhetoricians.⁴ Such attempts ultimately proved futile. Greek literature found ardent imitators in the Roman poets—Ennius, Statius, Plautus, Virgil, for instance; Greek philosophy, in its various forms, brilliant exponents in Lucretius, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius; influential patrons in the younger Scipio and others. Epicureanism came first and became very popular in the last pre-Christian century. Stoicism followed with the arrival at Rome of Panætius of Rhodes, the friend of the younger Scipio and of Laelius, in the later half of the second pre-Christian century, and exercised a powerful influence on the higher type of Roman character and on the development of Roman law.⁵ The movement derived a great impulse from the practice of sending young men to complete their education at Athens, where Cicero is found attending lectures early in the last pre-Christian century.

Epicureanism was professed by Lucretius, Platonism, as expounded by the later Academicians, by Cicero, Stoicism by the younger Cato, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius. There is observable, however, an eclectic tendency to assimilate what was

² Bury, "History of Greece," 815 f.; Wendland, "Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur," 13. See also De Burgh, "Legacy of the Ancient World," 154 f. (1926).

³ For the planting of Greek cities in Asia under Alexander and his successors, see Bevan, "House of Seleucus," i. 247, 264, 269 (1902); Fairweather, "Jesus and the Greeks," 40 f. (1924).

⁴ Zeller, "Eclecticism," 6-15.

⁵ Warde Fowler, "Religious Experience," 358 f. (1911); Sidgwick, "History of Ethics," 94 f. (1902).

best in all the systems of thought.⁶ It was partly critical, partly synthetic. The Stoic Posidonius is a remarkable example of this tendency. Cicero was greatly influenced by Stoicism as expounded by Posidonius and Panætius, as well as by Platonism. This tendency contributed to produce a more general knowledge of the ideas which prepared the way for the reception of Christianity. It was, especially in the West, practical rather than speculative, for the Roman mind was not particularly interested in or adapted for pure speculation, and preferred truth in relation to action to truth for its own sake. There is further observable a sceptical reaction from the dogmatism of the older schools, which doubted the capacity of the intellect to attain to absolute truth and advocated the open mind. Though the principle was opposed to Christian teaching, the open mind might lead, in some cases, to the favourable consideration of a Gospel, based not on philosophy, but on revelation.

THE JEWISH DIASPORA

Greek culture not only permeated the Gentile world embraced in the Roman Empire. It exercised a powerful influence on the Jewish colonies scattered throughout it (the Jewish Diaspora or Dispersion). This influence had made itself felt even in Palestine under the rule of the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucid kings in Syria, who dominated the land before the Maccabæan rising in the middle of the second century B.C. Though the rising was followed by a strong anti-Hellenist reaction, Hellenism again became a force in the land during the Herodian regime, which displaced that of the Maccabæan dynasty in the second half of the first century B.C. The historian Josephus is a striking example of it.⁷

It was, however, in the Jewish Diaspora that it became a moulding influence on Jewish Religious Thought.

The Diaspora was originally due to the fall of the Hebrew kingdoms and the exile. After the partial return from Babylon many Jewish communities remained in the East. In the course of the succeeding centuries emigration from Palestine planted Jewish settlements in the countries bordering the Mediterranean—in Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, Europe, as far west as Gaul and Spain, on the Black Sea, and in the cities of the East as far as the

⁶ Zeller, "Eclectics," 16, 194; Dill, "Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius," 407 f.

⁷ For the influence of Hellenism on even the Jews of Palestine, see Bevan, "House of Seleucus," i. 25; Wellhausen, "Israelitische und Jüdische Geschichte," 257 (1894); Krüger, "Hellenism und Judenthum," 18 f. (1908).

Tigris. They were already very widespread in the second century B.C. "Every land and every sea," we read in the Sibylline Oracles, "shall be full of thee."⁸ They were most numerous in Syria, Egypt, and Asia Minor. According to Philo, there were in the first Christian century a million Jews in Egypt alone, and Harnack has ventured the opinion that, in the time of Augustus, they formed 7 per cent. of the total population of the Empire.⁹ One effect of the Dispersion was the growth, among cultured Jews at least, of the cosmopolitan spirit and the assimilation of Greek culture by this class. These dispersed Jews were in the mass faithful to the religion of their fathers. There is, indeed, some evidence of the recognition of pagan gods by certain Jewish communities in Asia Minor and elsewhere alongside of Yahweh, in the syncretistic spirit of the time.¹⁰ Such truckling to paganism was, we may assume, exceptional among the Diaspora Jews. They observed circumcision, the Sabbath, and the great festivals. They sent their yearly contributions for the maintenance of the temple worship. They went in crowds to Jerusalem to participate in this worship. But they had a larger outlook on the world. The cultured class was responsive to Greek Thought and more liberal in their attitude towards the Law than their fellow-Jews of Palestine, whilst valuing the ethical and spiritual content of their monotheistic faith. They were more or less influenced by Hellenism, and this contact of the Jewish with the Greek mind had a superlative significance for the Christian mission.

The chief centre of this contact was Alexandria, where the civilisation of East and West met and mingled. At the beginning of the Christian era it rivalled Athens itself as a centre of culture. Founded by Alexander, it became the capital of the Ptolemies, his successors in the dominion of Egypt, and the centre of an active intellectual life.¹¹ Its library and Museum or University were the most famous in the Hellenist world. The city was, in fact, only second to Rome itself in size and splendour. Its population verged on a million, and of this number the Jews formed fully

⁸ Charles, "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," ii. 383 (1913).

⁹ "Philonis Opera," vi. 128 (Cohn and Reiter); "Expansion," i. 10-11. For the Diaspora, see the exhaustive account in Schürer, "Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes," ii. 493 f. (4th ed., 1907); Bousset, "Religion des Judentums," 60 f. (3rd ed., 1926); Tarn, "Hellenistic Civilisation," 181 f.; Juster, "Les Juifs dans l'Empire Romaine," i. 179 f. (1914); Parkes, "Conflict of Church and Synagogue," 5 f. (1934).

¹⁰ This aberration is probably referred to in the letter to the Church of Smyrna (Rev. ii. 9), where there were in the synagogue "those who say that they are Jews and are not, but a synagogue of Satan." For other instances, see Tarn, "Hellenistic Civilisation," 195 f.

¹¹ On Alexandria under the Ptolemies, see Tarn, "Hellenistic Civilisation," 159 f.

an eighth. They mainly inhabited two of the five quarters of the city within the wall.¹² It was here that the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek—the Septuagint—was made during the last three pre-Christian centuries.¹³ This translation was of cardinal importance for the spread not only of the Jewish, but later of the Christian religion. It is, too, a monument of the Jewish-Hellenist movement—the interaction of Greek and Hebrew Thought—which also finds expression in the Jewish Wisdom literature.

PHILO

Its most distinguished exponent in the first half of the first Christian century was Philo.¹⁴ Philo belonged to a very influential Jewish family, his brother being head (Alabarch) of the Jewish community. Towards the close of his life (A.D. 40) he was deputed to represent the grievances of his fellow-Jews of Alexandria, who were suffering from an access of persecution, to the Emperor Caligula.¹⁵

This was, however, but an episode in his life, which was that of a scholar and an eclectic philosopher who, whilst drawing largely from Plato, also laid Stoicism and Pythagorism under contribution. He devoted his Hebrew erudition and his knowledge of Greek Philosophy to the work of combining and reconciling the faith of Moses and the prophets with the wisdom of the Greeks. This he sought to do by a lavish use of the allegoric method of exegesis, which the Stoics had already exemplified in their interpretation of Greek mythology,¹⁶ and which was in vogue among the Jewish scribes. By this method he had no difficulty in discovering Greek philosophy in Jewish revelation and Jewish revelation in Greek philosophy. It was, indeed, an arbitrary and unscientific device, tending inevitably to substitute fancy for fact. But it was the method of the age, as some of the New Testament writings and so much of later Christian literature show. At the same time the influence of philosophy on his thought is evident,¹⁷ though he implicitly believes that he is only expressing the truth

¹² On Alexandria under the Ptolemies, see Tarn, "Hellenistic Civilisation," 189.

¹³ Schürer, ii. 697 f.

¹⁴ Schürer, ii. 833. On the influence of Alexandria as a centre of culture, see also Glover, "The World of the New Testament," 151 f.; on the general influence of Hellenism on the Jews, Tarn, 181 f.

¹⁵ Drummond, "Philo-Judæus," i. 8 f. (1888). For the mission, see "Legatio Ad Gaium," "Opera," vi. 155 f.

¹⁶ Zeller, "Stoics," 334 f.

¹⁷ Wendland, "Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur," 15; Krüger, "Hellenismus und Judentum," 40.

of Jewish revelation and seems not to realise that there is any inconsistency between his philosophy and his Jewish faith. As Edward Caird points out, "he had become unable to read Moses except in the light of Plato." As in the Greek thinkers, for instance, God is the framer, the *Demiourgos*, not the creator of matter, which is eternal and the source of evil. Nevertheless, though matter is evil, he seems, as Drummond¹⁸ points out, to hold the Biblical view of its creation by God and consequently of its essential goodness.¹⁹

This contact of Greek and Jewish thought, through Philo, was of the utmost importance for the propagation of Christianity. In particular, his doctrine of the Logos was destined to exercise a marked influence on the development of Christian thought and also to make it more easily comprehensible to the Greek mind. On its Greek side the Logos of Philo is the world soul of Plato—the divine framer of the world—combined with the Stoic World-Reason regarded as the expression or manifestation of the divine thought.²⁰ With the Greek aspect of the Logos he combined the Hebrew idea of the Word (*Memra*) or Wisdom of God,²¹ through which God creates the world and makes Himself known to man. Whether he conceived the Logos in a personal sense is a disputed question. Drummond concludes that for him it is merely the impersonal thought of God expressing itself in the universe.²² Heinze, Kennedy, and others²³ think that personality is involved in it. Aall²⁴ leaves the point doubtful. Certain it is that in a number of passages the terminology is distinctly personal. The Logos, in language that reminds of Plato, is "the Son of God," "the second God,"²⁵ "the First born," "the Image of God," etc. On the other hand, it is also described in terms that seem to exclude personality, and it appears that the author had not formed an exact and consistent view, and that the conception varied with the thought of the moment. At all events, he has not attained to the conception of an incarnation of the Logos, and does not associate the Logos with the Messiah.

¹⁸ "Philo-Judæus," i. 299-313.

¹⁹ Kennedy, however, while admitting the indefiniteness of his conception of matter, contends that "there is nothing to show that he regarded matter *per se* as evil"—"Philo's Contribution to Religion," 74 (1919).

²⁰ λόγος προφορικός, in contrast to the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος or indwelling Reason of God.

²¹ Proverbs viii. 22 f.

²² ii. 273.

²³ Heinze, "Die Lehre vom Logos," 218 f. (1872); Kennedy, "Philo's Contribution to Religion."

²⁴ "Geschichte der Logosidee," 229 (1896-99). Morgan denies it, "The Trinity of Plato and of Philo-Judæus," 63 f.

²⁵ (ὁ δεύτερος θεός).

Very significant is the fact that, at the time when Jesus was proclaiming the Gospel of a divine Father, who manifests Himself to His children in a special sense through the Son of God, the Alexandrian philosopher was conveying to Greek philosophy a conception of the Logos by which this message could be the better apprehended by the Greek mind. Hardly less significant the fact that it is made to convey to the Greek mind the idea of a definite revelation from a personal, living God at a time when the yearning for such a revelation was finding expression in the Greek-speaking world. Philo, in fact, does not confine the inspiration, which brings the knowledge of God within the reach of man, to the Hebrew Scriptures. He holds that it is possible to all seekers after God. He believed himself to be thus inspired, for man is capable of the vision of God, of the ecstasy which lifts the spirit above the material into the presence of God.²⁶ For him, as for Plato, the soul is imprisoned in the body and can only realise its true life in being raised above the sensuous in ecstatic communion with God. "If a yearning come upon thee, O Soul, to possess the Good, which is divine, forsake not only thy 'country,' the body, and thy 'kindred,' the sense life, and thy 'father's house,' the reason; but flee from thyself and depart out of thyself in a divine madness of prophetic inspiration, as those possessed by Corybantic frenzy. For that high lot becomes thine when the understanding is wrapt in ecstasy, feverishly agitated with a heavenly passion, beside itself, driven by the power of him who is True Being, drawn upwards towards him while truth leads the way."²⁷ This ecstatic vision he himself had experienced. Here was a message fitted to arrest the attention of those who were groping for the definite revelation which Christianity offered. *Assidua de Deo questio est.* Cicero's "De Natura Deorum" and Plutarch's writings are evidence of the fact. It was this yearning that was leading serious-minded Gentiles in ever larger numbers to seek its satisfaction in the religion of the synagogue, to become proselytes or semi-proselytes of the Jewish faith.

Equally significant the tendency to universalise the Jewish religion and bring it into contact with the larger world of Greek life and thought, which was to find its full expression in Christianity. In this way, though not himself a Christian, Philo was unconsciously preparing the way for Christianity. Those who had been imbued with his teaching before they became Christians—the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, for instance—carried

²⁶ See Kennedy, "Philo's Contribution to Religion," 192 f.

²⁷ Trans. by Kennedy, "Philo's Contribution to Religion," 16-17; also by Bevan, "Later Greek Religion," 100; Bousset, "Religion des Judenthums," 449 f.

over into Christianity the universalist spirit and the accommodating attitude towards Greek thought which he bequeathed to his disciples. It was, in fact, in Christianity, not in orthodox Judaism, which ultimately discarded his influence, that this tendency was perpetuated and more fully realised.

INFLUENCE OF JUDAISM IN THE GRÆCO-ROMAN WORLD

On the other hand, if Greek thought exercised an influence on Jewish religious thought, the Jewish faith wielded a corresponding influence on the Greek mind. Hellenist Judaism was essentially a missionary religion. It was competing in the Græco-Roman world with the mystery religions for adherents to the God of Israel in the enlarged sense of "the God that made the world and all things therein, he being lord of heaven and earth," as Paul preached Him to the Athenians. Even the Pharisees, the champions of traditional Judaism, were active proselytes. They "compassed sea and land to make one proselyte," said Jesus.²⁸ Paul also refers to their missionary zeal in spreading the true knowledge of God and His Law in the Gentile world.²⁹ The Jews of the Diaspora were equally active in proselytising throughout the vast area of the Roman Empire wherever Jewish colonies were established.³⁰ Witness, in addition to the works of Philo, the letter of Aristæus, an apologetic in behalf of Judaism, adapted to the Greek mind, written probably in the early part of the first century B.C.³¹ It is apparent, too, in the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, which made the Greek-speaking world acquainted with the elevated monotheism and ethical teaching of the Hebrew religion. Many were thus drawn to this religion by the reading of the Scriptures in the Greek version.

These Jewish communities possessed an additional attraction for the Gentile in the autonomous jurisdiction allowed them by the Roman government, which carried with it valuable social and political privileges to those professing the Jewish faith.³² As a rule the Roman government, in view of their great wealth and numbers, and in spite of the hostile attitude of those of Palestine, which broke out in repeated risings against the Roman domination, respected their religious susceptibilities and the privileges which they had enjoyed under the successors of Alexander. "Rome,"

²⁸ Matt. xxiii. 15.

²⁹ Rom. ii. 17 f.

³⁰ On this subject, see Schürer, "Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes," ii. 493 f.; Krüger, "Hellenismus und Judenthum," 31 f.; Wendland, "Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur," 118; Bousset, "Religion des Judenthums," 77 f.; Harnack, "Expansion," i. 11 f.

³¹ Charles, ii. 83 f.

³² Schürer, ii., Pt. II., 243 f.

says Professor Angus, "curtailed none of the privileges they had secured under the Diadochi, but even protected and extended them. The Roman Emperors, with few exceptions, were favourable to the Jews. In the Roman civil wars both sides courted them. Cæsar became their patron . . . Augustus continued the Philo-Judaic policy, securing the Jews free and undisturbed exercise of their worship throughout the Empire. . . . The law against private associations was relaxed in their favour ; Roman governors were required to secure Jewish subjects the unrestricted freedom of their rights ; their religion was acknowledged as a *religio licita* ; they were excused from participation in the imperial cult, for refusing to comply with which Christians suffered so cruelly, and from military service. . . . Their existence as a Church in the State was recognised by Rome. For civil processes between Jews they were allowed to use their own law and hold their own courts ; even Jews possessing Roman citizenship preferred their own courts. A measure of independence was also accorded them in criminal cases among themselves. They were allowed to collect and administer their own funds. Even after the fall of Jerusalem the Roman authorities scarcely curtailed their privileges, except by the diversion of the tax of two drachmæ to the Capitoline temple."³³

There was, indeed, a strong anti-Jewish spirit which found vent at times in popular outbursts in cities like Rome and Alexandria. There are many traces in the literature of the time of this anti-Semitism. The Jew, then as later, was the butt of the malice and ridicule of the Gentile. The restive spirit of the Palestinian Jews was for long a menace to the Roman supremacy in the eastern Mediterranean, for revolt in Palestine might play into the hands of the Parthian enemy in the farther East. Anti-Semitism was all the more intense on this account, and the political element contributed to the circulation of the calumnies against them, such as hatred of the human race, worship of an ass or a pig, immorality, etc., which were later levelled against the Christians. Their strict monotheism and their uncompromising attitude towards the current polytheism similarly exposed them to the charge of Atheism. This was the penalty which the Jews had to pay to popular credulity and envy for their stubborn religious and racial conservatism and the industrial and commercial ability which they combined with it. It is also a striking testimony to the influence which they wielded on the

³³ "Environment of Early Christianity," 146 f. (1914). See also Juster, "Les Juifs dans l'Empire Romain," i. 213 f.; Morrison, "The Jews under Roman Rule" (1890).

social and industrial life of the age. At the same time, this influence was, in part at least, due to the solid merit of their religious and ethical teaching which, in spite of detraction and dislike, won the adhesion of many who could discriminate between calumny or prejudice and fact.

PROSELYTES

In virtue of these three factors—Jewish propagandist zeal, the reading of the Hebrew Scriptures in the Greek version, and the material advantages accruing from membership of the Jewish community—the number of Gentile adherents of the Jewish faith throughout the Empire was very large. Seneca, who shared in the antipathy against them, declared that “though conquered, they have given laws to their conquerors.” Other Roman writers testify to their widespread religious influence and Josephus confirms their testimony. “The masses have for long shown a great inclination to adopt our religious observances. For there is no city of the Greeks, nor of the barbarians, nor of any people, whither our custom of resting on the seventh day has not penetrated, and fasting, the lighting of lamps, and our food laws are not observed.”³⁴ The success of this propaganda was largely due to the liberal-minded policy of the Hellenist Jews, who were not dominated by the narrow spirit of the Pharisaic party in Palestine, which appears to have insisted on the absolute acceptance of the ceremonial law as well as the faith of Israel. These Hellenist Jews, on the contrary, were ready to open the synagogue worship to all who were disposed to participate in it, and to abstain from practices which the Jewish religion disallowed, without going the length of submitting to circumcision. These semi-proselytes were known as “God-fearers” or “pious” Gentiles,³⁵ of whom Cornelius is a type in the New Testament, in contrast to the full proselytes who accepted circumcision, but who were comparatively few in number, if they were strongly attached to their new faith. In this respect the Diaspora were the representatives of the liberal movement in Judaism which Paul and others later carried over into the Christian mission, though, on the whole, they were not prepared to become their disciples. The Christian mission was, in fact, but a development of this liberal proselytising movement in the Diaspora, and the importance of this movement for the diffusion of Christianity beyond the bounds of Palestine is obvious. It was largely through the synagogue of the Diaspora

³⁴ “Contra Apion,” ii. 40.

³⁵ *σεβόμενοι, ἐνσεβείς*. On the proselytes to Judaism, see Juster, i. 253 f.

that Paul and his fellow-missionaries won adherents, in the first place, to the Gospel. The majority of the early Christian converts were drawn from the ranks of the Gentile semi-proselytes to Judaism.³⁶ The synagogue, in fact, furnished the nucleus of the early congregation of Christian believers. "To the Jewish mission which preceded it," says Harnack, "the Christian mission was indebted, in the first place, for a field tilled all over the Empire; in the second place, for religious communities already formed everywhere in the towns; thirdly, for what Axenfeld calls 'the help of materials' furnished by the preliminary knowledge of the Old Testament, in addition to catechetical and liturgical materials which could be employed without much alteration; fourthly, for the habit of regular worship and the control of private life; fifthly, for an impressive apologetic on behalf of monotheism, historical teleology, and ethics; and finally, for the feeling that self-diffusion was a duty. The amount of this debt is so large that one might venture to claim the Christian mission as a continuation of the Jewish propaganda."³⁷

A WORLD-WIDE FELLOWSHIP OR CHURCH

Judaism had thus practically ceased to be the religion of an exclusive, elect people inhabiting a limited territory. Through the Diaspora it had become a widespread missionary faith, professed in all the cities of the Empire and influencing its environment. It had long shed the bonds of nationality in the sense of an elect people under the rule of Yahweh in Palestine. Even in Palestine the nation had ceased to have an independent existence. Judaism had reached the point at which religion had separated itself from nationality over the length and breadth of the Empire, though the Jewish national spirit, in reaction from Roman rule, was very strong in Palestine itself. It was no longer the religion of a nation in the real sense, but of a widespread religious association, a fellowship, a Church which transcends national limits, binds together the scattered Jewish communities over the Empire, welcomes the alien to its membership, and strives to extend its sway by proselytising among the Gentiles. The bond of union of this world-wide fellowship is a religious rather than a national one, and in this religious fellowship, which has a specific organisation and recruits itself by an active propaganda among the Gentiles, we have an anticipation of the Christian Church.³⁸ It has its

³⁶ Harnack, "Expansion," i. 63.

³⁷ "Expansion," i. 15.

³⁸ For this development of Judaism into a Church, see Bousset, "Religion des Judenthums," 53 f.

centre in Jerusalem, with its temple cultus, whither the faithful from far and near send or bring their offerings, and where the Sanhedrin or Council of priests and scribes, under the presidency of the High Priest, dispenses justice in accordance with the law.³⁹ It has its collection of sacred books (not yet, indeed, closed) and its prescribed worship. Its unit lies in the local synagogue in Palestine and among the communities of the Diaspora, which were under the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin in matters religious,⁴⁰ and with which the Sanhedrin kept in touch through its emissaries, or "apostles," as they were technically termed.⁴¹ In the synagogue the members of the community assemble for worship, which consists of prayer, and the reading and expounding of the Law and the prophets, and is concluded with the benediction. It is under the jurisdiction of a ruler or rulers of the synagogue⁴²—for sometimes there were more than one—who nominates those who read and expound the Scriptures and offer the prayers, and any member of the congregation so nominated can take part in the service. It exercises the power of excommunicating unworthy members, and in its simple worship, which contrasts with the elaborate ceremonial of the temple cult, in its observance of the obligation to care for its poor members, and in its democratic, non-sacerdotal constitution, we have the prototype of the Christian community.

³⁹ Except, however, in cases involving the death penalty. Schürer, ii. 259. Juster claims that the Sanhedrin had the power of inflicting capital punishment in religious causes, ii. 133 f.

⁴⁰ Wellhausen thinks that it had no such jurisdiction. Meyer contests this opinion. "Ursprung," iii. 163 f.

⁴¹ Staerk, "Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte," ii. 43-45. See also Bousset, 70 f.; Schürer, ii. 498 f.; Friedländer, "Synagoge und Kirche," 53 f.

⁴² ἀρχισυνάγωγος.

PART II

THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH

CHAPTER I

JESUS AND THE CHURCH

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

It is only in the first Gospel that Jesus speaks of the Church. The two passages in which He thus speaks are, however, of questionable authenticity. The saying in chapter xvi. 18, "Upon this rock I will build my church," is lacking in the versions of Mark and Luke, whilst in the Lukan version¹ of the other saying in chapter xviii. 17, which Mark omits, there is no reference to the Church. Jesus habitually speaks of the kingdom or rule of God, not of the Church. For Him the kingdom has a twofold aspect—the kingdom in the present, ethical sense, and the kingdom in the future, transcendental sense of the transformation of the existing age or æon into the coming one. For this transformation the kingdom in the present, ethical sense is the preparation. Whilst He appropriated the idea of the kingdom in both senses from Judaism, He discarded the popular idea of it as the restoration of the earthly rule of Israel.² The kingdom in the present sense, which He is engaged in founding in the course of His mission, is spiritual and ethical, not political. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. It is within or among you."³ It is an inward, transforming power and process. Like the leaven,

¹ Luke xvii. 3. Matthew's Gospel reflects in these passages the later influence of the developing Church on the writer's thought. There is force in the contention that the founding of the Church on the rock, etc., is an attempt by the party of Cephas, which undoubtedly existed in Paul's time (1 Cor. i. 12), to emphasise the leadership of Peter, either as against James, who supplanted him as the leader of the Palestinian Church, or as against Paul, whose radical attitude towards the Law was objectionable to this party. For the assumption of its authenticity, see Batiffol, "Primitive Catholicism," 84 f. (Eng. trans. of 5th ed., 1911); Hort, "Christian Ecclesia," 8 f. (1898); Bruce, "Kingdom of God," 54 f. (3rd ed., 1890); Gore, "Church and Ministry," 222 f. (1889); Headlam, "The Doctrine of the Church," 33 f. (1920). Against this assumption: Harnack, "Lukas der Arzt," 118-120; Johannes Weiss, "Schriften des N.T.," i. 344.

² Acts i. 7.

³ Luke xvii. 21; cf. Matt. xii. 28.

it is working in the hearts and lives of His disciples, who accept Him as God's authoritative Messenger and practise the new righteousness befitting it. It is growing unobtrusively like the mustard seed into a great tree. It will eventuate in the new age or æon, when the rule of God, in the future, transcendental sense, over man and the world will finally be established.

At first He apparently expected to witness Himself its establishment in this sense. But with the growing antagonism of the scribes and Pharisees, and ultimately of the high priestly party of the Sadducees, it became apparent that this expectation was not to be realised. He foresees that this growing antagonism will culminate in His death at the hands of His enemies. He determines to die for the kingdom in the firm conviction that His death will not frustrate but only postpone its realisation. With this conviction the emphasis shifts from the kingdom in the present to the kingdom in the future, transcendental sense.⁴ He will rise from the dead and His disciples will witness the coming of the kingdom of God with power.⁵ As Son of Man He will return in His glory to inaugurate it, and His return will not be long delayed. It will, in fact, take place in the present generation. Meanwhile His disciples are to continue His mission in preparation for this great consummation.

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

This consummation, as Jesus conceived it, did not materialise in literal fashion. Instead of the coming on the clouds of heaven to inaugurate the kingdom in the transcendental sense, there ultimately emerges the Church. The germ of the Church is already there in the community of disciples which He founded. This community is "the little flock," to which "the Father is pleased to give the kingdom," and of which Jesus is the Shepherd.⁶ At the same time, He does not seem to have contemplated the formation of a society in opposition to and distinct from the Jewish Church, though His conception of the spiritual and ethical character of the kingdom in the present sense might ultimately tend to the disruption of the Christian community from Judaism. He recognised the worship of temple and synagogue and observed the Law, even if He disregarded "the traditions" of the scribes. From the outset the community which He founds is a sect or party

⁴ Mark xiii. 1 f. and parallels.

⁵ Mark viii. 31 f. ; ix. 1 and parallels.

⁶ Luke xii. 32 ; Mark xiv. 27.

within Judaism, and after His death it continues so to regard itself and to practise the traditional worship and usages.

ITS DISRUPTION FROM THE JEWISH CHURCH

At the same time, the antagonism of His opponents to Him and His mission, which culminated in His death, might and did ultimately lead to the disruption of the community from Judaism. He had warned the disciples of this antagonism in sending them forth to preach during His lifetime. He had repeated the warning on the eve of His death in commissioning them to continue His mission.⁷ As the result of it, the community, as voiced by Peter, ere long disavows the authority of the Sanhedrin, and asserts its obligation to profess its distinctive faith in the Christ and its right to maintain its distinctive corporate existence. "We must obey God, rather than men."⁸ Somewhat later this double claim is maintained more aggressively by Stephen. His attack on the religious perversity of his race, his insistence, in the spirit of Jesus, on the spirituality of true religion, his arraignment of the religious authorities as the murderers of the Christ, mark a distinct breach with the traditional religion. Whilst the Palestinian community might continue to observe the Law, it had practically become, within five years of the death of Jesus, a separate body in its distinctive organisation as well as its faith in the Christ. With the extension of the mission to the Gentiles and the recognition, under the auspices of Paul, of Gentile freedom from the obligation of the Law, the evolution of the community of the disciples into the Church and its separation from Judaism were complete.

EVOLUTION OF CHRISTIAN CHURCH

That Jesus foresaw this evolution is unlikely,⁹ though it might be involved in the spiritual and ethical conception of the kingdom in the present sense, which the community embodies. Whilst He had commissioned His disciples to continue His mission pending His return, and contemplated the extension of it beyond "the sons of the kingdom,"¹⁰ the interval for their missionary activity

⁷ Mark xiii. 3 f. and parallels. Meyer unwarrantably regards the sending out of the Twelve as well as the Seventy by Jesus as unhistoric. "Ursprung und Anfänge des Christenthums," i. 278 f.

⁸ Acts v. 29.

⁹ That Jesus foresaw and founded the Church as it ultimately developed is maintained by Batiffol, Bishop Gore, Dr Simpson and others. This assumption is based on dogmatic and ecclesiastical grounds, and does not seem to be in accord with the actual historic situation.

¹⁰ Matt. viii. 11 f.

would be brief.¹¹ In view of this belief in His speedy return, the thought of its developed organisation evidently did not occur to Him, or, at first, to the disciples. In any case He left the community to create its organisation as the need arose. Whilst in founding the community He virtually founded the Church, He appears neither to have foreseen nor to have prescribed its developing corporate form. The Church was not born; it developed.

CHAPTER II

THE RESURRECTION FAITH

APPEARANCES OF THE LORD

As the result of the appearance of the risen Jesus, Peter and his fellow-disciples returned to Jerusalem from Galilee, whither they had fled after the crucifixion, and where Jesus, according to Mark and Matthew, had foretold that He would precede them. Matthew, reproducing apparently the lost conclusion of Mark, definitely says that this manifestation to the Eleven took place in Galilee,¹ and the fact of such an experience in Galilee, though ignored by Luke, is confirmed by the tradition reported by the Fourth Gospel.² With this conviction of the resurrection came the revival of their faith in Him as the Christ, who had triumphed over death and was now enthroned in heaven, pending His return to earth to complete His Messianic function as the Judge of the living and the dead.³ Their faith was confirmed by further appearances, apparently at Jerusalem; of these there is a reminiscence in the tradition embodied by Luke, who, in the concluding chapter of his Gospel and the first chapter of Acts, ignores the Galilean experience, and by the writer of the Fourth Gospel, who knows of both. That there was a series of appearances in the early history of the community we learn from Paul. Basing on the testimony of actual witnesses—probably Peter and James⁴—he tells us, in order, of His appearance to Peter, to the Twelve, to more than five hundred brethren at once, to all the apostles (in the wider sense), and last of all to himself.⁵ These

¹¹ Mark xiii. 28 f.

¹ Matt. xxviii. 16-17.

² John xxi. 1 f.

³ Acts iii. 21; x. 42.

⁴ Gal. i. 18-19.

⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 5 f. Holl holds that the phrase "all the apostles" means the Twelve and James. "Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte," ii. 47 f. (1928). He is followed by Meyer, "Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums," iii. 258 (1923). I am not convinced by Holl's reasons for this conclusion. In the primitive Church the term "Apostle" was not confined to the Twelve and James. It denoted others besides who, with certain qualifications, preached the Gospel.

manifestations were evidently of the same psychic character as that to Paul. They were spiritual, not material. They took the form of visions of the risen Lord in what Paul calls a spiritual body, capable of visualising itself to the minds of the persons concerned. The tradition of the rising and appearance of the actual body, which could be touched and even partake of food, is a later transformation of this spiritual experience. Paul's testimony goes back to a time when the belief in the resurrection rested on these appearances, as in the case of his own vision, and when that in the empty tomb, along with the circumstantial stories of the resurrection and ascension of the actual body, had not taken shape in the Christian tradition.⁶

To their resurrection faith we owe the actual founding of the Church. Without this faith in the living Lord to rally the fugitive disciples, the Church, which grew out of it, would not have taken shape. It led to the revival of the religious fellowship which the crucifixion had temporarily dissolved. In the renewal of this fellowship, in continuation of that founded by Jesus Himself, lies the actual origin of the Church. The only difference consists in the fact that, in virtue of the resurrection experience, the risen and exalted Lord takes the place within it of the Master they had known in the flesh.

RENEWED MISSION ACTIVITY

The disciples returned to Jerusalem in the expectation of the speedy coming of the exalted Christ. With them were the mother and brothers of Jesus and a number of women adherents who had ministered to Him in the course of His mission.⁷ They were joined by disciples resident in the city—the total, according to Acts,⁸ being about 120. They had, however, not returned to adopt a merely passive attitude, but to proclaim their resurrection faith and win adherents for it in the Holy City. They had been taught by their Master not to hide their lamp under a bushel.⁹ They had been sent forth in His lifetime to evangelise the cities of Israel, to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom from the housetops, to speak in the light what He had spoken to them in the darkness.¹⁰

⁶ On the credibility of these visions, see my "Gospel in the Early Church," 6 f. (1933).

⁷ Mark xv. 46; Matt. xxvii. 55-56; Luke xxiii. 49; John xix. 25.

⁸ i. xv. According to the Mishna ("Sanhedrin," i. 6) a town must have 120 inhabitants to have a council, and its officers must be one-tenth of the whole. "Peake's Comm.," 778 (1920).

⁹ Matt. v. 15.

¹⁰ Matt. x. 6 f.; cf. Luke xii. 2 f., a variant version. See also Mark iv. 21 f.; Matt. v. 14 f.; Luke xi. 33.

It was in this spirit that they had returned to continue His mission in the light and the power of their resurrection faith. Matthew and Luke even represent them as already contemplating the preaching of this faith to all nations in accordance with the express commission which they ascribe to Jesus Himself.¹¹ In thus anticipating the later idea of the Gentile mission, they have given a misleading impression of the actual situation. As the early chapters of Acts show, the mission is at first confined to Jews.¹² It required a revelation to decide Peter, the leader of the movement, to extend the mission to non-Jews, though he was anticipated by others of his fellow-believers in this extension.¹³

As a preliminary to their missionary activity, the little community, under Peter's direction, completes the number of the Twelve by electing Matthias to take the place of Judas. In so doing, they clearly reveal their resolution to continue the movement which the Master had inaugurated by renewing the mission with which He had entrusted them as His co-workers in the proclamation of the Gospel of the kingdom in Galilee and Judæa. With the spiritual exaltation of the experience of Pentecost day came the opportunity of inaugurating this new mission in the proclamation of Peter to the crowd of pilgrims and others which the dramatic scene of the outpouring of the Spirit and the "speaking with tongues" (Glossolalia) had attracted. Such ecstatic, incoherent utterance is psychologically explicable, and is by no means unfamiliar in modern as well as ancient religious history, though, in accordance with his universalist tendency, Luke mistakenly represents it as the ability to speak a variety of foreign languages.¹⁴ With this experience the community enters on its public career as a Jewish sect or party with a definite message which distinguishes it from other sects or parties within Judaism. This party, which virtually perpetuates the circle of disciples

¹¹ Matt. xxviii. 19-20; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts i. 8.

¹² Acts ii. 36; iii. 26.

¹³ Acts x. 9 f.; xi. 20 f. Acts iii. 26 seems to show an insight, from the beginning, on the part of Peter into the coming Gentile mission. But the adverb "first" does not necessarily refer to this mission, and in any case may be an insertion by the writer, and should not be stressed. The previous reference by Peter "to all that are afar off" (Acts ii. 39) also sounds universalist. But the claim does not seem, for Peter, to refer to the Gentiles, but to the Jews of a later time.

¹⁴ Lake thinks that Luke knew a form of Glossolalia in which it was intelligible speech, though specifically it is unintelligible gibberish. "The Earlier Epistles of St Paul," 241 f. (1911). He instances the case of the Camisards in modern times. At all events Luke's understanding of it as intelligible speech in this instance was mistaken. The phenomenon described is evidently that of incoherent, unintelligible utterance. Pfeiderer identifies the ecstatic experience of Pentecost with the appearance of the risen Christ to the five hundred. "Urchristenthum," i. 12 (2nd ed., 1902).

founded by Jesus in the course of His mission, is the germ of the future Church.

DISTINCTIVE MESSAGE

What its distinctive message was we learn from the discourses of Peter on this and other occasions. These may be regarded as substantially reproducing the primitive teaching as embodied in the early tradition, even if in their written form they are the free composition of the author of the Acts. For the speaker the Messianic age has dawned and the proof of it is the outpouring of the Spirit. Jesus of Nazareth, the Man whom God had attested by His wonderful works and whom the Jews had crucified, in accordance with His determinate will, has been proved by the resurrection to be the Messiah. This proof is found in their personal experience of His resurrection, and is confirmed by prophecy. The crucifixion is, therefore, no disproof of His Messiahship, since it was part of the divine plan that the Christ should suffer, and was also foretold by the prophets. By His resurrection and His exaltation God has made Him both Lord and Christ.¹⁵ As Lord He is invested with dominion over His enemies. As Christ He will return to judge the living and the dead. Their Christology does not go beyond what has been termed the adoptionist standpoint. Jesus of Nazareth has passed through death from earth to heaven to be invested with the heavenly dignity and function, which God had predetermined for Him. Pending His return to complete His Messianic vocation in the realisation of the kingdom of God¹⁶ and the final consummation of the divine plan of Salvation,¹⁷ He makes His spiritual power and presence felt in the outpouring of the Spirit. Through faith in Him as Lord and Christ, coupled with repentance and baptism, the remission of sin and the gift of the Spirit¹⁸ are attainable by

¹⁵ On the recognition by the primitive community of the exalted Jesus as Lord, see my "Gospel in the Early Church," 11 f. Bousset's contention ("Kyrios Christos," 1913) that the title was first conferred on Him in the Hellenist Christian community of Antioch and elsewhere, under the influence of the current Hellenist conception of a Godman, is untenable. See *ibid.* and *cf.* Lohmeyer, "Kyrios Jesus" (1928).

¹⁶ Acts i. 3; viii. 12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, iii. 20-21.

¹⁸ Baptism does not necessarily convey the Spirit. Though this view appears in Acts ii., it is not the invariable one in the sources which Luke used. It may be received on faith in Christ, which is essential in all cases. But it may precede baptism, as in the case of Cornelius, and, in the case of Philip's Samaritan converts, baptism does not convey it. These converts do not receive it till the apostles arrive to lay their hands on them. On this subject, see "The Gospel in the Early Church," 15 f.; "The Beginnings of Christianity," ed. by Foakes-Jackson and Lake, v. 134 f. (1933). Meyer thinks that baptism was

all, even those who have rejected and crucified Him. Baptism by immersion in or into the name of Christ, to which, as preached by John, Jesus had submitted, is the Christian equivalent of the Jewish ceremonial purification. It is symbolic of the moral change in the repentant believer and the seal of his consecration to Christ.

The remission of sin, which ensures salvation, is not directly associated in the early preaching with the death of Christ. It is dependent on the acceptance of Him as Lord and Christ in spite of His death. But we learn from Paul that in this preaching a redemptive significance was attributed to His suffering on the Cross. He attests the fact that in the primitive tradition, which he had received, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."¹⁹ From prophecy, which they applied to Him, Peter and his fellow-preachers thus evidently inferred that His death had a redemptive value in mediating the remission of sins, though probably not in the developed Pauline sense of a propitiation of God's justice in order to acquit or justify the sinner. In the episode of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, Christ's death is explicitly viewed in the light of Isaiah liii., if only His meekness in suffering is emphasised. The early preachers spoke of Him as God's Servant who, by an act of supreme self-sacrifice, had made deliverance from the future judgment of sin, salvation possible to believers in Him as Lord and Christ. Beyond this their conception of salvation does not seem to have gone.²⁰

CHAPTER III

GROWTH OF THE COMMUNITY

EFFECTIVE PREACHING

ACCORDING to the tradition preserved in the Acts, this preaching was wonderfully effective. It is a message from God, like that of the prophets of old, and its appeal arrests and strikes home. As the result of Peter's first discourse about 3,000 believers were baptized, and his second discourse in Solomon's Porch in the

introduced into the Christian community under the influence of the disciples of John the Baptist in Jerusalem who became Christians. "Ursprung," iii. 247. It was not practised by Jesus, though the command to baptize is ascribed to Him in Matt. xxviii. 19.

¹⁹ 1 Cor. xv. 3.

²⁰ See Acts ii. 14 f.; iii. 11 f.; iv. 23 f.; v. 29 f.; viii. 28 f.; x. 38 f. For a fuller account, see "The Gospel in the Early Church," 17 f.

temple increased the number to 5,000.¹ A little later these thousands are "multiplied exceedingly," and even include a great crowd of the priests.² Ancient statistics are notoriously unreliable, and the fact that "the multitude of the disciples" can assemble in one meeting-place leads us to doubt their accuracy. In view of the writer's tendency to emphasise the dramatic and irresistible growth of the movement in Jerusalem from the outset, allowance must be made for overstatement of effect. On the other hand, the dynamic character of the preaching and the spiritual exaltation of the converts, which there is no reason to doubt, were fitted to make an appreciable appeal, as in religious revivals generally. After all, several thousand believers in a large city, within an interval of several years, is not an undue percentage.³ Cures like that of the cripple at the gate of the temple, which faith in the name of Christ effects, would also lend strength to the Christian propaganda, as in the case of the mission of Jesus Himself, even if the writer, with this mission in his mind, has tended to exaggerate the miraculous aspect of the apostles' activity, and colour it with legendary detail.⁴ In any case, it was sufficiently effective to arouse the concern of the high-priestly party of the Sadducees, who take umbrage at their doctrine of the resurrection, in which, in contrast to the Pharisees, they disbelieved.

ATTEMPTS AT REPRESSION

At their instigation the officers of the temple, after the healing of the cripple, arrest Peter and John as the leaders, and on the morrow bring them before the Sanhedrin. The hearing gives Peter an opportunity to declare the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, in virtue of His resurrection, in the presence of the Sanhedrin itself. The court regards them as ignorant but harmless visionaries, who, if forming a new party, attend the temple worship, refrain from attacking the traditional religion, and were not politically dangerous. Their undoubted piety and the favourable effect on the crowd of the healing miracle evidently preserved them on this occasion from serious persecution. In

¹ Acts ii. iv. ; iv. 4. The latter statement is not necessarily a doublet of the former.

² Acts vi. 7.

³ Weizsäcker seems to be unduly sceptical in asserting that the figures "are all artificial." "Apostolic Age," i. 25 (Eng. trans., 2nd ed., 1894). They are probably at the most somewhat exaggerated. Von Dobschütz follows Weizsäcker in thinking that the movement was less obtrusive than Luke represents. "Probleme des apostolischen Zeitalters," 27 f. (1904).

⁴ Acts v. 12 f. For belief in the power of the Name, see iii. 6 ; iv. 7, 12.

spite of Peter's refusal to refrain from preaching, they were let off with the threat of punishment in case of disobedience.⁵

Though their forbearance accords ill with their attitude of deadly enmity to Jesus Himself, the incident may be regarded as substantially historic. It had become obvious that the movement had not only gained a considerable number of adherents, but had aroused the sympathetic interest of the crowd. It might well seem hazardous to provoke public disturbance by an attempt to suppress it and bring Peter and John before the Roman procurator on a charge of sedition. Moreover, their preaching was purely religious, and their conduct and that of their converts as pious Jews was otherwise unimpeachable.⁶

A second inquisition is also ascribed, in the tradition, to the healing activity of the Twelve.⁷ This tradition contains legendary features, which render its exact credibility as a record problematic. It is again instigated by the Sadducees, who are jealous of the growth of the new party, whose influence might undermine their own. This time the whole of the Twelve are arrested and imprisoned, but are miraculously freed by an angel during the night. Rearrested, they are brought forthwith before the Sanhedrin, and on this occasion Peter's defence, though it resembles his previous utterance, threatens to cost him and his fellow-apostles their lives. But the Pharisaic section of the Council is less embittered, and through Gamaliel, a descendant of the liberal-minded Hillel, advises further caution, though the speech in which he does so contains manifest chronological blunders⁸ which such a learned Rabbi could not have made.

His intervention is none the less probable, if the historical argument appears to be a blundering version of his speech by Luke, or the tradition which he followed. As the result of it, the accused are beaten and again let off with the prohibition of further preaching.

⁵ Acts iv. 1 f. The Sanhedrin would probably regard them as a Jewish association on the model of the synagogue. The formation of a religious association or synagogue was usual in Judaism, of which there were many in Jerusalem. This tends to explain why they were at first treated with forbearance and lends probability to Luke's statements of their rapidly increasing numbers. See Foakes-Jackson, "Comm. on Acts," 21.

⁶ In my judgment Weizsäcker does not give sufficient weight to such considerations in discrediting the early history as presented in Acts. "Apostolic Age," i. 24 f.

⁷ Acts v. 17 f.

⁸ The reference to the risings of Theudas, which had not yet taken place, and of Judas, which had taken place in the time of the enrolment, A.D. 6-8, and which he places after that of Theudas.

THE MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN

Once more the prohibition proved ineffective,⁹ and again we read of continued progress before the first set-back to the movement consequent on the martyrdom of Stephen. This renewal of the inquisition was not due to the persistent preaching of the Word, since the Sanhedrin had agreed to adopt a waiting policy. It was provoked by Stephen's aggressive attitude to Judaism itself. This appears as a distinct development of the primitive preaching and was destined to have a decisive influence on the extension of the movement far beyond Jerusalem. Stephen was a Jew of the Dispersion, a man of forceful character and Hellenist culture, who engaged in heated discussion with his fellow-Hellenist Jews. He evidently renewed the aggressive attitude of Jesus towards the legalism of the scribes and Pharisees, and whilst not attacking the Law itself—"the living oracles" delivered to their fathers at Mount Sinai¹⁰—as his opponents averred, emphasised the spiritual side of religion. He had apparently repeated, in addition, Jesus' reference to the destruction of the temple. He was accordingly accused before the Sanhedrin of blasphemy. His defence consisted of a lengthy historical review tending to show the perverse, rebellious spirit of his race in the past and its frequent lapse into idolatry, as illustrated particularly by the history of Moses. The implication which he thus intended to convey is evident. Just as the Jews have been frequently lacking in the true apprehension of their religion on its higher, spiritual side, so now in their rejection of the Christ. So far his judges had allowed him a fair hearing. But their passive attitude suddenly changed when he proceeded, evidently in reference to the charge of speaking against the temple, to question the substitution by Solomon of a temple for the ancient tabernacle, and to declare that God dwells not in houses made with hands. This declaration, though supported by a quotation from Isaiah lxvi., apparently evoked an angry outburst on the part of his hearers. This in turn provoked the speaker into a passionate denunciation of their blindness in resisting the Holy Ghost and murdering the Righteous One, as their fathers had murdered the prophets who had foretold His coming. The denunciation, along with his confession of the Son of Man enthroned in heaven, sealed his fate. Without waiting for a formal sentence or referring the case to the Roman

⁹ Acts v. 42.

¹⁰ Acts vii. 38. Stephen does not attack the Law in the spirit of Paul, but the lack of its true observance in the spirit of Jesus.

procurator,¹¹ the mob dragged him out of the city and inflicted the penalty for blasphemy by stoning him to death.

The persecution which followed and of which Saul, the young Pharisee from Tarsus, who had taken an active part in his death, was a ringleader, seems to have been specially directed against his fellow-Hellenist believers. These may be assumed to have largely shared his freer spiritual standpoint. Philip, for instance, who was among the many fugitives, and Barnabas, a Hellenist Jew of Cyprus.¹² At all events the Twelve, who devoutly observed the traditional religious usages, were exempt, as were presumably their fellow-believers of Palestinian birth, though Luke confines the exemption to the apostles.¹³ With Saul's departure to continue the work of repression at Damascus, it evidently slackened, and another period of growth supervened¹⁴ until the accession of Herod Agrippa I. (A.D. 41-44), to whom the Emperor Claudius had entrusted the government of the whole of Palestine.¹⁵

THE PERSECUTION OF HEROD AGRIPPA

To this persecution, which broke out in the Passover season of 44, James, the son of Zebedee, fell a victim. According to a tradition ascribed by a fifth-century writer to Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in the first half of the second, his brother John was also "killed by the Jews,"¹⁶ though it does not attribute it explicitly to the Herodian persecution. Peter, whom he arrested, was saved by a second fortunate escape from prison, which legend has again transformed into a supernatural deliverance, and retired beyond his jurisdiction, leaving James, the Lord's brother, as the leader of the Jerusalem community.¹⁷ The fact that before his hurried departure he sent a message to "James and the brethren" seems to indicate that the other members of the Twelve had anticipated him in his flight. This persecution was evidently a set

¹¹ Probably Pontius Pilate, who was not recalled till A.D. 36. Pilate, it seems, was absent from the city engaged in repressing a disturbance in Samaria toward the end of 35. See W. L. Knox, "St Paul and the Church of Jerusalem," 41-42 (1925).

¹² Acts iv. 36.

¹³ *Ibid.*, viii. 1 f.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ix. 31.

¹⁵ Caligula had already conferred on him the territories of Philip and Antipas, sons of Herod the Great, so that he was, like his grandfather, till his death in 44, ruler of the whole of Palestine.

¹⁶ See the fragment from Papias in De Boor, "Texte und Untersuchungen," v. 170 (1889). Es kann in Zukunft kein Zweifel mehr darüber walten dass Papias wirklich überliefert hat dass der Apostel Johannes von Juden erschlagen worden sei. *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁷ Acts xii. 1 f.

attempt to stamp out the movement by striking at its leaders. To Herod the preaching of Jesus as the Messiah might well seem dangerous to his authority, whilst the writer of Acts ascribes to him the additional motive of seeking to commend it to his Jewish subjects.¹⁸ Whatever his exact purpose, it was frustrated by his sudden death at Cæsarea in A.D. 44. With the resumption of the imperial government in Palestine, there ensued once more a period of renewed activity, which was to last for nearly two decades till the murder of James in 62. When some years after Herod's death the community again comes into the foreground of Luke's narrative, it includes an influential section of "Pharisees who believed," and is governed by a number of elders as well as apostles.¹⁹

CHAPTER IV

EXTENSION OF THE MISSION

ITS BEGINNINGS

IN Acts the extension of the mission beyond Jerusalem and its environs is ascribed to the persecution following the death of Stephen. In reality it had begun earlier, probably through the activity of Jewish pilgrims to Jerusalem, who had been converted by the apostolic preaching. Saul, for instance, finds a community of believers at Damascus under the leadership of Ananias.¹ Peter similarly finds believers at Lydda and Joppa in the coast region of Judæa,² and Paul speaks of the Churches of Judæa as already existing within three years after his conversion.³ Such early communities appear to have existed in Galilee,⁴ though we have no account of their origin. Converts from these regions, if not the Twelve themselves, had thus become missionaries of the new faith before the extension of the mission which Luke notes as the result of the persecution following Stephen's martyrdom. This extension was only a development on a larger scale of this unrecorded activity. It began with the mission of Philip in Samaria and southern Judæa, of Peter and John who are found co-operating with him in Samaria, and of the Hellenist fugitives in Phœnicæa, Cyprus, and Antioch in Syria.⁵ In the evangelisation of Palestine other members of the Twelve presumably took

¹⁸ Acts xii. 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xv. 4 f.

⁵ *Ibid.*, viii. 5 f., 25; ix. 32 f.; xi. 19 f.

¹ *Ibid.*, ix. 19.

² *Ibid.*, ix. 32, 36.

³ Gal. i. 22.

⁴ Acts ix. 31.

part, and Luke's partial account of it may safely be regarded as merely symptomatic of this more general activity. The expansive movement once started, the charge of Jesus in sending out the Twelve to preach and heal in Galilee, as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, would doubtless recur to them, as to Peter, both as an incentive to take part in it and a model of procedure. The form of this charge, in the expanded version of Matthew ⁶ at least, clearly reflects features of this later missionary activity. The missionaries carry their message in pairs ⁷ from house to house in the towns and villages, and are dependent on such hospitality as may be offered. Their reception was evidently a mixed one. Whilst they are accorded a ready welcome in some communities, there are cases of hostility, of division and strife over their message, and even of persecution at the hands of the local authorities, who scourge them out of the synagogues.⁸ In such cases they are to shake the dust off their feet and remove elsewhere. In other communities they succeed in arousing the popular interest by their healing ministry as well as by their preaching of the kingdom. As in the mission of Jesus Himself and in the early movement at Jerusalem, the ability to exorcise the sick is a powerful adjunct of the spoken word,⁹ in spite of some legendary colouring imparted by Luke or his sources to the narrative of this healing ministry.

EARLIEST PREACHING TO GENTILES

As in the later history of the Church, persecution appears to be the most effective means of the spread of the Gospel. In the martyrdom of Stephen we have the first illustration of the truth of Tertullian's saying that "the blood of Christians is the seed of the Church." The resolute and self-sacrificing spirit of the community and its leaders, in the face even of death, is from the outset one of the secrets of the growth of the movement. It was this spirit that powerfully contributed to carry it, in spite of periodic attempts at repression, to the conquest of the ancient world. In this, as in other respects, its early adherents nobly exhibit the spirit and teaching of Jesus, and point the way to

⁶ Matt. x. 6 f.; cf. Mark vi. 7 f.; Luke ix. 1 f. I see no reason to assume with Holl ("Aufsätze," ii. 55 f., 1928) that Peter alone went on mission work in Palestine and that the others confined their activity to Jerusalem.

⁷ The coupling of Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, Judas and Silas, in mission work in Acts seems a reminiscence of Jesus' command to go in pairs.

⁸ That these early missionaries in Palestine were subject to persecution, we learn from Paul, 1 Thess. ii. 14.

⁹ Acts viii. 6 f.; ix. 42.

later generations in their striving thus "to overcome the world." Specially significant from this point of view is the fact that out of this persecution came the beginnings of the Gentile mission. In the liberal spirit of Stephen, Philip goes forth to evangelise in Samaria. The preaching to the Samaritans can, indeed, hardly be described as a mission to the Gentiles, since the Samaritans were largely of Hebrew race and observed the Law as contained in the Pentateuch. But, as we can see from the Gospel of Matthew, their right to be included in the Christian mission had been disputed, and Philip's mission is a clear proof that the Hellenist believers at least had advanced beyond the purely Hebrew conception of the Gospel. It was, therefore, none the less a liberal, if not exactly a revolutionary departure, in which Peter and John, as the representatives of the Jerusalem Church, ultimately co-operate.¹⁰ This departure definitely appears in Philip's baptism of the probably non-Jewish eunuch of the Ethiopian Queen, to whom he expounded the Gospel of the Suffering Servant in the course of an evangelistic tour in southern Judæa.¹¹ It appears still more definitely in the missionary propaganda of other Hellenist fugitives, who not only preach to Jews in the Phœnician towns and in Cyprus, but to Greeks at Antioch.¹² Peter himself, in his preaching tour in the towns of the Palestinian coast region, is ere long found instructing and baptizing the "God-fearing" Gentile Cornelius and his household, in obedience to the revelation conveyed to him in the vision of the clean and unclean creatures at Joppa.¹³

The principle of the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles has thus asserted itself within a few years of the founding of the Church at Jerusalem. Whilst the Church, through its representatives Peter and John, expresses its approval of Philip's Samaritan mission, it is apparently at first dubious about Peter's admission of the Gentile Cornelius to baptism. It requires the lengthy recital by him of the divine sanction of this momentous departure to extort approval from "those that were of the circumcision" (the Pharisaic believers), and this approval was probably less whole-heartedly given than Luke represents.¹⁴ Similarly, the Church sends the Hellenist Barnabas to Antioch to investigate the preaching to the Greeks, and while Barnabas approves in its name,¹⁵ it is certain that, in this case, the Pharisaic Christian party was not prepared to sanction the admission of the Gentiles

¹⁰ Acts viii. 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, viii. 26 f.

¹² *Ibid.*, xi. 19 f. The existence of "brethren" in Phœnicia is confirmed by Acts xv. 3.

¹³ Acts x. 1 f.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xi. 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xi. 23.

to the Church without the observance of circumcision and other prescriptions of the Law.¹⁶ This question had evidently not yet been definitely decided, though Peter and the more liberal section of the Church had gained a temporary victory for a free Gospel.¹⁷ On this decision depended the further progress of the Gentile mission (and with it the destiny of the Church), in which the convert Saul, to whom Stephen's martyrdom seems to have been in no small measure due, had already begun to take a leading part.¹⁸

CHAPTER V

LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY

RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLIES

THE religious life of the new community begins with the meetings in the upper chamber of the Twelve and their adherents after the resurrection.¹ From the outset those private meetings impart to the incipient movement a social-religious character. They are bound together in a fellowship or brotherhood² arising from their common faith in the Christ. They associate daily for the nurture of their religious life. With the growth of the movement those house meetings³ appear to have been multiplied. Whilst they continue to take part in the temple worship,⁴ they meet publicly in a court of the temple, like other Jewish parties,⁵ to bear witness to their faith and win converts.⁶ They meet further in a common assembly for worship and edification.⁷ This edification is described as "the apostles' teaching."⁸ It was presumably a reproduction of that of Jesus, and would include characteristic incidents from the story of His mission, as the Twelve and other

¹⁶ Acts xv. 1-2.

¹⁷ Peter's early liberal attitude is confirmed by Paul. Gal. ii. 12.

¹⁸ Acts xi. 25, 26; Gal. i. 21 f.

¹ Acts i. 13 f.

² Κοινωνία, ii. 42; ἀδελφότης, 1 Peter ii. 17.

³ An example of such a house meeting is given in Acts xii. 12, where many are assembled in the house of Mary, mother of John Mark, and are engaged in praying.

⁴ Acts ii. 46; iii. 1.

⁵ αἵρεσις.

⁶ Acts ii. 32, 46; v. 12. "Witness" in the primitive sense of testimony, from personal knowledge, to Jesus, especially His resurrection. On the term, see Casey, "Beginnings of Christianity," v. 30 f. (1933); Holl, "Aufsätze," ii. 68 f.

⁷ Acts ii. 1; iv. 31.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ii. 42.

personal disciples remembered them. In his first speech to "the brethren" Peter reminds them of the historic mission of the risen Lord—"all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto the day that he was received up from us." It is, in fact, to this "teaching" that the later Synoptic Gospels owe their existence. As is evident from these narratives, it included, further, the reading of appropriate Old Testament Scriptures in confirmation of this teaching. In addition to teaching and the reading of the Scriptures, mention is made of "the prayers" in which those present joined, and which would include the Lord's Prayer.⁹ This common assembly thus appears to have reproduced the features of the synagogue service, adapted to their new faith in the Christ. They appear, further, to have observed the current Jewish festivals—Pentecost, for instance—the prescribed fasts,¹⁰ and the Sabbath, whilst celebrating, in addition, the Lord's Day,¹¹ in remembrance of the resurrection.

The house meetings seem to have included a common meal (the Agape or Love Feast, as it later came to be called). Like similar meals among the Jews—the Kiddush, for instance, in preparation for the Sabbath and the great feasts, or the common meal of the Essenes—this "breaking of bread"¹² had a religious character. At its conclusion the members seem to have celebrated the simple rite of the Eucharist, as instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper, though this celebration does not definitely appear in Luke's narrative.¹³ As the common meal expressed their fellowship with one another, the celebration of Christ's death, with which it concluded, expressed their sense of spiritual fellowship with Him.¹⁴

⁹ Acts ii. 42; Matt. vi. 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xiii. 3; cf. Mark ii. 10.

¹¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

¹² Acts ii. 42, 46.

¹³ The Eucharist was later separated from the common meal. Whilst Paul directs this separation in 1 Cor. xi. 34, in Acts xx. 7 f., on the occasion of the meeting at Troas, the two seem still combined.

¹⁴ There is diversity of modern opinion on the meaning of the phrase "the breaking of bread" (*κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου*). It has generally been regarded as denoting a fellowship meal in commemoration of the death of Christ, as instituted by Him at the Last Supper. Lietzmann, on the other hand, contends that it was simply the continuation of the repasts of which Jesus had habitually partaken with His disciples during His mission, and had no reference to the Last Supper at which He instituted the Eucharist. It consisted exclusively of the breaking and partaking of bread, though, in accordance with Jewish custom, it had a religious-social character. It had not yet developed into the later Eucharistic memorial celebration, in which believers partook of bread and wine as symbols of Christ's broken body and shed blood. This development was due to Paul ("Messe und Abendmahl," 229 f., 249 f., 1926). In this contention Lietzmann is followed by Loisy ("La Naissance du Christianisme," 289 f., 1933) and by MacDonald ("Christian Worship in the Primitive Church," 123 f., 1934, Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Eccles. Hist., Edin. Univ.). The theory is

To this meal the more affluent members liberally contributed. In the enthusiasm of those early days, when the coming of Christ was hourly expected, they carried their generosity the length of selling their property for the benefit of their needy brethren. We need not, with Luke, see in this generosity the profession of Communist theory. It was evidently not an obligation on principle, but a readiness to dispose of property for the common benefit, in the spirit of Jesus' command, "Go sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor." It means only selling one's property (not necessarily all of it¹⁵) and placing it in a common

elaborated by Lietzmann with great liturgical learning, but I am not convinced by the arguments in support of it. "The breaking of bread" by Paul at Troas, on the first day of the week (Sunday) towards the conclusion of what was a meeting for fellowship and edification—the only other relative reference to the subject in the Acts (xx. 7 f.)—does seem to imply a Eucharistic celebration as the culmination of a religious primitive assembly. Of such an assembly at Corinth, as described by Paul himself (1 Cor. xi. 20 f.), the Eucharistic celebration certainly formed the concluding part of the fellowship meal or Agape which preceded it, and in chapter xiv. of the "Didache" (c. A.D. 100) "the breaking of bread" explicitly refers to the celebration of the Eucharist on the Lord's Day, as described in chapters ix. and x. In support of his contention that "the breaking of bread" in the Jerusalem community was a purely fellowship meal, in accordance with Jewish custom, not a memorial celebration of Christ's death, Lietzmann adduces the primitive tradition as it appears in Mark, from which the words, "This do in remembrance of me," are absent. These words first appear in the version of the tradition given by Paul in 1 Cor. xi. 23 f. Paul, he thinks, added this memorial injunction to the primitive tradition of the Last Supper, and did so by a special revelation from the risen Lord. "For I received (*παρέλαβον*) of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you how that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread," etc. The clause "I received of the Lord" means, he maintains, that Paul, in this passage, claims to have received his account of what took place at the Last Supper from the exalted Lord Himself. It seems to me more probable that he means that he had found out from the personal disciples of Jesus what had actually taken place at the Last Supper, and that the words, "This do in remembrance of me," formed part of the primitive tradition, and were not added to it by him on the authority of a personal revelation. In another passage in 1 Cor. (xv. 3), in which he summarises the Christian message relative to the death, resurrection, and appearances of Christ to the disciples, he uses the same word "received," and in this passage he certainly professes to be recounting the tradition current in the primitive community at Jerusalem. The absence of the memorial injunction from the Markan version of the Last Supper, with which that of Paul otherwise agrees, is, indeed, singular, and it is possible that he may have added them on his own authority in virtue of what he believed to be a special revelation. But his version was written within twenty-five years of the crucifixion, and is, therefore, older than that of Mark, who, moreover, shows a marked tendency to abbreviate the sayings of Jesus, compared with the other two Synoptists. In Luke's version the memorial injunction does occur, and this account is not necessarily a mere echo of that of Paul, as Lietzmann assumes. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to hold that from the outset "the breaking of bread" had a Eucharistic significance for the primitive community at Jerusalem and elsewhere, in which it marked its sense of the redemptive self-sacrifice of the risen and exalted Lord, in accordance with His injunction, as well as expressed its fellowship with Him and with one another.

¹⁵ See Acts v. 1 f.

fund, administered by the Twelve, for the support of the poor. The disposal of one's possessions was purely voluntary and only partial. In any case the experiment proved unworkable, and was ere long abandoned.¹⁶

DYNAMIC CHARACTER

The life of the community is of the dynamic type. From the outset onwards, the Church is, for the writer of Acts, the community of the Holy Spirit. The new movement is based on the baptism with the Spirit, and in this spiritual baptism lies its differentiation from that of the Baptist.¹⁷ As in the case of Jesus Himself, water-baptism in the name is only significant in connection with the gift of the Spirit and the conveyance through faith of the power for which the name stands.¹⁸ For these early believers the Spirit is not a person, but a power, emanating from God and dominating their lives. This power manifests itself in a common inspiration, and this inspiration is not confined to the Pentecostal experience. It is repeated after the first deliverance of Peter and John from the inquisition of the Sanhedrin.¹⁹ It occurs in connection with the preaching of Peter to Cornelius and his household.²⁰ In such an atmosphere of spiritual exaltation, this dynamic experience seems to have been a common feature, and the recorded instances were, we may assume, not the only ones. It seems, in fact, to have been characteristic of the expanding movement in Palestine and far beyond it. It manifests itself not merely in the emotional scenes described as "speaking with tongues." It begets the assured conviction of the truth of the Gospel. It quickens the various gifts of believers in a variety of service in the common cause (*charismata*). In this belief in the inspiration of the community largely lies the explanation of its growth and the extension of the mission. It nurtured the zeal and the endurance which enabled the movement

¹⁶ On the primitive Communism, see Stevens, "Theology of the New Testament," 263 f.; Troeltsch, "Social Teaching of the Christian Churches," i. 62 f. (Eng. trans., 1931); Pfeiderer, "Urchristenthum," i. 22 f. (2nd ed., 1902).

¹⁷ Acts i. 5, 8, etc. On the characteristic conception of the dynamic operation of the Spirit in the first generation of believers, see Heb. ii. 3-4.

¹⁸ On this subject, see Silva New in "Beginnings," v. 121 f. Baptism of converts as a ceremonial preliminary was a Jewish custom. It had no sacramental efficacy. But neither had the baptism which Peter advocates (Acts ii. 38). This, like John's baptism, was for the remission of sins.

¹⁹ Acts iv. 31. There is no compelling reason to regard this experience, with a number of critics, as merely a variant version of the scene on Pentecostal day, on the assumption that chapters iii. to v. 16 are a doublet of chapters ii. and v. 17-42.

²⁰ Acts x. 44 f.

to prevail and increase, in spite of attempted repression. Besides the Glossolalia, it operates in the preaching of the Word, in the care of needy believers, in the healing of the sick, in the confession of the Christ in the face of opposition, in the edification of believers, in the direction of the movement. It inspires Peter's discourses, as it inspired the prophets of old. In this respect the new movement is a prophetic one. It betokens, in fact, the revival of the ancient prophetic revelation in its Christian form, which works irresistibly in Stephen's contendings with his fellow-Hellenists.²¹ In men like Barnabas, Agabus and others the movement has its prophets, who proclaim the Word by inspiration, or foretell the future, or decide some important departure in the life of the community.²² It is the Spirit that enlightens Peter on the meaning and purpose of his vision at Jaffa.²³ The gift of the Spirit is the concomitant of repentance and faith. It operates in individual believers as well as in the community and the Twelve, though, in the case of Philip's Samaritan converts, its conveyance is made dependent on the laying on of the hands of the apostles and, in the case of Saul at Damascus, of Ananias.²⁴ Whilst in some cases it is associated with baptism, in others it precedes baptism, and baptism in itself does not necessarily convey it.²⁵ It makes its power felt in the communal life in the gladness and singleness of heart, which win them the favour of the people, in unity of heart and soul, in self-sacrifice for their fellow-believers.²⁶ The portrayal of its ethical effects is, indeed, to a certain extent idealised. Unworthy motives appear in the persons of Ananias and Sapphira, whose profession is a veneer of lurking deceit and selfishness.²⁷ Among the converts are found those of mercenary character like the magician, Simon Magus, who would fain buy the gift of the Spirit. The communal harmony is ere long disturbed by friction between the Palestinian and the Hellenist believers over the question of the distribution of the common fund in support of needy members. There is, too, friction of a more serious kind between the two sections of the Church over the question of the Gentile mission. To this extent the Spirit-inspired community fails to correspond with the ideal, though, as the action of Peter in the cases of Ananias and Sapphira and Simon Magus show, there was a watchful effort to maintain it. Withal, however, the new spiritual life, consequent on the faith in Jesus Christ, of which Luke gives us some glimpses in the

²¹ Acts vii. 10.

²² *Ibid.*, xi. 22 f.; xiii. 1 f.

²³ *Ibid.*, x. 19; xi. 12.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, viii. 17; ix. 17.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, ii. 38; viii. 16; x. 45.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, ii. 46; iv. 32.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 1 f.

first half of Acts, may rightly be described as dynamic. It is at the same time the mainspring of a movement of vast potential significance. In this respect the community shows a striking contrast to the current Judaism. Whilst Judaism professed belief in the Holy Spirit, the Rabbis appear to have disclaimed its inspiration for their teaching in the synagogue.²⁸ To the on-lookers who witness its outpouring at Pentecost, those ecstatic believers in Christ appear to be "filled with new wine."

CHAPTER VI

ORGANISATION OF THE COMMUNITY

THE ECCLESIA

THE members of the community at Jerusalem and elsewhere consist of baptized "believers," who are known as "disciples," "brethren," "those of the way (of life)," "the saved," "the saints."¹ In the early chapters of the Acts, Luke speaks of the community in its collective capacity as "the multitude"² or congregation of the disciples or believers. As brethren in the Lord, they seem to have regarded themselves as a fellowship or brotherhood. Whilst in two early passages³ he designates the community as "the Church" or ecclesia, it is questionable whether it so designated itself in the first years of its existence. If not, it ere long appropriated this term, and henceforth the term appears in the Acts as the current, if not the exclusive, designation of the community, at Jerusalem and elsewhere, as a corporate religious association. It had come into use comparatively early, since Paul speaks of the churches of Judæa shortly after his conversion,⁴ and it is applied by him to the communities to which he addresses his earliest Epistles. With the disruption

²⁸ Kohler, "Jewish Theology," 201 (1918). On the worship of the early community in greater detail, see A. B. MacDonald, "Worship of the New Testament Church." See also Duchesne, "Christian Worship, Origins and Evolution" (1923); Duhm, "Gottesdienst im ältesten Christenthum" (1928); Koestlin, "Geschichte des Christlichen Gottesdienstes" (1887).

¹ Acts ii. 47 (τοὺς σωζομένους); v. 14 (πιστεύοντες); vi. 1 (τῶν μαθητῶν); ix. 2 (τινας τῆς ὁδοῦ ὄντας); ix. 13 (τοὺς ἀγίους); i. 16 (ἀδελφοί), etc.

² iv. 32 (τὸ πλῆθος); vi. 2, 5; xv. 12, 30. It is misleading to say, with Rackham, that "the apostles are practically the Church" or that "the Church began with the twelve apostles" or that they are "the foundation of the Church." "Comm. on Acts," 80 f. (4th ed., 1922).

³ Acts v. 11; viii. 1 (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν).

⁴ Gal. i. 22.

from Judaism it ultimately came to mean the new, the true people of God in contradistinction from the old. It was evidently taken over from the Septuagint, in which the *ecclesia* is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew *qihāl*—the congregation of Israel as the people of God.⁵ It is so used by Stephen in his speech before the Sanhedrin, in which he speaks of the *ecclesia* or congregation of Israel in the wilderness.⁶

THE TWELVE

At first the Jerusalem community consists of about 120 souls. It recognises the Twelve as its leaders and the directors of its corporate life, and this recognition is due to the fact of their selection by Jesus and their close association with His mission. They are introduced by Luke under the title of "apostles,"⁷ and this is the distinctive title in Acts. But in the early period, as we learn from Paul,⁸ they are known as the Twelve, and even in the Acts there is a trace of this primitive designation.⁹ At the same time, the change from the Twelve to "the apostles" appears to have been early, as we also learn from Paul.¹⁰ The transition was apparently connected with their missionary preaching in Palestine and beyond, and is so connected by Paul in another passage in First Corinthians,¹¹ in which he refers to their mission work in preaching the Gospel. The title "apostle" is, however, not exclusively used of them. It includes James, the Lord's brother, Paul himself, Barnabas, and others, though the tendency of Luke, in accordance with later usage, is to limit it to the Twelve.¹²

The importance attached by the community to the Twelve as

⁵ The community preferred *ecclesia* to the term *synagogue*, the equivalent in the Septuagint for the Hebrew *edah*, the congregation of Israel in a more secular sense. The term *synagogue* is applied to the Christian community in James ii. 2, but its use for Church is rare in early Christian literature. *Ecclesia* in the Greek world denoted a sovereign assembly of free citizens (see Sohm, "Kirchenrecht," i. 16 f.). But its origin in the Christian sense lies in Judaism, not in Greek political institutions. On the origin and adoption of *Ecclesia*, see "Beginnings," iv. 53 f.; v. 387 f.; Harnack, "Law and Constitution of the Church," 15 f. (1910); Arts. "Church" and "Congregation" in Hastings' "Dict. of the Bible."

⁶ Acts vii. 38.

⁷ *Ibid.*, i. 2, 26.

⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 5.

⁹ Acts vi. 2—the only passage in which Luke applies it to them.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. xv. 7 in which, after mentioning the Twelve, he speaks of "all the apostles," and evidently includes the Twelve among the apostles in the wider sense of mission preachers.

¹¹ ix. 5.

¹² This tendency also appears in the Synoptic Gospels. See, for instance, Mark vi. 30; Matt. x. 2; Luke ix. 10. In Acts xiv. 4, 14 there is a trace of the early wider meaning of the term which is applied to Barnabas and Paul.

the intimate personal associates of Jesus is shown by the election at the outset of Matthias to fill the place of Judas. For this office personal discipleship and personal testimony ("witness") to His resurrection are the indispensable qualifications.¹³ As in the Gospels, Peter appears as their leader in the early period. But while a virtual primacy is accorded him, this primacy appears to be due to his personal aptitude for leadership, which, as in the mission of Jesus, brings him into the foreground. His primacy is purely a primacy of service, in the spirit of his Master, who had rebuked the striving for first place in the kingdom of God, and had taught them that the greatest is he that serves the most. With the exception of John, who appears as Peter's lieutenant, the others are in the Acts obscure figures. On the other hand, in the tradition preserved by Papias, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, James, Aristion and John the Elder, who were also "disciples of the Lord," appear along with Peter and John as important authorities for the teaching of Jesus.¹⁴ Their obscurity in Acts is thus not to be taken as an indication of their insignificance. Moreover, the fact, recorded by Luke, that James fell a victim to the Herodian persecution, tends to show the prominence of others of the Twelve besides Peter and John, in propaganda and leadership.

According to Luke, the distinctive function of the Twelve is that of "ministry," "oversight," "apostleship."¹⁵ Though their main business is the preaching of the Word, members of the community may participate in this function. "And they were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit and they spake the word of God with boldness."¹⁶ Inspiration is not confined to them. Its outpouring is made in and through the community, though Luke or his source shows a tendency to limit it on occasion to the "apostles," as in the episode of the gift of the Spirit by an apostolic deputation from Jerusalem in the case of Philip's Samaritan converts. All its members, being in possession of the Spirit, render service according to their capacity. Its government is conducted on what might be called the co-operative principle. The supremacy within it really resides in the Spirit of God,

¹³ Acts i. 21-22.

¹⁴ Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," III. xxxix. 4. Greek text ed. by Schwartz (1903-9). Abridged ed. or "Kleine Ausgabe" (1922). Greek text and Eng. trans. by Lake and Oulten in Loeb Class. Lib. M'Giffert's trans. in "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers," i. (1890), has ample and valuable notes.

¹⁵ Acts i. 17, 20, 25. Peter's speech on the occasion of the election of Matthias is evidently a free composition of the author (see E. Meyer, "Ursprung," iii. 139 f.), and the description of the function of the Twelve seems to reflect his own conception of it.

¹⁶ Acts iv. 31.

which works in all alike, even if the Twelve are the leaders in the work of propagating the faith and in its organised life. At the behest of Peter, "the brethren" elect a successor to Judas. The co-operation of the community again emerges in the fact that Peter and John report to it, after their first trial before the Sanhedrin.¹⁷

THE DEVELOPING MINISTRY

The organisation develops as the need of this development arises. The inspired community is not subject to a fixed and final organisation, and it is rather premature to speak, with Holl, of "a regular hierarchy, a divinely ordained order, a divine ecclesiastical law from the outset."¹⁸ What organisation there is is clearly provisional, until the sending anew of the Christ and the times of the restoration of all things, which is regarded as imminent.¹⁹ It shows distinctively Jewish features, adapted to its special character as a new sect within Judaism. The Twelve were evidently chosen by Jesus in reference to the Twelve Tribes of Israel, whose rulers and judges they are destined to become in the Messianic kingdom.²⁰ The appointment of the Seven—the next important step in organisation—seems also to have its counterpart in the officials of the synagogue appointed to receive the alms of its members.²¹ This step was due to the necessity of a division of labour in connection with the daily provision for the poor. The Twelve had evidently been unable adequately to combine "the Service of the tables," with "the ministry of the Word," and complaints arose on the score of the neglect of the widows of Hellenist believers in favour of those of the "Hebrew" or Palestinian Jews. Hence the election of the Seven, who all bear Hellenist names, and whom they set apart for this service with prayer and the laying on of hands.²²

¹⁷ Acts iv. 23.

¹⁹ Acts iii. 20-21

¹⁸ "Aufsätze," ii. 59.

²⁰ Matt. xix. 38; Luke xxii. 30.

²¹ Matt. vi. 2. See Schürer, "Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes," ii. 223 f., 498 f. (4th Auflage, 1907).

²² Acts vi. 1 f. Cadbury contends that the Hellenists here are Gentile, not Jewish, believers. "Beginnings," v. 59 f. I do not think he has proved his contention. The laying on of hands is a Jewish custom, one conveying to a person power or function, as in the consecration of a Rabbi. Jesus made use of it in His healing ministry. Peter and John similarly convey the Spirit on Philip's Samaritan converts, and Paul and Barnabas are thus consecrated at Antioch for their mission to the Gentiles. Paul conveys the Spirit in this fashion to certain Ephesian believers who had been baptized with "John's baptism" (followers of the Baptist). It is not an exclusively apostolic function, since Ananias conveys the Spirit to Saul at Damascus. On the custom, see "Beginnings," v. 137 f. It is clearly the primitive method, borrowed from Judaism, of ordination to ministerial office and is symbolic, not sacramental. Art. in Hastings' "Dictionary."

These Seven perform the function of the later deacons, though the term is not applied to them. They combine with it that of preaching the Word, and are in this respect practically on an equality with the Twelve. Were they the leaders of the Hellenist section of the community and the Twelve the leaders of the Hebrew? ²³ It is impossible definitely to say. At all events they do not appear to be subordinate to them. In this incident, as in that of the election of Matthias, we have the combination of apostolic direction with the exercise of the corporate voice of the community.

With the flight of the Hellenist believers from Jerusalem, consequent on the martyrdom of Stephen, the place of the Seven is ere long taken in the record by "the elders," ²⁴ who had either been appointed in the interval to continue their ministrations, or had come into existence with the growth of the community in connection with its house meetings. It is to these elders that Barnabas and Saul deliver the contribution of the Church of Antioch on the occasion of the famine in the reign of Claudius, probably in A.D. 45 or 46. ²⁵ Whilst in this incident their function evidently covered that of the Seven, it seems to have included the general direction of the community along with the Twelve. Both the name and the office are an adaptation from the local Jewish communities in Palestine, which were governed by a Council of elders, who also exercised jurisdiction over the synagogue. ²⁶ They maintained discipline over its members by means of excommunication and appointed the officers for the conduct of its worship. ²⁷ The eldership thus seems to be an adaptation from this source. Church and synagogue as well as temple are, in fact, found, from an early time, in close association, as the history of Stephen shows. Jesus Himself had prosecuted His mission through those of Galilee, and in continuing His mission the Christian missionaries similarly sought a hearing for their message among its members, Jews and proselytes alike. ²⁸ Henceforth, with the

²³ On this question, see "Beginnings," v. 149 f.

²⁴ Acts xi. 30.

²⁵ "Beginnings," v. 454-455. Luke (Acts xii. 1) wrongly places the famine in the reign of Herod Agrippa who died in 44. Knox would place it between 44 and 48, and thinks that it reached its height in the latter year. "St Paul and the Church of Jerusalem," 180, 187. It is noted by Josephus, "Antiq.," xx. 2, 5, but without a definite date.

²⁶ In Luke vii. 3 it is these local elders who appear in communication with Jesus in the episode of the cure of the centurion's servant.

²⁷ See Schürer, "Geschichte," ii. 223-226, 498 f., 504. It is more likely that the Christian eldership was derived from the synagogue than from the Sanhedrin, as Rackham supposes. "Comm. on Acts," 100. Elders as members of the Sanhedrin are mentioned in Acts iv. 5, etc.

²⁸ See Matt. x. 17 and the accounts of Paul's mission in Acts.

disappearance of the Twelve, in consequence of the Herodian persecution, they figure prominently in the Acts in association with James, the Lord's brother, who now appears in place of Peter as the leader of the community.²⁹ They take part in the Conference at Jerusalem on the question of the obligation of the Law for Gentile believers.³⁰ They appear later, along with James, in negotiation with Paul on his last visit to Jerusalem.³¹ There is no little force in the conclusion that their emergence, on the flight of the Twelve, marks a further development of the organisation of the community, which displaced their régime by that of a council of elders under the primacy of James, in virtue of his kinship with Jesus.³²

In addition to the elders, prophets and teachers ere long appear in the community. At Jerusalem Agabus, Silas, and Judas exercise the prophetic function of declaring by inspiration the Word of God.³³ At Antioch there are teachers, who expound the Word, as well as prophets, and among them are reckoned Barnabas and Saul.³⁴ The Christian prophet is the counterpart of the Jewish; the Christian teacher of the Jewish scribe, or Rabbi in a new sense. Prophecy had not, as is often erroneously assumed, died out in pre-Christian Judaism, as the Synoptic Gospels abundantly prove. John the Baptist is a striking example of this exercise of the gift of prophecy in the age of Jesus, and the current apocalyptic literature of the period attests its prevalence. Prophets, true and false, abounded both in Palestine and in the Diaspora,³⁵ who wandered from place to place, and appear, in some cases, to have dabbled in sorcery. They are, in fact, found outside Judaism. Like "the apostles," these Christian functionaries of this class move from one community to another.³⁶ Even the Christian apostle, in the sense of a travelling missionary like Paul and Barnabas, has his counterpart in the Jewish emissary who was sent to the Dispersion to collect contributions and maintain contact between the synagogues in the Empire and the headquarters of Judaism at Jerusalem.³⁷ With this function

²⁹ Acts xii. 17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xv. 6 f.

³¹ *Ibid.*, xxi. 20 f.

³² See Harnack, "Constitution and Law," 31 f.; Knox, "St Paul and the Church of Jerusalem," 170 f., who rather imaginatively conjectures that the elders numbered seventy on the model of the Sanhedrin, with James as president.

³³ Acts xi. 28; xv. 32.

³⁴ Mark xiii. 22; Acts xiii. 6; cf. Matt. xi. 13.

³⁵ Matt. x. 41; Acts xi. 27; xxi. 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii. 1 f.

³⁷ There is a reference to such Jewish apostles in the conversation between Paul and the Jews at Rome, Acts xxviii. 21. Their activity was known to Jesus Himself, as His reference to the Pharisees, who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, shows (Matt. xxiii. 15).

they appear further to have combined, like the Christian apostle, religious propaganda. In his journey to Damascus to counteract the Christian mission as the emissary of the high priest, Paul himself appears in the rôle of the Jewish apostle before his conversion transformed him into the apostle of the Gentiles. Moreover, in bearing the contribution of the Church of Antioch in relief of the distressed brethren at Jerusalem, and in subsequently initiating the collection for this purpose in his Gentile Churches, Paul was similarly exercising the function of the Jewish apostle.³⁸

RIGHTS OF THE COMMUNITY

With this developing organisation, the community itself continues to play a recognised part in its government. Whilst in the Gospel of Matthew the power of loosing and binding is conferred on Peter and on the Twelve, the Church exercises the right of excommunication.³⁹ Peter appears before "the apostles and the brethren" to explain and defend his action in consorting with Gentiles.⁴⁰ "The church which was at Jerusalem" sends Barnabas to Antioch to inquire into the preaching to the Greeks.⁴¹ It is associated with the apostles and the elders at the conference with Barnabas and Paul on the question of the obligation of the Gentiles to observe the Law. The decision to send deputies to Antioch with its decree is taken by all three, though the decree runs in the name of "the apostles and the elder brethren." "It seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church," etc.⁴² It is still prominent in the later part of the Acts. It welcomes Paul on his last visit to Jerusalem,⁴³ though it is to James and the elders that he makes report.

As the Mother Church, it seems to have claimed an oversight over the other newly founded communities in Palestine and elsewhere. Even Paul, who otherwise asserted so strenuously his equality, as an apostle of the Gentiles, with the Twelve and James, and his independence and that of his Churches from their interference, was fain to consult them and submit his free gospel for their approval.⁴⁴ Hence the dispatch of its emissaries to these communities, as branches of the Mother Church. Hence, in particular, in the case of the Conference on the obligation of the

³⁸ On the Jewish origin of the Christian apostolate, see Harnack, "Expansion of Christianity," i. 409 f. (Eng. trans., 1904), and "Constitution and Law," 23 f.; E. Meyer, "Ursprung," i. 265 f. (1921). Lake's arguments in refutation of this origin are not convincing. "Beginnings," v. 48 f.

³⁹ Matt. xviii. 17.

⁴⁰ Acts xi. 1 f.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xi. 22.

⁴² *Ibid.*, xv. 22.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, xxi. 17.

⁴⁴ Gal. i. 16 f.; ii. 1 f.

Law, the assumption of the right to legislate for the Churches of Syria and Cilicia.⁴⁵ At the same time, these Churches, as represented by that of Antioch, are found acting on their own initiative in promoting the mission to the Gentiles,⁴⁶ even if subsequently they so far recognise the primacy of the Jerusalem Church as to submit the question of the circumcision of Gentile converts to its judgment. Even so, Paul and Barnabas, as representatives of the Churches of the Gentile world, have a voice in its deliberations. Under Paul's auspices, these Churches ere long appear as practically independent, self-governing units.

LEADERSHIP OF JAMES

Noteworthy is the growing prominence of James, the Lord's brother, and his sole leadership after the Herodian persecution and the disappearance of the Twelve, who, from the Conference at Jerusalem onwards, no longer figure in the Acts. At the outset he was, along with his mother and brothers, only a member of the community, and it is significant of his obscurity that not he, but Matthias was chosen to make up the number of the Twelve. His rising influence is, however, traceable to an early period, although it first appears in the Acts on the outbreak of the Herodian persecution.⁴⁷ Within three years of his conversion Paul visits him as well as Peter at Jerusalem.⁴⁸ He presides over the Jerusalem Conference. He is one of the three "pillars" of the Church, and Paul mentions him before the other two, Peter and John.⁴⁹ So influential is he that Peter does not dare to disobey his emissaries and withdraws from communion with the Gentile believers at Antioch.⁵⁰ "James and the elders" take the place of the Twelve in the government of the Church. With their departure to undertake mission work elsewhere, there thus appears a marked transition in the organisation of the community. The idea of a Messianic kingdom in the spiritual sense, as Jesus himself conceived it, is superseded by that of the concrete, earthly community or Church ruled by a council of elders, of which James is the head. This primatial position he owed not only to the dispersal of the Twelve, but more particularly to his near kinship with Jesus, and this development can hardly be regarded as in unison with his mind. For Jesus, service for the kingdom in the

⁴⁵ Acts xv. 23. Holl rather overestimates the Jerusalem primacy. "Aufsätze," ii. 55 f. He thinks, in reference to the financial contributions of the Gentile Churches, that it possessed "the right of taxation" (p. 62).

⁴⁶ Acts xiii. 1 f.

⁴⁸ Gal. i. 19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, ii. 12.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, xii. 17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, ii. 9.

spiritual sense is the only warrant of supremacy. Nothing was farther from His mind than the institution of a family rule over the community which embodied it. His family opposed His mission, and in the face of this opposition He proclaimed that His true kindred were those who do the will of God.⁵¹ He came to found the kingdom, not a family dynasty or Christian caliphate, and on its final establishment the Twelve will be with Him its rulers. The introduction of this Semitic feature of family rule into the Church is thus alien to His spirit and purpose.

Some historians, following Hegesippus and Eusebius, have seen in His primatial position the origin of episcopal rule as it later developed in the Gentile Church. So later tradition believed and asserted. Eusebius even knows that he was made bishop by the apostles apparently by direction of Jesus Himself.⁵² His episcopal chair was, in fact, still to be seen at Jerusalem, and Jewish-Christian legend, not content with this distinction, made him bishop of the whole of Christendom, with Peter as his subordinate.⁵³ Whatever his personal ascendancy may have been, it is hardly correct to invest him with monarchic power, as Harnack⁵⁴ and others do, since he appears in the last glimpse we get of him in the Acts as still acting in conjunction with the elders and, presumably, with the Church. Moreover, it is erroneous to see in him the originator of the later Gentile episcopacy. He is not called a bishop in the New Testament, and the sole leadership which he ultimately exercises is not historically the origin of the Gentile episcopate. The historic episcopate is Greek, not Jewish. His leadership was due to his relationship to Jesus, as is apparent from the fact that, after his death, it passed to Symeon, another relative (cousin) of Jesus.⁵⁵ This appears to have been in accord with Oriental practice, which conferred the rule of a religious society on the oldest surviving male relative of the founder.

Under James's leadership the primitive community, in the observance of the Law, preserved its Jewish character. That, like Jesus Himself, he observed the traditional usages, is clear from the Acts. He is even regarded by a very dubious tradition

⁵¹ Mark iii. 35.

⁵² "Hist. Eccl.," ii. 1, 23; vii. 19.

⁵³ "Recognitions," i. 72; iv. 35, etc. Such traditions arose, owing to the tendency to read back later institutions into an earlier time. See M'Giffert, "Christianity in the Apostolic Age," 553 f., 605; Lindsay, "The Church and the Ministry," 120 f.

⁵⁴ "Law and Constitution," 36. Streeter describes his position as "mon-episcopal"—"Primitive Church," 73 (1929).

⁵⁵ Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 11, who says that the apostles and the surviving relatives of Jesus met and appointed him in succession to James.

as living the life of a Nazarite and performing the function of a priest in the temple.⁵⁶ A still more questionable inference is that he attributed to himself the function of high priest of the Christian community and president of the elders after the model of the Sanhedrin.⁵⁷ The community at an early stage renounces the authority of the Sanhedrin. Whilst there were priests and Levites among the early converts,⁵⁸ and these priestly converts were even numerous, their priestly character gave them no distinctive function among their fellow-believers. The Christian priesthood in the primitive community is spiritual and includes all believers.⁵⁹ In this respect there is a complete breach with Judaism. In the later Jewish-Christian sects there were no priests, but only elders and rulers of the synagogue (in the Jewish-Christian sense), the term synagogue being preferred by them to that of church.

⁵⁶ "Hist. Eccl.," ii. 23.

⁵⁷ See Harnack, "Constitution and Law," 34

⁵⁸ Acts iv. 26 ; vi. 7.

⁵⁹ 1 Peter ii. 3 ; Rev. i. 6.

PART III
THE RISE OF THE GENTILE CHURCH

CHAPTER I

PAUL AND THE GENTILE MISSION

HIS SPECIAL VOCATION

PAUL'S conversion¹ was of decisive importance in the history of the early Church. The vision of the exalted Lord near Damascus, which transformed the zealous Pharisee and persecutor into the impassioned disciple of the crucified Christ, can only be described as epoch-making. It brought into the service of the Christian mission in the Gentile world the greatest of all the early missionaries. From the outset he saw in it a divine call to preach Christ among the Gentiles.² Other missionaries—fugitives from the persecution of which he was the ringleader—had already preached it to Greeks at Antioch.³ Paul did not initiate Gentile Christianity. But he conceived it from the beginning as his special vocation to devote himself to the conversion of the Gentile world. As a Jew of the Dispersion, whose Phariseeism was to a certain extent influenced by the Greek culture of his native Tarsus, it was natural that his "call" should point in the direction of the Gentile world, though, as his early preaching in the synagogues at Damascus,⁴ and later in those of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, shows, it embraced Jews as well as Gentiles. What it meant was that his mission was to be in the wide area of the Roman Empire, of which he was a citizen, not in Palestine. In this sense he had,

¹ There is difference of opinion on the question of its date. E. Meyer places it as early as A.D. 28-30; Harnack, 30; Rackham, 32; Ramsay, 33; Lightfoot, 34; Turner, 35-36. The last seems to me the most probable. For a conjunct view of the various attempts to fix the chronology of his life, see Grieve, "Peake's Comm.," 654 f. Sir W. Ramsay has illuminated the mission by his archaeological researches. See, for instance, "St Paul the Traveller" (1895), "The Church in the Roman Empire" (1893), "The Cities of St Paul" (1907), etc. More recently the archaeological remains have been examined and recorded in the "Monumenta Asiæ Minoris Antiqua," ed. by W. M. Calder and others (1928-33). See also Deissmann, "Light from the Ancient East" (1927).

² Gal. i. 15-16; cf. Rom. xv. 15 f.

³ Acts xi. 19 f.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ix. 20.

with his conversion, found both his vocation and its sphere. It was a great conception, this world-wide mission, betokening a personality of large humanity in spite of his intense Hebraism, of dynamic force equal to an achievement so vast and daring, of surpassing intellectual and moral endowment. It lifted him above his apostolic contemporaries and justified his claim to be "no whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles" and to have laboured more than they all.⁵ Most significant, he was the first, as far as we know, to grasp and think out all the implications, for the nascent faith, of the Gentile mission, to emancipate on principle this faith from its Jewish limitations, to de Judaize the Gospel by invalidating the Law for salvation for both Jew and Gentile. This is his great contribution to the primitive Church. He not only extended the Gentile mission. He furnished the rationale of this mission as a universal religious movement, based on faith in Christ, and independent of Jewish legalism. This is the distinctive feature of the Gospel which he preached in the Gentile world,⁶ defended so uncompromisingly in the Epistle to the Galatians, after the outbreak of the controversy with his Judaizing opponents, and elaborated with more restraint in the Epistle to the Romans.

HIS DISTINCTIVE GOSPEL

Its basic principle is that justification, salvation is dependent solely on faith in Christ, not on the works of the Law. It involved alike the universality of the Christian mission, the free admission of Gentile believers into the Church apart from the observance of the Jewish Law, and their full equality, in virtue of their faith in Christ, with their Jewish fellow-believers. Faith has been the grand principle and factor of the religious life since the time of Abraham, in the promise to him and his seed of future blessing for all nations, Jews and Gentiles alike. Apart from the Old Testament teaching, thus interpreted in a Christian sense, the gift of the Spirit to all believers and the common consciousness of their sonship, independently of the old legalism, are convincing concrete evidence. An essential feature of the Gospel, as Paul conceived it, is, therefore, freedom from the old legal bondage from which Christ has set the believer free. "With freedom did Christ set us free. Stand fast, therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."⁷ To impose circumcision is to forfeit not only this freedom, but salvation, since "everyone that receiveth circumcision is a debtor to do the whole Law," which

⁵ 2 Cor. xi. 5 f., 22 f.; xii. 11 f.

⁶ Gal. i. 6 f.

⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 1.

no one can possibly do. Faith is thus the grand condition of both salvation and freedom. Thereby is formed the new creature which has died with Christ to the Law in order to live unto God "the life of faith in the Son of God who loved and gave himself for me."⁸

This Gospel of faith and freedom as well as his commission to preach it, he claims to have received from Christ. It came to him, "not from man, but through revelation of Jesus Christ."⁹ At his conversion he "conferred not with flesh and blood; but went away into Arabia"¹⁰ (Nabatæa)—apparently to think out the implications of his new faith, rather than to preach to the Nabatæans. It was only three years later that he went to Jerusalem to visit Peter and James, the Lord's brother, presumably to consult them on the tradition about Jesus. There is no doubt about the originality of his Gospel as he expounds it in refutation of his Jewish opponents. The train of thought is distinctively his own. Whether it is altogether in accord with the mind of Jesus is not so evident, in spite of his claim to direct revelation, though, as his Epistles show, he had made himself familiar with His ethical teaching. His Gospel has, indeed, an affinity with the teaching of Jesus on the supreme value of faith for the religious life, the spiritual character of the kingdom as an inward ethical reality, the free forgiveness of the repentant sinner as in the parable of the prodigal son and the Pharisee and publican, the giving of His life as a ransom, the shedding of His blood of the new covenant for many. In some of His authentic sayings salvation is open to the Gentile as well as the Jew, and the Gentile even takes the place of the Jew in the kingdom of God. His free attitude towards the Law, His antagonism to the extreme legalists in His controversy with the scribes and Pharisees seem to foreshadow the Pauline antithesis between faith and works. At the same time, Jesus' conception of the Law in itself is hardly in accordance with that of Paul. In the fulfilment of the Law in the right spirit—the doing of the commandments in reliance on God's help—not its total abrogation, lies for Him the way of salvation. Nor is faith for Him, as for Paul, necessarily antithetic to works, even in the legalist sense, as His conformity to current usage shows. In this respect Paul's claim that he received his Gospel by revelation from Christ is rather problematic. Moreover, his exposition of the Gospel in controversy with the Judaisers shows clearly the impress of his own religious thought and his rabbinic training. His conception of the Law and its function under the old dispensation does not accord with the

⁸ Gal. ii. 19 f.; v. 14 f.

⁹ *Ibid.*, i. 1, 11, 12

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, i. 16-17.

historic reality, and his rabbinic reasoning in proof of his subjective version of it is far from convincing for us as well as for his opponents. Even so, this "revelation," despite its problematic content in some respects, was of cardinal practical significance and importance for the nascent Gentile Church. It saved Gentile Christianity from the compulsory imposition of the old Jewish legalism. It made the rise of a free Gentile Church possible. Only in virtue of the recognition of the non-circumcision of Gentile believers and the wider freedom involved in this recognition, was it possible for the Gospel to expand in the Gentile world. The Church would, otherwise, have become at most a sickly appendage of Diaspora Judaism. By invalidating the Law for salvation and thus dejudaising the Gospel, Paul is the "master-builder" of Gentile Christianity.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFLICT OVER THE LAW

THE CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM

THE representation of the Law as not only unnecessary but as an obstacle to salvation for both Jew and Gentile, the virtual severance of the Gospel from Judaism, was both daring and challenging. It inevitably led to bitter and prolonged conflict between Paul and his conservative fellow-believers of Palestine and of the Jewish Dispersion. This section had exceptionally recognised the extension of the mission to Gentiles at Cæsarea and Antioch and fellowship with them. It was not prepared to sanction the Pauline abrogation of the Law as incompatible with the Gospel, in virtue of the principle of justification by faith and not by works. It insisted on the necessity of its observance for salvation and actively opposed the preaching of a free, unconditional Gospel as an unwarranted and latitudinarian innovation. Its leaders at Jerusalem belonged to the Pharisaic section of the Church¹ and set themselves, with characteristic Pharisaic zeal, to counteract this latitudinarian Gospel in the Gentile world. They assumed the right to an oversight of the Gentile mission² as prosecuted by Paul and Barnabas, though, according to Paul, they exercised it in an underhand way. After the first mission tour in Asia Minor, they came down to Antioch "privily to spy

¹ Acts xv. 5.

² *Ibid.*, xv. 1.

out our liberty which we have in Jesus Christ, that they might bring us unto bondage.”³ Their intrusion led to heated discussion in the Church at Antioch in which Paul strenuously defended “the truth of the Gospel.”⁴ As a result of the debate, the Antioch community deputed Paul and Barnabas, with certain other brethren (including Titus), to lay the question before the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.⁵ Hence the Conference, of which we have a detailed account in Acts xv. and which is erroneously described as the Council of the Apostles. In reality it was a deliberation between the Church of Antioch, through its representatives, and that of Jerusalem, which assembled for this purpose in its corporate capacity, though the leading part is taken by “the apostles and the elders,”⁶ and particularly Peter and James. In the Epistle to the Galatians Paul represents the deliberation as a private negotiation between the three chief apostles, James, Peter, and John and himself and Barnabas on the question of circumcision. This version of the Conference has led some critics to doubt or deny its identification with that of the assembly described in Acts xv., and to refer the negotiation, as described by Paul, to his visit at an earlier time with Barnabas as bearers of the contribution of the Church of Antioch on the occasion of the famine in the reign of Claudius (*c.* A.D. 46).⁷ This conclusion is very questionable and is, besides, unnecessary. Paul’s account is obviously not meant to be a full one. It is not a formal and detailed report of the proceedings of the Conference, but a rapid sketch suitable to his purpose of proving to the Galatians his independence as an apostle and vindi-

³ Gal. ii. 4, *παρεισῆλθον κατασκοπήσαι*. The word implies oversight.

⁴ Gal. ii. 5; Acts xv. 2

⁵ The date is uncertain. In Gal. i. 18 Paul says that he visited Jerusalem for the first time after his conversion three years after this event. In ii. 1 he says that fourteen years later he paid another visit (not necessarily the second, which according to Acts xi. 30 was on the occasion of the famine contribution made by the Church at Antioch). It is not certain whether he means that this visit took place fourteen years after the three years mentioned in i. 18. The natural inference is in favour of the latter conclusion, *i.e.*, seventeen years after his conversion. Supposing his conversion took place towards the end of 35, and making allowance for the probability that the figures three and fourteen are not definite numbers, we get an interval of, say, fifteen years from his conversion, which would place the Conference about 49 or 50. Meyer would date it 44, on the assumption that his conversion took place in 28 or 29 and that the crucifixion took place in 27. “Ursprung,” iii. 169 f. This seems too early.

⁶ Acts xv. 4, 6 f., 22.

⁷ Acts xi. 27 f. For instance Emmet, “Beginnings of Christ.,” ii. 277, and “Comm. on Galatians”; Ramsay, “St Paul,” 54 f., 152 f.; Duncan, “Epistle to Galatians,” Introd. 22 (1934); Blunt, “Acts,” 197 f. (1926). Cf. Loisy, “Naiss. du Christ.,” 178 f., and Windisch, “Beginnings,” ii. 328. Against this inference, Meyer, “Ursprung,” iii. 178 f.; Peake, “Comm.,” 790, and others.

cating his Gospel against his judaizing opponents. The private negotiation with the chief apostles which he emphasises does not exclude a public and more formal deliberation. For the purpose of the Epistle to the Galatians, it was sufficient to show the apostolic approval of the free Gentile mission—"the Gospel of the uncircumcision"—equally with "the Gospel of the circumcision." Hence the omission in this hastily and excitedly written missive of the details of the public discussion, as related in Acts xv., and the emphasis on the recognition of the right, which he claimed, in virtue of revelation, to evangelise the Gentiles without the imposition of circumcision and the legalism which this implied. "And when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John—they who were reputed to be pillars—gave unto me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship that we should go unto the Gentiles and they unto the circumcision."⁸ The only stipulation made in this private negotiation was that "we should remember the poor" of the Jerusalem Church, and appeal to the liberality of their Gentile brethren on their behalf.

The private recognition of Gentile immunity from circumcision agrees with that formally accorded as the result of the public deliberation. In this deliberation Peter and James appear as the leading speakers. On the ground of the evident efficacy of the free Gentile mission, which Paul and Barnabas rehearsed to the assembly, as they had done in private, they advocated and carried its recognition by the Conference. To this proposal "the apostles and elders with the whole Church" agreed and decreed accordingly. They further resolved to send deputies to make known their decision to "the brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia."⁹

In the text of the decree as given in Acts, the public decision restricts Gentile liberty in respect of things sacrificed to idols, the use of meats not permitted by the Jewish Law, and fornication.¹⁰ It was thus of the nature of a compromise, in

⁸ Gal. ii. 9.

⁹ Acts xv. 22 f.

¹⁰ Acts xv. 29. In addition to things sacrificed to idols the received text explicitly prohibits the use by the Gentiles of "blood and things strangled," *i.e.*, the drinking of the blood of slain animals and the eating of flesh that has been strangled. It thus imposes on the Gentiles the Jewish ceremonial Law regulating the use of certain meats. In a later and variant text only "blood" is prohibited, and "things strangled" are omitted. Harnack and others argue that this text, not the received one, was the original and that the word "blood" means murder ("Acts of the Apostles," 248 f., Eng. trans., 1909). This would make the decree prohibit only murder and fornication in addition to things sacrificed to idols, and thus the Gentiles were not brought under any obligation to observe the Jewish ceremonial Law. It is, however, very questionable whether this, and not the received text in Acts, was the original one. (See, for instance, Meyer, "Ursprung," iii. 186 f., and Windisch, "Beginnings," ii. 324 f.) It

deference to the scruples of the stricter Jewish Christians. The decree did not go the length of granting complete freedom from the Law to the Gentiles. But the waiving of circumcision, which in both the Epistle to the Galatians and the Acts appears as the vital issue, removed the main obstacle to the success of the Gentile mission. With this cardinal concession Paul was fain to be satisfied. He had no reason to quarrel with the prescription against Gentile idolatry and immorality which he unsparingly denounces in his mission preaching. Whilst he regarded eating of meats prohibited by the Law as a thing indifferent, he was willing, as the Epistles to the Corinthians and Romans show, to counsel his Gentile converts to take account of the scruples of their weaker Jewish brethren and abstain from the indiscriminate use of meats for their sake. In so doing, he was prepared, for reasons of expediency at least, to abide by the provisions of the decree,¹¹ if from the religious point of view he did not regard himself or his converts as absolutely bound by such ceremonial prescriptions.

PERSISTENCE OF THE JUDAISERS

With this comparatively liberal policy the conservative party, though fain to comply for the time being, was by no means satisfied. Even James, whilst waiving the demand for circumcision, retained scruples on the score of the free fellowship of Jewish and Gentile believers. He evidently sought to maintain the principle of their separation within the community. At all events, as we learn from Paul, his emissaries ere long appeared at Antioch to forbid their unrestricted communion. So great was his authority that Peter and even Barnabas, to Paul's bitter chagrin, refrained from "eating with the Gentiles." Their relapse led to an open, if temporary, rupture between him and them, and called forth an outspoken rebuke of their weak and illogical perversion of the Gospel.¹²

Those emissaries appear to have started from Antioch a counter-mission in Galatia, which the Epistle to the Galatians was written to counteract. Judaisers are found, too, fomenting faction and strife at Corinth. The party "of Christ" seems to

seems, therefore, that the Jerusalem Church did limit Gentile freedom by compliance with the Jewish ceremonial Law in the use of forbidden meats. It is hardly likely that the Judaisers would have waived entirely the ceremonial Law in favour of the Gentiles.

¹¹ In Acts xvi. 4 he delivers the decree to his Galatian Churches. In xxi. 25, however, James is found informing him about the decree, of which he seems ignorant. This passage is regarded by a number of critics as an interpolation. Preuschen, for instance, "Handbuch zum N.T.," iv., Pt. I., 127 (1912).

¹² Gal. ii. 11 f.

have consisted of those in the Corinthian Church who appealed against his Gospel to the teaching of Jesus on the Law, and pitted this teaching against his rabbinic reasoning in its exposition and defence. That of "Cephas," if not so radical in its opposition, professed to follow Peter's leadership in preference to his.¹³ Hence the very severe letter to the Corinthians with which he dispatched Titus from Ephesus against these subverters of a free Gospel and slanderers of his person.¹⁴ These factious leaders are ministers of the old covenant, not of the new, of the letter which killeth, not of the Spirit which giveth life. Their vision is veiled like that of Moses at the promulgation of the Law, so that they cannot perceive that liberty prevails where the Spirit of the Lord is, and that this veil is done away in Christ.¹⁵ They "preach another Jesus whom we did not preach," "a different Gospel" from His. They are "false apostles," "deceitful workers," and impugn His claim to equal apostolic rank with the Twelve.¹⁶ Evidently His Gospel was in some jeopardy at Corinth from these Judaisers who are not Gentiles but Hebrews, and plume themselves on their racial as well as their religious superiority.¹⁷ Similarly in the Epistle to the Romans there are those who "cause divisions and occasions of stumbling," contrary to the true Pauline doctrine,¹⁸ whilst in Palestine, whither he is on the eve of journeying, he has still to reckon with his old opponents.¹⁹ This opposition appears very active even towards the close of his life, as we learn from the Epistle to the Philippians.²⁰ Against these he claims that the true circumcision is to be found in the Gentile Church—the Christian Israel which has displaced the old Israel. "We are the (spiritual) circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."²¹ As the true Israel, the Gentiles have taken the place of God's ancient people, and there is now in Christ no distinction between Jew and Gentile.²² Despite these traces of protracted Judaising propaganda, his claim was substantially true, even if some of his rabbinic arguments in support of Gentile freedom from the Law are not historically valid, and must have seemed to his opponents, as they do to the modern reader, somewhat sophistical. As will later appear, he had won in the conflict over the Law. He had permanently emancipated Gentile Christianity from Judaism, if not from the legalist spirit.

¹³ 1 Cor. i. 12 f.

¹⁴ 2 Cor. ii. 4 f.; cf. vii. 5, 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, iii. 3 f.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xi. 4 f.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, xi. 22.

¹⁸ Rom. xvi. 17 f.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xv. 31.

²⁰ Phil. i. 15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, iii. 3; cf. Col. ii. 11.

²² Rom. ix. 30 f.; x. 12.

CHAPTER III

THE PAULINE MISSION IN OUTLINE

EARLIER MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

PAUL was not the originator of the Gentile mission. Other Jewish-Hellenist believers had started it before his conversion. But he fought and won the battle of Gentile freedom from the Law and thus made the extension of the mission possible.

He may have begun his mission in Arabia (Nabatæa), to which, on his own testimony, he retired immediately after his conversion. More probably the purpose of his retirement was to meditate in solitude on the vision experience that had suddenly transformed him into a believer in Jesus the Christ. One thinks of the retirement of Jesus Himself into the wilderness after the similar experience on the bank of the Jordan. He himself avers that the call to evangelise came to him with this experience,¹ though he does not actually mention the vision as recorded in Acts. In any case he must have felt the need to think out the implications of his call as the Apostle of the Gentiles. If the call came suddenly, the free Gospel which he was to proclaim in the Gentile world was, we may assume, not the fruit of sudden inspiration, but of protracted and intense thought. On his return from Nabatæa he began his mission in Damascus and continued it for the greater part of three years.² It was so effective that the Jews, in conjunction with the representative of Aretas, the Nabatæan king, plotted his destruction. From this fate he escaped by night through the window of a house abutting the city wall.³ From Damascus he proceeded to Jerusalem to visit Peter and James, the Lord's brother. He represents the visit as a private one, and is positive that he saw no one else and was at this time still unknown to the Churches of Judæa.⁴ Luke, on the other hand, says that he was introduced to "the apostles" by Barnabas, who informs them of his preaching at Damascus. He even preaches in the city and disputes with the Hellenist Jews, who, like those of Damascus, plot against his life. From this danger he is saved by the brethren, who conduct him to Cæsarea, whence he goes to Tarsus.⁵ In view of this glaring discrepancy in the two accounts, either Paul's memory, after the lapse of the lengthy interval before

¹ Gal. i. 16.

² Gal. i. 17-18. Luke indefinitely says "many days" (Acts ix. 23).

³ 2 Cor. xi. 32-33; Acts ix. 23 f.

⁴ Gal. i. 18 f.

⁵ Acts ix. 26 f.

the composition of the Epistle to the Galatians, must have been at fault, or the account in Acts is a confused and inaccurate version of this first Jerusalem visit. The sketch in Galatians of his early career as an apostle is slight and hasty, and in the excited, controversial mood of the moment he may have overlooked the fact of this early preaching at Jerusalem, which he seems to recall in the Epistle to the Romans, where he speaks of preaching the Gospel "from Jerusalem and round about even unto Illyricum."⁶ Moreover, in 1 Thess. ii. 15, in which he speaks of being driven out of Judæa, he seems to confirm Luke's averment of the hostility of the Jews on his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion.

From Tarsus he appears to have devoted himself to mission preaching in "the regions of Syria and Cilicia"⁷ for a number of years, until he was fetched by Barnabas to Antioch, where he spent a whole year as teacher of the Church. At the end of it he paid his second visit to Jerusalem to bring its contribution in relief of the famine-stricken brethren in Judæa (c. A.D. 46).⁸ From Antioch he was deputed by the Church, along with Barnabas, and attended by John Mark as far as Perga in Pamphylia, to undertake what is usually called his first missionary journey, but what is more correctly his first journey in the interior of Asia Minor. The journey embraced Cyprus, Pamphylia, and South Galatia, and resulted, in spite of opposition and persecution, mainly on the part of the Jews, in the founding of Churches at Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.⁹ It probably occupied about two years, and may be approximately dated A.D. 47-49. From the outset we observe the method invariably followed by the missionary. He does not linger in Pamphylia, but makes for the centres of Roman military occupation and of commerce in the interior, which were connected by military roads and in which Jewish colonies resided and the common Greek was spoken. These advantages directed the course of his missionary activity from beginning to end. He chooses the cities and their environment in preference to the country, where the native population was more backward and far less familiar with the common Greek. "Where Roman government and Greek thought have gone," says Ramsay, "there Paul by preference goes."¹⁰

⁶ Rom. xv. 19.

⁷ Gal. i. 21.

⁸ Acts xi. 25 f.

⁹ Acts xiii. and xiv. Ramsay tries to extract some details from the Acts of Paul and Thecla. "Church in the Roman Empire."

¹⁰ "The Church in the Roman Empire," 59. In the case of Antioch Luke mentions that the word of the Lord spread throughout "all the region," of which it was the capital. On the extent of the district so designated, see Ramsay, "St Paul," 102 f.

MACEDONIA AND GREECE

It proved to be the first stage of what was evidently a definite policy of the evangelisation of the Gentiles by carrying the Gospel westwards into Asia Minor and beyond. "The Roman Empire for Christ" was the thought behind this extension of the mission. This was for Paul the issue at the Conference of Jerusalem which followed this first journey, and the decision of the Conference in favour of "the Gospel of the uncircumcision" made the extension possible. Hence the second journey with Silas and, from Lystra, Timothy, through Syria, Cilicia, and South Galatia "in confirmation of the churches" in these regions.¹¹ Its ultimate objective was clearly the province of Asia.¹² From this objective the missionaries were deflected, by an inward monition, northwards towards Bithynia, and then, by another change of plan, westwards to Troas. Evidently the prospect of further effort in Asia Minor was not, for the present, encouraging, owing, perhaps, to Jewish hostility, and it was only at Troas that the uncertainty came to an end. Here another momentous vision directed Paul to cross over to Europe (Macedonia). The cry in the vision of the man of Macedonia, "Come over and help us," and the landing at Neapolis on the western shore of the Ægean are of far-reaching importance. Though the Greek civilisation on both sides of the Ægean was the same, the farther Christianity moved from its Oriental environment, the more apparent became its character and destiny as a universal religion. The founding of the Gentile Christian community in the Roman colony of Philippi, which followed, was not the first outpost of Christianity in the West. In Rome there was already a community, which probably owed its existence to Jewish pilgrims who had been converted at Jerusalem. But it was the first of whose foundation we have an exact account by the Diarist who accompanied Paul and his companions from Troas and tells of the conversion of "the God-fearing" Gentile, Lydia and her household—the nucleus of the great Philippian Church—and whose testimony as a witness of the Pauline mission adds so much to the historical value of the later portion of the Acts.

In Macedonia, as in South Galatia, the opposition to their preaching, which drove them onwards along the great Roman road running westwards from Neapolis on the Ægean to Dyrachium on the Adriatic, led to the foundation of Churches at Thessalonica and Berea, and the extension of the mission to

¹¹ Acts xv. 36 f. ; xvi. 1 f.

¹² *Ibid.*, xvi. 6.

Achaia (Greece). Whilst at Thessalonica, the great commercial centre of Macedonia, the Jews forced their retirement by bringing against them the dangerous charge of treason to the Emperor, those of Beroë accorded them a remarkably favourable reception. At Athens, where the Gospel was brought face to face with Greek philosophy, there was indifference or critical superciliousness rather than opposition, and the number of converts was few. On the other hand, at Corinth, where he spent eighteen months, he met with a remarkable response, in spite of the luxury and immorality which made the great commercial centre of Achaia a byword for licentious living.¹³ His Epistles to the Corinthians amply confirm the statement of Luke that he left a vigorous Gentile-Christian community on his departure by sea, via Ephesus, to Cæsarea, and thence to Antioch.¹⁴ The importance of this second missionary tour, which seems to have lasted two years (c. 50-52), lies in the planting of a number of Christian communities on the European mainland from which the Gospel could spread, through the missionary activity of his more notable converts, over a wider area than that covered by the apostle himself. Among these notable converts who continued the mission the Epistles mention Epaphroditus at Philippi, Aristarchus and Jason at Thessalonica, Stephanas and others at Corinth.

EPHESUS

At Ephesus he had left Aquila and Priscilla, exiled believers from Rome and his staunch abettors at Corinth, to prepare the way for his return. Ephesus, the metropolis of the province of Asia on the Ægean seaboard, is accordingly the objective of the third missionary journey through "the region of Galatia and Phrygia." It was the most important centre of the most important province of Asia Minor, and here he made his longest sojourn in any one city during these journeys. It lasted three years¹⁵ and was much more eventful than appears in Acts. He began his mission by rebaptizing a number of the disciples of John the Baptist "into the name of the Lord Jesus." He preached in the synagogue for three months and aroused the usual antagonism. Thereafter he transferred his public ministry to the lecture room of Tyrannus and also privately taught "from house to house."¹⁶ His preaching was so effective that at the end of two years it had materially diminished the trade of the silversmiths who made "shrines" in honour of the Great Mother—the nature goddess

¹³ Κορινθιάζειν, "to live like a Corinthian," i.e., a vicious life.

¹⁴ Acts xvi.-xviii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xx. 31.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xx. 20.

worshipped under the name of Artemis at Ephesus and throughout Asia Minor. Moreover, the mission had been extended throughout the greater part of the province by his converts, or his associates,¹⁷ such as Epaphras and Philemon, Gaius and Aristarchus, Timothy, Erastus, and Titus.¹⁸ We hear of Churches at Colossæ, Laodicea, Hierapolis in the Lycus Valley,¹⁹ and it is highly probable that, besides Ephesus and Laodicea, the other five²⁰ of the seven Churches addressed in the Book of Revelation were among the fruits of this Ephesian ministry. It was interrupted by a visit to Corinth to assert his authority against the factious opposition of the Judaisers,²¹ and was brought to a dramatic close by the riot engineered by the guild of silversmiths. From the Epistles we further learn that this violent outburst was not the only one. During these three years he appears, in fact, to have been repeatedly exposed to maltreatment and to have been imprisoned and in imminent danger of death. Of these tragic details we hear nothing in the all too optimistic account in Acts.

From Ephesus he proceeded to Troas, where he found "an open door for the Gospel,"²² and thence crossed the Ægean a second time to Macedonia to organise the collection for the Jerusalem Church. On this occasion he appears to have undertaken a mission to Illyricum²³ and Epirus on the Adriatic seaboard (Nicopolis).²⁴ From Corinth, where he spent three months, he may have paid a short visit with Titus to Crete.²⁵ From Corinth, too, he wrote the Epistle to the Romans in which he announces his plan to visit Rome on his way to proclaim the Gospel in Spain.²⁶ This culmination of the Gentile mission from east to west, which he had long cherished, was destined to be only partially realised. He was only to reach Rome as "an ambassador in chains," whilst the projected mission to Spain was probably not realised. Already on the journey from Corinth to Jerusalem by way of Macedonia and thence by sea to Ptolemais (the modern Acre) he had a foreboding of "the bonds and afflictions" in store for him.²⁷ From

¹⁷ Acts xix. 26.

¹⁸ Col. i. 7; iv. 2; Philem., 1 f.; Acts xix. 29; 2 Cor. ii. 13, etc.; Acts xix. 22.

¹⁹ Col. iv. 13 f.

²⁰ Sardis, Thyatira, Philadelphia, Smyrna, Pergamum.

²¹ 2 Cor. ii. 1; cf. xii. 14 and 1 Cor. iv. 19.

²² 2 Cor. ii. 12.

²³ Rom. xv. 19.

²⁴ Titus iii. 12.

²⁵ On the assumption that the biographical details incorporated by the author of the Epistle to Titus are authentic.

²⁶ Rom. i. 10 f.; xv. 24; cf. Acts xix. 21.

²⁷ Acts xx. 23.

the commencement of his mission at Ephesus to his arrival at Jerusalem a period of fully four years had elapsed (c. 53-57).

ROME

His arrest at Jerusalem by the commander of the Roman garrison as the result of a hostile demonstration by an infuriated Jewish mob was the prelude to the long imprisonment first at Cæsarea, and then, in consequence of his appeal to Cæsar, at Rome, which put an end to his active missionary career. The conclusion of the narrative in Acts, which briefly states that he was allowed for two years to "preach the kingdom of God" to his visitors, leaves us in doubt as to the issue of his appeal to Cæsar. In the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon he is still in prison and expresses the hope of liberation and his intention of visiting them.²⁸ In a biographical section incorporated in the Second Epistle to Timothy,²⁹ he is facing death and has abandoned the hope of release which his "first defence, or preliminary hearing," had inspired.³⁰ One set of critics assumes that the confidence of Philippians and Philemon was realised, and that in consequence of his acquittal and release, he carried out his plan of evangelising in Spain and also undertook a mission in Achaia, Macedonia, Asia, and Crete, which ended at Nicopolis in Epirus.³¹ Thereupon followed a new arrest, imprisonment, and the second trial, referred to in 2nd Timothy, which resulted in his execution. This assumption is by no means convincing.³² It is almost incredible that, if he was acquitted and released after the expiry of two years, the writer of Acts should have ignored a fact so pat to his purpose of showing the favourable attitude of the Roman Government towards Christianity in the lifetime of the

²⁸ Phil. i. 25; Philem. 22. See also Col. iv. 3, 18, where he is still a prisoner. Some critics would assign Philippians and Philemon to a previous imprisonment either at Ephesus or Cæsarea. For Ephesus, see Duncan, "St Paul's Ephesian Ministry" (1929). This view has not been widely accepted.

²⁹ 2 Tim. iv. 6 f.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, iv. 16 f.

³¹ Titus iii. 12.

³² His supposed release and continued missionary activity, and his subsequent martyrdom are first related by Eusebius in the early part of the fourth century. "Hist. Eccl.," ii. 22. For a recent discussion of this belief, see Cadbury, who inclines to favour the assumption of a first acquittal, followed by a second trial and conviction. "Beginnings," v. 312 f. Pfister thinks that the conclusion of Acts related the trial and death of Paul, but that it was later suppressed in favour of the legendary story in the Acts of Peter (see James, "Apoc. N.T.," 304 f.) that he was released and went to Spain from Rome. This is rather an arbitrary solution of the problem. For a detailed account of it, see "Beginnings," v. 336 f. Parry's contention that the statement in Acts xxviii. 30, "he stayed (*ἐπέμειπεν*) in his own hired house two whole years," implies that he was released and then left Rome, is rather forced. "Pastoral Epistles," Introd., 15 (1920).

apostle.³³ Ramsay's assumption that he omitted to do so because he intended to write a continuation of Acts, rests on no real evidence and is only a plausible conjecture to meet a formidable objection. The evidence for the mission to Spain, which is adduced as proof of his release and continued missionary activity, rests only on the vague rhetorical statement of Clement of Rome, about the end of the first century, that "he came to the bounds of the West."³⁴ It is, moreover, quite possible to fit the supposed mission of Paul in the East, after his assumed release, into the period before the final journey to Jerusalem, which led to his arrest. Accordingly another set of critics reject the theory of a first trial and acquittal, and conclude, with no little force, that his missionary career was terminated by his conviction and execution shortly after the expiry of the two years mentioned at the close of Acts. On the other hand, if he was still in prison awaiting trial when the persecution under Nero broke out (A.D. 64), he would almost certainly be one of its victims.³⁵ The exact date of his death, which depends on that of his arrival at Rome, is difficult to determine. Some historians would place his arrival as early as 58; others, with greater probability, in 61 or 62. In the one case his martyrdom would fall round about the year 60; in the other 63 or 64.

CHAPTER IV

FEATURES OF THE MISSION

HIS PREACHING TO HELLENIST JEWS

THOUGH Paul's specific vocation in the Epistles is that of the apostle of the Gentiles, his mission was not confined to them. He aimed at the conversion of his fellow-Jews of the Diaspora as well. Like Jesus, he prosecutes his mission through the synagogue. In the worship of the synagogue Gentile proselytes (those who

³³ Harnack argues that he did not mention the trial because he finished the book before it took place. This, if the case, would explain why he ignores the trial. But the date fixed by Harnack, A.D. 63, seems too early for the composition of Acts, and the argument is therefore questionable. "Neue Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte." The early date is accepted by Rackham, *Jour. of Theol. Studies* (1900), 76 f., and Clark, "Acts of the Apostles," 389 f. (1933).

³⁴ Epistle to the Corinthians, v.; ἐπὶ τὸ πέρας τῆς δόσεως ἐλθὼν. A journey to Spain is first definitely mentioned in the Muratorian Fragment, late second century. It is given by Milligan, "New Testament Documents," 286 f. (1913).

³⁵ This seems inferable from the reference of Clement of Rome to the martyrdom of Peter and Paul.

accepted circumcision) and non-circumcised Gentile "God fearers" participated, and in these mixed audiences he could best realise his twofold purpose of proclaiming the Gospel to both Jew and Gentile.¹ Whilst in the understanding with the chief apostles at Jerusalem he is to go to "the uncircumcision," and Peter to "the circumcision," he evidently assumed that it did not preclude him from preaching in the synagogues of the Diaspora. Accordingly in Acts he everywhere begins his mission in the synagogue, and only when his message is rejected, as it almost invariably is by the majority of his fellow-Jews, does he turn to pagan Gentiles outside it.²

At the outset Luke reports at length his address in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, which is evidently meant to be a sample of his preaching to those mixed audiences throughout his missionary activity. Its content is largely akin to that of Peter in the early period at Jerusalem. Like him, he seeks to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ and appeals to prophecy in proof of this contention. The prophets have foretold His birth of the seed of David, His death, and His resurrection, of which His disciples were "witnesses." In this respect the discourse is simply an amplification of the primitive tradition, which Paul briefly summarises in the First Epistle to the Corinthians.³ In Him God has fulfilled His promise of salvation to Israel. Remission of sin is now available to those who believe in Him, whilst unbelievers are warned of the peril, also foretold by the prophets, of their unbelief.⁴ The only addition is the Pauline doctrine of justification which the reporter has not rightly apprehended.⁵ Whilst many of the Jews and the Gentile hearers are favourably impressed, the majority of the former prove hostile on the following Sabbath and definitely reject the Gospel. With a denunciation of the coming judgment against these gainsayers of his message, Paul declares his determination to turn to the Gentiles. The antagonism of the majority is, nevertheless, not surprising. According to Acts, they saw in the free Pauline Gospel a danger to the Jewish propaganda in the Gentile world. A Gospel which abolished the obligation of the Law for Gentile converts would inevitably lure many of the Gentile "God fearers" from Judaism to Christianity. More-

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 20 f.

² Acts xiii. 46; xviii. 6. In these passages Luke does not seem to imply that the Gentile mission is only secondary—merely the result of the rejection of the Gospel by the Jews. In xiii. 46 Paul only expresses his intention of *first* preaching the Word to them, not that it was no part of his plan to evangelise the Gentiles.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 3 f.

⁴ Acts xiii. 17 f.; cf. xvii. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, xiii. 39.

over, his negative conception of the Law, his insistence on the invalidity, in virtue of the doctrine of justification by faith, of its observance for salvation, could not but arouse dissent and protest even in the liberal atmosphere of the Dispersion. These Hellenist Jews, in virtue of their close association with their Gentile neighbours, might be less rigorous in their observance of the Law. But they were not prepared to admit its abrogation for salvation or forego the religious privileges which its possession conferred, and accept the doctrine of the absolute equality, in God's sight, of Jew and Gentile.⁶ It was the Hellenist Jews at Jerusalem who had instigated the martyrdom of the liberal-minded Stephen, and it is not surprising that those of the Dispersion resented and resisted the more revolutionary teaching of Paul, despite the fact that he was ready, on occasion, to conciliate them, as the circumcision of the semi-Gentile Timothy at Lystra shows.⁷ Hence the active opposition of the large majority throughout the Gentile world. Not only do they everywhere, with one exception—that of the Jews of Berea in Macedonia—reject his Gospel. They repeatedly plot his destruction and excite the populace against him. His mission to the Hellenist Jews was thus largely ineffective. On the other hand, it appears to have found a favourable response among the Gentile "God fearers" of both sexes, and the writer of Acts specially notes the readiness of the "God-fearing women" to accept the Gospel.⁸ These "God fearers," in fact, form the nucleus of most of the Churches founded by him in the course of the Gentile mission.

HIS PREACHING TO THE GENTILES

These "God fearers" who frequented the synagogues were familiar with the Hebrew religion, which, in this respect, proved so valuable an adjunct of the Gentile mission. It was different in the case of the pagan Gentiles, and therefore Paul's preaching outside the synagogue differs, in some respects, from that within it. It takes the form of an appeal on behalf of monotheism against the current polytheism, and a demonstration of the error and sinfulness of idolatry. Of this type the Acts contain two samples—the discourse to the populace at Lystra, and that to the philosophers at Athens.⁹ Whilst they appear to reflect the current Jewish propaganda in the Gentile world, they probably embody the gist of Paul's appeal to pagan Gentiles, since, as a Hellenist Jew, he would be familiar with this propaganda. At

⁶ Rom. ii. 9-11.

⁷ Acts xvi. 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, xvi. 15; xvii. 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, xiv. 15 f.; xvii. 22 f.

Lystra he proclaims to the idolatrous populace, who would fain offer sacrifice to him and Barnabas as Mercury and Jupiter, the living God, the Creator, to whose existence nature bears witness. To the philosophers of Athens he expatiates, in addition, on the oneness and spirituality of God and His immanence in the soul, which, like the whole creation, derives its being from Him, as even some of their own poets have taught.¹⁰ Hence the perversity of the polytheistic conception of the Deity in a material sense and the worship of these idols in gold, silver, or stone. Hence also the necessity of repentance in view of the day of judgment by the Man whom God has ordained to be the Judge of the world and whom, in proof thereof, He has raised from the dead.¹¹

Jewish monotheism, combined with the Christian proclamation of repentance and salvation from judgment through Jesus, attested by the resurrection to be the divinely ordained Judge and the Deliverer from judgment—this is also the distinctive feature of Paul's preaching to the Gentiles as reflected in the Epistles. He reproachfully reminds the Galatians, who had come to know God in His true being, but are combining the worship of the astral powers with that of Christ, that they have turned back to their former "bondage to them which are by nature no gods."¹² He thanks God, on the other hand, that the Thessalonians have remained steadfast in their renunciation of idolatry and their adhesion to the faith, as he had taught them on "his entering in among them." "How ye turned unto God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come."¹³ To the Corinthians he emphasises, in contrast and opposition to the current polytheism, the conception of the one God in combination with the one Lord, Jesus Christ, His agent in creation and redemption.

¹⁰ On the quotations from Aratus and Epimenides, see "Beginnings," v. 246 f.

¹¹ Acts xiv. 11 f.; xvii. 22 f. Norden contends that the discourse at Athens is a typical sample of the current Jewish-Hellenist propaganda on behalf of monotheism in which Old Testament teaching was blended with the Stoic philosophy (as in the Wisdom of Solomon, for instance). Luke has merely put this current plea for Jewish monotheism in the mouth of Paul. "Agnostos Theos," 124 f. This is too sweeping a conclusion. Paul was quite capable of thus addressing the philosophers, even if he borrowed the main content of the address from Jewish-Hellenist sources, and the address well fits the situation. M'Giffert ("Christianity in the Apostolic Age") and Harnack ("Expansion of Christianity," i. 475 f.) regard the address and the scene as genuine. Bacon, ("Story of St Paul," 163 f.) accepts the speech as genuine, whilst denying the historicity of the scene.

¹² Gal. iv. 6 f.

¹³ 1 Thess. i. 9, 10.

"We know that no idol is anything in the world and that there is no god but one."¹⁴ In the Epistle to the Romans he similarly emphasises the witness of creation to "the everlasting power and divinity" of the one God, whom the Gentiles have dishonoured by their senseless and inexcusable idolatry, and denounces the divine wrath against the worship of the creature rather than the Creator. For him, as for Plato, the visible is but the shadow of the invisible. He further appeals to conscience, the natural law implanted in the human soul, in addition to the Mosaic Law, in proof of the divine retribution of their idolatry and its concomitant moral depravity at the day of judgment through Jesus Christ "according to my Gospel."¹⁵

ITS DYNAMIC CHARACTER

It is a dynamic movement that Paul thus launches on the Gentile world. Of this aspect of the movement Acts conveys only an inadequate impression, though the writer notes generally the operation of the Spirit throughout it. For the electric effect of his preaching on his converts we must turn to the Epistles. He regards himself as the ambassador of Christ to the Roman Empire. To him and his fellow-missionaries God has committed "the ministry of reconciliation." He and they speak as the mouthpiece of God or the Spirit of God—"as though God were entreating you by us, Be ye reconciled unto God."¹⁶ The efficacy of the mission depends not on man or the wisdom of man, but on the power and the wisdom of God in Christ.¹⁷ The movement of which Paul is the leader is a supernatural one. He has derived both his Gospel and his mission from God in Christ and to God or the Spirit of God, which he equates with the Spirit of Christ, the efficacy of both is due. "Our sufficiency is from God."¹⁸ "The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds."¹⁹ Though his own emotional temperament, his alert and resourceful intellect, his strong-willed and masterful personality are distinctively reflected in his mission preaching, the secret of it lies, as in the case of the prophets of old, in this overmastering faith in and reliance on God or the Spirit of God or Christ. "We also believe," he

¹⁴ 1 Cor. viii. 4 f.

¹⁵ Lietzmann thinks that it is impossible to give more than a general outline of Paul's preaching to the Gentiles. "Geschichte der alten Kirche," 112 (1932). A good deal bearing on it may, however, be gleaned from the Epistles. On his mission preaching, see Munzinger, "Paulus in Korinth," 72 f. (1908).

¹⁶ 2 Cor. v. 18 f.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, iii. 5.

¹⁷ 1 Cor. xi. 18 f.

¹⁹ 2 Cor. x. 4.

writes in reference to a quotation from the 116th Psalm, "and therefore also we speak."²⁰ Hence the dynamic character of the mission which he depicts so vividly in the Epistles. He speaks of the marvellous works which the Spirit has wrought among the Galatians, who, in spite of "the infirmity of the flesh"—"the thorn in the flesh"—"received me as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ."²¹ Through the weakness of the flesh the strength of Christ manifests itself; His power is made perfect in weakness.²² The Thessalonians are reminded "how that our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance."²³ Similarly, he reminds the Corinthians that his preaching was not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.²⁴ He appeals against his Corinthian opponents to "the signs of an apostle wrought among you in all patience by signs and wonders and mighty works." Though he himself is "nothing," he is, in this respect, "in nothing behind the very chiefest of the apostles."²⁵

From the outset to the close of the mission—"from Jerusalem round about even to Illyricum"—this spiritual dynamic is a continuous feature, as we learn from the summary of it in the Epistle to the Romans. In proof of the efficacy of this far-flung ministry in virtue of the grace of God, he confidently adduces "the things which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Ghost."²⁶ Acts also knows of these signs and wonders. They occur at Iconium and at Ephesus.²⁷ The writer gives specific instances and, as in the case of Peter at Jerusalem, tends to magnify these miraculous happenings. At Paphos Paul smites the Jewish magician and false prophet Barjesus (Elymas) with blindness. At Lystra he heals a cripple. At Philippi he exorcises a girl soothsayer. At Ephesus handkerchiefs and aprons in contact with his body, which their credulous relatives bring to them, heal the sick. At Troas he restores Eutychus, who was evidently only stunned, not dead, to consciousness. Paul believed in and practised faith-healing, and the exercise of this gift seems to have been not uncommon in his Churches.²⁸ The Spirit calls into activity the latent gifts of the members of the community, and their dynamic exercise appears to have affected body as well as soul. Healing by exorcising the evil spirits, who are believed to cause disease, was part of the

²⁰ 2 Cor. iv. 12.²¹ Gal. iii. 5; iv. 13.²² 2 Cor. xii. 7.²³ 1 Thess. i. 5.²⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 4-5.²⁵ 2 Cor. xii. 11-12.²⁶ Rom. xv. 15 f.²⁷ Acts xiii. 5; xix. 11.²⁸ 1 Cor. xii. 9 f., 28 f.

current belief of the ancient world in the miraculous. To the populace at Lystra Paul the healer is one of the gods "come down in the likeness of men." At Ephesus he appears as the unrivalled magician, and his superiority to the Jewish exorcists wins him not a few converts. So, at least, it appears in the Acts, and this current popular superstition doubtless accounts, to a certain extent, for the success of his mission. On the other hand, in the Epistles, in which the miraculous is assumed and signs and wonders are wrought, it is in the spiritual impact of the Gospel on the Gentile world and the religious and ethical effect of this impact that the real dynamic of the movement manifests itself. Like Jesus, Paul deprecates the tendency to "ask for signs," and among the "spiritual gifts" he exhorts the Corinthians to seek primarily that of prophecy or the inspired preaching of the Word, in contrast to the ecstatic speaking with tongues. "Follow after love; yet earnestly desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy."²⁹

DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS

There is, however, a reverse side to the picture. The mission is by no means the triumphal march of this dynamic Gospel from Antioch to Rome. It is rather a campaign to capture the Gentile world, and the campaign is both difficult and dangerous. It is a constant struggle with the active antagonism of the Jews, and in part with that of the Gentiles, whose hostility the Jews incite. The writer of Acts does not ignore this feature of the movement, though his aim is to show that the Gospel, in spite of antagonism and persecution, is winning throughout. Paul is stoned and left for dead at Lystra. He and Silas are beaten and imprisoned by the magistrates (prætors) at Philippi, in spite of their Roman citizenship, which in the tumult they evidently had been unable to make known. They were hunted by the Jews out of Macedonia. At Ephesus his lengthy mission ends in a hostile demonstration which compels him to withdraw. At Corinth on his last visit his life is menaced by a Jewish plot, and at Jerusalem the riot engineered by his fellow-Jews of the Dispersion leads to his arrest and the virtual conclusion of his active missionary career.

From the Epistles we are again enabled to amplify the difficulty and danger of the mission. At Corinth as well as Athens the Gospel makes little impression on the intellectual class and finds a reception largely, if not exclusively, in the slave class—"the weak and the base of this world" in contrast

²⁹ 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

to the wise after the flesh, the mighty, and the noble. To Greek wisdom "the preaching of Christ crucified"—"God's wisdom"—is foolishness.³⁰ Moreover, even among believers there is a tendency in the Gentile world to corrupt the Gospel as Paul proclaims it. Gnosticism is already seeking at Corinth and Colossæ to divorce faith and knowledge and transform the Gospel into a philosophy. The Judaisers are striving to bring his converts under the bondage of the Law and hindering its progress.³¹ Party spirit is rife at Corinth—the storm centre of the Pauline mission—and is undermining his authority. Of all this the Acts, which regards the controversy with the Judaisers as finally settled at the Jerusalem Conference, tells us nothing. It veils the internal strife in the Pauline Churches, and wishes the reader to ignore it. It is only from the Epistles that we get an insight into the complex antagonism that drags the progress of the mission. Only from the Epistles, too, that we derive an adequate idea of the trials and sufferings, the depression and disappointments which it involved. At Ephesus, for instance, the riot that ended his long sojourn was only one of many testing vicissitudes. He has "fought with beasts at Ephesus," and "there are many adversaries," though a great and effectual door has been opened to him.³² He has been imprisoned and has only escaped death through the self-sacrificing exertions of Aquila and Priscilla who "laid down their own necks for his life."³³ He has suffered affliction in Asia and was "weighed down exceedingly, insomuch that we despaired even of life."³⁴

The mission is a continuous strain of mind and body in the face of endless antagonism, frequent maltreatment. The wonder is that his frail body survived this physical and mental strain of which, casting aside his usual reserve, he draws such a vivid picture in the second Corinthian Epistle, in vindication of his service and suffering for Christ against the detraction of his opponents, "the false apostles." "Are they ministers of Christ? I more; in labours more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a day and a night have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from

³⁰ 1 Cor. i. 18 f.

³¹ That these Judaisers were Jews, and not Jewish Christians, is maintained by Ropes, "Beginnings," v. 215. This does not seem to me to be warranted.

³² 1 Cor. xv. 32; xvi. 9.

³³ Rom. xvi. 3-4.

³⁴ 2 Cor. i. 8.

the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ; in labours and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches." ³⁵

TOLERANT ATTITUDE OF ROMAN GOVERNMENT

On the other hand, the mission is as yet not exposed to the hostility of the Roman Government. In Acts its representatives are, as a rule, its protectors, if not its patrons, and it is the object of the writer to emphasise throughout its friendly, or at least neutral attitude. At Paphos the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, is even represented as an inquirer and ultimately a believer. If the magistrates of the Roman colony of Philippi are hostile and order the punishment of Paul and Silas, those at Thessalonica evidently disbelieve the charge of disloyalty to Cæsar brought against them by the Jews. At Corinth the proconsul Gallio, brother of Seneca, before whom the Jews charge them with subverting the Jewish Law, refuses to intervene in what he regards as a Jewish religious squabble. For him Judaism and Christianity are still identical, and as Judaism was a religion recognised by the State (*religio licita*) the State is not concerned with such internal theological dissension. At Jerusalem Claudius Lysias is similarly unconcerned with questions of Jewish Law and finds nothing in the charges against Paul "worthy of death or bonds." At Cæsarea the procurators Felix and Festus are equally tolerant, and Festus concludes that "this man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Cæsar." Even at Rome he is leniently treated pending the consideration of his appeal. In the Acts Christianity is thus not a seditious religion. The movement is not subversive of Roman authority, as the Jews represent.

The contention is substantially true ; Paul was no fomenter of sedition. He was proud of his Roman citizenship and emphasised subjection to the Government as the duty of the Christian believer. His message was purely religious and ethical. It did not trench on political and social conditions. The day of the persecution of the Church by the State had not yet dawned, though the dawn was not far off. The Government had not yet learned to discriminate between Christianity and Judaism. It was ere long to make this discovery, as the persecution under Nero from 64 onwards and under Domitian towards the end of

³⁵ 2 Cor. xi. 23 f. ; cf. 1 Cor. iv. 11 f.

the century proves. When Acts was written Christians were being thrown to the wild beasts because they refused to worship the image of the Roman Emperor. The object of the writer is to show that there was a time when the State was friendly to them and found no ground for believing in their disloyalty. Despite this later apologetic motive, there is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the representation of the tolerant attitude of the Roman Government to the Pauline mission. As long as it regarded the movement as merely a sectarian variation of Judaism, the striving of the Jews to enlist it on the side of repression was generally fruitless.

But for its neutrality during the thirty years of Paul's missionary activity, the movement might have been strangled at birth. It is due in no small degree to this neutrality that the mission, as the result of this activity, had developed into an organised movement in the Gentile world.

CHAPTER V

PAUL'S CO-WORKERS

MISSIONARY CONVERTS

CHRISTIANITY owed its expansion in the Roman Empire to many other "apostles" in the missionary sense. Many of Paul's converts became his fellow-workers, or "fellow-soldiers," as he calls them,¹ in the preaching of the Gospel. Others who had been believers before him became his associates in his mission work. Barnabas and Silas and Mark, Andronicus and Junias, Priscilla and Aquila, and Apollos, for instance. Timothy, the most beloved of his converts and his frequent emissary to the Churches, appears to have continued his work at Ephesus, with which later tradition associates him.² At all events he was there, along with Tychicus, on the eve of the apostle's martyrdom.³ From a later notice of him in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he appears to have been imprisoned and was expected shortly to visit those to whom the author writes.⁴ Titus' mission to Dalmatia as well as Crete and that of Crescens in Galatia (possibly Gaul) are likewise attested by genuine fragments of the Pastoral Epistles.⁵ From the same source we learn that Erastus was at

¹ Phil. ii. 25; Philem. 2.

² Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 4.

³ 1 Tim. i. 3; 2 Tim. iv. 9.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 23.

⁵ Titus i. 5; 2 Tim. iv. 10.

Corinth and that the faithless Demas had left him for Thessalonica. Of Linus and Clement we know only the names, the former in connection with the Church at Rome, the latter with that at Philippi. Tradition, indeed, makes both of them bishops of Rome.⁶ But the traditional identity of the Philippian Clement with Clemens Romanus is very questionable, and the assumption that they were bishops in the later monarchic sense is an anachronism. If Luke "the beloved physician" was not only the author of Acts, but of the 'Travel or "We" document incorporated in it, he was, from the second journey in Asia Minor onwards, the active abettor of the Gentile mission as well as its historian. He accompanied Paul to Rome and was the only one of his companions who stood by him to the last.⁷ So enthusiastic a champion of Gentile Christianity as he reveals himself to be in Acts and even in the Third Gospel would certainly strive to continue his hero's work. Where, we cannot definitely say. The later tradition,⁸ which assigns him an extensive mission sphere in the Gentile world, is unreliable. Epaphroditus, another of his "fellow-soldiers," who had brought him a contribution from his beloved Philippians, fell ill at Rome and "came nigh unto death for the work of Christ," but recovered to continue his work at Philippi.⁹

MISSIONARY ASSOCIATES

Our knowledge of the mission work of Paul's associates who were not his converts is equally scanty. That Barnabas continued to evangelise after his separation from Paul at Antioch and his mission to Cyprus, we learn from Paul himself,¹⁰ who evidently harboured no grudge against him. Unfortunately he does not say where. The only other reference to him in the Epistles is in connection with the Church at Colossæ,¹¹ and seems to show that he extended his mission once more from Cyprus to Asia Minor. Tradition connects him also with Alexandria and Rome,¹² and Clement of Alexandria unwarrantably credits him with the authorship of the anonymous so-called Epistle of Barnabas.¹³

⁶ Eusebius, iii. 4.

⁷ 2 Tim. iv. 11; cf. Philem. xxiv. and Col. iv. 14.

⁸ Epiphanius, "Haer.," ii. 11. Eusebius, who mentions his intimacy with Paul and gives Antioch as his birthplace (iii. 4), knows nothing of this apparently imaginary mission from Gaul to Bithynia.

⁹ Phil. ii. 25; iv. 18.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. ix. 6.

¹¹ Col. iv. 10.

¹² Clement, "Recog.," i. 7 f.; "Homilies," i. 9.

¹³ Strom. ii. 6 *passim*. He is followed by Eusebius, iii. 25.

Silvanus or Silas, Paul's co-worker throughout the second missionary journey, is only mentioned in the Epistles in connection with this period of the mission.¹⁴ Before his association with Paul he was already notable as a prophet of the Jerusalem Church—one of "the chief men among the brethren"¹⁵—and was sent with the decree of the Conference to Antioch. Later he appears as the associate of Peter at Babylon (Rome?), and, as Peter's amanuensis, writes the first Epistle ascribed to him.¹⁶ The unstable Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, whom Paul refused to take along with him on the second journey, evidently redeemed himself by his later activity in connection with the Gentile mission. He is found with Timothy at Ephesus and along with Epaphras, the founder of the Colossian Church, and other associates at Rome with Paul himself, to whom he had rendered special service.¹⁷ He is also associated with Peter at "Babylon," as he had previously been at Jerusalem, and so close is the relation between them that in the First Epistle of Peter the writer speaks of him as his "son."¹⁸ According to Papias it was from Peter that he derived the material for the Second Gospel, in which he recorded the primitive tradition as the apostle related it in the course of his preaching.¹⁹ Apollos, the learned and eloquent Jew of Alexandria and disciple of John the Baptist, first appears on the missionary stage in Acts at Ephesus. Here he was associated with Aquila and Priscilla who "instructed him in the way of the Lord more accurately"²⁰ before proceeding to Achaia. At contentious Corinth his eloquence and his Hellenist "wisdom" won him a large number of partisans and added one more to the party divisions which Paul denounces.²¹ Apollos himself seems not consciously to have placed himself in opposition to the apostle. On Paul's own testimony he only watered where he had planted, and used his special gifts for the common cause. Whither he went after leaving Corinth we know not. We do know that he was unwilling to return, and only at Paul's repeated request did he consent to do so at some future opportunity.²² We last hear authentically of him in the Epistle to Titus, where, along with Zenas, the lawyer, he is on his way to Crete.²³ Other outstanding fellow-workers are Andronicus and Junias, his "kinsmen," *i.e.*, fellow-countrymen, who "are of note among the apostles" and have suffered imprisonment for the Gospel,²⁴ but of whose

¹⁴ 1 and 2 Thess. and 2 Cor. i. 19.

¹⁵ Acts xv. 22.

¹⁶ 1 Peter v. 12.

¹⁷ 2 Tim. iv. 11; Col. iv. 10.

¹⁸ 1 Peter v. 13.

¹⁹ Eusebius, iii. 39.

²⁰ Acts xviii. 24 f.

²¹ 1 Cor. i. 10 f.; iii. 4 f.

²² *Ibid.*, xvi. 12.

²³ Titus iii. 13.

²⁴ Rom. xvi. 7.

missionary activity no further information is vouchsafed. Like Paul, Aquila and Priscilla transferred their sphere of labour from Corinth, where they had welcomed and strenuously abetted him on his first visit, to Ephesus.²⁵ To these "fellow-workers," who "for my life laid down their own necks," he owed his preservation from imminent death, apparently at Ephesus.²⁶ From Ephesus they appear to have returned to Rome and founded one of its "house churches." In the Second Epistle to Timothy they are back in Ephesus²⁷ to resume the activity which made them known "in all the churches of the Gentiles."²⁸

MISSION WORK OF COMMUNITIES

In addition to the preaching of Paul and his co-workers the mission owed much to the missionary zeal of the communities themselves. All believers—women as well as men, as Paul notes²⁹—were perforce missionaries of the Gospel. The salvation of others was as imperative as their own, and the conviction of the speedy coming of Christ was an additional incentive to ensure this benefit to all. These communities existed not merely for the purpose of worship and mutual edification. They were corporate agencies for the spread of the Gospel. "From you," says Paul of the Thessalonians, "hath sounded forth the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to Godward is gone forth."³⁰ Similarly in reference to the Philippians he speaks of "your fellowship in furtherance of the Gospel from the first day until now."³¹ "We may take it as an assured fact," says Harnack, "that the mere existence and the persistent activity of the individual Christian communities did more than anything else to bring about the extension of the Christian religion."³²

²⁵ Acts xviii. 18, 26

²⁶ Rom. xvi. 3.

²⁷ 2 Tim. iv. 19.

²⁸ Rom. xvi. 4. A number of the details about his co-workers mentioned in this chapter are given by Paul in the greetings contained in the sixteenth chapter of Romans. Some critics hold that this chapter is a single epistle or part of an epistle directed not to Rome, but to Ephesus. In that case some of the above statements would have to be modified. It does seem strange that so many of Paul's friends were at Rome when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans. On the other hand, there are weighty objections against the supposition that chapter xvi. is directed to Ephesus, and I have assumed that it is part of the Roman Epistle. For a forcible statement of the case for Rome as against Ephesus, see Lietzmann, "Handbuch," iii. 122 f.

²⁹ Phil. iv. 2-3.

³⁰ 1 Thess. i. 8.

³¹ Phil. i. 5.

³² "Expansion," ii. 50.

CHAPTER VI

THE LATER MISSION OF THE TWELVE

PETER

OF the later work of the Twelve, James and other brethren of the Lord, there is also little to tell. That they engaged in mission work is certain. Paul refers to their missionary wanderings,¹ though unfortunately he gives no details of their whereabouts. After the Jerusalem Conference Peter disappears from the narrative in Acts. His absence is explained by Paul's reference to his missionary activity which, as in the case of James and the others, was shared by his wife. Where he evangelised during his later career it is impossible consecutively to say. His mission was mainly, if not exclusively, to the Jews of the Diaspora (the circumcision).² His presence at Antioch before he disappears from view would suggest that he chose Syria, which Paul ultimately abandoned, as the first sphere of this extended mission. The first Epistle ascribed to him suggests that it included the Diaspora of the provinces of Asia Minor. Even if the critics are right in questioning its Petrine authorship, he could hardly be represented as addressing the Christians of this wide region if it had not been believed that he had some connection with them. The existence of the Cephas party in the Corinthian Church may indicate his presence at Corinth, and tradition so understood the reference in 1st Corinthians and joined him with Paul as its founder. But whilst the reference shows his widespread influence, it does not necessarily mean that he evangelised at Corinth, though he may have visited it on his way to Rome. The party so designated appears to have consisted of those who preferred his teaching to that of Paul, and invested him with an authority superior to his. He certainly was not the co-founder with Paul of the Corinthian Church. The statement to this effect made by Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth³ (based apparently on the mention of this Cephas party), is very probably due to the bishop's desire to enhance the prestige of his Church.

The first Petrine Epistle professes to be written from Babylon. On the assumption that Babylon stands for Rome, Peter is believed to have ended his missionary wanderings in the capital of the Empire. The identification is not free from doubt. A number of critics take the name in the literal sense and conclude that

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 5.² Gal. ii. 7 f.³ Eusebius, ii. 25.

either Babylon on the Euphrates is meant, on the assumption that Peter extended his mission eastwards from Syria, or Babylon in Egypt, on the assumption that he laboured there. The use of the name for Rome in the Book of Revelation makes it more probable that it is to be identified with the capital of the Empire, which would be more likely to attract the apostle than the comparatively insignificant Babylon on the Euphrates or in Egypt.⁴ That he went to Rome early in the reign of the Emperor Claudius to controvert Simon Magus, or that he was Bishop of Rome for twenty-five years are only later beliefs, though they still find champions.⁵ Equally groundless is the later tradition⁶ that, along with Paul, he founded the Roman Church, the origin of which is wrapped in obscurity. The silence of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans and the later imprisonment Epistles seems to preclude his presence there before his arrival, or during the period of his imprisonment. On the other hand, that he ended his missionary career by martyrdom there during the Neronian persecution is sufficiently well attested. Clemens Romanus, who mentions his martyrdom as well as that of Paul, implies that it took place at Rome and connects it with this persecution.⁷ Ignatius is also an early and reliable authority for his presence at Rome.⁸

That he exercised a supremacy over the other apostles is disproved by all we hear of him in the New Testament. He was, as we have seen, a leading apostle, as he had been a leading disciple. In the earliest period of the Christian mission he is the most prominent, and at the Jerusalem Conference he is one of the three pillars, though, significantly enough, he is mentioned by Paul after James. Ultimately James in Palestine and Paul throughout the Gentile world emerge as the leaders, whilst he becomes at most a furtive figure, which comes into the limelight only in later romance and legendary "Acts."⁹ His disappearance

⁴ On the identification of Babylon with Rome and Peter's connection with it, see Lightfoot, "Apostolic Fathers," ii. 490. More recently Lietzmann comes to the same conclusion, "Petrus und Paulus in Rom," 236-237 (1927). Streeter holds that the balance of probability is in favour of Rome, "Primitive Church," 117 (1929). Guignebert rejects it and concludes that Peter never was in Rome except in later legend, "La Primauté de Pierre," 169 f. (1909).

⁵ Mr Edmondson, for instance, who contends that the story in the "Clementines" that he went to Rome in pursuit of Simon Magus early in the reign of Claudius is founded on fact. "The Church of Rome in the First Century," Lecture III. (1913).

⁶ Irenæus, "Adv. Haer.," III. i. 1; Eusebius, ii. 25.

⁷ Epistle to Corinthians, v.

⁸ Epistle to Romans, iv.

⁹ "The Clementines," and "The Acts of Peter" ("Apocryphal New Testament," ed. by James, 300 f.). The "Acts" contain the beautiful legend, "Domine Quo Vadis," 333. Date generally put about A.D. 200.

may be due to the lack or the destruction of authentic records of his later career. He was not so fortunate as Paul in having a contemporary chronicler of his mission. Nor had he in the same degree the constructive gift, as he certainly had not the genius of the apostle of the Gentiles. His mind was receptive rather than original, as the first Epistle ascribed to him tends to show. At the same time he evinced no little power of initiation as well as zeal and courage in the early days of the movement. These qualities, coupled with his intimate association with Jesus, gave him an eminent position in the Apostolic Church, and contributed to the later assumption of supremacy over the other apostles, ascribed to him in support of the growing claims of the Roman bishop. There is already a trace of the tendency to raise him into a supreme position in the saying attributed to Christ in the sixteenth chapter of the First Gospel.

JOHN

Like Peter, John disappears from the narrative in Acts after the Jerusalem Conference at which he is still prominent as one of the three "pillars" of the Church.¹⁰ Thereafter we hear of him no more until Irenæus, the pupil of Polycarp, from whom he derived his information, lifts the veil and reveals his presence at an advanced age at Ephesus.¹¹ He cannot have been there in the lifetime of Paul, who never refers to him after the Conference. Where he evangelised after leaving Jerusalem is unknown. The statement of Irenæus that connects him with Ephesus and Asia is based on what professes to be authentic knowledge. He adds that he died in the reign of Trajan,¹² and if this detail is correct, he must have lived to a great age. It is, however, surprising that Ignatius in his letter to the Ephesians, written not long after John's reputed death, does not refer to him. According to tradition he was banished to Patmos in the time of Domitian¹³ and there wrote the Book of Revelation. That Revelation was written by a prophet of the name of John we know from the work itself,¹⁴ and Irenæus ascribed both it and the Fourth Gospel to the apostle. That he did so shows how slender his knowledge of the apostle's sojourn in Asia really was, in spite of his appeal

¹⁰ Gal. ii. 9.

¹¹ "Adv. Haer.," III. i. 1; iii. 4; V. xxvi. 1, and his "Epistle to Florinus," quoted by Eusebius, v. 20. The Acts of John which profess to recount his doings at Ephesus and elsewhere are pure romance. "Apocryphal New Testament," 228 f.

¹² "Adv. Hær.," II. xxii. 5.

¹³ Eusebius, iii. 18.

¹⁴ Rev. i. 4, 9.

to the testimony of Polycarp, since it is evident that the same person cannot have written both.¹⁵ In view of this confusion as well as the strange silence of Paul and Ignatius, it is doubtful whether he ever was at Ephesus. It is likely enough that Irenæus, whose accuracy and critical discernment are not outstanding, has confused him with another John—John the Elder mentioned by Papias¹⁶ of Hierapolis in Asia, in the second quarter of the second century, as well as with the prophet John of the Book of Revelation. The apostle's sojourn at Ephesus is thus by no means above question, and a weighty section of critical opinion now rejects the confused testimony of Irenæus to his long residence at Ephesus as unhistorical, and assigns the authorship of the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles to John the Elder. From another fragment¹⁷ of Papias, it appears that the apostle as well as his brother James "was put to death by the Jews," presumably in Palestine.

JAMES THE LORD'S BROTHER

Unlike Peter, James the Lord's brother is not known to have engaged in mission work outside Palestine. Whilst the Twelve had betaken themselves to various spheres of labour, he confined himself to the propagation of the Gospel at what was, before the rise of the Gentile Church, the centre of Christianity as well as Judaism. He maintained his reverence for the religious institutions of his race, and it is evident from Josephus' brief notice, as well as from the longer account of Hegesippus,¹⁸ that his austere character and his observance of the Law won the goodwill of the Jews. To this fact we may attribute the lengthy immunity from persecution enjoyed by the Jerusalem Church after the brief outburst under Herod Agrippa I. During this period his influence seems to have largely augmented its members. When Paul paid his final visit to Jerusalem, James emphasised the large number of believing Jews as a cogent reason for conciliating their goodwill by a demonstration of his respect for the Law.¹⁹ Whilst his mission was confined to the capital, or at most to Palestine, he evidently took an active interest in the Jewish Christian

¹⁵ See Moffatt, "Expositor's Greek Testament," v. 320 f., and especially Charles, "Internat. Crit. Comm." (1920).

¹⁶ In a fragment of his work in which he collected the sayings of the apostles and other disciples of the Lord, including this John, as he had learned them from those who had known them. Eusebius, iii. 39.

¹⁷ Preserved by Philip of Side (c. A.D. 430). See De Boor, "Neue Fragmente des Papias, Texte und Untersuchungen," v. 167 f.

¹⁸ Eusebius, ii. 23; cf. ii. 1.

¹⁹ Acts xxi. 20 f.

communities beyond its bounds, as appears from the Epistle to the Galatians, in which Paul mentions his narrow zeal in striving to enforce on the Jewish Christians at Antioch a strict adherence to the Law. If the Epistle bearing the name of James could be accepted as his, it would conclusively prove that he extended this interest to the whole Diaspora, and that by his pen, if not in person, he strove to impress his high ethical ideal, in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, on the Christian communities scattered throughout the Gentile world. The James who wrote this Epistle is not, however, necessarily the Lord's brother, and the weight of evidence is not in favour of his authorship.²⁰

The growth of the Jerusalem Church under his auspices was ultimately checked by the outbreak of Jewish intolerance, which supervened on the attack on Paul and may have been due, in part at least, to the bitter feeling aroused by this incident. At all events, in the interval between the death of the procurator Festus in A.D. 62, and before the arrival of his successor Albinus, the high priest Ananus, who belonged to the party of the Sadducees, arraigned James and some other Christians before the Sanhedrin on a charge of violating the Law. Though the Sanhedrin did not possess the power of capital punishment, it sentenced them to be stoned to death.²¹ Before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, in which the revolt of the Jews against the oppression of the procurator Florus culminated, the Christians had withdrawn to Pella, east of the Jordan.²² Their withdrawal denotes their lack of sympathy with the militant nationalism championed by the party of the Zealots and by the political messiahs, whose appearance is noted by Josephus. It involved, too, the failure of the Jewish-Christian mission in Palestine, of the ideal of a Christian Israel according to the flesh. A remnant seems, indeed, to have returned²³ under Symeon, the cousin of James, who appears as his successor in the leadership, which, like him, he owed to his relationship to Jesus.

LEGENDARY ACCOUNTS

Of the later mission work of the rest of the Twelve there is little authentic to tell. Tradition believed that Jesus had enjoined

²⁰ See my "Gospel in the Early Church."

²¹ Josephus, "Antiq.," xx. 9, 1. Hegesippus, who gives a more elaborate and legendary account, says that he was hurled down from the pinnacle of the temple and dispatched, as he lay on the ground, by the club of a bystander. Eusebius, ii. 23.

²² Eusebius, iii. 5.

²³ Epiphanius, "De Mensuris et Ponderibus," 15.

them to remain preaching in Palestine for twelve years and then go forth into the Gentile world.²⁴ It assigns to them various mission spheres from Gaul to India, for which they cast lots.²⁵ Eusebius takes Thomas to Parthia,²⁶ which then included the northern fringe of India, whilst the "Acts of Thomas" take him direct to India by way of Egypt and the Indian Ocean.²⁷ Bartholomew likewise goes to India²⁸ and Andrew to Scythia, north of the Black Sea. Thaddeus proceeds to Edessa, whose king, Abgar, had exchanged letters with Jesus, and duly heals the king and converts many of his subjects.²⁹ Philip, who is confused with the evangelist of this name, after evangelising in Lydia and the province of Asia, gets as far as Parthia.³⁰ Of the adventures of these and others the later romancers give lively accounts in the various "Acts." Needless to say, these tales are very largely pure fiction. It is possible that Thomas and Bartholomew found their way to "India," though the exact region covered by this term is doubtful. The King Gundaphoras, who is mentioned in the "Acts of Thomas," is a historic figure, and the trade route to India by way of the Nile and the Indian Ocean makes the mission at least feasible.³¹ There may also be some foundation for the mission of Bartholomew thither, in view of the fact that Pantænus, towards the end of the second century, found in this region the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew,³² which his converts had preserved, though India, in this case, may mean only southern Arabia. On the other hand, the correspondence of Jesus and Abgar of Edessa is a forgery, and the introduction of Christianity among his subjects by Thaddeus an anachronism.³³

²⁴ Clement of Alexandria, "Stromateis," vi. 5. Probably derived from a lost portion of "The Preaching of Peter."

²⁵ "Acts of Thomas,"—"Apoc. N.T.," 365.

²⁶ "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 1.

²⁷ "Acts," 365 f.

²⁸ "Acts of Bartholomew,"—"Apoc. N.T.," 468.

²⁹ Eusebius, i. 13, who gives the correspondence.

³⁰ "Acts," 439; cf. Eusebius, iii. 31.

³¹ There is a considerable modern literature on the mission of Thomas to India. See Rae, "The Syrian Church in India" (1892); Medlycott, "India and the Apostle Thomas" (1905); Farquhar, *Bulletin of John Ryland's Library*, x.-xi. (1926-27); Mingana, "Early Spread of Christianity in India" (1926); Philipps, "Indian Antiquary," 32, 33; Burgess, "Buddhist Art in India."

³² Eusebius, v. 10.

³³ Modern research has established that the legend of Abgar and his correspondence with Christ has no historic foundation. It begins to take shape about the middle of the third century, and acquired literary form towards the end of it. It was this document from which Eusebius borrowed. See Carrière, "La Légende D'Abgar," 370 f., for a summary of the critical conclusions. The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles are usually considered to be Gnostic productions. Schmidt argues that they are products of the early Catholic

EXTENT OF THE APOSTOLIC MISSION

The tendency of later tradition and romance is to magnify the extent of the mission in the apostolic age. All that we can safely infer from the authentic sources is that, by the seventh decade of the first century, Christianity, outside Palestine, had made considerable progress in the regions bordering the eastern and central Mediterranean basin—in Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Achaia, and westwards perhaps as far as Gaul (Massilia). Its diffusion beyond these regions belongs for the most part to a later time. From certain expressions in the Pauline Epistles and the earlier Christian writers we might, indeed, infer that the Gospel had been preached, throughout the Empire and even beyond it, in apostolic times. "The Gospel," wrote Paul to the Colossians, "is come unto you as it is in all the world."³⁴ Jesus Himself is represented in the first chapter of Acts as assuring the Twelve that they would be His witnesses "unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Paul is said by Clemens Romanus "to have brought righteousness to all the world."³⁵ Hermas is equally positive that Christ was preached by the Twelve Apostles to the whole world, and later writers like Eusebius and Lactantius likewise assert the universality of the apostolic mission.³⁶ Such rhetorical statements are manifest exaggerations, due to the belief that the Scriptural forecast of the speedy diffusion of the Gospel must have been fulfilled. At the same time, it is evident that, even in the apostolic age, it had made substantial progress in the regions of the eastern and central Mediterranean basin. From Acts it appears that the preaching of the apostles resulted in certain places, as at Jerusalem, in sudden and numerous conversions, if the record also tells of instances in which it was followed by little or no result.

For long it drew recruits chiefly from the lower classes.³⁷ For these its humanitarian teaching of the universal love of God and the spiritual, if not the social equality of all classes had a powerful appeal, even if it had to contend with the ignorance and superstition of the masses. "To the poor the gospel is preached."

Church. They are, nevertheless, not more trustworthy on this account. Their value lies mainly in the light they throw on the beliefs and culture of the later Catholic Church. Schmidt, "Die alten Petrusakten, Texte und Untersuchungen," ix. 157 f. (1903); also "Die Acta Pauli" (1904).

³⁴ Col. i. 6; *ἐν παντί τῷ κόσμῳ*; cf. 1 Thess. i. 8; Rom. xvi. 26.

³⁵ Epistle to the Corinthians, 5.

³⁶ See the extracts from original sources in Harnack, "Expansion of Christianity," ii. 147-170.

³⁷ 1 Cor. i. 26 f.

The message which Jesus sent to the Baptist had a deep significance for the diffusion of his teaching far beyond the bounds of Palestine, to which it was limited during his earthly life. Its appeal to the cultured class, as Paul reminds us, might be limited. It might be less effective than that of the wandering popular Stoic preacher, who also sought to win converts for his humanitarian message.³⁸ At the same time, there was in the world of intellect a quickened quest after God, a growing sense of the reality of the spiritual and the ethical. Hence the tendency on the part of many serious minds in the Gentile world to turn to Jewish monotheism and the Old Testament Scriptures in satisfaction of this quest. Hence, too, the readiness on the part of not a few such inquirers to give a hearing to the Christian message with its definite doctrine of redemption, its intense faith in a living and immanent God and His redeeming love in Christ, its denunciation of unrighteousness and its proclamation of Judgment, its capacity to beget a new spiritual and moral life, its burning sympathy with human misery, its active philanthropy, the heroism of its early martyrs. In this respect it had a potent advantage over its rivals, including even Judaism, from which it won a large number of "God fearers," if not of proselytes. It is, therefore, not surprising that even in Paul's lifetime it had gained a certain proportion of adherents in the higher ranks of society, including imperial officials and even courtiers. Cornelius at Cæsarea, for instance, Sergius Paulus, proconsul of Cyprus, Erastus the city treasurer of Corinth, Luke "the beloved physician," "those of Cæsar's household," and those of the household of Aristobulus, probably a foster-brother of Herod Agrippa I., and of Narcissus, the minister of the Emperor Claudius.

Apart from such general considerations the progress of the Gospel was due in no small measure to the devotion and self-sacrifice of its missionaries. Of this the Pauline Epistles furnish convincing evidence, and though Paul is unique, the passionate love of Christ and the inspiration of the spirit of Christ were also at work in his coadjutors. The nerve of the movement lies here. "For whether we be beside ourselves it is unto God, or whether we are of sober mind it is unto you. For the love of Christ constraineth us."³⁹ "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."⁴⁰

³⁸ On the Cynic preachers of the age, see Dill, "Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius," 334 f.

³⁹ 2 Cor. v. 13-14.

⁴⁰ Rom. viii. 35 f.

"Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel."⁴¹ The fervid Christian missionary was already latent in Paul, the Pharisee. He was one of those prophetic men who, whether as Jew or Christian, must declare the Word of the Lord. It was this passionate devotion to the cause of the Gospel operating in Paul and its other missionaries that carried it, within a comparatively short period, with such remarkable results, throughout a large part of the Gentile world.

CHAPTER VII

THE NERONIAN PERSECUTION

CHANGE IN ROMAN ATTITUDE

BEFORE the close of the apostolic mission the movement had come into collision with the Roman Government, whose representatives had hitherto adopted a neutral attitude towards it and had, on occasion, even intervened to protect it from Jewish hostility. From a passage in Suetonius we may infer that in the reign of Claudius there broke out at Rome tumults over the Christian faith,¹ of which the Acts furnish so many instances in the East. Hence the edict expelling the disputants from the city (A.D. 49-50). The statement of Suetonius is confirmed by Luke in explaining the presence of Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth on Paul's arrival there, "because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome."² From Dio Cassius we learn that it was impossible to carry out the edict owing to the numbers of the Jews. But some evidently quitted Rome.³ It was as Jewish disturbers of the peace, not as Christians, that the edict was directed against these adherents of Christ. In the reign of Claudius the Roman Government and its provincial officials regarded the Christians as a Jewish sect and extended to it the same toleration as to Judaism proper, which was recognised as a *religio licita*. Its comparative insignificance in the early period of the mission explains this attitude of impartiality or indifference. It was only in the second half of the first century, when it had made substantial

⁴¹ 1 Cor. ix. 16.

¹ Judæos impulsore Chresto, assidue tumultuantes, Roma expulit. "Claudius," 25 (Lat. text and trans. by Rolfe, Loeb Class. Lib.). The name Chrestus is evidently an earlier form of Christus.

² Acts xviii. 2.

³ Dio, "Hist. Rom.," Epit. lx. 6; Ramsay, "St Paul the Traveller," 254.

progress in the Empire, that its distinctive character began to be understood.⁴

With this insight came a startling change in the attitude of the State towards the close of Nero's reign, when it became an illegal cult and was exposed to persecution by the Government. Whether or not the initiation of this persecution was, as Tacitus asserts, due to the attempt of Nero to divert the suspicion of causing the burning of Rome, in July 64, from himself to the Christians, its continuance was, he tells us, due to the fact of their religion. By this time they were popularly regarded at Rome and elsewhere as a danger to civilised society, and their religion as "a pernicious superstition." They were already hated on account of the abominations ascribed to their religion and probably due, in part at least, to Jewish calumny.⁵ Suetonius, who also notices the Neronian persecution, though he does not connect it with the fire, similarly describes them as "a race of men addicted to a new and mischievous superstition."⁶ By the year 64 Christianity is thus differentiated from Judaism in the capital of the Empire, and some years later this differentiation is expressly voiced by Titus in a speech delivered at the siege of Jerusalem⁷ (A.D. 70). Being regarded as a danger to the State and to society, it was, therefore, liable to repression in the interest of both. Hence the antagonism on the part of the Roman Government to which this discovery gave rise, and which found vent in oft-recurring persecution during the next two and a half centuries.

NERO AND THE ROMAN CHRISTIANS

In July 64 a fire broke out in Rome. It raged for six days, and when it seemed to have subsided, broke out afresh and blazed for three days longer. In the face of such an appalling disaster suspicion fell on the crime-laden Nero. Tales of the Emperor's fiendish plan to destroy the narrow and irregular streets of the capital and rebuild a grander Rome on their ruins, of his mad delight in the ever-widening conflagration, of his chanting, in melodramatic fashion, the destruction of Troy in celebration of

⁴ Parkes contends that it was not before the end of the first century that the Roman Government came definitely to differentiate between Judaism and Christianity. "Conflict of Church and Synagogue," 92 (1934). This seems to me too late.

⁵ "Annals," xv. 44. *Exitibilis superstitio. Odio humani generis convicti sunt. Invisos per flagitia.*

⁶ "Nero," 16. *Genus hominum superstitionis novæ ac maleficæ.*

⁷ Sulpicius Severus, "Chron.," ii. 306, whose source, according to Mr Hardy, "was almost certainly Tacitus." "Studies in Roman History," 63 f.

the occasion, got into circulation and were afterwards retailed by the historians. Whilst Suetonius⁸ records them as fact, Tacitus mentions that opinion was divided on the question whether the disaster was due to chance or to the wickedness of Nero.⁹ These tales are most probably baseless, and the fact, which he also mentions, that Nero returned to the burning city and did his best to cope with the appalling situation, seems to be sufficient proof of their baselessness. The fire was evidently due to accident. But the terror and misery begotten of such a calamity disposed the sufferers to see conspiracy and design in it and to demand their victims. That Nero knew of the suspicion against him is asserted by Tacitus, who avers that, after vainly attempting to disarm it by liberal gifts to the miserable people and sacrifices to the gods, he falsely sought to divert it from himself to the Christians.¹⁰ The accusation was all the more likely to find credence in consequence of the calumnies against them in vogue among the people. A number of them were, therefore, arrested and put on trial on the charge of incendiarism. According to Tacitus, those first arrested confessed, not apparently to the charge of incendiarism, but that they were Christians. They further revealed, probably under torture, the names of a large number of their fellow-Christians. As the result of this preliminary investigation, these were also tried, convicted, and condemned "not so much on account of incendiarism as of hatred of the human race" (*i.e.*, the people of the Roman Empire). Evidently the charge of incendiarism was not seriously entertained by their judges, and it was as votaries of what was generally deemed a nefarious and dangerous superstition that they were convicted and subjected to a variety of horrible punishments.¹¹ According to Tacitus,

⁸ "Nero," c. 38. So also Dio in greater detail, "Hist. Rom.," lxii., chs. 16-18, Ep. Xiphilinus.

⁹ "Annals," xv. 38.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xv. 44.

¹¹ "Annals," xv. 44. Igitur primo correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens haud perinde in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis convicti sunt. The passage is not quite clear and has given rise to much discussion and divergent interpretations. The question is, What did those first arrested and tried confess? (*fatebantur*). Arnold ("Neronische Christenverfolgung," 20 f., 1888), Gwatkin ("Early Church History," 78 f., 1909), Merrill ("Essays in Early Christian History," 126 f., 1924), and others contend that they confessed to arson and were punished as incendiaries. This seems unlikely. More likely that they confessed that they were Christians (Klette, "Christenkatastrophe unter Nero," 117 f. (1907); Hardy, "Studies," 50; Ramsay, "Church in Rom. Emp.," 238) and were tried (*correpti*) as such. More recently Weigall thinks that they confessed that they had made no attempt to extinguish the fire, because they believed at the time that it was the signal of the coming of Christ ("Nero," 223 f., 1930). This is only a presumption. Huelsen maintains that neither Nero nor the Christians caused the fire, though

they were derisively exposed to excruciating torments for the delectation of the populace. Some were covered with the skins of wild beasts and torn in pieces by dogs. Others were nailed to crosses and their bodies set on fire to illuminate the imperial gardens, which Nero threw open for this horrible spectacle. These scenic horrors, in which women as well as men suffered,¹² ultimately proved too much for the nerves of even the hardened Roman populace, which felt some pity for the victims of what seemed an exhibition of the savagery of a madman rather than a vindication of the public welfare.¹³ The persecution in a less acute form probably lasted during the remaining four years of Nero's reign. Among its victims Clement of Rome seems to include Peter and Paul, the former, according to tradition, being crucified, the latter, as a Roman citizen, beheaded.¹⁴

Whether the persecution was confined to Rome or was extended to the provinces is not definitely apparent. If Peter wrote the first Epistle ascribed to him, it would prove that it was so extended. The example set by the Emperor in the capital might well have been followed by the provincial governors, and Orosius expressly states that this was the case. But the Petrine authorship of the Epistle is doubtful, and Orosius is too late a writer to be implicitly trusted in the absence of confirmation from early sources. At the same time, Suetonius mentions the Neronian persecution among other general administrative measures of the reign and does not connect it specifically with Rome or the fire. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the persecution extended beyond the capital.

the evil antecedents of the Emperor and the popular conception of the Christians tended to involve them in suspicion. He controverts the theory that the Christians, impelled by their belief in a speedy judgment of the world, either set fire to the city (Carlo Pascal), or that, after its outbreak, they helped to spread it from the same motive (Bouche-Leclercq). *Bulletin of the Roman Archaeological Soc.*, July 1914. Klette argues unconvincingly that Nero did not initiate the persecution in order to counter the suspicion against himself, but in order to distract the people from the misery of the situation caused by the fire. "Christenkatastrophe," 85 f.

¹² Clemens Romanus, Epistle to Cor., 6.

¹³ "Annals," xv. 44. Suetonius also notices the punishment of the Christians among other repressive measures of Nero's reign, without, however, connecting it with the fire. "Nero," 16.

¹⁴ Eusebius, ii. 25. Tertullian, "De Præscriptione Hæc.," 36. The "Acts of Peter" assert that he was crucified head downwards. James, "Apoc. N.T.," 334. Ramsay's contention that Peter lived into the reign of Vespasian and wrote 1st Peter about A.D. 80 is not convincing. "Church in the Rom. Empire," 252 f. See Hardy's criticism, "Studies," 60 f.

CHAPTER VIII

ORGANISATION OF THE GENTILE CHURCHES

RUDIMENTARY ORGANISATION

The organisation of the Gentile churches founded by Paul is reflected in the Epistles, supplemented by certain passages in the Acts. From the incidental character of these references, it would seem that the organisation of the community was of secondary importance, compared with its religious life. Since it lived in the expectation of the speedy coming of Christ, organisation can at best have been merely provisional. Whilst a constitution in the formal sense does not exist, practical necessity brought into being in the Gentile Church, as in that of Palestine, at least a rudimentary and generally identical organisation. The need of local direction would make itself speedily felt. Provision had to be made for the regular meeting of the community, for the conduct of worship (as in the synagogue), the supervision of the younger members, the care of the poor and the sick. Special function would thus devolve on certain members and function would tend to develop into office, whilst the service of all was given in accordance with capacity or aptitude.¹

The organisation of the Gentile Christian communities reproduces features of that of the Jewish Christian communities of Palestine, with some additions due to difference of environment. In general it may be described as that of a self-governing association, subject to the authority of the apostle and of certain functionaries, indefinitely alluded to in the Epistles. Only in one case—that

¹ Sohm ("Kirchenrecht," i. 1892, and "Wesen und Ursprung des Katholicismus," 1909) combats the idea that the primitive community was an organised association, with functionaries who possessed a recognised authority in virtue of their office. This, he thinks, was a later aberration from primitive Christianity, which was a purely spiritual movement. The conception of the Church as purely spiritual had nothing in it of the nature of a constituted society or corporation in the legal sense. It was the new people of God ruled by God through His spirit—a mystic association of pneumatics in whom the Spirit of God operates, and who compose the mystical body of which each local body is a manifestation. This is, indeed, one side of the case. But alongside it is the fact that this spiritual movement found expression in concrete form from a very early period, as is evident from the gradual organisation of the Jerusalem Church, in which the Twelve, the Seven, the elders appear as exercising distinctive functions. Historically the early community was an organised body with a nascent constitution corresponding to its needs and later developing in accordance with altering conditions. Harnack has forcibly replied to Sohm in App. I. of his "Constitution and Law of the Church" (1910, Eng. trans.).

of the Church of Philippi—are those functionaries particularised as “bishops and deacons.”²

THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLE

Paul claims the right not only to admonish and guide, but to exercise supreme authority on occasion. This is an integral part of his apostolic function. The Lord Himself has conferred this authority on him for the building up of the community.³ What he writes to the Corinthians is the command of the Lord.⁴ He legislates for his churches, and sends Timothy to Corinth to make known his decisions—“even as I teach everywhere in every church.”⁵ “And so I ordain in all the churches.”⁶ His Epistles are to be read in the churches as authoritative deliverances.⁷ He declares his will in matters of doctrine as well as practice as the will of God, to which his converts owe implicit submission, as in the controversy with the Judaisers and with those who impugn his doctrine of the resurrection. Against his opponents, of whatever species—“the false apostles,” who seek to subvert his Gospel and undermine his authority—against the evildoers, who misinterpret and misapply his teaching, he uncompromisingly speaks as the mouthpiece of God or the Spirit of God. He will not brook what he deems unwarranted insubordination when his Gospel and its moral implications appear to be at stake. In the assertion and defence of his convictions he is very masterful and imperative. As a rule, however, he does not unnecessarily obtrude his authority, and eschews an autocratic attitude towards the community. It is usually that of the watchful and affectionate mentor of his brethren. He disclaims lordship over the faith of the Corinthians and is desirous only of being their helper.⁸ His distinctive attitude is that of the father of his spiritual children. “I write to admonish you as my beloved children.”⁹ “Ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children.”¹⁰ He does not desire to play the part of the pædagogus or tutor—the slave who has charge of and trains the children of his master. “For though ye have 10,000 tutors in Christ ye have not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the Gospel.”¹¹

² Phil. i. 1.

³ 2 Cor. x. 8; xiii. 10.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

⁵ *Ibid.*, iv. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vii. 17.

⁷ Col. iv. 16.

⁸ 2 Cor. i. 24.

⁹ 1 Cor. iv. 14.

¹⁰ 1 Thess. ii. 10-12.

¹¹ 1 Cor. iv. 15.

LOCAL FUNCTIONARIES

Each community is likewise subject to leaders or directors, who are vaguely described as "those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord," and whom they are to esteem highly in love for their work's sake.¹² Similarly, in the Epistle to the Romans, "he that ruleth"¹³ is particularised among those who exercise their gifts in the service of the community. To this ruling class is committed the gift of "government" in the Corinthian community, with which that of "helps" (helpful action such as helping the poor and weak brethren) is associated.¹⁴ It evidently corresponds to those in the Jerusalem Church (Judas and Silas) who are "leaders among the brethren" and are also described as "prophets."¹⁵ To it, too, evidently belonged older converts, such as Stephanas at Corinth—"the first-fruits of Achaia"—to whom the apostle enjoins subjection as well as "to everyone that helpeth in the work."¹⁶

In the earlier Epistles this ruling or leading function is not described by any definite term, and it is only in the late Epistle to the Philippians that Paul designates its holders as "bishops and deacons." They thus appear as regular office-bearers and, in virtue of their office, are distinguished from the body of the members, or "saints in Christ Jesus." Similarly, in that to the Colossians Archippus, who is enjoined "to take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord," has evidently been invested with a specific office in the church which meets in the house of Philemon.¹⁷

Nowhere in the Epistles are these functionaries designated presbyters or elders. It is only from the Acts that we learn that functionaries with this title existed from the outset of the mission in Asia Minor. Paul and Barnabas are represented as appointing elders in the churches which they founded during the first missionary journey.¹⁸ The "appointment" may mean the setting apart, with prayer and fasting, those whom the members had chosen by vote, as in the case of the Seven at Jerusalem.¹⁹

¹² 1 Thess. v. 12-13; τοὺς προϊστάμενους ὑμῶν.

¹³ Rom. xii. 8; ὁ προϊστάμενος.

¹⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 26; Κυβητηρίσεις, ἀντιλήψεις. See Hort, "Christ. Ecclesia," 159.

¹⁵ Acts xv. 22, 32; ἀνδρας ἡγουμένους.

¹⁶ 1 Cor. xvi. 15-16.

¹⁷ Col. iv. 17; cf. Philem. 2 and 3. The phrase "received in the Lord" denotes a special setting apart for this ministry.

¹⁸ Acts xiv. 23.

¹⁹ This is the meaning of the term in 2 Cor. viii. 19, as applied to the deputies of the churches of Macedonia to Corinth. For the meaning of χειροτονήσαντες, see Ramsay, "St Paul," 121 f.; Hort, "Christ. Ecclesia," 215.

Or it may mean that they themselves selected and set them apart. It may be that the term presbyter or elder in Acts at this early period is an anachronism. The writer may merely have applied what had later come to designate an office-bearer in the Church to the leading brethren, to whom the apostle committed the care of his newly founded churches in South Galatia. The term certainly does not appear in connection with the early Church at Antioch, which sends forth Paul and Barnabas, and in which only prophets and teachers are particularised.²⁰ Accordingly, a number of critics, in view of the silence of the Epistles, assume that the writer of Acts has transferred back to the early period a designation current at the time when he wrote.²¹ On the other hand, it is highly probable that Paul and Barnabas would not leave these newly founded communities without entrusting their oversight to these senior members or elders. Presbyter or elder would thus imply function as well as age or status, even at this early period of the mission. Certain it is that some years later elders appear in the Church of Ephesus and that their function is that of the oversight of the Church. This section of Acts, in which Paul addresses them at Miletus is taken from a contemporary document—the diary of a travelling companion known as the “We” or Travel Document.²² In this contemporary document the “elders” whom he addresses are interchangeably²³ also “bishops,” who have charge of the community or “flock,” which it is their office to “feed.” The appearance in Acts in the period of the Pauline mission of distinctive functionaries in the churches of Asia Minor, termed interchangeably elders and bishops, is thus not necessarily or even probably an anachronism. Whilst the silence of the Epistles on the subject till the very close of the apostle’s career is rather singular, the mention of presbyter-bishops at Philippi tends to confirm the testimony of Acts to their earlier existence in the Pauline churches in Asia Minor. The deacons mentioned along with them in the Philippian Epistle were evidently also common to the other Gentile churches. While

²⁰ Acts xiii. 1.

²¹ Weizsäcker, “Apost. Age,” ii. 318, 326; Knopf, “Comm. on Acts” (“Schriften des N.T.,” i.) and “Das Nachapostolische Zeitalter,” 177 f.; Dobschütz, “Apost. Age,” 54 (1909).

²² Acts xx. 17 f.

²³ Harnack contends that the bishops of Philippi were not identical with the presbyter-bishops of Acts, but were officials concerned specifically with administration. “Constitution and Law of the Church.” Weizsäcker also holds that they were not identical. I do not think that their contentions are well founded. Lightfoot forcibly maintains the interchangeability of the terms, which denote the same functionaries, elder denoting status, bishop function. “Essay on the Christian Ministry” in his “Comm. on Philippians,” 94 f. So also Hort, “Christ. Eccl.,” 231 f.

Paul uses the term *διακονία* in other Epistles in the general sense of "ministry," he expressly speaks of Phœbe as "a deaconess" of the Church at Cenchreæ.²⁴

In addition to presbyter-bishops and deacons, the community has its prophets, who proclaim the Word of God by inspiration, and its teachers, who expound the Word thus received or contained in the Jewish Scriptures, though those invested with the rule over it also exercise the teaching function.²⁵ Those so specially gifted rank next to the apostles in importance. "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers," etc.²⁶ The local prophet is differentiated from the speaker with tongues, or incoherent utterance, which needs interpretation, and comes last in the list of those who exercise their various gifts in the common service.

RIGHTS OF THE COMMUNITY

Whilst subject to the general authority of the apostle and the local authority of certain functionaries termed in Acts presbyters and bishops, the community itself, as a corporate body, is invested with recognised rights and functions. It is the organ of the Holy Spirit which teaches and directs it, and calls into operation the varied gifts of its members for the communal good. As the organ of the Spirit, Paul recognises and rates highly its corporate powers and stimulates their exercise in a variety of service. He accords to the individual member inspired by the Spirit—"the spiritual

²⁴ Rom. xvi. 1; *διάκονος*. Whence the terms bishop and deacon were derived by the Christian communities, we cannot definitely say. Whilst there are similarities between the pagan confraternity and the Christian community, the attempt of Hatch ("Organisation of the Early Christian Churches," 1881) and others to derive the organisation of the latter from the former is to be regarded as largely a failure. See Loening, "Gemeinderverfassung des Urchristenthums," 20 f. (1888), and Poland, "Das Griechische Vereinswesen" (1909). *ἐπισκοπος* in the sense of inspector was the title of a functionary entrusted with the supervision of the subject cities of Athens (Lietzmann, "Handbuch zum N.T.," iii. 44 f.), and the Christian communities may have borrowed it to designate the pastoral function of their presbyters. Or it may have come into vogue from the Septuagint—the Greek Bible of the Jews of the Diaspora. The term deacon may possibly have been derived from the functionary of this name in the pagan confraternity, who acted as the assistant of the priest in worship (Poland, 391 f.). Possibly, too, the term patroness (*προστάτις*), applied by Paul to the deaconess of the Church of Cenchreæ, came from the same source, though it is more likely to have been derived from the synagogue of the Diaspora (Schürer, "Geschichte des Jüd. Volkes," iii. 71 f., 1909, and "Gemeindeverfassung der Juden in Rom," 1879) whose members placed themselves under the patronage of some influential member. Like the synagogue and the confraternity, the Christian community had its patron or patroness in whose house it seems to have met for worship.

²⁵ 1 Thess. v. 12-13.

²⁶ 1 Cor. xii. 26; cf. xii. 4 f.; Rom. xii. 6 f. Church in this passage may be the local community as well as the universal Church.

man"—the right of judging all things, whilst not judged by any man. Belonging to Christ and having the mind of Christ, "all things are yours," and, therefore, in this respect Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas is subject to the community.²⁷ He is prepared to submit to its judgment the burning dispute between him and the Judaisers.²⁸ With one exception, he addresses his Epistles exclusively to the community itself, and in the exceptional case of the Philippians he directs the Epistle primarily to its members—"the saints in Christ Jesus"—along with "bishops and deacons." It exercises discipline over its members, and in the case of grave offences expels the offender, whilst cherishing a forgiving spirit and prepared to receive the repentant into renewed fellowship.²⁹ It elects deputies to other churches. It decides on the raising of money for the relief of the Jerusalem Church, or the support of the apostle. It tests the prophets and admonishes the disorderly.³⁰ Each member, in fact, possesses the right of admonition and edification.³¹

As inspired by the Spirit the community is a theocracy, whose supreme ruler and director is the Spirit of God or of Christ. As an organised association it is a democracy, limited only by the authority of the apostle and certain ruling functionaries, whose authority depends on their being the organ of the Spirit in their special capacity. To the community equally with them is ascribed the exercise of a "ministry." The term designates the sum total of service rendered by all in their respective capacities, though it has the special sense of caring for, helping the needy.

CHAPTER IX

THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

THE ONENESS OF THE CHURCH

IN addition to the particular community, the term "ecclesia" denotes the community or Church in the general sense. It betokens the whole body of believers in the Roman Empire,

²⁷ 1 Cor. ii. 15 f.; iii. 22; vi. 2 f.

²⁸ Gal. v. 10.

²⁹ Gal. vi. 1; 1 Cor. v. 4 f.; 2 Cor. ii. 5 f. In Matt. xviii. 17, the community as well as the Twelve is invested with authority over an erring brother, and this passage may be regarded as reflecting its primitive right to maintain discipline.

³⁰ 2 Cor. viii. 19; Rom. xv. 26; Phil. iv. 10, etc.; 1 Thess. v. 20-21, and 5, 14.

³¹ Rom. xv. 14, etc. On the primitive community as a self-governing association, see Weizsäcker, ii. 309 f.; Knopf, "Das Nachapostolische Zeitalter," 149.

from Jerusalem to Rome, in which Christian communities had been established. The use of the word in this larger sense in the earlier Pauline Epistles is, indeed, rare, and in the large majority of cases it refers to a single community or to a group of communities, like the Churches of Galatia, or Asia, or Macedonia, or Achaia.¹ It is used in this larger sense of the primitive Church of Jerusalem and Judæa in the passage in which Paul speaks of having persecuted the Church of God²—the whole Church as it existed before his conversion. It is probably also so used in the passage³ in which he enumerates the various functions and gifts in the Church, though there is difference of opinion on this point. It is only in the later Epistle to the Colossians that it unequivocally denotes the whole body of Christians.⁴ But the thought of such a wider unity recurs again and again in earlier Epistles, though the term Church may not be explicitly used to designate it. In writing to the Church at Corinth he associates with it “all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place.”⁵ He always implies that all believers are members of one great fellowship, are united by their common faith and life. Each community, though varying in locality, in external circumstances, is identical in a religious sense with every other community. It shares in the same baptism, partakes in the same celebration of the Lord’s death, is the medium of the diversified working of the same spirit, recognises the same God, is animated by the same faith and hope, is conscious of a spiritual kinship that transcends the limitations of locality, race, or social status. After the analogy of the human body, which is one, though composed of many members, the members of each local community form one body in Christ,⁶ or the body of Christ, or a body of Christ.⁷ “Even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office; so we, who are many, are one body in Christ and severally members one of another.” Each is a unit in itself as an association in which the Christian faith and life of its members fully realise themselves. But the one being, in its religious features, the counterpart of all, the various units form, in virtue of this identity, a real and larger unit, and the later Epistle to the Colossians contains the explicit assertion of the wider unity thus implied. Both the terms church and body are

¹ Gal. i. 2; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; 2 Cor. viii. 1, 19; ix. 2.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

³ *Ibid.*, xii. 28.

⁴ I omit the Epistle to the Ephesians, as its Pauline authorship is doubtful.

⁵ 1 Cor. i. 2.

⁶ Rom. xii. 4-5.

⁷ 1 Cor. xii. 27; *ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα χριστοῦ*. Interpreters differ as to whether the translation should be a body or the body of Christ.

explicitly used in the general as well as the particular sense. They denote the members of all Christian communities as well as those of any particular community.

Perhaps, as Hort thinks,⁸ his sojourn in the capital of the Empire, from which he wrote the Epistle to the Colossians and which visualises the fact of the vast political unity of so many different races, enabled him to realise more clearly the conception of the Church in its universal aspect as a religious society. But the thought is there from the beginning, though the explicit expression of it may partly be due to the more vivid realisation of the universal political society which Rome embodied. In Colossians the Church is explicitly the universal Church or Society of all believers. It is both the Body of Christ and the Body of which He is the Head. "His body which is the church. And he is the head of the body the church."⁹

NO CENTRAL AUTHORITY

This conception of the universal Church is religious rather than constitutional. There is apparently no central authority such as Acts reveals in the early period in the Jerusalem Church. In submitting the case for the free Gentile mission to the consideration of James, the Twelve, the presbyters, and "the whole Church" at Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas, as the representatives of the Church at Antioch, appear in Acts to recognise its supreme authority as the mother Church over the communities not only in Palestine, but in the Gentile world. On the other hand, in his necessarily very contracted account in Galatians, Paul emphatically asserts his independence, as the apostle of the Gentiles, of the Jerusalem Church and its leaders. He only brings the question of the free Gentile mission before them, especially the three "pillars," from the practical motive of obtaining their approval, not their sanction. Such approval was highly desirable if the mission was to make progress, since, without this approval, it would have been very difficult to continue it effectively "Lest by any means I should be running or had run in vain."¹⁰ He recognises no authority even in the "pillars" to overrule his divine commission to preach a free Gospel to the Gentiles. "But for those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me; God accepteth not man's person)—they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me."¹¹

⁸ "Christian Ecclesia," 143-144.

⁹ Col. i. 18, 24; ii. 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ii. 2.

¹¹ Gal. ii. 6.

Nor apparently did the Church at Antioch, which, of its own initiative, had originated the mission of Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles of Asia Minor, regard itself as subject to this authority. The supremacy of the Jerusalem Church was thus, in the view of Paul and his Antioch associates, confined to the Jewish communities of Palestine and those in the Gentile world founded by Peter and other apostles of "the circumcision." Even if James as its leader is subsequently found seeking, by his emissaries, to intervene in the government of the Antioch community, he was stoutly withstood by Paul, if not by Barnabas.¹² Clearly Paul regards his Gentile communities as independent of any other authority than his own, as the apostle of the Gentiles (the "uncircumcision"), whilst seeking to remain in fraternal communion with James and the Jerusalem Church and implementing the undertaking to provide for its poor by organising the collection for them in his churches.¹³ He takes a firm stand in defence of the authority of his churches against the supremacy which the Jerusalem Church and its leaders exercise in the early period and seek to perpetuate over the expanding Gentile Church.¹⁴ In the vindication of this autonomy he was ultimately successful, even if the Judaisers, the representatives of this supremacy, continued to cause dissension within them. With the disappearance of the Twelve from Jerusalem and the martyrdom of James, the effort to maintain a supreme central authority for the Church at large, if not perhaps the idea, virtually lapsed. The authority of the individual apostle seems to have taken the place of the conjunct authority of the Twelve and James at Jerusalem. For Paul the supreme authority in the Church is Christ. He is both its Foundation and its Head.¹⁵ The Spirit of Christ or of God is the grand directing and inspiring power in the individual and the community and, therefore, in the Church universal. To be in Christ or to have Christ and the Spirit of Christ within—this is the most distinctive feature of the Pauline Church as a spiritual society.

FUNCTIONARIES OF UNIVERSAL CHURCH

At the same time, whilst asserting the independence of his Churches, he recognises a certain ecclesiastical order in the

¹² Gal. ii. 11.

¹³ Gal. xii. 10; 1 Cor. xvi. 1 f.; 2 Cor. viii. 1 f.; Rom. xvi. 25 f.

¹⁴ On the position of the Jerusalem Church in the Church at large, see Harnack, "Constitution and Law of the Church," 27 f. Holl seems to me to exaggerate its constitutional primacy, "Aufsätze," ii. 55 f.

¹⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 10 f.; Col. i. 18 f.

universal Church, of which they are constitutive units. The first in rank are the apostles, who exercise their calling not only in the particular community, but in all the Churches of which they are the founders. An essential qualification and credential of the office of apostle is a personal, divine call to preach the Gospel.¹⁶ Another lies in "the signs of an apostle"—in the dynamic character of the work which attests itself "by signs and wonders and mighty works."¹⁷ A third consists in "having seen the Lord,"¹⁸ though this does not seem to have been absolutely indispensable, and did not necessarily confer apostleship, as in the case of the 500. At all events the function was exercised by those like Junias and Andronicus, Barnabas and Silvanus, and "the brethren of the Lord" of whom it is not stated that they had seen the risen Jesus, but who were also apostles.¹⁹ A fourth was the ability to speak the Gospel or Word of God²⁰ by direct revelation, whether as missionaries to unbelievers or as teachers of the members of the community, and, in virtue of this ability, to exercise authority within it in all matters pertaining to its life.²¹ They have the right of maintenance by the community,²² though Paul forbore to exercise this right and preferred to support himself by his own labour.

Next to the apostle the prophet occupied an influential position in the community and in the Church at large. As we have seen, such functionaries appear early in the Jerusalem Church and in that of Antioch. It appears from Acts that the function might be exercised by women, as in the case of the daughters of Philip, the evangelist at Cæsarea, "which did prophesy."²³ In the Pauline Churches, especially that of Corinth, the prophets play a very important part, and Paul himself rates the gift very highly. They owed their influence to the fact that, like the apostles, they were conscious of a divine call and were able to speak the Word of God by revelation.²⁴ The third class of functionaries, the teachers, were also conscious of a divine call to instruct their fellow-believers, but, unlike the apostle and the prophet, were

¹⁶ See the opening address of the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, and Colossians.

¹⁷ 2 Cor. xii. 12.

¹⁸ 1 Cor. ix. 1.

¹⁹ Rom. xvi. 7; Acts xiv. 4, 14; xv. 40; 1 Cor. ix. 4-6; 1 Thess. ii. 6.

²⁰ 1 Thess. ii. 2; λαλεῖν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἢ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ.

²¹ 1 Thess. i. 5, etc.; 1 Cor. v. 4-5; xi. 23; xiv. 37; 2 Cor. x. 8; xiii. 10; Gal. i. 12. The term apostle is also applied to a messenger from one or more churches to another. 2 Cor. viii. 23. This is the sense in which it was used in Judaism, *i.e.*, those sent from Jerusalem to the Diaspora.

²² 1 Cor. ix. 6 f.

²³ Acts xxi. 9.

²⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 30.

not the recipients of revelation. They were only the exponents of the common faith, of the tradition (the life and teaching of Jesus and the teaching about Him) more than once referred to by Paul, to which the community is to adhere.²⁵ As the exponents of this tradition the apostle and prophet themselves were teachers on occasion. The teaching function might also be exercised by the local office-bearers, and any member of the community who possessed the gift might speak the Word of God in this sense.²⁶ Both the prophet and the teacher might pass from the lower office to that of the apostle, so that the distinction is by no means absolute.²⁷ Even Paul as well as Barnabas is ranked among the prophets and teachers of the Church at Antioch.

Whilst prominent in rank, this threefold class owes its pre-eminence not to the fact that it belongs to a higher order in the official sense. It is as those specially called by God and specially endowed by the Spirit (charismatics in the highest degree) for the proclamation and propagation of the Gospel that they are so highly distinguished. Both apostles and prophets, in fact, ultimately disappear from the Church. Apart from their special inspiration by the Spirit and their proficiency in the Christian life, especially in the cardinal virtue of love, they are in themselves of no account. It is not in virtue of holding ecclesiastical office in the later sense that their distinction and their authority lie, but as the instruments of God's will and power in the service of the Gospel. "If I have the gift of prophecy, etc., but have not love, I am nothing."²⁸

This threefold class are charismatics in a specially endowed degree, and their function might be assumed by those who, to Paul, seemed mere usurpers of it and strove to propagate views which were at variance with what he believed to be the true Gospel.²⁹ Judaism and incipient Gnostics, for instance, whom he

²⁵ 1 Cor. xi. 23 ; xv. 3.

²⁶ 1 Thess. v. 12 ; Gal. vi. 6 ; Col. iii. 16.

²⁷ Barnabas was probably a prophet before becoming an apostle, whilst Paul is supposed by Harnack to have been a teacher in the Church at Antioch before being invested with the apostolate by the Church. "Expansion," i. 420 f. It is rather far-fetched to read into the ordered enumeration as 1st Cor. xii. 28 ("first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers") the conception of a clerical hierarchy in the primitive Church, as Mr Turner does. "Studies in Early Church History," 13 (1912). It shows a distinction in function and importance. But "hierarchy" suggests something different from itinerant missionaries and exhorters, who exercise their function for the benefit of the Church at large, and whose authority is not based on ecclesiastical institution, but on the consciousness of their divine call. Holl also applies the term hierarchy to the Twelve in the Jerusalem Church. "Aufsätze," ii. 52. Its use is rather misleading, especially as the apostle and the prophet ultimately disappear from the Church.

²⁸ 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

²⁹ 2 Cor. xi. 13.

denounces as false apostles. Moreover, the apostolic and prophetic claim to be the mouthpiece of God might, and did in fact, give rise to crude teaching at a time when religious enthusiasm was the predominant feature of the communal life. Hence the necessity for "proving" or discerning these special charismatics—a right which inhered in the community itself, in whose midst they appeared.

Apostles, prophets, teachers are not created by the community. It is God that has set them in the Church; the Spirit that has called them.³⁰ All three serve not one community, but the Church at large. Their function is universal. They are itinerants who are not appointed by or to a particular community, though there appear to have been local prophets and teachers who do not necessarily perform their function outside it.³¹ Their œcumenical function should, therefore, not be too rigidly conceived. As itinerants, they not only further the common cause in the expansion of the Gospel and the building up of the community; they are links of the wider unity between the various communities. This unity was also furthered by the intercourse between the churches by means of deputations from one church or group of churches to another, by the visits of individual members of different churches, by epistolary intercourse not only on the part of the apostles, but of one church with another. Within this wider but informal union groups of churches in the same province, such as those of Judæa, Syria and Cilicia, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, Asia, also maintain a closer communion.

LOFTY CONCEPTION OF THE CHURCH

Of the Church, which is thus in process of being founded and built up throughout the Gentile world, Paul has a very lofty conception. As the believers have been chosen and predestined by God before the foundation of the world,³² so God has from eternity chosen the Church, which in their corporate capacity they form, as the means of revealing the mystery of the Divine plan in the redemption of the world.³³ Within it, and apparently exclusively within it, the revelation of the Divine will in redemption is made, and the salvation of mankind achieved. The Jewish idea of a chosen people as the exclusive organ of salvation reappears in the Pauline view of the Church, though the chosen

³⁰ 1 Cor. xii. 28; Acts xiii. 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, xiv. 29 f.

³² Rom. viii. 28 f.

³³ Col. i. 24 f.

people is or may become, in this case, coequal with humanity³⁴ and develops its own distinctive corporate life and organisation. Within it, *i.e.*, in the individuals who compose it and of whose gifts He makes use, the Holy Spirit operates. In it especially, as a spiritual and ethical society, God works His highest purpose in the creation of the world, the redemption and perfection of man.

As the corporate expression of this conception and purpose, it has an ideal aspect and significance. The actual Church, with its imperfections and constant need of inspiration to the higher life, disappears, and the ideal mystic Church stands out as the habitation of God and His Spirit, the temple of the living God, the mystic body of Christ.³⁵ Its members have become through Christ the spiritual Israel, and are knit together under Him as its Head.³⁶ They are, therefore, members of a supernatural society in which the perfect spiritual and ethical life is embodied.

CHAPTER X

COMMUNAL RELIGIOUS LIFE

INFLUENCE OF GENTILE ENVIRONMENT

In their communal life the Gentile Christian communities resemble those of Palestine. At the same time they reveal distinctive features, due to the individuality of their founder and their Gentile environment. They show the imprint of Paul's original mind and religious experience. Moreover, they consist of Gentile as well as Jewish converts, and in many of these the Gentile converts form the large majority. We are, therefore, no longer in an exclusively or predominantly Jewish atmosphere, inasmuch as the Jewish converts, in virtue of their Hellenist environment, have to a certain extent emancipated themselves from religious particularism, whilst the Gentile converts, apart from "the God fearers," are unaffected by it. Christianity has been transplanted into a different environment from that of its origin. On the one hand, it has become the religion of humanity. On the other, it is in contact with a less elevated religious and ethical life—with the idolatry and sensualism of the Gentile world. In both respects the Gentile Christian community shows the influence of its environment.

³⁴ Rom. ix.-xi.

³⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 16-17; 2 Cor. vi. 16.

³⁶ Col. ii. 19.

MYSTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

In this community, as in Palestine, membership is conditioned by repentance and baptism, based on faith in Jesus the Christ. Though in the account of the mission in Acts baptism is seldom mentioned, and Paul himself esteemed it of much less importance than the preaching of the Gospel,¹ it has in the Epistles a mystic religious significance, which it does not seem to have had in the primitive apostolic preaching. It not only symbolises the remission of sins. It betokens the dying of the believer with Christ and the rising with Him to newness of life. In this mystic, more sacramental conception of the rite, there is an echo of that current in Greek mystery religion which Paul seems to have appropriated in striving to impress on the minds of Gentile believers the imperative obligation of renouncing sin and living the higher life of faith. "Even so reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ."²

SPIRITUAL INTENSITY, WORSHIP, AND EDIFICATION

As in the primitive Palestinian community, its members live in the expectation of the coming of Christ. "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."³ The same primitive note is apparent in the working of the Spirit in and through the community. Its religious life is intensely experimental. It finds its characteristic expression in the exercise of the gifts or powers—the charismata—conferred by the Spirit. These manifest themselves, in a variety of forms, in service and worship—in prophecy, in ministry, in teaching, in exhortation, in liberality, in works of mercy, in the word of wisdom, in the word of knowledge, in works of faith, in healings, in working of miracles, in the discerning of spirits (the false from the true prophet), in speaking with tongues, and in the interpretation of them.⁴ This enumeration betokens an intensity of spiritual life, the source of which is the Spirit of God, and which creates its own varied expression. There is as little artifice about it as in the spring that gushes from the hillside. Its communal life is largely self-creative according as the Spirit manifests itself in the varied gifts of its members which it calls into activity.

¹ 1 Cor. i. 13 f. In Acts only in the case of Lydia and the jailer at Philippi, and the disciples of John at Ephesus.

² Rom. vi. 11.

³ Phil. iii. 20; cf. 1 Thess. iv. and v.; Gal. v. 5; Col. iii. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 23 f.; 2 Cor. v. 1 f.

⁴ Rom. xii. 6 f.; 1 Cor. xii. 4 f.

It finds ample scope in the daily meetings for devotion and edification. In these assemblies the members join in singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, in thanksgiving for God's blessings, and also in mutual exhortation.⁵ Confession of Jesus as Lord is made⁶ and spontaneous prayer offered, the members joining in the Amen.⁷ Prayer is offered to God, not to, but only in the name of Christ, though He might be invoked in ejaculatory fashion, as in the *Maranatha*, and hymns seem to have been addressed to Him. The Old Testament Scriptures are read,⁸ and some one could recite the sayings and acts of Jesus, which were ultimately recorded in the later Gospels. Paul reminds the Corinthians that he himself had recited to them the facts of Christ's death and resurrection and His various appearances after death.⁹ Then several of those present would prophesy or teach,¹⁰ the prophets communicating the revelations which came to them from God,¹¹ and in regard to which the members exercise the right of discernment.¹² Others would launch into the ecstatic utterance known as speaking with tongues—an incoherent outburst of religious emotion which needed interpretation. It was by no means confined to Christian worship, and Paul, who greatly preferred prophecy, sought to regulate it in the interest of edification and, without such regulation, discouraged it.¹³ The women members also ventured to pray and prophesy. Paul was prepared to sanction the practice, provided they did so with veiled head.¹⁴ Otherwise he peremptorily forbade it in deference to current Oriental custom.¹⁵ Whilst ready enough to make use of their gifts in certain forms of service and warmly expressing his appreciation of this service, he obviously shared the conventional Oriental notion of the subordination of the female to the male sex. In this respect he unduly allows current Oriental prejudice to restrict the operation of the Spirit, which knows no artificial distinction of this kind between the sexes.

Evidently the implicit belief in the inspiration of the Spirit gave rise to a great deal of crude talking and confusion in these primitive assemblies. Swayed by the impulse of the moment men and women would spring to their feet and launch together into incoherent harangues or hysteric cries, without any con-

⁵ Col. iii. 16 ; 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

⁶ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, xiv. 16.

⁸ This is implied, if not stated.

⁹ 1 Cor. xv. 3 ; *cf.* xi. 23 f.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xiv. 26.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xiv. 29 f.

¹² *διακρίσις*.

¹³ 1 Cor. xiv. 1 f.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xi. 5, 13.

¹⁵ 1 Cor. xiv. 34. The prohibition in this passage seems to forbid absolutely women to speak in the church and seems inconsistent with 1 Cor. xi. 5, 13. Some critics accordingly regard it as an interpolation.

sideration for order or the edification of others. In the interest of order as well as edification, the apostle was forced to rebuke and regulate. His intervention would seem to have been effective, and the practice of reading his Epistles as well as the Old Testament Scriptures in these assemblies also contributed to counteract the unsteady influence of religious enthusiasm.

CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Besides the assembly for worship and edification, the members meet on the Lord's day to partake of a common meal,¹⁶ for which they bring the provisions. It was an occasion of thanksgiving¹⁷ and fellowship, and in its social, religious character bears resemblance to the common meal of the religious confraternities. It culminated in the simple rite inaugurated by Jesus at the close of the Last Supper. A loaf of bread, after thanks offered, is broken in fragments and distributed to the members. Similarly a cup of wine, after being blessed, is handed round. The celebration is a commemoration and a communion.¹⁸ It brings to mind the sacrifice of Christ for them and the new covenant between God and them which this sacrifice seals, and it intensifies their fellowship with Him and with one another. The bread and wine symbolise the body and blood of Christ, and the one loaf, of which all partake, further symbolises their oneness in this fellowship. "We, who are many, are one bread, one body, for we all partake of the one bread."¹⁹ The rite not only symbolises; it connotes both spiritual communion with Him whom it commemorates, and their common fellowship as His disciples. Hence the scathing rebuke of the Corinthians, who behave as if the meal preceding it were an ordinary repast, the wealthier members regaling themselves even to excess in separate groups, whilst the poor sit apart and have little to eat and drink.²⁰ A fine preparation this for the commemoration of Christ's death and the fellowship of believers with Him and with one another! In their gross materialist spirit, they are lacking in self-examination and in spiritual discernment and are in danger of eating and drinking judgment to themselves.²¹

Whilst Paul thus emphasises the religious significance of the rite as a commemoration and a communion, he does not seem to

¹⁶ Acts xx. 7.

¹⁷ εὐχαριστία. 1 Cor. xi. 24, in reference to the thanksgiving by Christ Himself in taking the bread.

¹⁸ ἀνάμνησις, κοινωνία.

¹⁹ 1 Cor. x. 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xi. 17 f.

²¹ *Ibid.*, xi. 27 f.

associate with it ideas derived from the Greek mysteries, as Bousset²² and others infer. He refers to pagan sacramentalism, in which the votary of the god, in partaking of the things sacrificed to him, partakes of his substance and holds communion with him, as "a communion with devils."²³ He warns his Corinthian converts to flee from such idolatry.²⁴ He explicitly takes his conception of the rite from the original institution at the Last Supper, as tradition has handed it down, as he is careful to inform the Corinthians.²⁵ He emphasises its spiritual character and effects. It is spiritual food and drink, not the actual body and blood of which believers partake, in communion with the Lord and in fellowship with one another. He finds the type of this spiritual nourishment at the Lord's table not in pagan sacramentalism, but in the Old Testament. As in the case of the manna and the water flowing from the rock, of which the Israelites partook in the desert, and which he interprets, in rabbinic fashion, as a type of the Eucharist, he sees in the bread and wine spiritual,²⁶ not material, food and drink. Christ is truly present in the elements only to him who by faith "discerns the body,"²⁷ or discriminates between the material symbol and that which it symbolises. It is, therefore, very risky to take the eating and drinking of the body and blood in the literal sense and to see, with Dieterich,²⁸ in the Christian rite, as conceived by Paul, a mere replica of pagan sacramentalism. At the same time, the train of thought present in the minds of the Corinthian converts, which Paul has in view, might pave the way for the later materialistic conception of the rite, from which he seeks to deflect them. That he himself shared it is, I think, a hazardous conclusion. In the Pauline Churches the great dynamic is faith and the Spirit of God, and baptism and the Lord's Supper are spiritual, not material, adjuncts of the believer's faith and the Spirit's activity. Both salvation and sanctification are the result of faith and the working of the Spirit in the believer's heart. "We look not at

²² Comm. on I Cor. ("Schriften des N.T.").

²³ I Cor. x. 20. On the ideas associated with pagan sacramentalism, see Lietzmann, "Handbuch," iii. 124 f.

²⁴ I Cor. x. 14.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, xi. 23.

²⁶ πνευματικόν. I Cor. x. 1 f.

²⁷ διακρίνω.

²⁸ Christus Wird gegessen und getrunken von den Glaubigen und ist dadurch in ihnen . . . weil er (der Glaubige) Leib und Blut auf jeden Fall faktisch gegessen hat "Eine Mithrasliturgie," 106 (1910). See also Wernle, "Beginnings of Christianity," i. 273. J. Weiss thinks that a certain influence of pagan sacramentalism is discernible in Paul's conception. "Urchristenthum," 508. Against this inference, see Kennedy, "St Paul and the Mystery Religions," 262 f. (1913). For an illuminating discussion of Paul's view of the Eucharist, see Réville, "Les Origines de l'Eucharistie," 71 f. (1908).

the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." "We walk by faith, not by sight." "Ye are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ." "Quench not the Spirit." This is the distinctive Pauline Gospel. "Paul," judges Harnack, "was the first and almost the last theologian of the early Church with whom sacramental theology was held in check by clear ideas and strictly spiritual considerations."²⁹

IMPERFECT UNITY

The unity of the community symbolised and expressed by the rite was only imperfectly realised in its communal life. From the outset dissension over the obligation of the Law for all believers begets faction and animosity. On this and other questions, such as the resurrection, the apprehension of the Gospel as proclaimed by Jesus Himself, the difference of view among the leaders is reflected within the communities. It appears in all the Epistles. The Thessalonians are exhorted "to be at peace among themselves";³⁰ the Galatians not "to bite and devour one another."³¹ "It has been signified unto me concerning you," he writes to the Corinthians, "that there are contentions among you."³² The Romans are besought to "mark them who are causing divisions and occasions of stumbling."³³ Even his beloved Philippians are entreated to "be of the same mind and do nothing through faction,"³⁴ and the Colossians to forbear one another and forgive each other, in love, the bond of perfectness.³⁵ Hence the recurring emphasis on the community as the mystic body of Christ, whose members, as in the human body, form a unity in the diversity of their functions.³⁶ Hence, again, the obligation of Jew and Gentile to live in harmony as the one people of God,³⁷ and the recurring proclamation that in Christ there is no distinction of race, or sex, or social status. In the face of the all too-prevalent party spirit, Paul emphatically condemns the division which splits the community, especially at Corinth, into rival factions, who range themselves under the party names of Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ. "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" Evidently at Corinth, and to a certain extent elsewhere, these "schisms" were tending to devitalise the Gospel as a message

²⁹ "Expansion," i. 289.

³⁰ 1 Thess. v. 14.

³¹ Gal. v. 15.

³² 1 Cor. i. 11, etc.

³³ Rom. xvi. 17.

³⁴ Phil. ii. 2-3.

³⁵ Col. iii. 13-14.

³⁶ 1 Cor. xii. 12 f.; Rom. xii. 4 f.

³⁷ Rom. xv. 7 f.

of redemption. Here we have the nascent ecclesiastical tendency to magnify individual nostrums at the expense of the spiritual realities of the Gospel, which was to deform its true character and encumber its progress throughout the centuries. Paul strives his hardest to counter it by insisting on the supreme authority of Christ as the foundation on which the community is built. "What then is Apollos and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed. . . . For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."³⁸ In his desire to further the Gospel he is prepared even to make the best of this factious spirit and to rejoice that "only in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed."³⁹ On the other hand, it is a fair question whether he himself did not contribute to nurture it by his insistence at other times on his specific version of the Gospel as necessarily the exclusive interpretation of that of Jesus. His rabbinic argumentation in the exposition and defence of the Gospel was not always fitted to convince the objector on historic grounds.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

MORAL DECLENSION OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

FOR Paul the Gospel is not only a message of redemption. It is a new ethic to be applied by the individual and the community in practical life. In every Epistle he strives to transform individual and communal life by means of this ethic, which is inspired by and infused with the ideal and the spirit of Jesus Himself. There are in them distinct echoes of the Sermon on the Mount.

As the habitation of the Spirit, the community, individually and collectively, embodies this new ethical life. It is there both as a witness to the Gospel, as "lights in the world holding forth the word of life," and an evidence of its practical efficacy in a world which he depicts in very dark colours. An unmitigated moral declension prevails throughout it. He judges it on the *a priori* principle that idolatry can only produce moral degradation. Hence the appalling immorality depicted in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and other passages.¹ The picture is

³⁸ 1 Cor. iii. 5, 11.

³⁹ Phil. i. 17 f.

¹ Cf., for instance, 1 Cor. v. 10 f.; 1 Thess. iv. 4 f.

doubtless an exaggeration. Whilst he recognises that the Gentiles have a certain knowledge of God, he fails to see that the recognition of the divine in the universe, which underlies their idolatry, might impart a moral value and stimulus to life. The spread of the Oriental cults westwards betokens a fairly widespread religious and moral earnestness. With the exception of the extreme forms of polytheism which pandered to immorality, idolatry was not necessarily the nurse of the category of vices which he imputes to it. Moreover, he ignores the practical influence of an elevated ethic like that of the Stoics, who strove to educate the mass as well as the cultured class in the principles and practice of the higher life.

At the same time, there is truth as well as exaggeration in his generalisation. Grave moral declension was all too prevalent in the cities of Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece, of which he could speak from observation, and in Rome itself, which he was ere long to visit. Contemporary Roman literature has much to tell of the odious vices which he mentions, and the category could be abundantly illustrated from this source. It is by no means a flattering picture that historic research into the moral condition of the early Empire reveals.² It shows, for instance, a grave relapse from the old Roman simplicity and strength of character. Sycophancy and servility flourish in the imperial court. The proudest aristocracy grovels not only before the Emperor, but before his freed men, the all-powerful dispensers of his favour, whilst the prejudice of rank and race nevertheless looks askance at the lower classes and despises the provincials as "barbarians." Marriage is held in scant respect in the higher circles, in which the wedded life is frequently a cover for the life of licence. In Rome the position of women³ was higher than in Greece, where the wife was a neglected drudge, and the *hetairai* wielded a demoralising sway. Husband and wife were equal before the law, but the conjugal bond was in the first century A.D. very loose. Family and social life was degraded by the evils of abortion, by the exposure or murder of infants. Equally prevalent, as Paul scathingly notes, the revolting vice of male prostitution (*paiderastia*). The indecency of literature is only too true an index of the indecency of social life. The self-respect and industry of the people are sapped by the imperial largess and

² See Friedländer, "Sittengeschichte Roms," trans. from 7th German ed. under the title "Roman Life and Manners Under the Early Empire," by Magnus and Freese.

³ On the position of women in Greece and Rome, see Donaldson, "Woman, Her Position and Influence in Ancient Greece and Rome and Early Christianity" (1907).

the brutal spectacles of the amphitheatre (*Panem et Circenses*). The curse of slavery consigns in Rome alone more than half the population of over a million and a half to a life of bondage. Out of their toil and suffering the upper classes sweat the riches which minister to their luxury and excess. The profession of humanity is too often but a hollow pretence. One might indefinitely enlarge on such characteristics of the higher social life of the imperial capital in illustration of the apostle's sombre delineation of the moral condition of the Gentile world. There was much that was heartless, degrading, revolting in the world in which Paul lived and in which the Gentile Christian communities took their rise. But the great cities are not, after all, the measure of the Empire, and even within the cities it would be unfair to gauge the morality of the age exclusively from that of its fashionable circles. There are testimonies to the purity as well as the impurity of family life, to the considerate treatment of slaves, to the fact of virtuous and strong characters, to the humanising and elevating influence of philosophy which seemed to anticipate the Christian spirit. These certainly preclude us from taking too literally the apostle's generalisation. In spite of the thousand and one details of moral declension which Friedländer adduces, he does not omit to warn his readers against an indiscriminating pessimism. "An age which raised itself by its own efforts to higher and purer views of morality than all the ages which preceded it, which not only produced a Musonius, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, but in which these preachers of a gentle, truly human system of ethics were generally admired and their doctrines generally adopted, cannot have been an age of utter moral decay, as it has been so often called. . . . It would be inadmissible to draw general conclusions from these sources alone (writers like the elder Pliny, Seneca, Tacitus, and the satirists) as to the morality of the whole period, even if they did not offer, amidst much that is repulsive, hateful, and horrifying, many agreeable and sublime impressions, which even decidedly predominate in other authorities, such as the letters of the younger Pliny, and the works of Quintilian, Plutarch, and Gellius. And if we leave out of consideration those declamations about the disappearance of the 'good old times,' it will be difficult to find any evidence in the literature of the age that men thought they were living in a period of general decay, but rather the reverse."⁴

Paul himself corrects his one-sided estimate in other passages which recognise in the Gentiles the presence and activity of the moral sense and the possibility of the moral life even for the

⁴ "Roman Life and Manners," iii. 280-281.

idolater. Whilst the Gentiles have not the benefit of the revealed law, like the Jews, they can, he points out in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, still do by nature the things of the law. They have, in fact, the law written in their hearts, in the testimony of conscience, which excuses or accuses them. He assumes, too, a common moral standard such as the Stoics were striving to emphasise and a capacity of moral discrimination in those among whom his converts lived.⁵ At the same time, his dominant thought is the wickedness of the world in which these converts are placed, and the coming judgment for which it is ripe. There can be no doubt that their moral environment made the realisation of the Christian ideal of life in the Gentile Christian communities by no means easy. That it took root and grew in these communities, in spite of so unpromising an atmosphere, is a conclusive proof of the power of the Gospel and the fervour of its first preachers.

JEWISH PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIAN MORALITY

The Epistles show us how and how far this ideal was embodied in the communities. They reflect the educative process by which the old becomes the new. In this respect the Palestinian communities were in a different position from those of the Græco-Roman world. In their case the law had been a preparatory school for Christian morality. They were familiar with the fact of a holy God and the pure life which He requires. The ethical monotheism of the Jews is the ethical monotheism of the Jewish Christians. The Jewish Scriptures, fortified as they were by the ethical teaching of Jesus, became the Christian Scriptures. Even Jesus could not improve upon the decalogue. A change of spirit and outlook and a quickening of faith rather than a revolution of the moral life was what Christianity meant for the pious Jew. A Christian morality had not to be created for him as for the Gentile Christian. His moral training was already Christian in all essential respects, though Paul, rather extremely, represents in the second chapter of the Romans the moral condition of the Jews as practically on a level with that of the Gentiles, and hits hard at the immorality underlying Jewish religious profession.

To a certain extent the synagogue of the Diaspora had already prepared the way for the Christian life in the larger world outside Palestine, in the case at least of those who had been Jews or proselytes before they became Christians. Far otherwise was it in the case of the purely pagan converts to Christianity. Not

⁵ Phil. iv. 8 ; 1 Thess. iv. 12.

that the Græco-Roman world was lacking in moral standards and moral teaching which were being popularised by the wandering preachers and reformers of the day. In this respect the world was being prepared for the Christian missionary. But apart from the limited effect of this propaganda, such moral teaching at its best was still below the level of the Christian ideal. Paul again and again reminds his converts of the contrast between their former moral life and that which Christianity exacts. In this fact lay, indeed, the chief obstacle to the realisation of the ethical ideal for which the community stands.

MORAL IDEAL AND RENEWAL

With the enforcement of this ideal in the community, as well as the exposition of the Gospel as a theory of salvation, the Pauline Epistles are largely concerned. Paul is not only the preacher of a gospel of redemption, though this is, even in the letters, a supremely important part of his function. He is a moralist as well as a preacher, and the practical exemplification of the Gospel is as important as the Gospel itself. "Let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel," he urges his beloved Philippians.⁶ The life of the community is as much a matter of vital concern as its faith. Hence its supreme importance as the nurse of the ethical life in its Christian form. Entrance into it involves nothing less than newness of life, the moral renovation as well as the salvation of the individual soul. "If any man be in Christ," he tells the Corinthians, "he is a new creature; the old things are passed away; behold they are become new."⁷ They are to purge out the old leaven that they may be a new lump.⁸ Similarly, he impresses on the Romans and the Colossians the necessity of this ethical renewing. "Be not fashioned according to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."⁹ "Put on the new man," he exhorts the Colossians, "which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him."¹⁰

CONFLICT OF SPIRIT AND FLESH

This moral renovation involves the conflict between the spirit and the flesh, which stands not merely for sensual vices, though this is prominent, but for all desires and acts that are

⁶ i. 29.

⁷ 2 Cor. v. 17.

⁸ 1 Cor. v. 7.

⁹ ἀνακαταβρωσις. Rom. xii. 2. See also Rom. vi. 4; ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς.

¹⁰ Col. iii. 10.

ethically lowering. The antithesis between the two is absolute; the obligation of renouncing the works of the flesh and bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit imperative. "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Of the which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they which practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance. Against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof."¹¹

Such antithetic enumerations occur frequently and denote what the community is to be, in contrast to the world out of which it has been gathered. Recurring emphasis is laid on sins such as fornication, drunkenness, idolatry, to which it is specially exposed in virtue of its environment. The believer is constantly reminded of the coming judgment on these things, and the thought of this judgment is emphasised as a moral incentive. The sensual influences of the polytheistic atmosphere are an ever-present menace to Christian morals and faith in all the communities. "Flee fornication," "flee idolatry," he implores the Corinthians. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor coveters, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But," he adds thankfully, "ye were washed; ye were sanctified; ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."¹²

In spite of his conception of the flesh as a clog to the moral life, Paul recognises and emphasises the Christian consecration of the body as the habitation of the Spirit of God. "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God? And ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price. Glorify God, therefore, in your body."¹³ So, too, the Christian, as the temple of God, can have no fellowship with an idolater. In the case of the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever, for instance, though those already

¹¹ Gal. v. 16-24.

¹² 1 Cor. vi. 9-11.

¹³ *Ibid.*, vi. 19-20.

married are not lightly to separate on this account.¹⁴ "And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? For we are a temple of the living God. . . . Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate."¹⁵

LOVE, THE SUPREME VIRTUE

The great, the distinctive fruit of the Spirit is love. The Galatians and the Romans are reminded that "the whole law is fulfilled in this one word."¹⁶ To the Corinthians is indited the superb rhapsody on love as the greatest of the virtues. The Colossians are "to put on above all things love which is the bond of perfectness."¹⁷ The Thessalonians "to abound and increase in love towards one another and toward all men."¹⁸ The Philippians are to have the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.¹⁹ In it is the essence of the Christian Spirit which shows itself in kindness, compassion, gentleness, longsuffering, not only in the relations of the brethren with one another, but with all men, and even with enemies.²⁰ Love is especially to manifest itself in the case of the weak and the helpless, the poor and the sick. It is the grand panacea for the ills of a world that is full of misery. It strives to grapple with the problem of this misery, as it shows itself in the poverty and hardship of the mass of oppressed humanity. It is the active antithesis of the doctrine that the weak must go to the wall and sets itself the task of salving the social wreckage of the age. But it is not only the secret of an active philanthropy. It is the cement of unity which is also specially emphasised in the Epistles. This unity is essential if the community is to preserve oneness in the faith and maintain itself in the face of a hostile world.

CHRISTIAN ETHIC RELATIVE TO SOCIAL LIFE

This ethical ideal the members are to carry into the whole sphere of life. Christian morality consecrates the life of the Christian without as well as within the community. Christianity does not ignore or minimise the real, whilst emphasising the ideal side of life. It moulds all social relations—that of the citizen to the State, of husband and wife, of parents and children, of master and slave, of man and man in the ordinary business of

¹⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 12.

¹⁵ 2 Cor. vi. 16-17.

¹⁶ Gal. v. 14; Rom. xiii. 8.

¹⁷ iii. 14.

¹⁸ 1 Thess. iii. 12.

¹⁹ ii. 2.

²⁰ Gal. vi. 10; Rom. xii. 20.

life. It requires due obedience to the civil power as ordained by God, and as the minister of God, and therefore endowed with an ethical function. Such obedience is an obligation imposed by the Christian conscience as well as by the fear of punishment.²¹ Paul has no sympathy with the rebellious spirit of the Palestinian Jew, though he certainly loved his own people. He is a loyal citizen of the Empire and it is characteristically in the Epistle to the Romans that obedience to constituted authority and the conscientious rendering of all State dues are emphasised. He accepts the State as it is, and is not concerned with politics. The only limit to obedience evidently lies in the injunction to flee idolatry, which inevitably brought the Christian into collision with the State, and here the motive is religious, not political.

Though marriage appears to Paul in no higher light than as a concession to the weakness of the flesh, the marriage bond is sacred and does not permit to the Christian the lax relations so prevalent in the Gentile world.²² Separation from an unbelieving husband or wife may, in certain circumstances, be advisable or even allowable, though he shared Jesus' conception of the inadmissibility of divorce. But fornication never fails to find a prominent place in the apostle's category of heinous sins. He does not sufficiently realise the ethical side of marriage and, in this respect, reflects the current view of it as a thing of the flesh. There is a strong note of asceticism in the Epistles in this respect. He even encourages his younger converts, both male and female, to remain unmarried as more befitting the Christian life, especially in view of the shortness of the time. But though marriage appears almost as a necessary evil, he strongly emphasises the duty of sanctifying it in a Christian spirit. He raises it to the plane of mutual obligation. The subjection of the wife to the husband is balanced by the love of the husband to the wife, and the latter is as imperative as the former.²³ A due appreciation of the rights of womanhood may be lacking, for Paul seems to share the Oriental notion of the subordination of woman and, in the Oriental spirit, lays an altogether artificial stress on such formal matters as hair-dressing and veiling the face.²⁴ The modern mind revolts against the assumption that the wife has no rights against the husband, except the right of subjection, and that this condition of subjection extends to her place in the community.²⁵ Yet we cannot but feel that, in the Christian atmosphere, woman has been raised by religion, if not by law, into a higher sphere of esteem, love, reverence than in the non-Christian atmosphere. Christian

²¹ Rom. xiii. 1-7.

²² 1 Cor. vii. 1-17.

²³ Col. iii. 18-19.

²⁴ 1 Cor. xi.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, xiv. 34.

morality knows no difference of sex in the application of its lofty standard of life, and from this point of view the evaluation of womanhood could not be higher than in the Pauline Epistles.

The same principle of mutual obligation applies to the relation of parents and children, master and slave. The relation is not modified from the legal point of view. But it is pervaded by the Christian spirit. The apostle accepts the institution of slavery, as he accepts the constitution of the State as it is. Primitive Christianity involves neither a political nor a social revolution, though its leavening influence might ultimately tend to produce both. It is a moral and religious movement, and it would have been absolutely visionary to attempt to overthrow the political and social institutions of the Empire as well as evangelise it. But the slave in becoming a Christian, while not ceasing to be a slave, acquires the ethical value of a brother in Christ. He becomes "the Lord's freedman,"²⁶ and has a right to be treated accordingly by his earthly master.²⁷ As an ethical power governing the social life in all its forms, Christianity is superior to anything in Græco-Roman civilisation.

IMPERFECT REALISATION OF IDEAL

Needless to say, the community and the individual Christian, as the Pauline Epistles show, were by no means the actual embodiment of this ideal. The apostle frequently, indeed, notes with joy and appreciation the progress of the various communities in the Christian life. We feel that a real education of the Christian conscience, a real moral transformation are taking place, and that the primitive enthusiasm is not the product of a mere wave of religious excitement. It is as a new life, of which the Spirit is the source and the nurse, that Christianity expands in the Gentile world. It is not by preaching a superior system of morals that Paul engenders and fosters this new life. It is not the Gospel as a new law, but as a new life that he preaches. He does not believe that correct belief or mere ordinance will make the world virtuous even if he lays such stress on faith. The Gospel is not a system of belief or law, though he can be dogmatic enough against its opponents, whom he regards as its subverters, and legislates for the Churches. It is faith united with love, which "serves one another." It is freedom from the law and tradition, and it is in this free atmosphere that the ethical life, which is the fruit of it, is developed. But this freedom is conditioned by the very Gospel that confers it. It is only freedom to grow in love, purity,

²⁶ 1 Cor. vii. 22.

²⁷ See especially the Epistle to Philemon.

and every Christian gift. That the misapprehension or the misuse of this freedom existed, and was a real danger to Christian morality, is amply apparent from the letters. The Galatians, for instance, are warned not to use their freedom for an occasion to the flesh.²⁸ Among the Thessalonians were "some that walk disorderly," shirking the obligation to work and disobeying the apostle's command to earn their bread by their labour, and leave off busyboding.²⁹ The Colossians, like the Galatians, are in danger of entangling themselves in the old bondage of ceremonial usages and "subjecting themselves to ordinances . . . after the precepts and doctrines of men."³⁰ On the other hand, the Romans are disposed to make a too-ample use of their liberty to eat and drink, in spite of the vegetarian and abstemious prejudices of weaker brethren, and are exhorted not to put "a stumbling block" or "an occasion of falling" in such matters in their brother's way.³¹ Though himself inclined to asceticism, Paul took a very rational view of the religious significance of such formal acts. Christianity is freedom from artificial religiosity of this kind. But, if in principle liberal and rational, he is ready to limit freedom, and even sacrifice his own rational judgment for the sake of the weak brother. Even among the Philippians there are those who so "walk that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is perdition, whose god is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."³²

It is in the Corinthian community that the misuse or the misapprehension of Christian freedom is most apparent. In the Epistles written to the Corinthians there is no lack of appreciation of their attainments in the Christian life. As Paul thankfully acknowledges, "they come behind in no gift."³³ "Ye are our epistle," he exclaims enthusiastically, "written in our hearts, known and read of all men."³⁴ At the same time, they reveal a truly surprising relapse from the primitive Christian ideal. Not only is the community torn by party divisions and the authority of the apostle openly flouted in favour of other leaders like Peter and Apollos,³⁵ and even false apostles who are mere pretenders to apostolic authority.³⁶ Not only have divisions or schisms and heresies or factions thus arisen in their midst.³⁷ There is indulgence in sensual vice on the part of many of the members.³⁸ One is actually living in fornication with his stepmother,³⁹ "such

²⁸ v. 13.

²⁹ 1 Thess. v. 14; 2 Thess. iii. 6 f.

³⁰ ii. 16-23.

³¹ xiv.

³² Phil. iii. 18-19.

²³ 1 Cor. i. 7.

³⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 2.

³⁵ 1 Cor. i.-iv.

³⁶ 2 Cor. xi. 13-15.

³⁷ 1 Cor. xi. 18-19.

³⁸ 2 Cor. xii. 21.

³⁹ 1 Cor. v.

fornication as is not even among the Gentiles." The members go to law with one another in the pagan law courts, instead of referring their disputes to the arbitration of the brethren, or suffering wrong rather than yield to the unchristian litigious spirit. Some even do not refrain from defrauding their brethren.⁴⁰ Many still take part in pagan rites and usages. Not only have they been members of the pagan confraternities before becoming Christians. They have remained members after their conversion and take part in the feasts in the pagan temples at which the sacrificial flesh was consumed. Their motive in doing so was social, not religious, and they acted on the principle that their Christian freedom allowed them to participate in this social life, especially as they had come to recognise the one true God and to realise the unreality of the idols to which this flesh was offered before being consumed, and which are not gods, but only demons. The practice, however, involved a danger for others as well as themselves. The weak brethren were not able thus to discriminate. Whilst vindicating in principle the right to eat things sacrificed to idols, Paul condemns the practice on this ground, and on the further ground that those who partake in these idolatrous feasts cannot worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, and, as in the case of the Romans, demands the limitation of Christian freedom for the sake of others.⁴¹ To their credit, the Corinthians, who had sought his advice in such matters, appear to have taken it to heart, and renounced such abuses. Still, the Second Epistle, or that part of it which is regarded as a separate one, shows that renewed admonition was necessary in order to counteract the sinister tendency to faction and licence.⁴²

CHAPTER XII

PAUL'S CONTRIBUTION TO CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

ITS CHARACTER

PAUL made a momentous contribution to the Gospel not only as a movement but as a message. He explicitly universalised it and furnished the rationale of the universalism that was implicit, and in several passages explicit, in the teaching of Jesus. In addition he gave it, as a message of redemption, a distinctive content out of his own fertile, creative mind. Here, also, he worked

⁴⁰ 1 Cor. vi.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, viii., ix., x.

⁴² 2 Cor. x.-xiii.

with ideas contained in the message of Jesus Himself and that of His personal disciples about Him. At the same time, he went beyond both and impressed on it his own thought and religious experience. He developed as well as interpreted it, and this development was, in important, if not in all respects, to exercise a moulding influence on the later teaching of the Church.

He took over from the primitive teaching the doctrines of the death, resurrection, and glorified existence of Christ; of faith in Him as the divinely appointed Messiah; of salvation through Him from the coming judgment; of repentance and baptism in or into His name as symbolic of the remission of sin and as a consecration of the believer to Him as Christ and Lord; of the gift of the Spirit as the inspiration of the believer's life. On this basis he raised the structure of his own religious thought and experience, which obviously differs, in certain respects, from the Gospel as it was proclaimed by Jesus and apprehended by His personal disciples. It could not well be otherwise in view of the difference in culture, training, temperament, and religious experience which he carried over from his pre-Christian into his Christian thought and life. In contrast to Jesus and His personal disciples, he was a Hellenist Jew, in whom an intense Hebraism was blended with the Hellenism of his environment, though the Hebrew influence was substantially the most potent. We do not need his own assurance that in his pre-Christian period he was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," a Pharisee.¹ His Epistles amply reflect his early Phariseeism. They show that his mind was steeped "in the Jews' religion," "the traditions of my fathers." At the same time, they also show familiarity with the wider culture of his Hellenist environment. He is a hybrid, if the Hebrew breed is unmistakably predominant. The Jewish Rabbi tintured with Hellenism would best describe him. His rabbinism is embedded in his theology.

CHRIST AND HIS REDEMPITIVE WORK

He starts with a conception of the universe and man that has a resemblance to the pessimistic view of them both as dominated by evil, current in Hellenist thought. To it matter is essentially evil and the world is ruled by astral powers which exercise over it the dominance of fate. For Paul, too, human nature is in bondage to evil, though the creation is not in itself evil. He does not go the length of regarding the material existence of man

¹ Phil. iii. 5; cf. Gal. i. 14; 2 Cor. xi. 22.

as wholly bad, even if his language comes pretty near it at times. In virtue of sin, flesh and spirit are in inevitable antagonism. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in bondage and in corruption until now" under the régime of the astral powers or principalities.² From this régime God has provided a redemption in and through Christ. He belongs to the sphere of the divine. He is the pre-existent Son of God and the First-born of all creation, the Agent of God in creation, redemption, and the completed divine rule in the final "reconciliation," "subjection of all things," even Christ, to Him.³ Though pre-existent, He is subordinate to God the Father. He is not God in the absolute sense, and ultimately He will, in the accomplishment of God's redeeming will and purpose in and through Him, resign His divinely appointed function in order "that God may be all in all." At the completion of His redeeming mission on earth He offered Himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for man's sin, paid the penalty for sin, and thus made man's free forgiveness by God possible. The benefit of this forgiveness is appropriated by faith in Him, and thus man's inability and utter failure to keep the Law are cancelled. The sinner is acquitted or justified in virtue of Christ's vicarious suffering.

At the same time, redemption is not a purely juridical process of justification by faith from sin and its guilt. It is also ethically conceived, inasmuch as it brings God and the sinner into a filial relation by way of spiritual adoption. It involves a real ethical transformation befitting this relation and indispensably involved in it. In justification human nature is transformed into newness of life. If the believer dies to the Law, it is only that he may live unto God.⁴ On the other hand, the Law cannot effect this transformation. It cannot save man by reason of his inherited sinful nature and the impotence of his will to do the good. It is, and has always been, only a tutor, to bring men to Christ. Christ has not only redeemed him from sin. He has abolished the régime of the Law along with that of the astral powers. To show this he reviews the history of Israel, which has always pointed to the redeeming Christ and to faith in Him as the only means of salvation. He does so by a forced exegesis of Old Testament passages, in which his skill in rabbinic interpretation is more in evidence than his historic sense. To put it plainly, he is apt to be far-fetched and unconvincing in the demonstration from the Old Testament of his specific Christian beliefs. Moreover, in spite of his conversion from Phariseeism to the doctrine of salvation

² Rom. viii. 18 f.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 20 f. ; Col. i. 17 f.

⁴ Gal. ii. 19, and many other passages.

by faith and not by works, he carried over, to a large extent, his Pharisaic ideas into his apprehension of the Gospel. Though he bans the Law as an essential of salvation for both Jew and Gentile, he is ready to conciliate Jewish religious scruples and allow the Jewish Christian to retain it, in absolute subordination to the cardinal principle of justification by faith as the exclusive medium of the redemption available in Christ.

THE IMMANENCE OF THE SPIRIT

The régime of Law and the idea of salvation by legalist works being abolished in and by Christ, religion has become a thing of the spirit, of faith, not of works in the old legalist sense. Being spiritual, it is *ipso facto* universal. Judaism has been displaced by Christianity, and Christianity has in its very nature become the religion of humanity. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free. Salvation is limited by no privilege or prerogative of race or sex or social status. Being a thing of the spirit, religion has become pneumatic, charismatic. The motive power of the believer's life is the Spirit of God or of Christ, which operates so dynamically in both the individual and the community. Hence the specific doctrine of the immanence of the Spirit of God or of Christ, which with Paul are interchangeable. Sometimes the Spirit is conceived in a personal sense, and is distinct from Father and Son. Sometimes it is impersonal or only personal in the sense of being the Spirit of Christ. On the whole it is practically, as in the Old Testament, a divine effluence or influence rather than a person. In the cardinal passages in which God and Christ are represented as the source of grace and peace (in the opening addresses of the Epistles) the Spirit is never named as an associate of God and Christ. In this respect Paul's view of the Godhead is binitarian rather than trinitarian, though there are passages in which he seems to accord the Spirit a distinct existence.

MYSTICISM

In the doctrine of the immanence of the Spirit in the believer's life Paul remains in touch with the primitive preaching. In his doctrine of the indwelling Christ he strikes a mystic note all his own. This mystic note becomes the dominant one in his conception of the Christian life. The believer is in Christ and Christ is in the believer not merely in a figurative, but in an experienced sense. This indwelling denotes the closest union and fellowship

of the believer with Him. So much so that it seems a case of an inter- or combined personality, if I may so express it. The believer is crucified with Christ. He dies and rises with Him in baptism and he lives the life of Christ. It is, indeed, the life of faith. But it is faith reproducing the crucified and living Christ in himself. "Buried with him through baptism unto death . . . united with him by the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection."⁵ "I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."⁶ "Ye died and your life is hid with Christ in God."⁷ The believer is mystically a member of Christ's body. The mystic vein in his thought of the relation between Christ and the believer is so distinctive that some have seen in his Christ mysticism a reflection of that of Hellenist mystery religion, and derive it from this source. The similarity of thought and language is very marked and seems to show a knowledge of Hellenist mystery religion. It may have influenced his conception of the life in Christ just as the Stoic philosophy seems to have influenced his conception of an immanent God. At the same time, its content evidently reflects his own Christian experience and is hardly an appropriation from any external model. It might well be the outcome of his own keen sense of the power of the flesh over the Spirit and his striving, in absolute self-surrender to Christ and in intense fellowship with Him, to realise, in the gradual dying of the material and gross element in human nature, the immortal life of the spirit. At all events this mystic process, so realistically conceived, is not the Greek deification of the spirit, but its highest development in and through the indwelling Christ, who takes possession of it and transforms it into the likeness of His own. It is thus that this new spiritual personality is being prepared for its transition to the spiritual body at death—"the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." If the train of thought has an affinity to current Hellenist mysticism and is to a certain extent influenced by it, it is Christianised and assumes a distinctive Christian significance. At the same time, this mystic conception of the life of faith is peculiar to himself. Whilst it may remind of Jesus' saying about losing one's life in order to find it, there is nothing in His teaching on His death and resurrection or in that of His personal disciples of this mystic dying and rising with Him. The Pauline mysticism is the fruit of his own experience and may reappear in similarly constituted natures. It does not seem to have been a general feature of Gentile Christianity as it developed in the subapostolic period.

⁵ Rom. vi. 3 f.⁶ Gal. ii. 20.⁷ Col. iii. 3.

INCIPIENT GNOSTICISM

With incipient Gnosticism his mind was also in contact. The Epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians, and especially Colossians reveal this contact with the quasi-religious philosophy that concerned itself with the redemption of man and the universe from the power of evil—the régime of the ethereal principalities and powers. Against this philosophy, with its series of divine emanations for man's redemption, he sets Christ as the sole, divinely appointed medium of redemption. This redemption is available to all alike who believe in Christ. It is not conditioned by knowledge, but by faith. In this respect he radically rejects both the Gnostic theory of redemption by means of a higher knowledge and the Gnostic distinction between the spiritual man, who is alone capable of this higher knowledge, and the lower psychic man. Christ is the redeemer of humanity apart from intellectual as well as racial and social distinctions. "Ye are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ."⁸ "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."⁹ Nevertheless he himself distinguishes between the spiritual or perfect, and the psychic or carnal believer.¹⁰ Among believers some are fitted for the higher knowledge of which he also is in possession; others are not, or at least not yet. He, too, has a higher philosophy to which Christ, as the agent of creation and redemption and the ultimate rule of God through Him, is the only key. In this attempt to unfold the mystery of all things in Christ, he shows the trace of Gnostic thought and terminology. Here, again, his mind works in a groove widely different from that of Jesus Himself and His early disciples. The Gospel, as he develops it, bears the unmistakable marks of its new and wider environment.

PAUL AND THE PRIMITIVE TRADITION

Paul professes that his teaching is in accord with "the traditions"¹¹ current in the primitive community. It is none the less evident that, in certain respects, he goes beyond the primitive preaching and that of Jesus Himself as ultimately recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. With these he mingles his own opinions very freely, even if he discriminates on occasion between them and the word of Christ. He has added to it from his own thought

⁸ Gal. iii. 26.⁹ I Cor. i. 30.¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ii. 6 f.; iii. 1 f.¹¹ I Cor. xi. 2, *cf.* 23; xv. 3.

and experience and has drawn liberally on the rabbinic theology and Jewish apocalyptic with which he was familiar. Into his conception of Christ and His redemptive mission, and His doctrine of justification by faith, he has worked, from this source, the thought and belief of his Pharisaic experience and training. Into it he has also worked strands from the religion and thought of his Hellenist environment, which only the blind eye of traditional belief cannot or will not see. There is, therefore, as already noted, a good deal that is problematic in his version of the Gospel of Jesus. On the other hand, there is much in his thought and experience that reflects the mind and heart of Jesus Himself and has a perennial religious value. In his conception of religion as a thing of the spirit, in his reaction from Jewish particularism and legalism ; in his insistence on the universality and freedom of the Gospel ; in his sublime ethical teaching as the fruit of the Christ-possessed and Spirit-inspired life, he is a true interpreter of the Gospel of Jesus and its implications. In this respect it may be said of him, as it was said of Peter and John in their witness for Christ before the Sanhedrin, "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."¹²

¹² Acts iv. 13. For Paul's contribution in greater detail, see my "Gospel in the Early Church" (1933).

PART IV
THE SUBAPOSTOLIC CHURCH

CHAPTER I

THE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH

THE SUBAPOSTOLIC PERIOD

THE subapostolic period extends from about A.D. 70 to about the middle of the second century. With the exception of the Pauline Epistles, the sources include all the New Testament writings, and even some of these Epistles are assignable to this period. Probably Ephesians and certainly the bulk of the Pastoral Epistles are post-Pauline, and possibly 2nd Thessalonians belongs to the same category. Of the rest of the New Testament writings the Synoptic Gospels are, on the whole, in content pre-Pauline, since they embody the tradition of the life and teaching of Jesus, handed down by His personal disciples and, to a certain extent, reflected in the Pauline Epistles. The Fourth Gospel, whilst embodying in a lesser degree the primitive tradition, is clearly post-apostolic. So also the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Revelation of the prophet John, and, with the debatable exception of the First Epistle of Peter, the other Catholic Epistles. To this period belong, too, the writings of the so-called Apostolic Fathers, those of the earliest Apologists,¹ and the "Didache."

The period may generally be described as one of transition from the primitive apostolic towards the Catholic Church in its early form. Throughout it the Christian mission has to reckon with the hostility of the State, already discernible, as we have seen, towards the close of the apostolic period. Whilst the apostolic organisation of the Christian communities continues, primitive episcopacy definitely emerges in the Epistles of Ignatius as an established institution at Antioch and in the province of Asia. Another distinctive feature of the period is the enhanced appeal to the tradition, embodied in the teaching of the apostles as well as of Jesus, as the norm of Christian faith and of the life of the

¹ Aristides and perhaps the author of the Epistle to Diognetus. That of Quadratus has not been preserved.

community and the individual. At the same time, the content of the primitive apostolic faith undergoes a distinctive development, particularly in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Johannine and Ignatian writings.

MISSION PREACHING

We know little in detail about the spread of the Gospel during this period. Later tradition, indeed, professes to fill up the all-too-recurring blanks in our knowledge. But this tradition is uncritical and at best dubious. As a rule, we cannot safely go beyond the evidence of contemporary sources. From these we can discern, either directly or inferentially, the further progress of the Christian mission, and with it the expansion of the Church in the Gentile world, if not in Palestine. This progress was still due to a large extent to the missionary activity of "apostles" of the faith, which continued far into the subapostolic period, as we learn from the "Didache," the Third Epistle of John, and "The Shepherd" of Hermas. Whilst the tendency is to limit the term to the Twelve in Luke, in the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, and the Epistles of Ignatius, its wider missionary meaning persists throughout. Alongside the apostle, the evangelist or missionary preacher, who is not of apostolic rank, appears in the Epistle to the Ephesians² and 2nd Timothy.³ "And they also," says Eusebius in reference to their evangelistic activity, "being illustrious disciples of such great men, built up the foundations of the churches which had been laid by the apostles in every place, and preached the Gospel more and more widely and scattered the saving seeds of the kingdom of Heaven far and near throughout the whole world. . . . Starting out upon long journeys, they performed the office of evangelists, being filled with the desire to preach Christ to those who had not yet heard the word of faith and to deliver to them the divine Gospels. And when they had laid the foundations of the faith in foreign places, they appointed others as pastors, and entrusted them with the nurture of those that had recently been brought in, while they themselves went on again to other countries and nations with the grace and co-operation of God."⁴ The passage is vague and rhetorical and reveals no detailed knowledge of the work of these missionaries. He only adduces as an illustration of it the mission work of the prophet Quadratus. But if its language is palpably exaggerated, the passage is not purely fanciful, as the above-mentioned con-

² iv. 11.

³ iv. 5.

⁴ "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 37.

temporary documents prove. These travelling preachers are maintained and helped on their journeying from place to place, since they take nothing from the Gentiles among whom they evangelise.⁵ Moreover, though the office-bearers of the local communities more and more displaced this "apostolic ministry" and their special function was the pastoral one, the propagation of the faith seems also to have formed a part of their function. It found scope especially in the instruction of catechumens who, we may assume, as in the case of the later catechetical school of Alexandria, were largely drawn from paganism.⁶ By this unobtrusive method as well as by missionary preaching, and by the training received in the Christian household, the local communities were quietly but effectively being recruited. It was, in fact, to this unobtrusive activity in the Christian community and the Christian home that the Church owed most of all the steady accession of its members.

MISSIONARY INFLUENCES

Of the missionary influence of the Christian Scriptures there is evidence in the writings of Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian and Theophilus,⁷ whose conversion falls within this period. They found in the Old Testament an authoritative revelation, the truth of which is confirmed by prophecy and which is vastly superior, in this respect, to the writings of the philosophers. Aristides tells us that it was the reading of the Christian writings that convinced him of the truth of the Christian revelation.⁸ Justin meets an aged Christian who directs him to the divine wisdom of the Hebrew Scriptures, and at the end of a long discussion leaves him a convinced believer in Christianity.⁹ Similarly the Assyrian Tatian, in his search for the truth, chances on these Scriptures, and learns from them to put his faith in the true God.¹⁰ Theophilus ascribes his conversion to the same cause,¹¹ and like them makes special use of the argument of an assured revelation in commending Christianity to others.

The belief in the supernatural power of Christian faith seems also to have contributed, in some degree, to the spread of the Gospel

⁵ 3 John, 5-8.

⁶ Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," vi. 3, 4.

⁷ Those of Aristides and Justin certainly, of Tatian and Theophilus probably belong to this period.

⁸ "Apol.," 16.

⁹ See the opening chapters of the "Dialogue with Trypho."

¹⁰ "Address to the Greeks," 29.

¹¹ "Ad Autol.," i. 14.

in this period, and even beyond it. Irenæus¹² claims that the Church still exercised the power of exorcising the evil spirits and curing disease, nay, even raising the dead. The good bishop is a trifle credulous and tends to magnify the miraculous, though he refrains from encumbering his pages with tales of miracles of the magical sort, in which the later hagiology revels. But there is no reason to question his statement that faith still attested its power in the healing of a variety of disease and thus materially aided the Christian propaganda. In the ethical sphere the Church also exercised a potent attraction, as we see in the picture of the Christian life drawn by Aristides and the writer of the Epistle to Diognetus. The picture is somewhat idealist, in view of the evidence in other documents of moral declension and even apostasy in the communities. At the same time, there can be no question that this ideal was not only incessantly reiterated in the Christian sermons and writings of the period. It was, on the whole, powerfully exemplified in personal character, in the constraining power of Christian love, and in active philanthropy towards all men as well as the brethren. The calumnies circulated against them were, no doubt, a real hindrance to the progress of the Christian mission, wherever ignorance and prejudice prevailed, and often roused the violent antagonism of the mob. But these calumnies ceased to be credited by serious inquirers like Justin and Tatian, who may again be cited in evidence of the powerful impression produced by the Christian life to which they and other apologists could forcibly appeal in favour of the acceptance as well as the toleration of Christianity. Not less potent was the influence of the martyrs in winning converts to the faith. Justin, for instance, tells us that the fearlessness of the Christians in the presence of death contributed to convince him of the truth of Christianity. It was thus that, as Tertullian says, "the blood of the martyrs is a seed."¹³ Their heroism tended to impress many with the power of the Christian faith, and to vitalise the movement which persecution was meant to repress. In this respect it owed not a little to its persecutors. "Though persecuted daily," says the author of the Epistle to Diognetus, "the Christians only increase the more in number."¹⁴

PALESTINE

The failure of the Jewish revolt against Roman rule and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was a decisive check to the Palestinian

¹² "Adv. Haer.," II. xxxi. 2 ; xxxii. 4 ; cf. Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," v. 7.

¹³ "Semen est Sanguis Christianorum."

¹⁴ c. vi. ; cf. vii.

Church as well as to Judaism. With the return of the Christian fugitives from Pella, east of the Jordan, it subsisted under Symeon,¹⁵ the cousin of Jesus, and his successors till the renewed rising under the Pseudo-Messiah Barcochba in the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 132-5). But this revived Jerusalem Church in the interval between Vespasian and Hadrian was too insignificant, and was, besides, too odious to the non-Christian Jews to exercise an appreciable missionary influence in Palestine. After the suppression of the rebellion Hadrian built on the ruins of the old the new city of *Ælia Capitolina*¹⁶ and prohibited all Jews, including Jewish Christians, from residing in it. Henceforth the Church of *Ælia* consisted exclusively of Gentile Christians, whose first bishop, according to Eusebius, was Marcus.¹⁷ In consequence of this final catastrophe, the mother Church of Christendom in its Jewish form seems to have again sought a refuge eastward of the Jordan. With the rise of the Gentile Church in the Græco-Roman world, it had gradually lost its central significance for the Church at large. Jewish Christianity continued to exist in Palestine and elsewhere, and its adherents in Palestine appear under the names Nazarenes and Ebionites, the former preserving the designation originally applied by the Jews to the followers of Jesus,¹⁸ the latter that of "the poor in spirit" of the first Beatitude.¹⁹ Their derivation from a certain Ebion is a later patristic invention. Whether these names represent two distinct sects is a disputed point. To me it seems that Harnack is right in maintaining, against Zahn and Seeberg, that they "held various shades of opinion" rather than formed two distinct sections of Jewish Christians.²⁰ From Justin we learn that in the early part of the second century they maintained a strict adherence to the Law, but differed among themselves in their attitude towards Gentile Christians and in their conception of Christ.²¹ Some were ready to waive the obligations of the Law for Gentile believers. From

¹⁵ Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 11. J. Weiss holds that the return of the Christians from Pella to Jerusalem, the leadership of whom was invested in Symeon in succession to James, and the existence of the Church till the rising under Hadrian, are historic. "Urchristenthum," 557 f. Achelis, on the other hand, thinks that there was no return, and that Symeon was head of the Jewish Christians beyond Jordan. "Das Christenthum in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten," i. 225. The former is the more probable view.

¹⁶ So called after himself and Jupiter Capitolinus, to whom he erected a temple.

¹⁷ "Hist. Eccl.," iv. 6.

¹⁸ Acts xxiv. 5.

¹⁹ Matt. v. 3.

²⁰ "Hist. of Dogma," i. 30. For the other view, see Zahn, "Geschichte des Kanons," ii. 668 f.; Seeberg, "Dogmengeschichte," i. 258 f. (3rd ed., 1922).

²¹ "Dialogue with Trypho," 47.

other sources²² we further learn that they believed in the virgin birth, whilst rejecting the pre-existence of Christ. Others not only strictly observed the Law, but disowned Paul and refused fellowship with the Gentile believers unless they did likewise.²³ Moreover, they held strictly to the primitive adoptionist conception of Christ as a man born by natural generation and endowed at His baptism by the Holy Spirit.²⁴ With this conception they later combined Gnostic speculation and asceticism and ultimately from the time of Irenæus²⁵ onwards were opposed and denounced, under the name of Ebionites, as a heretical sect.

SYRIA

The "Didache" reveals the continued activity of apostles, prophets, and teachers in the churches of Syria, with which it was most probably connected.²⁶ To its author the Church, as the result of this activity, has become a far-spread association to be "gathered together from the ends of the earth."²⁷ The Gospel of Matthew, of which he shows a knowledge and which is also connected with Syria, similarly reveals the far-flung sweep of the Christian mission. The Gospel is being preached to all nations at a time when false Christs and, as in the "Didache," false prophets abound.²⁸ Whilst the Jews have been rejected, the Gentiles are being invited to the marriage feast of the king's son. The impression conveyed by these documents of a vigorous and wide-spread Christianity in this region is confirmed by the Epistles of Ignatius, whom tradition ranks as the second Bishop of Antioch,²⁹ written in the later years of the reign of Trajan. In these he appears as a man of fervid, neurotic temperament and passionate conviction, who devoted himself with a burning zeal to the propagation and defence of the Gospel against the Gnostics, and morbidly courted martyrdom in his devotion to Christ. Unfortunately he was too obsessed by his passion for martyrdom and the new episcopal order in the Church to tell us much of the

²² Eusebius, iii. 27, following Origen.

²³ "Dialogue with Trypho," 47.

²⁴ "Gospel of the Ebionites." James, "Apocryphal New Test.," 8 f. "Extracts given by Epiphanius," 29 and 30 (vol. i., ed. by Holl, 1915). Epiphanius confusedly distinguishes between Nazarenes and Ebionites. Eusebius, iii. 17.

²⁵ "Adv. Haer.," I. xxvi. 2.

²⁶ c. xi. f. Written probably about the end of the first or the early part of the second century.

²⁷ c. ix., x.

²⁸ Matt. xxviii. 19; cf. xxvi. 13, xxiv. 24.

²⁹ Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 22, 36; following Origen, "Hom.," vi. in Luc.

Christian mission either in Syria or Asia Minor, where he wrote his Epistles. He speaks with evident exaggeration of "the bishops that are settled in the farthest parts of the earth."³⁰ He incidentally, but more concretely, mentions the Churches nearest to Antioch and others farther afield.³¹ More indefinitely, and rather rhapsodically, he expatiates on the general progress of the Gospel, which is destroying the ancient kingdom of evil. For him Christ is the effulgent star, whose appearance far outshines all other constellations, and is transforming humanity into newness of life.³² The growing strength of Christian Gnosticism, of which Antioch was a centre and which Ignatius combats, is a more concrete evidence of the attraction of the Gospel for theosophists like Saturnilus and Cerdo, both natives of Syria.³³

Before the middle of the second century it had penetrated as far east as Edessa, the capital of Osroene in Mesopotamia, which became the great centre of eastern Christianity. It appears to have been introduced by Addai, a Palestinian Jew, who was subsequently confused with the apostle Thaddeus, and its adherents to have consisted at first mainly of Jews.³⁴ Its most distinguished early representative was Tatian, whose conversion may have taken place at Rome about A.D. 150. Still farther afield, it had found a footing in Adiabene on the Tigris at an even earlier time (c. A.D. 100).³⁵

If Ignatius may be taken as representing the Syrian type of Christianity, it has evidently completely broken with Judaism, which he regards as entirely antiquated and incompatible with the Gospel. In the "Didache" and the Gospel of Matthew, on the other hand, the type is Jewish-Christian, which combines respect for the Law in the Christian sense with the Pauline universalism. In the "Didache," in fact, the Decree prohibiting the eating of meats sacrificed to idols is still operative.³⁶

³⁰ Eph. 3.

³¹ Philad. 10.

³² Eph. 19.

³³ Eusebius, iv. 7, 11.

³⁴ For the later legends about Addai and the introduction of Christianity in Edessa, see Haase, "Altchristliche Kirchengeschichte nach Orientalischen Quellen," 61 f., 71 f. (1925). The story given in detail by Eusebius is, as we have already noted, purely legendary. See also Cureton, "Ancient Syriac Documents Relative to the Earliest Establishment of Christianity in Edessa" (1864) (translation in Antenicene Lib., vol. xx.); Phillips, "The Doctrine of Addai the Apostle" (Syriac and Eng., 1876); Burkitt, "Early Eastern Christianity," 26-27.

³⁵ According to Haase the tradition that another Addai preached the Gospel here at this early period is reliable. "Altchristliche Kirchengeschichte," 96 f.

³⁶ c. 6.

ASIA MINOR, MACEDONIA, AND ACHAIA

There is substantial evidence for the expansion of the Church in Asia Minor in the subapostolic period. The first Epistle ascribed to Peter reveals the existence of Churches in the provinces of Pontus, Bithynia, Galatia, Cappadocia, as well as in that of Asia. With Asia in this period are associated the names of Timothy at Ephesus, the daughters of Philip the evangelist and Papias at Hierapolis, John the Elder, whom tradition confused with the apostle John, and the prophet John, the author of the Apocalypse, Polycarp, and, in his early manhood, Irenæus—"the great lights of Asia," as Polycrates called them.³⁷ Of this expanding movement Ephesus continued to be the chief centre. Here laboured the profound Christian mystic to whom we owe the Johannine writings, which exercised a moulding influence on Christian thought and mark an epoch in its development. Here, too, the prophet of the same name, whose weird imagination produced the Apocalypse—that passionate protest against a persecuting Empire and war-song of the Church militant. In both are reflected the triumphal progress of an all-conquering faith in spite of the hostility of the Jews and the repression of a persecuting government. Very significant of this progress is the saying attributed in the Fourth Gospel to "the Greeks." "Sir, we would see Jesus."³⁸ Equally significant the sayings, "This is indeed the Saviour of the world," and "Lo, the world is gone after him."³⁹ Significant also the words of the Apocalyptic seer, who beholds "a great multitude which no man could number out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne of God."⁴⁰ If it is risky to take such a visionary estimate as exact history, such visions tend to rest on observed facts. From the Epistles of Ignatius, which, as in the Apocalypse, reveal the existence of communities hitherto unknown to us, we derive the same impression of a widespread and growing movement in Asia Minor.⁴¹ Not only has it many adherents. It is seething with the germs of growth in the variety of its apprehension of the Gospel. Even more definitely we have the confirmation of this impression in the letter of the younger Pliny, Governor of Bithynia and Pontus, to Trajan, written about the same time (A.D. 112-13). To his astonishment he discovered a large number of Christians in this region. Many of all ages and ranks

³⁷ Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 31.

³⁸ John xii. 21.

⁴¹ Eph. 1; Tral. 1; Mag. 15; Rom. 9; Polycarp, 8.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, iv. 42; xii. 19.

⁴⁰ Rev. vii. 9.

and of both sexes have been tried or are to be tried for "this superstition," which has spread like a contagion not only in the towns, but in the villages and rural districts. The temples have been forsaken, the sacred rites neglected, and the market for the fodder for the sacrificial beasts has greatly declined. It is the complaint of the silversmiths of Ephesus, in the time of Paul, over again. This surprising extension was probably due to the missionary enterprise of the Churches of Asia. But it was not confined to these neighbouring provinces. These Churches sent out their missionaries westwards to Massilia (the modern Marseilles), the old Greek colony at the mouth of the Rhone, and up the Rhone valley to Vienne and Lyons. Here Christian communities, which evidently originated in the first half of the second century, are found in the second half of it under office-bearers, like Bishop Pothinos, who bore Greek names and some of whom were natives of Asia Minor.⁴²

Between the Churches of Asia and those of Macedonia and Achaia there was an even closer connection, as we may conclude from the Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians. It tells us that Paul's favourite community was still "flourishing," though Gnostic heresy was menacing it.⁴³ Unfortunately the Epistle is purely local in scope and contains no information about the other Macedonian communities, whilst that available from other sources is extremely scanty. This dearth is due to the fact that after the apostolic age the Church of Macedonia, unlike that of Asia, produced no great leaders. At the same time, from the mention of Christians at Larissa⁴⁴ in Thessaly, of whose existence nothing is previously known, in the reign of Antoninus, we may infer that of others, though unknown to early tradition. Of the progress of the Church in Achaia there is also little to record. From the correspondence of Dionysius of Corinth, it would appear that Athens, to which Antoninus Pius addressed a rescript, had a community under a bishop in the reign of this emperor, and that there was one at Lacedemon or Sparta.⁴⁵ This seems to indicate that the Corinthian community continued its missionary activity in Achaia after Paul's time. At all events it appears in the Epistle written by Clement in the name of the Roman Church to have maintained its reputation for self-assertion.⁴⁶

⁴² Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," v. 1.

⁴³ Epistle, i., vi., vii. Greek text and translation by Lightfoot, "Apostolic Fathers," ii., and by Lake in "Apostolic Fathers," i. (Loeb Class. Lib., 1912).

⁴⁴ Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," iv. 26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, iv. 23.

⁴⁶ Epistle, i. f. ; xlv. f.

EGYPT AND NORTH AFRICA

Our knowledge of Christianity in Egypt within this period is likewise extremely scanty, and it is not till well into the second half of the second century that we stumble on a large and active church at Alexandria. In the apostolic age the only definite fact, vouched by the Acts of the Apostles, is that the Alexandrian Apollos had already an imperfect knowledge of the Gospel before he came to Ephesus to be instructed more fully by Aquila and Priscilla.⁴⁷ The obscurity of its origin is all the more strange inasmuch as the conditions in Alexandria were very favourable to its early and rapid progress. Hellenism as well as Judaism was here in the ascendant, and the blending of Greek culture and Jewish religion, which was fitted in some respects to further its progress, found its most salient expression in Philo and his school. One is, therefore, justified in concluding that, in spite of this obscurity, the Gospel found an early introduction into Egypt. In Acts natives of Cyrene, who were driven from Jerusalem by the persecution following the death of Stephen, are noted as among the first to preach to the Greeks at Antioch. Whilst it is possible that they carried this mission to Egypt, tradition ascribes its origin, not to them, but to Mark.⁴⁸

Though Eusebius, who mentions it, adduces no proof of its historicity, it is extremely probable that such a great commercial and intellectual centre would attract a missionary preacher even in apostolic times. The Jews were here very numerous, and probably it was among them—Apollos, for instance—that Christianity first found a footing. Eusebius further says that the mission of Mark was most successful. He speaks of the usual "multitude of believers" and makes him establish a number of churches in Alexandria. But he only speaks from hearsay and he betrays his ignorance by confusing these numerous early converts with the ascetic sect of the Therapeutæ,⁴⁹ whom he takes to be the early Christian forerunners of the Egyptian monks of his own time. He further tells us that Mark was succeeded by Annianus,⁵⁰ and

⁴⁷ Acts xviii. 24 f.

⁴⁸ Eusebius, ii. 16. So also Epiphanius, "Haer.," li. 6.

⁴⁹ ii. 17. The existence of the Therapeutæ in Philo's time depends on the authenticity of the "De Vita Contemplativa" ascribed to him, in which he describes their manner of life. Lucius ("Die Therapeutæ," 1879) denies its Philonic authorship and assigns it to the end of the third century, whilst others (Zöckler, Herzog, "Real-Encyclopädie," xi.) maintain it. In any case Eusebius is wrong in assuming that they were identical with the first Christians in Egypt.

⁵⁰ ii. 24.

he gives a succession of bishops of Alexandria down to Demetrius towards the end of the second century.⁵¹ With the exception of the last, we know nothing about them beyond their names, and the bare list, with the writings of the Egyptian Gnostics, is all that Eusebius himself knew about Christianity in Egypt up to this period. The list itself is very dubious, since the government of the Alexandrian Church seems to have been under presbyters and deacons before the time of Demetrius, who appears to have become the first monarchical bishop.

The other sources from which we may glean information for this obscure period are unfortunately also extremely meagre. In a letter of Hadrian preserved by Vopiscus, which is accepted by Lightfoot and others as genuine, we have an ironic reference to the Christians and Christian bishops and presbyters at Alexandria.⁵² We learn from Clement of Alexandria that two gospels entitled "The Gospel according to the Hebrews," and "The Gospel according to the Egyptians," were used in Egypt in the second century,⁵³ and they were probably in use there before the canonical Gospels came to supersede them. From the discovery made by Grenfell and Hunt among papyri at Oxyrhynchus,⁵⁴ about 120 miles south of Cairo, it is evident that there was also in circulation at this period a number of Logia or sayings of Jesus. Where these documents were in circulation there must have been Christians to read them. If the Epistle of Barnabas was directed to a Christian community at Alexandria, as most scholars reasonably conclude, it may also be adduced as evidence of Christianity in Egypt in the early second century. Before the middle of this century, Christian Gnosticism had, too, its representatives in Basilides and Valentinus—both of them natives of Egypt—who actively propagated their systems at Alexandria and elsewhere.⁵⁵

The rise of Christianity in proconsular Africa and the provinces of Numidia and Mauretania to the west of it is still more obscure than in the case of Egypt. Even the traditional apostle is lacking in the pages of Eusebius, though later tradition knows of a mission of Mark, and even of Peter and his disciple Crescens, at Carthage. Here, as in Egypt, it is not till towards the close of the second century that the curtain rises over the stage of North African

⁵¹ iii. 14, 21; iv. 1, 4, 5, 11, 19; v. 9, 22.

⁵² Vopiscus, "Vita Saturnini," 8. Harnack thinks that it is spurious, but Lightfoot gives weighty reasons for accepting it as genuine. "Apost. Fathers," i., Pt. II., 465. Schiller concludes that, in the main, it is so. "Geschichte der Römischen Kaiserzeit," ii. 682.

⁵³ For these Gospels see James, "Apocryphal N.T.," 1 f., 10 f.

⁵⁴ James, "Apoc. N.T.," 25 f.

⁵⁵ Irenæus, "Adv. Haer.," i. 24; Eusebius, iv. 7; and Epiphanius, 24, 31.

Christianity, and that we are suddenly brought face to face with a growingly powerful movement.⁵⁶ Its introduction at an earlier period may mainly be traced to Rome, between which and Carthage there was the closest intercourse. At the same time it is possible, in view of the commercial relations of Carthage with the Orient, that some nameless missionary from Syria or Asia Minor may first have brought the Gospel message hither. The Jews were numerous in North Africa, as in Egypt, and Christianity may have found a footing here through the synagogue. In its early form, as at Rome, in Egypt, and nearly everywhere else, it was Greek, and only from the time of Tertullian, the first of the great Latin fathers, did North African Christianity bear a definitely Latin stamp. Whilst its Greek character does not necessarily imply direct relations with Asia Minor or Syria, Monceaux thinks that the similarities between the liturgy and usages of the Church of Asia Minor and that of North Africa point this way. At all events the main impulse in the evangelisation of this region was almost certainly derived from Rome.

ROME

As we have seen, the Roman Church, on the testimony of Tacitus, had already a large membership in the apostolic age, and this testimony is confirmed by Clement at the end of the first century. In spite of the attempt of Nero to stamp out the movement, it had evidently grown in the interval between the Neronian persecution and the composition of this Epistle.⁵⁷ Clement likens the Church to an army,⁵⁸ and Hermas, writing in the early part of the second century, to a great tree overshadowing the whole earth in which the Gospel is being proclaimed.⁵⁹ At Rome it contains a large proportion of wealthy members.⁶⁰ Ignatius speaks of its leading position in Italy ("the land of the Romans").⁶¹ It is so influential that he fears its intervention may frustrate his passion for martyrdom at Rome, whither he is travelling to his doom.⁶² Its prominence was due not only to its position as the Church of the capital of the Empire, but to the number and relative wealth of its members which, as we learn later from Dionysius of Corinth, enabled it to show "from the beginning" an active philan-

⁵⁶ Its authentic history begins with the trial of the Scilitan martyrs. Tertullian, "Ad Scap.," 3.

⁵⁷ Epistle to Corinthians, vi.; *πολὸ πλῆθος ἐκλεκτῶν*.

⁵⁸ xxxvii.

⁵⁹ "Sim.," viii. 3; ix. 17.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, i. 1-2, etc.

⁶¹ Rom. i.

⁶² *Ibid.*, iv. f.

thropic interest in the poorer churches of the East.⁶³ Even in Paul's day it seems to have included a number of house churches,⁶⁴ and by the middle of the second century, as we learn from Justin Martyr, it was impossible for all the Roman Christians to meet in one place.⁶⁵ By this time, too, its numbers had been greatly increased by the concourse of Christians from other regions. Some were driven thither by persecution,⁶⁶ and hither came those who, like Marcion, had a message to proclaim or a movement to propagate. Rome was already the religious as well as the political magnet of the Empire. The growing diversity of theological opinion of the period in Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt was concentrating in the capital of the Empire. Its members were still drawn from the Greek-speaking section, both Jewish and Gentile, of the population. Both Clement and Hermas write in the common Greek, and the names in the lists of its early bishops were with the exception of Pius, Greek.⁶⁷

Of its extension throughout Italy we are in almost complete ignorance. The only contemporary notice is contained in the "Shepherd of Hermas," in which he is directed to send copies of a certain book to the "outside cities."⁶⁸ Whilst this may indicate the existence of communities in other Italian towns, it may also, as in the case of Clement's Epistle, refer to Churches in the East. From Acts we know of one community at Puteoli,⁶⁹ and probably there were others in the centre and south of the peninsula.

From this survey it is apparent that the extension of the Church within this period was greater in the eastern than in the western division of the Empire. It is, moreover, evident that it was more rapid and intensive in some regions of these sections than in others. This is especially the case in Asia Minor. Further, it seems, as a rule, to have been stronger in the cities than in the rural districts, though Pliny's correspondence with Trajan reveals a remarkable diffusion in the villages of Bithynia and Pontus. As a rule, too, its progress is unobtrusive, if steady. The ever-present danger of persecution throughout the greater part of the period imposed the need for circumspection. The

⁶³ Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," iv. 23; *ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ ὁμῶν ἔθος ἐστὶν τοῦτο.*

⁶⁴ Rom. xvi. 5.

⁶⁵ "Martyrium," 2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁷ Irenæus, "Adv. Haer.," III. iii. 3; Epiphanius, xxvii. 6. Up to the middle of the second century Irenæus has one Latin name—Pius. In Epiph. all are Greek. An evidence of the prevalence of Greek at Rome is the fact that the inscriptions in Jewish cemeteries there are largely Greek, though there is a proportion in Latin. No Hebrew inscription has been found, though frequently single Hebrew words are added at the end of inscriptions. Schürer, "Gemeindefassung der Juden in Rom," 13-14.

⁶⁸ "Vision," ii. 4, *ἐξω πῶλεως.*

⁶⁹ xxviii. 14.

provocative spirit of an Ignatius seems to have been exceptional. In the letter of Pliny to Trajan and in the "Shepherd," indeed, we hear of apostasy from the faith under stress of persecution. At the same time, from these and other sources we also hear of the unflinching constancy of others who sealed their testimony with their blood and perpetuated the heroism of its first martyrs. As Judaism was saved by persecution from complete relapse to paganism in the days of the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes, so Christianity was periodically vitalised and strengthened by the same means in the long struggle for the conquest of the Empire. Again, its progress seems to have been conditioned by culture as well as geography. It is most marked where Hellenism is strongest, as in the province of Asia. It is in the Hellenist atmosphere that it thrives best, and that the development of theological opinion, as reflected particularly in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Johannine writings, is most marked.

CHAPTER II

IN CONFLICT WITH THE EMPIRE

PROCEDURE AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS

CHRISTIANITY being, according to Tacitus and Suetonius, deemed, as early as the time of Nero, a maleficent and dangerous superstition, it has been widely assumed that it was, in itself, regarded as something criminal, and that the mere profession of it sufficed to prove the Christian a criminal. The Christians were, accordingly, in virtue of their religion, criminals, and like brigands were liable to proscription as pests of society. This, it is asserted, was henceforth the general principle on which Christianity was judged and its adherents treated by the imperial authorities. So it appeared to Neumann who was followed by Ramsay, Hardy, and others.¹ Hence the recurring complaint of the Christians that they were persecuted on account of their profession of Christianity,

¹ Neumann, "Der Römische Staat und die allgemeine Kirche" (1890); Ramsay, "The Church in the Roman Empire" (1893); Hardy, "Studies in Roman History" (1906). A new edition, with additional essays, of the author's "Christianity and the Roman Government" (1894). Whilst Ramsay holds that in the first persecution initiated by Nero the Christians were tried on specific charges (incendiarism, etc.), he agrees that under the succeeding Flavian Emperors and onwards they were regarded by the authorities as members of a criminal sect and summarily condemned accordingly, 242 f.

or, as the phrase ran, merely "for the name."² With this assumption Mommsen seems to agree. "The persecution of the Christians was a standing one, like that of brigands, though the regulations touching them were applied, now mildly and carelessly, now with severity, while every now and then they were stringently and thoroughly enforced."³

Mommsen further assumed that their prosecution took place, as a rule, in virtue of the exercise of the police jurisdiction (*coercitio*) invested in the *Præfectus Urbi* at Rome and in the provincial governors for the maintenance of public order against its subverters. These magistrates were thus empowered, in virtue of their police jurisdiction, to proceed against all, like brigands and other criminals, who jeopardised the public security,⁴ among whom the Christians (according to the above-mentioned general principle) were reckoned. They might, indeed, be prosecuted under the law of *Læsa majestas* or treason to the Empire and the Emperor, in consequence of their refusal to take part in the cult of the recognised State gods or that of the Emperor. But this course, according to Mommsen, seems rarely to have been adopted. In virtue of their police jurisdiction, all that the magistrates had to do was merely to ascertain (*cognitio*) the fact that the accused was a Christian in order to condemn him as the votary of a religion that was in itself a danger to the State and society.

Both these assumptions are questionable and have recently been contested. It may be forcibly argued that there was no general principle from the time of Nero onwards under which they were regarded and summarily treated by the magistrates as outlaws merely in virtue of their religion. There might be cases in which, under the pressure of mob violence or by reason of the prejudice of the magistrate, they were so regarded and treated. But as a rule they were tried and condemned on some specific charge, more particularly their refusal to recognise the State gods and the divine status of the Emperor, and participate in their worship. Hence the imputation to them of "atheism" in the sense of denying the existence of the State gods and refusing divine honour to the head of the State. In reality their atheism was a political rather than a religious offence. It involved treason to the State and its head, since the formal worship of the gods and the imperial cult were required of every loyal subject.

² *Propter nomen ipsum, διὰ τὸ ὄνομα.* The phrase already occurs in 1 Peter iv. 14 (*ἐν ὀνόματι χριστοῦ*) and it recurs frequently in the second-century apologists.

³ "Römische Geschichte," v. 523.

⁴ "Die Religionsfrevl nach römischem Recht, *Historische Zeitschrift*" (1890). Mommsen is here also followed by Ramsay, Hardy, and others.

Otherwise the profession of Christianity might be winked at in accordance with the tolerant Roman spirit, even if not legally recognised, and was not, in itself, necessarily regarded as something criminal. It thus does not seem to have been the case that the Christians were usually proceeded against in the exercise of the police jurisdiction invested in the magistrates for the maintenance of public order against habitual criminals like brigands or those reputed to be such. They were tried and condemned on such a specific charge as that aforementioned. Such a charge might be implied in the profession of Christianity, or "the name." But the charge does not seem to have been generally regarded by the magistrates as a foregone conclusion or the Christians to have been punished as criminals in virtue of their profession of Christianity, in the exercise of their police jurisdiction. The charge was, as a rule, proved against the accused by ordinary legal process, as a number of extant trials throughout the second century shows. In the face of this record, the older view of the persecution of the Christians put forward by Mommsen, Neumann, and others must be materially modified as the result of recent investigation and criticism.⁵

Whilst the Christians were thus liable to persecution under the existing laws from the time of Nero and throughout the second century, there does not seem to have been any general legislation by imperial edict against them. Some of the emperors, indeed, in the second century issued rescripts⁶ to the provincial governors bearing on the persecution of the Christians. But these were merely pronouncements on the application of the existing laws in their case. It was not till the third century, when Christianity, in virtue of its growing strength and its developing organisation, threatened to become a grave political danger and the Church appeared as a state within the State, that general imperial edicts were fulminated against its adherents and they were prosecuted in accordance with these general legislative measures.

SPASMODIC CHARACTER OF PERSECUTION

Nor are we to infer that persecution of the Christians from the outset was either general or continuous. As a matter of fact it seems to have been only spasmodic and local up to the third century.

⁵ See Merrill, "Essays on Early Church History," 131 f. (1925); O. Seld, "Das altchristliche Martyrium in Berücksichtigung der rechtlichen Grundlage der Christenverfolgungen" (1920).

⁶ A Rescript was an instruction to a governor by the Emperor. An Edict, a general enactment for the whole Empire.

Even in the third century, when general attempts at repression were made by various emperors, there were long intervals of immunity. The zeal of an individual proconsul or legate might expose the Christians of a particular province to persecution. The fanaticism of the mob, or the enmity of private individuals, who took upon themselves the rôle of informer, or the hatred of the Jews⁷ and other enemies, who invented calumnies against them, might force the magistrates of other provinces to take action against them. The hostile view of Christianity entertained by individual emperors might, too, lead their representatives to adopt a more alert and repressive attitude towards them. But these factors were only intermittent in their operation. The relative limitation of the movement in many regions of the Empire contributed for long to shield its adherents from serious molestation. Discriminating governors could hardly be deceived by the calumnies against them in view of the eloquent testimony of the Christian life to the elevation of Christian morality and their substantial loyalty to the State, apart from the question of religious scruples. It depended to a certain extent on the individual official whether and how far he should proceed against them. Tolerant and level-headed men would be inclined rather to protect them against their accusers. They might and evidently did shut their eyes as long as no actual detriment to the public order accrued from their religion. On the whole, the attitude of the Government during the first two centuries was not very aggressive. Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius, in fact, as we shall see, discouraged, on utilitarian grounds at least, an aggressive attitude towards them. Most of the second-century emperors do not seem to have regarded it as a serious practical danger to the State and apparently adopted a more or less opportunist attitude.⁸ What Eusebius says in reference to the reign of Trajan applies generally to every reign before the third century. "Sometimes the people, sometimes the rulers in various places would lay plots against us, so that, although no great persecutions took place, local persecutions were nevertheless going on in particular provinces and many of the faithful endured martyrdom in various places."⁹ It was only in the course of the third century that certain of the emperors, in their apprehension at the substantial growth of the movement, promulgated general edicts for their

⁷ Parkes concludes that from the second century onwards the Jews only exceptionally showed active hostility to the Christians. The evidence, he contends, does not bear out the Christian assumption that they were active in instigating the persecutions of the second and following centuries. "Conflict of Church and Synagogue," 148 f.

⁸ See Hardy, "Studies," 119.

⁹ "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 33.

repression, which culminated in the last formidable, but forlorn, attempt of Diocletian and his fellow-rulers in the beginning of the fourth. Even in the third century, however, there were lengthy intervals of immunity, and during the last third of it Christianity was accorded the status of a *religio licita*.¹⁰

THE PERSECUTION UNDER DOMITIAN

Whether they were exposed to persecution in the reigns of Vespasian (A.D. 69-79) and his son Titus (79-81) we cannot definitely say. The moderation of Vespasian, who sought to restore the Empire from the effects of Nero's tyranny and the civil war following his death,¹¹ probably stood them in good stead. Despite his moderation, he did not hesitate to banish from Rome the Stoic and Cynic philosophers for political reasons, and he certainly would not have spared the Christians had he believed them to be politically dangerous. But the terrible ordeal through which they had passed would lead them to practise circumspection, and historians like Suetonius know of no repressive measures against them. Whilst Titus evidently entertained no friendly feelings towards them,¹² there is, in his case also, no actual evidence that he resorted to such measures during his short reign. The silence of Christian writers of a later time seems to prove that neither under the father nor the son was there anything like a serious inquisition against them. Tertullian, in fact, explicitly asserts that Vespasian refrained from persecution, though his testimony is not conclusive, in view of his assumption¹³ that none of the emperors up to his own time, with the exception of Nero and Domitian, was a persecutor of the Christians.¹⁴

There is no substantial reason to doubt the renewed outbreak under Domitian, the second son of Vespasian (A.D. 81-96). Tertullian, borrowing from an older writer, Melito of Sardis,

¹⁰ The attempt of Orosius in the fifth century, who was followed by the older historians, to distinguish ten great persecutions from the reign of Nero onwards is thus not in accordance with the actual state of things. The number 10 seems to have been derived from the analogy of the ten plagues of Egypt and is quite fanciful. Before the third century persecution, if hardly ever extinct, was too local and spasmodic to be resolved into a definite series.

¹¹ Suetonius, "Vespasian," 8-12.

¹² The unfriendly attitude of Titus towards Christianity appears from his speech preserved by Sulpicius Severus ("Chron.," ii. 30), probably derived by him from the lost portion of "The History" of Tacitus urging the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

¹³ Borrowed from Melito of Sardis. See Eusebius, iv. 26.

¹⁴ "Apol.," 5. So also Eusebius, who says that Vespasian refrained from persecution (iii. 17), and who may merely be repeating Tertullian.

singles him out as a persecutor along with Nero, though in a lesser degree. It was of short duration and, he adds erroneously, ended with the recall of the banished Christians.¹⁵ Whilst Domitian was a fairly efficient ruler, he was extremely jealous of his imperial power, and in the later years of his reign, when the revolt of Saturninus, the governor of Upper Germany, and the hostility of the aristocracy and the Stoic philosophers, who cherished republican sympathies, revealed a widespread disaffection, he became a suspicious tyrant. Unlike his father and brother, he was, moreover, a zealous champion of the State cults against their Oriental rivals (with the exception of that of Isis, which he favoured), and exemplified his zeal for the traditional religion by punishing the unchastity of several of the vestal virgins with death.¹⁶ Among the victims of his tyranny were Flavius Clemens and his wife Domitilla, both of them his near relatives, and the ex-Consul Glabrio. According to Suetonius, the charge against Flavius Clemens was that of conspiracy—"on the merest suspicion"—in which his wife was apparently involved, and Dio Cassius informs us that the same charge was brought against Glabrio.¹⁷ He further tells us that the two former were accused of "atheism" because they and many others "were addicted to the Jewish mode of life." Jews equally with Christians were "atheists" in virtue of their refusal to acknowledge the State gods. But as their religion was, nevertheless, tolerated, and atheism as a crime could only be predicated of Christians, it is probable that the atheism of the accused consisted in their profession of Christianity. According to Suetonius, Glabrio was accused of being "a mover of revolution,"¹⁸ and the phrase may imply his zealous activity as a Christian. Both he and Clemens were executed, whilst Domitilla was banished to the island of Pandateria. They were not the only victims. In writing to the Corinthians Clement speaks of "the repeated calamities and reverses befalling the Roman Church."¹⁹ His statement of the intensity of the persecution is confirmed by Dio, who speaks of "many others" besides those mentioned by name as implicated in the charge of atheism. If the subapostolic Epistle to the

¹⁵ "Apol.," 5. This latter statement is incorrect. They were recalled by his successor Nerva.

¹⁶ Suetonius, "Domitian," 8.

¹⁷ Suetonius, "Dom.," 15; Dio, "Epit. Xephilinus," lxxvii. 14 (Gr. text ed. by Boissevain, 1901); text and trans. by Cary, Loeb Class. Lib. Suetonius describes Clement as a man of "most contemptible inertia," and this has been regarded by Lightfoot and others as a dislike for public affairs due to his Christianity.

¹⁸ "Dom.," 10. Molitor rerum novarum.

¹⁹ Clement, i.; cf. vii.

Hebrews, which was probably addressed to Roman Christians, was written towards the end of the first century, it affords additional corroboration, though those who are suffering persecution, if cast into prison, have not yet resisted unto blood.²⁰ Besides the later testimony of Eusebius,²¹ corroboration is also afforded by archaeological investigation, which shows that the names of Domitilla and Glabrio were associated with early Christian burying grounds at Rome.²²

That the persecution extended from Rome to the provinces of Asia Minor is evident from the First Epistle ascribed to Peter and, in the province of Asia in particular, from the Apocalypse. The Christians in these provinces are suffering severe trial for their faith,²³ not merely exposed to social disabilities on this account, as some hold. In the Apocalypse the evidence for Asia at least is quite explicit. The Christian prophet who addressed it, at the close of the reign, to the Christians of Asia, with which he was closely associated, had been himself exiled for his faith,²⁴ and he writes at a time when he and his fellow-Christians of Asia are in great tribulation. The main cause of this tribulation was evidently their refusal to take part in the imperial cult which had struck deep root in the Asian province. The seer, who passionately protests against this enormity, emphasises the sharp antagonism between Christianity and the State consequent on the refusal to participate in this worship. In this respect it fits exactly the religious policy of Domitian, who was the zealous champion of the imperial as well as the national cult and, unlike Vespasian, took his divinity very seriously. The priesthood of this cult in Asia were, therefore, no longer so tolerant of Christianity as they had been in the days of Paul, when the Asiarchs used their influence to protect him from the violence of the votaries of Artemis of Ephesus. They were now its bitter opponents, and their zeal in vindicating the cult of which they were the ministers, seconded by the hostility of the Jews, involved the Christians in suffering, and was the menace of suffering to come. The author of the Apocalypse realises the sinister import of the situation, and unlike Paul, 1st Peter, and Clement of Rome (the author's contemporary), who emphasise the State as a divine institution, he regards it as the diabolic enemy of God and His people, which will

²⁰ Heb. x. 32 f.; xii. 4.

²¹ iii. 17, and "Chronicon," ii. 160, ed. Schöne, and Fotheringham, 274 (1923).

²² For a survey of this evidence, see Lightfoot, "Clement," i. 35 f. See also Merrill, "Essays," 167 f., who seeks to minimise the evidence for the persecution under Domitian.

²³ 1 Peter i. 6-7; iv. 12 f.

²⁴ Apoc. i. 9.

erelong be overwhelmed by the divine judgments. The Emperor, whose image the Christians refuse to worship and are exposed to martyrdom, or imprisonment, or banishment, for their refusal²⁵ is "the beast."²⁶ Though the concrete instances of suffering are meagre, the author seems to assume that the victims are numerous.²⁷ As, however, in his rôle as prophet, he projects his view into the future and takes account of the tribulations that are to supervene before the end of the world and the final triumph of the Christian cause, it is rather risky to assume a wholesale inquisition for his own age. At the same time, the closing year of Domitian's reign, in which he writes, was sufficiently full of trial to be a foretaste of the greater tribulation to come.

The tradition that the suspicious tyrant pursued the Christians as far as Palestine, preserved by Hegesippus and reported by Eusebius, is perhaps legendary. According to this tale he sent for the surviving relatives of Jesus, but having convinced himself by their rustic appearance that they were harmless peasants, contemptuously dismissed them.²⁸

Nerva, Domitian's successor, adopted a tolerant policy during his short reign (A.D. 96-98), recalling the banished, restoring their property, and even directing that those addicted to the Jewish (*i.e.*, Christian) manner of life should be unmolested.²⁹

TRAJAN

In the reign of his successor Trajan (A.D. 98-117) we again light on conclusive evidence in the Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, and of Pliny, Governor of Bithynia and Pontus, of the renewal of persecution at least at Antioch and in these two provinces of Asia Minor. To his reign is also ascribed the death of Symeon, the venerable Bishop of Jerusalem.³⁰ Trajan was a native of Spain and was the first provincial to wield the imperial sceptre. His ability as a soldier and an administrator amply justified Nerva's choice of him as his successor. His conquest of Dacia and Parthia extended the boundary of the Empire beyond the Danube and the Euphrates. Like Vespasian, he united with the ability of the born military leader that of the born administrator, and his rule

²⁵ Apoc. ii. 13, 10; i. 9. He mentions by name the martyr Antipas at Pergamon, the chief seat of the imperial cult in Asia.

²⁶ xiii. 15; xx. 4.

²⁷ vi. 9; xvii. 6. The "Martyrium" of Ignatius also refers to the victims of the persecution under Domitian as numerous.

²⁸ Eusebius, iii. 19 and 20.

²⁹ Dio Cassius (Xiphiline), lxxviii. 1; Eusebius, iii. 20.

³⁰ Eusebius, iii. 32.

was characterised for the most part³¹ by wisdom, moderation, and justice, which deservedly earned him the official title of Optimus. His purely practical turn of mind unfitted him, however, to understand or appreciate a movement like Christianity. He had no interest in literature or philosophy. He was the man of action pure and simple, and to one whose absorbing interest lay in the camp and the cabinet the Christians would appear as a visionary sect, which was not likely to become practically dangerous. He had none of Domitian's religious zeal, and though, like most of the emperors, opposed to the formation of societies,³² he would not have gone out of his way to molest them had not circumstances brought him into touch with them. Whilst regarding membership of the Christian societies as a punishable offence, as we learn from his correspondence with Pliny, his attitude was distinctly non-aggressive.

From what we know of the character of Ignatius, it is very probable that he himself provoked the persecution at Antioch to which he fell a victim.³³ In spite of the notoriety with which his martyrdom invested him, we know almost nothing about his life before the outbreak of this persecution. Lightfoot thinks that he was converted in mature life and was probably before his conversion an active enemy of Christianity. At all events, once converted, he threw the whole force of a fervid nature into the profession and propagation of his new faith. Later tradition believed that his conversion took place early enough to associate him with the apostles, but differed as to whether the apostle was Peter, or Paul, or John. Apart from such dubious beliefs, all that we authentically know, previous to his trial, is that he was Bishop of Antioch in the reign of Trajan.³⁴ As his Epistles show, he was a Christian and a bishop of the self-assertive type, and it is not surprising that he came into collision with the authorities at Antioch. He is represented in the later account of his martyrdom as adopting a defiant attitude towards his judges, and though these "Acts" cannot be regarded as authentic,³⁵ this representation, in view of the spirit of his Epistles, is very probably in accordance

³¹ Exception must be taken to his slavery legislation, which showed a reactionary spirit.

³² *Collegia, heteriæ.*

³³ John Malalas of Antioch, writing in the sixth century, professes to know that the persecution was due to the earthquake which wrought havoc at Antioch in 115, and which is vividly described by Dio Cassius, lxxviii. 24-25. See Henderson, "Five Roman Emperors," 324 f. (1927). The evidence of this credulous monk is too late to be implicitly relied on.

³⁴ The theory of Harnack that he flourished in that of Hadrian has not found much acceptance.

³⁵ See Lightfoot, "Ignatius," ii. 376 f.

with fact. In the Epistles themselves he appears as possessed by a mania for martyrdom, and, like the author of the Apocalypse, gives emphatic expression to the antagonism between Christianity and the State. In view of his uncompromising and aggressive attitude, his judge would have no alternative but to condemn him to the doom for which he thirsted. He was sent to Rome to be thrown to the wild beasts and he glories, in strangely realistic language, in the prospect of this terrible punishment, which will only increase the joy and the acceptance of his sacrifice.³⁶ It fills him with a frenzy which savours of Oriental fanaticism and can only be described as morbidly psychopathic. Whether his reckless extravagance involved others of the Antiochean community, we do not know. In his Epistle to the Philippians,³⁷ Polycarp mentions along with him two other martyrs, Zosimos and Rufus, as examples of patient endurance, but does not explicitly connect them with the persecution at Antioch. There is, at all events, no need to assume that his arraignment was part of a general inquisition against the Christians in the capital and the province of Syria, and the persecution, such as it was, came to a speedy end.³⁸

From Antioch he was escorted in chains by a guard of ten soldiers,³⁹ who treated him with extreme rigour, across Asia Minor to Smyrna, and thence by Troas, Neapolis, and Philippi to Rome. At Smyrna he was visited by Polycarp and by representatives of the Churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles, to which three of his epistles are addressed. The other four which are extant were written to Polycarp, to the Churches of Philadelphia, Smyrna, and Rome. In that to the Roman Church he implores his Roman friends to refrain from all efforts to save him from being "given to the wild beasts and rather to entice them that they may become my sepulchre." He finally met this fate with a heroic endurance and a fervid exaltation of spirit that made an indelible impression both on his fellow-Christians and on the Church of a later age.

For the persecution in Bithynia and Pontus we are fortunate in possessing the account of Pliny the younger, who was sent by Trajan in 111⁴⁰ as governor of this important province, and consulted the Emperor on the question how he was to deal with the Christians. The province had hitherto been badly governed and many abuses awaited redress at the hands of the new governor. He was well fitted for the task, for he had had large experience of

³⁶ Rom. 4 and 5.

³⁸ Ep. to Polycarp, 7.

³⁷ c. 9.

³⁹ Rom. 5.

⁴⁰ His letters to Trajan extend from Sept. 111 to the beginning of 113.

affairs as a pleader and as a public official under both Domitian and Trajan. He is a fine example of the best type of Roman administrator—able, honest, conscientious, just, and actuated by the striving to do his best for the province entrusted to him. He seems, however, to have been lacking in initiative, and this explains why he turns at every step to the Emperor for direction. In the case of the Christians his recourse to Trajan is explicable enough, for he found himself face to face with a very difficult situation. As we have previously seen, the Christians in this region were very numerous, and their societies were liable to repression under the edict dissolving all private *collegia* throughout the provinces, which Pliny had promulgated in accordance with the Emperor's instructions. It was evidently the enforcement of the edict that led, in the first instance, to their prosecution.⁴¹ They had, indeed, so far complied as to abandon their common meal, which was a distinctive feature of their social life. But they had continued to meet for worship and other purposes, and were, therefore, still amenable to the law. Their persistence in doing so in defiance of the law made them liable to the death penalty which it prescribed. In the case of those first brought before him, Pliny asked them whether they were Christians. If they answered in the affirmative, he put the question a second and a third time, warning them of the death penalty to which they were liable under the edict, and if they persisted in pleading guilty, ordered those who were not Roman citizens to execution on the spot. Roman citizens he sent to Rome for punishment. It was, however, not Christianity in itself, but the pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy of these confessors in adhering to an illegal society in disobedience to the imperial will that, in his eyes, demanded condign punishment.

The initial action in enforcement of the edict gave rise to a large number of accusations. An anonymous list, containing many names, was handed in and the matter became more complex. Of these a number denied that they were or had been Christians, and at his injunction invoked the gods, offered incense and wine to the Emperor's image, and cursed Christ. These were discharged. Others, whose names were handed in by an informer, acknowledged that they were Christians, but presently denied the fact (apparently in the face of the governor's threats) and declared that though they had once been Christians, they had renounced Christianity years ago—some as far back as twenty years. These,

⁴¹ This is forcibly maintained by Merrill ("Essays," 183 f.) against Ramsay ("Church in the Roman Empire," 213 f.) and others who maintain that the Christians were not arraigned and punished as members of forbidden societies, but as outlaws in virtue of their profession of Christianity.

too, submitted to the test imposed on the others and were discharged. From them he obtained information regarding the principles and practices of the sect. They were accustomed to meet before dawn on a stated day (*stato die*), evidently Sunday, to sing together a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath not to commit any crime, but to refrain from thefts, robberies, adulteries, breach of faith, and dishonesty. Later in the day they met to partake of a common meal, which was quite harmless in character—a practice from which they had, however, desisted in accordance with the imperial prohibition of secret societies. To test the truth of these assertions he examined under torture two deaconesses, who evidently belonged to the slave class, and the examination tended to confirm them. Christianity, indeed, appeared to him to be a crude form of religious fanaticism. In accordance with the current Roman conception, Pliny describes it as a species of “madness” (*amentia*), “a perverse and extreme superstition.”⁴² He was an eclectic in philosophy and quite incapable of appreciating the passionate religious conviction of these visionaries. But he had satisfied himself that they were not guilty of the revolting crimes popularly attributed to them. They were not, in virtue of their religion, the criminals they were represented to be, and whilst holding that persistent refusal to conform to the law and the State religion must be punished, there was nothing in the past life of those who were prepared to recant to prevent them from being pardoned.

He had, however, had no previous experience of the trials (*cognitiones*) of Christians on account of their religion, and as the movement was a widespread one and endangered the lives of so many people, he turns to the Emperor for guidance in the face of this difficult situation. He desires to know whether, apart altogether from the law against illegal associations, there exists a general and recognised principle dealing with the Christians as such throughout the Empire. He inquires further whether he is at liberty to take into account difference of age and discriminate between the young and inexperienced and those of mature age. Is he to pardon those who have shown penitence and have recanted? Is he to prosecute on the ground of the mere profession of Christianity (*nomen ipsum*), even if it involves nothing criminal, or on the ground of the crimes assumed to be inherent in it? Pending a reply to these questions, he has postponed further proceedings. In conclusion he indicates his conviction that, by allowing opportunity for repentance, many of these sectaries may be reclaimed. He is distinctly in favour of a policy of moderation.

⁴² Superstitionem pravam immodicam.

RESCRIPT IN RESPONSE TO THESE QUESTIONS

In his rescript the Emperor shows that he sympathises with this policy of moderation. He approves Pliny's procedure in these trials. No general deliverance can be made on the subject, and, therefore, no set form of procedure, applicable to all cases, can be established. In his view, as well as that of his representative, the Christians are evidently not necessarily criminals in virtue of their religion, and there is to be no aggressive inquisition against them. They are not to be hunted out. Those duly accused and convicted are to be punished, apparently as recalcitrant members of an illegal society. But those who deny that they are Christians and give proof of the sincerity of their denial by worshipping the gods are to be pardoned, in spite of suspicion as to their past. No anonymous accusation, such as Pliny had received, is to be entertained. Such accusations afford the worst possible precedents and are against the spirit of the age.⁴³

This is a policy not of toleration, as the apologists assumed, but of moderation. The Emperor maintains the liability of the Christians to trial and punishment for defiant adherence to their faith, whilst allowing them the benefit of a retraction, and discouraging aggressive and unfair action towards them.

HADRIAN

Hadrian (117-138) improved upon the moderation of his predecessor in the rescript which he addressed to Minucius Fundanus, the proconsul of Asia, about A.D. 124.⁴⁴ Unlike Trajan, he was keenly interested in philosophy and religion, both Greek and Oriental. He possessed the inquisitive and acquisitive mind, was a great traveller and observer, and reflects the cosmopolitan spirit of the age. Tertullian calls him "the explorer of all curiosities," and Dio Cassius expatiates on his extraordinary versatility.⁴⁵ Such a man was not likely to persecute people for disbelieving either in his own divinity or that of the gods, and though he was not fitted to relish the religious exclusiveness of the Christians, he was too much of the philosopher and the sceptic to take fanaticism of any kind seriously. He could indulge in sarcasms at their expense, as his letter from Alexandria to

⁴³ "Select Letters of Pliny," ed. by Pritchard and Bernard.

⁴⁴ Its genuineness has been controverted by a number of modern critics. But as Mommsen and others have shown, there is no real ground for rejecting it.

⁴⁵ "Hist. Rom.," LIX. iii. and v. "Epit. Xiphilinus."

Servianus shows,⁴⁶ and enjoyed twitting them on their eccentricities. He did not, indeed, go the length of legalising the profession of Christianity, and persecution was still possible. His rescript, in fact, affords proof that, in the province of Asia at least, the Christians were being harassed by informers and by popular clamour in the early years of his reign. Even after the issue of the rescript, it was open to the Roman officials to entertain accusations against them, and Telesphorus, Bishop of Rome, appears to have suffered martyrdom about the end of his reign.⁴⁷ The apology addressed by Quadratus⁴⁸ to the Emperor furnishes evidence of the same fact. But he emphatically discouraged their persecution and strove to protect them from false accusations and popular violence. His object in issuing the rescript was to ensure that innocent men should not be harassed and opportunity of robbery should not be given to mercenary calumniators, who were evidently practising a system of blackmail against them. The Christians may only be accused on a definite charge. It is evidently not sufficient for an informer to come forward and denounce them as Christians. The crime involved in their Christianity must be specified and criminality proved. If an accusation is brought against them, the proconsul is to examine it, and if they are found to be guilty of anything against the law, they are to be punished in proportion to the heinousness of the crime. But if it is based on mere calumny the accuser is himself to be arraigned and punished.⁴⁹ We distinctly feel that Hadrian detests the oppression of his Christian subjects by unprincipled and prejudiced persons, and is determined to check these shady tactics and the outbursts of popular passion of which they are the victims. He agrees with Trajan in insisting on a fair trial and proof before conviction. He goes beyond him in making it absolutely clear that they must be proved guilty of some specific crime, in specifying that the punishment shall be graded in accordance with the gravity of the crime, and in directing the punishment of calumnious informers.

ANTONINUS PIUS

Antoninus Pius who succeeded him (138-161) was justly celebrated by the historians as the most clement of emperors.

⁴⁶ Lightfoot, i. 464-465.

⁴⁷ Irenæus, "Adv. Haer.," III. iii. 3. Eusebius places the martyrdom in the first year of the reign of Antoninus Pius (iv. 10), but this appears to be a mistake.

⁴⁸ Eusebius, iv. 3.

⁴⁹ The Rescript is given by Eusebius, iv. 9, and by Justin Martyr in his "First Apology," c. 68. What appears to be the original Latin is given by Rufinus in his trans. of Eusebius. The Serennius Granianus mentioned in it should be Silvanus Granianus, Fundanus' predecessor.

"In verity in his nature most clement," says Capitolinus.⁵⁰ His clemency towards the Christians is attested by the letters which he addressed to the citizens of Larissa, Thessalonica, Athens, and all the Greeks, prohibiting their violent treatment.⁵¹ It was not without reason, therefore, that the Christian apologists vied with the pagan writers in celebrating his mildness. He is even represented as entirely disallowing their persecution in a rescript to the Common Assembly of Asia.⁵² Whilst this rescript is indubitably spurious in the form in which it has been preserved, it may, as Harnack contends, "contain a nucleus of truth," and its subsequent elaboration is an evidence of the kindly feeling with which his memory was cherished by the succeeding generation of Christians. "He would rather," he said, "preserve one citizen than kill 1,000 enemies."⁵³ At the same time, however well disposed towards them, and ready to check unjust and riotous clamours, he could not prevent sudden outbursts of popular passion in despite of imperial rescripts to the contrary. From Justin's "Apology" we learn that persecution was going on and that there was a number of martyrdoms in this reign, and the fact proves that even the marked goodwill of an emperor was no guarantee of immunity for his Christian subjects.

Among these martyrs were Ptolemæus and Lucius, whom Lollius Urbicus, the prefect of the city, condemned to death at Rome, Polycarp and eleven other Christians who suffered with him at Smyrna, and probably Publius, Bishop of Athens.⁵⁴ The treatment of Ptolemæus and Lucius, as reported by Justin Martyr, is an instance of the condemnation of Christians for the profession of Christianity, without due legal process. A dissolute fellow, whose wife had become a Christian and ultimately refused to live with him, accused Ptolemæus as the agent of her conversion. He was arrested and brought before the prefect who merely asked whether he was a Christian, and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, immediately ordered him to execution. Lucius, who was present, remonstrated against the unjust punishment of a man who was guilty of no real crime. He was asked whether he, too, was a Christian, and on confessing that he was, was similarly ordered

⁵⁰ "Antoninus Pius," ii. Vere natura clementissimus.

⁵¹ Eusebius, iv. 26, quoting Melito of Sardis.

⁵² τὸ κοινόν. Eusebius, iv. 13, and Justin, "Apol.," i., conclusion. Harnack has endeavoured to prune away its later Christian interpolations. "Expans. of Christ.," ii. 151.

⁵³ Capitolinus, ix.

⁵⁴ Eusebius, iv. 23. It is not certain whether Publius suffered under Antoninus Pius or Marcus Aurelius.

to be led away to death. A third who followed his example was treated in the same summary fashion.⁵⁵

The death of Polycarp, who was martyred in the reign of Antoninus,⁵⁶ not of Marcus Aurelius, was, on the other hand, occasioned by a popular tumult. It was a glaring contradiction of the declared will of the Emperor, and shows how ineffective were such efforts to secure the Christian from mob violence. Various causes seem to have contributed to this outburst. The revival of the pagan cults, which distinguish the age of the Antonines, was particularly active in the province of Asia, where the progress of Christianity had helped to provoke a pagan propaganda. The popular devotion to the gods was intensified by a series of calamities—earthquakes, pestilence, famine, conflagration—which occurred in the reign of Antoninus.⁵⁷ Among the cities which had suffered severely from earthquake was Smyrna. It was, moreover, one of the centres of the imperial cult in the province and had a large Jewish population, which was actively hostile to the Christians.⁵⁸ This combination of circumstances explains the danger to which Polycarp and the Church at Smyrna were exposed even under so tolerant an Emperor as Antoninus. Polycarp, on his own confession, was eighty-six years at his death, and if his martyrdom took place about 155, was old enough to have been born on the fringe of the apostolic age. According to the dubious testimony of his pupil, Irenæus, he was a disciple of apostles, especially of the apostle John. Irenæus even ventures the assertion that he was appointed to the Church of Smyrna by apostles in the sense of the Twelve.⁵⁹ In his Epistle to Florinus, who had been a pupil of Polycarp along with him, he gives a brief but vivid picture of how the master used to sit and discourse to the people and speak to his friends and pupils of his familiar intercourse with John and others who had seen the Lord, and quote the words he had heard them speak.⁶⁰ He further tells us of a visit which Polycarp paid to Rome in the time of Bishop Anicetus, with whom he discussed the Easter controversy. Though neither could persuade the other as to the proper day for the celebration of Easter, they maintained brotherly fellowship, Anicetus even requesting Polycarp to celebrate the communion

⁵⁵ Justin, "Second Apol.," ii.

⁵⁶ Waddington, "Fastes des Provinces Asiatiques" (1872). This has, however, been questioned.

⁵⁷ Capitolinus, ix.

⁵⁸ Lightfoot, i. 451-454.

⁵⁹ "Adv. Haer.," III. iii. 4. He is also mentioned by him in V. xxxiii. 4, in connection with Papias and John.

⁶⁰ Eusebius, iv. 14; v. 20. Also given in "Ante-Nicene Lib.," Irenæus, ii. 158.

in his church.⁶¹ His intercourse with Ignatius at Smyrna is attested by the Epistles of the martyr, who expresses his indebtedness to and love for him,⁶² and one of which is addressed to him. Like the martyr he was the staunch enemy of Gnostic heretics such as Marcion, whom he called the first-born of Satan,⁶³ and was content to maintain the apostolic teaching as he had received it from an older generation. As his Epistle to the Church at Philippi shows, he was a simple-minded Christian of no originality or outstanding ability, and was incapable of understanding or appreciating men of more independent views. But he had the strength of character which an unquestioning faith and a lifelong devotion nurture, and he evidently wielded a marked influence on the Church of his day.

These characteristics appear in striking fashion in the account of his martyrdom which the Church of Smyrna wrote to that of Philomelium. The common assembly of Asia was celebrating its annual religious festival in honour of the Emperor at Smyrna. Eleven Christians had already been tortured and thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre for the diversion of the populace, one of them, a youth named Germanicus, signalling his zeal by resisting the efforts of the proconsul to save him and dragging the wild beast towards him. Another Christian, a Phrygian named Quintus, quailed at the sight of the beasts and obliged the proconsul by swearing by the genius of the Emperor and offering incense. Presently the cry arose from the savage multitude, "Away with the atheists. Let Polycarp be sought out." The venerable bishop had retired from the city at the urgent entreaty of his friends. His hiding-place was revealed by a slave whom his pursuers tortured, and he was brought back to the city, firmly resolved not to betray his faith. He was led into the crowded stadium where a terrible uproar raged. "Have respect to thy old age; swear by the genius of Cæsar," urged the proconsul, who was loath to send him to his doom. "Repent and say, Away with the atheists." Polycarp refused to swear, and pointing to the excited multitude in the stadium, cried, "Away with the atheists." "Reproach Christ, and I will release thee," further urged the proconsul. "Eighty and six years," returned Polycarp, "have I served Him, and He never did me an injury. How, then, can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" Again the proconsul urged him to swear. "It is in vain that you urge me," returned Polycarp firmly; "whilst you feign to be ignorant who I am, I

⁶¹ Epistle to Florinus, and Eusebius, v. 24.

⁶² Eph. 21; Mag. 15.

⁶³ Irenæus, "Adv. Haer.," III. iii. 4.

tell you plainly I am a Christian." "Prevail, then, upon the people," urged the kindly proconsul. "We render to princes and authorities such honour as is lawful for us. But as for this unworthy crowd, I will not defend myself before them." Threatenings were as unavailing as pleadings to wring from him the recognition of the imperial genius, and the proconsul at last asked the herald to proclaim three times to the crowd, which included both Jews and Gentiles, that Polycarp had confessed himself to be a Christian. A shout of fury rang through the stadium. "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the puller down of our gods who teacheth many not to sacrifice nor to worship." They clamoured that he should be thrown to a lion, but ultimately accepted the alternative that he should be burned. There was an eager scramble to collect from the workshops and the baths the necessary pile of firewood, the Jews being especially zealous. After being bound (instead of nailed) to the stake, he offered up a prayer of thanksgiving that he was counted worthy to suffer. The fire, however, failed of effect, encircling without consuming his body, and at last he was dispatched by the dagger of an executioner. Such, denuded of its miraculous details, is the pathetic story of the passing of the aged and heroic Bishop of Smyrna.⁶⁴

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

CONTINUANCE OF APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

As in the apostolic age, apostles, prophets, teachers, presbyters or bishops, deacons continue to exercise their distinctive functions in the Church. The apostle is a wandering missionary, and in respect of his missionary function he is practically identical with the "evangelist" in the category of post-apostolic functionaries in the Epistle to the Ephesians.¹ The title in the missionary sense is applied to Philip the evangelist² in the earlier period, and in the Pastorals Timothy is exhorted to do the work of an evangelist.³ "The brethren" in the Third Epistle of John, who go forth to

⁶⁴ The Epistle to the Church of Philomelium is given in full in Lightfoot, "Ignatius and Polycarp," ii., Pt. II., and also partly condensed by Eusebius, iv. 15. A trans. is in "Ante-Nicene Lib."

¹ Eph. iv. 11.

² Acts xxi. 8.

³ 2 Tim iv. 5.

“preach the Name” in the Gentile world, evidently belong to this wandering missionary class.⁴ In the “Didache” the true apostle is to be held in the highest estimation. He is to be received as the Lord Himself. But there are evidently false as well as true apostles, and tests are to be applied to determine his genuineness. He is not to remain longer than two days, and if he overstays his welcome and asks for money he is a false apostle. When he departs he is to take nothing except bread sufficient for a day’s journey.⁵

The apostle or evangelist is not only a missionary preacher. He appears, in some cases at least, to have combined with his mission work the oversight of a number of communities, as in the apostolic period. Timothy in Asia, Titus in Crete, appear in the Pastoral Epistles as exercising such a general oversight within a given region. Timothy is to see that worthy and efficient office-bearers be placed in charge of the communities (whether by election or not is not stated), to put in force certain directions in regard to worship and the conduct of their members, to maintain sound teaching against its Gnostic subverters, to exercise his gift by reading, exhortation, teaching, etc. Titus is similarly to appoint suitable presbyters in every city of Crete, and maintain sound doctrine against the false teachers. So, too, the writer of the third Johannine Epistle, who is probably John the Elder, sends out his emissaries to evangelise the pagan Gentiles, and assumes the right to visit, direct, and control the communities of the region in question, probably the province of Asia. Similarly, the authors of 1st Peter and James assume the right to address apostolic missives to the Christians of Asia Minor and the Church at large (the Christian Dispersion) respectively, though they do so in the names of Peter and James. The writer of the Epistles to the Seven Churches of Asia in the Apocalypse—the prophet John—adopts the same apostolic prerogative of authoritatively addressing this group of Churches, as the inspired medium of the divine will.

Like the apostle, the prophet continues to occupy an important place in the subapostolic Church. In the category of functionaries in the Epistle to the Ephesians and the “Didache,”⁶ he still ranks next to the apostle, as in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Whilst like the apostle he may be an itinerant, he generally appears to be attached to a local community.⁷ Hermas, the author of the prophetic effusion known as “The Shepherd,” was a member of the Roman Church. But as the medium of revelation the prophet

⁴ 3 John, 6 f.

⁵ xi. 4 f.

⁶ Eph. iv. 11; “Didache,” xi. 3.

⁷ “Didache,” xiii. 1.

speaks not to one community only, but to the Church at large. In the Epistle to the Ephesians there is a marked tendency to enhance their authority along with that of the apostles. For the writer these have become "the holy apostles and prophets," to whom specifically "the mystery" of "the divine economy" or dispensation of the grace of God in Christ has been disclosed. They are the foundation on which the Church is built.

In the "Didache" and "The Shepherd" we get a realistic picture of the prophetic ministry. As in the case of the apostle, the prophet who speaks in the Spirit is to be implicitly received. But his message is also to be tested by his conduct, and only the approved and true prophet is to be allowed to settle in the community. Similarly in the case of the teacher. Both are to be supported by the community out of the first-fruits of the produce and possessions of the members.⁸ In the First Epistle of John⁹ and in "The Shepherd" there are also true and false prophets. As a class they had begun to degenerate, and it is clear from these documents that it included impostors who sought to batten on the communities. In "The Shepherd" some of them appear as mere soothsayers to whom addle-headed people resort with questions about their future. Hence the necessity here also to "test the man who has the divine Spirit by his life." So tested, the contrast between the true and the false prophet is very striking. "In the first place, he who has the Spirit which is from above is meek and gentle and lowly minded, and refrains from all wickedness and evil desire of this world and makes himself poorer than all men, and gives no answer to anyone when he is consulted. Nor does he speak by himself (for the Holy Spirit does not speak when a man wishes to speak) but he speaks at that time when God wishes to speak. Therefore when the man who has the Divine Spirit comes into a meeting of righteous men who have the faith of the Divine Spirit, and intercession is made to God from the assembly of these men, then the angel of the prophetic Spirit rests on him and fills the man, and the man being filled with the Holy Spirit speaks to the congregation as the Lord wills."¹⁰

How different the conduct of the empty pretender to inspiration. "In the first place, that man who seems to have a spirit exalts himself and wishes to have the first place, and he is instantly impudent and shameless and talkative, and lives in great luxury and in many other deceits, and accepts rewards for his prophecy, and if he does not receive them, he does not prophesy. Is it then

⁸ xi. 7 f.; xiii. 1 f.

⁹ I John iv. 1 f.

¹⁰ Mand. xi. 8, 9. Lake's trans. in Loeb Class. Lib., which gives also the Greek text.

possible for a Divine Spirit to accept rewards and prophesy? It is not possible for a prophet of God to do this, but the spirit of such prophets is of the earth. Next, on no account does he come near to an assembly of righteous men, but shuns them. But he cleaves to the double-minded and empty, and prophesies to them in a corner, and deceives them by empty speech about everything according to their lusts, for he is also answering the empty. . . . But when he comes into an assembly full of righteous men, who have a spirit of the Godhead, and intercession is made by these, that man is made empty, and the earthly spirit flees from him in fear, and that man is made dumb, and is altogether broken up, being able to say nothing."¹¹

In the Shepherd of Hermas himself we have an actual specimen of the teaching of a prophet of this period. His book, though diffuse and somewhat tedious to the modern reader, was so popular that it narrowly escaped inclusion in the later Canon of New Testament Scriptures. We have another relic of this post-apostolic prophetic literature in the Apocalypse of the seer of Patmos. In both these works the visionary type of prophecy finds expression, though in general the prophet is the didactic exponent of the mind and will of God, and in that of Hermas the visionary is subordinated to the practical element. The main portion of the book consists, in fact, of a series of mandates and parables for the instruction of the community. The writer is mainly a Christian moralist.

Though in the "Didache" the teachers as a class form with the apostles and prophets a triad of specially endowed functionaries, as in 1 Cor. xii. 28, in the Epistle to the Ephesians and "The Shepherd" they are reckoned among the local office-bearers of the community.¹² In its wider significance the teaching function might, in fact, be exercised by anyone who sought to enlighten and edify the brethren,¹³ and in this sense Paul applied the title to himself.

In the documents of the period the local office-bearers are still generally described as "the leaders" or "rulers" of the community.¹⁴ More definitely they appear under the names of presbyters, bishops, and deacons. Presbyters may, indeed, in some passages in these documents, denote the senior, in contrast

¹¹ Mand. xi. 12-14.

¹² Eph. iv. 11; "Shepherd," Vis. iii. 5. In Ephesians they are mentioned after the "pastors"; in "The Shepherd" after the bishops.

¹³ James iii. 1. In the Epistle of Barnabas we have an example of the work of a teacher of a local community.

¹⁴ οἱ ἡγουμένοι, οἱ προϊστάμενοι. Heb. xiii. 17, 24, cf. 7; 1 Tim. iii. 4 f.; 1 Clem. i. 3; xxi. 6; Hermas, "Shepherd," Vis. ii. 26.

to the younger members of the community.¹⁵ But in others they are distinctive functionaries, who are invested with the oversight of the community. Their function is to tend the flock of God, over which they have authority¹⁶; to watch on behalf of souls as they that shall give account¹⁷; to labour in the Word and in teaching¹⁸; to exhort and confute its gainsayers¹⁹; to ordain by the laying on of hands²⁰; to heal the sick by prayer and anointing with oil.²¹ Their pastoral function is expressed in the term "pastors" applied to them in the Ephesian Epistle. They are the shepherds of the flock in imitation of Christ, the shepherd and bishop of souls.²² In virtue of their "oversight,"²³ they are also designated bishops, and it is evident that, in a number of passages in these documents, the terms presbyters and bishops are interchangeable and denote the same functionaries. To the presbyters whom Titus is to appoint in every city in Crete the general title of bishop is applied.²⁴ The identity of presbyters and bishops is also deducible from other passages in these documents. The combination bishops and deacons occurs, indeed, in some passages as the designation of the office-bearers of the community. In 1st Clement, for instance, the apostles are represented as setting bishops and deacons over the communities founded by them.²⁵ In the "Didache" the community is directed to elect bishops and deacons, in addition to the ministry of prophets and teachers.²⁶ Similarly Hermas has the combination bishops and deacons as the titles of the local office-bearers in the Church at Rome.²⁷ But the bishops in such passages are evidently also known as presbyters and are identical with them, since in another passage Hermas speaks of the office-bearers at Rome as "the presbyters who preside over the Church."²⁸ Similarly in

¹⁵ 1 Peter v. 1, 5; 1 Tim. v. 1; 1 Clem. i. 1; xxi. 6; Hermas, Vis. iii. 1, 8.

¹⁶ 1 Peter v. 2-3. Even if we omit *ἐπισκοπούντες*, with some ancient MSS., from 1 Peter v. 2, tending the flock (*ποιμάνατε τὸ ποίμνιον*) means the same thing.

¹⁷ Heb. xiii. 17.

¹⁸ 1 Tim. v. 17.

²⁰ 1 Tim. iv. 14.

¹⁹ Titus i. 9.

²¹ James v. 3 f.

²² 1 Peter v. 4; cf. John x. 1. The allegory of the Good Shepherd and the parable of the lost sheep, Luke xv. 3 f.

²³ *ἐπισκοπή*.

²⁴ Titus i. 5 f.; cf. 1 Tim. iii. 1 f.; v. 17, where the ruling function is predicated of both.

²⁵ xlii. 4-5.

²⁶ xv. 1-2. It would appear that in the communities to which the "Didache" was addressed the original functionaries, as at Antioch, consisted of prophets and teachers, and that bishops or presbyters and deacons were only beginning to be established.

²⁷ "Shepherd," Sim. ix. 26, 2; 27, 1, 2. The *φιλόξενοι* of 27, 2, "hospitable men," are evidently deacons.

²⁸ Vis. ii. 4, 3.

Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians the bishops appear as presbyters who exercise the "oversight" and are set over the flock of Christ.²⁹ In such passages the function of ruling and oversight is clearly predicable of both. The distinction of name does not betoken a distinction of order. The names cover the same functionaries who, from the point of view of official status as leaders, rulers of the community, are termed presbyters; from that of their pastoral or episcopal work bishops or overseers.

The deacons are their assistants in the special branch of it concerned with the care of the needy members—the poor, widows, and orphans—and the strangers within their midst.³⁰ Women are also set apart as deaconesses for similar service,³¹ and approved widows over sixty years of age are not only to receive maintenance from the community, but apparently also to serve it in certain respects.³² Women members are, however, allotted a subordinate position in the community. They are not to take part in public worship, to pray or teach.³³ The writer is hostile to the emancipation tendencies which sought to widen women's sphere and give greater scope to her capacity for service.

The hypothesis of Harnack that the bishops mentioned in some of the documents in connection with this philanthropic work were financial officials, distinct in function from the presbyters³⁴ seems to me problematic in view of the evidence in support of the identity of both. Possibly at Rome and elsewhere there were among the presbyter-bishops some who were specifically entrusted with the charitable work of the community. Specialisation of duty would naturally develop within the college or board of office-bearers known as presbyters or bishops. But this does not justify the inference that the term bishops in the subapostolic documents denotes a distinct order from the presbyters, who distinctively exercise the pastoral or episcopal function, and are therefore bishops. That the presbyters were charged with the administration of the communal funds is clear from the exhortation to be on their guard against the love of filthy lucre and to practise hospitality.³⁵

From the Pastoral Epistles we learn in some detail the qualification for holding office in the community. The presbyter-bishop must be of irreproachable character, apt to teach, and able to rule well his own household in order to be fit to rule the Church

²⁹ xlv. 4, 5; liv. 2.

³⁰ Hermas, Sim. ix., 26, 27.

³¹ 1 Tim. iii. 11; γυναῖκες, ministræ.

³⁴ "Constitution and Law of the Church," 60 f.

³⁵ Titus i. 7-8; cf. 1 Peter v. 2.

³² 1 Tim. v. 4 f.

³³ *Ibid.*, ii. 11-12.

of God. He must not marry a second time—a stipulation which marks him off from the ordinary members, to whom apparently a second marriage is permissible. Nor must he be a lover of money, in view evidently of his being entrusted with the funds of the community, though he is entitled to maintenance on the ground that the labourer is worthy of his hire. Equally important the stipulation “given to hospitality” in view of the necessity of providing for the wants of the poor and entertaining travelling brethren. Similarly the deacons must prove their fitness before being admitted to office, are also to be appointed in virtue of their ability to rule well their own households, and, in recognition of faithful service, may be advanced to the higher rank of presbyter-bishop.³⁶

THE MINISTRY OF THE COMMUNITY

As in the apostolic age, the ministry³⁷ of the community itself continues in the exercise of the gifts of its members. Each one is to minister according to his gift as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, whether in speaking the divine oracles, or rendering service as God gives him strength.³⁸ The community is a holy and royal priesthood in the spiritual sense, which has taken the place of the Jews as the people of God, and offers up spiritual sacrifices in His service, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.³⁹ Of this people Christ is the shepherd and bishop,⁴⁰ and its office-bearers are its undershepherds.⁴¹ The community, if subject to these office-bearers, has its rights which they are to respect, not lording it over their charge, and striving to secure a willing rather than a constrained obedience.⁴² In Hebrews the oversight of the community for the maintenance of the Christian life is the duty of its members as well as its rulers.⁴³ Its activity in ministering to the saints is commended and encouraged.⁴⁴ Similarly in the Epistle of James the members are to render service for the common benefit in seeking to convert an erring brother, and in visiting the widows and fatherless in their affliction.⁴⁵ In Titus service is likewise required of all in the “maintenance of good works for necessary needs, that they be not unfruitful.”⁴⁶ The insistence on this service for the common benefit is equally characteristic of the Epistle of Barnabas and the “Didache.” The

³⁶ 1 Tim. iii. 1 f. ; v. 17 f. ; Titus i. 6 f. ; cf. *Hermas*, Sim. ix., 27.

³⁷ *διακονία*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, v. 1 f.

⁴⁴ Heb. v. 10 ; cf. x. 32 f.

³⁸ 1 Peter iv. 9-11.

⁴² *Ibid.*, v. 2-3.

⁴⁵ i. 27 ; v. 19-20.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, ii. 5, 9-10.

⁴³ xii. 14 f.

⁴⁶ iii. 8, 14.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, ii. 25.

members are to share all things with one another, "not stretching out their hands to take and shutting them when it comes to giving," frequenting daily the society of the saints, striving to gain souls by the Word and to reconcile them that have fallen out.⁴⁷ In the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians there is, indeed, a tendency to accentuate the distinction between the community and its divinely instituted office-bearers, in view of the revolt against them at the instigation of certain headstrong and self-willed agitators, which he strives to quell as the representative of the Roman Church.⁴⁸ To this end he emphasises the necessity of an ordered ministry in the Christian as in the Jewish Church. He instances the divine regulation of the duties of the Jewish priesthood, which he sharply distinguishes from "the layman,"⁴⁹ as a type and an example of the Christian ministry. Moreover, this ministry was instituted by Christ who sent forth the apostles. The apostles, in turn, appointed from their converts bishops and deacons over the communities founded by them and, foreseeing that strife would arise over the oversight of these communities, directed that, on the death of these, other approved men should succeed them. To enforce this theory he quotes Isaiah lx. 17, unto which he unhistorically reads a prophecy of the institution of Christian bishops and deacons.⁵⁰ That local functionaries were appointed by Paul and Barnabas in the communities founded by them, we know from the Acts. That they and other apostles provided for the orderly continuance of this ministry in the manner described is not apparent from the other documents of the period. This seems to be merely a supposition to serve as an argument applicable to the situation at Corinth. The writer's quotation of the passage from Isaiah in further proof of his contention, with which it has really nothing to do, does not tend to beget confidence in his historic sense. For the historian proof of this kind is not worth the paper it is written on. At the same time, his purpose is to enforce the necessity of the continuance and orderly exercise of the ministry of presbyter-bishops and deacons as instituted by the apostles; not to set forth apostolic succession in the more developed sense of a later time. Whilst thus magnifying against the Corinthian agitators the established rights of the duly appointed office-bearers, and distinguishing between them and the laity, he recognises those of the community itself.⁵¹ It still seems to be invested with the supreme authority. The office-bearers are

⁴⁷ Bar. xix. 8, 9, 10, 12; cf. the opening chapters of the "Didache."

⁴⁸ c. i.

⁴⁹ ὁ λαϊκός.

⁵⁰ chs. xli.-xliv.

⁵¹ τὸ πλῆθος, τὸ ποιμνιον.

appointed "with the consent of the whole church."⁵² Its members are to do what is commanded by the people.⁵³ They take part in public intercession and admonition and form a brotherhood.⁵⁴ As in the case of nearly all these subapostolic missives, the Epistle is written from the Church of God in Rome to the Church at Corinth, not to its office-bearers. It is not they but the people who constitute the Church. On the other hand, the tendency is to regulate and control the thought and activities of the communities. The charismatic or dynamic spirit of a former time is declining in many of them. Instead of the free inspiration of the believer, the emphasis, in the Pastoral Epistles for instance, is on the sacred writings, the inspired Scriptures, in which teaching, reproof, correction, instruction, righteousness are to be sought.⁵⁵ The local ordained officials are superseding the earlier inspired speakers. Those who adopt an independent position as teachers are "false teachers" of the Gnostic type.

CHAPTER IV

PRIMITIVE EPISCOPACY

TRANSITION TO THREEFOLD MINISTRY

IN the subapostolic documents reviewed the communities are governed by a plurality of local office-bearers known as presbyters or bishops and deacons. These office-bearers form a twofold ministry, consisting of a board or college of presbyter-bishops, with deacons as their assistants. At the same time, this form of government, though practically universal in the Gentile world, was evidently not a static one. We hear of strife over the oversight¹ of those among the rulers at Rome "who love the first seats,"² of a striving on the part of a certain Diotrophes in the province of Asia "to have the pre-eminence among them."³ In reality the subapostolic period is one of transition, in which the twofold is developing into a threefold local ministry and one chief office-bearer, known as the bishop, in contrast to the presbyters and

⁵² c. xlv. As in Acts the word is *καθίστηναι*, and the actual appointment is made by men of repute (*ἐλλογιμῶν ἀνδρῶν*), apparently the rulers, just as it is made by the apostles in Acts vi. after the people have elected.

⁵³ c. liv.

⁵⁴ chs. ii. and lvi.; cf. 1 Tim. ii. 1 f.

¹ 1 Clem. xlv.

² Hermas, Vis. iii. 9, 7-10; Sim. viii. 7, 4.

⁵⁵ 2 Tim. iii. 15-16.

³ 3 John 9.

deacons, who have become his subordinates, emerges, in the genuine Epistles of Ignatius, in a number of communities in the province of Asia and at Antioch towards the end of the reign of Trajan.

IGNATIUS ON THE SINGLE BISHOP

Ignatius is an impassioned believer in the threefold local ministry of bishop, presbyters, and deacons, and presents his belief as an ecclesiastical dogma to be implicitly received by the communities. He claims for it, as Clement claimed for the twofold ministry of presbyter-bishops and deacons, a divine origin and institution. The claim of a divine sanction of both systems shows how subjective the contention was in both cases; and warns at the outset to be on our guard against such pontifical assumptions in the guise of history. Ignatius narrows the title bishop to a single office-bearer in each community, who exercises by divine right the supreme oversight over it, and, in extravagant language, accentuates the duty of subjection to him as, in a special degree, God's representative. On the analogy of the steward whom the master of the household has set over it, and who ought to be received as the Lord Himself, so "we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord himself."⁴ "When ye are obedient to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, it is evident that ye are living, not after man, but after Jesus Christ."⁵ "As many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are with the bishop."⁶ "Do ye all follow your bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father. . . . It is good to recognise God and the bishop. He that honoureth the bishop is honoured of God. He that doeth anything without the knowledge of the bishop serveth the devil."⁷ In exalting the single bishop he assumes the rôle of the prophet, claims to speak by inspiration. "He in whom I am bound is my witness that I heard it not from flesh of man; it was the preaching of the Spirit who spoke in this wise, 'Do nothing without the bishop.'⁸ For him the bishop is the representative not of the apostles, but of God and Christ, and his function is indispensable to the validity of baptism and the Eucharist. He occupies in the local congregation the same function as Christ does in regard to the universal or catholic Church. "Let that be held a valid Eucharist which is under the bishop, or one to whom he shall have committed it. Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be, even as where Jesus may be, there is the universal Church."⁹ "It is not lawful

⁴ Eph. 6.

⁵ Tral. 2.

⁶ Philad. 3.

⁷ Smyr. 8, 9.

⁸ Philad. 7.

⁹ ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία.

apart from the bishop either to baptize or to hold a love feast; but whatsoever he shall approve, this is well-pleasing also to God that everything which ye do may be sure and valid.”¹⁰ Those about to marry are to seek the bishop’s consent to their union. “It becometh men and women, too, when they marry, to unite themselves with the consent of the bishop, that the marriage may be after the Lord.”¹¹

PRESBYTERS, DEACONS, AND COMMUNITY

At the same time, the bishop, though invested with such high prerogative, is not an autocrat. The presbyters and deacons likewise exercise a divinely appointed function in the community. As the bishop is the representative of God, so the presbyters are the representatives of the apostles, and the deacons are the servants of Jesus Christ.¹² Submission is due to them as well as the bishop. “Be obedient also to the presbytery as to the apostles of Jesus Christ . . . and those likewise who are deacons or servants of the mysteries of Jesus Christ.”¹³ All three are divinely ordained functionaries. “I cried out when I was among you; I spoke with a loud voice, with God’s own voice, give heed to the bishop and the presbytery and deacons.”¹⁴ They are together necessary for the existence of the Church. “Apart from these there is not even the name of a Church.”¹⁵ The presbytery—“the council of God,” “the college of the apostles”—is still the governing body of the community, of which the bishop has become the personal president. Both co-operate in this work. “Your honourable presbytery worthy of God is attuned to the bishop even as its strings to a lyre.”¹⁶ The community is, therefore, to do nothing without the bishop and presbyters.¹⁷ He recognises, too, the corporate authority of the community itself¹⁸ as constituting, along with the office-bearers, the Church. Six of the Epistles are addressed to it. The Churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna are each requested to appoint a deputy to congratulate the Church of Antioch on the cessation of persecution,¹⁹ and Polycarp is directed to assemble a council or congregational meeting of that of Smyrna for the same purpose, and to write to other churches that they may do likewise.²⁰

¹⁰ Smyr. 8.¹¹ Polycarp, 5.¹² Mag. 6.¹³ Tral. 2; cf. Polycarp, 6.¹⁴ Philad. 7.¹⁵ Tral. 3.¹⁶ Eph. 4.¹⁷ Mag. 7 and other passages.¹⁸ τὸ πλῆθος.¹⁹ Philad. 10; Smyr. 11.²⁰ Polycarp, 7, 8.

NECESSITY OF UNITY

Despite his proneness to rodomontade in the expression of his ecclesiastical convictions, the motive behind his insistence on the divine institution of the threefold ministry is practical rather than theological. His theory of the divine right of the single bishop and his subordinate office-bearers in each community is really the product of the historic situation. Gnostic speculation in the form of a Docetic conception of Christ's person was threatening the unity of the Church, and persecution by a hostile Empire its very existence. In the face of this twofold danger Ignatius emphasises the clamant necessity of the unity of the community in adherence to the threefold ministry and in opposition to the schismatics among them. Unity is the chief note of the Epistles. "Do ye each and all of you form yourselves into a chorus, that being harmonious in concord and taking the keynote of God, ye may in unison sing with one voice through Jesus Christ unto the Father."²¹ "Therefore do ye all study conformity to God. . . . Let there be nothing among you which shall have power to divide you, but be ye united with the bishop and them that preside over you."²² "As children of the truth, shun division and wrong doctrines; and where the shepherd is, there follow ye as sheep."²³

CHARACTER AND LIMITED EXTENT

The guarantee of this unity lies in the episcopal system of government in the primitive sense, or mon-episcopacy²⁴ as depicted in these Epistles. But primitive episcopacy means merely the government of a single community by a single bishop or pastor, assisted by a college of presbyters, over which he presides, and a body of deacons, who do not seem to be included in the presbytery. What we see in these Epistles is the establishment of local, not of later diocesan episcopacy.²⁵ They disclose the evolution of the single bishop or pastor of the local community, instead of a plurality of bishops or presbyters, who, with the deacons, have become subordinate to him, but, equally with him, exercise a divinely ordained function. This system of government might be the forerunner of the later developed episcopacy. But it may

²¹ Eph. 4.²² Mag. 6.²³ Philad. 2 and other passages.²⁴ As Streeter terms it in his recent book, "The Primitive Church."²⁵ The phrase, "Bishop of Syria," which Ignatius applies to himself in one passage (Rom. 2), is either an exaggeration, to which he is only too prone, or if the passage be genuine, must mean the bishop belonging to or from Syria.

also be regarded as the prototype of the modern non-episcopal churches, in which the threefold ministry of bishop or pastor, elders, and deacons has been adopted. Moreover, this evolution, in spite of the extravagant insistence on its divine institution, is, in reality, the product of expediency, begotten of the historical situation. It is evidently an innovation, and the innovation is not implicitly accepted in the communities in which it has been or is being established. This is apparent from the insistent tone of the writer in urging its observance. As something new it needs to be pressed on the communities as of divine right, and it requires a special revelation to prove its divine origin. In some of them it is encountering opposition. It has led to schism, and the schismatics are not exclusively Gnostic heretics. There are evidently among them those who prefer the traditional system of government, and appeal to tradition in support of it. "Whosoever, therefore, cometh not to the congregation he hath thereby showed his pride and hath separated himself."²⁶ "Some persons have the bishop's name on their lips, but in everything act apart from him . . . forasmuch as they do not assemble themselves together lawfully according to commandment."²⁷ "For I heard certain persons saying, 'If I find it not in the charters (archives) I believe it not in the Gospel.' And when I said to them, 'It is written,' they answered me, 'That is the question.'"²⁸

Nor was the system by any means universal, as the writer, who extravagantly speaks of "bishops that are settled in the farthest parts of the earth,"²⁹ would have us believe. It was at this time apparently confined to Asia Minor and Antioch. In the Roman Church, to which one of the Epistles is directed, there is as yet evidently no single bishop.³⁰ Nor was there one in the Church at Corinth, to which Clement wrote the Epistle of the Roman Church, nor in that of Philippi, to which Polycarp³¹ wrote immediately after those of Ignatius. The evolution of primitive episcopacy is only in the partial stage. It had, however, the future on its side, and by the end of the second century it had become a universal institution.

²⁶ Eph. 5.

²⁸ Philad. 8.

²⁷ Mag. 4.

²⁹ Eph. 3.

³⁰ Dr Headlam thinks ("Doctrine of the Church," 97) that it is "absurd" to conclude from the silence of Ignatius in his Epistle to the Romans that there was no Bishop of Rome at this period. It seems to me that the writer, who had the bishop on the brain, would, in writing to the Roman Church, have taken notice of the fact if there had been a Bishop of Rome when he wrote his Epistle.

³¹ He speaks only of presbyters and deacons, v. 6, and this is significant for the identity of bishops and presbyters in Paul's phrase "bishops and deacons" in his Epistle to the Philippians.

ITS ORIGIN

Whilst insisting on its divine institution, Ignatius does not inform us how the single bishop in each community came into existence. According to Clement of Alexandria, the institution of the office in Asia was the work of the apostle John. When John returned to Ephesus from Patmos after the death of Domitian, he was accustomed to set out, he tells us, on a tour into the neighbouring districts of the Gentiles, appointing bishops in some places, in others setting in order whole churches, in others selecting some one for the ministry whom the Spirit indicated.³² The tradition is rather vague and is evidently based on the belief that the John of the Apocalypse was the apostle, a belief which is quite untenable. The presbyter of the second and third Johannine Epistles does seem to exercise a supervision over the churches of the province of Asia. But there is nothing in these Epistles to suggest the existence of a single bishop in the communities to which he writes, though the striving of Diotrophes for the pre-eminence over the other office-bearers, which he denounces, seems to indicate a tendency in this direction. The tradition would seem to be merely the outcome of the later belief that the monarchic episcopacy was instituted by apostles, and no reliance can be placed upon it as an explanation of its origin.³³

A still later theory, which was set forth by Theodore of Mopsuestia about the beginning of the fourth century, derives its origin from the superintendents of the churches of a region or province, which were under the charge of local presbyters. In other words, the primitive bishop was a functionary like Timothy in the province of Asia and Titus in Crete, who bore at first the title of an apostle, afterwards discarded for that of bishop, and was not the pastor of a single church. He was a provincial, not a local official, and was charged with the oversight of the churches of a whole region. But this theory is not in accordance with the early testimony of the Epistles of Ignatius in which the primitive bishop appears as a local office-bearer, *i.e.*, the pastor of a single church, not a provincial superintendent.³⁴

³² "Quis Dives," xlii. (Greek text and trans. in Loeb Class. Lib., 1919); Eusebius, iii. 23.

³³ As Rothe and Lightfoot assume. See Lightfoot, "Essay on the Christian Ministry," 209-210.

³⁴ Theodore's statement of the case is in his "Commentary on Paul's Epistles," Swete's ed., ii. 121 f. (1882); cf. Harnack, "Expansion," ii. 64 f.; Duchesne, "Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaul," i. 37 f. (2nd ed., 1907).

That the episcopal office was derived from the primacy which James appears to have exercised in the church at Jerusalem is very unlikely. This primacy, such as it was, was due, as we have seen, to his relationship to Jesus, as was that of his successor Symeon. In the Gentile churches the office seems to have gradually developed as the result of the natural operation of various factors. The situation disclosed in the Ignatian Epistles, in which the communities are exposed to the double danger of doctrinal strife within and persecution from without, would suggest the advisability of increased concentration in their government. Among the office-bearers, known indifferently at first as presbyters and bishops and charged with the oversight of a community, one specially gifted for the administrative function would naturally come to take a leading part as their executive president. Similarly, one of these office-bearers might take a leading part in worship, in virtue of special aptitude and ability. In connection especially with the Eucharist, the conduct of the celebration would necessarily be in the hands of one of their number for the time being, and this might ere long become a special function. In the case of the maintenance of correspondence with other churches, we know from Hermas that an office-bearer of the name of Clement was entrusted at Rome with this distinctive function, and this would lend an increasing importance to the person in question, compared with the other office-bearers. Again the necessity of guarding the community from false teaching would tend to bring the functionary most apt to teach to the front.³⁵ In this way specialisation of function would gradually take its rise, and probably we may look in such specialisation for the ultimate appearance of the single bishop, as the Ignatian Epistles first reveal him in some of the communities of Asia Minor. Nor should we overlook the very human factor of the ambition of place and power, which is apt to become the besetting sin of the ecclesiastical type of mind, and of which there is more than one trace in the documents of the period.

In the later lists which carry the succession of bishops of provincial churches like Antioch and Rome back to the time of the apostles, these so-called bishops, who are represented as immediately succeeding apostles, can only be functionaries who, in some such way, became prominent among their fellow-presbyters. Even in the time of Clement and Hermas there was no single bishop in the later sense at Rome for instance. Moreover, after there came to be bishops in the monarchic sense in

³⁵ On this question, see Harnack, "Constitution and Law of the Church," 96-101.

these churches, the term presbyter was still applied to them—a survival of the time when all were alike presbyters and, at the same time, bore the name of bishops.

CHAPTER V

COMMUNAL RELIGIOUS LIFE

BAPTISM

IN accordance with the developing theology of the subapostolic period, baptism is administered in the triune name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹ From the "Didache" we get a brief but suggestive account of the rite as administered in the Syrian communities, to which it was addressed. It is preceded by a course of instruction in the Two Ways of Life and Death,² and is performed by immersion if there is a sufficient supply of water (preferably in "living" or running water). Otherwise by aspersion or pouring three times on the head in the triune name.³ Before submitting themselves to the rite, those to be baptized fast for one or two days, and fasting is also prescribed for the baptizer, who is not particularly specified, and for any other members of the community who can. Whilst this simple manual tells us nothing of its religious significance, in other subapostolic documents it is symbolic of the washing away of sin and the attainment of a good conscience toward God,⁴ of the regeneration of the soul.⁵ Hence the believer is said to be saved through water,⁶ and in the "Shepherd" of Hermas the Tower, *i.e.*, the Church, is built on the water "because your life was saved and shall be saved through water."⁷ Baptism is the visible sign of an inward spiritual process, whereby the sense of sin is taken away and a new spiritual life attained. In the Fourth Gospel the water and the Spirit co-operate in producing this new spiritual life, or rebirth. "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."⁸ But it is the action of the Spirit that is emphasised, and to baptism in itself no magical efficacy seems to be assigned. The regenerated believer is "born of the Spirit" and the baptism with water, whilst symbolically

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19; "Didache," vii. 1.

² The first six chapters.

³ "Didache," vii. 2-4.

⁴ 1 Peter iii. 20 f.; Heb. x. 22; Eph. v. 26.

⁵ John iii. 5 f.; Titus iii. 5.

⁷ Vis. iii. 3, 5.

⁶ 1 Peter iii. 20-21.

⁸ John iii. 5; cf. Titus iii. 5.

important, is only emblematic of the regenerating power of the Spirit.⁹ The Baptist is in fact represented as proclaiming that his baptism with water is only a preliminary to the baptism with the Holy Ghost.¹⁰

Baptism involves the obligation to eschew wilful sin and live a holy life. Of this obligation the writer of Hebrews holds a very rigorist view. There is no room for a second repentance for those who give way to such wilful post-baptismal sin, and thus belie their Christian profession.¹¹ Against this illiberal view, which seems to have been the prevailing one, Hermas maintains in the "Shepherd" that a second repentance is possible and emphasises throughout God's mercy in accepting it. At the same time, His mercy has its limits. In the case of renewed wilful sin repentance will be of no avail and the sinner will forfeit his salvation.¹²

NURTURING THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

From these documents we get a glimpse of the assembly of the community for worship and edification. These assemblies, which take place on stated days, are the focus of its religious life, and there are recurring injunctions on the duty of assiduous attendance. "Do not by retiring apart live alone," we read in the Epistle of Barnabas, "as if you were already righteous, but come together and seek out the common good."¹³ Among the members there is a tendency, due to indifference or a schismatic spirit, to neglect the fellowship in praise, prayer, thanksgiving. The reading of the Old Testament Scriptures and the memoirs of the apostles¹⁴ (Gospels and Epistles), prophecy or revelation, teaching, mutual exhortation are indispensable for the nurture of the common religious life. The Ephesians are exhorted to be filled with the Spirit, in characteristic Pauline terms, "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."¹⁵ "I exhort, therefore, first of all," writes the author of the Pastoral Epistles, "that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men; for kings and

⁹ John iii. 6-8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, i. 31 f.; Mark i. 8; Matt. iii. 11; Luke iii. 16.

¹¹ Heb. vi. 4-8.

¹² Vis. ii. 2; Mand. i. 1.

¹³ iv. 10; xix. 10; cf. Heb. x. 25, and Ignatius, Eph. 5.

¹⁴ 2 Tim. iii. 14; 2 Peter iii. 15 f.

¹⁵ v. 18 f.

all that are in high place ; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity.”¹⁶ Of such supplications in the Roman community Clement furnishes an example in the intercessory prayer, applicable to the times, with which he closes his Epistle to the Corinthians, and which is a striking evidence of loyalty to even a persecuting State, enjoined in the foregoing passage in the Pastorals. Both are a convincing refutation of the charge of disloyalty involved in the refusal to participate in the State worship. Both, too, stand in striking contrast to the embittered attitude of the author of the Apocalypse in which the State is the object of fierce invective and defiance, and Rome is Babylon, the incarnation of wickedness and oppression to be destroyed by the warring Christ!¹⁷ Whilst men only are to pray and teach in the common assembly, to widows is assigned the duty of incessant prayer in private for the Church.¹⁸ In the doxologies contained in these documents we have probably fragments of the liturgical worship of the subapostolic community.¹⁹ Similarly there are not a few passages in the Apocalypse, such as the Trisagion and the Hallelujah, which appear to be devotional utterances of the common assembly.²⁰ Not only does the community make public confession of sin to God.²¹ Individual members confess to and pray for one another.²² Confession of their common faith and hope seems also to have found expression in the hymns—“a sacrifice or offering of praise”—in which they “make confession to His name.”²³ In this public confession the real humanity of Jesus is specially emphasised against Gnostic error. In the communities of Asia there is already a rudimentary creed, of which the real humanity is the characteristic note, and which, in the Johannine and Ignatian Epistles, is coupled with an enhanced evaluation of the person of Jesus as Son of God. “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God.”²⁴ In such passages the human and divine Christ, in the developed Johannine sense, has entered into the belief and worship of the community at Ephesus at least, though it is clear that, apart from the Gnostics, the Johannine conception of the divine Son has its opponents in the Asian communities. Similarly this rudimentary creed is reflected in the Epistles of Ignatius.

¹⁶ 1 Tim. ii. 1 f.

¹⁷ Rev. xiii. 1 f. ; xiv. 8 f.

¹⁸ 1 Tim. ii. 8 f. ; v. 5 f.

¹⁹ For example, Eph. iii. 20-21 ; Heb. xiii. 20-21 ; 1 Tim. i. 17.

²⁰ Rev. iv. 8 ; xix. 6-7, etc.

²¹ “Didache,” iv. 14.

²² James v. 16.

²³ Heb. xiii. 15 ; ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ; cf. x. 23.

²⁴ 1 John ii. 23.

"Jesus Christ who was of the family of David and of Mary, who was truly born, both ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died, who also was truly raised from the dead."²⁵

FELLOWSHIP MEAL AND EUCHARIST

The fellowship meal or Agape continues throughout the period and seems still to be conjoined with the celebration of the Eucharist.²⁶ The "Didache" has preserved a contemporary description of the simple ritual of this social-religious gathering in the Syrian churches on the Lord's Day, in which only those baptized into the name of the Lord may take part. In these churches the Eucharist appears to have preceded instead of followed the common meal, as at Corinth in Paul's time. Thanksgiving²⁷ is rendered to God the Father for the wine and the broken bread, which is evidently the symbol of Christ's broken body, and of which the members partake together, in thankfulness for the life and knowledge which have come to them through "Jesus thy servant" (*παῖς*), who is also metaphorically designated "the holy vine of David." It expresses the aspiration that, as the grain was scattered on the mountains before being gathered into one bread, so the Church may be gathered from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom.²⁸ Thereafter follows the common meal, which is concluded with another prayer in which thanksgiving is again rendered to the Holy Father and Almighty God for the knowledge, faith, and immortality, and for the spiritual food and drink freely given to them through His servant Jesus. It invokes deliverance for the Church from all evil and its sanctification for the kingdom, and concludes with the primitive *Maranatha* (Our Lord, Come). Though in these prayers, which have a distinctly Jewish flavour, the communities addressed had already a fixed liturgy, this liturgy might be departed from by the prophets, who are at liberty to give thanks "as much as they wish."²⁹

The Eucharistic celebration is described as a sacrifice. It is preceded by confession of sin, and none who has a contention with his fellow-believer may participate before a reconciliation has taken place, "that your sacrifice³⁰ may not be defiled." By

²⁵ Tral. 9; cf. Smyr. 1.

²⁶ Ignatius, Smyr. 8; "Didache," x. 1; Jude 12; 2 Peter ii. 13.

²⁷ *εὐχαριστία*.

²⁸ ix.; cf. Heb. xii. 22 f., in which the writer speaks of "the general assembly and church of the first-born enrolled in heaven."

²⁹ x.

³⁰ *θυσία* xiv. which seems to be an introduction to chs. ix. and x.

sacrifice is understood the gifts of bread and wine offered for the celebration and the support of the poor, as appears from the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, which mentions the offerings and gifts³¹ for this double purpose, offered to God by the bishops in prayer. In both documents sacrifice, as applied in this connection, has only a spiritual sense.³² In the "Didache" the prophets, who appear to have presided over the celebration, are only in this sense designated "your high priests."³³ In the Epistle of Clement the reference made to Jewish offerings and sacrifices is by way of an example of orderly ministration, and no identification of the Christian and the Jewish worship is otherwise implied or asserted.³⁴ For Clement the only high priest in the Christian sense is "Jesus Christ, the high priest of all our offerings."³⁵ Similarly, in the Pastoral Epistles and in Hebrews there is only one mediator between God and man, "the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all."³⁶

In the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles of Ignatius, on the other hand, there is an advance, suggestive of current Hellenist-Oriental thought and mystery religion, on the more primitive conception of the Eucharist. At all events, the terminology in reference to it has become very materialist. In the sacramental discussion at Capernaum in the Fourth Gospel Jesus is the bread of life from heaven (Philo), the living bread. This bread is His flesh which He gives for the life of the world, and the partaking of His flesh and blood in the Eucharist is essential to the attainment of eternal life. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves . . . for my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed." No wonder that His Jewish hearers, and even His disciples, are thoroughly mystified, and Jesus is fain to explain this utterance in a spiritual sense. "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."³⁷ Evidently in the Gentile communities of the province of Asia a materialist conception of the Eucharist was developing. This development is reflected in the sacramental discourse which the writer attributes to Jesus and seeks in conclusion to spiritualise, in order apparently to counteract this materialist tendency. This tendency is also observable in the

³¹ *προσφοράς, δώρα.*

³² "Didache," x. 3; *πνευματικὴν τροφήν καὶ ποτόν*; cf. Clement, xviii., xxxiii., lii.

³³ xiii. 3.

³⁴ xl.-xli.

³⁵ xxxvi., lxi., lxiv.

³⁶ I Tim. ii. 5-6; Heb. ix. 15. For Ignatius Christ is also the only High Priest, Philad. 9. So also Polycarp to Phil. 12.

³⁷ John vi. 35 f.

Epistles of Ignatius. For him the Eucharist is "the medicine of immortality," "the antidote of death."³⁸ The writer, in characteristic Oriental fashion, is given to hyperbole, and these phrases may only be figurative, as when he speaks of "desiring a draught of his blood which is love incorruptible."³⁹ At the same time, the language of other passages is very materialistic, and the Johannine spiritual correction is lacking. "The Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which flesh suffered for our sins, and which the Father of His goodness raised up."⁴⁰

INCREASED REGULATION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

The community is a society for the nurture of the religious life in a common worship. To this end it is also subject to the supervision of its pastors and of the members themselves, and the tendency, in some of the documents, is to increase the regulation of the religious life. Hence the emphasis on fasting, which it derived from Judaism. In the "Didache" fasting is prescribed on the Wednesday and the Friday⁴¹ in commemoration of the betrayal and the crucifixion of the Lord, and in distinction from the Jewish fasts on the Monday and Thursday in commemoration of Moses' ascent of and descent from Mount Sinai. In accordance with Christ's command, the Lord's Prayer takes the place of the Jewish prayers, and is to be repeated thrice daily,⁴² after the model of the Jewish morning, noon, and evening prayers. In the Epistle of Barnabas, "The Shepherd" of Hermas, and 2nd Clement fasting has also become a fixed institution.⁴³ Whilst, in "The Shepherd," the moral aspect of the practice is emphasised as abstinence from evil and as a means of spending what is thereby saved on the needy, it will also secure so much more merit in the sight of God.⁴⁴ In the "Didache" and the Apocalypse the apostolic regulation on foods offered to idols still holds good,⁴⁵ whereas in the Epistle to the Hebrews and 1st Timothy scruples on this score are discouraged.⁴⁶ The erring member is to be publicly reprov'd and absolution is not to be lightly given. "Them that sin reprove in the sight of all that the rest also may be in fear. Lay hands hastily on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins."⁴⁷ In Matthew's Gospel we have an example of the procedure followed in dealing with an offending

³⁸ Eph. 20; *φάρμακον ἀθανασίας, τοῦ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν.*

³⁹ Rom. 7.

⁴⁰ Smyr. 6.

⁴¹ viii. 1.

⁴² viii. 2, 3.

⁴³ *στάσεις, dies stationum.*

⁴⁴ Sim. v. 1, 3; *cf.* Barnabas, iii. 7.

⁴⁵ "Didache," vi. 3; "Apoc.," ii. 20.

⁴⁶ Heb. xiii. 9; 1 Tim. iv. 3 f.

⁴⁷ 1 Tim. v. 20, 22.

brother, who is first taken to task by the aggrieved member. If he fails to amend, he renews the attempt in the presence of several other brethren. If the delinquent still refuses amendment, the case is submitted to the whole Church, which possesses the power of loosing and binding and, if he still refuses, excommunicates him.⁴⁸

THE FAMILY OF GOD AND THE NEW HUMANITY

In spite of the growing tendency to distinguish between office-bearers and laity in Clement, the community is still "a brotherhood."⁴⁹ Its members are equally "the saints," consecrated to God in virtue of their common baptism. They form the family or household of God,⁵⁰ and whilst they comprise free and unfree, and slaves remain in their servile status, as in the apostolic age, they are to cherish the family spirit. The only distinction is between seniors and juniors of both sexes. The elder male members are esteemed the fathers, the elder women the mothers of the community, whilst the younger men and women regard themselves as brothers and sisters "in all purity."⁵¹ Respect of persons as between rich and poor is out of place in the household of God, though it is only too common in the Epistle of James. The family spirit involves the practice of a ready hospitality towards one another and the strangers sojourning in their midst.⁵² It involves further the fusion of Jew and Gentile into the one body, whether in the local or the universal sense, of which Christ is the head. This oneness of Jew and Gentile, whom difference of race, temperament, and religious experience tends to keep apart, is the main theme of the Epistle to the Ephesians. For the writer the union and equality of Jewish and Gentile believers in a common faith is the mystery which has been revealed in the Gospel.⁵³ By His death Christ has achieved their common salvation, broken down the middle wall of partition, has reconciled them in one body unto God through the Cross, and has created a new humanity, "one new man."⁵⁴ Hence the obligation to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, which, as we learn from the Epistles of James, Clement, and Ignatius, was only imperfectly exemplified in the practical life of the communities. The schismatic spirit was all too rife. "There is one body and one spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of

⁴⁸ Matt. xviii. 15 f.

⁵⁰ Eph. ii. 19; οἰκέτοί τοῦ θεοῦ.

⁵¹ 1 Tim. v. 1 f.; Ignatius, Polycarp 4.

⁵² 1 Peter iv. 9; Heb. xiii. 1; 1 Tim. v. 10.

⁵³ iii. 3 f.

⁴⁹ 1 Peter ii. 17; 1 Clem. ii.

⁵⁴ ii. 11 f.

your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." ⁵⁵

ESCHATOLOGICAL OUTLOOK

The outlook of the community on man and the world is still the eschatological one. It continues to live under the influence of the imminent appearance of Christ,⁵⁶ though with the waning years doubt on the subject begins to voice itself.⁵⁷ It is still regarded as a temporary association. Its real home is in heaven from which the Lord will speedily appear to complete its salvation. In accordance with this belief is the antithesis between the community and "the world," which finds such marked expression in the Epistle of James, the Johannine writings, and the Second Epistle of Clement. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God."⁵⁸ "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."⁵⁹ Hence the ascetic note, particularly in "The Shepherd," in antagonism to the tendency of many in the Roman community to accommodate themselves to their pagan environment. On the other hand, Jewish-Gnostic abstinence from marriage and meats is decisively condemned. "For every creature of God is good and nothing to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer."⁶⁰

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

PROBLEM OF MORAL ELEVATION OF GENTILES

IN the subapostolic period Christianity continues to evince its power to transform the life of the believer. Its moral standard is the lofty one of the earlier period, and in the subapostolic documents there is no lowering of the obligation to live up to it. As in the Pauline Epistles, the Church is faced with the problem of the moral elevation of its Gentile converts above their pagan

⁵⁵ Eph. iv. 4-6 ; *cf.* Ignatius who insists on unity from the ecclesiastical point of view.

⁵⁶ 1 Peter iv. 7 ; Heb. x. 25 ; Rev. xxii. 20 ; "Didache," xvi. 1-5.

⁵⁷ 2 Peter iii. 3 f.

⁵⁸ James iv. 4.

⁵⁹ 1 John ii. 15.

⁶⁰ 1 Tim. iv. 1 f. ; *cf.* Ignatius, Mag. 8, 10 ; Philad. 6.

environment. In some of the documents the Pauline conception of the Christian life is also reflected. On the whole, it is being displaced by the moralist conception of Christianity as a new Law to be exemplified in the practice of the Christian virtues. The life of freedom from law, in reliance on the power of the Spirit of God, gives place more and more to the regulated life in accordance with the commandments of Christ. For the average Gentile believer, living in a contaminating pagan environment, such regulation was a needful adjunct of the higher life, if, from the religious point of view, it betokens a lowering of the Pauline idea of the life of faith and freedom. Even so, we hear all too frequently of moral declension in the communities, though, on the whole, the appeal of the early apologists to the Christian life as a refutation of the calumnies against the Christians was substantially justified.

The problem of the moral elevation of the Gentile believers is a distinctive feature of the First Epistle of Peter and the Epistle to the Ephesians. In the former the Gentiles have taken the place of the Jews as the consecrated priestly people of God—"His own possession."¹ As such they are under the obligation to exhibit an elevated Christian morality in all the relations of life, whether as members of the State or in their relations with one another, or in the family. They are to give due obedience to the civil authority, as embodied in the Emperor and his representatives, and are to recognise its divine character and mission.² Each in his sphere, be it that of master or servant, husband or wife, or as a member of the Christian brotherhood, in the midst of a hostile world, is to manifest the Christian spirit in suffering wrong, in doing good, in brotherly love. Conduct is to be regulated by the Christian conscience.³ More especially there must be no compromise with their past life as Gentiles, with its fleshly lusts and idolatrous practices. They may not use their freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bond-servants of God. In contrast to their former life of ignorance and lust, they have been called to live a holy life in obedience to the will of God. Faith in Christ and Christ's example demand this, even if it involves suffering and persecution, to which the community is exposed at the hand of a hostile State and society.⁴ The belief in the approaching end of the world is an additional incentive both to the life of well-doing and to endurance. The Christian is a sojourner and a pilgrim.⁵ He awaits in faith the salvation ready

¹ 1 Peter ii. 4 f; γένος ἐκλεκτόν, ἔθνος ἅγιον, λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν, νῦν δὲ λαὸς θεοῦ.

² 1 Peter ii. 13-15, 17.

³ συνείδησις. ii. 19; iii. 16, 21.

⁴ 1 Peter i. 6-7; iv. 12-19; v. 8-10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ii. 11.

to be revealed in the last time.⁶ In this respect, the Epistle reflects the pristine spirit, though the early spiritual enthusiasm of the community seems to be absent, and emphasis is laid on sobriety, soundness, watchfulness, steadfastness of mind, on faith, on hope, and on prayer as the great mainstay of the Christian life in the midst of persecution.⁷

Similarly the writer of the Epistle to the Ephesians strives to enforce on them the Christian moral ideal and its obligations. God has chosen and adopted them as sons through Jesus Christ "that they should be holy and without blemish before Him in love."⁸ As in 1st Peter, they have become "God's own possession." Equally with their Jewish fellow-believers, they have inherited the redemption available in Christ. Formerly dead through their trespasses and sins, living in the lusts of the flesh, having no hope and without God in the world, they have, through their faith, been quickened into a new life, raised up with Christ, have become God's workmanship, "created in Christ Jesus for good works."⁹ Hence the obligation to walk worthily of their calling, "putting away as concerning your former manner of life the old man . . . and putting on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth."¹⁰ "For ye know of a surety that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, which is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."¹¹ As in 1st Peter, Christian morality must leaven the social as well as the personal life.

MYSTICAL CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Pauline mystical conception of the Christian life reappears in some of the documents of the period. In Ephesians the indwelling of the Spirit or of Christ in the believer evinces itself in his life in the putting away of the old man and the putting on of the new.¹² Believers grow into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom they are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.¹³ As members of Christ's body, they are mystically united with Him, as in the case of the union of husband and wife.¹⁴ In the Johannine writings, as the regenerated children of God, they live in mystic fellowship with the indwelling Father and Son, in virtue of the anointing with the Spirit.¹⁵ Christ is the Vine and

⁶ 1 Peter i. 5; cf. iv. 7, 13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, i. 8-9, 13; iv. 7; v. 7.

⁸ Eph. i. 4 f.

⁹ *Ibid.*, ii. 1 f.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, iv. 17 f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, v. 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, iii. 17; iv. 21 f.

¹³ *Ibid.*, ii. 22.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 23.

¹⁵ 1 John ii. 24 f.

they are the branches, and Christ organically abides in them.¹⁶ God abideth in them and they in Him through the gift of the Spirit.¹⁷ "If a man love me he will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."¹⁸ Similarly, in Ignatius, who borrows from both Paul and John, believers are to abide in Christ. They are fellow-initiates with Paul in the striving to attain unto God. They are temples in which Christ dwells. "Let us, therefore, do all things as though He were dwelling in us, that we may be His temples, and that He may be our God in us."¹⁹ Hence the aspiration throughout the Epistles "to attain to God," "to be full of God," "to partake of God."²⁰ The idea of the indwelling of God in the sanctified body of the believer as his habitation or temple reappears in the Epistle of Barnabas. "By receiving the remission of sins and hoping in the Name, we become new, created afresh from the beginning. Wherefore God truly dwells in us in our habitation."²¹

MORALIST CONCEPTION

The mystic conception of the Christian life is combined, in these documents, with the moralist view of it as the realisation of the commandments of God or of Christ. This view is the predominant one in other documents of the period. Christianity is a new law, based on the moral law and the ethical teaching of Christ, and the Christian life is the practice of this law, as the result of faith in Him. Christ is not only the Saviour from sin and judgment, but the Lawgiver. This is a distinctive note of the Gospels, especially that of Matthew, and generally of the literature of the period. "A new commandment I give unto you."²² "And hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments."²³ Similarly, Clement speaks of "the commandments and ordinances of the Lord,"²⁴ and Polycarp of doing His will and walking in His commandments, "fulfilling the commands of righteousness."²⁵ In the Epistles of Ignatius believers are "adorned in all ways by commandments of Jesus Christ," and are "united in spirit and flesh in every one of his commandments."²⁶ For the writer of the Epistle of James

¹⁶ John xv. 1.

¹⁷ 1 John iv. 12 f.

¹⁸ John xiv. 23.

¹⁹ Eph. xv; cf. x. 12.

²⁰ Mag. 14; Tral. 13, etc.

²¹ c. xvi.

²² John xiii. 34; cf. 1 John ii. 7 f.

²³ 1 John ii. 3.

²⁴ 1 Clem. ii. 8; iii. 4, etc.

²⁵ Phil. 2, 3.

²⁶ Eph. 9; Rom. 1.

Christianity is "the perfect law," "the law of liberty," "the royal law."²⁷ In that of Barnabas and in the "Didache" the way of life in the Christian sense consists of a series of commandments, positive and negative. For Barnabas Christianity is explicitly "the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ" in contrast and opposition to the old Jewish law,²⁸ whilst "The Shepherd" of Hermas contains a detailed revelation of the mandates and similitudes or parables bearing on the Christian life.

This law is based on the Sermon on the Mount,²⁹ supplemented by the ethical teaching of Paul and the apostles, and the Old Testament.³⁰ It is also influenced to a certain extent by the current Stoic moral teaching. Its great exemplar is Christ and, next to Him, the saints of the Old Testament.³¹ Whilst the Pauline conception of salvation by faith also finds more or less expression in these documents, it is really transmuted into a doctrine of salvation by works, done under the obligation of the law of Christ. Faith, the root principle of the religious life, is, on its practical side, obedience to the will of God; exemplified in the Christian virtues. In the Pastorals "piety"³² consists in the practice of these virtues and the shunning of impiety,³³ ungodliness. "Exercise thyself unto godliness, for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come."³⁴ It is the life of soberness and self-control, after the fashion of the Stoic good man—the pursuit of righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.³⁵ These virtues are "good works," and the man of God is to learn from the Scriptures how to be "complete, furnished completely unto every good work."³⁶ The same type of piety, evincing itself in good works, appears in the Epistle of Clement.³⁷ These earn the reward attainable through Christ, and he tells the Corinthians how to earn it by casting away from themselves the all too-common vices of "covetousness, strife, malice and fraud, gossiping and evil speaking, hatred of God, pride and arrogance, vainglory and inhospitality."³⁸ Ignatius shares the conviction of the Christian virtues as works to be rewarded. "Let your works be your deposits that you may receive the reserved pay due to you."³⁹

²⁷ James i. 25; ii. 8.

²⁸ ii. 6; ὁ καινὸς νόμος.

²⁹ 1 Clem. xiii.; James i. 25; ii. 8; v. 12; Polycarp, 2.

³⁰ Polycarp, 3, 6, 11; 1 Clem. v.; 2 Peter iii. 15-16; Ignatius, Rom. 4.

³¹ 1 Clem. xvi.-xviii.; Heb. xi. and xii.

³² εὐσέβεια.

³³ ἀσέβεια.

³⁴ 1 Tim. iv. 7-8.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vi. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 22; Titus ii. 11 f.

³⁶ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

³⁷ xv. 1.

³⁸ xxxv. 5, etc.

³⁹ Polycarp, 6. The reference is to the part of the soldier's pay deposited in the regimental savings bank and paid to him on his discharge from service.

Similarly, in Barnabas, Hermas, and the so-called Second Epistle of Clement, which dates about the middle of the second century, salvation is attained by the practice of the Christian virtues and the merits accruing therefrom. "We ought," says Barnabas, after an enumeration of these virtues, "to seek out the things that are able to save us."⁴⁰ In "The Shepherd" these virtues are the subject of the Mandates, and on their observance depends the attainment of eternal life. "Work righteousness and virtue and fear of the Lord, faith and meekness and whatever good things are like these. For by working these you will be a well-pleasing servant of God."⁴¹ In "The Shepherd," too, there is already discernible the doctrine of a twofold morality in the practice of the Christian life. Special merit is accordingly credited to the martyrs and to those who abstain from second marriage or practise fasting for the purpose of almsgiving. "Your sacrifice will be acceptable to God and will be written down (to your credit)."⁴² Consonant with this rigorous conception, the ascetic tendency is very marked. Hermas even seems to anticipate the later doctrine of works of supererogation in the pursuit of the perfect Christian life. It is possible to do more than is commanded and thus gain the benefit accruing from the merit of extra works. "If you do any good work beyond what has been commanded, you will gain for yourself more abundant glory, and be more honoured by God than you would otherwise be."⁴³ The doctrine of merit and reward is also very marked in 2nd Clement. To fasting and almsgiving, for instance, is explicitly attributed the power "to lighten sin."⁴⁴

In these documents there is thus a reversion from the Pauline conception of the Gospel as an emancipation from law, and of the Christian life as a life of freedom and spontaneous service rendered in the power of a living faith. Moreover, from the religious point of view, the conception of salvation as a reward of merit betokens a distinct lowering of the religious ideal, which sees in God the perfect Good and pursues the good for its own sake. The conception of God as the highest Good excludes the idea of merit and reward, since it is impossible for imperfect human nature to attain the perfect good and thus merit what it cannot achieve by its own efforts. In the last resort, it can only attain salvation in virtue of the exercise of God's mercy or grace, not by its own merit, however high. Paul showed a truer religious spirit when he made salvation depend on the divine grace, apart

⁴⁰ Eph. iv. 1; cf. 19.

⁴¹ Mand. xii. 3.

⁴² Sim. v. 3.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, v. 3.

⁴⁴ c. 16; cf. 5-7.

altogether from merit or reward, however questionable his theory of justification by faith may be in some of its aspects. On the other hand, whilst these subapostolic writers for the most part tend to lower the religious ideal, their standard of the Christian life is high compared with that of its pagan environment, if its principle is, from the religious point of view, questionable. Moreover, the reversion from Paul reveals a certain affinity with the teaching of Jesus Himself, as the quotations from the Sermon on the Mount in some of the documents show.

THE SUPREME VIRTUE

As in the Pauline Epistles, the supreme virtue is love. This is specially distinctive of the Johannine writer. For him God is of the essence of love, God's love involves the exercise of love on the part of His children. "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."⁴⁵ It manifests itself in active benevolence towards needy brethren, in the keeping of God's commandments, in the pure life "even as He is pure," in the doing of righteousness, the refraining from sin, lawlessness. The new commandment given by Christ consists in loving one another. There is no room for hate within the Christian brotherhood. But though God's love is theoretically universal,⁴⁶ it apparently does not extend to the Gnostic heretic outside the community, or to those who, without being Gnostics, do not share the writer's conception of the Logos Son of God. Its exercise is limited to those who share his theological creed. Christ lays down His life for "His own sheep," for "the brethren," for "His friends." Similarly for Ignatius love is "the way that leadeth up to God."⁴⁷ "The beginning (of life) is faith and the end is love, and when the two are joined together in unity it is God, and all other noble things follow after them."⁴⁸ As in John, "no man who professes faith sins, nor does he hate who has obtained love."⁴⁹ With him, too, love does not embrace the heretic, for whom he has nothing but damnation,⁵⁰ though he is not quite so illiberal as the Johannine writer and would try to reclaim him. In both we miss, in this respect, the spirit of Him who commanded to love

⁴⁵ 1 John iv. 7-8. On the practical operation of love in the post-apostolic community, see Uhlhorn, "Christian Charity in the Ancient Church," 120 f. (Eng. trans., 1883).

⁴⁶ John iii. 16.

⁴⁷ John x. 3, 12; xv. 13; 1 John iii. 16.

⁴⁸ Eph. ix. 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, xvi., etc.

one's enemies and came not to call the righteous, but sinners; to seek and save the lost. In more rhetorical fashion Clement also extols the supremacy of love. "Who is able to explain the bond of the love of God? Who is sufficient to tell the greatness of its beauty? . . . Love unites to God. In love were all the elect of God made perfect."⁵¹ More concretely, he illustrates its power in the practical life of the Roman community. "We know that many among ourselves have given themselves to bondage that they might ransom others. Many have delivered themselves to slavery and provided food for others with the price they received for themselves."⁵²

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A WARFARE

The Christian life in the exemplification of the Christian virtues is no easy one. It is the life of sacrifice in the conflict with the lower self and the service of the common good. It is a warfare, a contest for the prize, as in Paul. The Christian is a soldier, an athlete. The conflict is not merely with flesh and blood, but, as in Paul, with the astral powers, the principalities whose head is the devil and who dominate the world and man. The Christians must array themselves in the whole armour of God, enter the lists with girded loins and shod feet, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit.⁵³ "War the good warfare. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called. Suffer hardship with the Gospel, according to the power of God. Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier."⁵⁴ "Let your baptism remain as your arms, your faith as a helmet, your love as a spear, your endurance as a panoply."⁵⁵ For Clement the Church is Christ's army (the *militia Christi* or *Dei*), bound to obey His commands—the strong to care for the weak, the weak to reverence the strong, the rich to help the poor.⁵⁶ It is a warfare in a very real sense, since the Christians are ever in danger of death at the hands of the magistrate or the mob. The life of the Christian athlete is the life of self-control and suffering. "Be sober as God's athlete. The prize is immortality. The task of great athletes is to suffer

⁵¹ xlix. 1 f.; iv. 1 f.

⁵² lv. 2.

⁵³ Eph. vi. 10 f.

⁵⁴ 1 Tim. i. 18; vi. 12; 2 Tim. i. 8; ii. 3-4.

⁵⁵ Ignatius, Polycarp 6.

⁵⁶ xxxvii.-xxxviii.

punishment and yet conquer. We must endure all things for the sake of God." ⁵⁷

In this respect the Christian life is a great missionary force, since it tends to win converts to Christ, and this aspect of it is finely expressed by Ignatius. "Now for other men pray unceasingly for there is in them a hope of repentance, that they may find God. Suffer them, therefore, to become your disciples, at least through your deeds. Be yourselves gentle in answer to their wrath; be humble-minded in answer to their proud speaking; offer prayer for their blasphemy; be steadfast in the faith for their error; be gentle for their cruelty, and do not seek to retaliate. Let us be proved their brothers by our gentleness, and let us be imitators of the Lord, and seek who may suffer the more wrong, be the more destitute, the more despised." ⁵⁸ That many earnestly strove to live up to this high ideal we learn from the impartial testimony of Pliny, who was very favourably impressed by the practice of the Christian life, which inquiry disclosed to him. The Christians, he reported to Trajan, in reference to their stated meetings for worship, after singing a hymn to Christ as to a god, bind themselves to refrain from theft, robbery, and adultery, to keep their pledged word, and shun fraud.

TWO CONTEMPORARY PICTURES

How far did the ideal thus set forth correspond to the real in these subapostolic communities? Aristides and the author of the Epistle to Diognetus present a very attractive picture of the Christian life as it appeared to these early apologists in the communities throughout the Græco-Roman world. "The Christians," says Aristides, "have received the commandments (of the Lord Jesus Christ), which they have engraved on their minds and keep in the hope and expectation of the world to come. Wherefore they do not commit adultery nor fornication. They do not bear false witness; they do not deny a deposit, nor covet what is not theirs. They honour father and mother. They do good to their neighbours, and when they are judges they judge uprightly. They do not worship idols made in the form of man, and whatever they do not wish that others should do to them, they do not practise towards others. They do not eat food consecrated to idols, for they are undefiled. Those who grieve them they comfort and make them their friends. They do good

⁵⁷ Ignatius, Polycarp 1-3; *cf.* 2 Tim. ii. 5.

⁵⁸ Eph. x.; *cf.* 2 Tim. ii. 25.

to their enemies. Their wives, O King, are pure as virgins, and their daughters modest. Their men abstain from all unlawful wedlock and from all impurity, in the hope of the recompense to come in another world. If any of them have bondmen, bondwomen, or children, they persuade these to become Christians for the love that they have towards them, and when they have become so, they call them, without distinction, brethren. They do not worship strange gods. They walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them. They love one another. From the widows they do not turn away their countenance. They rescue the orphan from him who does him violence. He who has gives to him who has not without grudging, and when they see a stranger they bring him to their dwellings, and rejoice over him as over a true brother. For they do not call themselves brothers after the flesh, but after the Spirit and in God. When one of their poor passes away from the world, and any of them sees it, then he provides for his burial according to his ability; and if they hear that any of their number is imprisoned or oppressed for their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs, and, if it is possible, they deliver him. If there is among them some one poor and needy, and they have not an abundance of necessaries, they fast two or three days that they may supply his want with necessary food. They observe scrupulously the commandments of their Messiah. They live honestly and soberly, as the Lord their God commands them, thanking Him always for food and drink, and all other blessings. . . . The good deeds, however, which they do, they do not proclaim in the ears of the multitude, and they take care that no one shall perceive them. They conceal their gift, as one who has found a treasure and hides it. Thus they labour to become righteous as those who expect to receive the fulfilment of Christ's promises in the life eternal." ⁵⁹

Turn now to the Epistle to Diognetus, which may fall within our period. "While living in Greek and barbarian cities, according as each obtained his lot, and following the local custom, both in clothing and food and the rest of life, they show forth the wonderful and confessedly strange character of the constitution of their own citizenship. They dwell in their own fatherlands, but as if sojourners in them. They share all things as citizens and suffer all things as strangers. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is a foreign country. They marry as all men; they bear children, but they do not expose their

⁵⁹ "Apology," xv.-xvi. See von Dobschütz's "Christian Life in the Primitive Church," 1-3 of Introduction (1904).

offspring. They offer free hospitality, but guard their purity. Their lot is cast in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their time upon the earth, but they have their citizenship in heaven. They obey the appointed laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all men and are persecuted by all men. They are unknown and they are condemned. They are put to death, and they gain life. They are poor and make many rich. They lack all things and have all things in abundance. They are dishonoured and are glorified in their dishonour. They are spoken evil of and are justified. They are abused and give blessing. They are insulted and render honour. When they do good they are buffeted as evildoers. When they are buffeted they rejoice as men who receive life. They are warred upon by the Jews as foreigners and are persecuted by the Greeks, and those who hate them cannot state the cause of their enmity. In short, what the soul is in the body, that the Christians are in the world.”⁶⁰

REVERSE SIDE OF THE PICTURE

There is, however, a reverse side to this beautiful picture, as we learn from other documents, in which the real is far from corresponding to the ideal. In the Epistle to the Hebrews there is a danger of apostasy in the Roman community under the stress of persecution,⁶¹ and in “The Shepherd” the apostasy has become actual.⁶² In the Epistle of Pliny to Trajan many in the province of Bithynia have denied Christ and agreed to worship the State gods to save their lives. In the Epistle of James we hear of wars and fightings in the communities and the oppression of the poor by the rich members. The deteriorating effect of the pursuit of riches on Christian character is a recurring theme in nearly all the documents, and in “The Shepherd” the tendency, in this and other respects, “to live with the heathens” is all too general. If Christianity is influencing its pagan environment, this environment is also influencing the Christians, who are in grave danger of being enervated by the pagan society in which they live. Corinth is still a storm centre, as the Epistle of Clement shows. Revolt against the growing power of the office-bearers has rent the community, and the revolt is so serious as to call forth the attempt of the Roman Church to restore concord. The communities of the province of Asia are generally in a relaxed

⁶⁰ c. 5 and 6. Greek text and trans. by Lake (Loeb Class. Lib.). Trans. also in vol. i. of “Ante-Nicene Library.”

⁶¹ vi. 4 f.

⁶² Vis. ii. 2 ; iii. 7.

condition, as we learn from the Letters to the Seven Churches.⁶³ The tendency to profess faith and neglect works, to misapply the Pauline doctrine of faith, is all too prevalent and brings the Church into ill-odour among the heathen. "Give no occasion to the heathen in order that the congregation of God may not be blasphemed for a few foolish persons."⁶⁴ "When the heathen hear from our mouth the oracles of God, they wonder at their beauty and greatness; afterwards when they find out that our deeds are unworthy of the words which we speak, they turn from wonder to blasphemy, saying that it is a myth and a delusion."⁶⁵ In the Pastoral Epistles, the Epistles of Ignatius, in Revelation, the Johannine Epistles, in Jude and 2nd Peter, Gnosticism is increasingly assimilating Christianity in its speculative and mythological fashion. Whilst one section of those Gnostic Christians is given to extreme asceticism, the other transforms Christian freedom into licence, on the assumption that matter being evil, its abuse is a thing indifferent. Its influence on the communities of the Hellenist world is causing strife and schism and seriously endangering Christian unity. In addition Judaism is intruding itself into the Christian life under the guise of a reverence for the Sabbath and other Jewish religious observances. "Let us learn to live Christian lives and put away the old leaven, which has grown old and sour, and turn to the new leaven, which is Jesus Christ. It is monstrous to talk of Christianity and practise Judaism."⁶⁶

There is thus shade as well as light in the picture. Allowance must, however, be made for the proneness to overcolour the shade as well as the light. The eschatological outlook of all these writers tends to warp the moral judgment and nurture an otherworldly, puritanic, quietistic view of life. Hermas, for instance, is a type of the Christian who is disposed to see black, though he professes to preach "hilarity" as the true note of the Christian life. Moreover, in their judgment of the Gnostics all these writers are apt to evaluate moral character in the light of creed, to see in aberrant theological conviction a proof of moral reprobation.

⁶³ Rev. ii. 8 f.

⁶⁴ Ignatius, Tral. 8.

⁶⁵ 2 Clem. xiii.

⁶⁶ Ignatius, Mag. 10; cf. Philad. 6.

CHAPTER VII
CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

TRINITARIAN CONCEPTION OF GODHEAD

THE development of Christian thought continues in the sub-apostolic period. Characteristic of it is the enhanced influence of Hellenist thought in some of the documents of the period, notably the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Johannine writings, and the Epistles of Ignatius. Under this influence Christ virtually appears in Hebrews, and definitely in the Johannine and Ignatian writings as the incarnate Logos or Word of God, and in the latter He is equated with God in the absolute sense. In these and other documents the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit emerges alongside the Father and the Son. The conception of the Godhead becomes tritheistic or trinitarian, though the conception is not thought out, as in the later doctrine of the Trinity. On the other hand, Barnabas and Hermas seem to identify the Son and the Spirit and conceive of the Godhead in a di-theistic or binitarian sense.

CHRIST'S REDEMPTIVE WORK

In regard to the redemptive work of Christ, these writers generally agree with Paul in attributing the remission of sin, salvation, to His sacrificial death, the benefit of which is appropriated by faith. In Hebrews, for instance, without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, and Christ offers Himself as a sacrifice for man's redemption.¹ In the Pastoral Epistles Christ gave Himself a ransom for all, and the First Epistle of John reproduces the Pauline conception of His death as a propitiation for sin.² Generally in these documents His death is an essential of God's saving purpose. The Pauline doctrine of justification reappears in some of them; in the Epistle of Clement, for instance. But while reproducing the Pauline phraseology, they generally show the lack of a true apprehension of it, and salvation is distinctively the outcome, not of faith alone, but of the co-operation of faith and works in the practice of righteousness, the reward of well-doing in obedience to the commandments or new law of

¹ Heb. ix. 22 f.

² ii. 2; cf. John i. 29, in which Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

Christ. In the Johannine writings and those of Ignatius, it is largely displaced by the doctrine of regeneration, the rebirth of the soul and the attainment of life eternal through faith in the incarnate Son of God, who is the Life and the Light of the World. Faith is predominantly belief in the essential divinity of Christ, the means of attaining the new life-giving knowledge of God, though it has also its ethical side. It involves change of heart as well as a new consciousness of God and transforms believers into the children of God, in whom the Spirit operates and the Father and the Son take up their abode. Along with the Pauline mystic union with the indwelling Christ (Christ-mysticism) there is a mystic union of the believer with the Father (God-mysticism). For Ignatius, whose Epistles reveal the influence of the Johannine writer as well as Paul, redemption is similarly the attainment of eternal life, the true knowledge of God, and the regeneration of the soul to this end. "God manifested Himself in human form for the newness of eternal life."³ Christ is "the mind of the Father," from whom we derive the true knowledge of God.⁴ The ultimate outcome of redemption is the deification of the soul which becomes "full of God," "partakes of God." The train of thought represented by both writers thus suggests, in varying degree, the influence of Greek-Gnostic thought and mystery religion.

COMPLETE EMANCIPATION FROM JUDAISM

A notable feature of post-apostolic Christian thought is the complete emancipation of Christianity from Judaism. In this respect the influence of Paul continues to operate powerfully, and Christianity takes on more and more a Greek colouring. Though there is a tendency within the Church to perpetuate Jewish observances,⁵ and the Jewish Scriptures, along with the apostolic writings, are the norm of Christian life and thought, the breach between it and Judaism becomes ever wider. In the Epistle to the Hebrews Judaism is but "a shadow of things to come."⁶ If typical of Christianity, its sacrificial system has been superseded by the sacrifice of Christ, which has abolished blood sacrifice once for all. Christ remains the only High Priest and Intercessor in heaven. Christianity has become the final and absolute religion. In his revulsion from Judaism Barnabas goes beyond both Paul and the author of Hebrews. For him religion is essentially spiritual and utterly opposed to the materialist

³ Eph. 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3, 17.

⁵ In 1st Tim. and the Ignatian Epistles, for instance.

⁶ x. 1 f.

historic religion of the Jews, who have totally misinterpreted and perverted their own Scriptures. The original covenant and the promise attached to it have been fulfilled in Christ, and the Christians, not the disobedient and perverse Jews, are the inheritors of it. In their crass religious literalism and materialism, they have ever been alien from God, as the denunciations of the prophets prove. The Christians alone are the true people of God and are radically distinct from the old, falsely so-called. This extreme judgment the writer seeks to substantiate by a fanciful exegesis, which shows an utter lack of the historic sense. In the Fourth Gospel the Jews of the writer's time, who have finally rejected Christianity, are also the obtuse and perverse votaries of a false and outworn legalism. Christianity, as the religion of the Spirit, has displaced Judaism. Similarly for Ignatius the Judaising tendency in some of the communities he addresses is a complete perversion of the Gospel. Judaism and Christianity are utterly incompatible. The new religion is not a mere development of the old. It is a distinct divine departure from it, though he finds in the prophets the precursors of Christ, who looked forward to Him and preached the Gospel of salvation through Him. "It is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and practise Judaism. For Christianity did not base its faith on Judaism, but Judaism (Jewish Christians) on Christianity, and every tongue believing in God was brought together in it."⁷ Even the Hebraic Gospel of Matthew is strongly anti-Judaic. Whilst emphasising the permanence of the Law, it champions a neo-legalism based on the authority and suffused with the spirit of Christ's teaching. Similarly the ethical teaching of the archaic "Didache" and the Epistle of James is the Christianised legalism of Jesus rather than of the Rabbis.

THE SYNOPTIC TYPE OF THOUGHT

Another type of post-apostolic thought is reproduced in the Synoptic Gospels. This type is ethical and historical, not speculative or theological. It discloses an interest in the early life and teaching of Jesus, which we should hardly have suspected from the Epistles of Paul and most of the other New Testament documents. It seeks to rivet faith to its Founder, as He lived and taught on earth, whilst also envisaging Him as the risen and exalted Lord in heaven. These writers portray the Master as Teacher, Prophet, Healer, and Founder of the kingdom of God,

⁷ Mag. 10.

apart from the later developing thought about Him and His redemptive mission. They aim at depicting the Gospel in its pristine form, as the Master proclaimed it. Whilst they doubtless knew and had more or less assimilated the developing thought of their own time, they do not, as a rule, obtrude it into their narratives. They seem to represent a more concrete and far less speculative type of Christianity than that of Paul and some of his successors. Whilst Matthew and Luke preface their narratives with an account of the Virgin birth, which is lacking in Mark, the Fourth Gospel, and the primitive preaching, and thus incorporate later belief, they avoid the later tendency to invest Jesus with pre-existence and a cosmic significance, as in Paul and the semi-historic Fourth Gospel. For them He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of Man, and also the Son of God in a filial sense, the Revealer of God, and the Founder of His kingdom. His death has a redemptive significance in connection with the kingdom, and He is destined to play a superlative part in its final establishment, which is near at hand. But there is no theological or speculative elaboration of His person or His work, as developed in the apostolic and subapostolic periods. Withal a simpler, more concrete type of thought is reflected in these writings, which also bear witness to the keen interest in the historic, alongside the exalted Christ. They enable us to test the later belief, as reflected in the Pauline, Johannine, and other later writings, by the facts of history.

It is a mistake to assume that the teaching of Paul or the Johannine writer was the predominant norm of theological thought in the post-apostolic period. Paul continued, indeed, to influence the thought of this period, and the theology of the Fourth Gospel ultimately became predominant in the later Church. But Paulinism was ere long displaced by the prevailing moralism of the incipient Catholic Church, and the Johannine theology had its opponents as well as its adherents in the second century. The Pauline conception of Christianity was by no means the normal one even in the Apostolic age. It is hardly too much to say that in the subapostolic age it became the abnormal one. The moralist conception of Christianity has a certain affinity to the ethical teaching of the historic Jesus, as depicted by the Synoptists, even if it shows the trace of its Hellenist environment, and departs in some respects from the Spirit of Jesus. It betokens in the communities a distinct tendency, alongside the more speculative beliefs about His person and mission, to accord Him and His teaching a specifically normative influence on their thought and life.

INCIPIENT CHRISTIAN Gnosticism

Another type of the developing Christian thought of the period appears in Christian Gnosticism. Gnosticism was originally antecedent to and independent of Christianity. It also was in part a speculative, in part a religious and ethical movement. It sought to solve the problem of the reality of evil, which it regarded as inherent in the material universe and in the material side of human nature, and to provide a redemption, by means of a higher knowledge or Gnosis, from its power over both. In the solution of this problem it borrowed from Greek philosophy and Oriental thought and religion, especially the mystery religions, which professed to initiate their votaries into this higher knowledge and enable them thereby to attain the redemption or emancipation of the spirit from evil and its deification in union with God. There are traces in the Pauline and Johannine writings of its incipient influence, and in the subapostolic writings it has assimilated Christianity in its speculative, mythological fashion. It has become in this Christian form a distinctive movement within the Church, and is the cause of strife and schism in the communities of Antioch and Asia Minor. This is evident from the Pastoral Epistles and those of Jude and 2nd Peter, the Apocalypse, and the Johannine and Ignatian writings. Its main characteristic in its earlier form is the attempt to explain away the humanity of Christ in a Docetic sense, and to substitute for the faith in the historic and deified Jesus the higher knowledge, by which the redemption of the spiritual nature of man is attained. In the practical Christian life, as we have noted, it tended either to asceticism, according as evil is regarded as a thing to be repressed, or to licence, as a thing of no account in the pursuit of the higher spiritual life. Both its doctrinal and its ethical teaching are bitterly attacked in these subapostolic writings, in which its votaries are indiscriminately and one-sidedly portrayed as men of a low moral character, in accordance with the prevalent tendency to equate unsound doctrine with moral perversity. In their antagonism to it these writers anticipate the developed conflict in the second half of the second century, from which, as we shall see, the Catholic Church finally emerges as the true Church against the false Church of these Gnostic sectaries. In these writings we have the foretaste of this conflict and this ecclesiastical development. They already emphasise tradition as the deposit of truth handed down from the apostles, the succession of the official office-bearers in the Church from the apostles (Clement), appeal to the

Scriptures, which already include a number of the apostolic writings, as the norm of sound against false teaching, and formulate a rudimentary creed in which the historic, as against the unhistoric Gnostic version of the faith is asseverated (Ignatius). In this controversy the lineaments of the later Catholic or true Church are already discernible.⁸

⁸ For a detailed exposition and discussion of Christian thought in this period, see my "Gospel in the Early Church." I have reserved a fuller treatment of Christian Gnosticism for Part V., to which it properly belongs.

PART V

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, A.D. c. 150-c. 300

CHAPTER I

CONTINUED EXPANSION

GENERAL FEATURES OF THE PERIOD

IN this period—from about the middle of the second century to the early years of the fourth—the tendencies making towards Catholicism are powerfully operative. It witnesses the emergence of the Catholic Church, which is not only the universal but the true Church in opposition to Montanist reactionaries and Gnostic heretics. It continues to enlarge the communities by propaganda among the pagan population, and to found new ones throughout and even beyond the Empire, in spite of continued conflict with the State. It develops its episcopal organisation and becomes more and more an organic society, knit together not only by a common faith, but by an identical constitution. It opposes the attempt of the Montanists to revive and perpetuate, in an accentuated form, the charismatic ministry of an earlier time. It sheds more and more the primitive conviction of the imminent coming of Christ, and the primitive conception of the Church as the temporary embodiment of the spiritual kingdom of God. It acquires the character of a permanent association, whose members are citizens of the City of God on earth—the Church as an ecclesiastically constituted body—as well as of the City of God in heaven. Within this association the Roman Church occupies a pre-eminent position and exercises a growing influence, and its bishops begin to assert a claim to predominance over the Church at large. The Catholic Church claims to possess the true faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed, in virtue of apostolic succession, and strives to maintain it against Gnostic and other heretics, though diversity of theological opinion persists. It is the sole channel of sacramental grace, and outside it there is no salvation. It elaborates a set cultus and possesses a canon—though not a closed one—of authoritative Scriptures as the norm of faith.

It develops a system of discipline for the training of its members and converts in the Christian life.

EXPANSION IN SYRIA AND THE EAST

Our knowledge of the diffusion of Christianity during this period is still all too scrappy. At the beginning of the third century we hear of bishops in Palestine, which formed part of the province of Syria, as well as at Jerusalem and Cæsarea, and of churches in this region.¹ A little earlier we further hear of a Palestinian Synod, presided over by the bishops of Jerusalem and Cæsarea, in connection with the Easter controversy, and later of many victims of the persecutions of the third and early fourth centuries. Eusebius, in fact, devotes a whole book in commemoration of "The Martyrs of Palestine" during the Diocletian persecution. In Transjordan (Arabia) it had also won not a few adherents, as appears from the largely attended synods which met about the middle of the third century to deal with the Christological views of Bishop Beryllus of Bostra and other heretics.² Some Arabian bishops took part in the Council of Nicæa.³ It was, however, only in the Greek-speaking communities in Palestine that Christianity made an appreciable impression, and even within these communities, with the exception of that of Cæsarea, the churches seem to have been small. Though the Jerusalem Church enjoyed a universal distinction from the association of the city with the early Gospel history, and that of Cæsarea acquired a widespread fame from the time of Origen as a centre of theological learning, the Palestinian Church remained essentially an exotic.⁴ The number of Jewish Christians seems to have been meagre. There was apparently none at all in places like Capernaum, Tiberias, and Nazareth, so intimately associated with the mission of Christ. After the Palestinian Christians had finally withdrawn east of the Jordan during the second Jewish war of independence, the expansion of Christianity among the Jews was practically at an end, whilst the Ebionite and Nazarene communities beyond Jordan remained an obscure and stagnant body. According to Origen, who travelled extensively in these regions, their number, including the Jewish Christians of Alexandria and Egypt, was considerably less than the 144,000 saints of the Apocalypse.⁵

¹ Eusebius, vi. 8 f.

² Eusebius, vi. 35, 37; cf. viii. 12, in which he mentions the persecution of Arabian Christians in the reign of Diocletian.

³ Harnack, "Expansion," ii. 299.

⁴ See Harnack, "Expansion," ii. 260 f.

⁵ "Commentary on John," Bk. I., i. Greek text ed. by Preuschen (1903) (trans. by Menzies, "Ante-Nicene Lib.," add. vol.).

Antioch, the centre of Syrian Christianity, preserved its primitive character as a missionary Church. From Theophilus, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius onwards, its bishops exercised an increasing influence in the propagation and defence of the Gospel. It appears in close touch with the Churches of the eastern region of Asia Minor and with those of Alexandria and Rome.⁶ Its famous theological school comes into prominence in the fifth century under its bishop, Paul of Samosata, and the presbyters Malchion, Dorotheus, and especially Lucian, the teacher of Arius.⁷ It developed during this period the distinctive theological tendency which culminated in the Arian controversy in the early fourth century. It was the meeting-place of several numerous attended synods,⁸ which dealt with the Novatian schism and with the heresy of Bishop Paul, who, as the Procurator of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, appears as a great civic dignitary as well as an independent theologian. It was one of the fountain-heads of Christian Gnosticism, as represented by the school of Saturninus, and that of Cerdo, who was a native of Syria.⁹ In the early part of the fourth century it was largely a Christian city. From it Christianity had spread extensively among the Greek-speaking population of Syria and had become too widespread to be crushed in the Decian persecution, to which Babylas, Bishop of Antioch, fell a victim, or even in the long-continued persecution which began under Diocletian and was continued by Galerius and Maximinus. "An enormous number," says Eusebius, in reference to the outbreak under Diocletian, "were thrown into prison in every place¹⁰ . . . , everywhere the prisons were filled with bishops, presbyters and deacons, readers and exorcists." "Almost the greater part of the world," said Lucian of Antioch at his trial at Nicomedia, evidently referring to the situation in Syria as well as Asia Minor, "now adheres to the truth; whole cities, in fact."¹¹ So numerous were they that Diocletian attributed the insurrections which broke out in Syria and Melitene, before the promulgation of his second edict against them, to their machinations.¹² As many as fifty bishops from Syria (including

⁶ See, for instance, Eusebius, vi. 41 f.; vii. 5.

⁷ Eusebius, vii. 29, 32; ix. 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, vi. 46; vii. 27 f.

⁹ Irenæus, "Adv. Haer.," i. 18 (Harvey), "Ante-Nicene Lib.," I. xxiv. 1; Hippolytus, "Philos.," vii. 28; Eusebius, iv. 7, 11; Epiphanius, "Panarion," 41.

¹⁰ Eusebius, viii. 6; *ἐν παντί τόπω*; vi. 39.

¹¹ Rufinus, "Latin Version of Eusebius," ix. 6, Pars pæne mundi jam major huic veritati adstipulatur, urbes integræ (Mommsen's ed.).

¹² Eusebius, viii. 6.

Phœnicia and Palestine) and two chorepiscopi attended the Council of Nicæa.¹³

As we have already seen, its expansion eastwards to Edessa, the capital of Osroene, had probably taken place before the middle of the second century as the result of the preaching of Addai. His mission was continued by several successors, including the martyr Aggai. By the end of the century we have definite information of the existence of a Christian community in the city in a passage of the Edessene Chronicle, which, under the year 201, tells of the damage to "the Church of the Christians" by a great flood.¹⁴ By this time its king, Abgar IX., whose little kingdom was incorporated into the Empire by the Emperor Caracalla in 216,¹⁵ appears as a Christian, or at least friendly to Christianity.¹⁶ That it had already spread from the capital to other cities in this region is evident from the fact that a number of bishops from these cities met to discuss the Easter question.¹⁷ By this time, too, it had produced, in Tatian and Bardaisan or Bardesanes, two very notable Christian writers and teachers. Tatian, who tells us that he was a native of Assyria¹⁸ (Mesopotamia), was converted in the course of his wanderings as far as Rome by the reading of the Hebrew Scriptures, and amplified his knowledge of Christianity as a pupil of Justin Martyr. After Justin's death he returned to Mesopotamia,¹⁹ to preach his new faith, and to compose his "Oration to the Greeks," his "Diatessaron," and numerous other works which are no longer extant. He seems to have been a man of an independent critical mind and to have followed Marcion in criticising and rejecting the Old Testament Scriptures and part of the New. Like him, he developed a Gnostic, ascetic tendency which led him to break away from the Catholic Church and become a leader of the Encratites or *Continentes*, who abstained from flesh, wine, and marriage as essentially evil.²⁰ Heterodox though he was in these

¹³ Turner, "Ecclesiæ Occidentalis Monumenta," 42-52. Among the better-known towns thus represented were, besides Antioch, Syrian Laodicea, Apamea, Samosata, Tyre, Sidon, Damascus, Palmyra, Ptolemais, Emesa, Jerusalem (Ælia), Cæsarea, Jericho, Gaza.

¹⁴ "Edessenische Chronik," ed. and trans. from the Syriac by Hallier, c. i., Texte und Unters (1892). See also Burkitt, "Early Eastern Christianity," 27.

¹⁵ Schiller, "Geschichte der Römischen Kaiserzeit," ii. 747; Gibbon, "Decline," i. 207 f.

¹⁶ Burkitt, 26 f.

¹⁷ Eusebius, v. 23.

¹⁸ "Oratio," 42.

¹⁹ Harnack thinks that he returned to Mesopotamia after his conversion in Rome about 150 and wrote his "Oratio ad Græcos," went to Rome once more, and fell into heresy after Justin's death and finally went back to Mesopotamia. Zahn, on the other hand, thinks that he made only one visit to Rome and lapsed into heresy after his return to Mesopotamia.

²⁰ Irenæus, "Adv. Haer.," I. xxvi. 1 (Harvey); I. xxviii. 1 ("Ante-Nicene Lib.").

respects, he was a zealous, if rather captious Christian teacher and writer, and evidently laboured with effect to diffuse Christianity in Mesopotamia in the later decades of the second century.

Bardaisan, the other notable Edessene Christian, who flourished somewhat later and died in 222, was also distinguished as a writer and teacher. He was, according to Eusebius,²¹ a Gnostic of the school of Valentinus before he became a Christian, and conjoined some of his Gnostic opinions with his Christian faith. Anyhow, he came to be regarded by later writers like Epiphanius and Ephraim the Syrian as a Gnostic heretic. He does not, however, appear to have been so heterodox as they make out. Eusebius, who seems to have read a number of his works, expressly asserts that, while retaining some of his former Valentinian views, he wrote against both Valentinus and Marcion. He is said to have been a poet as well as a philosopher, though it is doubtful whether the hymns ascribed to him, which were highly prized by his followers in the Edessene Church, were not written by his son. Certain it is that he was a very influential teacher, who founded a distinctive school or sect, and had many pupils, who translated his works into Greek and perpetuated his teaching and his influence.²² A Church which produced two such independent writers and teachers must have wielded, even at so early a period, a marked intellectual and religious influence in this eastern region.

Shortly before the final Roman conquest of Osroene under Caracalla, the Edessene Church came into close relations with the Catholic Church through the ordination of its bishop, Palut, by Serapion of Antioch. It thereby lost its primitive Syriac character, which, however, continued to be represented by the followers of Bardaisan till the fifth century.²³ Its authentic history during the third century is confined mainly to the story of its martyrs. It suffered persecution even in the time of Bardaisan and again in the reign of Decius.²⁴ It shared in that of Diocletian, Galerius, and Maximinus.²⁵ By the time that Eusebius wrote his history, if not as far back as the pseudo mission of Thaddeus, Edessa had become a Christian city.²⁶ Four bishops from Mesopotamia, including those of Edessa and Nisibis, were present at the Council of Nicæa.²⁷

²¹ "Hist. Eccl.," iv. 30.

²² *Ibid.*, iv. 30.

²³ See Burkitt, 35, and also a little book by the same author, "Early Christianity Outside the Roman Empire," 13 (1899). Also Tixeront, "Les Origines de l'Église d'Édesse" (1888); and the older works of Merx, "Bardesanes von Edessa" (1863), and Hilgenfeld, "Bardesanes, der letzte Gnostiker" (1864).

²⁴ Eusebius, vii. 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, ii. 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, viii. 12.

²⁷ Turner, 54; Burkitt, 23.

PERSIA AND ARMENIA

From Edessa Christianity had spread farther eastwards into Parthia before the end of the second century. If we could believe the "Acts of Thomas," the Parthian king, Gondophares, who reigned in the first half of the first century, and whose sway undoubtedly extended over Afghanistan and into north-western India, had been converted by the apostle Thomas. As we have noted, the Parthian mission of Thomas, which Eusebius records and Ephraim the Syrian, a fourth-century writer, extends to India in the wider sense, is very problematic.²⁸ At all events, it is only in the second half of the second century that we have reliable evidence of the existence of Christians east of the Tigris.²⁹ For their existence in the early third century in the wide region extending from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, there is conclusive evidence in the "Dialogue on Fate" attributed to Bardaisan.³⁰ In the course of this Dialogue the writer refers to the new race of Christians in Parthia, Bactria, Persia, Media.³¹ Before the middle of the century the Persians under Artaxerxes overthrew the Parthian dynasty (the Arsacidæ), which had maintained the Parthian Empire against the Romans during the previous three centuries. Artaxerxes was the first of a long series of Persian kings of the Sassanidæ dynasty who continued the struggle with the Roman Empire down to the seventh century, when it at last succumbed to the Arabs. Characteristic of the Sassanidæ was their attachment to the ancient religion of Zoroaster, which they revived and strove to foster after an eclipse of nearly five hundred years. Their zeal for the old Iranian religion involved antagonism to Christianity, and in the persecution of the Christians by Varahran or Varanes (272-275), who was as hostile to them as to the followers of Manes,³² we get another evidence of the growing strength of the Persian Church in the second half of the

²⁸ There is certainly no historic ground for the claim of the ancient Syrian Church in southern India (the Thomas Christians) that the apostle was its founder. See Rae, "The Syrian Church in India," 23 f., who doubts the tradition of Thomas's Indian mission even for the north-west of India included in the Parthian Empire. Bishop Medlycott, on the other hand, on the ground of the tradition recorded by Ephraim, accepts it as actual history. "India and the Apostle Thomas," ii. (1905). The late Dr Burgess maintained in a communication to me, that though Thomas did not labour in what is now India, he did in what was then called India, *i.e.*, Afghanistan, and perhaps as far as Peshawar. See the *Indian Antiquary* for some papers on the subject.

²⁹ See Hoffmann, "Auszüge aus Syrischen Acten Persischer Märtyrer" — "Abh. für Kunde des Morgenlandes," VII. iii. 46.

³⁰ Probably written by one of his pupils.

³¹ Burkitt, 184.

³² Rawlinson, "Seventh Great Oriental Monarchy," 104.

third century. In the beginning of the fourth Eusebius tells us that "there were many churches in Persia and large numbers there were gathered into the fold of Christ."³³ His testimony is confirmed by the Emperor Constantine, who, in a letter to Shahpur or Sapor II. (309-379), expressed his joy that "the fairest districts of Persia are full of Christians,"³⁴ and commended them to the protection of the Persian king. His intervention was only temporarily effective. At the instigation of the Magians or priests of the ancient cult, Sapor ultimately, from 343 onwards, became their implacable persecutor, as the Acts of the Persian Martyrs show.³⁵ With this renewed outbreak of persecution the Persian Church entered on a long period of heroic suffering for the faith which, with the advent of Constantine, had finally triumphed within the Empire.

We first hear of Christianity in Armenia Minor, *i.e.*, the Roman province of Armenia, about the middle of the third century, when Dionysius of Alexandria writes to "the brethren in Armenia," whose bishop was Meruzanes.³⁶ This points to its introduction at an earlier period—when, we are unable exactly to say. In the beginning of the following century the number of these brethren had evidently greatly increased, as the Testament of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in the reign of the Emperor Licinius shows. By this time Christianity had been diffused among the Greek-speaking inhabitants of a considerable number of villages of the province where the churches were under presbyters and deacons.³⁷ By this time, too, it had penetrated into the kingdom of Armenia, between the Euphrates and the Araxes, whose inhabitants attributed their origin to Haik,³⁸ a descendant in the fifth degree of Noah, and are known in their own language as Haikans. Their conversion to Christianity is associated with the name of Gregory the Illuminator—the spiritual sun of Armenia. Gregory, who was born before the middle of the third century, was the son of Anak,

³³ "Vita Constantini," iv. 8.

³⁴ "Vita," iv. 13.

³⁵ See Sozomen, "Hist. Eccl.," ii. 9. Sozomen wrongly puts the beginning of the persecution in Persia in the reign of Constantine.

³⁶ Eusebius, vi. 46. Gelser contends that he was Bishop of Vaspurakan in the south-east corner of the kingdom of Armenia. "Anfänge der Armenischen Kirche," 171 f. (1895). Harnack thinks that the story about the Thundering Legion from Melitene shows the existence of Christians in Armenia Minor in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, on the assumption that Melitene was in this province. "Expansion," ii. 342. In the map of Asia Minor in Mommsen's "Roman Provinces," however, Melitene is placed in Cappadocia, on the border of Armenia.

³⁷ See Gebhardt, "Acta Selecta," 166 f.; Harnack, ii. 343-344.

³⁸ This seems to be a fiction concocted by the historian Moses Chorenensis, a seventh-century Armenian writer. Carrière, "Moïse de Khoren" (1891), and "La Légende d'Abgar," 357 f. (1915).

who treacherously murdered the Armenian king Kosrov, and was himself slain, along with nearly all his kindred, in expiation of his crime. From this fate, according to Armenian legend, the child was saved by a Christian woman, who concealed and carried him off to Cæsarea in Cappadocia, her native place, where he received a Christian education. Whilst the legendary explanation of his upbringing at Cæsarea is not above question, it appears to be a fact that he was educated there. His education finished, he returned to Armenia, and, concealing his parentage, entered the service of King Tiridates III. (c. 261-316), the son of the man whom his father had murdered. This Tiridates was an ardent votary of the old Armenian cult, and long resisted the efforts of Gregory to convert him to the Christian faith. Nay, according to what purports to be a contemporary narrative of his reign, written by his secretary Agathangelos, he subjected him to a series of tortures, twelve in number, each more severe than its predecessor, and finally cast him into a loathsome dungeon. Gregory, it seems, was possessed of what must positively have been a superhuman constitution if, after twelve tortures, each extending over several days, and any one of which would have killed an ordinary mortal, he managed to survive for fifteen years in a dungeon infested with reptiles and reeking with pestilential odours.³⁹ It is impossible to accept these tales as sober history, even when found in what purports to be a contemporary narrative. They are demonstrably the fabrications of a later hagiologist. The so-called secretary of Tiridates, when dissected by the modern critic, turns out to be a clerical scribe who wrote about the middle of the fifth century under the assumed name of Agathangelos, and made himself the secretary of Tiridates in order to appear as an eyewitness of the events and scenes which he describes.⁴⁰ This clerical scribe drew, however, on an earlier Life of Gregory which contained a far more reliable account of his mission. From this source it is clear that he had to endure a lengthy interval of suffering before he succeeded, by means of the inevitable miracle, in effecting, about the year 280,⁴¹ the king's conversion. Thenceforth his mission, to which he was later formally ordained by Leontios, Bishop of Cæsarea, made such rapid progress that by 316, the year of Tiridates' death, the Armenians had largely exchanged the worship of the old gods for that of Christ. Tiridates himself lent all the

³⁹ Agathangelos, "Hist. of Tiridates," ii., in Langlois, "Collection des historiens anc. et mod. de l'Arménie," i. (1869).

⁴⁰ Von Gutschmid, "Kleine Schriften," iii. 350 f. (1892). In his introduction and notes to the work of Agathangelos, M. Langlois is not sufficiently critical at times.

⁴¹ Gelzer, "Die Anfänge der Armenischen Kirche," 166.

greater effect to his preaching by destroying the pagan temples and building and endowing churches all over his dominions. He and his people are represented by Eusebius as a Christian nation in the war which he successfully waged against the persecutor Maximinus Daza.⁴² According to our contemporary history, Armenia became a Christian land within a couple of decades, though it seems that the new religion made much less progress among the mass of the people than among the nobles.⁴³ It is evident, at all events, that at his death he left a strongly organised Church in a region extending from the Euphrates to the Araxes—the western and eastern borders respectively of Armenia. Equally evident that his work was no mere spasmodic growth, though it appears that there was a temporary relapse, to some extent coeval with the reign of the Emperor Julian, and that the old cult retained a hold in eastern Armenia.⁴⁴

ASIA MINOR

The evidence for the spread of Christianity in Asia Minor during this period is fuller, though also largely incidental. It may be gleaned from the extant correspondence of leading churchmen and the notices of persecution affecting this region, of the synods which met in connection with current ecclesiastical controversies, and of the missionary and literary activity of which it was the scene. Polycarp, for instance, writes to the churches in the neighbourhood of Smyrna; Dionysius of Corinth to those of Pontus, Bithynia, and Crete; the Church of Smyrna to that of Philomelium and all the parishes of the holy Catholic Church in every place (in Asia Minor); the Church of Lyons to those of Asia and Phrygia.⁴⁵ The pagan Lucian, writing about 170, speaks of Pontus as full of "atheists and Christians."⁴⁶ Similar evidence of the growth of the Asia Minor Church is found in the correspondence of Dionysius of Alexandria and others in the third century. It is confirmed by the passing notices of persecution in this region. The outburst at Smyrna, to which Polycarp fell a victim, appears to have been in part due to the exasperation of the populace at the numbers of "the atheists." Its fury was

⁴² ix. 8; *ὄντας καὶ αὐτοὺς Χριστιανούς ὄντας.*

⁴³ Gelzer, 133 f.

⁴⁴ Gelzer maintains (165 f.) von Gutschmid controverts his ordination by Leontios (iii. 418).

⁴⁵ Eusebius, v. 20; iv. 23; iv. 15; v. 1, *cf.* 3.

⁴⁶ "Alex. Abon.," 25. Greek text and trans. by Harmon in Loeb Class. Library (1925).

directed against the whole race of Christians,⁴⁷ and the phrase implies a powerful and widespread movement in the province of Asia. At the end of the century Tertullian knows of a persecution in Cappadocia.⁴⁸ When, shortly after, it was the turn of Asia, they were so numerous that, after executing a few of them, the proconsul Arrius Antoninus was fain to desist with the exclamation, "O miserable men, if you wish to die, you have precipices and halters."⁴⁹ Cappadocia is again the scene of a severe persecution in the reign of Maximinus Thrax (235-238), and the notice of it in an Epistle of Bishop Firmilian to Cyprian begets the impression that the proportion of Christians in the province was a large one.⁵⁰ About twenty years later (258) the Gothic invaders of Cappadocia and Pontus carried away many Christian captives from these provinces, including the ancestors of Ulfilas, the future missionary of the Goths.⁵¹ We know too little of the persecution of Decius and Valerian in the sixth decade of the century to draw definite inferences from them as to the progress of Christianity in Asia Minor. We are more fortunate in the case of the Diocletian persecution which broke out in 303 after an interval of fully forty years of immunity. At its outbreak the imperial household at Nicomedia contains many Christians, including apparently the Empress Prisca and her daughter.⁵² Nicomedia itself possesses a magnificent church and is a semi-Christian city. In the course of his narrative of this long drawn-out persecution in the eastern half of the Empire, Eusebius tells of one town in Phrygia, whose inhabitants were wholly Christian,⁵³ and, as we have seen, the martyr Lucian knows of other wholly Christian cities,⁵⁴ and the rescript issued by Maximinus Daza towards the close of the persecution magnifies, if it perhaps exaggerates, the ascendancy of Christianity over paganism in Asia Minor and other eastern provinces at its commencement. "Almost all men had abandoned the worship of the gods and had attached themselves to the party of the Christians."⁵⁵

Equally significant of the growing strength of the Asia Minor Church are the numerous attended synods convened in connection with current ecclesiastical controversies. Several of these

⁴⁷ Eusebius, iv. 15.

⁴⁸ "Ad Scap.," 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁰ Cyprian, "Ep.," 74 (75). He describes the proconsul Serenianus as "a bitter and terrible persecutor" (*acerbus et dirus persecutor*), and tells of the flight of the Christians to other regions.

⁵¹ "Canonical Epistle of Gregory Thaumaturgus" ("Ante-Nicene Lib."), xx. 30 f.

⁵² Eusebius, viii. 1.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, viii. 11. πάντες αὐτὴν πόλιν οἰκοῦντες . . . χριστιανοὺς σφᾶς ὁμολογοῦντες.

⁵⁴ "Urbes integræ." Eusebius, ix. 6 (Rufinus).

⁵⁵ Eusebius, ix. 9.

assemblies met in the late second century for the discussion and condemnation of the views of Montanus and his followers.⁵⁶ In the course of the quarrel over the proper day for the celebration of Easter, we hear of two synods—one in Asia, the other in Pontus—towards the end of the century, and these were evidently not the only ones.⁵⁷ Of the second, Polycrates of Ephesus says that the bishops who attended it constituted “a great multitude,” too numerous to particularise.⁵⁸ In the middle of the third century we hear again of largely attended synods to consider the question of rebaptizing heretics, of which the bishops of Asia Minor were the staunch champions.⁵⁹ At the end of the first quarter of the fourth century the most decisive evidence of this kind is furnished by the relatively large number of bishops from Asia Minor who attended the Council of Nicæa. Even so sequestered and wild a region as Isauria (lying between Pamphylia and Galatia) sent as many as thirteen bishops and five chorepiscopi to Nicæa.⁶⁰ This council is the monument not only of the triumph of Athanasian orthodoxy for the time being over the Arian heresy, but of the triumph of Christianity itself over paganism in Asia Minor.

The vitality of the Church of Asia Minor during this period is further proved by the missionary enterprise and the literary activity of which it was the nurse. As we have seen, Christians from the province of Asia had in the early second century evangelised in the lower valley of the Rhone. In the second half of it Christianity spread into Gaul through the activity of Christians for this province, especially of Irenæus, the pupil of Polycarp, who laboured not only as bishop of the Christian community at Lyons, but as a missionary among the pagan provincials. From Cæsarea in Cappadocia it had spread, as we have seen, into Armenia in the latter half of the third century through the activity of Gregory the Illuminator, who was trained in the theological school founded by Firmilian. In Pontus, Gregory Thaumaturgus applied with striking success the new method of winning over the pagans to Christianity by accommodating it to a certain extent to the pagan cult. He transformed, for instance, the pagan into Christian festivals and replaced the worship of the gods by the commemoration of the martyrs. His missionary activity was so effective that, whereas there were only seventeen Christians in Neo-Cæsarea in Pontus when he began his mission about the year 240, there

⁵⁶ Eusebius, v. 16 f.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 23-24.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 24. ὦν τὰ ὀνόματα ἐὰν γράψω πολλὰ πληθυσίον.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, vii. 5 and 7.

⁶⁰ Turner, 77-80.

were only the same number of pagans left in it when he died about 270.⁶¹

The Church of Asia Minor from the early second century onwards produced or influenced many of the Christian writers of this period—apologists, theologians, Gnostics, and controversialists of various kinds and calibre. Ephesus, where Hellenism exerted so marked an influence on Christianity, continued throughout the second century to be the focus of Christian thought. In the third, Cæsarea in Cappadocia emerges as a worthy rival. Among the apologists were Melito of Sardis and Apolinarius of Hierapolis, whilst Justin sojourned for a time at Ephesus. Irenæus, the greatest of the early Greek theologians and anti-Gnostic controversialists, was trained at Smyrna. Marcion the Gnostic came from Sinope in Pontus and Florinus, another Gnostic, had been a fellow-pupil of Irenæus. The monarchian controversy took its rise with the Alogi, Theodotus, Praxeas, Epigonos in Asia Minor.

From this survey of the relative evidence, it is evident that, by the first quarter of the fourth century, Christianity had asserted its supremacy over paganism in Asia Minor. It was, in fact, the first of the great divisions of the Empire in which this supremacy was practically achieved. "Asia Minor in the fourth century," concludes Harnack, "was the first purely Christian country, apart from some outlying districts and one or two prominent sanctuaries."⁶²

EGYPT AND NORTH AFRICA

Towards the close of the second century the Church of Alexandria suddenly emerges from its previous obscurity with Pantæus, Clement, Origen, Demetrius. Pantæus, who is supposed to have been a native of Sicily, was the first teacher of its famous catechetical school of whom we have authentic knowledge. That a theological school should have arisen in such a centre of culture is not surprising, and it appears to have been in existence from an early period, as Eusebius asserts.⁶³ With theological learning he combined the zeal of the missionary, and interrupted his work as a teacher to undertake a mission to "India." This work was zealously continued by his pupil Clement⁶⁴ until the persecution under Septimius Severus, when, in the opening years of the third century, he retired to Palestine, and was succeeded by his still more famous pupil Origen. Under Origen, whose zeal

⁶¹ See Jerome, "De Vir. Ill.," 65, and the "Life," by Greg. of Nyssa.

⁶² "Expansion," ii. 328.

⁶³ v. 10.

⁶⁴ Eusebius, vi. 6.

was encouraged by Bishop Demetrius,⁶⁵ the school became an increasingly powerful agency for the conversion of the cultured class. A number of his pupils not only embraced Christianity, but evinced the ardour of their faith by their martyrdom during this persecution.⁶⁶ So numerous were they that he was compelled to devolve a share of the work on Heraclas, one of the most distinguished of them, who afterwards became the successor of Demetrius as Bishop of Alexandria.⁶⁷

This persecution reveals not only the strength of the Church at Alexandria, but the diffusion of Christianity in the interior of Egypt. In addition to the martyrs belonging to Alexandria itself, among whom was Leonidas the father of Origen, many were brought thither to suffer torture and death "from Egypt and all Thebais."⁶⁸ Eusebius in his exaggerated style speaks of "thousands" of these "athletes of religion."⁶⁹ We can also adduce the testimony of Clement, who asserts that Christianity had spread into every nation, village, and town throughout the world,⁷⁰ and though this assertion is a manifold exaggeration in reference to the diffusion of Christianity in general, it may be taken as proof that it had made considerable progress in Egypt in particular. He could hardly have written in such sweeping terms if Egypt had been only slightly affected by the movement. On the other hand, the more cautious terms in which Origen refers to the subject reminds us that we should not interpret the language of Clement and Eusebius too literally. A more concrete proof of the existence of Egyptian churches, in addition to those in Alexandria itself, is available in the synods convened by Demetrius towards the close of his life in 232 to consider the case of Origen.⁷¹

The record of the Decian and Valerian persecutions in the middle of the third century, as contained in the letters of Bishop Dionysius, reveals the existence of numerous churches in the towns and villages of the interior⁷² as well as the size and widespread influence of the Alexandrian Church. In one of these Dionysius tells of the village churches which were disturbed and divided over the chiliastic teaching of the Egyptian Bishop Nepos, and which he succeeded in harmonising at a conference at Arsinoë.⁷³ Several of his Epistles are addressed to "the brethren in Egypt," and he himself took the opportunity of adding to their number by preaching in the places to which he was exiled during these

⁶⁵ Eusebius, vi. 14.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vi. 3, 4, 18, 29.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, vi. 15.

⁷¹ Eusebius, vi. 23, and McGiffert's note, p. 392 f. of his trans.

⁷² *Ibid.*, vi. 42; vii. 22.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, vii. 22.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vi. 1.

⁶⁹ vi. 2.

⁷⁰ Strom., vi. 18.

persecutions. The presence of Christians in the villages of the interior is further proved by the *libelli*, or certificates of having sacrificed during the Decian persecution, which have been found among the Egyptian papyri. The third century thus witnessed the evangelisation of the native Egyptian as well as the Greek-speaking element of the population, from which the large majority of Egyptian converts was drawn during the first two centuries. The decline of the old Egyptian cults among the latter class, in virtue of the influence of Hellenist culture, doubtless facilitated the transition of many of this class, to whom the Christian Logos doctrine would appeal, from paganism to Christianity. Similarly, the ideas of a future life and judgment characteristic of the popular cult of Osiris—the god who had once reigned on earth and had been slain by the power of evil—tended to make the Christian story of the Cross more comprehensible to the people.⁷⁴

The severity of the Diocletian persecution in the opening years of the fourth century affords further concrete proof of the advancing evangelisation of Egypt. Eusebius, who paid a visit to this region towards the close of the reign of Maximinus, here speaks as an eyewitness. At Alexandria and as far south as Thebais the martyrs were to be counted by the thousand, and many more were sent in batches to the mines in Palestine and Cyprus. There were, he says, daily executions to the number of 10, 20, 30, 60, and even 100 at a time. The executioners themselves were exhausted, and relieved each other in the gruesome work; their swords were blunted and broken in the effort to destroy the endless procession of victims.⁷⁵ A less reputable form of evidence is furnished by the outbreak of theological strife on the cessation of persecution, over the Arian question which, according to Eusebius, spread from Alexandria "over the whole of Egypt, Libya, and the farther Thebaid."⁷⁶ The strife was aggravated by the Meletian schism which involved the same region.⁷⁷ "In every city bishops were engaged in obstinate conflict with bishops and people rising against people."⁷⁸ The monastic movement, which was assuming considerable proportions by the beginning of this century, is an additional proof of the vitality of Egyptian Christianity. In Alexandria alone there were now numerous churches, and though Egypt (including Libya, *i.e.*, Pentapolis and Cyrenaica) sent only twenty-three bishops to Nicæa, the number

⁷⁴ See Scott-Moncrieff, "Paganism and Christianity in Egypt," 51 f., 99 f.

⁷⁵ "Martyrs of Pal.," 3, 8, 10, 13; "Eccl. Hist.," viii. 6-10; ix. 6.

⁷⁶ "Vita Constantini," ii. 61.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, ii. 62.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, iii. 4.

for the whole region was not far short of a hundred.⁷⁹ The number of bishops, however, by no means represents the number of churches, as each nome or district which had only one bishop contained many which were governed by presbyters, and in some villages there was not even a presbyter.⁸⁰ Harnack concludes that down to 325, churches were established in fifty of these districts,⁸¹ which, according to Mommsen, became the bases of the episcopal dioceses.⁸²

As in Egypt, Christianity in North Africa suddenly emerges, in the pages of Tertullian, from obscurity, as a powerful movement at the close of the second century and the early part of the third. Tertullian, the greatest Christian writer since the apostolic age, is prone to indulge in rhetoric, and allowance must be made for the rush of his facile pen. His object is to create an impression of the magnitude of the Christian movement in the mind of the Roman officials in the attempt to overawe its repressors. To this end he does not hesitate, as an advocate, to overstate his case. The outcry, he tells these officials in his "Apology," about the close of the century, is that the State is filled with Christians, that both sexes and every age and condition, including even the highest rank, are going over to Christianity.⁸³ So numerous are they that their rebellion would be a grave menace to the stability of the Empire. If they were merely to emigrate beyond its frontiers, they would leave it largely a solitude behind them, almost all the inhabitants of the cities being Christians.⁸⁴ Against such vast numbers persecution is useless; it only increases them.⁸⁵ He strikes the same note in the "Address to the Nations,"⁸⁶ which was written about the same time as the "Apology," and in the Epistle to the proconsul Scapula some years later. You cannot, he tells Scapula, effect anything against such a multitude of men and women, who amount almost to a majority in every city.⁸⁷ To destroy us you will have to decimate Carthage itself, including large numbers of its leading citizens. Spare yourself, therefore, if not us. Spare Carthage. Spare the province.⁸⁸ This is doubtless rhetoric, and could only apply—and this with material reservation—to Carthage and its nearer provincial environment. For Numidia and Mauritania it was a palpable exaggeration, though we learn incidentally of the spread of Christianity in those

⁷⁹ We may conclude this from the testimony of Athanasius, "Contra Arianos," i and 71.

⁸⁰ See Harnack, ii. 316.

⁸¹ ii. 319-320.

⁸² "Roman Provinces," ii. 235.

⁸³ "Apol.," i; cf. 37.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁸⁶ "Ad Nationes," i. 1.

⁸⁷ "Ad Scap.," 2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

western regions.⁸⁹ Tertullian himself betrays the fact of strong opposition to the movement on the part of the masses, whilst mentioning the mild and humane attitude of some of the pro-consuls of the period.⁹⁰ "How often the hostile mob, paying no heed to you, takes the law into its own hands and assails us with stones and flames."⁹¹ It vents its fury against even the Christian cemeteries, which served as their meeting places, and tears in pieces the dead.⁹² "No *Areæ*—no burial-places for the Christians," was the cry with which the mob rose against them in the consulship of Hilarian.⁹³

As in Asia Minor, an indication of the growing strength of African Christianity from about the opening of the third century is the presence of dissension among the Christians and the convention of synods to deal with it. Those hot-headed Africans were particularly prone to quarrel over questions of doctrine and discipline, such as the validity of heretical baptism and the treatment of the lapsed. Both Tertullian and Cyprian refer to the early synods which met to consider such disputes.⁹⁴ At one of these, presided over by Bishop Agrippinus towards the end of the first quarter of the third century, as many as seventy African and Numidian bishops were present.⁹⁵ About twenty years later another, under Bishop Donatus, was attended by ninety.⁹⁶ The dissidents of various kinds were evidently very numerous, for Cyprian, referring to the effects of these synods, tells us that, between the time of Agrippinus and his own day, many thousands of them had been brought over to the Church.⁹⁷ Under his own episcopate eighty-seven bishops took part in one of these assemblies held in September 256,⁹⁸ and this number did not include those who were opposed to Cyprian's view of the invalidity of heretical baptism. From the list of the churches represented by them it appears that Christianity about the middle of the third century had its strongest hold along the coast in and around Carthage, in and near Cirta in Numidia, and along the great trade and military routes. The Christians are less numerous in the interior, though a considerable advance has been made at and near Lambæsa and

⁸⁹ "Ad Scap.," 3 and 4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹¹ "Apol.," 37.

⁹² "Apol.," 37, and see Monceaux, "Hist. Lit. de L'Afrique Chrét.," i. 12 f.

⁹³ "Ad Scap.," 3.

⁹⁴ Tertullian, "De Pudicitia," 10; Cyprian, "Ep.," 65, ed. Migne (Oxford ed., 1); 70 (71), etc.

⁹⁵ Cyprian, "Ep.," 70 (71); Augustine, "De Unico Baptismo contra Petilianum," 13, 22.

⁹⁶ Cyprian, "Ep.," 54 (59).

⁹⁷ "Ep.," 72 (73).

⁹⁸ Eighty-five were actually present, but two absent bishops empowered two of those present to vote for them.

Theveste in southern Numidia. In Mauritania, on the other hand, the churches were relatively few. In the middle of the third century, concludes Monceaux, "the power of expansion of Christianity diminished from the east to the west and from the north to the south, in proportion as the country receded from the coast line, or from Carthage, or the grand routes."⁹⁹ Its expansion was conditioned by that of Roman civilisation, of which Carthage was the grand centre.

The Decian and Valerian persecutions afford proof of its growingly intensive character in the interval between Tertullian and Cyprian. The great number of apostates as well as of martyrs and confessors shows how comprehensive, if also, in part, how superficial, the profession of Christianity had become. In the interval between these persecutions and that of Diocletian (A.D. 303 f.) there was continued growth, though its history is very obscure. The number of bishoprics was materially increased by the first quarter of the fourth century, as is shown by the fact that as many as 270 attended the Donatist Council in 330. Christianity has taken a firmer hold of the interior and has made a marked advance in Mauritania. It has, in fact, reached the pillars of Hercules, for there is now a church at Tingi. It has produced in Arnobius and Lactantius two other distinguished Latin Fathers, in addition to Tertullian and Cyprian. It has its basilicas in contrast to the house meeting places of an earlier time, though these are not as yet numerous.¹⁰⁰ The Diocletian persecution, which lasted less than two years in North Africa, proved only a passing blight. There is now a marked change in the attitude of the populace, for there appears to have been no mob violence.¹ This alone would indicate that Christianity had won by the number of its adherents the virtual if grudging recognition of its right to the toleration which it had enjoyed for forty years. In an epistle in reference to the incipient Donatist controversy in 313, Constantine assumes that a very large proportion of the dense population of North Africa is Christian.² Harnack is, in fact, of opinion that it had attained as strong a position in proconsular Africa and Numidia as in some of the provinces of Asia Minor.³ This estimate seems too sanguine. The cultured class was still largely hostile and the devotees of the many cults seem, taking these regions as a whole, to have been a majority. Moreover, though the number of bishops is imposing, it must be remembered that

⁹⁹ ii. 10. For the list of places known to have contained churches at this period, see *Ibid.*, 7-9, and Harnack, ii. 424-434.

¹⁰⁰ Monceaux, iii. 11-17.

¹ *Ibid.*, iii. 26.

² Eusebius, x. 5.

³ "Expansion," ii. 435.

each community in these provinces had a bishop and that many of them were small.

As in Egypt, the powerful growth of the movement in North Africa has a significance far beyond the limits of these provinces. The Christianisation of Egypt was of crucial importance for the development of theological thought in the eastern Church. To show this it is sufficient to mention the names of Origen and Athanasius. Not less important is the Christianisation of North Africa for the development of Christian thought in the Latin west. It produced in Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Cyprian, Arnobius, Lactantius, and especially Augustine at a later time, a series of theological writers who wielded a decisive influence on the defence of Christianity or the development of its doctrine and organisation in the West. Not least, it most probably produced the first translation, or rather translations, of the Bible (for there were more than one) into Latin, which ere long displaced Greek as the language of Western culture. These translations preceded by a long time that of the Itala, the revised Latin version in use at Milan and in northern Italy in the fourth century. Tertullian already at the end of the second uses such a translation as well as Cyprian after him.⁴ From this point of view alone, the influence of African Christianity on that of the West is far-reaching. It first gave the Bible to the West in the popular language, and the Bible in the popular language was then, as ever, the greatest of missionaries. It is from this point of view that Mommsen hazards the rather exaggerated assertion that "in the development of Christianity Africa plays the very first part; if it arose in Syria, it was in and through Africa that it became the religion of the world."⁵

EUROPE

Turning now to Europe, our knowledge of the progress of Christianity in the Balkan peninsula during this period is still very scanty. In a letter of Serapion, Bishop of Antioch, relative to the Montanist controversy towards the close of the second century, we hear of churches at Debeltum and Anchialus in Thrace on the western shore of the Black Sea.⁶ From the notices of martyrs and the records of the Council of Nicæa,⁷ it is evident that by the beginning of the fourth century the number of churches had materially increased. By this time, too, there were Christian communities in Mœsia, Dalmatia, Pannonia in the north and north-

⁴ See on this subject Monceaux, i. 97 f., 165 f.

⁵ "Roman Provinces," ii. 343.

⁶ Eusebius, v. 19.

⁷ Turner, 86 f.

west. A beginning at least had been made by Arnobius, who was banished to Scythia, and by Christian captives, carried off by the Gothic invaders of Asia Minor in the middle of the third century, in the evangelisation of the Goths. There was one bishop, Theophilus, from Gothia (the Crimea) at the Nicene Council.⁸

We have more ample, if still far from complete, information regarding the growth of the Church at Rome and in Italy throughout this period. In the early part of it Justin Martyr, in his rôle of philosopher-evangelist, won not a few converts during his two years' Roman sojourn.⁹ By the end of the second century it included among its members many of the higher classes.¹⁰ Rome continued to attract in ever-increasing degree the leaders of theological thought, both orthodox and heterodox, from other parts of the Empire. Not only Gnostics like Valentinus and Marcion, but Montanists and Quarto-decimans like Blastus; Monarchians like Theodotus, Artemon, Praxeas, Sabellius; Rigorists like Novatus had their own meeting places, and some of them even their own bishop.¹¹ This concentration of the diverse theological belief of Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt, and North Africa is not without its significance for the Christian propaganda, in its various forms, at Rome as well as the Church at large. Apart from these sects, the Roman clergy of various grades totalled by the middle of the third century over 150, as we learn from the definite figures given by Bishop Cornelius in a letter to Fabius, Bishop of Antioch. There are, he informs him, 46 presbyters, 7 deacons, 7 subdeacons, and as many as 94 minor clerical officials (acolytes, exorcists, readers, and janitors)—155 in all including the bishop. In addition over 1,500 widows and poor persons were maintained by the Church.¹² From these figures we may infer that the whole community must have numbered a good many thousands, which have been estimated as high as between 30,000 and 50,000. In view of its numbers and influence, there is substantial ground for the saying, attributed to the Emperor Decius, that he would rather see a rival Emperor in Rome than a Roman bishop.¹³ Even in Justin's time the city contained a number of Christian meeting places.¹⁴ By the end of the third century there were as many as forty basilicas, in contrast to these house churches of an earlier time.¹⁵ A few years later Maxentius is represented

⁸ Turner, 90.

⁹ "Martyrium," 2.

¹⁰ Eusebius, v. 21.

¹¹ See on this last point, Eusebius, v. 28; vi. 43.

¹² Eusebius, vi. 43.

¹³ Cyprian, "Ep.," 51 (55).

¹⁴ "Martyrium," 2.

¹⁵ This is stated by Optatus of Milevis. See also Barnes, "The Early Church in the Light of the Monuments," 196 f.

by Eusebius as stopping the persecution of the Christians at Rome in order to gain favour with the Roman populace. Though an evident exaggeration, the assertion shows that Christianity had grown so powerful in the capital that politicians were fain to reckon with it.

As in Rome, so also in Italy, the Church had made substantial progress. A synod convened by Cornelius in 250-251 to discuss the Novatian schism was attended by sixty Italian bishops, besides a much larger number of presbyters and deacons, whilst many other Italian bishops sent their opinion by letter.¹⁶ These seem to have been most numerous in lower or southern Italy. In the north they were still comparatively few, though such cities as Ravenna, Brescia, Verona, Bologna were already bishoprics in the third century.

Crossing the Alps into Gaul we light on churches at Lyons and Vienne in the Rhone valley towards the end of the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The Bishop Potheinos bears a Greek name. So do Irenæus the presbyter and two other Christians, Attalus and Alexander. Irenæus had been a pupil of Polycarp at Smyrna. Attalus was a native of Pergamon; Alexander of Phrygia. Potheinos had most probably also come to Lyons from Asia Minor. This information comes to us from the letter written by the churches of Lyons and Vienne to those of Asia and Phrygia, telling of the persecution that had overtaken them in 177 and the martyrdom of the bishop and others. The letter proves the close intercourse that existed between these Gallic churches and those of the East. There had for centuries been Greek settlements at Marseilles and in southern Gaul, where Hellenist culture long predominated,¹⁷ and there was active communication between them and Asia Minor. It was probably through this channel that the Gospel had come to these Gallic cities, and Potheinos might have been sent on a special mission to the capital of the Gallic land many years before, for he was ninety at the time of his death. At all events, his work in this region is the historic starting point of the evangelisation of Gaul. According to Sulpicius Severus,¹⁸ Christianity came late to Gaul. But it could not have been later than the middle of the second century, since we may assume that the aged Potheinos had been labouring for at least thirty years before his death during the persecution of 177. On the outbreak

¹⁶ Eusebius, vi. 43.

¹⁷ Mommsen, "Roman Provinces," i. 78-79 and 110-111. In Paul's time Crescens was engaged in a mission to Galatia, probably in Asia Minor, but possibly identifiable with Gaul or northern Italy (Gallia Cisalpina).

¹⁸ "Chron.," ii. 32.

of this persecution the Christians of Lyons and Vienne were apparently not very numerous, to judge from the number of its victims, which seem to have been between forty and fifty.

Under Irenæus, the successor of Potheinos, their number was materially augmented. He speaks of Gnostic emissaries like Marcus deluding many Christian women in the Rhone valley by their fallacies and quakeries, some of whom he won back to the Catholic faith.¹⁹ Montanism also had its adherents. Irenæus himself evidently evangelised among the Celtic population in central Gaul, preaching in Celtic, which to him appeared "a barbarous dialect." He seems in fact to have spoiled his Greek style by the constant use of this "dialect."²⁰ His Celtic converts were sufficiently numerous to enable him to adduce their simple faith as an argument against the perversion of Christianity by the Gnostics,²¹ against whom he wrote his chief theological work. Whatever the extent of the Gallic mission, which he carried out during the last twenty years of the second century, it is certain that there were other churches in his time besides those of Lyons and Vienne. In his anti-Gnostic work he mentions the churches of Gaul along with those in other regions of the Empire in a tone that shows that, in his opinion, their orthodoxy counted for something in support of that of the Church universal, as against the Gnostics. Whether he extended his mission to Roman Germany we do not know. But he speaks of the churches planted in the Roman province along the Rhine known as Germania Superior and Inferior.²² He seems to have laboured till the opening years of the third century, and Jerome, in his "Commentary on Isaiah," calls him a martyr. Perhaps he was one of the victims of the persecution under Septimius Severus,²³ though we should expect Eusebius, who has a good deal to say about him in connection with the controversies of the time, to have mentioned the fact.

Legend knows of other martyrs and missionaries of nebulous existence—of the mission of the seven bishops, for instance, who were sent from Rome about the middle of the third century and who founded seven bishoprics—Arles, Narbonne, Toulouse,

¹⁹ "Adv. Haer.," I. vii. 4 (Harvey); I. xiii. 7 ("Ante-Nicene Lib.").

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I., Preface.

²¹ "Adv. Haer.," III. iv. 1 (III. iv. 2). In the references to the work of Irenæus those without brackets denote the edition of Harvey, which differs in the numbering of chapters and sections from the translation in the "Ante-Nicene Library." The latter are added in brackets for the benefit of the student.

²² "Adv. Haer.," I. iii. (I. x. 2).

²³ Jerome's testimony is, however, late, and the silence of previous writers is rather against the assumption of his martyrdom. Platnauer's assertion that he "certainly suffered martyrdom" is too positive. "Life and Reign of Septimius Severus," 135 (1918).

Clermont-Ferrand, Tours, Limoges, Paris (Lutetia). That there was a bishop at Arles at this time we know from Cyprian.²⁴ But we have no authentic knowledge of the others till the beginning of the fourth century, when about a dozen Gallic churches were represented at the Synod of Arles in 314, which Constantine convened to consider the Donatist schism.²⁵ In the previous year the bishops of Arles, Autun, and Cologne were present at a synod at Rome, which dealt with the same question.²⁶

Up to the reign of Diocletian, Gaul was too much disturbed by the civil wars waged by successive usurpers to afford a fertile field for missionary enterprise. Gaulish Druidism was, too, very tenacious and long resisted the Christian inroad. Owing to this double cause Christianity had not made much headway in Gaul outside the towns by the beginning of the fourth century, and in the towns this headway was comparatively meagre. Even the patronage of Constantine Chlorus and his son Constantine does not seem to have much accelerated its expansion. It may be said that Constantine would hardly have decided to go over to Christianity if the number of Christians in Gaul had not been considerable. But Constantine's impression of its strength would be derived from the East, where he grew to manhood, rather than from the West. Its progress even in the fourth century was very limited, Gaul being still extensively pagan in the second half of it, as the labours of St Martin show.²⁷

In Roman Germany its hold seems to have been even slighter. All we definitely know is that there were churches in this region in the time of Irenæus, and that Cologne, like Treves and Reims, in the neighbouring province of Belgica to the west, had a bishop by the year 313, when he was present at the Synod of Rome in this year, and also at that of Arles. There seem also to have been churches at Augsburg and Regensburg in the province of Rhætia to the south-east.

Whilst Irenæus²⁸ tells of churches in Spain in his time, their origin is wrapped in obscurity. According to Mommsen,²⁹ Spain had been thoroughly Romanised at an early period. The tradition that extended the travels of Paul thither is questionable, and the Spanish apostleship of James is a myth. Their history remains obscure up to the middle of the third century, for the statements of Irenæus and Tertullian are general. The testimony of Cyprian

²⁴ "Ep.," 66 (67).

²⁵ Eusebius, x. 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ For the subject in greater detail, see Holmes, "Origin and Development of the Christian Church in Gaul" (1911), and Duchesne, "Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule" (1907 f.).

²⁸ "Adv. Haer.," I. iii. (I. x. ii.).

²⁹ "Roman Provinces," i. 69 f.

about the middle of the century, on the other hand, is explicit and reveals strong and regularly organised churches at Leon, Astorga, Meridæ, Saragossa. He speaks of Christian communities and bishops throughout the provinces, two of whom, Basilides and Martial, have lapsed during the Decian persecution and are accordingly to be deposed, despite their appeal to Bishop Stephen of Rome.³⁰ About fifty years later the Synod of Elvira (c. A.D. 300), at which forty-three representatives of Spanish churches were present, testifies to the continued growth of the Spanish Church. This growth seems to have been due, in no small measure, to the lax morality, worldliness, and readiness to compromise with paganism, of which the synod gives a very sinister picture. Nowhere, in fact, does the declension of the primitive spirit appear so marked as in its canons.³¹

BRITAIN

Exact information about the introduction of Christianity into Roman Britain is equally lacking. Legend is, indeed, here, as elsewhere, very circumstantial. It ascribes the introduction of Christianity into Britain to some of the apostles or their contemporaries. "That the British Church," to quote Dr Plummer, "can claim apostolic origin, whether through St Paul or any one of the Twelve, is a magnificent conjecture without anything but its audacity to recommend it."³² Another early missionary, Bran the Blessed, turns out, according to Sir John Rhys,³³ to have been a Celtic war god transformed into a saint. Gildas, who wrote in the sixth century, is no safe authority for the statement that it had already gained a footing in his native country as early as the reign of Tiberius. The assertion that a British king, Lucius, applied to Pope Eleutherus in the second half of the second century (c. 174-189) for Christian instruction,³⁴ is probably of still later concoction. It appears in the "Liber Pontificalis" and had evidently found a place there before the year 700, *i.e.*, about five hundred years after the alleged event. It may, as Haverfield and Zimmer think, have originated at Rome during the bitter controversy between the Celtic and the Roman party in the

³⁰ "Ep.," 67 (67).

³¹ See Hefele Leclercq, "Councils," i. 212 f.; Dale, "Synod of Elvira" (1882).

³² "The Churches in Britain," i. 3 (1911). For these legends, see Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils and Eccl. Documents," i. 22 f. (1869).

³³ "Arthurian Legend," 261 f.

³⁴ "Liber Pontificalis," 17, ed. by Mommsen (1898). *Hic accepit epistolam a Lucio Brittanio rege, ut Christianus efficeretur per ejus mandatum.* The passage is a late addition to the original "Liber."

British Church in the seventh century, and have been meant to strengthen the party contention of the latter against the former.³⁵ Or its pious inventor may possibly have been a contemporary of the chronicler Prosper in the fifth century, who shows a suspicious tendency to exalt the papal power. The fact that Bæda gave it credence is no proof of its authenticity, since Bæda was a partisan of the Roman side in the controversy with the Celtic Church. On the other hand, Duchesne,³⁶ whilst admitting that the story is baseless, disputes the inference that it was concocted in support of the later Roman party in Britain, and Harnack argues that it has no reference to Britain at all, but to Lucius Abgar IX., King of Edessa, Britanio being a form of BIRTHA, another name for Edessa.³⁷ In any case it appears to be an invention. There was no king of Britain of this or any other name in the second half of the second century ruling over what had, long before the time of his request for conversion, become a part of the Roman Empire.

Equally questionable is the alleged application, about the beginning of the third century, for instruction and baptism by the Scottish king, Donald, to Pope Victor, the successor of Eleutherus, which we owe to Fordun and Hector Boece. No Scottish king of this name is known to have existed in North Britain at this early period, though there seems to have been a small Scottish settlement in what is now Argyllshire in the third century.³⁸ Tertullian, indeed, writing in the first decade of the century, professes to know of the existence of British Christians in "places of the Britons inaccessible to the Romans."³⁹ The phrase occurs in a rhetorical passage of his tract against the Jews, in which he adduces the world-wide diffusion of Christianity as a proof of the fulfilment of the promise that Christ would rule over all nations. In view of his proneness to overstatement, it is risky to accept this rhetorical flourish as exact history in the face of the

³⁵ See Haverfield, "Early British Christianity," in "English Hist. Rev.," xi. (1896) 419, and Zimmer, "Celtic Church," 2.

³⁶ "Liber Pontificalis" (1886-92), Introduction. It is an interpolation in the early sixth century into the original "Liber," which dates from about the middle of the fourth century.

³⁷ "Sitzungsberichte der k.p. Academie der Wissenschaften" (1904), 907—"English Historical Rev.," xxii. 767 f.; "Expansion," ii. 410.

³⁸ This settlement is mentioned by Bæda ("Hist. Eccl.," i. 1) and may be historic on the assumption that he got his information from Adamnan, one of Columba's successors at Iona. But the chief of this settlement was not Donald, but Reuda or Riata, whose name is preserved in that of this locality—Dalriada. On this point, see my "Constitutional History of Scotland," 5 f. (1924). In Sir George MacDonald's "Roman Wall in Scotland" (2nd ed., 1934) there is no trace of Christianity among the remains of the Roman occupation of North Britain during this period. Equally negative is James Curle's "Roman Frontier Post" (Newstead, near Melrose) (1911).

³⁹ "Adv. Judæos," 7.

fact that, according to Bæda,⁴⁰ it was only with the mission of Ninian two hundred years later that the evangelisation of North Britain began. At most we can only infer the reputed existence of Christianity in some part of Roman Britain which had risen in temporary revolt against Roman rule.⁴¹ Before the middle of the century, Origen also knows of the existence of Christians in Britain,⁴² though he does not specify their locality, and his testimony is, besides, rather contradictory. In itself, it is probable that Christianity, from the early third century, had made some impression on Southern Britain, in virtue of the close intercourse, through trade and travel, between it and Gaul and Roman Germany, where it had undoubtedly established itself before the close of the second. It is to this source, rather than to the agency of Christians in the Roman army that its introduction was probably due. The remains of the Roman military occupation within our period are of a purely pagan character and reveal no trace of Christianity.⁴³

However introduced, it is only towards the end of the third century and the early part of the fourth that it appears as an organised movement, which, according to what seems a reliable tradition, contributed, in St Alban and two others, its first martyrs for the faith. The only question is whether these martyrdoms were due to the persecution under Diocletian, and not rather to those under Decius and Valerian.⁴⁴ In view of the moderation

⁴⁰ "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 4.

⁴¹ Prof. Williams contends that Tertullian wrote from special knowledge and that his assertion is substantially true. He can, however, adduce no fact in proof of his contention, which amounts, in conclusion, only to this—"that Tertullian knew about A.D. 200-208 of 'a submission to Christ' in Britain." "Christianity in Early Britain," 76 (1912). The point, however, is whether there were Christians at this time in the part of Britain inaccessible to the Romans, *i.e.*, North Britain.

⁴² "Hom. in Ezek.," iv. ; Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," i. 3 ; Harnack, "Expansion," ii. 410. In another passage in reference to the limited spread of Christianity he exempts Britain from its scope. "Comm. on Matt.," xxiv. 9 (ed. Klostermann, 1933).

⁴³ Haverfield, "Roman Occupation of Britain," 297 f. (ed. by Sir G. MacDonald, 1924). On the paucity of the archaeological evidence even for the fourth century, see Romilly Allen, "Christian Symbolism in Great Britain and Ireland," 77, and "Monumental History of the British Church," 144. List in Haddan and Stubbs, i. 37 f. None of them is earlier than the fourth century. Hübner, "Inscriptiones Britannicæ Latinæ," Introd. (C.I.L., vii.). The most important is the remains of a Romano-British church at Silchester. Haverfield, "Eng. Hist. Rev.," xi. 424 f. ; "Roman Occupation of Britain," 206 f. ; and "Romanization of Britain," 35 (1912). A British Christian tombstone found on Exmoor, with Latin inscription, belongs to the post-Roman period. Haverfield, "Roman Britain," 41 f. (1913).

⁴⁴ We first hear of the martyrdom of St Alban in Constantine's "Life of Germanus" in the early fifth century. Haddan and Stubbs, i. 5. Gildas ("De Excidio Brit.," x. 11, ed. by Stevenson), who is followed by Bæda ("Hist.

of the Cæsar, Constantius Chlorus, the subordinate ruler of Britain and Gaul, under whose régime the Christians do not seem to have been seriously molested, it is quite feasible that they took place during one or other of these earlier persecutions. If so, we have in them concrete proof of the appreciable extent of British Christianity in the second half of the third century. In any case, an organised British Church emerges at the beginning of the fourth, and is sufficiently large to make its influence felt in the controversies of the period. Three of its bishops—those of London, York, and Lincoln (?)—along with a presbyter and a deacon attended the Council of Arles in 314, and it gave its assent to the decrees of that of Nicæa in 325. The Emperor Constantine, in commending the decree of the Nicæan Council relative to the celebration of Easter, to the universal Church, includes Britain among the regions of the Empire where the number of churches is large.⁴⁵ His conversion undoubtedly gave a powerful impulse to the Christian mission among his British subjects,⁴⁶ among whom he began his imperial career.

GENERAL ESTIMATE

What, in conclusion, was the probable proportion of Christians to non-Christians throughout the Empire at the beginning of the fourth century? Various estimates have been attempted, but in the absence of contemporary statistics, they are mere guesses. The proportion varied according to geography, being greatest in the lands bordering the eastern and southern Mediterranean basin. All that we can with certainty say is that it had gained a powerful and permanent hold in the Roman world before the conversion of Constantine. But even the conversion of Constantine was very far from being equivalent to the conversion of the Empire. It only contributed to assure to Christianity the ultimate complete triumph, to which its missionary spirit and its splendid vitality under persecution entitled it, and which would have come even if Constantine had not been converted. But this triumph, in the West at least, was still far off. As far as mere numbers went, it was still only the possible religion of the Empire, though it was already the dominant religion in Asia Minor and was bidding

Eccl.," i. 7, ed. Plummer), ascribes it to the Diocletian persecution. His statement is, however, not above question. Williams inclines to place it in the reign of Decius or Valerian, "Christianity in Early Britain," 102. See also Duke, "The Columban Church," 3 f. (1932); F. G. Warren, "Camb. Med. Hist.," ii. 497; Plummer, "Two of the Saxon Chronicles, Parallel" (1892).

⁴⁵ Eusebius, "Vita Constantini," iii. 19.

⁴⁶ See Sozomen, "Hist. Eccl.," i. 6; cf. ii. 6.

fair to become so in the East, in Egypt, in North Africa, in part of Italy and Spain. Elsewhere it had only established strong outposts in the enemy's territory.

CHAPTER II

ACCUSATIONS AND CALUMNIES AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS

It is only when we come to the apologists of the second half of the second century and the early third that we get a detailed view of the accusations and calumnies against the Christians, which underlay the continued conflict with the State in this period. There is throughout a large part of it not only recurrent local persecution, but repeated general attempts to repress Christianity in the middle of the third and the early years of the fourth centuries. The apologies of Aristides,¹ the writer to Diognetus, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Tertullian, Minucius Felix throw a flood of light on the prejudiced attitude of mind which regarded the Christians as enemies of the State and society. To this hostile attitude they are an atheistical, disloyal, unpatriotic, misanthropic, immoral, and generally maleficent sect. Hence the continuance of the conflict with the State on the ground of the accusations and calumnies, which these apologists set forth in detail and attempt to refute. It is, therefore, in place here, before proceeding to review this continued conflict, to summarise the charges against the Christians and the Christian defence.

ATHEISM

In the first place the Christians are atheists,² and are guilty of sacrilege. They deny the existence of the gods. They refuse to worship them, to offer sacrifice to their images in the temples.³ They offer no sacrifices to their own god. Their worship does not deserve the name of religion. "Why have

¹ The apology of Aristides and probably the Epistle to Diognetus belong to the subapostolic period. But they are of limited scope and extent compared with those of Justin and the other apologists of this period. Such as they are I have included them in this chapter.

² *ἀθεοί, ἀθεϊσμός.*

³ Justin, "Apol.," i. 5 and 9; Tertullian, "Apol.," 10 f.; Athenagoras, iii. 4 f.

they no altars, no temples, no images"?⁴ The official charge of atheism does not, indeed, imply that the Christians did not believe in any god at all, but that they did not recognise any gods beside their own and refused, in particular, to participate in the worship of the State gods and in the imperial cult. Moreover, their atheism showed itself in their aggressive attitude towards the gods. Not only do they disbelieve in their existence, they denounce their worship as idolatry and even ridicule them and it. This was more than even Roman tolerance could stand. To show reverence to the State religion was a political as well as a religious obligation. Though under the republic Rome had jealously guarded it against the intrusion of foreign cults, with the expansion of the later Republic and the early Empire, and the growth of the syncretistic spirit, it had gradually abandoned this intolerant attitude. Toleration became, in fact, a political necessity. In extending the boundaries of the State, it became necessary to enlarge the Roman pantheon—to recognise, for political reasons alone, the gods of the conquered peoples incorporated in the Empire. It might make exceptions in the case of Druidism in Gaul,⁵ or the worship of Saturn in Africa⁶ on grounds of public morality, or political expediency, or of inhuman practices. Otherwise its policy was one of large toleration. "Rome," says Gibbon, "bestowed the freedom of the city on all the gods of mankind." But it was not prepared to tolerate the "atheism" of the Christians. Its intolerance was not due to the fact that Christianity was a propagandist religion. So, too, were Mithraism and other Oriental cults. But these did not demand the exclusive adhesion of their votaries. The worship of such strange gods could quite well consort with that of the State gods, and the Roman citizen could participate in their worship without necessarily proving unfaithful to that which was bound up with the Roman State system and which it was his duty to observe. To the polytheist it was, in fact, a case of the more gods he worshipped the better.

The Roman Government might go the length of tolerating Judaism which, like Christianity, was a strictly monotheistic religion and, like it, essentially intolerant of polytheism, *i.e.*, atheistic in the Roman sense. But Judaism, though both aggressive and exclusive, was essentially a national or racial religion and, from the propagandist point of view, was not an appreciable menace to the Roman State, since comparatively few Roman citizens were prepared to accept circumcision. Moreover, as

⁴ Min. Felix, "Octavius," 10.

⁶ Tertullian, "Apol.," 9.

⁵ Suetonius, "Claudius," 25.

we have noted, it had been granted by Julius Cæsar and Augustus the status and rights of a *religio licita*⁷ for political reasons, and it was expedient, on material grounds, to uphold these rights even after the destruction of the temple and the suppression of the Jewish nation in Palestine. The Jews of the Diaspora were numerous, wealthy, and influential,⁸ and the suppression of their religion in the cities of the Empire would not have been in the interest of the State. There was, indeed, in the Græco-Roman world,⁹ as in the world of to-day, a strongly anti-Semitic spirit which occasionally found vent in persecution, as in the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius. Calumnies similar to those against the Christians at a later period were circulated against them and their religion, including the charge of ritual murder. Nevertheless, the Jewish communities of the Diaspora were allowed to retain the rights of a legal religious association, even after the destruction of the temple and the bitter anti-Semitic feeling aroused by the Jewish war, though they were subjected to somewhat stricter regulations.¹⁰

Towards the "atheism" of the Christians, on the other hand, the attitude of the Government was far less accommodating. The same motives for recognising their religion or restraining its repression did not exist. For long they had neither wealth nor social influence on their side. Their exclusive and intolerant attitude towards the national gods and their strenuous propaganda, which ere long overshadowed that of the Jews,¹¹ were deemed far more dangerous to the State. Christianity was no mere racial religion. It knew no limitations of race or nationality. It claimed to be the religion of humanity and aspired to a universal and sole sway. It was intolerant even of Judaism and the realisation of its claims would involve a radical revolution of the religious beliefs and practices bound up with the Roman State. Its atheism was a political as well as a religious menace. In spite of the religious revival which Augustus initiated, there might not be much real zeal for the old gods among the educated class. Their worship was official and formal in the case of this class at least, and the Government had outlived the jealousy and intolerance of the earlier republic. But the maintenance of the old polytheism was politically expedient as an expression of homage on the part of the Roman citizen to the majesty of the Roman State, and this

⁷ Schürer, "Die Gemeindeverfassung der Juden in Rom.," 8-9 (1879).

⁸ Augus, "Environment of Early Christianity," 143 f.

⁹ Staerk, "Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte," ii. 54 f.

¹⁰ Hardy, "Sketches," 24-26.

¹¹ Schürer, "Die ältesten Christengemeinden im Römischen Reiche," 11 (1890).

homage the Roman citizen did not dream of refusing, though, as we have seen, he might have ceased to take the old religion seriously, and even give expression to his scepticism in books or conversation. Moreover, the exclusive and aggressive spirit of Christianity aroused on occasion the fanaticism of the people and made it incumbent on the Government, on political grounds alone, to take account of the charge of atheism which this spirit tended to evoke.

DISLOYALTY AND LACK OF PATRIOTISM

The Christians are not only atheists. They are guilty of disloyalty and treason. They not only spurn the State gods. They refuse to take part in the imperial cult, which, far more than in the case of these gods, was a political as well as a religious obligation. This cult dates from the deification of Julius Cæsar. It involved the worship of the dead Emperor, who at death was, as a rule, raised by decree of the senate to a place among the gods (*Divus Augustus*), and the honouring of the genius and the image of the reigning Emperor and the swearing by his name. Nay, in the eastern provinces the living Emperor, as well as his dead predecessors, was accorded divine rank and worshipped as a god, and ultimately the practice came into vogue in the west as well. The Emperor was "God," or "Son of God," or even "God of God" as in later Christian theological parlance.¹² This cult had at Rome and in the provinces its temples, its high priests, and its annual provincial assemblies and festivals,¹³ and served as a bond of union between Rome and the various peoples of the Empire.¹⁴ Its priests, who were State officials, exercised a vigilant religious supervision over the provincials and were probably quick to detect and denounce to the magistrates the recusancy of those who, like the Christians, refused to participate in it.¹⁵ The danger to the Christians from such denunciation was all the greater, inasmuch as the worship of the Emperor, as the supreme representative of the State and the embodiment of its unity and majesty, was a special mark and test of loyalty. To refuse it was to be guilty of disloyalty to both the State and its supreme head. From

¹² Deissmann, "Light From the Ancient East," 343 f. Domitian seems to have been the first to require the recognition of his divinity. *Dominus et Deus noster hoc fieri jubet*. Suetonius, "Domitian," 13.

¹³ Concilium, τὸ κοινόν. In the province of Asia, for instance, where the cult was particularly flourishing. Its priests bore the title of Asiarchs. But see Souter in Hastings' "Dict. of the Bible," 58 (1909).

¹⁴ Marquardt, "Römische Staatsverwaltung," iii. 443 f.; Mommsen, "Roman Provinces," i. 344-350.

¹⁵ Mommsen, "Roman Provinces," i. 348-349.

the political point of view, to be a Christian was to be a rebel as well as an atheist, to be guilty not only of sacrilege, but of treason.¹⁶ His passive obstinacy¹⁷ was simply a form of anarchy, tending to undermine the State and its Government in deference to the will of the individual.

Closely connected with this charge is that of lack of patriotism, of shirking the duties of citizenship. The Christians are always prating of a kingdom of their own.¹⁸ They look for the establishment of one which is to supplant that of Rome. They account themselves strangers and pilgrims in the world, and the only thing in this life which greatly concerns them is how to get quickly out of it.¹⁹ They have thus no interest in the things that make for the glory and prosperity of the Empire. They refuse or show reluctance to serve in the army. They take no part in the public assemblies and political organisations.²⁰ They know only of one commonwealth—the world.²¹ Their only interest is the salvation of the soul. They cannot, therefore, be true patriots. They even refrain, for religious reasons, from engaging in certain trades. They are thus not only lacking in public spirit, they are unprofitable citizens.²² Moreover, they preach and practise communism and other revolutionary doctrines. They welcome the dregs of the population as brethren, and their levelling doctrines are a menace to political and social order and, therefore, to the stability and greatness of the State. They are in fact anarchists; no true Romans, but public enemies; a visionary and nefarious faction, to which the duties of citizenship and the interests of country are of no account.²³

MISANTHROPY AND IMMORALITY

They are not only bad patriots and citizens, they are misanthropists. They are, as Tacitus expresses it, distinguished by their "hatred of the human race." They are, as Tertullian phrases it, "enemies of the Roman Empire" as well.²⁴ Their religion puts them out of touch with, and brings them into antagonism to, ordinary humanity. They appear to be a peculiar people, a third race, different from Jews and Gentiles. They live in a morbid world of their own. They hold themselves aloof from the social life of their fellow-men. They shun the public festivals and never go near the circus and the amphitheatre, or

¹⁶ Tertullian, "Apol.," 28 f.; cf. "Ad Scap.," 2.

¹⁷ *Obstinatio*, *παράραξις*.

¹⁸ Justin, i. 11.

¹⁹ Tertullian, "Apol.," 1 and 41.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

²² *Ibid.*, 42 (*infructuosi in negotiis*).

²³ *Ibid.*, 36-42.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 36 and 37.

the arena.²⁵ They foment strife and division in families by their proselytism. They are atrabilious doctrinaires. They carp at everybody and everything and are always prating of the judgment about to come. They practise a sour and superior puritanism. They profess to be dead to all the pleasures of life, and their profession of an ostentatious godliness is a perpetual irritation to their neighbours.

To such an age this puritanism could only be the cloak of secret immorality. Hence the further charge that the Christians are a grossly immoral sect. They have their secret meetings for the Agape and the celebration of the Eucharist. Why this suspicious secrecy? ²⁶ To an age in which vice of the most revolting kind was only too common, the answer was easy. The Christians meet at night to worship some monstrosity, half ass and half man.²⁷ They sacrifice and eat an infant in honour of their beastly god, and then upset the lamps and give themselves up to a horrible debauchery, including even incest—Thyestean feasts, Œdipidean intercourse. They practise community of wives as well as goods.²⁸

Finally, their impiety is the cause of public disasters and calamities. Superstition as well as malignity contributed to the clamour against them. Their atheism is undermining the greatness and prosperity which the Romans owe to their devotion to the gods.²⁹ It is to them that plague, famine, floods, droughts, earthquakes are to be ascribed. "If the Tiber rises as high as the city walls; if the Nile does not spread its waters over the fields; if the heavens give no rain; if there is an earthquake; if there is famine or pestilence, forthwith the cry resounds, 'The Christians to the lions.'" ³⁰

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN DEFENCE

CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC

THIS task was undertaken by a series of apologists from Aristides onwards. Whilst Aristides, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tertullian appealed directly to various Emperors or their repre-

²⁵ Tertullian, "Apol.," 38.

²⁶ Min. Felix, 10.

²⁷ Tertullian, "Apol.," 16.

²⁸ Tertullian, "Apol.," 7, 8, 39; Justin, i. 26; Athenagoras, iii. 31; Theophilus, "Ad Autolyicum," iii. 4 and 15; Min. Felix, "Octavius," 9.

²⁹ Tertullian, "Apol.," 25; Min. Felix, 6, 7.

³⁰ Tertullian, "Apol.," 40. *Christianos ad leonem*,

sentatives, it is questionable whether their apologies on behalf of the Christians were actually submitted to those to whom they were addressed. They seem, in fact, to be discourses written for general perusal in the form of appeals to particular Emperors or Roman officials.¹ They borrowed largely from the popular argumentation on the gods current in Stoic and Epicurean circles, and from the works of Jewish apologists like Philo and Josephus. The Jewish apologetic, in particular, is, in this respect, the forerunner of the Christian. From this double source they take many of their arguments against polytheism and merely apply them, with varying ability, in defence or support of Christianity. They vary, too, in the tone which they adopt towards the State and its representatives. That of Aristides² is very deferential. Justin is less accommodating. Whilst he recognises the obligation of obedience to the State in its own sphere, and seeks to persuade its representatives of the justice as well as the indefeasibility of the case for the Christians, he frankly disclaims any intention of flattering them, and warns them that, in continuing to countenance tyranny and violence against innocent people they will incur the judgment of God.³ Athenagoras is more politic. He descants on the good qualities and efficient government of those he addresses,

¹ Aristides addressed his apology to the Emperor Hadrian or Antoninus Pius; Justin to Antoninus and his adopted son Marcus Aurelius about the middle of the second century; Tertullian to the Roman officials of North Africa about the end of the century; Athenagoras to Marcus and his son Commodus about A.D. 177. That of Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, was written for the benefit of a friend Autolytus shortly after the death of Marcus. He calls it *προσβηλα* or Plea. The "Octavius" of Minucius Felix is a discussion between the pagan Cæcilius and Octavius, and its date depends on the question whether he borrowed from Tertullian, or Tertullian from him. The former alternative is the more probable, and, if so, it was written in the early part of the third century. An Armenian fragment of the work of Aristides was discovered in 1878 in a monastery at Venice, a Syriac version by Dr Rendal Harris in 1889 in the Convent of St Catherine on Mount Sinai. In 1891 the original Greek was recovered by Dr Armitage Robinson, who recognised it as part of a mediæval Christian romance (Barlaam and Josaphat) into which, with some modifications and compressions, it had been incorporated. Both the Greek text and the Syriac version, with translation of the latter, are in vol. i. of "Texts and Studies." Also in "Texte und Untersuchungen," iv. (1893). Eng. trans. of the Greek and Syriac in an additional volume of the "Ante-Nicene Lib." by Prof. Kay (1897). See also remarks by Pape, "Texte und Unters.," xii. Two apologies stand in the name of Justin. But the second is regarded by many critics as merely a continuation of the first. Harnack, "Chronologie," i. 274 f.; Donaldson, "Critical History of Christian Lit.," ii. 81; Blunt, "Apologies of Justin Martyr," 44 f. The works of other early apologists—Quadratus, Apollinaris of Hierapolis, Miltiades, who also appealed directly to the Emperors, have been lost. Of that of Melito of Sardis only some fragments have been preserved by Eusebius. The original texts of the second-century Greek apologies in Otto, "Corpus Apolog. 2 Sacc.," 1851 f.; 3rd ed., 1877 f. For Justin, Blunt's ed. (trans. in "Ante-Nicene Lib.").

² 16 and 17.

³ "Apol.," i. 2, 3, 17, 68.

and assumes that they only need to be enlightened to see fair play done to their Christian subjects.⁴ Tertullian, on the other hand, whilst acknowledging the civil government to be of divine origin,⁵ strikes a note of defiance of its persecuting representatives and boldly throws down the gauntlet to them as well as the enemies of the Christian faith.⁶ He challenges them to do their worst. Christianity will triumph in spite of all their injustice and cruelty. His "Liber Apologeticus" is as much a fiery philippic as an apology, in which he gives full rein to his indignation, his sarcasm, his dialectic and forensic powers. The wonder is that he did not forfeit his head for his aggressive defiance, and the fact that he escaped summary punishment would show that the Roman officials in North Africa must have been more tolerant than he assumes.

WHY THE CHRISTIANS ARE NOT ATHEISTS

Whilst they admit that the Christians do not believe in the gods, they deny the inference of atheism.⁷ An atheist is one who, like Diagoras, does not believe in a god at all, and such the Christians assuredly are not.⁸ But taking the term in its current significance, the Christians do not believe in the gods simply because they have no real existence. How can they be atheists or guilty of sacrilege⁹ who merely refuse to recognise what does not exist? These gods of yours were originally either men whom their fellow-men foolishly deified, or were the mere fictions of Orpheus, Homer, Hesiod.¹⁰ Equally baseless the notion that, though originally men, they were subsequently raised to deity by the supreme God in reward of their merits, or because He needed their services in the government of the universe.¹¹ But, say you, to us who believe in them they *are* gods. Pray, then, what kind of gods are they? How can you punish us for not believing in these fictitious beings to whom the most revolting vices and actions are ascribed, of whom the most ridiculous tales are told?¹² You should deify your vilest criminals, if you would please gods like these, whom you ought to consign to the lowest depths of Tartarus, instead of raising to a place in heaven.¹³ Of these gods you fashion

⁴ 1 and 2.

⁵ "Apol.," 33.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷ Justin, "Apology," i. 6; Tertullian, "Apology," 10.

⁸ Athenagoras, 4.

⁹ Sacrilege technically applied to spoiling the temples and only in ordinary language was applied to disbelief in the gods.

¹⁰ Athenagoras, 17-18, 28-30; Tertullian, 10.

¹¹ Tertullian, 11.

¹² Aristides, 9-11; Justin, i. 21; Athenagoras, 20-21; Tertullian, 14.

¹³ Tertullian, 11.

images out of perishable material with the instruments with which you make ordinary utensils—with axes, planes, and rasps. You condemn us to the mines for refusing to worship these images, and from the mines these gods of yours take their origin. You attach the name of God to such corruptible things under the mistaken notion that God can take a material form and insult the ineffable Being who cannot be represented.¹⁴ You buy and sell them, and when a Saturn or a Minerva are worn down, you make a cooking pot out of the one, or a saucepan out of the other. Their sacredness depends on the amount of tribute you can exact from their worshippers.¹⁵ You offer to them in sacrifice only the worn-out and scabbed beasts and keep the best parts to feast on yourselves,¹⁶ whilst you punish us for refusing to join in these scurvy sacrifices. But what need has God of blood offerings, and libations and incense? He who gives us all things has no need of such material offerings, though all men have need of Him. The only sacrifice He requires is the bloodless sacrifice of a pure and devoted life and the service of our reason.¹⁷ Into such absurd worship you have been beguiled by the wicked demons—the offspring of the impure lives of fallen angels.¹⁸ Your religion is thus, at bottom, nothing more than demonolatry. The images of the gods, you say, are only the human expression of our worship of the divine. Sacrifice and supplication are not offered to them, but to the divinity they represent. And do they not manifest the real existence and power of the gods by the miracles they work through them? Even if these gods are poetic fictions or the fruit of credulity, they stand for the powers of nature and are symbolic of the divine, as the Stoics especially teach us. These miracles, whose reality they do not question, are in reality the work of demons, retort the apologists. In thus symbolising the divine, do you not reduce God to the level of material things and confuse the eternal and immutable Deity, who is only to be apprehended by reason, with what is transient and perishable? Your cardinal error consists in this that you are unable to distinguish between the creation and the Creator, the universe and its Maker. We, on the other hand, distinguish between God, who is the cause and controller of all things—the uncreated and eternal

¹⁴ Justin, i. 9; Athenagoras, 17; Tertullian, 12.

¹⁵ Tertullian, 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁷ Aristides, 1; Justin, i. 10 and 13; Athenagoras, 13.

¹⁸ Justin, i. 5, 9, etc.; Tertullian, 22 f.; Athenagoras, 24 f. The view of the gods as really the demons was apparently derived from the Septuagint version of Ps. xcvi. 5, "All the gods of the heathen are demons," which we translate "idols."

Intelligence—and matter, which is perishable.¹⁹ We see in the universe, indeed, an incitement to piety—in its order, harmony, magnitude, beauty. But we do not, like the Chaldæans, make gods of the elemental forces,²⁰ for they speak to us only of the eternal, self-existent Intelligence who called them into being. With Philo we hold that the universe is a divine product. We admire the divine product, but we reserve our worship for the one and only God, who fashioned it. Moreover, the conviction of the oneness of God we share with poets like Euripides and Sophocles, and philosophers like Plato and Aristotle and even the Stoics. We only assert this doctrine more fully and clearly than they, whom you permit to disbelieve and deride the gods, and yet do not arraign them for atheism.²¹ On the other hand, as the result of not distinguishing between God and His works, you have multiplied your gods in most bewildering fashion. Each people, each city worships different ones, and how shall we discriminate, amongst this mass of deities, which are the true ones? Pray agree among yourselves before charging us with atheism for disagreeing with you.²² The gods being so numerous and diverse, you are bound to allow free choice of deity. Religion ought to be free. What kind of a religion is that which consists in offering an involuntary homage? You have no right to compel free men against their will thus to profess a merely prescribed religion. We demand liberty of worship as an indefeasible right.²³

How infinitely superior, on the other hand, is our religion to yours. Compare our conception of God with yours. We worship no ass's head as you falsely assume,²⁴ but the one God, the conviction of whose existence is innate in the soul²⁵; whose perfections we can only conceive, but cannot fully comprehend; Who is at once known and unknown.²⁶ But He has not left us merely with the dim light of the natural testimony of the soul. He has revealed Himself through the inspired Jewish prophets, as you may learn from the Jewish Scriptures—those writings which are so much older than the oldest of yours, to which Plato himself was indebted, the sublimity of which proclaims their divine origin.

The defence thus, for the most part, takes the form of an attack. In the circumstances the attack could not but fail, since the charge was based on their refusal to worship the gods, and

¹⁹ Aristides, 3; Athenagoras, 4.

²⁰ Aristides, 4-5.

²¹ Athenagoras, 5-7; Justin, i. 4.

²² *Testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ.*

²⁶ Tertullian, 17.

²³ Athenagoras, 14.

²⁵ Tertullian, 24, 28.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

this refusal they frankly admitted. Legally, therefore, they were atheists, in the conventional sense, and must accordingly take the consequences. At the same time, one feels that, on the merits of the case, it ought to have succeeded. The argumentation on behalf of Monotheism against Polytheism was in itself forcible, though to modern thought it is weakened by the naïve belief in demonology and demoniacal miracles, and the tendency to regard Polytheism purely in the light of the popular superstition and of the old mythology, which largely belonged to the realm of antiquarianism.²⁷ Equally so the plea for liberty of worship, even if in their aggressive attitude towards all other cults there is a strain of intolerance which might, and ultimately did lead to the perpetuation in a Christian form of the very tyranny against which they protested. At this stage, however, even the headlong Tertullian does not go further than the demand for liberty and does not claim domination.

CHRISTIAN LOYALTY

In respect of the charge of disloyalty, as we do not believe in the existence of the gods, so we cannot recognise the Emperor, either dead or living, as a god. We acknowledge that he derives his office and his power from God. We pray for him, his family, his armies, and his Empire, as we are enjoined by the Scriptures to do,²⁸ and to our prayers it is due that the Empire is not visited by the judgment of God. As we are commanded to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's, so we serve the Emperor in all things lawful. The most convincing proof of this is our readiness in paying taxes.²⁹ It is no proof to the contrary to say that we recognise another kingdom than the Empire, because the kingdom we look for is spiritual, not earthly.³⁰ Moreover, we are commanded to love all men, even our enemies, and the fact that we suffer wrong instead of avenging it, as we have the power, in virtue of our numbers, to do, is another proof of our loyalty. Whilst refraining from rebellion and honouring the Emperor, we cannot worship him. Worship is due to God alone, whose subject he is.³¹ We cannot swear by his genius, for this would be to recognise the demons. We are willing to call him lord, but not in the sense of divinity.

²⁷ On this point, see Cumont, "Religions Orientales," 244 f.

²⁸ See, for instance, the prayer in the "Epistle of Clemens Romanus," 60.

²⁹ Justin, i. 17; Tertullian, 42; Athenagoras, 37.

³⁰ Justin, i. 11.

³¹ Justin, i. 17; Tatian, "Oration," 4; Theophilus, i. 11; Tertullian, 30 f.

Augustus himself declined the title in this sense. Our refusal is not due to a perverse obstinacy, but to conscientious convictions. Religion is the concern of the individual soul, and the State has no right to dictate as between the soul and God.³² You have only to become really acquainted with the meetings of our society—our common faith, discipline, and hope; our care for the poor, the aged, the unfortunate, the persecuted; our mutual love of the brethren and our readiness to share our goods, though not our wives, with them—to discover that we are no secret disloyal faction.³³

Most of this is altogether admirable. Whilst here again the law was against the Christians, Emperor-worship was a comparatively recent innovation. It was on a different footing from the demand to sacrifice to the gods—these gods being conceived as actually divine. It was more in keeping with Oriental servility than the independent Roman spirit. If only as an appeal on behalf of liberty against so gross a form of political absolutism, Tertullian's "Never will I call the Emperor God" is splendid, even though the Christians were not concerned with political liberty in itself. On the question of actual disloyalty the prosecution had no real case. To pray for the Emperor and promptly pay one's taxes was a substantial proof to the contrary.

FALSITY OF THE CHARGE OF IMMORALITY

As to the charge of immorality, it is false. It is the fruit of lying rumour, springing from hate or ignorance. We neither kill a little child and eat it, nor practise incest and other abominable crimes at our meetings for worship. Such accusations may, in fact, be traced to the calumnies³⁴ circulated by the Jews, and we challenge you to prove them. Produce one of the countless enemies by whom we are surrounded, who can himself say that he has witnessed such things.³⁵ You may believe them possible among us because of the wicked practices which prevail among yourselves. What about the destruction of the fœtus in the womb to save you from unwelcome children? Or the exposure of those whom you permit to be born, and who, if they survive, become prostitutes?³⁶ Or the community of wives and the still more horrid vices which disgrace society? Or of the revenue which, in the shape of taxes on vice, you raise from this polluted

³² Tertullian, 34.

³³ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁴ See on this point Justin, "Dialogue with Trypho," 17.

³⁵ Athenagoras, 35.

³⁶ Justin, 27; Athenagoras, 34, 35.

source? ³⁷ We, on the other hand, detest such abominations and are taught by Christ, our Master, the purest and most stringent manner of life.³⁸ We live in the ever-present conviction that no act can escape the eye of a holy God, and that each will receive everlasting salvation or punishment according as his life has been. We seek the higher eternal life with God, and we know that we can only attain it by the renunciation of sin.³⁹ We marry only that we may beget children. One marriage only is permissible, and many of us renounce marriage altogether that we may mortify the flesh.⁴⁰ We appeal to the actual conduct of Christians in proof of the purity of the Christian life, and in disproof of the vile accusations against us. Many of our number led wicked lives before we became Christians, and you yourselves are fain to confess the reformation which has resulted from this conversion, though you fail to appreciate and even hate the religion which has produced it. "What a woman she was," you say; "how wanton, how gay, what a youth he was, how profligate, how licentious! They have become Christians!"⁴¹ The Christian life is its own defence.⁴² On the score of personal and family morality the Christians could face their accusers with the confidence that, in this respect, they had the law, such as it was, on their side, and what was better, a conscience void of offence. The ethical power of Christianity which quickened and purified the individual conscience and impelled it to the battle with the moral corruption of the age, was, from the practical point of view, the strongest plea not only for toleration, but for encouragement on the part of the State.

FALSITY OF OTHER CHARGES

Compared with the three charges of atheism, disloyalty, immorality, the others occupy a minor place in the controversy. The very name of Christian, argue Justin and Tertullian, in reference to the mistaken form of the Christian name⁴³ current at an early time, means something beneficent and excellent. The Romans, say you, have owed their prosperity and power to their piety towards the gods. They have thereby become the masters of the world, and you Christians show a lack of patriotism as well as atheism in denying and despising them. On the

³⁷ Justin, i. 27; Athenagoras, 34-35; Tertullian, 7-9.

³⁸ Justin, i. 15; Athenagoras, 32.

⁴⁰ Justin, i. 29; Athenagoras, 33.

³⁹ Justin, i. 8, 12.

⁴¹ Tertullian, 3; cf. Justin, i. 14.

⁴² On this point, see especially Aristides, 10, and "The Epistle to Diognetus," 5.

⁴³ Christian, *Χριστός*. Tertullian rightly points out that this is the wrong form. Tertullian, 3; Justin, i. 4.

contrary, you have acquired your Empire by war and ravage and, in extending it, you have destroyed temples and murdered priests enough. You have had as many triumphs over the gods as you have had over the nations, and your expansion is rather a testimony to your irreligion than to your piety. Fine patriotic gods, too, are those who, like Jupiter, allowed his own native Crete to fall into Roman hands, or like Juno helplessly witnessed the destruction of Carthage! It is not on such, but on the Lord of the world, whom we worship, that the fate of nations depends.⁴⁴

But we are, it seems, unprofitable visionaries. We neglect the affairs of life. We do not do our duty as citizens, either in the army, or the administration, or in commerce and industry. 'Tis false, returns Tertullian, not quite candidly in all respects.⁴⁵ We are men as well as Christians. We are to be found in the forum, the shambles, the bath, the booth, the workshop, the inn, the weekly market, and other haunts of commerce. We sail with you, we fight with you, we till the ground with you. We do not, indeed, share in the traffickings associated with your religion and its ceremonies. We do not buy frankincense with which to fumigate your gods, or flowers to crown our heads in their honour. But we purchase these things for our own purposes. We do not contribute to the temple revenues. But we care for our own poor and ease you of the burden, and we do not defraud the State of its dues by making false declarations and thereby impoverishing it. We preserve it and you by our prayers from the evil machinations of the demons. We are, indeed, in certain respects, a sterile race, for we produce no pimps and panders, no assassins, poisoners, sorcerers, soothsayers, diviners, astrologers. But great is the merit of Christians in being unfruitful in such things. We do not frequent the circus, the theatre, the arena, and have no delight in your barbarous pleasures. We are utter strangers to the atrocities and follies in which you take delight. But the loss, if loss there be in such madness, is ours, not yours, and surely we may be allowed the liberty of differing in taste from you. You forget to mention the real loss to the State caused by the murder of so many innocent and virtuous citizens, among whom not one real criminal is to be found, or, if found, is a Christian no longer.

But we are the causes of the calamities that afflict the world. Pray inform us how many calamities afflicted the world before the reign of Tiberius—that is, before the advent of Christ. Where

⁴⁴ Tertullian, 25-26.

⁴⁵ See Geffcken, "Zwei Apologeten," 243. In the "De Idolatria," 19, for instance, he denounces military service on the part of Christians as incompatible with Christ's teaching.

were your gods in the days of the flood, or in the days when Pompeii was destroyed by the fire of its own mountain? It is we that by our prayers mitigate the Divine anger, though we take no part in the barefooted processions to your gods. And yet when our prayers move the Divine compassion, Jupiter gets from you all the honour! We, indeed, have our share in the common adversity, which God metes out to the human race. We receive His visitations as admonitions, not as punishments, which they are for you. We have learned from His own lips how to regard and bear these things.

INJUSTICE OF PERSECUTION FOR THE NAME

Besides refuting the accusations and calumnies against the Christians the apologists emphasise the injustice of condemning them for the mere profession of Christianity.⁴⁶ Let inquiry be made in order to find out whether they are the criminals they are represented to be, and justice be done accordingly. Investigation alone can show whether the crimes supposed to be inherent in Christianity⁴⁷ are founded or baseless. To make Christianity in itself a crime and require the renunciation of it by the accused Christian on pain of death, without charging or proving against him any specific crime, is contrary to reason and justice. We demand, therefore, as a right that you do not condemn us merely for being Christians. The mere name signifies nothing apart from the actions which it covers. You do not condemn an accused man who happens to be a philosopher merely for professing a certain philosophic system, but on account of some definite charge against him. No more should you condemn a Christian merely for being a Christian. Even supposing we are criminals, why do you deny us the right of all other criminals—that of inquiring into the crimes deemed to inhere in Christianity before you condemn us.⁴⁸

There were undoubtedly cases in which the Christians were exposed to mob violence or were condemned to death by prejudiced judges for “the mere name,” on the assumption that Christianity was, in itself, something criminal and the mere profession of it was, therefore, sufficient to merit the death penalty. In as far as this was so, the protest of the apologists in the name of justice was a very forcible one. At the same time these cases would

⁴⁶ ἐπὶ μόνῳ ὀνόματι; διὰ τὸ ὄνομα; *nomen ipsum*. Justin, i. 4; Athenagoras, 1; Tertullian, 2.

⁴⁷ *Flagitia coherentia nomini*.

⁴⁸ Justin, 1, 2, 7; Athenagoras, 1-2; Tertullian, 2.

seem to have been the exception rather than the rule. Usually, as I have pointed out in a previous chapter, the Christians were not arraigned and condemned as votaries of a religion which was deemed in itself criminal. They were, as a rule, condemned on some specific charge, especially that of refusing to comply with the existing law and sacrifice to the State gods, and, as loyal citizens, offer incense to the Emperor's image, or swear by his genius. Their condemnation was really due to this refusal, which the magistrates, in view of the existing law enforcing the worship of the State gods and the imperial cult, had no alternative but to punish. In general, therefore, the protest against persecution for "the mere name" could not apply, and if made, would be regarded as irrelevant and invalid.

Throughout this long argumentation the central thought is, Christianity is the true religion and it possesses the capacity to produce the true life as exemplified in that of the Christians. As a faith and a life it is infinitely superior to all other cults, and its superiority is steadily leading it to the conquest of the Empire. This is especially the note of Tertullian, for whose rhetoric some allowance must be made. "The outcry is that the Christians have taken possession of the State; that they are in the fields, in the citadels, in the islands. They lament, as in the case of a public calamity, that both sexes, every age and condition, even high rank, are passing over to the Christian faith."⁴⁹ "We are but of yesterday and we have filled every place among you—cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market-places, the camp itself, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum. We have left you only your temples."⁵⁰ Persecution is unavailing against such a movement, let the persecutor do his worst. "We conquer in dying. . . . The oftener we are mown down, the greater do our numbers become; the blood of Christians is a seed."⁵¹

CHAPTER IV

CONTINUED CONFLICT

It was this irrepressibly heroic spirit that carried the Church through the conflict with the Empire which continued, with intromissions, throughout two-thirds of this period.

⁴⁹ "Apol.," 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 50. Semen est sanguis Christianorum.

MARCUS AURELIUS

Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-180) was, in a greater degree than even Hadrian, the philosopher on the throne. On his own confession he owed much to Antoninus, his father by adoption, for the careful training which produced the striking combination of the idealist and the man of affairs. He was unfortunate in the period in which his reign was cast. In contrast to that of his predecessor, it was one of almost incessant frontier war. A votary of the Stoic philosophy, he sought to infuse its humane spirit into his legislation, and in his devotion to high principles of duty and humanity, and the repression of self in the service of others, there was no little affinity between his view of life and that of the Christians. Nevertheless, his Stoic rationalism was repelled by what seemed their irrationality and obstinate fanaticism,¹ and he appears to have borne them no good will. As we learn from Minucius Felix, his teacher Fronto believed the worst stories related of them,² and even if such tales might not be entertained by one who habitually preferred to believe the best of all men, there would be no real understanding of the Christian faith or the Christian spirit in the intimate circle of his philosophic friends.³ Certain it is that, with his philosophic friend Rusticus,

¹ "Meditations," xi. 3. *μη κατὰ ψιλὴν παράταξιν ὡς οἱ Χριστιανοί*. Haines regards the last three words as an interpolation, but assumes all the same that the reference is to the Christians. In agreement with Lemerrier ("Les Pensées de Marc Aurèle," 1910) he maintains that the *ψιλὴν παράταξιν* should be translated "opposition," not "obstinacy." Even so, the word does imply the obstinate spirit. He infers a reference to the Christians in other passages, which he also interprets as showing that Marcus really approved of their conscientious fidelity to their convictions. The reference seems to me doubtful, and the interpretation still more so. He further thinks that Marcus, as co-ruler with Antoninus, was responsible for the Rescript both to the Greek cities and that to the Common Assembly of Asia, which, with Harnack, he inclines to accept as, in the main, genuine. This is for him an additional proof that Marcus regarded the Christians in a friendly spirit. The conclusion does not seem necessarily to follow. As subordinate ruler he would naturally defer, in such a matter, to his senior colleague. See Haines' lengthy note in his excellent edition of the Greek text and trans. of the "Meditations," 381 f. (Loeb Class. Lib.). Hayward follows Haines in his popular biography of Marcus (1935). On Marcus and his philosophy, see Bussell, "Marcus Aurelius and the Later Stoics," 122 f. (1910); Rendall's Introduction to his translation of "The Meditations" (1898).

² "Correspondence of Fronto," ii. 383 f. Latin text and trans. by Haines (Loeb Class. Lib., 1920). Octavius, 9 and 31.

³ On his Stoic teachers and his intimate association with the Stoic philosophers, see "Dio Cassius," lxxii. 35; Capitolinus, "Marcus," 2, 3 ("Historia Augusta," text and trans. by Magie, Loeb Class. Lib., I. (1922)). The *Historia* in this critical edition is a valuable source, though it has to be used with circumspection owing to the biased or inaccurate character of its contents at times. For the critical discussions of it in recent times, see Magie's introduction to vol. ii.

he regarded Christianity as a justly punishable offence. There are no authentic Rescripts in his reign in favour of moderation. On the other hand, Melito of Sardis speaks in his apology to him of new decrees⁴ against the Christians in the province of Asia, though he is in doubt whether the Emperor himself has issued them, and politically assumes that his personal attitude is even more benevolent than that of his predecessor. He notes, too, that persecution prevails in the province, and complains of the activity of mercenary informers who, in virtue of these decrees, spoil and oppress those who are guilty of no wrong.⁵ War and pestilence fanned the spirit of panic and proved a fitting *milieu* for the machinations of these scoundrels.

To this persecution we may probably ascribe the martyrdom of three bishops in the province of Asia,⁶ and three other victims at Pergamum.⁷ Of that of Justin Martyr there can be no doubt. Justin was sojourning in Rome in the early years of Marcus' reign and had incurred the enmity of the Cynic philosopher Crescens, who denounced the Christians as atheists, and with whom the martyr entered into controversy. The controversy was evidently very keen, since Justin gives a very deprecatory account of the philosopher, who, he is afraid, may attempt to compass his destruction.⁸ According to Tatian⁹ he did attempt to bring about his death. In the "Acts" of the martyr, which appear to be on the whole genuine, there is, however, no reference to Crescens as the author of his death. The document merely informs us that he was arrested with six others and brought before the prefect of Rome, Junius Rusticus, who was a Stoic philosopher of some note and an intimate friend of the Emperor. "Obey the gods," said the prefect to Justin, "and submit to the emperors."¹⁰ Justin refuses and asserts that to obey the commands of Christ is not a blameworthy thing. A short dialogue ensues, in the course of

⁴ He is probably referring to Rescripts, not to general edicts. See Ramsay, "The Church in the Roman Empire," 338. He issued a Rescript decreeing the punishment of banishment against those who sought to terrify the minds of men by superstition. "Digest," *xlvi. 19, 30*, given by Lightfoot, *i. 488*. This has been regarded by Neumann as referring to the Christians. But this is only an assumption.

⁵ Quoted by Eusebius, *iv. 26*.

⁶ Thraxas, Sagaris, and Papius, who is said to have been Polycarp's successor at Smyrna. Eusebius, *v. 24*; and see Lightfoot, *i. 448 and 494 f.*

⁷ Carpus, Papyllus, and Agathonice. Eusebius, *iv. 15*. The "Acts" of these martyrs are in their shorter form considered, in the main, to be genuine. See Lightfoot, *i. 624 f.*; Harnack, "Texte und Unters.," *iii. 4* (1883), and McGiffert's note to Eusebius.

⁸ "Apol.," *ii. 3*.

⁹ "Oratio ad Græcos," *19*, which Eusebius misquotes.

¹⁰ The reference is to Marcus and his colleague Verus.

which the prefect, being a philosopher, asks him as to his creed, and also where the Christians meet. Finally he asks him directly whether he is a Christian, and Justin replies in the affirmative. The others to whom he puts the same question give the same answer. Whereupon he turns again to Justin and asks him whether he supposes that after being beheaded he will go to heaven to receive some recompense. "I do not suppose it; I am fully persuaded of it." He then asks them again whether they will sacrifice and threatens them with death. "Do what you will. We are Christians and do not sacrifice to idols." Whereupon he sentences them to be scourged and beheaded.¹¹

The inquisition against the Christians of Lyons and Vienne towards the end of Marcus' reign (A.D. 177) resembles that to which Polycarp had fallen a victim at Smyrna. It was initiated by a popular outburst at Lyons, in the course of which the Christians were mobbed and maltreated and a number of them imprisoned by the magistrates pending the arrival of the imperial legate. Unlike Pliny, the legate proved a harsh inquisitor, and his harshness impelled Vettius Epagathus, who was present at the trial, to protest on behalf of his brethren. A number of the accused boldly confessed their faith and were condemned accordingly. Vettius, who, as the result of his protest, was also asked whether he was a Christian, similarly confessed. Others were less firm and recanted. Contrary to the Rescripts of Trajan and Hadrian, the legate proceeded to search out and arrest all the Christians he could lay his hands on. He further contravened the Rescripts of former Emperors by taking cognisance of the calumnies against them and rearrested those who had recanted as implicated in these crimes. Under threat of torture, some of the slaves of Christian masters falsely accused them of cannibalism and incest (Thyestean banquets and Œdipodean intercourse). In consequence of these false charges, they were subjected to horrible tortures to force them to incriminate themselves. Among those who endured this ordeal the narrator specially commemorates the heroism of Sanctus, a deacon of the Church of Vienne, Maturus, a recent convert, Attalus, a native of Pergamum, the slave girl Blandina, and Biblias, one of those who had recanted, but, through the efforts of their fellow-Christians, had recovered their faith. Blandina was tortured from morning till evening. Her tormentors mangled her body in vain. "I am a Christian," she kept on exclaiming, "and there is nothing vile done by us." Equally unyielding was Biblias, her companion in

¹¹ The Martyrium is given in "Gebhardt Acta," 18-21, and a translation in vol. ii. of "Ante-Nicene Lib."

torment. "How," she asked, "could those eat children, who did not think it lawful to taste the blood even of irrational animals?" Some succumbed to the outrages inflicted on them in the suffocating prison in which they were confined. Among them was the aged bishop Pothinos, who had passed his ninetieth year and was beaten and kicked as he was dragged away from the judgment seat to prison, where he died two days later.

Like Pliny, the legate wrote to the Emperor for instructions how to deal with the prisoners, and meanwhile gratified the populace with a spectacle in the amphitheatre at which Maturus and Sanctus, Attalus and Blandina were to be the chief performers. The first two were tortured once more and succumbed to their sufferings. The last two escaped the ordeal in the meantime, Blandina because the wild beasts refused to touch her, Attalus because the Governor discovered that he was a Roman citizen.

The reply of Marcus was on the lines of that of Trajan to Pliny—those who confessed, to be punished with death, those who recanted, to be set free. Whereupon he retried the prisoners and sentenced those of them who were Roman citizens to be beheaded, the others to be thrown to the beasts. The sentence was carried out in the amphitheatre in the presence of the deputies of the Gallic provinces, who had convened for the annual religious festival in honour of the Emperor, held in the month of August. Among the sufferers this time were Attalus, Blandina, the boy Ponticus, and a physician named Alexander who, like Attalus, was a native of Asia Minor, from which Christianity had been transplanted to these Gallic cities. Before being thrown to the beasts, they were tortured anew and their mangled remains burned and cast into the Rhone in contempt of their belief in a bodily resurrection.¹² It is a grim commentary on the so-called civilisation of the age that the fiendish brutality, which exhausted human ingenuity in applying the most excruciating tortures to women as well as men, could devise such horrors as a spectacle to the gloating crowd in the reign of a philosophic Emperor who, in his "Meditations," gave expression to a high-toned humanity. In spite of his professed culture, man, in an age of such horrors, is but one remove from the beast. Nay worse than the beast, since he is gifted with the rational and moral faculty which, under the debasing influence of passion and prejudice, he is so prone in every age, even our own, to misuse and outrage. Though Marcus

¹² The facts of this persecution are contained in the letter sent by the churches of Lyons and Vienne to those of Asia and Phrygia. Eusebius, v. 1-3. There is no reason to deny (with Havet and others) its genuineness.

might hardly have approved these revolting scenes, he certainly was not a patron of the Christians, as he is represented in the story of the Thundering Legion, to whose prayers he is supposed to have owed his deliverance from threatened disaster in the war with the Teutonic tribes beyond the Danubian frontier. The tale is a legend, though it was credited by Tertullian and other later Christian writers.¹³ Besides the concrete evidence of these martyrdoms, the writings of Justin, Melito, Athenagoras, and Theophilus tend to show that in this reign persecution was more active than it had hitherto been throughout the second century.

COMMODUS AND SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS

The persecution extended into the early part of that of Marcus' vicious son Commodus (180-192). In the first year of it took place the trial of the Scilitan martyrs, the story of which affords the first vivid glimpse of militant Christianity in proconsular Africa. According to Tertullian,¹⁴ it was the first time that the Christians suffered death for their faith in Africa. In July 180 twelve of them—seven men and five women—from Scillium were brought before the proconsul Saturninus at Carthage. The proconsul was a mild, kindly man and was very anxious to save them. He offered them the imperial indulgence if they would return to a good frame of mind, and swear by the Emperor's genius and pray for him to the gods. Speratus, their spokesman, replied that they had done no evil, but suffered the evil done to them with thankfulness. He offered to explain their faith, but the proconsul declined to listen to anything against the official religion and asked him to swear. "I recognise not the rule of this world," replied Speratus, not very tactfully, "but serve the God whom no one has seen or can see. I have committed no theft and I pay my taxes because God is King of kings and ruler of all nations." Saturninus begs the others not to share in such madness (*dementia*). They all persist in confessing their faith. "We honour Cæsar, but we fear God alone." He suggested that they should take time to consider the matter and offered a respite of thirty days. They declined the offer, and there was nothing for it but to pronounce them guilty as obstinate confessors and sentence them to be beheaded. "Thanks be to God," was the joyful response. "To-day we become martyrs in heaven." The scene is brief and dignified. There are happily no brutalities, as at Smyrna and

¹³ It is given by Eusebius, v. 5, and by Xiphiline in his "Epitome of Dio Cassius," lxxii. 9.

¹⁴ "Ad Scap.," 3.

Lyons, and there is no melodrama. Only a quiet and immovable resolution to suffer rather than surrender convictions dearer than life. "And then," adds the simple record, "they were all crowned together with martyrdom and reign with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit throughout all the ages."¹⁵

About the same time another batch of Christians from Madaura, who bear Punic names, appears likewise to have preferred martyrdom to recantation.¹⁶ In the early part of this reign we hear, too, of persecution in the East and at Rome as well as in Africa. We may infer this from the Apology of Theophilus,¹⁷ Bishop of Antioch, which may have been written at this period, and Tertullian speaks of an inquisition in Asia under the proconsul Arrius Antoninus, which Waddington and Lightfoot are inclined to place between 180 and 185. We have more precise information about the martyrdom of Apollonius at Rome. He was a man of rank and culture, and apparently a member of the senate, and the fact that so distinguished a Roman citizen had embraced Christianity tends to confirm the statement of Eusebius that it had by this time made substantial progress among the higher classes of the capital.¹⁸ He was denounced as a Christian to the Prætorian Prefect Perennis who, evidently in deference to his senatorial rank, conducted his examination in the presence of the senate. "Why do you refuse to sacrifice?" asked Perennis. "Because," replied Apollonius, "I am a Christian and fear God, and cannot sacrifice to idols." "You ought to repent and swear by the good fortune of the autocrat Commodus." "I cannot repent of what is good. I am willing to swear by the true God that we, too, love the Emperor and to pray for him." "Sacrifice then to the gods and the Emperor's image." Apollonius explains why he cannot thus sacrifice, and the prefect tells him that he has not been summoned before the senate to talk philosophy, and allows him a short respite to consider better of it.

After a day's interval the examination is resumed, this time evidently before Perennis alone. Apollonius declares that he will remain faithful to his religion. The prefect reminds him of the resolution of the senate bearing on his case and requiring him to sacrifice, and advises him to comply in accordance therewith.

¹⁵ The Acts of the Scilitan Martyrs in their Latin and Greek form have been edited by Armitage Robinson in "Texts and Studies," i. The Latin is the original and is printed from a document discovered by Robinson in the British Museum in 1890. Also given by Buonaiuti, "Il Cristianesimo Nell' Africa Romana," 6 f. (1928).

¹⁶ They are noticed in the correspondence of Maximus of Madaura with St Augustine. See Lightfoot, i. 506-7.

¹⁷ iii. 30.

¹⁸ v. 21.

Apollonius emphasises anew his monotheism, states his objections to idolatry in the style of the apologists, speaks of the Christian life and the Christian fearlessness of death as the entrance to everlasting life, and explains the teaching of Christ. The prefect is loath to sentence such a man, whose defence evidently impressed him favourably. But he had no option in view of the resolution of the senate that he must be punished, if he would not recant. "I fain would let thee go, but cannot because of the decree of the senate. Yet with benevolence I pronounce sentence on thee." The benevolence consisted apparently in sentencing him to be beheaded by the sword instead of being thrown to the wild beasts. "I thank my God for thy sentence," answered Apollonius.¹⁹

Apart from these instances of persecution in its opening years, the reign of Commodus is celebrated by Eusebius as a time of peace. This immunity the Christians owed to Marcia, the Emperor's concubine, who is said to have been devoted to the Christians, and whom Hippolytus calls "a God-loving woman."²⁰ Though, in view of her rôle as the partner of so abandoned a creature as Commodus—the votary of every vice²¹—these compliments are rather singular, she certainly used her influence on their behalf. She obtained from Victor, Bishop of Rome, a list of those who had been banished to the mines and succeeded in persuading Commodus to recall them.²² Her influence was probably strengthened by that of the Christians who, according to Irenæus,²³ served in the royal household. When the favourite lost her hold on her unworthy paramour, she parried the fate that threatened her by bringing about his assassination,²⁴ and thus obviated what might at the same time have proved an antichristian reaction.

The tolerant attitude of the later years of the reign of Commodus continued during the first nine of that of Septimius Severus (193-211). Till 197, when his victory over Albinus

¹⁹ "The Acts of Apollonius," translated from the Armenian by Conybeare in "Monuments of Early Christianity," 35 f. (1896). The Armenian version gives them almost certainly in their original form. Eusebius, v. 21; Harnack, *Proceedings of Roy. Prus. Acad.*, July 1893; Hardy, "Studies," 155 f. A strong argument in favour of their authenticity is the absence, as in the case of the Scilitan Acts, of the miraculous which often disfigures later acts of the martyrs. I do not find sufficient reason to reject their substantial accuracy as Merrill and others do.

²⁰ Xiphiline, "Epit.," lxxiii. 4; "Philosophoumena," ix. 12.

²¹ See the portrait of him by Lampridius in "Historia Augusta," ii. 2 f.; Herodian, "Historia Rom.," bk. I. Greek text and Latin trans. by Politian (1563). Eng. trans. by Hart (1749).

²² Hippolytus, ix. 12.

²³ "Ad. Haer.," IV. xlvi. 1; (IV. xxx. 1).

²⁴ Lampridius, 17, and in greater detail, "Herodian," bk. i.

made him undisputed master of the Empire, he was too busy fighting down the opposition of his military rivals to think of the Christians. His dislike of the conservatism of the senate, many of whose members he put to death,²⁵ perhaps accounts for the favour he showed to those of senatorial rank who had become Christians. The Christians, according to Tertullian, had refrained from supporting his rivals.²⁶ He had owed his recovery from illness to the Christian Proculus, whom he ever afterwards kept in his palace. Another indication of his friendliness and that of his wife, the Syrian Princess Julia Domna, is the fact that the nurse of their son Caracalla was a Christian woman.²⁷ Persecution doubtless continued here and there, as is proved by the Apology of Tertullian, which was probably written about the year that Severus overthrew the last of his rivals. "We are daily beset by foes; we are daily betrayed; we are often times surprised in our meetings and congregations."²⁸ The Christians were always liable to oppression under any Emperor, however tolerant, as long as Christianity was an illicit religion and accusations were brought against them on this ground. The authorities were fain to take cognisance of such accusations especially in the face of hostile popular demonstrations, as appears to have been the case at this time in Africa at least. But there was no official inquisition, and, as far as the Government was concerned, they were left in peace till the year 202 when Severus, after his sojourn in Syria, where he seems to have been impressed by their number, issued a Rescript prohibiting further conversions to Christianity.²⁹

The Rescript seems to betoken apprehension at the spread of Christianity and a determination to check it. In virtue of its growing numbers and organisation, the Church had become a formidable society. Its development had made the question of Christianity an imperial problem, for it was by this time a sort of state within the State. It was no longer composed of obscure persons. Christianity entered the senate itself, the focus of the old Roman spirit. In spite of the fact that the Church was not recognised as a legal association and its units had to be content with the legal status of benefit societies,³⁰ which they had by this

²⁵ Spartianus, 12, 13; "Dio Cassius," lxxv. 2 (Xiphiline); Herodian, bk. III.

²⁶ "Ad Scap.," 2.

²⁷ Tertullian, "Ad. Scap.," 4.

²⁸ "Apol.," 7. This description would, however, fit better the later part of his reign when he had turned persecutor. On his life and reign, see the recent work of Platnauer, "Septimius Severus" (1918).

²⁹ *Judæos fieri sub gravi poena vetuit. Idem etiam de Christianis sanxit.* Spartianus, "Severus," 17. It seems to have been a Rescript, not a general edict.

³⁰ *Collegia tenuiorum* or *funeraticia*.

time secured and which entitled them to hold property, it was really a widespread and powerful organism. It is, indeed, singular, in view of the law against unlicensed associations,³¹ that it had been possible for the network of Christian communities to spread over the Empire. It can only be explained from the fact that the law was only enforced in specific cases and that where associations, which were legally forbidden, proved harmless, they were tacitly allowed to exist. In this respect, the Christian communities were not exceptional. Large numbers of unlicensed *collegia* of various kinds were similarly suffered throughout the Empire, though their existence was illegal. In these matters the Government showed an opportunist spirit, and this compliant opportunism stood the Church in good stead, in spite of the persecution of individual Christians. Their recognition as benefit societies did not, indeed, affect the liability of their members to be persecuted as Christians.³² But despite such persecution the Church had continued to expand, and by the end of the second century it had become a formidable association. It exemplified, in fact, in the religious sphere, the idea of a spiritual unity far more successfully than the State did the idea of a political unity. From the point of view of a growingly powerful association under its developing hierarchy, apart from the religious beliefs and tendencies it represented, the Church might well seem a serious menace to the State in its imperial form. Hence, we conceive, the Rescript specifically prohibiting the Christian propaganda.

It was applied with rigour in Egypt and Africa.³³ One of its many victims at Alexandria was Leonidas the father of Origen, and though Origen himself, in spite of his zeal, escaped, a number of his pupils were martyred.³⁴ It fell heaviest, in fact, on the young and newly converted, and one of them, the fair Potamiæna, added one more pathetic example of feminine fidelity and heroism for the sake of Christ, which led to the conversion and martyrdom of the officer Basilides, who protected her from the insulting violence of the mob.³⁵

At Carthage took place the passion of Perpetua and her companions, Revocatus and his fellow-slave Felicitas, Saturninus, and Secundulus, all of them catechumens of the evangelist Saturus, who voluntarily shared their martyrdom. Perpetua was a young woman of quality with a baby at the breast. Whilst her mother

³¹ *Collegia, sodalitates, heteriæ.*

³² See Hardy, "Studies," 129 f.

³³ From Eusebius, v. 28, and vi. 11, we learn that there was also persecution at Rome, Antioch, and Jerusalem, though he gives no details of it.

³⁴ Eusebius, vi. 1, 2, 4, 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vi. 5.

and two brothers were also Christians, her father was a pagan. The little party was brought from Thuburbo to Carthage to be tried before the procurator Hilarianus.³⁶ Confined in a dark and stifling prison, they obtained through the kindness of two deacons, who bribed the jailor, the permission to go into the fresh air daily, and Perpetua was allowed to suckle her child and see her relatives. Thenceforth in her own moving words, "the prison became a palace to me, where I had rather be than anywhere else." Her father pathetically, but vainly, implored her again and again to save her family the disgrace of such an ordeal. Her firmness was confirmed by a vision, in which she ascends with Saturus to heaven and is welcomed by the Good Shepherd in the ineffable region of the blessed. With this foreknowledge of their fate, they were some days thereafter led into the court of the procurator, whither a great crowd had gathered. Perpetua's companions were first examined and confessed. "Are you a Christian?" asked the procurator. On receiving a reply in the affirmative, he ordered her father, who stood by with her baby, to be scourged and expelled the court, and condemned her and the others to the wild beasts. With radiant faces they were taken back to prison where they were confined a considerable time longer, but were considerably treated and were allowed to see their fellow-Christians and receive kindnesses from them. Other visions were vouchsafed to Saturus as well as Perpetua, who seem to have been "Montanists," during the interval of waiting, and served to intensify their eagerness for the terrible ordeal.³⁷ At length after celebrating the Agape on the previous evening, they were led into the amphitheatre in a state of ecstasy. "If they trembled, it was from joy, not from fear." They pass before the procurator whom they saluted with the bold words, "Thou art our judge; God is thine." The words aroused a howl from the mob, and the procurator ordered them to be scourged for their temerity. The details of the horrible sequel, given with such painful realism in the tale of their passion, are better imagined than described. Suffice to say that after the men had been torn by the wild beasts and the women tossed by an infuriated cow, an end was put to their suffering by the gladiator's knife. Even in the midst of this horrible scene Saturus makes a convert of the soldier Pudens, whose ring he dips in his blood and returns with the admonition

³⁶ Hilarianus was Procurator for the proconsul Timinianus who had died before his term of office expired.

³⁷ At this point Perpetua ceases to write and what follows is by another narrator, who was evidently a contemporary and an eyewitness. Robinson thinks he was Tertullian; Monceaux rejects this theory, "Hist. Lit. de l'Afrique Chrétienne," i. 83-84.

to remember his example and be faithful.³⁸ The story is a vivid reflection at once of the savagery which could condemn harmless people to such a fate and could derive pleasure from it as a popular spectacle, and of the religious exaltation which could welcome and triumph over such sufferings.

A LENGTHY RESPITE

In the reign of Severus' son, Antoninus Bassianus, nicknamed Caracalla (211-217), we hear again of persecution at Carthage, and in Numidia and Mauritania from Tertullian, who addressed a spirited remonstrance to Scapula, the proconsul of Africa.³⁹ It was, however, apparently confined to the years of Scapula's proconsulship (211-213), and Caracalla, though a fratricide⁴⁰ and a bloodthirsty tyrant, seems to have left the antichristian policy of his father in abeyance.

This toleration continued throughout the reigns of his cousins Elagabalus (217-222) and Alexander Severus (222-235). For disgusting beastliness and utter folly, Elagabalus, as portrayed by the historian Lampridius, who, however, is prone to exaggerate, beats the record among the unworthy wearers of the purple. But he combined with a revolting sensuality a fervid zeal for the cult of the Syrian sun god, and cared so little for Roman religious sensibilities that he went the length of supplanting the old Roman cult by that of his licentious deity, whom he installed in a magnificent temple on the Palatine. Thither he transferred the sacred emblems of Rome and, according to Lampridius, even conceived the plan of combining with his favourite cult those of the Jews and the Christians.⁴¹ His contemptuous and aggressive attitude towards the national religion and his fantastic syncretism saved the Christians from persecution. But they riled the Roman spirit, and coupled with his wretched misrule under the auspices of his infamous mother,⁴² led to his assassination by the mutinous soldiers as "a public pest."⁴³

³⁸ "The Passion of St Perpetua," edited by Robinson in "Texts and Studies," i. Eng. trans. of Ruinart's text. in vol. xiii. of "Ante-Nicene Lib."

³⁹ "Ad Scapulam." The fact of persecution is also apparent in others of his works composed between 211 and 213—the "De Corona," the "Scorpiace," the "De Fuga in Persecutione." For the date of these, see Monceaux, "Hist. Lit.," i. 208-209.

⁴⁰ For the murder of his brother Geta and his numerous other murders, see Spartianus, "Caracalla," and Herodian, bk. IV.

⁴¹ Lampridius, "Hel.," 3, 6. This statement is questionable.

⁴² Lampridius, 7.

⁴³ Lampridius, 10; Dio Cassius, "Epit.," lxxx. See also Butler, "Studies in the Life of Heliogabalus" (Michigan Univ. Studies), iv. (1910).

Alexander's syncretism was of a nobler and saner kind. His high character, his wide culture, his love of justice, his continence, his simplicity, his goodness of heart, his devotion to the public weal were largely the fruit of the careful upbringing which he owed to his mother Julia Mammæa. Unlike her sister, the mother of Elagabalus, she was a virtuous woman, though given to avarice. She guarded him from the contamination of the court of the despicable Elagabalus, surrounded him with wise counsellors like Ulpian and retained her influence over him (he was only thirteen at his accession) to the end of his reign.⁴⁴ Both were not only tolerant towards the Christians. They showed a serious interest in Christianity, in accordance with their syncretistic tendency to assimilate what was best in the higher forms of religion, Greek and Oriental. Julia invited Origen to Antioch to discuss theology with her, and though Eusebius does not call her a Christian, he warmly praises her piety.⁴⁵ Her son, whilst officially honouring the national gods, similarly showed his appreciation of Christianity as well as of other faiths by placing the statues of Abraham and Christ, along with those of Orpheus, Apollonius of Tyana and others in his oratory.⁴⁶ One of his favourite maxims was the Golden Rule which he inscribed in his palace and on public monuments.⁴⁷ He wished, says his biographer, to erect a temple to Christ and raise Him to the rank of the gods,⁴⁸ and he showed his partiality for His followers, who laid claim to a piece of ground in opposition to the guild of victuallers, by deciding the suit in their favour, remarking that it was much better that the place should be consecrated to the worship of a god than given over to purveyors.⁴⁹ His court, according to Eusebius, contained many believers.⁵⁰ All this does not, of course, prove that he was a convert to Christianity, as the Christians ere long came to believe. It does show that, unlike Marcus, whom in respect of culture he resembles, he realised to a certain extent its merits and recognised its right to toleration. "He kept inviolate the privileges of the Jews," says Lampridius, "and he tolerated the Christians."⁵¹

His assassination in the course of a campaign against the Germans by a handful of soldiers, whom his severity had enraged, was a misfortune for the Christians as well as for the Empire. The Thracian who succeeded him, the ferocious Maximinus (Maximinus Thrax, 235-238) renewed their persecution as part of the reaction against his régime, of which he was the implacable

⁴⁴ Lampridius, "Alex. Sev.," 14, 66; Herodian, bk. VI. See also "Julia Mammæa" (Michigan Univ. Studies), i. 69-70.

⁴⁵ "Hist. Eccl.," vi. 21.

⁴⁶ Lampridius, 29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁰ vi. 28.

⁵¹ 22.

leader. It was directed specially against the clergy,⁵² and among its victims were Pontianus, Bishop of Rome, and Hippolytus, whom he banished to the mines of Sardinia, where both died of the hardship to which they were subjected.⁵³

We hear of clerical sufferers at Cæsarea in Palestine,⁵⁴ and of persecution in Cappadocia, whose inhabitants attributed the earthquakes which desolated this region to the enemies of the gods and where, according to Origen,⁵⁵ many churches were burned.

Maximinus, like his three predecessors, was got rid of by assassination, and during the next ten years under Gordian (238-244) and Philip the Arabian (244-249) there was another interval of immunity. Like Alexander, Philip seems to have shown a keen interest in Christianity. Origen wrote epistles to him and the Empress Severa.⁵⁶ Tradition represents him as seeking to take part in the Easter worship of the Christians at Antioch, whose bishop refused to gratify his wish until he had done penance for his sins.⁵⁷ On the ground of this tradition he came later to be regarded as the first Christian Emperor.⁵⁸ Tradition seems, however, to have taken too credulously the will for the deed, and Philip's action apparently betokens nothing more than a sympathetic interest in Christianity and a desire to obtain the favour of the Christian God, in addition to that of other deities. It was probably, at most, a case of practical syncretism, for we find him, as a good pagan, celebrating with magnificent rites the thousandth anniversary of the founding of Rome in 248. Eusebius only gives the story as a report,⁵⁹ and reserves the honour of being the first Christian Emperor for Constantine.

THE DECIAN PERSECUTION

Philip was defeated and slain at Verona by the revolted Pannonian legions, and with the accession of Decius, their unwilling leader (249-251), came a decided reaction against the

⁵² Eusebius, vi. 28.

⁵³ Duchesne, "Liber Pontificalis," i. 4 f.; Mommsen's ed., 22 f.

⁵⁴ Eusebius, vi. 28.

⁵⁵ "Comm. on Matt.," xxiv. 9. Ed. by Klostermann (1933). See also the Epistle of Firmilian to Cyprian, "Epistles of Cyprian," 74 (75).

⁵⁶ Eusebius, vi. 36.

⁵⁷ Eusebius, vi. 34. Eusebius does not say that it was the Bishop of Antioch who refused him admittance to the Church. But Chrysostom and Leontius of Antioch identify the bishop who did so with Babylas, Bishop of Antioch at the time.

⁵⁸ Eusebius, *ibid.*; Jerome "De vir. illustr.," 54.

⁵⁹ κατέχει λόγος.

Christians, which characterised the next decade. The motive of the persecution under him was not, as Eusebius asserts,⁶⁰ his hatred of his predecessor. It was the fruit of the conviction of the necessity of a drastic reform of the demoralisation and weakness, which the régime of a series of Emperors of Oriental extraction had brought upon the Empire. The ever-swelling tide of barbarian invasion in the north and the east, which they had failed to stem, emphasised its urgency. Decius saw in a revival of the old Roman spirit and manners, and the old Roman religion, the means of bringing about this clamant reform. "He was," says Vopiscus, "worthy to be ranked in his life and his death with the ancient Romans."⁶¹ To this end he re-established the office of censor, which he entrusted to Valerian, and launched a crusade against the Christians as their most dangerous subverters. The Christian writers have consequently represented him in the darkest colours. The truth seems to be that he was personally the embodiment of the old Roman virtue and piety, which he strove to revive as the panacea for the rampant degeneration of the age, and persecuted them in the honest, but unfounded and prejudiced belief that their religion was, in part at least, responsible for it.

What distinguishes his antichristian action from that of all his predecessors is the fact that he was, as far as we know, the first to issue an explicit general edict against Christianity, directing the provincial governors and magistrates, assisted by local commissioners,⁶² to enforce the observance of the old rites throughout the Empire. To this end all Christians or Christian suspects must give proof of their devotion to the gods by sacrificing on a certain day,⁶³ renouncing Christ,⁶⁴ and eating the sacrificial meat.⁶⁵ The object of the Edict, which was issued in the beginning of 250, seems to have been to subvert Christianity by forcing the Christians to recant, rather than to bring about their destruction by wholesale execution. They were to be overawed by the threat of punishment or harassed into compliance by imprisonment, banishment, confiscation, and, if need be, torture. This astute policy had no small success. If the lengthy interval of peace which, with the exception of the short reign of Maximinus, had lasted from Caracalla to Decius, had largely increased the number of Christian converts, it had also contributed to

⁶⁰ vi. 39.

⁶¹ "Aurelian," 42.

⁶² Cyprian, "Epist.," 39 (43, Oxford ed.).

⁶³ Cyprian, "De Lapsis," 3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶⁵ Cyprian, 24, 25. The Edict has not been preserved; but its terms can be made out from the "Epistles" and the "De Lapsis" of Cyprian.

weaken the morale of the Church. The spirit of worldliness and slackness had impaired the fervour of primitive devotion which the intermittent persecutions of the second century had served to keep alive. The Church was accustoming itself to its sojourn in the world. It had taken on the character of a permanent institution and attracted to itself a more mundane type of adherent among clergy and laity, as the worldliness and moral laxity, too general among both, show.⁶⁶ This is proved indisputably by the lapse of a large number of professing Christians as the result of the application of the Edict. Of this falling away the writings of Dionysius of Alexandria and Cyprian, of Carthage afford explicit evidence. Cyprian made it the subject of a special work⁶⁷ as well as of many of his Epistles. He speaks, for instance, in one Epistle of thousands of certificates daily given by confessors to those who had denied Christ, and sought in this way to secure their readmission into the Church.⁶⁸ In the "De Lapsis" he bewails the fact that the majority of the Christians at Carthage voluntarily betrayed the faith on the mere menace of persecution,⁶⁹ and he gives a vivid picture of the scramble to sacrifice. "They indeed did not wait to be apprehended ere they ascended (to the capitol), or to be interrogated ere they denied. Many were conquered before the battle, and prostrated before the attack. Nor did they even leave it to be said for them that they seemed to sacrifice to idols unwillingly. They ran to the market-place of their own accord; freely they hastened to (spiritual) death, as if they had formerly wished it, as if they would embrace an opportunity, now given, which they had always desired. How many were put off by the magistrates at that time, when evening was coming on; how many even asked that their destruction should not be delayed. . . . But to many their own destruction was not sufficient. With mutual exhortations people were urged to their ruin; death was pledged by turns in this deadly cup. And that nothing might be wanting to aggravate the crime, infants also, in the arms of their parents, either carried or conducted, lost, while yet little ones, what in the very first beginning of their nativity they had gained."⁷⁰

Dionysius tells of the same lack of firmness at Alexandria and in Egypt. "All truly were affrighted. And many of the more eminent in their fear came forward immediately; others, who were in the public service, were drawn in by their official duties; others were urged on by their acquaintances. And as their names were

⁶⁶ Cyprian, "De Lapsis," 6.

⁶⁷ The "De Lapsis."

⁶⁸ Epistles, 14 (20).

⁶⁹ c. 7.

⁷⁰ "De Lapsis," 8, 9.

called they approached the impure and impious sacrifices. Some of them were pale and trembled as if they were not about to sacrifice, but to be themselves sacrifices and offerings to the idols ; so that they were jeered at by the multitude who stood around, as it was plain to every one that they were afraid either to die or to sacrifice. But some advanced to the altars more readily, declaring boldly that they had never been Christians."⁷¹

Evidently the long peace had sapped the heroic spirit of an earlier time, and the imperial fulmination found the Church utterly unprepared to face the ordeal. The all too general tendency was to escape it by securing a certificate (*libellus*) of having sacrificed from the commissioners,⁷² and among the papyri discovered in Egypt are several of these certificates, belonging to the reign of Decius and stating that the person in question has complied with the Edict.⁷³ Some by bribing the commissioners secured the certificate without actually sacrificing,⁷⁴ and some satisfied the law by proxy. The firmness of others, who at first refused, was broken by imprisonment or torture.⁷⁵ Many including even Dionysius and Cyprian, sought safety in flight. Those in the position of Dionysius and Cyprian were, of course, marked men from the outset. The former was at once ordered to be seized. The military commissioner (Fruentarius) sent to search for him failed to find him. But he was arrested in his flight, with some of the brethren, by a party of soldiers from whom he and his companions were rescued by some Christian peasants, who hurried him to Libya.⁷⁶ At Carthage the populace raised the cry "Cyprian to the lions,"⁷⁷ and the Government ordered his property to be confiscated.⁷⁸ Both aver that they fled not from fear, but from a sense of duty. Dionysius adduces the divine direction ; Cyprian the danger which his presence would bring on others.⁷⁹ But it was a dubious course to adopt at a time when the general laxity demanded a firm attitude on the part of the leading clergy, and it certainly does not look heroic to find Cyprian writing letters from a place of safety exhorting the clergy and people of Carthage to endurance unto death,

⁷¹ Eusebius, vi. 41.

⁷² Cyprian, Epistles, 14 (20). Those who obtained these certificates were called *Libellatici*.

⁷³ They do not explicitly state that the person is a Christian. But this was probably the case. They are given by Scott-Moncrieff, "Paganism and Christianity in Egypt," 85-87.

⁷⁴ "De Lapsis," 27.

⁷⁵ Eusebius, vi. 41.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, vi. 41; cf. vii. 11.

⁷⁷ Epistles, 54 (59).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 68 (66).

⁷⁹ Dionysius' account of his flight in Eusebius, vi. 40; Cyprian, Epistles, 14 (20).

denouncing the lapsed, and rebuking the confessors and martyrs for their precipitate but charitable action in receiving the penitents among them back into the Church. The Roman clergy, whose bishop Fabian had evinced the fortitude of more heroic days and suffered death for his convictions,⁸⁰ judged the fugitive very severely, and in a letter to their Carthaginian brethren said some stinging things about the shepherd that leaveth the flock and fleeth.⁸¹ They subsequently, however, accepted his own explanation of his action and maintained brotherly relations with him.

Many of the clergy, following the example of their leaders, fled from Carthage⁸²; some even lapsed.⁸³ Among the bishops of the province there were likewise many fugitives and one bishop, Ripostus of Tuburnuc, lapsed with the greater part of his congregation. In Asia Minor, as in Egypt and North Africa, flight or apostasy similarly thinned the ranks of the Christians. Like Cyprian and Dionysius, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Bishop of New Cæsarea in Pontus, retired into concealment, and at Ephesus Bishop Euctemon went the length of apostasising, as did also the Spanish bishops Basilides and Martial.⁸⁴ Even in Rome there were some backsliders in spite of Bishop Fabian's noble example of constancy.⁸⁵ Flight was not necessarily an index of lack of Christian fidelity. Christ Himself had sanctioned it, and the Church, in opposition to extremists like the Montanists, rather discouraged a headlong zeal for martyrdom, whilst emphasising the necessity of faithfulness in the hour of trial. The Roman Church, in fact, welcomed and shielded the numerous fugitives from Africa⁸⁶ and elsewhere who, strange to say, sought a refuge in the capital. Its vast and motley population made it a comparatively safe hiding place for provincials, who might easily remain unnoticed among the throng of strangers in its streets. At the same time, the flight of so many bishops in the face of a set attempt to overthrow Christianity was fitted to further the imperial policy, if only from the point of view of the discouragement it tended to intensify.

Happily, however, the collapse was only temporary. Persecution, if at first demoralising, tends to nurture the martyr spirit. Against the cowardice and apostasy of the many we can place the heroism of others, which saved the situation at the most critical moment of the struggle—the incipient stage of

⁸⁰ Eusebius, vi. 39.

⁸¹ Epistles of Cyprian, 2 (8).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 27 (34).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 34 (40).

⁸⁴ Cyprian, Epistles, 67 (67).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2 (8); 20 (21).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 20 (21).

shrinking and panic. Like Fabian, some of the bishops gave their lives for their faith—Babylas of Antioch and Alexander of Jerusalem, who succumbed in prison after publicly refusing to recant.⁸⁷ At Alexandria, where persecution had broken out even in the last year of Philip's reign as the result of popular clamour,⁸⁸ a number of recusants were burned or beheaded.⁸⁹ A large number in the cities and villages of Egypt, who preferred flight to apostasy, perished in the deserts and mountains, or were carried into slavery by the Saracens.⁹⁰ Even in Carthage the number of confessors and martyrs,⁹¹ *i.e.*, those who refused to sacrifice and bore imprisonment, torture, or banishment, was considerable, as we learn from the correspondence of Cyprian. A number died in prison as the result of torture or hunger, and thus became martyrs in the more primitive sense.⁹² At Rome, where the Church remained fully a year without a successor to Fabian, there were also many such witnesses, both lay and cleric. In the East the most celebrated of the sufferers was Origen, who died a year later from the effects of the tortures to which he was subjected.⁹³

THE VALERIAN PERSECUTION

The disastrous war with the Goths, which ere long taxed the Emperor's energies and led to his tragic death in the marshes of the Dobrudscha (August 251), afforded the Christians a breathing space. Gallus, his successor (251-253 or 254), continued, indeed, his antichristian policy and banished Cornelius, who had at length succeeded Fabian as Bishop of Rome. But he did not carry it out with vigour, apparently owing to the terrible plague which ravaged the Empire, and it was not till the year 257 that it was renewed by Valerian (253-260). Though, like Decius, a man of the old Roman type, Valerian adopted at first a very friendly attitude towards the Christians and recalled Lucius, Cornelius' successor, who had also, along with others, been banished. "None of the Emperors before him," testifies Dionysius, in reference to the opening years of his reign, "had treated them so kindly and favourably; not even those who were said openly to

⁸⁷ Eusebius, vi. 39.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, cf. vii. 11.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, vi. 41.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, vi. 42.

⁹¹ These terms were now applied to those who, though not condemned to death, suffered for their faith.

⁹² See, for instance, the letter of Lucius of Carthage to Celerinus at Rome; Cyprian, Epistles, 21 (22).

⁹³ Eusebius, vi. 39. On the Decian Persecution in greater detail, see Gregg, "The Decian Persecution" (1897).

be Christians.”⁹⁴ The imperial household, he adds, contained many Christians. His sudden revulsion to a persecuting policy is ascribed by the same writer to the influence of Macrianus, one of his ablest generals and a devotee of Egyptian magic. The continuance of the plague and the renewed inroads of the Goths and the Franks in the north and west, and the Persians in the east, evidently lent weight to his machinations. Whilst marching against the Persians in the summer of 257, he issued an edict commanding the Christians to conform to the Roman religion and forbidding them to hold assemblies or visit their cemeteries.⁹⁵ It followed that of Decius in requiring conformity; it differed from it in treating the Christian churches as illegal associations and enforcing their suppression as such. In order the better to ensure this, the attack was directed particularly against the clergy, who were to be exiled for non-compliance. In their absence these illegal assemblies, whether in church or in catacomb, would, it was assumed, lapse, and the formidable corporate life of the Church be undermined, especially as the penalty of death was threatened in case of contravention. The persecution was, therefore, largely a clerical one.

At Carthage Cyprian, who adopted the more manly attitude on this occasion, was arraigned before the proconsul and, on refusing to comply, was deported to Curubis. As his correspondence shows, he was by no means the only sufferer. Nine of the Numidian bishops, to whom he wrote letters of comfort, were treated more severely and sent to the mines.⁹⁶ Dionysius likewise showed more courage this time and was exiled, along with several of his clergy, first to Kephron on the edge of the desert, and afterwards to a still more wretched place nearer Alexandria.⁹⁷

The Edict does not seem to have had the desired effect. The Christians had influential protectors among the Roman aristocracy and even in the imperial court. They continued to meet secretly, if not publicly, and exiled bishops, like Cyprian and Dionysius, made use of their enforced leisure to evangelise in their environment and to encourage their brethren. Hence the second Edict in the following year (August 258) directing recusant bishops, presbyters, and deacons to be put to death, Christian senators and

⁹⁴ Eusebius, vii. 10.

⁹⁵ The Edict has not been preserved, but that these were its terms appears from the examination of Cyprian before the proconsul Paternus at Carthage. The proconsular account of the trial is given by Benson, "Cyprian," 465-466. The same is apparent from the account of the proceedings at Alexandria. Eusebius, vii. 11.

⁹⁶ Epistles, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80 (6).

⁹⁷ Eusebius, vii. 11.

knights to be deprived of their dignities and their property and, if they persisted in their recusancy, to be beheaded, Christian matrons to suffer confiscation and banishment, and the Christian members of the imperial household likewise to lose their property and be sent in chains to labour as slaves on the imperial estates.⁹⁸ Its immediate effect at Rome was the execution of Bishop Xystus (Sixtus II.), who had hitherto escaped but who was now surprised, with four of his deacons, in the catacomb to which he had removed the relics of Peter and Paul from the Vatican and the Ostian way respectively, and straightway put to death with his four companions.⁹⁹

In addition to the missive to the Senate, letters were addressed to the provincial governors directing them to take immediate action against the clergy.¹⁰⁰ Among the victims was Cyprian, who was recalled from Curubis, and whom the proconsul Galerius Maximus seized and arraigned once more at Carthage. With dignity and intrepidity he refused to offer incense, was found guilty of sacrilege against the gods and the Emperors (Gallienus being associated with Valerian as Augustus), and sentenced to be beheaded, which sentence was forthwith carried out in the presence of the multitude of Christians, from whom resounded the cry, "Let us, too, be beheaded along with him."¹ Evidently the persecution had winnowed the chaff from the wheat and revived the heroic spirit of an earlier time. His death was now the precursor of many martyrdoms in proconsular Africa and Numidia.²

TOLERATION

The capture of Valerian by the Persian Sapor, or Shahpur I, in 260 and his death shortly after left his son Gallienus sole Emperor (260-268). Gallienus put an end to the persecution by issuing edicts³ which at last recognised Christianity as a *religio licita*. In separate Rescripts⁴ to the bishops he restored to them their places of worship and their cemeteries, and legally empowered them to perform their functions without molestation. The desperate straits of the Empire, exposed to invasion, civil war, and

⁹⁸ Cyprian, Epistles, 81 (80).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 81 (80); and see Benson, "Cyprian," 475 f.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 81 (80).

¹ See Pontius, "Vita Cypriani," 14-19, and the fine account of his end in Benson, 493 f.

² See Monceaux, ii. 25-26.

³ προγράμματα, public proclamations. Eusebius, vii. 13.

⁴ ἀντιγραφάι. *Ibid.*

plague, largely explain this generous and sensible measure. The Christian sympathies of the Empress Salonina doubtless also contributed to bring it about. Gallienus himself, whilst reversing his father's persecuting policy, was evidently not actuated by such religious motives. His predilection was for the culture and religion of Greece. He prided himself on his election as archon or chief magistrate of Athens, where he was initiated into the mysteries,⁵ and he won a considerable reputation as a poet and a *bel esprit*. But, according to Trebellius Pollio, who is, however, by no means an impartial judge, he was a total failure as a ruler in an age of rampant anarchy and universal calamity. Whilst not without military ability, as his victory over the usurper Postumus in Gaul and over the Scythian hordes shows, and not without spurts of energy, his lack of persistence and his tendency to frivolity and debauchery unfitted him to cope with so desperate a situation. In the provinces usurper after usurper was set up by the degenerate legions—the thirty tyrants, as they were called—most of them only to be assassinated by the mutinous soldiery. By his cruelty and his incompetence he alienated his generals, who successfully plotted his murder. The Emperor who anticipated Constantine in his religious policy, if not in his personal attitude towards Christianity, and whose reign is, therefore, a turning point in its history, died by the hand of an assassin, and was publicly declared a tyrant.⁶

The desperate situation of the Empire, which had operated in favour of the Christians in the reign of Gallienus, continued in more or less aggravated form till the advent of Diocletian in 284. This tragic interval produced, indeed, in Claudius (268-270) and Aurelian (270-275), two strong men whose military ability stemmed for a time the wave of barbarian invasion, and checked the internal anarchy which provoked it. By his crushing defeat of the Goths near Naissus, the former broke the force of Gothic inroad for nearly a century, whilst the latter reduced both east and west to subjection to his drastic rule. But the reigns of both were too brief to lend more than a transient efficacy to the work of restoration. Claudius was carried off by the pestilence within two years of his elevation; Aurelian had only reigned five when his severity and cruelty provoked his assassination. The Christians, if not the Empire, had no reason to lament his tragic end, for, according to Lactantius,⁷ he had determined to resume their persecution when he was struck down by the assassin's

⁵ Trebellius Pollio, "Gal.," 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁷ "De Mortibus Persecutorum," 6.

knights to be deprived of their dignities and their property and, if they persisted in their recusancy, to be beheaded, Christian matrons to suffer confiscation and banishment, and the Christian members of the imperial household likewise to lose their property and be sent in chains to labour as slaves on the imperial estates.⁹⁸ Its immediate effect at Rome was the execution of Bishop Xystus (Sixtus II.), who had hitherto escaped but who was now surprised, with four of his deacons, in the catacomb to which he had removed the relics of Peter and Paul from the Vatican and the Ostian way respectively, and straightway put to death with his four companions.⁹⁹

In addition to the missive to the Senate, letters were addressed to the provincial governors directing them to take immediate action against the clergy.¹⁰⁰ Among the victims was Cyprian, who was recalled from Curubis, and whom the proconsul Galerius Maximus seized and arraigned once more at Carthage. With dignity and intrepidity he refused to offer incense, was found guilty of sacrilege against the gods and the Emperors (Gallienus being associated with Valerian as Augustus), and sentenced to be beheaded, which sentence was forthwith carried out in the presence of the multitude of Christians, from whom resounded the cry, "Let us, too, be beheaded along with him."¹ Evidently the persecution had winnowed the chaff from the wheat and revived the heroic spirit of an earlier time. His death was now the precursor of many martyrdoms in proconsular Africa and Numidia.²

TOLERATION

The capture of Valerian by the Persian Sapor, or Shahpur I, in 260 and his death shortly after left his son Gallienus sole Emperor (260-268). Gallienus put an end to the persecution by issuing edicts³ which at last recognised Christianity as a *religio licita*. In separate Rescripts⁴ to the bishops he restored to them their places of worship and their cemeteries, and legally empowered them to perform their functions without molestation. The desperate straits of the Empire, exposed to invasion, civil war, and

⁹⁸ Cyprian, Epistles, 81 (80).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 81 (80); and see Benson, "Cyprian," 475 f.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 81 (80).

¹ See Pontius, "Vita Cypriani," 14-19, and the fine account of his end in Benson, 493 f.

² See Monceaux, ii. 25-26.

³ προγράμματα, public proclamations. Eusebius, vii. 13.

⁴ ἀντιγραφαι. *Ibid.*

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⁵ Trebellius Pollio, "Gal.," 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁷ "De Mortibus Persecutorum," 6.

knife whilst passing through Thrace to settle accounts with the Persians. What exactly turned him against them we do not know. Apparently his zeal for the worship of the sun god, of which his mother is said to have been a priestess in her native Sirmium,⁸ combined with his masterful, tyrannical temperament to rouse his resentment against a sect which denied the existence of his favourite god. Till towards the close of his career he had respected the Edict of Gallienus, and on being appealed to by the orthodox Syrian clergy to compel Bishop Paul of Samosata, whom they had excommunicated, to surrender the Church of Antioch to the orthodox rival bishop, decided the question in their favour.⁹ The decision does not, however, necessarily betoken friendly feeling towards the Christians, as Eusebius seems to assume. It was merely a question as to the ownership of property, and it is evident from a reference to them preserved by Vopiscus that he regarded their religion with contempt. "I am surprised," wrote he to the senate, in reference to the proposal to consult the Sibylline oracles on the occasion of an inroad of the Marcomanni into North Italy, "that you have hesitated so long to open the Sibylline books. One would think that you were deliberating in a church of the Christians rather than in a temple of all the gods."¹⁰ Eusebius attributes his ultimate open hostility to the influence of his advisers, and says that he contemplated issuing edicts against them.¹¹ Lactantius says that he had actually promulgated them, but that they had not reached the more distant provinces at the time of his murder.

CHAPTER V

THE CATHOLIC MINISTRY

IN this period the threefold ministry, which had only partially established itself in the early second century, becomes a characteristic feature of the Church at large. The distinction between clergy and laity,¹ which already appears in the Epistle of Clement at the end of the first century, is accentuated. The clergy appear

⁸ Vopiscus, "Aurelian," 4; cf. 35.

⁹ Eusebius, vii. 30.

¹⁰ Vopiscus, "Aurelian," 20.

¹¹ vii. 30.

¹ κληρος, λαϊκός. κληρος originally meant the lot by which the election of the disciples fell on Mathias as a substitute for Judas. It afterwards seems to have denoted the office to which the individual was appointed, and still later the individual appointed. Irenæus still uses it in the sense of office. "Haer.," I. 24; III. iii. 2 (I. xxvii. 1; III. iii. 3).

as a distinct order (*ordo*) in contrast to the people.² They ultimately displace the declining prophetic class, in spite of the organised attempt of Montanus and his followers to perpetuate it in a new form. With it disappears the enthusiastic spirit and the charismatic ministry of an earlier time as the Catholic Church acquires more and more the character of a permanent, ordered institution, though the members of the community are required to practise the Christian virtue of active well-doing. With it, too, tends to disappear the expectation of the imminent coming of Christ. In the conflict with Gnosticism, the authority of the Catholic ministry is enhanced by the doctrine of apostolic succession, which is developed by Irenæus and Tertullian. The authority of the bishops in particular is further enhanced by the theory of the Church as founded on the episcopate and of the sacerdotal function of the ministry, of which Cyprian is the strenuous advocate. It is with the developing Catholic ministry, as it presents itself in the relative documents of the period, that this chapter deals.

PREVALENCE OF EPISCOPACY

In the document known as "The Original Sources of the Apostolic Canons,"³ which probably belongs to the early second half of the second century, the bishop has emerged into a prominent position among the presbyters and deacons, who are associated with him in the government of the community. The bishop is elected by the members, who, if less than twelve in number, are to request a fully organised neighbouring church to depute three of its experienced members to assist them. The bishop must be a man of pure life, unmarried rather than married, but at all events the husband of only one wife, and capable, if possible, of expounding the Scriptures. The members are also to elect presbyters (apparently two in number), a reader, three deacons, and three widows as deaconesses, whose character must also be in strict keeping with their office. The office of the bishop, or pastor,⁴ is to take the leading part in public worship, receive at the altar and distribute, along with the presbyters, the gifts of the members, and exercise a pastoral oversight over the community. That of the presbyters who, in the assembly for public worship, are to

² *Populus, τὸ πλῆθος.*

³ So-called by Harnack, who dates it 140-180. It consists of fragments incorporated into a later compilation of ecclesiastical law. The Greek text, with a German translation, notes, and critical dissertation by Harnack, are given in "Texte und Untersuchungen," ii. Eng. trans. by Wheatley (1895).

⁴ He is called both *ἐπίσκοπος* and *ποιμήν*.

sit on his right and left, is to act along with the pastor in the administration of the offerings of the members and in the maintenance of order and morality, to summon the congregation to worship, and to assist the pastor therein and in the supervision of the people. That of the lector or reader is to read and expound the Scriptures and take the place of an evangelist, and it was a specially important one in view of the fact that the bishop might be incapable of expounding the sacred writings. That of the deacons is to assist in the moral and spiritual oversight of the members, to encourage the generosity of the rich and themselves to show an example of generosity, to find out those who are in need of a share of the gifts of the congregation, and thus by their assiduity to gain for themselves an eventual claim to the pastoral office. To one of the deaconesses was entrusted the duty of nursing their sick sisters and reporting on this work to the presbyters; to the other two that of praying incessantly for those in temptation, and for further revelations in any case in which these might be necessary.

At the time when these fragments were penned, the extraordinary ministry of the apostles and prophets seems to have disappeared in the churches which the writer's directions are meant to guide. The prophetic function is now limited to the prayers for the enlightenment of the community of the two of its feminine members set apart for this purpose. The office-bearers are sharply distinguished from the community,⁵ though it is still regarded as a brotherhood.⁶ Among these office-bearers the bishop occupies a leading position in worship and administration, and the presbyters are to show him a ready good will.⁷ He is apparently the representative of the community in its relations with the world. But though distinct from the presbyters, he is not independent of them. They share in his consecration.⁸ They co-operate with and evidently even control him.⁹ They remain as the ruling power, though the community has now a distinctive head and representative in the bishop. Its government was still really in the hands of a college of presbyters, and the bishop, though the leading functionary in worship and administration, as well as in the community, is subject to its disciplinary jurisdiction. It is still a dyarchy of bishop and presbyters, not strictly a monarchy.

About the time when these fragments were composed, Justin

⁵ τὸ πλῆθος.

⁶ ἀδελφότης.

⁹ προνοήσονται τῶν ἐπισκοπῶν.

⁷ προθυμουμένους.

⁸ συμμύστας τοῦ ἐπισκόπου.

That the word signifies control over the bishop is shown by the fact that it is applied also to the control of the presbyters over the congregation.

Martyr was writing a description of the rites and worship of (presumably) the community at Rome. The leading part in the meeting for worship is taken by "the president of the brethren,"¹⁰ who is not further characterised, and who receives and administers the contributions of the members. Whilst the term probably means the bishop of the community, it may designate the presbyter who for the time being presided over the celebration of the Eucharist. Neither bishop nor presbyters are mentioned by name; only the president and the deacons. In contrast to the author of "The Sources of the Apostolic Canons," Justin furnishes evidence of the continued existence of the prophetic class in the Church. The Old Testament gift of prophecy, he contends, in the "Dialogue with Trypho,"¹¹ has been transferred from the Jews to the Christians, and its exercise in the churches is a proof that Christianity has taken the place of Judaism as the true religion. As in "Hermas," however, this class has evidently degenerated. There are false as well as true prophets, and the false prophet seems to be more in evidence than the true.

Of the Catholic ministry, as it existed in the early years of the third century at Carthage and Rome respectively, we get a conjunct view in the writings of Tertullian and in "The Church Ordinance" of Hippolytus. At Carthage, to which Tertullian specially refers, the ministry consists of the bishop, presbyters, and deacons and of subordinate functionaries—readers, widows, and virgins (deaconesses).¹² He applies the title "chief priest" to the bishop,¹³ and "priest" to presbyters, and both must be men of good character.¹⁴ The clergy form an ecclesiastical or priestly order in distinction from the laity or *plebs*,¹⁵ and in his pre-Montanist days he emphasises the authority of this order as an ecclesiastical institution.¹⁶ Its members may not marry more than once,¹⁷ and are supported by the contributions of the faithful in money or kind.¹⁸ To the bishop belongs the sole right to baptize, though he may authorise the presbyters and deacons to do so. Where no cleric is available, even the layman may baptize.

¹⁰ τῷ πρεσβυτέρῳ τῶν ἀδελφῶν. "Apol.," i. 65; cf. 67. Purves would explain the omission of the term bishop by the assumption that the terms applied to the office-bearers varied in the churches, and Justin therefore uses the vague term "president" to express the function of the leader in worship. Justin Martyr, 262 (1888).

¹¹ "Dialogue," 82.

¹² "De Bap.," 17; "De Monog.," 11; "De Virgin.," 1 f.

¹³ "De Bap.," 17. Summus sacerdos.

¹⁴ "Apol.," 39.

¹⁵ "De Exhort. Cast.," 7, etc. *Ordo sacerdotalis* or *ecclesiasticus*.

¹⁶ "De Bap.," 17.

¹⁷ "De Monog.," 11; "De Exhort. Cast.," 7.

¹⁸ "De Jejun.," 17.

In "The Church Ordinance"¹⁹ of Hippolytus, rival bishop of Rome (218-235), the ministry also consists of bishop, presbyters, deacons, and lesser officials — subdeacons,²⁰ reader, widows, and virgins. The first three form the clergy in the strict sense, who are distinguished from the minor officials as well as the laity by ordination, which consists of the setting apart by prayer and the laying on of hands. The bishop is elected by the people. Thereafter follows on the Sunday his ordination in the presence of other neighbouring bishops, the clergy, and the people. The bishops lay their hands on his head, and one of them crosses him and consecrates him by prayer, beseeching God to grant him the Holy Spirit, as to the apostles of old, to make him a true pastor of the flock and endow him with the power of remitting sins, of excommunicating the unworthy, and appointing to other offices in the Church. The people give him the kiss of peace and the deacons present their offerings, on which the bishop and the presbyters lay hands. Thereupon he proceeds to the celebration of the Eucharist, according to the prescribed liturgical form.²¹ In virtue of this ordination he is invested with the chief liturgical, pastoral, and administrative functions. He ordains the presbyters and deacons,²² admits the catechumens to baptism and the Eucharist, exorcises them and heals the sick, receives the first-fruits and directs their distribution to the widows, orphans, and poor, and probably the clergy. In this relation, and also in connection with the exorcism of the sick, he is called a priest.²³ The

¹⁹ The so-called Canons of Hippolytus are a later elaboration of this original Church Ordinance of Hippolytus. It is now generally recognised that the Ordinance is the *ἀποστολικὴ παράδοσις* mentioned in an authentic list of Hippolytus' works, and that it is identical with the so-called Egyptian Church Ordinance, which has really nothing to do with Egypt. This has been established by Schwartz ("Über die pseudapostolischen Kirchenordnungen," 1910) and by Dom. Connolly ("Texts and Studies," viii., 1916). They have thus disposed of the theory of Achelis, who maintained that what he arbitrarily called the Egyptian Church Ordinance was based on the so-called Canons of Hippolytus ("Texte und Unters.," vi. 1891) and of Funk, who held that the original was embedded in the Eighth Book of "The Apostolic Constitutions," a late fourth-century compilation ("Didascalia et Const. Apost.," 1905-6). Other theories, now untenable, were put forth by Wordsworth ("Ministry of Grace," 1901) and by MacLean ("Ancient Church Orders," 1910). Jungklaus, who has recently reviewed the subject and gives a reconstructed text of the Church Ordinance of Hippolytus, agrees with Schwartz and Connolly ("Die Gemeinde Hippolytus, dargestellt nach Seiner Kirchenordnung," 1928). Horner, trans. of the Ethiopic, Coptic, and Arabic. It exists also in a Latin version, the oldest and most reliable of them, though incomplete, edited by Hauler. "The Latin text represents substantially what Hippolytus wrote." Easton, "The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus," 28 (1934)—the latest contribution to the subject. It consists of an introduction, trans., and notes.

²⁰ ἱποδιάκονοι.

²¹ c. 2-4.

²² c. 8-9.

²³ c. 31. Sacerdos and princeps sacerdotum.

tendency of the Ordinance is thus to emphasise the importance of his function and his power over the community, whilst laying stress on character as an essential alongside official position.

The function of the presbyter is still an important and honoured one,²⁴ though he is nominated by the bishop, not elected by the people. If the bishop alone can convey the gift of the Spirit and offers the ordination prayer, his fellow-presbyters take part in the laying on of hands, and one of them makes the sign of the Cross on his forehead.²⁵ Those who have attained to special honour by suffering for Christ's sake—martyrs and confessors²⁶—are *ipso facto* received into the eldership,²⁷ the martyrs without ordination, inasmuch as they bear the marks of Christ on their bodies. The presbyters take part in all acts of worship, either alone or as the bishop's assistants. They can, in fact, perform all the acts of the bishop with the exception of that of ordination. Like the bishop, they are the recipients of the Holy Spirit, though they cannot, like him, confer it. They can baptise, dispense the Eucharist, exorcise.²⁸ As members of the Council of the bishop they exercise, under his presidency, the right of discipline, the excommunication of heretics and unworthy persons. They have charge of the instruction of the catechumens, and in this capacity perform the function of teacher or doctor. At the same time, they practically occupy a subordinate position, and in function as well as in honour the bishop has evidently become something more than a *primus inter pares*. Practically the presbyters are largely his assistants.

The subordinate function of the deacons—probably seven in number—is still more marked. The deacon is the servant of the bishop, who alone lays hands on him. Though ordained, he is not, like the presbyter, a member of the bishop's Council, and does not belong to the *clerus* in the stricter sense. He may, however, in reward of his diligence, be advanced to the rank of presbyter. His specific function is the care of the poor and the sick, which he reports to the bishop. Whilst he takes only a subordinate part in the worship, he may preside over the Agape.²⁹ The sub-deacon is his assistant, particularly in the care of the

²⁴ c. 8-9.

²⁵ c. 9.

²⁶ The martyr being one who has endured punishment by a civil court, the confessor one who has been reviled for Christ without punishment.

²⁷ c. 10.

²⁸ The office of exorcist referred to in c. 15 is probably exercised by one of the presbyters.

²⁹ c. 9. At Rome, in Justin's time, he gives the Eucharistic elements to the communicants. In the Ordinance this is done by the bishop, and the function of the deacon in worship has evidently become more limited.

sick.³⁰ He is further assisted in this part of his function by the widows and virgins, whose additional office it is to fast and pray.³¹ The office of the reader, to whom the bishop hands the Scriptures in setting him apart,³² is to read the lessons in public worship. Their exposition is reserved for the bishop or presbyters. None of these lesser officials is set apart by the laying on of hands.

The distinction between clergy and laity is very marked. The people, indeed, exercise the important right of electing the bishop. But they are subject to an official class and to a variety of regulations concerning worship and life which it is the right of this class to enforce. Apart from the liturgical responses, they take no part, as in the early charismatic period, in the conduct of worship, for which, except for the subordinate post of reader, ordination is essential. Authority resides in the clergy, and of this authority the bishop now possesses the predominating share.

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

The episcopal authority was enhanced by the doctrine of apostolic succession. The germ of this doctrine is already apparent, as we have seen, in Clement's theory that the apostles took care to ensure the orderly succession of office-bearers (bishops and deacons) in each community. From about the middle of the second century it is assumed as an established belief by Hegesippus.³³ Towards the end of it, it is formulated and maintained against the Gnostic heretics by Irenæus, who is followed by Tertullian and Hippolytus in the early part of the third. According to Irenæus, the apostles appointed bishops to take charge of the churches founded by them, who should perpetuate their work and teaching. These, in turn, were followed by others in regular succession down to the time at which he wrote.³⁴ Thereby the bishops, and also the presbyters, who share in the apostolic succession, have been invested with "the certain gift of truth,"³⁵ and the true tradition has been preserved, in contrast to Gnostic heresy. The doctrine is based on the assumption that the apostles actually instituted the episcopal constitution as it had developed by the end of the second century. In order to prove it, Irenæus and others constructed or adduced lists of bishops of Rome and other churches from the apostles

³⁰ c. 30.

³¹ c. 11 and 25.

³² c. 12.

³³ Eusebius, iv. 22, quoting from the lost memoirs of Hegesippus.

³⁴ "Adv. Haer.," III. iii. 1, and other passages.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, IV. xl. 2 (IV. xxvi. 2). Qui cum episcopatus successione charisma veritatis certum . . . acceperunt.

onwards. The earlier bishops in the monarchic sense in these lists are exceedingly dubious. If authentic, they can only be the names of prominent presbyters in the churches concerned, since in the apostolic, and even to a large extent in the subapostolic Church, the single bishop of the local community was unknown, with the doubtful exception of the Jerusalem Church. Irenæus himself betrays the fact in those passages of his writings in which he still refers generally to the successors of the apostles as "presbyters."³⁶ On the other hand, if he is guilty of an anachronism in transferring back to apostolic times the development of his own day, mon-episcopacy, on the ground of apostolic succession,³⁷ had become a universal institution towards the close of the second century.

Irenæus recognised the gift of prophecy as still in vogue in the Church³⁸ and rates its exercise very highly. At the same time the tendency is to relegate the prophet to a subordinate place in favour of this official class of bishop and presbyters, especially the bishop, and to regard the attempt of the prophets, as in the Montanist movement, to assert their independence of the official office-bearers as an unauthorised infringement of established ecclesiastical order.

CYPRIAN AND THE EPISCOPATE

Cyprian was probably born at Carthage in the opening years of the third century. Very little is known of his life before his conversion towards the middle of the century. His father appears to have been affluent, and he received a thorough training in rhetoric, which he adopted as a profession, conjoining with it that of advocate.³⁹ He himself became the owner of considerable property⁴⁰ and was a notable figure in the highest society at Carthage. He retained the affection of his numerous pagan friends of high social standing after he became a Christian and a bishop.⁴¹ With them he had lived the life of an elegant man of the world, enjoying the things of sense and winning a high reputation in his profession. He looked back, after his conversion, on this period of his life, which seems to have lasted till about 245, as the complete contrast, spiritually and morally, of his life as a

³⁶ "Adv. Haer.," III. ii. 2, etc. "Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching," c. 3 and 6, ed. and trans. from the Armenian by Karapet and Wilson, "Patrologia Orientalis," t. 12 (1919).

³⁷ For a more detailed critical account of the doctrine, see *infra*, c. x. "The Repudiation of Gnosticism."

³⁸ "Adv. Haer.," I. vii. 4 (I. xiii. 4), etc.

³⁹ "Ad Donatum," 2.

⁴⁰ Pontius, "Vita," 2 and 15.

⁴¹ "Vita," 14.

Christian. His conversion from the one to the other seemed to him nothing short of a miracle.⁴² We must in such cases discount the tendency to exaggerate the sins of the past, and we should probably do him an injustice were we to conclude that, before he became a Christian, he was inordinately wicked. Despite his severe condemnation of himself, he was at all events evidently a man of a serious inquiring mind, meditating much on moral and religious verities and not by any means indifferent to the quest of the higher life.⁴³ His biographer, Pontius, tells us that he owed his actual conversion to the presbyter Caecilianus, for whom he ever after cherished the deepest affection.⁴⁴ From the same source it is, however, patent that the reading of the Scriptures prepared the way for and materially contributed to it.⁴⁵ It was, in verity, a great change, a regeneration of his nature exemplified in a real newness of life.⁴⁶ He forthwith imposed on himself a life of continence and sold a large part of his property for the benefit of the poor. He renounced, too, the classic writers, though not the style of the rhetorician, and devoted himself to the study of the Bible⁴⁷ and the works of Tertullian, whom he regarded as his "master," and whom he does not appear to have known in his youth. His zeal as a convert led to his election as a presbyter soon after his baptism,⁴⁸ and on the death of Donatus the people enthusiastically fixed upon him as his successor, in spite of his own reluctance and the opposition of some of his fellow-presbyters (probably about the beginning of 249),⁴⁹ who questioned "the popular vote and the judgment of God." His biographer adds that he conciliated them by his forgiving disposition and patience. He himself says that he forgave them and kept silence, and it would seem that, in the case of some of them, the reconciliation was more apparent than real. At all events he was ere long confronted with the bitter antagonism of a recalcitrant party among the Carthaginian clergy.

In him the Church of Carthage secured a leader of imperious personality, which was fitted to accentuate rather than assuage this opposition. Despite the "miracle" of his conversion, it is evident that he carried a great deal of the caste of thought and temperament of his pagan days over into his Christian life. He certainly carried with him the Roman spirit of authority and order, and tends to exalt the power of the bishop as the chief agent of the ecclesiastical authority. In him the episcopal conception of

⁴² "Ad Donatum," 3, 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁴ "Vita," 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁶ "Ad Donatum," 4.

⁴⁷ "Vita," 2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5; Ep. 43 (39).

the Church found its strenuous champion, and in this respect he powerfully influenced its constitutional development. He also gave an impulse to the sacerdotal tendency which invested the clergy, particularly the bishop, and certain ritual acts performed by them, with a priestly character. He evidently drew his inspiration from the Old Testament. But the influence of paganism with its priestly rites (especially the mystery religions) also contributed something to the colouring of his Christian ideas in this respect.⁵⁰

Within a year after his election the storm of the Decian persecution broke on the Church of Carthage as elsewhere. Unlike Bishop Fabian of Rome, who remained at his post and suffered martyrdom, he withdrew, as we have seen, to a place of safety. He defended his withdrawal with the plea that his presence would have aggravated the danger to the Christian community,⁵¹ and it may be granted that he was actuated by prudence rather than fear. But it appears to have produced a bad impression at Rome as well as Carthage. It certainly tended to diminish his authority for the time being, and, as we have seen, the Roman clergy, to whom the Carthaginian clergy communicated the fact, along with the reason adduced and their approval of it, referred to him in their reply as the hireling that leaveth the sheep and fleeth. They virtually assume that he has abdicated his episcopal function by his flight, and proffer exhortation and advice in reference to those who lapse into idolatry. Cyprian, to whom the Carthaginian clergy sent the letter, resented the insinuation and returned it to Rome with a sarcastic note, in which he professed to doubt its authenticity.⁵² He was by no means disposed to admit the inference that he had forfeited his episcopal function or to submit to this encroachment on his episcopal authority. Immediately after his withdrawal he had empowered the presbyters and deacons by letter to carry on the work of discipline and administration⁵³ in his absence. He now adopted a more commanding tone as

⁵⁰ See Harnack, "History of Dogma," ii. 129-130 and 138.

⁵¹ Ep. 14 (5). Among the older editions of the "Opera" of Cyprian are those of Fell (Oxford, 1682) and Migne, iii. and iv. of "Cur. Lat." The standard edition is that of Hartel, vol. iii., in three parts, of the "Corpus Script. Eccl. Lat." (1868-71). Eng. trans. of the Epistles and treatises in Oxford Lib. of Fathers (1839-44) and "Ante-Nicene Lib." (1868-69). The numbering of the Epistles is that of Fell and Hartel. That of the "Ante-Nicene Lib.," which follows Migne, is given in brackets.

⁵² Ep. 9 (3). On the correspondence with the Roman clergy at this period, see Harnack, "Die Briefe des römischen Klerus im Jahre," 250. "Theologische Abhandlungen C. von Weizsäcker gewidmet" (1892).

⁵³ Ep. 5 (4). *Disciplina et diligentia*. *Disciplina* concerns the right of judging and punishing.

their bishop⁵⁴ in a second epistle, in which he limits the scope of the function conferred in the first.⁵⁵ He shows, too, apprehension at the popularity of the martyrs and confessors—those who had suffered for the faith and were consequently the heroes of the hour—and emphasises the necessity of their subordination to the clergy. To some of them he attributes, from hearsay, a very bad character, whilst recognising the merits of others and the glory of their confession.⁵⁶ His anxiety about them is evidently actuated by a genuine fear lest, by their self-exaltation and their arrogance, they bring discredit on the faith and endanger order and discipline. At the same time he seems to divine in them the possible rivals of constituted authority, especially of the supreme authority invested in himself as bishop, of which he has a very keen sense. Ere long he appears in open collision with them, supported by a section of the Carthaginian clergy, over the question of the lapsed.

It was in the course of the controversy over this question and also that of the rebaptism of heretics that he asserted and maintained in his treatise, "The Unity of the Church," his high views of the episcopate as an essential of the Church and its government. At the beginning of his episcopate he apparently held the traditional view of the Church as "constituted in the bishop and the clergy and all steadfast believers."⁵⁷ As the result of this controversy he ere long advanced to the view that the Church is founded exclusively on the bishops.⁵⁸ It is this view that he maintains so insistently in his treatise on its unity. The Church is a unity, and this unity resides not in the general body of its members, but in the episcopal order, which is an absolute essential of the Church. Christ in founding the Church on Peter, *i.e.*, on one of the apostles, meant to express this fundamental unity. In so doing, he did not make Peter the head of the Church.⁵⁹ He only singled him out as representing the other apostles, who were endowed with a partnership in honour and power along with him, and in whose corporate authority and power the unity of the Church consisted.

Now, the unity and authority thus embodied in the apostles, as represented by Peter, passed to the episcopate as the successors of the apostles. Like the apostles, the bishops constitute one

⁵⁴ *Hortor et mando*, in contrast to the *peto* of the earlier letter.

⁵⁵ Ep. 14 (5).

⁵⁶ Ep. 10 (8); 13 (6).

⁵⁷ Ep. 33 (26). In this epistle he still combines the older view with the view that the Church is founded on the bishops alone.

⁵⁸ See Harnack, ii. 85.

⁵⁹ The passages in sec. 4 ascribing a primacy over the Church to Peter and making him the exclusive foundation of it are later interpolations designed to support the later papal claim to supremacy.

body, each member of which shares in and exercises the authority belonging to the whole body.⁶⁰ It is thus not the papal, but the episcopal conception of the Church that Cyprian stands for, since the Church is not founded on one single bishop—the Bishop of Rome as Peter's successor—but on the episcopal order as the successors of the apostles, on whom Christ, in the person of Peter as their representative, founded it. The Church which they govern, though spread over the earth, is thus necessarily one, even as the multitude of rays which emanate from the sun forms one light. Without the episcopate it is, in fact, impossible to conceive of the Church, though the most categoric expression of this conception is given, not in this treatise, but in the Epistle to Florentius Pupianus, who was inclined to impugn his dogmatism. "They are the church who are a people (plebs) united to the priest and a flock adhering to its own pastor. Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop, and he who is not with the bishop is not in the Church . . . since the Church, which is Catholic and one, is not sundered nor divided, but is verily connected and bound together by the glue of priests who cohere with one another."⁶¹ From this it follows that the Church cannot exist without the episcopate. In the case of controversy or schism over questions like the treatment of the lapsed or the rebaptism of heretics, for instance, those who disagree with or separate from a bishop like Cyprian do not and cannot belong to the Church. Separation from the Church, thus episcopally conceived, involves separation from God. "He cannot have God for his Father," he says, "who has not the Church for his mother."⁶² Outside this unity are only enemies of Christ. Christ's seamless, undivided garment expresses its unity. So do the Ark and other Old Testament prefigurations of the Church, for the model of which he goes back to the Old Testament priesthood. The ordinations of heretical bishops can, therefore, have no validity. Neither has the baptism performed by them. Such baptism does not cleanse; it only stains. In vain do they quote the text, "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them." How, he asks, can they be assembled in Christ's name who are separated from Christ? In other words, you must agree with Cyprian even on a question of discipline or policy, if you would agree with Christ. "We have not withdrawn from them (those schismatics over the question of the lapsed), but they from us." Even those who have given up life itself for their convictions are not martyrs,

⁶⁰ "Episcopatus unus est cuius a singulis in solidum pars tenetur," 5.

⁶¹ Ep. 66 (68).

⁶² "De Unitate," 6.

if they have died outside the Church. Schism is a worse crime even than idolatry.

The treatise, in which all this is set forth, is largely a dogmatic deliverance—a series of vehement assertions and assumptions which are not in accord with the previous development of the Church. It is the dogmatic interpretation of what had, in reality, as we have seen, been the gradual evolution of the episcopal order to its supreme position in the Christian community. Of this evolution Cyprian seems to be quite unconscious. At any rate, he practically ignores it in his conception of the Church and its ministry. One would never infer from this dogmatic conception that there had been a time when there was no such thing as monarchic episcopacy in the government of the Christian community, or when its membership had a real, a controlling voice in its government, though in his Epistles he does recognise this voice to a certain extent.

He was not exactly the creator of this dogmatic conception, for the tendency towards it is observable before his time. This tendency had, in fact, been gradually developing since the time of Ignatius, and it was accentuated by the controversy with the Gnostics which gave rise to the theory of the apostolic succession of the clergy, especially of the bishop, as the guarantee of the truth and the true Catholic Church against the Gnostic sects. The controversy over the lapsed and the schism to which it gave birth aggravated this tendency, and in Cyprian's treatise the tendency culminates in the dogmatic expression of the theory of the episcopate as the essential and the criterion of the true Catholic Church. The work is thus important as a landmark in the development of the episcopal conception of the Church by divine right. Otherwise, it is but a mediocre performance, which is vitiated by the tendency to mistake dogmatism for history, to ignore the fact of historical development, and to identify the Church with Old Testament institutions. From the ecclesiastical point of view, its significance and its effects were very great. In itself it is an *ex parte* effusion of very questionable validity. The late Archbishop Benson exaggerated its merits when he described it as "a marvellous work."⁶³

Cyprian's theory of the episcopate as the body on which the Church is founded materially affected the position of the lower clergy. It tended to exalt the bishop at the expense of the presbyter. In this theory the gulf between the two is materially widened. If God makes the bishop, the bishop makes the lower clergy.⁶⁴ The bishop is no longer merely the president. He is

⁶³ Cyprian, 186 (1897).

⁶⁴ Ep. 3 (64).

the autocrat. He is not merely the successor of the apostles in the historic sense. He is an apostle. The apostles were bishops and the bishops are by vicarious ordination apostles,⁶⁵ invested with all their functions and powers. They are like them Christ's vicegerents, representatives.⁶⁶ They are made by God, and obedience to them is as essential as obedience to the divine will. It is inadmissible on the part of the clergy or the people to question or revolt against their authority, except in the case of lapse or other heinous sin, by which they forfeit this authority. To contend with them is to incur the fate of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram—a favourite example. The bishop has absolute power to punish disobedient clerics, to inflict excommunication or deposition, and opposition to him is opposition to God. Such is the theory. Ignatius, as we have seen, had, a century and a half earlier, exalted the bishop in very extravagant terms. For him also he was the representative of Christ. But he had also emphasised the authority of the presbyters as the successors of the apostles and the deacons as the servants of Christ, and recognised the rights of the community itself. Cyprian not only exalts the rights and function of the bishop in similarly extravagant language. With him the bishop completely overshadows both clergy and people and is the autocrat of the community. In the enforcement of his theory, he even claims, like Ignatius, to speak by inspiration.⁶⁷ Like him he is prone to assume in his Epistles that he is uttering the divine commands and that his interpretation of Scripture is infallible. He applies to the bishops Christ's words to the apostles, "He that heareth you heareth me."⁶⁸

Practically, however, he does not carry out his autocratic theory. He could not, even if he had desired, entirely ignore the historical rights of the clergy and people. The presbyter has become the absolute subordinate of the bishop. But the bishop, as a rule, consults with the presbyters and the deacons in all important matters connected with the community, such as the choice of those to be ordained to the clerical office. "Since the beginning of my episcopacy," he tells the presbyters of Carthage, "I have resolved to do nothing on my own private opinion, without your counsel and without the consent of the people."⁶⁹ The people, too, have still certain rights, especially that of electing the bishop, though the consent and confirmation of neighbouring bishops are necessary to the validity of the election.⁷⁰ It may withdraw its obedience from one guilty of heresy or other heinous sin. Its presence, and apparently its assent, are necessary to the

⁶⁵ Ep. 3 (64); 66 (68).

⁶⁶ *Antistites*.

⁶⁷ Ep. 63 (62).

⁶⁸ Ep. 66 (68).

⁶⁹ Ep. 14 (5).

⁷⁰ Ep. 67 (67).

validity of important measures, like that in reference to the lapsed, which affect the individual community. It, as well as the clergy, takes part in the councils held to decide such questions for the Church throughout the African provinces, though the decision is apparently given only by the bishops.

In this autocratic conception of the episcopal office he seems to have been influenced to some extent by Roman institutions. As the Roman governor is the representative of the Emperor, so the bishop is the representative of Christ. In both cases the transmission of power is conveyed by the mandate of an authority esteemed divine, though in both cases it is formally regarded as also coming by popular assent. The Emperor is invested with an imperial power by the will of the Roman *populus*, and similarly the people give their assent to the election of the bishop. But in the one case and the other the assent is really formal, for the Emperor is a sort of divinity, and, in Cyprian's view, the bishop really derives his power from God alone.

SACERDOTALISM

Cyprian also gives emphatic expression in his Epistles to the priestly function of the clergy, especially the bishop. Generally speaking, we may say that, in the first and second centuries, the priestly conception, as associated with the Christian community, is understood in a moral and spiritual sense. In the gospels Christ founds a religious community, which is not, indeed, sharply differentiated from Judaism, for he respects the law and the priesthood and does not abolish either. But with the transition of Christianity into a universal religion there came the inevitable disruption between the two. Christ becomes the one eternal high priest in His sacrifice and intercession for mankind, and the Christian community is a spiritual priesthood,⁷¹ which offers its prayers and thanksgivings, and its gifts for the Eucharist and the poor to God in a spiritual sense. In the second century there is still no real attempt to depart from the original conception of this common spiritual priesthood, despite the gradual striving to differentiate the clergy from the laity, and to emphasise the rights of the former, especially the bishop. Clemens Romanus, indeed, as we have seen, at the end of the first century shows a tendency to bring the Christian office-bearers into association with the Jewish priesthood in his anxiety for an orderly ministry. But he speaks by way of analogy, and at any rate he does not teach an organic connection between the two, though even the analogy is significant of a tendency to bring them into some sort of connection.

⁷¹ Heb. v. f. ; 1 Peter ii. 5.

Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century still applies the idea of priesthood to all Christians who are "the true high-priestly race of God."⁷² Irenæus at the end of the century likewise recognises this priesthood of believers, whilst laying stress on the function and distinction of the clergy as bearers of the apostolic tradition.⁷³ At the same time, the ultimate outcome of the marked differentiation between clergy and laity was to substitute for the general priesthood of Christians an exclusive clerical priesthood, which is the intermediary between God and the community in certain acts of worship. Significant of this tendency is the use of the term *sacerdos* as applied to the bishop in Tertullian and Hippolytus. Tertullian, however, does not exclusively apply the conception of priesthood to the clergy. Where there is no cleric, every layman may be his own priest, and, in his later Montanist period at any rate, he emphasises the old idea of the priesthood of all believers.

With Cyprian, on the other hand, the sacerdotal conception is fundamental. He identifies the episcopate with the Jewish priesthood—not by way of analogy, but absolutely. He habitually uses the term "priest" (*sacerdos*) to designate the bishop, who is for him not merely the successor of the apostles, but the successor of the Jewish priest. He applies to him, without discrimination of the difference of institution and office, the precepts of the Old Testament relative to the priesthood. When he desires to emphasise his privileges, rights, functions, he turns by predilection to these passages, especially those enforcing with the death penalty obedience to the priest as to God, such as Deut. xvii. 12-13, and that relating the fate of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. He speaks of the "sacerdotal position," of "the priestly power" of the bishop.⁷⁴ He calls the clergy "a divine priesthood."⁷⁵ He identifies the presbyters with the Levitic tribe.

With the idea of priesthood is combined that of sacrifice. The Eucharist is no longer a sacrifice in the sense of being a spiritual and commemorative offering of the people's thanksgivings and gifts. It is a repetition of Christ's sacrifice, offered by the bishop each time that he performs this rite, not merely a commemoration of it, though this feature is also referred to. It is "the sacrifice of the Lord's passion that he offers," and it ought to be done in the manner prescribed by him, he insists in reference to the question of using water, instead of wine mixed with water, as some were in

⁷² "Dialogue," 116-117.

⁷³ On the subject of the priestly conception in the second century, see Lightfoot, "Essay on the Christian Ministry," 247-256 (1868).

⁷⁴ Ep. 3 (64).

⁷⁵ Ep. 1 (65).

the habit of doing. "For if Jesus Christ our Lord and God is Himself the chief priest of God the Father and offered Himself a sacrifice to the Father, and commanded this to be done in commemoration of Himself, that priest truly acts in the place of Christ who imitates that which Christ did. In so doing, he offers a true and full sacrifice in the Church to God the Father, if he thus proceeds to offer it according to what he sees Christ Himself to have offered."⁷⁶

In addition to performing in this act the priestly function of Christ, the bishop also exercises his judicial function. He is the judge in Christ's place and as such remits sin. He is also the channel by which the Holy Spirit is conveyed to the believer by means of the laying on of hands at baptism, ordination, etc. In his priestly capacity and his function as the channel of the Spirit, the bishop is, in fact, the mediator between God and the people. The primitive conception of a spiritual priesthood and a community directly inspired by God has thus receded before that of an official priesthood, which offers sacrifice to God, and is the mediator of the divine grace by means of the performance of certain rites. The difference is a striking one and the process by which it gradually came about was due to various influences. In part, doubtless, to the pagan ideas emanating especially from the mystery cults which, with the increasing number of Christian converts, were finding their way into the Church. In part to the tendency to seek not only types, but actual anticipations and embodiments of Christian institutions in the Old Testament, which was the inevitable result of the unhistoric apprehension and interpretation of these much misused Scriptures.⁷⁷ This kind of imaginary exegesis could and did easily lead to the identification of the Christian ministry with the Jewish priesthood, especially in one who, like Cyprian, evidently brought with him into Christianity the predilection for sacerdotalism, combined with the Roman sense of authority and obedience, which this identification tended to fortify.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ep. 63 (62). According to Cyprian, the presbyter can also perform the sacerdotal function. He speaks generally of the clergy in one passage as *sacerdotes et ministri* (Ep. 72), the presbyters being included in the former, the deacons designated by the latter. Habitually, however, the term *sacerdos* is applied to the bishop.

⁷⁷ Justin, for instance, sees in the twelve bells attached to the robes of the high priest types of the twelve Apostles. Irenæus speaks of the Apostles as priests, though it is evident that he is speaking of a spiritual priesthood, IV. 17 (IV. viii. 3).

⁷⁸ For Cyprian see, besides "Opera Omnia," "Corpus Scriptorum Eccl. Lat.," iii.; O. Ritschl, "Cyprian von Karthago" (1885), critical and scientific; Goetz, "Das Christenthum Cyprians"; Benson, "Cyprian, His Life, Times, and Work" (1897), the most elaborate work in English, scholarly, but unduly

THE EASTERN CHURCH

Of the Catholic ministry in the Eastern Church we get a detailed presentation in the Syrian "Didascalia,"⁷⁹ which, though addressed to a single community, is evidently meant to apply to the Church at large. The community, which is a large one, forms part of "the Catholic, holy, perfect Church," and, as in 1st Peter, it is "a royal priesthood," "a holy assembly." The ministry is derived from the apostles, in whose name the author writes, on the assumption that the existing constitution was ordained by them from the outset. It consists of bishops, presbyters, deacons, deaconesses, sub-deacons, reader, and widows, who are markedly distinguished from the laity. Its members correspond to the High Priest, priests, and levites of the old dispensation, though only by way of analogy, not in the organic sense. They are the servants of Christ, the true High Priest, to whom, instead of the old sacrifices, the Catholic Church offers prayers, petitions, praise, and its gifts for the support of the clergy and the needy. The bishop is, in this analogous sense, the Christian high priest; the presbyters, deacons, and widows the Christian priests and levites. The writer is evidently a bishop with a flair for episcopal dominance, and magnifies the dignity and importance of the episcopal function at the expense of the other office-bearers as well as the laity. As in the Ignatian Epistles, which he takes as his model, he is prone to exaggeration. The bishop is to be honoured as the representative of God in the community. He is, under God, its father, who has begotten its members in baptism, its head, leader, and mighty king, who

biased at times in Cyprian's favour; Monceaux, "Hist. Lit. de l'Afrique chrétienne," ii. (1902), thorough and very appreciative; Lindsay, "Church and Ministry in the Early Centuries" (1902); Harnack, "Hist. of Dog.," ii.; Lightfoot, "The Christian Ministry" (1868); Muir, "Cyprian, His Life and Teaching" (1898), popular; Buonaiuti, "Il Cristianesimo Nell' Africa Romana" (1928); Koch, "Cyprianische Untersuchungen" (1926).

⁷⁹ The Greek original is not extant except in so far as it is embedded in the first six books of the Apostolic Constitutions. Part of it in a Latin translation was discovered by Hauler in a library at Verona in 1896 and edited by him (1900). The Syriac translation in the Parisian "Codex Sangermanensis," discovered and edited by Lagarde (1854). Another and very defective one discovered by R. Harris and edited and translated by Mrs Gibson (1903). A critical edition with German notes and translations, and essays on the contents by Achelis and Flemming, "Texte und Unters." Neue Folge, Bd. x. (1904). Connolly, "Didascalia Apostolorum" (1929). Introduction, translations, and notes. It contains besides the translations from the Syriac the Latin text so far as it goes. The date is uncertain. Whilst Harnack places it in the first half of the third century, Achelis is disposed to date it in the second half of the century. Connolly is equally undecided, though he inclines to place it before the Decian persecution. *Introd.* 91.

ought to be honoured as God Himself,⁸⁰ the mediator between God and the faithful.⁸¹ The community is to do nothing without the bishop. Of the common offerings, he receives four parts to two each for the presbyters, deacons, and reader, and one for the widows. He should not, as a rule, be under fifty years of age, and should be well educated and expert in the Scriptures. In any case, he must be familiar with God's Word and a man of exemplary character and life,⁸² befitting the head of a Christian community. He may only be married once. Obviously the writer has taken his model bishop from the Pastoral Epistles. Before admission to office he must give proof by examination of these imperative qualifications. Though elected by the people and ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbyters,⁸³ he is almost its absolute monarch. He is the equal of kings, and his power, unlike theirs, extends over heavenly things, since what he looses or binds on earth has validity in heaven.⁸⁴ He appoints to all lower clerical offices.⁸⁵

He overshadows the other clergy as well as the laity. Whilst, as in Ignatius, the presbyters are to be esteemed as the apostles, their importance has declined in proportion as that of the bishop has increased. They are members of the presbytery or collegiate council over which he presides, and their chief function is the maintenance of discipline in co-operation with him. In this capacity they are, indeed, to be "honoured as the apostles and the councillors of the bishop, and as the crown of the Church, seeing that they are the maintainers of the discipline and its councillors."⁸⁶ Practically, however, their influence and activity in the community seem to depend on the episcopal will. The deacons, who, in Ignatius' phrase, are the representatives of Christ, are, in fact, more prominent and active in its affairs than they. They are "the ear of the bishop, his mouth, his heart and soul."⁸⁷ If the bishop is Moses, the deacon is Aaron. If the bishop mediates between God and man, the deacon mediates between the bishop and the community. He takes an active part in the pastoral work. He reports to the bishop on the state of the community. He is in constant touch with the laity, who bring to him their gifts, which he distributes to the poor and the sick, and those suffering for the faith, of whom he has the charge. He has the supervision over the behaviour of the members in worship, and sees that no one hums, sleeps, laughs or nods in

⁸⁰ c. 9.⁸¹ c. 8.⁸² c. 4.⁸³ c. 4.

There is no mention of the presence of neighbouring bishops.

⁸⁴ c. 9.⁸⁶ *Ibid.*⁸⁵ *Ibid.*⁸⁷ c. 10.

church.⁸⁸ Widows and deaconesses, as ecclesiastical functionaries, also figure prominently. The widows, of whom the writer shows a marked distrust, should not be less than fifty years old, since experience shows that it is inadvisable to appoint younger women. They must promise not to remarry, must not circulate scandal, nor exploit the members for their personal profit, nor usurp the episcopal function by prophesying, teaching, and even baptizing, nor foster a schismatic tendency subversive of the episcopal authority. Evidently the old charismatic spirit has survived in them and their supporters, and one object of the writer is to stamp out what remains of this spirit in the community. They shall, therefore, strictly keep to their proper sphere—intercessory prayer and the care of the sick—for which they are consecrated by the bishop. The tendency is to curb these troublesome females by the deaconesses, who, like the deacons, are the close associates of the bishop in the pastoral work.⁸⁹

CHAPTER VI

THE MONTANIST OPPOSITION

MONTANISM was a revolt against the ecclesiastical type of Christianity represented by the developing Catholic Church with its official ministry, its emphasis on apostolic succession, as the test of truth and authority, its growing tendency to adapt itself, in life and discipline, to the world and take on the character of a permanent ordered institution. This development had synchronised with the decline of the prophetic type of Christianity with its inspired teaching, its enthusiastic, other-worldly spirit, its accentuated belief in the speedy coming of Christ. Montanism was an attempt not only to revive this type in an exaggerated form, but to reform the Church in accordance with it.

MONTANUS AND HIS ASSOCIATES

Montanus, its originator, was probably a native of a Mysian village, named Ardabau, on the borders of Phrygia. It was here, according to the anonymous writer quoted by Eusebius,¹ that,

⁸⁸ c. 9 and 12.

⁸⁹ chs. 9, 14, 15, 16. Widows in general, who are cared for by the community, are to be distinguished from widows in the ecclesiastical sense.

¹ Eusebius, v. 16.

soon after the middle of the second century, he began his career as a prophet.² The movement had already begun to agitate the Church by the year 177, in which the persecuted Christians of Lyons sent letters relative to it to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia and to Eleutherus, Bishop of Rome.³

We know from Eusebius⁴ that he was a convert from paganism, and he is said to have been a priest of the local pagan cult before he was converted to Christianity.⁵ If so, he seems to have transferred from the worship of Cybele to Christianity the fervid, ecstatic spirit which it nurtured, and which was indeed a feature of the Phrygian national character, as also of the Christian worship of an earlier time. With him were associated two women, Maximilla and Priscilla, to whom the same authority was ascribed, and the same reverence shown by their adherents as to Montanus himself. Their opponents represent Montanus as actuated by ambition and the craving for notoriety⁶—a charge usually levelled against those deemed heterodox and not, therefore, necessarily justified. They ascribe his ecstatic prophecies as well as those of his feminine associates to the agency of the devil, whom some of the bishops attempted in vain to exorcise.⁷ They say, further, that, under the influence of the devil, the two women left their husbands to follow Montanus,⁸ and this seems to have been the fact, whether the devil was the cause of it or not. They add that Montanus and Maximilla ultimately ended their crazy existence by hanging themselves like Judas⁹—which is evidently an unfounded slander. They accuse their followers of hypocrisy, arrogance, self-seeking, and worse vices.¹⁰ Though the charge may be true of individuals amongst them, like Alexander, it is entirely out of keeping with the austere spirit of the movement. These and other bitter accusations show only the personal animosity which their antagonism to the Church had aroused,

² Eusebius, "Chronica," ed. Fotheringham, 288 (1923), gives the year 172 as the beginning of the movement; Epiphanius the year 157, "Panarion," 48, ed. Holl (the nineteenth year of the reign of Antoninus Pius). Its origin was most likely nearer the latter than the former date. On Montanism in its native Phrygian environment, see Calder in "Anatolian Studies," presented to Sir W. Ramsay, 63 f. (1923).

³ Eusebius, v. 3.

⁴ v. 16.

⁵ By Didymus of Alex., "De Trinitate, III. xli. 3, quoted by Bonwetsch, "Geschichte des Montanismus," 149 (1881). Still the best work on the subject. He has collected the extant utterances of Montanus and other prophets. See also "Texte zur Geschichte des Montanismus," Kleine Texte (1914).

⁶ Eusebius, v. 16.

⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 18.

⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 16.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, v. 18.

and are clearly in large measure the fruit of misrepresentation and calumny.¹¹

THE NEW PROPHECY

The basis of their teaching is the claim to a fuller revelation, in virtue of their inspiration by the Spirit, than that possessed by the Catholic Church. They acknowledged the revelation previously made through the Old Testament prophets, Christ, and the apostles, and adhered to the traditional faith as professed by the Church. They were not heretics in the sense of denying the truths common to all Catholic Christians, and their antagonists admitted their general soundness in the faith.¹² Nor was the question at issue between them and their opponents the question whether or not prophecy was still operative in the Church. The Catholic ministry still recognised the validity of the prophetic function, as is evident from the testimony of Irenæus, who tells us that there were many in the Church who possessed the prophetic gift, declared the mysteries of God, and even spoke with tongues, and whom he designates "the spirituals."¹³ To this class the Montanist prophets claimed to belong.¹⁴ But they not only perpetuated the primitive prophetic function. They sought to vindicate this function and the authority of the prophetic class against the official ministry, which, whilst recognising it, assigned it a subordinate position. At the same time, they claimed to inaugurate a new era of revelation superior to all that had preceded it—a "new prophecy" which it was obligatory on the Church to receive, and to which it must submit as the highest norm of truth and life. Its authority is superior to that of any canon of inspired writings or ministry deriving from the apostles. Not that they denied the validity of a canon of apostolic writings or an apostolic ministry. But the new prophecy, as the fruit of a special inspiration by the Spirit, is of higher authority than either. With Montanism the age of the Paraclete has dawned and Christ's promise of a further revelation has been fulfilled. This revelation is to previous revelations as perfect to imperfect knowledge. Through the new prophets the Paraclete, promised by Christ, speaks directly and fully the truth. This fuller revelation, of

¹¹ This is especially apparent in the case of the two anti-Montanist writers from whom Eusebius quotes—the one anonymous, the other named Apollonius, of whom little is otherwise known. Hippolytus is less biased. Epiphanius, on the other hand, ascribes the movement to diabolic agency.

¹² Hippolytus, "Philos.," viii. 12; Epiphanius, "Panarion," 48.

¹³ "Adv. Haer.," V. vi. 1.

¹⁴ Eusebius, v. 17.

which the Church has only an imperfect apprehension, has been reserved to this last time. The prophets themselves are but the passive instruments of the Spirit's activity. They speak in a state of ecstasy, in which the will and self-consciousness of the prophet are in abeyance.¹⁵ It is akin to that of those who spoke with tongues, except that the new prophet's message is expressed in terms which his listeners can understand. In this respect he speaks like the ordinary prophet. Only, unlike the ordinary prophet, his ecstatic message is superconscious. "Behold," Montanus makes the Spirit say, "the man is as a lyre and I sweep over him as a plectrum. The man sleeps; I wake. Behold it is the Lord who puts the hearts of men out of themselves and gives a heart to men."¹⁶ He claimed, it is said, even to incorporate, in this sense, the Trinity in himself. "I am the Father, and the Son, and the Paraclete."¹⁷ Similarly, Maximilla is said to have claimed that, in listening to her, her auditors were listening to Christ.¹⁸ "I am Word, and Spirit, and Power," she exclaimed to the bishops, who sought to exorcise her.¹⁹ A cardinal element of their message is the emphasis laid on the approaching end of the world. The reign of Antichrist is about to commence in a last great persecution, and thereafter Christ will appear to establish His millennial kingdom on earth in the Phrygian village of Pepuza, which is to be the new Jerusalem (*cf.* Rev. iii. 12). Hence the necessity of due preparation for this last phase of the world's history, with its mingled conflict and triumph for God's people. Hence the rigorous, puritanic tone of their revelations in as far as they concern actual life. The Christian must practise a rigorous asceticism and must live as if he belonged to another world. He must eschew second marriage, or, better still, refrain altogether from marriage.²⁰ The shortness of the time and the horrors of impending trial should deter him from gratifying such a fleshly desire, which is, besides, incompatible with purity of soul, and hinders the operation of the Spirit. Hence, too, the emphasis laid on long and severe fasting²¹ as an indispensable adjunct of a holy life; the antagonism to any compromise between the Church and the world; the exclusion of all notorious sinners from it and the refusal to readmit them, even in return for repentance; the exaltation of martyrdom and the heinousness of the sin of fleeing from instead of facing persecution. Hence also the distinction between the spiritual or pneumatic and the psychic class of

¹⁵ Eusebius, v. 17.

¹⁷ Didymus, "De Trinitate," xli. 1; Bonwetsch, 197.

¹⁸ Epiphanius, xlvi. 12.

¹⁹ Eusebius, v. 16.

¹⁶ Epiphanius, "Haer.," xlvi. 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, v. 18.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Christians in the Gnostic fashion, though not in the Gnostic sense. The actual Church has degenerated with its sojourn in the world, in which the true Church—the Church of the Paraclete, which consists of spiritual Christians—has no real part. Its historical development and the growing tendency to take on the character of an earthly society constitute, for the Montanists, a lapse from the ideal heavenly society, in which alone the Spirit can fully and fitly manifest itself. Their highly subjective conception of Christianity as the religion of the Spirit, their rigorist view of life, and their conviction of the imminence of the end of the world and of the transformation of the earthly into the millennial kingdom of heaven, alike led them to draw this conclusion. At the same time, while actuated by a moral earnestness and a spiritual intensity that took offence at the more formal aspect of the life and organisation of the Church, they were themselves in danger of fostering a formalism still more objectionable. With their ecstatic spiritualism they combined a petty and morbid puritanism, which tended to invest the minutiae of conduct with an artificial moral importance, to restrict unduly individual Christian liberty, and infuse into Christianity the old Jewish legalist spirit. In spite of their hyperspiritualism, their emphasis on the free prophetic spirit as against the official ecclesiasticism, they share the conventional conception of Christianity as a new law, and even exaggerate it in a petty, querulous, and self-righteous spirit. Nor is it by any means certain that the ascetic reformation desiderated by them would have proved an unmixed blessing to the Church or the world. Their low view of marriage, for instance, would have tended to the degradation instead of the uplifting of humanity.

CATHOLIC ANTAGONISM

Antagonism between them and the Catholic Church was inevitable. Theoretically the things that the Montanists emphasised were also the things that the Church professed. It believed in prophecy, urged the necessity of renouncing the world, cherished the hope of the coming of Christ. It prescribed fasting and discouraged second marriage, in the case of the clergy at least. But it objected to the claim of the new prophets, on the ground of John xvi. 13, to possess a revelation superior to that of Christ Himself, and to the ecstatic character of the new prophecy as extravagant, arrogant, and delusive. It maintained that it was not in keeping with the traditional practice.²² It denounced the

²² Eusebius, v. 17.

new prophets as pseudo-prophets,²³ adduced the early practice of trying the spirits, ascribed their utterances to demonic agency, and denied their right to appeal to the Christian prophets of a more primitive time in support of their claims. This is the attitude adopted by the anonymous writer quoted by Eusebius, by Apolinarius of Hierapolis, Serapion of Antioch, Miltiades, Alcibiades, Apollonius, Caius. The contention that the new prophecy, in virtue of its ecstatic character, was a diabolic aberration from the received prophecy and from that of an earlier time is, however, not altogether in accord with historic evidence. Irenæus, for instance, testifies that the gift of speaking with tongues was still exercised in the Church of his time,²⁴ and this gift was certainly of an ecstatic nature. Primitive prophecy, as distinct from speaking with tongues, was, as a rule, intelligible and didactic. But it could also be ecstatic, as in the case of the prophet who wrote the Apocalypse. Even Paul had his ecstatic moments of inspiration, and the Montanist prophet could claim that he, too, though his revelation came to him in a state of ecstasy, spoke in an intelligible language. The Catholic critics of Montanus were, therefore, unwarranted in drawing an absolute distinction between the new and the old, and in carrying their antagonism the length of ascribing the former to diabolic influence. Their criticism is coloured by their hostility, and their bias is only too apparent in the bitterness with which they denounced it.

What they most resented was the un-Catholic tendency of the movement, and their criticism was, in no small degree, actuated by this feeling. The emphasis on tradition as the norm of truth and the attestation of office, the appeal to the apostolic age as the grand authority for the developing organisation, teaching, and practice of the Church were incompatible with the principle of a progressive revelation, independent of tradition and of the ecclesiastical development for which the sanction of tradition was adduced. Even in the matter of tradition the Montanist sought to counter the appeal to the apostles with the appeal to the prophets. The Montanist Proclus, for example, could adduce the tombs of the prophetic daughters of Philip, the evangelist, at Hierapolis as an offset to the appeal of Caius, the anti-Montanist Roman presbyter, to the tombs of the apostles at Rome, in vindication of the superior authority of the Catholic Church.²⁵ The controversy was thus not so much a controversy as to the merits or demerits of prophecy. It was rather a conflict between the new prophet and the new episcopate, to which the prophet

²³ Eusebius, v. 16, 18.

²⁴ V. vi. 1.

²⁵ Eusebius, ii. 25; iii. 31.

refused to be subordinate, and over which he even assumed a higher authority. Tradition, apostolic succession, even a canon of apostolic writings availed nothing against those who claimed to be the infallible mouthpiece of the Paraclete, refused to recognise a closed canon of inspired writings, and insisted on imposing their own revelations on the Church. There was something to be said for their principle of a progressive revelation of truth against the ecclesiastical tendency to limit Christian thought to a collection of apostolic writings, some of which were not even written by apostles. Equally cogent the objection to the tendency to make tradition and apostolic succession the infallible test of truth. On the other hand, the Catholic Church could not afford to recognise a movement which not only questioned its evaluation of itself as the true apostolic Church, but pitted against the authority of the apostles the higher authority of the Spirit. Moreover, apart from the question of a rival authority which tended to subvert that of the official Catholic ministry, the ecstatic extravagances of the new prophets might well seem, on practical grounds, a grave menace to the cause of Christianity. To admit the Montanist claim to a dictatorial authority over the Church would have been to transform it into a narrow, legalist sect, and expose it to the tyranny of every enthusiast who mistook his own idiosyncracies for the dictates of the Spirit. The reckless desire for martyrdom, the uncompromising, provocative attitude towards the State and society were, furthermore, fitted to endanger as well as embarrass the Church in the midst of a hostile world.

It may be said, therefore, that it forced the Church in self-defence to take up an antagonistic position, even if it was by no means the diabolic thing that its ecclesiastical opponents represent, and its high, if narrow ideal invests it with a certain moral greatness. At the same time, the repression of the prophetic function in the Church which had enriched Christian thought in the past, and now fell into abeyance as the result of this antagonism, was a distinct loss to its spiritual life. Institutional religion, with its professional ministry, is apt to fall into the rut of use and wont. It cannot afford to ignore or repress the prophetic spirit, if it is to avoid the fossilisation of life and thought.

SCHISM

The result was schism, and schism on a considerable scale. Montanism organised itself in a separate church, with its distinct and salaried clergy, whose head was the patriarch at Pepuza—the new Jerusalem—where a yearly assembly was held. It thus

tended to crystallise into a fixed form, against which it had protested, in spite of its original character as a free expression of the Spirit. In this Church women occupied an influential position as prophetesses or teachers. We may dismiss as malicious gossip for the most part the accusation that in organising the movement and raising funds in its support its leaders were actuated by covetousness, as its opponents aver. It could boast of its martyrs and its defenders, among whom were Alcibiades, Theodotus, Themison, Proclus, and Alexander—the last of rather dubious reputation. Though its opponents seek to belittle the movement,²⁶ it evidently had many adherents not only in Phrygia and Asia Minor,²⁷ but in Greece and North Africa. At Rome, too, and in Gaul it made some headway, and the widespread and lengthy agitation, which it evoked, is a sufficient evidence of its strength. Synods met in Asia Minor to consider and authoritatively condemn it and excommunicate its adherents.²⁸ Bishop Eleutherus of Rome, who was at first disposed to be sympathetic, and to whom the Christians of Lyons submitted the question,²⁹ added his condemnation. Bishop Victor, who was also at first inclined to toleration, was transformed into an active enemy by Praxeas.³⁰ The antagonism of Rome might check its spread in the West, but it exercised a considerable influence in North Africa, through Tertullian, its most notable convert. It continued to maintain its separate existence in the East in spite of the repeated condemnation of synods and severe repression on the part of the Emperor Constantine.

TERTULLIAN AS MONTANIST

According to Jerome, Tertullian's adhesion to Montanism was due to the hostile attitude of the Roman clergy.³¹ It was rather an act of personal pique than of conviction. It is probable enough, as M. Monceaux thinks, that he had quarrelled with the Bishop of Carthage, that the bishop had sought the intervention of the Roman clergy, and that the latter took the side of the bishop

²⁶ Eusebius, v. 16.

²⁷ Sozomen, "Hist. Eccl.," ii. 32.

²⁸ Eusebius, v. 16; Hefele, "Conciliengeschichte," i. 83 f.

²⁹ According to Eusebius (v. 3) they seem to have been opposed to the movement, not, as Bonwetsch and Müller ("Kirchengeschichte," i. 111) think, sympathetic. See also Salmon, "Dict. of Christ. Biog.," iii. 937.

³⁰ Tertullian, "Adv. Praxean," 1. Müller and others assume that it was Eleutherus, not Victor, that Praxeas influenced against Montanism. It is more probable that Tertullian is referring to Victor in the expression "the Bishop of Rome."

³¹ "De Viris Illustribus," 53.

against his contentious presbyter. The point in dispute may have been connected with the new prophecy, with which Tertullian was disposed to sympathise, and which successive Roman bishops had condemned. The Roman decision may have contributed to alienate him definitely from the Church. If so, the antagonism of Rome was rather the occasion than the cause of his secession. He was, in fact, predisposed by character and temperament to become the champion of such a movement. "Before actually becoming a Montanist," aptly remarks M. Monceaux, "he was one by instinct."³² He was a born rebel against what is called constituted authority; one of those independent, opinionative natures which cannot submit when they cannot dominate. He was, too, intellectually head and shoulders above the mediocre ecclesiastic of his time. With great intellectual gifts, he conjoined a personality of extraordinary force, and it must have been, on this ground alone, exceedingly difficult for him to subordinate himself to smaller men. He was, besides, an extremist, to whom compromise was an impossibility. If the point in dispute was a matter of doctrine he would pursue the heretic as if he were the devil himself. He was, in fact, always on the track of some enemy, whether the enemy was a persecuting governor, or a Gnostic philosopher, or an anti-trinitarian theologian. So, too, in regard to questions of discipline. From the outset he was inclined to be a puritan and his puritanism grew upon him until, as in the "De Pallio," even the question of donning the short pallium in preference to the more flowing toga, or the wearing of veils by virgins became a question of the highest moral importance. One cannot help wondering how a man of such brilliant intellect, such literary skill could waste his genius on the discussion of questions of a largely formal and often petty nature. Such, however, was Tertullian—a fighter, whether the cause be great or little; an anarchist against constituted authority, whether the authority is that of the State, or the Church; an extremist even if the question is only about the length or the shape of a garment.

The character and temperament of the man thus sufficiently explain why he became a Montanist. The Montanist insistence on the free inspiration of the Spirit as against official ecclesiastical authority appealed to his restive temperament. The austere morality of the sect accorded with his puritan instincts. The individualist and the extremist in him together ultimately made him the protagonist of the Paraclete and the antagonist of the Church. There is no need to ascribe his profession of Montanism to any definite experience or event.

³² "Hist. Lit. de L'Afrique Chrétienne," i. 399 (1901).

The Montanist influence definitely appears in the second edition of his work against Marcion, which Monceaux assigns to the year 207-208.³³ In this work he appeals to the authority of the Paraclete in support of his view of the inadmissibility of second marriage; defends the ecstatic character of the new prophecy, which has occasioned the controversy between him and the Catholic Church (the psychics, as he calls the Catholics); and proclaims his belief in the millennial kingdom which is about to be established in the new Jerusalem.³⁴ Shortly afterwards the "De Anima," which Monceaux dates between 208 and 211, reveals the existence of a Montanist Church at Carthage, among whose members is a sister who receives revelations in ecstatic visions during the service, and makes them known to Tertullian after the congregation has dispersed. For these charismatic gifts he claims apostolic sanction.³⁵ Whilst emphasising in the "De Anima" the activity of the Paraclete,³⁶ he shows no express hostility to the Church. In the "De Virginibus Velandis" and the "De Exhortatione Castitatis," which were written about the same time, he adopts a more combative tone on the question of revelation as against the tendency to limit it to a canon of sacred writings. Revelation, he insists in the "De Virginibus," is progressive, and he appeals in support of his contention to John xvi. 12-13, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth." It has four stages—the rudimentary stage represented by natural religion, the stage of childhood or that of the law and the prophets; the stage of youth or that of the Gospel, and now at last the stage of maturity or that of the Paraclete and the new prophecy. The revelation of the Paraclete covers both teaching and discipline. His office is to regulate discipline, to interpret the Scriptures, to reform the intelligence, and to contribute to progress.³⁷ On the question at issue—the veiling of virgins—he argues in the extreme puritan spirit, and, to the modern mind, with needless heat and eloquence, against the growing custom of allowing virgins to appear uncovered in church. He writes as if the sight of a fair young face in the place of worship was necessarily an incitement to lust as well as an

³³ "Hist. Lit. de L'Afrique Chrétienne," i. 404.

³⁴ "Ad. Marcionem," i. 29; iii. 24; iv. 22. The presence of the Montanist spirit at Carthage is apparent a few years earlier in the story of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions in 202, which tells of the special revelations vouchsafed to Perpetua and Saturus in a series of visions. The martyrs are, however, still in full communion with the Church. The narrative was evidently edited and interpolated at a later time by a Montanist.

³⁵ "De Anima," 9.

³⁶ 11, 55, 56.

³⁷ "De Vir. Vel.," 1.

insult to modesty. This is certainly not very complimentary to his fellow-Christians, who might be supposed to be capable, especially in church, of beholding an unveiled female face without the grave danger to morality which he suggests. For him such laxity is a certain sign of the religious and moral declension of the Churches. Like Hermas he has an unwholesome predilection for discovering heinous sins in things innocent or indifferent.

At the same time, he is still prepared to recognise these degenerate Catholics as Christians. He confesses the identity of Montanists and Catholics in the common faith despite these differences. "They and we have the same faith, the same God, the same Christ, the same hope, the same sacrament of baptism. In one word we form the same Church."³⁸ This identity is also assumed in the "De Exhortatione Castitatis." He recognises the Catholic clergy as a legitimate clerical order, and warmly praises those of its members who eschew marriage and observe chastity as a matter of principle. He even speaks of the clergy as priests and acknowledges the conventional distinction between clergy and laity. But this distinction rests only on ecclesiastical authority and is only a formal one. All Christians, lay as well as cleric, are priests and are under the same obligation to abstain from second marriage, against which the treatise is directed. Where only three Christians meet together, there is the Church, and although they are laics, where there is no cleric, the layman may rightly baptise and dispense the Eucharist. The only condition is that he be not a digamist. Each individual must live by his own faith.³⁹ For Tertullian, the Montanist, ecclesiastical authority *per se* is of no validity. The test of truth and the true Church is moral and spiritual, not ecclesiastical, though he is as yet willing to live on terms of forbearance and even friendship with the order to which he himself belongs.

ANTAGONISM TO THE CHURCH

From about the year 211 this attitude decidedly changes to one of violent and bitter antagonism. He not only belongs to the Montanist community; he has broken completely with the Church and becomes the leader of an opposition sect, which alone is the true Church, and holds aloof from the Catholic Church as unworthy of its communion. This is the attitude of most of his later writings.⁴⁰ What impelled him to this rupture with the Psychics,

³⁸ "De Vir. Vel.," 2.

³⁹ "De Exhort.," 11.

⁴⁰ The "De Corona," the "De Idololatria," "De Fuga in Persecutione," "De Monogamia," "De Jejunio," "Adversus Praxean," "De Pudicitia," and the lost "De Ecstasi."

as he calls the Catholic Church, was, he tells us, the acknowledgment and defence of the Paraclete.⁴¹ He joins issue with them in the most uncompromising style on the subject of the Paraclete, second marriage, fasting, martyrdom, penitence, flight in persecution. He now insists on the necessity for all Christians of receiving the new prophecy as the supreme authority in all matters of faith and life.⁴² Only those who submit to the guidance of the Paraclete rightly understand the Scriptures, the rule of faith, and the discipline of the Christian life. This discipline, though severe, is not something new, for the Paraclete is only definitely appointing what he has hitherto refrained from imposing, in deference to human infirmity. He is rather its restitutor than its institutor.⁴³ Hence the inadmissibility of second marriage, which the Church forbids the clergy, even for the laity, second marriage being by the Spirit's testimony equivalent to adultery.⁴⁴ "We admit one marriage just as we admit one God."⁴⁵ The Paraclete, further, absolutely disallows flight or the buying immunity from persecution. Persecution, martyrdom is the God-appointed trial of faith, the sifter of the wheat from the chaff.⁴⁶ He also enjoins longer and more frequent fasts than those observed by the Church, and does not, as in the Church, leave the individual Christian at liberty to observe them, or not, as he pleases.⁴⁷ He absolutely forbids the pardon of adulterers and other gross sinners, in spite of the edict of the Pontifex Maximus at Rome, as he sarcastically terms Callistus. Such sinners are to be excommunicated without hope of readmission to the Church, since the remission of sin, in return for penitence, is the prerogative of God, not of such carnal bishops.⁴⁸ Those who oppose these authoritative prescriptions are carnal or psychic Christians, and to all Catholics he now systematically applies this contemptuous term, in contrast to the spirituals, for whom he claims a monopoly of the Paraclete. These carnals are, in fact, incapable of receiving the Spirit or taking pleasure in the things of the Spirit. Being carnal, they must perforce take pleasure only in the things of the flesh.⁴⁹ He speaks of their "animal faith,"⁵⁰ and attributes their opposition to Montanism to the lowest motives. He accuses the Catholic clergy, from the Roman bishop downwards, of seeking to lower the standard of Christian morality for their own material advantage.

⁴¹ "Adv. Prax.," 1.

⁴² "Adv. Prax.," 30; "De Fuga," 1 and 14.

⁴³ "De Monogamia," 1-4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-15.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁶ "De Fuga," 1, etc.

⁴⁷ "De Jejunio," 1, 2, etc.

⁴⁸ "De Pudicitia," 1, etc.

⁴⁹ "De Monogamia," 1.

⁵⁰ "De Jejunio," 1 and 3.

They are a miserable race of cowards and time-servers. They are lions in time of peace, but deer in time of persecution.⁵¹ These fugitive bishops, presbyters, deacons feed themselves rather than the sheep committed to their charge.⁵² He directs against them all the power of satire and invective which he had hitherto reserved for Gnostic and other heretics, and his satire is at times coarse and indelicate as well as stinging. He strives to discredit their authority by pouring out on them the vials of his ridicule and scorn and pitting against it the injunctions of the Spirit-inspired Christian. He contemptuously speaks of the Catholic Church as the Church which consists of a number of bishops, and ends by denying its claim to be a true Church and reserving this title for the Church of the Spirit.⁵³ The champion of the free inspiration of the Paraclete becomes the most intolerant of dogmatists, from whom there is no appeal. This dogmatism was, indeed, in some respects, a needful counterfoil to that of the Church, which tended more and more to exalt ecclesiastical authority, buttressed by a specious theory like apostolic succession, as the infallible norm of both teaching and life. It was, too, a by no means superfluous antidote to the growing tendency to be satisfied with a more easygoing morality and a more accommodating spirit towards the world, on the part of many Christians, in deference to expediency. But it undoubtedly tended to set up a sectarian domination in place of the corporate authority it attacked, and it would have fettered the Church by a puritan legalism, in large measure petty and unwholesome. The spirit of Tertullian, despite his moral earnestness and his great intellectual power, was essentially that of the sectarian doctrinaire. It is not surprising that the doctrinaire ended by quarrelling even with his Montanist brethren and becoming the leader of a sect within the sect, which seems to have survived till the time of St Augustine.

THE CATHOLIC REPLY

Nor did his Catholic opponents leave him in undisputed possession of the field. They paid him back in his own coin and denounced the new prophecy as an unwarrantable innovation and heresy inspired by the devil.⁵⁴ They opposed argument to argument as the numerous objections, which he attempts to answer in his writings, show. Over against his legalism, they set the liberty of the Gospel. The law and the prophets were until

⁵¹ "De Corona," I.

⁵² "De Fuga," II.

⁵³ "De Pudicitia," 21.

⁵⁴ "De Jejunio," I, II, 14; "De Monogamia," 2.

John, and the Gospel is a liberation from the old legalist dispensation, which the so-called régime of the Paraclete seeks to revive.⁵⁵ On the question of second marriage, for instance, did not St Paul permit the Christian widow to marry a second time? Is it not, therefore, permissible to all Christians, with the exception of the clergy, on whom alone monogamy is obligatory?⁵⁶ Fasting, except on stated days and at Easter, is a matter of individual choice.⁵⁷ The ascetic note in the new prophecy reflects pagan as well as Jewish influence, and is contrary to the Spirit of Christ. Faith is free, according to Paul, who predicted the advent of these lying prophets, forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats which God has enjoined to be received with thanksgiving.⁵⁸ Against such the testimony of Scripture and the fact of Christian freedom are decisive. Moreover the violent denunciation of military service, as involving the recognition of idolatry,⁵⁹ is a needless provocation to the State, and this provocation, together with the extravagant exaltation of martyrdom, tends to aggravate its hostility and endanger the lives of his fellow-Christians.

CHAPTER VII

THE ROMAN PRIMACY

THE EARLY ROMAN CHURCH

FROM an early time the Roman Church had acquired an eminent and influential position in the Church at large. This distinction it owed to its importance, size, and relative affluence as the Church of the capital of the Empire; to its association with Peter and Paul; to its active and philanthropic interest in the churches of the East from the end of the first century onwards; to its prominence, through the influx of theologians from the East, as the centre of the varied theological thought of the period; to its championship of early orthodoxy against heresy. Of its early œcumenic importance, on such grounds, the Epistle written in its name by Clement to the Corinthian Church furnishes reliable historic evidence. Within a couple of decades later, Ignatius may be cited as another witness to its eminence among the

⁵⁵ "De Monogamia," 7; "De Jejunio," 2.

⁵⁶ "De Monogamia," 11, 12.

⁵⁷ "De Jejunio," 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, 15.

⁵⁹ "De Idololatria" and "De Corona."

churches of the West at least.¹ Its eminence in the Church at large is emphasised by Dionysius of Corinth² and Irenæus³ in the second half of the second century, and Tertullian in the early years of the third.⁴ Irenæus, in particular, ascribes to it "an eminence of leadership" among the other apostolic churches. On this account "every church, *i.e.*, the faithful from all quarters, necessarily resort to it,⁵ in which has been preserved that tradition derived from the apostles and always (professed) by those coming thither from all quarters." The Latin text thus literally translated is rather nebulous. Taken along with its context, the meaning appears to be this—As it would take too long to give the succession of bishops in all the apostolic churches to prove their apostolic origin and authority against the Gnostics, it must suffice to single out the Roman Church as the pre-eminent possessor of the apostolic tradition. Since the faithful from all quarters (*undique*) necessarily resort thither and share this tradition, the Roman Church may be taken as representing all the apostolic churches in this respect.

THE EARLY ROMAN BISHOPS

In any case, it is the pre-eminent leadership of the Roman Church, as embodying the true apostolic tradition, not a personal primacy of the Roman bishop over the Church at large that is signalled in this passage. It is only from about the middle of the second century that its bishop emerges from the obscurity of an earlier time. According to the Muratorian Canon,⁶ the first to emerge is Pius, who is somewhat problematically described as a

¹ In the preface to his Epistle to the Romans, he describes it as "having the precedence in the land of the Romans"; ἐκκλησία ἡρις καὶ προκάθηται ἐν τόπῳ Χωρίῳ Ρωμαίων.

² Eusebius, iv. 23.

³ "Adv. Haer.," III. iii. 1 (III. iii. 2).

⁴ "De Præscript. Haer.," 36.

⁵ Ad hanc enim ecclesiam propter potioem principalitatem necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam. The original Greek is lacking owing to the fact that only part of the First Book of "Adv. Haer." has been preserved in the original through the copious extracts of Hippolytus and Epiphanius. The remainder, for the most part, exists only in an imperfect Latin translation. I do not agree with Harnack ("Hist. of Dogma," ii. 157 f.) that principalis stands for *ἀθροῦν*, "sovereignty," or that "convenire ad" means "to agree with," not "to resort to." He tends to exaggerate the dominating position of the Roman Church at this period. Gwatkin ("Early Church Hist.," ii. 220 (1909)) and Beet ("Early Roman Episcopate," 115 f. (1913)) and others also question this conclusion. See also C. I. Cadoux, "Catholicism and Christianity," 459 f. (1928). Whilst Irenæus and Tertullian ascribe special honour to Rome as an apostolic church, they also recognise the pre-eminence of other apostolic churches.

⁶ Latin text and trans. in Milligan, "New Test. Documents" (1913).

brother of Hermas. The next two, Anicetus (154 or 155 to 166 or 167) and Soter, are undoubtedly historic. Polycarp as well as Hegesippus visited the former and discussed the Easter question with him.⁷ Dionysius of Corinth notices the latter in appreciative terms in connection with the liberality of the Roman Church.⁸ Irenæus gives a list of their predecessors back to Linus, whom Peter and Paul ordained first bishop.⁹ Hegesippus appears to have preceded Irenæus in drawing up such a list.¹⁰ Evidently, therefore, such a list existed in the second half of the second century. On the other hand, the available historic evidence does not tend to show that there was a single bishop of the Roman Church till towards the middle of the second century. In his Epistle to the Corinthian Church, Clement writes not as Bishop of Rome, but as the correspondent of the Roman Church, and gives no hint that he is its sole bishop. He knows only of presbyter-bishops in each community, and he was evidently one of these presbyter-bishops in that of Rome. Writing some years later to the Romans, Ignatius knows nothing of a single Roman bishop, such as had come into existence in the churches of Syria and the province of Asia, as we learn from his Epistles to a number of the Asian churches. Had there been such an office-bearer in the Roman Church, he would, we may safely infer, assuredly have taken note of his existence.¹¹ Hermas, who wrote "The Shepherd" at Rome somewhat later, knows only of bishops in the Roman Church, and though he mentions Clement as its correspondent with other churches, he does not speak of him as its sole bishop. Moreover, the list of Irenæus, who makes Clement the third bishop from Linus, does not agree with the statements of others, in which he appears as the first¹² or the second¹³ of these so-called early monarchical bishops.

⁷ Eusebius, iv. 14 ; v. 24.

⁸ *Ibid.*, iv. 23.

⁹ "Adv. Haer.," III. iii. 3.

¹⁰ Eusebius, iv. 22. It is, however, doubtful whether in the words of Hegesippus, as quoted by Eusebius, *διαδοχὴν ἐποιήσαμην μέχρις Ἀνικητῶν, διαδοχὴν* (a succession) is not a mistaken reading for *διατριβήν* (a sojourn). In this case they would mean "I made a stay until (the time of) Anicetus." See M'Giffert's note. Lightfoot thinks that the words as they stand are correct, and can only mean that Hegesippus made a list of the Roman bishops till Anicetus. He also thinks that the list of Hegesippus is the one given by Epiphanius ("Panarion," xxvii. 6) which agrees with that of Irenæus. This is, however, only a conjecture.

¹¹ Sohm ("Kirchenrecht," i. 164 f.) attempts to give reasons why Ignatius did not mention his existence and appeals to his statement that there were bishops established to the utmost parts of the earth in proof that there was one at Rome. But Ignatius is prone to exaggeration, and there is historic proof that moniscopacy was only partially adopted in the Church at large in his time.

¹² Tertullian, "De Præscript. Haer.," 32 ; "Epistle of Clement to James," ii. 19.

¹³ "Apost. Constitutions," vii. 46.

All that we may safely infer from such lists is that these early bishops, before about the middle of the second century, were prominent presbyter-bishops of the Roman Church, whom Irenæus and others erroneously regarded as bishops in the later monarchical sense. It is only from this time onwards that there is reliable evidence for the series of Roman bishops in this sense—from Anicetus and Soter downwards. To Eleutherus, who succeeded Soter, the churches of Lyons and Vienne sent an Epistle on the Montanist controversy.¹⁴ Under Victor, his successor, not only the prominence, but the self-assertion of the Roman bishop in the affairs of the Church at large finds energetic expression. He was the first authentic bishop of *Latin* origin and seems to have been imbued with the Roman spirit of authority. At all events he was a man of strong will and dominating temper, and exercised through Marcia, the mistress of Commodus,¹⁵ considerable influence in the imperial court, and thereby enhanced his personal authority. Under him the Roman bishop tends to overshadow the Roman Church and incorporate in the person of the bishop the prestige and influence hitherto accruing to this Church, in virtue of its special position and influence as the Church of the imperial capital. His striving to assert his authority over the Church at large appears in the dictatorial attitude which he adopted towards the churches of the province of Asia in the Easter or Quarto-deciman controversy. These churches differed from the Roman Church and Christendom generally on the date and manner of observing the Easter festival. Unlike Anicetus, one of his predecessors, who, in conference with Polycarp at Rome, had agreed to differ on the subject, Victor excommunicated the bishops of Asia who refused to comply with the Roman practice,¹⁶ evidently on the assumption that, as Bishop of Rome, he was invested with the right to impose his will on the whole Church. "But," adds Eusebius, "this did not please all the bishops of other regions," who, though approving the Roman practice, sharply rebuked him for his presumption and exhorted him to preserve peace and unity. Against this arrogant attitude Irenæus also protested¹⁷ in a letter to Victor, though he, too, agreed with his view of the question.

About twenty years later the Roman bishop in the person of Callistus¹⁸ (217-222) is found quoting the words addressed by

¹⁴ Eusebius, v. 3.

¹⁵ Hippolytus, "Philos.," ix. 12.

¹⁶ Eusebius, v. 24.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Sohm ("Kirchenrecht," i. 221) infers from Eusebius (ii. 25) that Zephyrinus, who succeeded Victor and preceded Callistus, had already claimed to be the successor of Peter. But the words of Caius quoted by Eusebius do not yield this conclusion.

Christ to Peter, "Thou art Peter," etc., in justification of his action in promulgating an ordinance, in which he granted absolution to repentant adulterers and fornicators. The ordinance seems to have been actuated by the desire to relax the severe discipline which denied forgiveness even to repentant sinners of this category, and thus to foster a milder and more tolerant treatment of penitents. But it was couched in very lordly terms and was, besides, bitterly resented by rigorists like Tertullian and Hippolytus as subversive of Christian morality. "I hear," says Tertullian, who had by this time adopted Montanist views, "that an edict has been promulgated and indeed a peremptory one—'I remit the sins of adultery and fornication to all who have done penitence.'"¹⁹ He sarcastically applies to Callistus the epithets Pontifex Maximus and bishop of bishops.²⁰ Whether Callistus assumed the title "bishop of bishops," or, as seems more probable, Tertullian scornfully invented it for him, he appears to have claimed the right to issue such an ordinance in virtue of Christ's words to Peter as the rock, on which He will build His Church, and conferring on him the power of loosing and binding.²¹ Tertullian retorts that these words were spoken to Peter personally and were not meant to confer the power of absolution for such sins on any bishop, or even on the Church itself. Such a claim is a pure usurpation, adultery and fornication being outwith the power of any bishop to remit.²² He does not imply that Callistus, who appears, in fact, to have recognised that the power of loosing and binding belonged to all bishops, actually made this claim for himself exclusively, as Peter's successor. But the fact that he appealed in justification of his ordinance, to Christ's charge to Peter is very significant. Such an appeal might, and did, erelong lead to the claim of the Roman bishop to the exclusive right, as Peter's successor, to a primacy over the Church at large in virtue of Christ's words to Peter. Meanwhile the ordinance itself produced a schism in the Roman Church, of which the leader was Hippolytus, the opposition bishop to Callistus and his immediate successors.

THE PRIMACY OF PETER

For centuries the passage in the first Gospel, on which this claim is mainly based, has been a battleground between Roman Catholics and their opponents in the East and West. On critical and historic grounds its authenticity is, as we have noted, highly

¹⁹ "De Pudicitia," 1.

²⁰ *Episcoporum episcoporum*.

²¹ Matt. xvi. 18-19.

²² "De Pudicitia," 21.

questionable. It is lacking in the version of the words of Jesus given by the other two Synoptic Gospels. It is not in keeping with the teaching of the New Testament, which makes Christ, or, in one passage in Ephesians, the apostles and prophets the foundation of the Church. Nor is it in keeping with the historic position of Peter in the early Church. In the early period, as we have seen, he occupies, indeed, a prominent and leading position among the Twelve, and his work was of great importance in connection with the founding and early expansion of the Church. But he ere long disappears from view and becomes almost as shadowy a figure as most of the other apostles. In the Palestinian Church the leading position is ultimately occupied by James; in the Gentile Church by Paul. Such facts preclude the assumption of a Petrine primacy over the early Church at large. Even granting the genuineness of the passage²³ and assuming such a primacy over the early Church, it does not follow that this primacy was invested by Jesus in the Roman Church and its bishop. There is no indication whatever that such an institution was present in His mind if and when He spoke the words attributed to Him. It may be answered that Peter founded the Roman Church and established his primacy in it, and that, in this way, Christ's assumed intention was realised. But the Roman Church was not founded by him or Paul, as later tradition²⁴ came to believe. The legend that makes him its founder early in the reign of the emperor Claudius (A.D. 42) and ascribes to him a twenty-five years' ministry as first Bishop of Rome is, to say the least, highly dubious. The Roman Church evidently existed before either Peter or Paul arrived there. The tradition that ultimately connects Peter as well as Paul with it is, indeed, fairly credible. The "Babylon" of the First Epistle credited to him may be a cryptic term for Rome.²⁵ We may draw the same conclusion from the First Epistle of Clement, which mentions his martyrdom, along with that of Paul, as apparently taking place there during the Neronian persecution.²⁶ Some years later Ignatius, writing to the Roman Church, also mentions Peter and Paul in conjunction, and his words imply that they

²³ On the assumption that the passage was genuine, the early Fathers interpreted the rock (Aramaic, *Kepha*; Gr., *πέτρα*) on which Christ will build His Church as referring to Christ himself or the faith in Christ which Peter, as the representative of the other apostles, confessed.

²⁴ *Irenæus*, etc.

²⁵ In his recent book, "Essays in Early Christian History," Merrill contends that Babylon on the Euphrates is meant. He subjects the early tradition of Peter's sojourn and martyrdom at Rome to a lengthy criticism, and concludes, rather too positively, that "it is entirely lacking in the support of historic evidence," 332.

²⁶ c. 5 and 6.

both taught at Rome. In any case they are mentioned by both writers as equals, and there is nothing in these early notices to warrant us in concluding that Peter was the recognised head either of the Roman Church or of the Church at large, or that, as such, Paul was subordinate to him. In the second half of the second century the tradition associating both with Rome becomes quite definite. Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, and Irenæus assert explicitly that Peter and Paul laboured at Rome,²⁷ though they both make the mistake of saying that they founded the Roman Church. By both, however, they are still regarded as equals. At the beginning of the third century the tradition is quite circumstantial, for Caius, a Roman presbyter, speaks explicitly of the tombs of the two apostles at Rome, which may be seen by anyone on the Vatican hill and the Ostian Way respectively.²⁸ Tertullian, who is equally explicit, tells us that both suffered martyrdom at Rome, that Peter was crucified and Paul beheaded, and speaks of Peter baptising in the Tiber.²⁹ By both writers they are still represented as equals.

In the early third century there is, however, observable a tendency to magnify Peter as the chief apostle and exponent of the true faith against the heresiarch Simon Magus. This tendency is especially characteristic of the spurious writings ascribed to Clement of Rome — the “Clementine Recognitions” and “Homilies.”³⁰ They are evidently of Jewish-Christian (Ebionite) origin, and profess to give an account of the travels and preaching of Peter against Simon. They, indeed, only take him as far as Antioch. But in the letter to James with which Clement prefaces the “Homilies,” he is at Rome on the track of Simon, and ordains Clement as Bishop of Rome in succession to himself and transfers to him the power of loosing and binding, and ruling the Church. Whilst in this Epistle the primacy over the whole Church is still ascribed to James as “the bishop of bishops, who rules the Church

²⁷ Eusebius, ii. 25 ; Irenæus, “Adv. Haer.,” III. i. 2 ; iii. 1 (III. i. 1 ; iii. 2).

²⁸ Eusebius, ii. 25.

²⁹ “De Præscript. Haer.,” 36 ; “De Baptismo,” 4. Clement of Alexandria also speaks of Peter preaching at Rome. Eusebius, iv. 14.

³⁰ The critics are not agreed as to the date. They are not earlier than the second half of the second century and have been variously assigned to the second, third, and fourth centuries, though parts such as the “Preaching of Peter,” *Κήρυγμα Πιερου*, are regarded by some as dating from the first half of the second century. Harnack opines that the original piece of which the “Homilies” and “Recognitions” are the amplifications is not earlier than 225 and may be placed any time between 225 and 300. The amplifications, he thinks, belong to the end of the third century and may be placed even in the first half of the fourth. He thinks, further, that they were to some extent worked up by a Catholic scribe. “Chron.,” ii. 518-540. Translations in vols. iii. and xvii. of “Ante-Nicene Lib.”

of Jerusalem and the churches everywhere," the tendency to magnify Peter as the first bishop of Rome is clearly apparent in the "Recognitions" and "Homilies," and to this source both the growing tradition about Peter's Roman episcopate and the striving to exalt the power of the Roman bishop, as his successor, over the universal Church evidently owed not a little. About the middle of the third century this striving on the part of a Roman bishop definitely emerges in the claim apparently put forth by Bishop Stephen (254-257) to a universal primacy as Peter's successor, in the course of his controversy with Cyprian and other bishops over the question of the re-baptism of heretics. The primacy which the Roman Church, in virtue of its prestige and its moral and religious influence, enjoyed from an early time, its bishop, in the person of Stephen, now sought to incorporate in himself.³¹

PRIMATIAL CLAIM OF ROMAN BISHOP

On the question of the re-baptism of heretics, on which Cyprian insisted, Stephen defended the moderate practice of readmitting heretics by the imposition of hands instead of re-baptism. He resented the overbearing spirit of the Bishop of Carthage, and in the controversy with him and the African bishops and those of Asia Minor who supported them, he seems to have gone the length of asserting his supreme authority as the successor of Peter over all other bishops and of requiring them to submit to his authority. He even threatened to excommunicate the bishops of North Africa and Asia Minor who should refuse to submit to his dictation in this matter. In spite of this threat, a synod of the African bishops, convened by Cyprian in 256, affirmed its adherence to the African practice, whilst agreeing to maintain communion with those who held a different view and recognising the right of the bishops of the Church at large to judge, each for himself, in this matter. In addition, Cyprian, in his opening address to the synod, condemned the arrogance of the Bishop of Rome in setting himself up as the bishop of bishops and assuming the right to

³¹ On the Roman Catholic version of the subject, see Duchesne, "Histoire Ancienne de l'Église," i. 52 f. (1906). Moderate in tone. Battifol, "Primitive Catholicism," 84 f. (Eng. trans., 1911). He accepts and defends the genuineness of Matt. xvi. 18-19. Both ignore Peter's twenty-five years' sojourn at Rome. A detailed statement of the Roman Catholic view, as represented by Merry del Val, Di Bruno, Kirsch, Joyce, and others, and that of its opponents, and a fair discussion of the whole subject is given by C. I. Cadoux, "Catholicism and Christianity," 422 f. (1928). See also the monograph of W. E. Beet, "The Early Roman Episcopate" (1913).

dictate obedience to his will.³² Similarly, Firmilian, Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, who shared Cyprian's view of the question, and whom Stephen also threatened to excommunicate, along with the eastern bishops,³³ strictly maintained the practice of re-baptism and protested against the Roman pretension to lay down the law to the Church universal.³⁴ He denounced the audacity and pride of Stephen in daring to dictate his own opinion to his fellow-bishops, and even compared him to Judas. He emphasised the diversity existing in the various churches in regard to many matters of practice, without thereby breaking the common unity. He refused to recognise Stephen's estimate of his own rights as Peter's successor, and boldly told him that, in seeking to excommunicate others, he had excommunicated himself.

Thus both Cyprian, as representing the Church of North Africa, and Firmilian, as representing the Church of Asia Minor, repel the assumption by the Bishop of Rome of a supremacy over the Church universal. Cyprian, indeed, appears to have recognised in the Roman Church and its bishop a primacy of honour in the Church at large. Rome, he says, from her greatness, plainly ought to take precedence over Carthage.³⁵ It is the chief Church of Christendom,³⁶ whence priestly or ecclesiastical unity (as represented by Peter) takes its rise. It is the throne of Peter.³⁷ But it is only pre-eminent in the Church at large in virtue of this association with Peter. Its bishop possesses no supreme jurisdiction over the bishops of the whole Church, who form a college, each member of which has full and independent jurisdiction in his own church, equal power and prerogative among his fellow-bishops. At most, it would seem that by this time the Roman bishop exercised no more than a sort of metropolitan authority over the bishops of *Italy*. This much we may infer from the action of Cornelius, Stephen's predecessor,³⁸ in proceeding against the Italian bishops, who had ordained Novatian as rival Bishop of Rome, and ordaining others in their places.

This principle of the equal jurisdiction of the episcopal order Cyprian and the African bishops further firmly maintained against Stephen in the case of the Spanish bishops, Basilides of Leon and Martial of Merida. These bishops had lapsed during

³² "Sententiæ Episcoporum," "Opera," ed. by Hartel, iii., Pt. II., 437 f. Trans. in vol. ii. of Cyprian's works ("Ante-Nicene Lib.").

³³ Eusebius, vii. 5.

³⁴ Cyprian, Ep. 75 (74). For its genuineness, see Benson, "Cyprian," 397 f.

³⁵ Ep. 52 (48).

³⁶ *Ecclesia principalis*.

³⁷ Ep. 59 (54).

³⁸ Lucius, his immediate predecessor, only held the See eight months.

the Decian persecution, and the people had accordingly elected two others in place of them. In response to their appeal, Stephen rehabilitated them. Whereupon the people appealed to the African bishops, who, assuming that their Roman colleague has acted in ignorance of the real facts of the case, override his decision and recognise the election of their substitutes. Basilides and Martial have been reduced by their lapse to the position of laymen, and their successors, being lawfully elected and consecrated, rightfully hold the office which they have forfeited, in spite of their rehabilitation by Stephen.³⁹ Cyprian and his African colleagues have no hesitation in pitting their will against that of the Roman bishop.

Similarly in the case of Marcian of Arles, who adhered to the schismatic Novatian and excommunicated the other Gaulish bishops. Faustinus of Lyons, along with his fellow-bishops, notified Stephen of the fact and sought his co-operation in dealing with their schismatic colleague. Stephen, however, took no action and appears not even to have taken any notice of the letter. But Faustinus had also written to Cyprian on the subject, on the assumption apparently that such a serious question concerned the whole episcopal order, and on the failure of Stephen to act as its representative, seems to have complained in a second letter to him of the remissness of the Roman bishop. Whereupon Cyprian wrote a letter to Stephen reminding him of their common duty as bishops to take action in such a case,⁴⁰ and urgently requesting him to vindicate the authority of the episcopal order against the arrogant, schismatic Marcian by letters to the Gaulish bishops to excommunicate him and to the people to elect a substitute. Stephen is evidently to initiate action as the representative and vindicator of the episcopal order, not in virtue of any superior power to that of the other bishops of the Church.⁴¹

Dionysius (259-269) who, after the short episcopate of the martyred Sixtus II., followed Stephen, has also been represented as assuming a general authority over the Church. His namesake, the illustrious and influential Bishop of Alexandria (247-264), "a learned man" according to Eusebius,⁴² was a keen antagonist

³⁹ Ep. 67 (67).

⁴⁰ Cui rei nostrum est consulere et subvenire. Ep. 68 (66).

⁴¹ Such seems to be the tenor of the letters he is to write. The letters to the Gaulish bishops are evidently to be letters of direction to excommunicate, not an actual excommunication on his own authority. *Literæ quibus, abstento Marciano, alius, in loco ejus substituitur.* Sohm, however, thinks that Cyprian did ascribe to the Bishop of Rome the right of excommunication in such a case, though not any legal jurisdiction over the bishops of Gaul as over the bishops of Italy. His right outside Italy was, he thinks, only spiritual (i. 391-395).

⁴² vii. 7.

of the Sabellian heresy, which identified the Father and the Son. He, in turn, became suspect of going to the other extreme and holding a Tri-theistic view of the Godhead. Some of the Alexandrian clergy brought the case to the notice of the Roman Dionysius, who wrote a letter asking an explanation. This he gave so satisfactorily as to convince the Roman bishop of his soundness on the doctrine of the Trinity. The reference of the case by the Alexandrian clergy to Rome seems to suggest the recognition by them and their bishop of the right of its bishop to be the supreme judge of true doctrine. In the extant fragments⁴³ of the letter of Dionysius to his Roman colleague, there is, however, no trace of such a recognition. He writes not as an inferior to a superior, but as an equal to an equal, as in the case of Cyprian to Cornelius and Stephen.

Another case a little later seems to assume such a recognition on the part of the Emperor Aurelian. It concerns the prosecution by the Eastern bishops of Paul of Samosata for the heresy of denying the Godhead of Christ. As the result of their investigations, the Eastern bishops pronounced sentence of deposition against their heretical colleague (A.D. 267), notified the bishops of Rome and Alexandria and all their fellow-ministers throughout the world of the fact, and appointed Domnus as his successor. Paul, relying on the protection of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, whose Procurator⁴⁴ he was, paid no heed to the sentence, and his opponents appealed to the Emperor Aurelian to give effect to it, an example of an appeal to the civil authority to exercise its power in an ecclesiastical dispute before the time of Constantine. Aurelian, in turn, referred the case to the bishops of Italy and Rome, whose decision was to be final.⁴⁵ This looks like the ascription of supreme authority to the Roman bishop, Felix I., along with the Italian bishops in such disputes within the Church. In reality it means no more than that Aurelian, who could not himself adjudicate in such a matter, entrusted the final decision to those who were in a position to give an intelligent judgment. A pagan emperor would not be likely to recognise in a Roman bishop an ecclesiastical authority over the Church corresponding to his own over the State. To do so would have been to create a prerogative in competition with his imperial one.

⁴³ As preserved by Athanasius and Basil, vol. xx. of "Ante-Nicene Lib."

⁴⁴ Procurator Ducenarius.

⁴⁵ Eusebius, vii. 30.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ORGANISATION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

INCREASE OF EPISCOPAL JURISDICTION

By the second half of the third century the jurisdiction of the bishop over the local community had not only greatly increased; in the larger cities it had been extended so as to include a number of communities and churches within it. In the early period, as illustrated by the Epistles of Ignatius and other documents, the bishop appears as the pastor of a single church; and the practice of a single bishop ruling only a single church long prevailed. Both Cyprian and Cornelius in the middle of the third century emphasise the general principle of one community, one bishop.¹ But in the larger cities there ultimately emerges a number of churches, and in cities like Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage, Rome the one bishop exercises the oversight over all these churches and their clergy. There is reliable evidence of this fact from the close of the second century. At this time Demetrius, for instance, is elected to the charge of the "parishes" or Christian communities of Alexandria.² About the middle of the third century, Dionysius receives "the episcopate of the churches of Alexandria."³ By this time the number of churches at Rome, to judge from the number of the Roman clergy,⁴ must have been considerable, and there seems to have been several churches at Carthage under the rule of Cyprian.⁵ Even in much smaller towns than Alexandria, Rome, and Carthage there appear several churches under one bishop,⁶ and there is also a number of instances of one bishop exercising the oversight of a whole region or province. Demetrius, for instance, at the close of the second century, is spoken of by Eusebius as bishop of the churches of Egypt⁷ as well as those of the capital, Alexandria, and he seems to have been the only bishop in Egypt before he ordained three for the province, to whom his successor Heraclas added twenty. About

¹ "De Unitate," 8; Eusebius, "Hist. Eccles.," vi. 43.

² Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," v. 21, *παρoικία* is used, not in a territorial sense, but in that of the Christian community. Hatch, "Organisation of the Early Christian Churches," 190 (1881).

³ Eusebius, vi. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vi. 43.

⁵ Benson, "Cyprian," 112.

⁶ In the case of Laodicea, for instance. Eusebius, vii. 32.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vi. 2.

the same time Irenæus appears as bishop not merely of Lyons, but of a number of churches in Gaul which he had founded.⁸

In the next place there is discernible a tendency to enhance the influence and authority of the bishops of certain churches. In the early period churches founded by one of the apostles or their associates ultimately came to enjoy a certain prestige over those of a less distinguished origin. But not many of these apostolic churches permanently attained or maintained a leading position in the Church at large, and ultimately the size and political importance of a city decided the importance of its bishop. Hence the leading position of the churches and bishops of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage which overshadowed all others as the ecclesiastical capitals of Christendom in the third century, though Carthage was not even an apostolic foundation. In addition to these great cities, the metropolis or capital of each province gave to their churches a relative degree of importance—Cæsarea in Palestine, Cæsarea in Cappadocia, Tarsus in Cilicia, Ephesus in Asia, Corinth in Achaia, Lyons in Gaul, for instance. In rare cases the ability of a bishop might lend an importance to his church altogether out of proportion to that of the town in which it was situated.

METROPOLITAN JURISDICTION

The bishops of such metropolitan churches naturally came to exercise a special influence over the province or region which was not under their immediate rule. They gradually, in fact, came to wield an informal, a virtual metropolitan jurisdiction. They presided, for instance, over the synods of these regions,⁹ which met to consider the points in dispute in some controversy like the Easter or the Montanist controversy, or those over the lapsed and rebaptism. But, apart from these synodal meetings, the bishops of Rome, Carthage, Lyons appear by the middle of the third century as ordinarily exercising such an informal metropolitan jurisdiction over the churches of Italy, North Africa, and Gaul, respectively, in the West; the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch in the eastern part of the Empire. Take the cases of

⁸ Eusebius, v. 23, 24. Duchesne thinks that he was the sole bishop of Gaul outside the province of Narbonne, "Fastes Épiscopaux," i. 33 (2nd ed., 1907-10). Other instances might be given. See Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," vii. 26, 32, and Cyprian, Ep. 67 for the churches of Leon and Astorga in Spain which were under the charge of one bishop.

⁹ See Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," v. 23, 24. Where, however, there was no leading church, the oldest bishop of the region presided. In such cases the metropolitan function devolved on the senior bishop present. For details, see Sohm, "Kirchenrecht," i. 352.

Cyprian at Carthage and his contemporary bishop, Cornelius of Rome. Cyprian is not merely Bishop of Carthage. He takes the lead in matters of common concern to his fellow-bishops of proconsular Africa and even of the African provinces of Numidia and Mauretania. He interests himself in the election of bishops to vacant churches. He receives appeals for advice or direction from some of these bishops. He guides and exhorts them in reference to current controversies, and takes the initiative in securing concerted action by means of a series of synods, over which he presides. If he has no legal, official jurisdiction over his fellow-bishops, he wields an informal authority over the whole of North Africa, and makes his influence felt even in Spain and Gaul. This authority he really derives from his powerful personality and the prestige of his position as bishop of the Church of the provincial capital, which, as in the case of the bishops of Alexandria, Rome, and Carthage, is expressed by the title of "Papa"¹⁰ or "Pope." His contemporary, Cornelius of Rome, plays a similar part in Italy, summoning and presiding over a synod of Italian bishops, and even assuming the right to select and ordain the bishops of certain churches, in place of those who had taken the side of his rival Novatian.¹¹ In this respect he appears to have assumed a metropolitan jurisdiction in Italy more substantial than that of his Carthaginian colleague. "The Roman bishop," to quote Sohm, "is already in the first half of the third century in a position to appoint and depose bishops in the churches of Italy. He treats these churches as dependencies of the Roman Church."¹²

Before the close of the third century the tendency in the Church at large is generally to transform this virtual metropolitan jurisdiction into an official one. We observe, in fact, a set striving on the part of the bishops of the provincial capitals to subordinate to their jurisdiction the bishops of the smaller towns within the province, and thus to arrogate to themselves an official ecclesiastical primacy over it. Eusebius gives a lurid picture of the play of personal ambition in the scramble for power prevalent among the clergy at this period.¹³ The theoretic parity of the episcopate, advocated by Cyprian, thus begins to give way under the strain

¹⁰ Greek *papas*, Latin *papa*. Cyprian, Ep. 8 (2). On the use of this title, which seems to have been general, see Achelis, "Christenthum im ersten drei Jahrhunderten," ii. 13, 417.

¹¹ Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," vi. 43.

¹² "Kirchenrecht," i. 366.

¹³ viii. 1. He evidently refers to the all too general tendency of the bishops of the metropolitan cities to extend their power over those of the lesser towns within the province, and of these latter to lord it over the country bishops or *chorepiscopi*.

of the ambition, the striving for a larger measure of power on the part of these bishops, and in this respect the organisation of the Church begins to reflect the influence of the political organisation of the Empire. As, in the State, the Government of the province has its centre in the provincial capital, so the bishop of this capital strives to extend his ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the churches of the whole of the province.

In the opinion of Sohm¹⁴ this development was connected especially with the episcopal elections. The bishop of the capital of a province claimed the right to direct and sanction the election of a bishop to a vacant church within the other towns of the province,¹⁵ or even to select the bishop. The aim of this policy was, he thinks, to attain to a recognised primacy over the bishops of the province by securing a recognised right over the episcopal elections.

To this metropolitan primacy the Council of Nicæa in the early fourth century at length gave a legal sanction in the canon that required the confirmation, by the metropolitan of the province, of all episcopal elections within it.¹⁶ It also recognised the imperial province (as reorganised by Diocletian) as the ecclesiastical province, the bishops of which are directed to meet twice a year in a provincial synod.¹⁷ It further recognised the still wider jurisdiction exercised over a number of provinces by the bishops of Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch, the traditional honour enjoyed by the bishop of Jerusalem, whilst preserving the rights of the bishop of Cæsarea as metropolitan of Palestine, and "the privileges" of certain other churches which it does not name, and whose distinctive privileges it does not specify.¹⁸

Thus in the early part of the fourth century the ecclesiastical hierarchy consists not merely, as in the theory of Cyprian, of an episcopal order, whose members possess equal and independent authority, but of a graded episcopal hierarchy. This hierarchy consists of those who wield ecclesiastical authority over a number of provinces—in particular the bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria, who later appear under the title of Patriarchs—and of certain other privileged churches; those who wield jurisdiction over a sole province, known as metropolitans and later as arch-

¹⁴ "Kirchenrecht," i. 370.

¹⁵ See the 13th and 18th Canons of the Council of Ancyra in 314, Hefele, "Conciliengeschichte," i. 237 (2nd ed., 1873), and French trans. by Leclercq with additional notes.

¹⁶ Canon 4. Hefele, i. 382 (Hefele-Leclercq, i. 549 f.).

¹⁷ Canons 4 and 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6 and 7. Churches like Ephesus and Cæsarea in Cappadocia may be meant.

bishops ; and those at the bottom of the episcopal scale—the ordinary bishops of the towns of a province. The influence of the imperial organisation in shaping the episcopal organisation of the Church is thus evident. So much so that the ecclesiastical organisation perpetuated that of the Western Empire after its conquest by the German invaders. Adapting the words of Hobbes in reference to the later papacy, we may say that it became the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire sitting crowned upon the grave thereof.

ECCLESIASTICAL ASSEMBLIES

This influence is also apparent in the development of the ecclesiastical assemblies of the Church—the provincial synod and the general council. In the opinion of Dr Hatch,¹⁹ the provincial synod seems to have been modelled on the annual representative assembly of the town of the imperial province. Whether there was a conscious imitation of these secular assemblies or not, it is certain that the old provincial organisation of the Empire influenced the grouping of the churches of a given district or region in subordinate divisions within the one Catholic Church, and that, when the ecclesiastical synod appears as a definite institution, it more or less conforms to the territorial divisions of the Empire. Occasional conferences between the representatives of a number of churches of a given region appear to have been usual from the Apostolic age²⁰ onwards. Deputies of the churches of Macedonia, for instance, repair to Corinth to deliberate with the Corinthian Church on the collection set on foot by Paul for the benefit of the Church of Jerusalem. The Roman Church at the end of the first century sends representatives to that of Corinth in connection with the strife in the Corinthian community. In the early years of the second century those of the province of Asia depute representatives to that of Antioch on the occasion of the cessation of persecution in the time of Ignatius. In the "Sources of the Apostolic Canons," representatives of one church are to visit another in order to assist its members in the election of a pastor.²¹

¹⁹ "Organisation of the Early Christian Churches," 165-166.

²⁰ Besides the Conference at Jerusalem of representatives of the Church of Antioch and the Jerusalem Church, a late tradition knows of another conference in the Apostolic age—that of the apostles at Antioch. But this tradition has no historic foundation. Harnack, "Expansion," i. 86-101.

²¹ These rudimentary synods were of the nature of a congregational meeting of the outside deputies with the local church. Sohm thinks that this feature continued in the case of the more developed synodal meetings of the second and third centuries, inasmuch as not only the bishops of a given region, but the local clergy and people of the town in which the synod was held took part in them (i. 298 f.). Whether or not the presence of the lower clergy and people

From the second half of the second century these assemblies tend to become a regular feature of the ecclesiastical organisation, and also to assume larger dimensions. Controversies of a doctrinal or practical character break out at intervals and necessitate the meetings of the bishops and other representatives of a given area to discuss and decide them. With the development of the episcopal system, the bishops ultimately play an important part in these synods. But during the second and third centuries they were not exclusively episcopal assemblies. There is evidence to show that they included in their membership presbyters and deacons and even representatives of the laity. In connection with the Montanist controversy in Asia Minor, for instance, in the late second century, "the believers," we learn from Eusebius (not merely the bishops), "met often in many places throughout Asia to consider the matter."²² In those convened by Cyprian at Carthage and Cornelius at Rome in connection with the controversies of their time (middle of the third century), not only the bishops, but the local clergy and the people take part, on the understanding that, in spite of Cyprian's high theory of the episcopate, they also constitute the Church along with the bishops. In the beginning of the fourth century at the synods of Elvira (*c.* 300) and Arles (314) the lower clergy and people are also present. In that of Arles the majority of the members are even presbyters, who take an equal part with the bishops in the deliberations, though the acts of the synod are apparently issued as decisions of the bishops.²³

The tendency of the bishops was, however, more and more to ignore the rights of the lower clergy and the people to a voice in these assemblies in their striving to enhance their own power. From the early part of the fourth century the ecclesiastical synod becomes practically the organ of the episcopate in the general government of the Church. Though the lower clergy and the laity were largely represented in the Council of Nicæa in 325, for instance, and might take part in its deliberations, only the bishops exercised the right to vote, and the two Roman presbyters, who exercised this right, only did so as the representatives of the Bishop of Rome. Just as the bishop had gradually absorbed the

in these later synods was due to the continued recognition of the original character of the synod as a meeting of the bishops with a given congregation, as Sohm infers, it is clear from the evidence which he adduces that in a large number of them the lower clergy and people as well as the bishops were present, and that their approbation was necessary for the validity of their decisions.

²² "Hist Eccl.," v. 16.

²³ *Coetus episcoporum qui adunati fuerunt in oppido Arelatensi*. Hefele-Leclercq, i. 280.

chief power in the government of the local Christian community, which, as we have seen, was at first a self-governing body under its own office-bearers, so the episcopal element in the ecclesiastical synod gradually absorbed the chief power in the government of the Church at large. The democratic principle of government, both in the local community and in the Church universal, thus gave way to the aristocratic principle, which the episcopate gradually came to embody.

These synods were, up to the beginning of the fourth century, local or regional. They consisted of the representatives of particular regions, though their decisions might be, and usually were accepted in other regions. Those whom a synod at Carthage excommunicated, for instance, might be cut off from communion at Rome, or Alexandria, or elsewhere. At the same time such a decree had to submit to the examination of those to whom it was communicated, in order that they might ascertain its validity. From the constitutional point of view the provincial synod had no essential jurisdiction beyond the provincial bounds. At the end of the second century, for instance, Bishop Victor of Rome is found refusing to accept the decree of a synod of the province of Asia on the Easter question. It was not till the meeting of the council summoned by the Emperor Constantine to Nicæa in 325 that we have an example of a General Synod or Council authoritatively legislating for the whole Church. The churches, or even the bishops of the whole Empire, were not, indeed, actually represented at Nicæa. Nevertheless it was regarded as an œcumenical assembly, in virtue of the number and distinction of its members and its convention by the head of the Empire, and it was meant to legislate for the whole of Christendom. In conception, if not in fact, it was the culmination of a sort of federal tendency which had hitherto found at least a partial exemplification in the synods of particular regions of greater or less extent. Through the General Council of Nicæa this tendency was formally realised, and the Church became an organic whole in the constitutional sense, and to a degree in which, as far as its general government was concerned, it had not been before. From the early part of the fourth century the Church had a supreme legislative assembly, with subordinate assemblies or synods ²⁴

²⁴ The Council of Nicæa in its 5th Canon (Hefele-Leclercq, i. 548 f.) recognised the provincial synod as a regular institution for the administration of the ecclesiastical province, in reference, in particular, to excommunication. It was now invested with a legal authority within the province, and the tendency was to limit its acts to its territorial sphere in distinction from the larger synod of a political diocese or ecclesiastical patriarchate, and from the General Synod or Council for the whole Church. Sohm, i. 335-336.

for certain regions within the whole, and a graded hierarchy performing the work of administration within these areas, according to the jurisdiction wielded by the various grades of this hierarchy.

The General Council was, in a fashion, the application of the representative principle to the government of the Church. But this principle was not applied in the really democratic sense of the representation of the whole body of the Christian people, through their accredited representatives, with the power to vote as well as deliberate on the matters submitted to the decision of the Council. The General Council of Nicæa and its successors were not representative assemblies in the sense that the lower clergy and the laity had an effective voice in such decisions. Both were present at Nicæa and their presence might be a recognition of the old principle of the consent of the people to ecclesiastical acts and legislation. But only the bishops or their representatives might vote, and practically the rise of the General Council, in alliance with the State, strengthened and legalised the régime of the episcopal order; and excluded the laity and even the lower clergy, except in a subordinate capacity, from any real share in ecclesiastical legislation.

The tendency of the alliance between the Church and the Empire at the beginning of the fourth century was thus to make the Church an organic body in government, if not, owing to long-continued doctrinal strife, in doctrine. Like the Empire it became, in this respect, an organic whole, the various subdivisions of which were regulated after the model of the imperial administration, and in which local or provincial autonomy and sectarian divisions were repressed in the interest of regulated subordination. From being a congeries of self-governing communities, bound together by the bond of a common faith, a common spiritual Head, and intercommunication of various kinds, it became more and more an ecclesiastical Empire autocratically governed by a graded order of bishops, meeting on occasion in ecclesiastical parliaments or councils, though more or less dependent on the imperial power. Ultimately this organic unity was to be broken up by the schism between East and West, with the result that the supreme ecclesiastical power in the East was centred in the Emperor; in the West in the Pope, and the Western Church became a monarchy.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHRISTIAN GNOSTICS

THE GNOSTIC MOVEMENT

As the term implies, Christian Gnosticism is the specific presentation of Christianity as Gnosis or Knowledge. It is not merely knowledge in the philosophic sense, but knowledge in the religious sense. It is the knowledge that not only enlightens, but saves, inasmuch as through it man attains the mystic enlightenment which ensures his ultimate redemption or deliverance from evil. From the theoretic point of view, it is the apprehension of the process by which all existence is evolved out of God, its ultimate cause, though some of the Gnostics appear to have held a dualistic view of existence, and to have regarded matter, which is evil, as existing independently of God. From the point of view of redemption, it is the knowledge that raises the human spirit out of this material existence and brings it back to Deity from whom it has emanated. In this sense it is the key to the kingdom of Heaven.

Gnosticism was a pre-Christian movement which took cognisance of Christianity almost from the outset of its promulgation. Witness the story of Simon Magus reported in the early portion of the "Acts of the Apostles." Its growing interest in the Gospel is further reflected in the Pauline Epistles, especially the Epistle to the Colossians, in which Paul warns his readers against "a philosophy," based not on Christian, but human tradition.¹ In the subapostolic documents included in the New Testament—especially the Pastoral Epistles—and in the Epistles of Ignatius its adherents are already carrying on an active propaganda in the Christian communities. In the second half of the second century and throughout the third, it has become the dangerous rival of the Catholic Church. Hence the long and bitter conflict between the Church and the Gnostic "heretics," which eventuated in its repudiation by the Church as a falsification of Christianity—"knowledge falsely so-called."²

In both its pre-Christian and its Christian form, it was a syncretistic movement, which drew on Greek, Egyptian, Jewish, Babylonian, and to a certain extent, perhaps, even Indian thought, mythology, religious belief, and mystery religion. In its Christian

¹ ii. 8.

² Tim. vi. 20.

form it was concerned, as Tertullian succinctly put it, with the threefold problem. Whence God? Whence man and how? Whence evil and why? ³ In its attempt to solve this threefold problem, it accorded to Christ, and the Christian idea of a redemption through Christ, a supreme importance, whilst at the same time drawing liberally on non-Christian philosophy and religion in the syncretistic spirit of the age. Though the Church opposed it as an alien, paganised movement, its exponents claimed that they were in possession of the true knowledge of Christianity, which had been handed down by a secret tradition, through the apostles, from Christ Himself. This alleged tradition was largely fictitious, and their Catholic opponents had certainly the best of the argument in pitting against it the historic tradition contained in the Gospels, even if fictitious elements had also in the course of time been woven into it. In thus manipulating tradition in the interest of their theories in the fashion of the age, these Christian Gnostics were not necessarily the conscious imposters and subverters of the faith, such as their Catholic opponents tend to represent. In their striving to solve the enigma of existence and human destiny, the more thoughtful and reputable of them at least appear to have been earnest seekers of truth, sincere, even passionate believers in Christianity as they understood it. However fantastic some of their speculations and beliefs, their object was not to distort and subvert, but to relate it to the science and philosophy of the Græco-Roman world and strengthen its appeal to the culture of the age. We must beware of accepting, without large reserve, the accusations and imputations of their ecclesiastical opponents, on whom we are largely dependent for our knowledge of them and their systems. Their works have largely disappeared. What remains of those of Basilides, Valentinus, Heracleon, Ptolemy, for instance, are known to us from quotations preserved in the replies of Irenæus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Epiphanius, Philaster, and other anti-Gnostic writers. What has escaped the general destruction—such as the “Pistis Sophia” and other effusions of the Egyptian Gnostics—belongs to the later and decadent period of the movement. Irenæus and Hippolytus are frankly partisan.⁴ Their object is rather to expose than expound their systems from the standpoint of Catholic orthodoxy, though they do so with varying degrees of prejudice and animosity. Epiphanius, as an ex-Gnostic, is specially bitter and vituperative, and Tertullian, as is his wont,

³ “De Præscript. Haer.,” 7.

⁴ See, for instance, the prefaces of Irenæus and Hippolytus to their works against them.

in matters of controversy, is the extreme, but very effective, pleader, not the judicial historian.⁵

SIMON MAGUS

Simon Magus, a native of Samaria, is represented by Irenæus⁶ and other anti-Gnostic writers as the father of the Gnostic heresies. He figures in the Acts of the Apostles as a Gnostic teacher and a magician who was converted to Christianity by Philip the Evangelist.⁷ His alleged conversion was, however, of a superficial character. Irenæus roundly says that it was but a pretence, and

⁵ The "Pistis Sophia" and the "Books of Jeu" have been edited by Carl Schmidt; "Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften," Bd. i. (1905), Eng. trans. of the "Pistis" by Horner (1924); Baynes, "A Coptic Gnostic Treatise" (contained in the Bruce Codex, 1934); Brooke, "The Fragments of Heracleon," Texts and Studies, i. (1891); Irenæus, "Adv. Haer.," ed. by Harvey, 1857, trans. in "Ante-Nicene Lib.," which differs somewhat in the numbering of chapters and sections. See also Hitchcock, "St Irenæus Against the Heresies" (S.P.C.K.); Hippolytus, "Philosophoumena," or "Refutatio omnium Haeresium," ed. by Wendland (1916), trans. in "Ante-Nicene Lib.," and also by Legge (1921); Tertullian, "Adv. Valentinianos," "Adv. Marcionem," "Adv. Hermogenem," and more briefly, "De Prescriptione Haereticorum," ed. by Oehler (trans., "Ante-Nicene Lib."). The "Adv. omnes Haereses," wrongly ascribed to him and usually cited as Pseudo-Tertullian. The works of Clement of Alexandria and Origen which contain extracts from Gnostic writings. Epiphanius in the second half of the fourth century has in his "Panarion," ed. by Holl (1915-33) left an exhaustive account of the subject. "Philastrius Diversarum Haeresium Liber," ed. by Marx (1898). "Epistula Apostolorum," ed. by Duensing, Kleine Texte (1925). De Faye subjects the early anti-Gnostic writers to a searching criticism. He contends that they have depicted Gnosticism in the light of the later development at the end of the second century and the early part of the third, and that, apart from their bias, they cannot be implicitly relied on in their accounts of the systems of the early leaders of the movement. His own reconstruction of their views is at times rather supposititious and one is not sure whether his substantial reduction of the mythological element in the actual system of Valentinus and his immediate followers is accurate, though it seems that the system grew in detail in its later exponents. "Introduction à l'étude du Gnosticisme" (1903), and "Gnostiques et Gnosticisme" (1913). Other comparatively recent works, Bousset, "Hauptprobleme des Gnosticismus" (1907); Legge, "Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity" (1915); E. F. Scott, art. in "Dict. of Rel. and Ethics" (1913); Mellone, shorter art. in Ency. Brit., latest ed.; Burkitt, "Church and Gnosis" (1932); Leisegang, "Die Gnosis" (1924), and art., "Gnosis" in "Religion, in Geschichte u. Gegenwart"; Lietzmann, chap. in "Geschichte der alten Kirche" (1932); Harnack, "Hist. of Dog." i. (1894); Müller, "Kirchengeschichte," i. (1905); Angus, chaps. in "Religious Quests of the Græco-Rom. World" (1929); A. D. Livingstone, "Irenæus and Gnosticism" (Edin. Univ. Ph.D. Thesis in Ecclesiastical Hist., 1934); Bevan, "The Gnostic Redeemer" in "Hellenism and Christianity," 89 f. (1921); Loisy, "La Crise Gnostique" in "La Naissance du Christianisme," 368 f. (1934). See also the older works of Anz, "Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnosticismus," "Texte und Untere," xv. (1897); Mansel, "The Gnostic Heresies" (1875); King, "The Gnostics and their Remains" (2nd ed., 1887).

⁶ "Adv. Haer.," I. xvi. 2, 4 (I. xxiii. 2, 4).

⁷ Acts viii. 9 f.

in the Acts he incurs the rebuke of Peter for offering money in order to obtain the magical gift of the Holy Spirit. In the later romancing Christian literature, he appears, in fact, as the opponent of Peter, who carries on a running polemic against him. He is said to have won a large number of disciples in the course of his propagandist activity in which he was accompanied by a woman, Helena, who in the biased judgment of his ecclesiastical critics was of immoral character. According to a dubious tradition, he carried his propaganda in the reigns of Claudius and Nero as far as Rome, where Peter continues to oppose him.⁸ From Hippolytus we learn that he expounded his Gnostic doctrines in a work entitled "The Great Announcement" or Revelation.⁹ In this work there is no trace of Christian teaching, and it was evidently written before his alleged conversion, as depicted in the story in Acts, which there is no substantial reason for rejecting.¹⁰ In any case, it is certain that the ideas set forth in "The Great Announcement" exercised an influence on later Christian Gnostics like Valentinus,¹¹ and in this sense he may be described as the father of the Gnostic heresy. His adherents were increased by Menander, another Samaritan, who, according to Irenæus, succeeded him in the leadership.

In "The Great Announcement," as reflected in Hippolytus' rather confused account, he evidently drew on current philosophy, mythology, mystery religion, and magic in the formulation of his ideas, and appealed to the Old Testament for confirmation. For him, as for all subsequent Gnostic teachers, all spiritual and material existence is the result of a process of emanation from an original divine source, though the process is variously represented in the various Gnostic schools or sects. He posits what he calls a boundless, unbegotten power.¹² This is bi-sexual, *i.e.*, possesses in itself the power of generation or creation, which is at the ultimate root of all existence. From it emanates six æons in pairs, male and female respectively. These are Mind and Thought, Voice and Name, Reasoning and Passion or Desire. It is thus that he envisages the working of the divine power in its creative capacity. They are personified abstractions, the attributes of Deity in creative operation. They are embodied in a seventh

⁸ Justin Martyr, "Apol.," i. 26; Hippolytus, "Philos.," vi. 20 ("Ante-Nicene Lib.," vi. 15); Acts of Peter, James, "Apocryphal New Testament," 300 f.

⁹ ἡ ἀπόφασις ἡ μεγάλη, vi. 11.

¹⁰ The contention that the Gnostic Simon was a different person from the Simon of the Acts and that this Gnostic flourished in the second century is not convincing.

¹¹ Hippolytus, "Philos.," vi. 20.

¹² The power of God which is called Great, as Acts puts it.

æon, the Logos or Word of God, which contains them in itself, and becomes the intermediary between the Deity and matter—the material universe and man—as the agent of their creation. By means of this Gnosis, magically applied, man may attain to Deity. Evidently the anti-Gnostic writers took this to mean that Simon claimed to be God incarnate. These and other assertions seem to rest on a misapprehension of his doctrine of deification.

THE OPHITES

Besides the Simonians, there were other early Gnostic sects which had undoubtedly absorbed Christian ideas. Such were the Ophites¹³ or Naasenes and the kindred sects of the Peratæ, the Sethians, and that founded by Justinus. Their common feature was the worship of the Serpent, from which the name Ophite or Naasene was derived. According to a late and questionable tradition,¹⁴ the founder of these Ophite sects was the Christian proselyte Nicolas of Antioch,¹⁵ from whom they also bore the name of Nicolaitans.¹⁶ According to Hippolytus, they were the first to call themselves Gnostics, and appear to have originated in Phrygia, the home of the mystery cult of Cybele and Attis. Of the influence of this cult as well as of Oriental, Jewish, and Egyptian mythology and religion, their Gnostic beliefs furnish palpable evidence.¹⁷

These Ophite sects assume a triad of Father, Mother, or Holy Spirit, and their offspring the Son, as constituting the Deity, the ultimate source of all existence. From this divine triad emanates a number of æons, as in "The Great Announcement,"¹⁸ who intervene between the triune Deity and the lower material existence. One of them is Christ who is begotten of the Holy Spirit. From another of them, Sophia or Wisdom, who descends into the chaotic abyss below, proceeds Ialdabaoth, who becomes the Fashioner or Demiurge of the Seven Heavens or Hebdomad, with their respective rulers or powers. With the assistance of his serpent-like son and these planetary powers, he also fashions the earth and man.¹⁹ This serpent-like son²⁰ is the nous or animating

¹³ From Greek, *ὄφις*; Hebrew, Nachash or Naash.

¹⁴ Pseudo-Tertullian, Jerome, Augustine.

¹⁵ Acts vi. 5.

¹⁶ The Gnostic sect mentioned in "Apoc.," ii. 6, 15.

¹⁷ Hippolytus gives the most detailed account of them. There is no real ground for the assumption that in using his sources he was imposed on by a forger, as Salmon and Stachelin ("T.u.U.," vi., 1890) maintain. They appear to have been genuine accounts of Ophite beliefs.

¹⁸ "Philos.," v. 9; cf. 6 and 10.

¹⁹ Irenæus, "Adv. Haer.," I. xxx. 3; "Philos.," v. 7.

²⁰ *ὀφιδόμορφος*.

principle of the earth, which gives it form and life, is regarded as a good and beneficent power, and is, therefore, the object of Ophite worship. Man's creation takes place in one of the Seven Heavens (Paradise). As thus created, his nature is threefold—pneumatic or intellectual, derived from that of the Highest Deity; psychic or animal; and hylic or earthly.²¹ Being possessed of intellect—the divine element in his nature—man gives thanks to the supreme Deity, from whom he has derived it, instead of to Ialdabaoth, of whom Ialdabaoth is ignorant, but whom he imagines himself to be. In his vexation at this slight, he creates Eve, with whom the other planetary powers fall in love and beget sons who are called angels, in order through her to deprive man of the intellectual, divine element in his nature. He forbids her and Adam to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. But his serpent-like son, at the instigation of Sophia, who is enraged at Ialdabaoth's claim to be the supreme Deity, induces them to defy the command of this presumptuous lower God or Demiurge and eat of the forbidden fruit. Whereupon he throws them and the serpent from the celestial Paradise to earth.²² He henceforth figures as the God of the Old Testament, who gives the Law to the Jews, and from whose régime it is the mission of Christ, who becomes incarnate in Jesus, is sent forth by the supreme God, and was foretold by the prophets, to redeem mankind.

The resolution of Jesus to undertake this Gnostic redemption is vividly expressed in an Ophite hymn, which begins with a description of the woes being endured by the spiritual part of man immersed in evil matter.

But Jesus said, Father, behold
 A strife of woes upon earth
 From thy breath has fallen,
 But she seeks to flee malignant chaos
 And knows not how to win through it.
 For this cause send me, O Father;
 Having the seals I will go down,
 Through entire æons I will pass.
 All mysteries I will disclose;
 And the forms of the gods I will display;
 And the secrets of the holy way
 Called Gnosis I will hand down.²³

This Ophite Gnosis, of which there are varying versions according to the sect, is a crude synthesis drawn from current

²¹ "Philos.," v. 6, 7.

²² *Irenæus*, I. xxviii. 3 f. (Harvey).

²³ "Philos.," v. 10. Legge's trans.

mythology, astrology, and mystery religion, mingled with the Ophite apprehension of Christianity. It shows a marked predilection for gross sexual allusions. It professes to have been communicated by James, the Lord's brother, to Mariamne,²⁴ and by an utterly impossible exegesis its exponents strive to find confirmation and illustration of it in the Greek poets and philosophers, and the Christian Scriptures. These expositions can only be described as fantastic and pretentious nonsense. Christianity is thus transformed into a crude mystery religion, into which its votaries are initiated by baptism, unction, and magical rites. According to Hippolytus they also participated in the mystery cult of the Great Mother (Cybele), and practised a strict asceticism,²⁵ though the charge of indulging in gross sensuality, due in part at least to the secrecy of their cult, is common enough in the writings of their ecclesiastical opponents. In the Ophite Book of Baruch, from which Hippolytus quotes, the neophyte is first sworn to secrecy. "I swear by Him who is above all, the Good One, to preserve these mysteries, and to utter them to no one, nor to turn away from the Good One to creation" (matter). He is then introduced to the presence of the Good One and beholds (by a series of symbolic scenes apparently) "what eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man."²⁶ By this secret Gnosis the initiate is liberated from the régime of the planetary powers and is prepared to ascend safely through the spheres to Deity.

VALENTINUS AND HIS SCHOOL

Whilst much of this early Gnosticism does not appreciably rise above the level of popular superstition, some of its beliefs (for instance its emanation theory and the Gnostic conception of the Old Testament God or Demiurge) were absorbed and developed by Gnostics of a more philosophic cast of thought in the first half of the second century. Among the more prominent of them were Saturninus or Satornilus of Antioch; Basilides and his son Isidore of Alexandria; Valentinus, who also began to teach at Alexandria before migrating to Rome, and his disciples Heracleon and Ptolemy. Of these Saturninus and Basilides found few followers. Basilides, in fact, according to Irenæus,²⁷ confessed that only one in a thousand or two in ten thousand understood his teaching. Valentinus, on the other hand, was alike the most profound and the most influential of all the founders

²⁴ "Philos.," iv. 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 7, 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 27; cf. 24.

²⁷ "Adv. Haer.," I. xix. 3.

of Gnostic schools, and his teaching' and that of his followers was a serious menace to the Catholic Church, to judge from the attention bestowed on it by Irenæus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and other anti-Gnostic Catholic writers. Other notable teachers were Cerinthus, the contemporary and, according to tradition, the bugbear of the Apostle John, who could not endure his presence in the baths at Ephesus; ²⁸ Carpocrates, who made some stir at Rome about the middle of the second century; Cerdo, who also figures at Rome about the same time, and is supposed to have influenced Marcion; ²⁹ Tatian, who diverged from Catholicism and became a leader of the Encratites. ³⁰

For Valentinus, as for the Gnostic teachers generally, God is absolutely transcendental, the self-existent reality, utterly remote from all other being. In Himself He is inconceivable, indefinable, inexpressible, though Valentinus is not quite so agnostic as Basilides, for whom He is the non-existent One, or Nothing—apparently nothing apprehensible by the human mind. ³¹ This Supreme Being or Monad exists in absolute isolation or silence. ³² He is the Propator (the First Father) or Bythos (the deep), from whose thought ³³ there is evolved a series of emanations or æons in pairs, male and female, beginning with Mind and its correlative Truth, ³⁴ and ending with Design ³⁵ and Sophia or Wisdom—thirty in all. ³⁶ These constitute the Pleroma or supersensible fullness of divine being. For Valentinus and the more philosophical of his disciples they are personified abstractions or attributes of the self-expressing Deity. They represent, in the pictorial fashion of the time, the working of the thought of the Supreme Being in the process of self-expression, which lies behind all other existence, though they are clothed in quasi-mythological form. It is only in the later Gnostic systems derived from that of Valentinus, such as the Pistis Sophia and the other extant Coptic documents, that these speculations tend to become a crude mythology, ³⁷ as in the Ophite sects.

How, now, was the sensible world or lower order of existence—the Seven Heavens below the Pleroma, and the material universe and man—evolved out of this supersensible divine Fullness? This takes place through the fall of Sophia, the lowest of the

²⁸ "Adv. Haer.," iii. 3, 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, i. 24, 25 (I. xxvii. 1, 2).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I. xxvi. 1 (I. xxviii. 1).

³¹ "Philos.," vii. 21 ("Ante-Nicene Lib.," vii. 9).

³² Σειγή.

³³ ἔννοια.

³⁴ Νοῦς and Ἀλήθεια. Nous is described as Monogenes or the Unique.

³⁵ θελητός.

³⁶ Irenæus, i. 1 f.; "Philos.," v. 29, 30 (vi. 24-25, "Ante-Nicene Lib.").

³⁷ Burkitt, "Church and Gnosis," 40-41, 90.

æons, who is seized with an irresistible desire to fathom the depths of the supreme Father's being, of which she and all the other æons, except the unique Nous or Mind, are ignorant. Her design miscarries and from her misdirected passion³⁸ there is produced a shapeless abortion,³⁹ which projects into the void beyond the Pleroma. There is here an evident allusion to the shapeless mass of Gen. i., from which the universe is formed, whilst Sophia seems to be a Gnostic adaptation of the Jewish-Hellenist conception of Wisdom, which pre-existed before the creation of the universe and was associated with God in its creation.⁴⁰ To relieve the stricken Sophia and restore her to the Pleroma the supreme Father causes two new æons to be produced—Christ and the Holy Spirit, who separate her from her abortive offspring, whilst Horus,⁴¹ an additional æon, is formed to bound and guard the Pleroma from the shapeless mass outside it, which her fall has brought into existence, and which is designated Achamoth in the account of Irenæus, Sophia Without in that of Hippolytus.⁴² By an intricate and fanciful process, this incorporeal shapeless abortion is metamorphosed into the lower corporeal form of existence. This metamorphosis is the work of the Demiurge who is evolved out of Achamoth or Sophia Without and is of a psychic or animal nature, *i.e.*, the soul or animating principle of the universe. He fashions the incorporeal shapeless mass into the Hebdomad or Seven astrological heavens and the sensible cosmos below them. He is "the God and Father of all things animal and material outside the Pleroma."⁴³ But being of a purely psychic or animal nature, he is lacking in spirit or pneuma—the higher spiritual or intellectual faculty, which belongs to and comes from the divine sphere. He can, therefore, only produce animal and material things, is ignorant of that which is above him, and acts in a blind, mechanical fashion. He is identified with the God of the Old Testament, "the Ancient of Days,"⁴⁴ and in his ignorance of the supreme Deity imagines himself to be the only and the supreme God, saying, "I am God and there is no god besides me,"⁴⁵ until he is taught better by Sophia, or by Christ.⁴⁶ He further fashions the psychic and the material, but not the spiritual part of man from a fluid material

³⁸ Enthymesis.³⁹ Ἐκτρομα.⁴⁰ Prov. viii.⁴¹ The Limit or *Stauros*, Cross.⁴² "Adv. Haer.," I. iv. 1 f.; "Philos.," v. 32. Achamoth is evidently derived from the Hebrew *chokmah*, wisdom.⁴³ Irenæus, i. 1, 9 (I. v. 1 f.).⁴⁴ "Philos.," vi. 32.⁴⁵ Isaiah, xlv. 5 f.; cf. Deut. iv. 35. Irenæus, I. i. 10 (I. v. 4).⁴⁶ "Philos.," vi. 36; Irenæus, I. i. 13 (I. vii. 4).

substance, into which he breathes from himself the soul or animating principle. The pneumatic or spiritual part is imparted to elect souls by Sophia, without the cognisance of the Demiurge.

As thus completed, man is, therefore, a compound of spirit, soul, and body. In so far as he is composed of soul and body, *i.e.*, as fashioned by the Demiurge, he is subject to evil, which came into existence with the evolution of matter, and of which the Devil, the Ruler or Cosmocrator of the visible world, and his angels are the embodiment.⁴⁷ Hence the necessity and the superlative importance of the idea of a redemption in the Valentinian, as in the other Gnostic systems. To achieve this redemption is the mission of Christ, the Saviour or Redeemer, who imparts the saving knowledge by which the spiritual man can alone attain to salvation. Of this redemption all men are not equally capable. Valentinus divides mankind into three classes according to their capacity and character. There is the truly spiritual class, which is alone fully capable of receiving this knowledge; the psychic class, *i.e.*, the members of the Catholic Church, which is only capable of faith and will be saved only in so far as they choose and pursue the good; and the purely material or hylic class, which is utterly incapable, and, as in the case of the material cosmos, is doomed to destruction at the final consummation of all things.⁴⁸ Hence, further, the obligation of the ascetic life, the repression of the animal and bodily side of human nature. Valentinus and his immediate disciples seem to have taught a lofty and austere morality, whilst other Gnostic teachers, like Saturninus and Tatian, went the length of denouncing and eschewing marriage as well as the use of animal food.⁴⁹ On the other hand, some like Carpocrates, Simon, Menander, and Marcus are accused by their Catholic opponents of indulging in gross sensuality on the assumption, it would seem, that, matter being evil, its unregulated use is immaterial to the higher life of the Spirit.⁵⁰ They are, further, addicted to magic as well as the seduction of women.⁵¹ There appears to have been some ground for such charges against certain sections of them. At the same time, the tendency of their opponents was to magnify them on the principle that heterodoxy necessarily implied immorality.

⁴⁷ The devil is called by Irenæus "a spirit of evil," *πνεῦμα τῆς πορνείας*, I. i. 10 (I. v. 4). Being of a spiritual nature he is superior to the Demiurge.

⁴⁸ Irenæus, I. i. 11 (I. vi. 1, 2).

⁴⁹ Irenæus, I. xviii (I. xxiv. 2), etc.; "Philos.," vii. 28; viii. 16.

⁵⁰ Irenæus, I. xvi. 3 (I. xxiii. 4). The statement of Irenæus that Basilides taught such a doctrine, I. xix. 3 (I. xxiv. 5), is, as De Faye shows, unfounded. "Gnostiques et Gnosticisme," 26 f.

⁵¹ Irenæus, I. vii. 1 f. (I. xiii. 1 f.), etc.

These charges, in the general sense, must, therefore, be received with reserve.

Matter being evil, how could the divine Redeemer take upon Him a human body, become incarnate? The great difficulty of the Gnostics was not the divinity but the humanity of Christ. They tried to solve the problem by eliminating or minimising His humanity. They did so in varying fashion. What Valentinus himself thought on the subject is very obscure, and his followers were divided over it. According to Hippolytus the Italian section of them, to which Heracleon and Ptolemy belonged, held that His body was psychic, not material, and that into this psychic body the Spirit or Logos entered at his baptism, but left it before the crucifixion. The Eastern section, on the other hand, of which Bardesanes was the representative, contended that it was purely spectral, taking merely the semblance of man, and that His life and death were purely phantasmal.⁵² According to Irenæus, who seems to give the Italian version, His psychic body passed through Mary "as water through a tube," without deriving anything from her substance, and was conjoined at the baptism with Christ, who left it before the crucifixion.⁵³ For Saturninus His body was purely spectral, since "He was without birth, or body, or figure, though putatively appearing as a man."⁵⁴ Irenæus attributes a similar doctrine to Basilides, for whom Christ also appeared on earth in a seeming body. Before the crucifixion He substituted for Himself Simon of Cyrene, who suffered on the Cross, whilst He stood by and laughed at His enemies.⁵⁵ According to Hippolytus, He appeared in a psychic body which suffered on the Cross,⁵⁶ and this version of Basilides' Christological teaching is the more probable one. For Cerinthus Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary on whom the Christ descended at the baptism and whom He left before the crucifixion. Only the man Jesus suffered and rose from the dead.⁵⁷ A similar view seems to have been taught by Carpocrates. The Ophite Justinus was unique in not only maintaining His natural generation, but in regarding Him as only a teacher inspired by God, through His messenger Baruch, whom the Jews put to death, and whose spirit went on high to the Father.⁵⁸ With this exception, the Gnostic teachers thus either rejected the humanity of Christ, or admitted it only in a partial sense, or if recognising it, so distinguished between the man and the God as to invest Him with a double personality.

⁵² "Philos.," vi. 35.

⁵³ I. i. 13 (I. vii. 2).

⁵⁴ I. i. 18 (I. xxiv. 2).

⁵⁵ I. xix. 2 (I. xxiv. 4).

⁵⁶ "Philos.," vii. 27.

⁵⁷ Irenæus, i. 21 (I. xxvi. 1).

⁵⁸ "Philos.," v. 26.

For all of them, His mission was not to suffer for man's sin, as in the Catholic theory, but to reveal the secret knowledge whereby the spiritual man may attain to the higher life. Into this secret knowledge the spiritual man is initiated by means of symbolic rites after the fashion of the mystery religions. In the less philosophic sects he is further drilled in the use of magic practices and formulæ, which give him command over nature, and enable him to ascend safely through the spheres to heaven. This secret knowledge they profess to have derived from Christ, either directly or through the apostles.⁵⁹ Hence the importance of tradition in the Gnostic systems. Basilides, for instance, claimed to have received his doctrine from Matthias, who had derived it from the private or esoteric teaching of Jesus Himself.⁶⁰ Clement of Alexandria says that he derived it from Glaucus, the interpreter of Peter,⁶¹ whilst Valentinus is supposed to have been a disciple of Theudas, a disciple of Paul.⁶² The Ophites appealed in support of theirs to "The Gospel according to the Egyptians," and that according to Thomas, as well as to the discourses of the Lord's brother.⁶³ The movement, in fact, ere long produced a whole series of Gnostic gospels and Acts of the Apostles. Its leaders further quoted liberally from the books of the Old and New Testaments, which they twisted into a revelation of Gnostic doctrines.

CRITICAL ESTIMATE

As elaborated by Valentinus and his school, Christian Gnosticism was a serious attempt to solve the enigma of existence in the light of current science, philosophy, and religious belief, both Christian and pagan. It was a grandiose synthesis which displays no little power of thought and imagination, combined with a deep ethical sense and purpose. Hippolytus describes Valentinus himself as a disciple of Pythagoras and Plato—the product of Greek science and philosophy—whilst denying him the title of Christian.⁶⁴ He undoubtedly drew largely from Greek thought, whilst imparting to it his poetic flair and stamping on it his Gnostic apprehension of Christianity. He may be best described as a Christian Platonist and a Stoic moralist in one. In his system and the movement to which he belonged, we may see the culmination of the Hellenisation of Christianity. The beginning of this culmination is already discernible in the apostolic and post-apostolic development of Christian thought, though the

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Irenæus, I. xx. iii (I. xxv. 5).

⁶⁰ "Philos.," vii. 20.

⁶¹ "Strom.," vii. 17.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ "Philos.," v. 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, vi. 21 f.

movement was also influenced more or less by Oriental speculation and religious belief and mythology. Of his philosophical ability and ethical seriousness there can be no doubt. Irenæus certainly errs in attributing to him and his followers the doctrine of moral indifference, on the plea that as gold, when submerged in filth, loses none of its native qualities, so the spiritual man may permit himself such indulgence with impunity.⁶⁵ "He was," rightly judges M. de Faye, "a very profound Christian moralist and a speculator of high flight . . . haunted by the problem of evil and the deliverance from it; the most daring speculator of the second century."⁶⁶

At the same time, the Catholic opposition to it as well as to the lower forms of Gnosticism, is intelligible enough. Its defects are palpable. It not only elaborated a theory of the origin of being and of the constitution of the universe—a quite legitimate undertaking. It did so in a quasi-mythological fashion, and in the less philosophical form of the Gnostic movement the mythology became both crude and increasingly fantastic. It tacked on this mythology to Christianity, which already contained a mythological element derived from Judaism and Christian tradition. It sought to immerse Christianity in current scientific and speculative thought as well as in current mythology. It would have made it a fantastic medley of thought and belief largely alien to it, and certainly alien to the original teaching of Jesus Himself. However laudable the aim to rationalise Christian teaching and relate it to the science and philosophy of the age, it would have burdened Christian faith with an intricate and fantastic incubus of speculation and belief, which, to the modern mind, is neither truly scientific nor philosophical. In its lower forms it would, in addition, have transformed the religion of Jesus into a crude system of sacramental magic and mythology. Moreover, it would have divorced Christianity from its historical founder, and made of Christ a purely superhuman and therefore essentially a fictitious figure. Christ as phantom or as only partially a human being is not the Christ of the primitive tradition, though in the Fourth Gospel and to some extent in Paul He comes at times very near to this unhistoric, Gnostic figure. These Gnostics are strangely lacking in the historic sense, and the surrender of the historic Jesus for an imaginary supermundane being in human guise would have been an irreparable loss to Christian faith. Equally visionary the theoretic invention of two Gods—the supreme God isolated in the supersensible sphere or divine

⁶⁵ "Adv. Haer.," I. i. 11 (I. vi. 2).

⁶⁶ "Gnostiques et Gnosticisme," 50 f.

Pleroma, and the subordinate God of the sensible creation. There might, indeed, be some excuse for not identifying the God of the Old Testament, who is conceived at times in very human fashion, with the supreme Deity, who is the source of all other being. But the explanation lies not in the assumption of a subordinate God, but in the imperfect Jewish conception of the one and only God. No less unchristian is the distinction between knowledge and faith, between the spiritual and the merely psychic Christian. The distinction is utterly at variance with the teaching of Christ Himself, whose mission was to the common people rather than the scribes and Pharisees, and who emphasised faith as the vital, the saving principle of the religious life.

Again, the attempt to interpret the Old Testament and the early Christian Scriptures in a Gnostic sense by a forced and allegorical exegesis was both unhistoric and unscientific, even if its Catholic opponents were far from infallible in this respect. Further, the pessimistic and morbid conception of matter as essentially evil, and the extreme asceticism on the one hand, the gross licentiousness on the other, to which it gave rise, can only be described as a travesty of the teaching of Jesus. It was, too, based on a one-sided and purblind view of matter. Corruption and death are, indeed, inherent in material existence, and this feature of existence might well give rise to a morbid pessimism. Even so, how much is there in the material universe that bespeaks a marvellous, beneficent, designing Power, of which the material universe is the revelation and the instrument. "And God saw that it was good" is, on the whole, the saner conviction. This pessimism was, in fact, the fruit, not of a balanced philosophy or science, but of the current crude belief in the existence of the hostile astral "principalities and powers," which were supposed to rule the universe and hold man in a fate-like thralldom. To conjure this imaginary ethereal hierarchy and resort to magic in order to counter its régime and that of its emissaries, the demons, was only to perpetuate the superstition of the age. There was, therefore, on such and other grounds, ample reason for its repudiation by the Catholic Church, even if such ideas, in a less extreme form, were by no means without their influence on the thought and teaching of the Church itself.

MARCION

Marcion ⁶⁷ was a native of Sinope in Pontus, where his father

⁶⁷ Both Irenæus and Hippolytus devote much less space to Marcion than to Valentinus and his school. His importance is not to be measured by this fact, however. Irenæus intended to write a special work against him, though he

was bishop. By occupation a shipmaster, he had evidently had a liberal education, and was besides a man of an inquiring, independent mind. He ere long diverged from the traditional faith, was, in consequence, excommunicated by his father,⁶⁸ and started forth on his career as a propagandist for his religious convictions. At Smyrna he came into collision with Polycarp and ultimately (*c.* 138) arrived in Rome, where he became a member of the Roman community, to which he made a liberal contribution. Six years later (144) he was once more excommunicated by the Roman presbyters, and organised a separate community. Though influenced by the Gnostic movement, he was not merely the founder of a school. Like Montanus, he became the founder of a Church in opposition to the Catholic Church. By this time he had thought out the distinctive religious views, which he set forth in his edition of the New Testament Scriptures⁶⁹ and his "Antitheses." It is from these, as preserved in the works of his opponents, that we obtain an insight into his distinctive position as a religious leader and propagandist. According to Justin and Tertullian,⁷⁰ his success was phenomenal. Before his death (*c.* 160) he had won many adherents throughout the Empire and organised them into a separate Church. In its widespread effects his missionary activity is comparable to that of Paul, whose true disciple he claimed to be. The claim is very questionable. Whilst he appropriated the Pauline teaching of the antithesis between the Law and the Gospel and of redemption solely by the grace of God in Christ, in the radical inferences which, under Gnostic influence, he drew from this teaching, he went far beyond and away from the master. In respect of these inferences, Paul would certainly not have recognised in him a legitimate disciple.

Though influenced by the Gnostic movement, he was not specially concerned with Gnostic speculation. His distinctive

does not seem to have carried out his intention, and Hippolytus actually did so. Treatises against him were also written by Justin, Rhodo, Tertullian, and Bardesanes, etc., and that of Tertullian in five books is extant. De Faye, Legge, and other modern historians of Gnosticism devote special chapters to him. The standard monograph is that of Harnack, "Marcion: Das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott" (Texte und Unters., 3 Reihe, Bd. xv., 1921, 2nd ed., 1924). The latest in English is by R. S. Wilson, "Marcion: A Study of a Second-Century Heretic" (1933), a concise and serviceable review, which is confessedly largely dependent on Harnack. Harnack's estimate of Marcion and some of his positions have been criticised in Germany. For these criticisms and his reply, see "Neue Studien zu Marcion" (Texte und Unters., 1924).

⁶⁸ The alleged cause, the seduction of a girl, may safely be discarded as a later calumny.

⁶⁹ Harnack, "Marcion," 24.

⁷⁰ Justin, "Apol.," i. 26, 58; Tertullian, "Adv. Marcionem," v. 19.

interest was in religion as revealed in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. He was a Biblical critic and theologian and a practical reformer of the Church, in accordance with what he deemed to be true Christianity, which it had misunderstood and misinterpreted. In its acceptance of the Old Testament as a Christian book and its identification of the God revealed by Christ with the Jewish God, the Church had remained Judaic and had perverted the Christian faith. In proof of this contention, he put forth the startling thesis that the God and the religion revealed in the Old Testament were radically at variance with the God and the religion revealed in the New, and subjected both Testaments to a critical examination in demonstration of this thesis. Whilst in his application of the critical method, he implicitly accepted the whole of the Old Testament as it stands and interpreted it in the literal sense, he did not shrink from eliminating from the New everything Judaic in an arbitrary and dogmatic fashion. Of the Four Gospels he retained only a mutilated version of that of Luke. Of the Epistles only ten of those of Paul, which he modified to suit his thesis. The others, along with the Acts and the Apocalypse, he entirely rejected, on the plea that their authors were false apostles, who had falsified the Gospel as proclaimed by Christ and Paul, and had even tampered with those documents which he retained in an expurgated form.

In his radical distinction between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New, he seems to have been influenced by the Gnostic conception of the supreme God and the inferior Creator God—the Demiurge or Framer of the world. This inferior God reveals Himself in His creation, and in the Old Testament He is the God of the Jews, whom He chose as His people and to whom He gave the Law. As Lawgiver, He is the Just God, who requires obedience to His Law, punishes disobedience, and acts on the principle of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But, though just, he is an imperfect God. He creates the world out of matter in which evil inheres and death and corruption reign, disease and vermin abound. Evidently He could not make a better. He makes man in His own image, but could not prevent him from falling and becoming subject to death and corruption, or from being weak and helpless and miserable, the victim of fleshly lust, the procreative instinct. He is thus not all-powerful. Nor is He omniscient, for He does not appear always to know what is to happen or has happened, and is ignorant of any other God. He can be partial, arbitrary, harsh, wrathful, envious, jealous, despotic, vindictive in His treatment of His people and others. He punishes the sins of the fathers on their children, and allows the

innocent to suffer for the guilty. He shows, indeed, in the Prophets and the Psalms an aspect of benevolence in promising the redemption of His people. But this redemption is concerned only with their earthly existence. The creator God has accomplished only a wretched tragedy in the creation and government of the world and man. Both are a failure.

In complete antithesis to the Creator God stands the Good God, the supreme Deity. He is also the Stranger-God, inasmuch as He has had nothing to do with the creation of the world and man, and was entirely unknown till He chose to reveal Himself in Christ.⁷¹ In His essence He is Goodness and compassionate Love. His love is universal. It is not confined to any one people. It impels Him to redeem man from the régime of the Just God. To this end He sent His Son to displace the Law by the Gospel. The Son is God Himself, being distinguishable from the Father only in name. Marcion is a Modalist, for whom the Son is merely the mode in which the Father manifests Himself. Without human birth or body He appears at Capernaum, suddenly and unheralded, in a seeming body, though it is capable of suffering. Being a Stranger-God, He has no real connection either with matter or with the Messiah of Jewish prophecy, who was to be born of the lineage of David. He reveals the Good God and proclaims the Gospel of His universal redeeming love to the poor and the oppressed, to whom, not to the righteous, who observe the Law of the Just God, the Beatitudes are given. In opposition to the Law and its teachers, He inculcates the love of enemies and the duty of unlimited forgiveness, in accordance with the distinctive character of the Good God. He evinces this limitless love by yielding Himself to the death on the Cross, which is instigated by the Just God. It is the price of man's salvation which He pays to him and thereby puts an end to His régime, and inaugurates the life of faith and freedom, which is the object and the result of His self-sacrificing love. Finally, as universal Redeemer, He descends into the underworld to save the victims of the Just God's tyranny. Cain and the Sodomites, for instance, who flock to Him as their deliverer, in contrast to Abraham and the Old Testament saints, who, in their blindness, persist in their allegiance to their inferior God. The antithesis between the Good and the Just God, the Gospel and the Law, thus seems to go the length of undermining moral values, as expressed in the Decalogue. It is the Pauline antithesis between faith and works gone mad. Marcion was himself better than his extreme

⁷¹ Luke x. 22.

theory. Like Paul, he recognises a good element in the Law and is not antinomian in practice. In practice, in fact, he is ultra-puritan to the extent of absolutely disallowing marriage as a thing of the flesh, and prohibiting the use of meat. There can be no doubt that, in spite of his theoretic vagaries, he had experienced the power of the Gospel as a revelation and an inspiration, apart from all legal prescription, and strove to live the higher life of faith under its inspiration. For him in the opening sentence of his "Antitheses" the Gospel is "the wonder of wonders, ecstasy, power, astonishment—too wonderful to be uttered, or thought, or compared with anything else."⁷²

CRITICAL ESTIMATE

Marcion was a sincere Christian, a deeply earnest disciple of Christ and Paul. In adopting the theory of two antagonistic gods, and placing the Gospel in complete antithesis to the Old Testament religion, he believed that he was rendering a real service to Christianity and inaugurating an imperative reformation of the Church. From this point of view, Harnack reckons him the greatest religious personality between Paul and Augustine, and compares him with Luther as a Reformer. Though the estimate seems to me exaggerated, he was a man of powerful intellect and deep religious conviction, not the mere godless heretic that his Catholic opponents represent. He was deeply impressed by the difficult problems concerning the constitution and government of a universe in which evil is such a grim reality. He was dissatisfied with the Old Testament conception of the Creator-God, which contained much that seemed to be irreconcilable with the character of the supreme God, as he conceived Him, and as Christ revealed Him in the Gospel. Discarding the allegoric method of exegesis and interpreting the Old Testament in the natural sense, he saw only an unmitigated antithesis between the two. In accepting the Old Testament *en bloc* as Christian scriptures and allegorising them into harmony with the Gospel, the Church seemed to him to have failed to face the problem of their incongruity in important respects. It had placed a heavy burden of traditional belief on the faith of the Christian believer, who might well ask how the conception of the Jewish tribal war God could accord with that of the Father-God of all mankind in the Gospel.

The answer to such questions is to us obvious enough. It lies in the relative imperfection of the Jewish conception of God.

⁷² Quoted by Harnack, "Marcion," 81.

The character of the Creator-God of the Old Testament is imperfect simply because it reflects the very human traits which Jewish thought imparted to Him before the great prophets of Israel raised Him to a higher spiritual and ethical plane. Even so, the human representation of Him is still visible enough. If it is true that God made man in His own image, it is also true that man made God in *his* image. Instead of adopting this solution of the problem, Marcion sought the solution in his theory of two Gods—the Jewish and the Christian—without reflecting that it was merely a question of two different conceptions of the one God. The Old Testament does not prove the existence of an inferior God, but the inferiority of the Jewish conception of the one God. This solution of the problem, so obvious to us, did not occur to him, as it did not occur to other Gnostics. Nor did it occur to his Catholic opponents. Marcion's solution was natural enough in a polytheistic age, to which, apart from the Jews, monotheism was not the imperative postulate it is to us. The theory was none the less fanciful. It was also unworkable, and could only be made to work in virtue of a one-sided apprehension of the Old Testament Scriptures and an arbitrary adaptation of those of the New. In manipulating the latter into accordance with his theory, he did not refrain from playing fast and loose even with those of them which he accepted.

Moreover he failed to understand and, therefore, misrepresented the teaching of Jesus Himself and His attitude towards the Old Testament. The God revealed by Jesus is not the Stranger-God of Marcion, who is absolutely distinct from the Creator-God of Judaism. Jesus was a strict monotheist, and the Father-God whom He revealed is for Him identical with the God of the Old Testament envisaged on the higher plane of His unique thought and spiritual experience. Nor was the moral element in the Law and the prophets for Jesus what it was for Marcion—the arbitrary expression of the despotic will of an inferior God. It was the expression of an elevated ethical monotheism, even if it was, in some respects, inconsistent with a truly spiritual conception of God as the perfect Good. Jesus Himself felt this, and did not hesitate to criticise the Law from this point of view. He repudiated the *Lex talionis*, for instance, and set love above law. But love and law (justice) were not for him incompatible. They did not betoken two Gods, but were united in the Father-God whom He proclaimed, and who was not wholly unknown to Jewish religious thought as represented in the religious experience of the seers and singers of Israel. From the historic as well as monotheistic point of view Marcion's theory was thus

untenable. Whilst there might be antitheses between the revelation of the Old Testament and that of the New, these antitheses do not warrant, from either point of view, the theory of two gods. They show only a difference of conception of the one God. Even Paul, who emphasised the antithesis between the Law and the Gospel, works and faith, and rejected the Law as a means of salvation would not have shared Marcion's conception of it as an evidence of the existence of an inferior Creator-God and arbitrary Lawgiver, utterly alien from the supreme Redeemer-God and Father proclaimed by Christ.

Catholic opponents like Tertullian had a comparatively easy task in demolishing the two gods theory and the radical inferences which Marcion drew from it. The African Father's brilliant dialectic and power of sarcasm left it in ruins, though the vituperative terms in which he pillories his opponent in the exordium of his elaborate work against him⁷³ are unpardonable in a Christian theologian. Even to the amiable Justin he was possessed by the devil.⁷⁴ Equally vulnerable the one-sided pessimistic view of creation and the Docetic conception of the person of Christ, which Marcion shared with the Gnostics.

At the same time, some of the arguments of his Catholic opponents are no less vulnerable. Equally with Marcion, they failed, for instance, to find the true solution of the problem of the imperfections of the character of the Old Testament God. Because of this failure they did not realise the real difficulty of accepting the Old Testament revelation along with the New as the infallible revelation of a perfect God. Moreover, in their implicit acceptance of such assumptions as the virgin birth of the pre-existent heavenly Christ or Logos, incorporated in the developing creed, they themselves were endangering the real humanity of Jesus.

CHAPTER X

THE REPUDIATION OF GNOSTICISM

IN repudiation of the Gnostic version of Christianity, the early Catholic Fathers appealed to tradition, as guaranteed by the apostolic succession of the Catholic ministry and embodied in the primitive creed, or Rule of Faith, and the apostolic Scriptures.

⁷³ "Adv. Marcionem," i. 1.

⁷⁴ "Apol.," i. 26.

In adopting this line of argument, they were only following the method of the Gnostics and Marcion, who, in vindication of their teaching, adduced a secret tradition handed down from apostles, and appealed to a Gnostic form of the creed and to alleged apostolic Scriptures.

TRADITION AND APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

As we have seen, Basilides, Valentinus, and other Gnostic teachers claimed to have derived their teaching from certain of the apostles, to whom Christ secretly communicated it. It had come to them from a reliable tradition, though this tradition was known only to a few.¹ Their Catholic opponents denied this claim, denounced this professed tradition as false, and counter-claimed that they alone possessed the true tradition.² Paul and the other apostles had openly and fully taught the true faith, which the Gnostics had corrupted under this specious pretext. The Catholic Church was in possession of this traditional faith in virtue of the uninterrupted succession of its ministry from the apostles. It had thereby been handed down intact from generation to generation. Apostolic succession is the infallible guarantee of this fact.

As in the Epistle of Clement, though not so definitely, Irenæus represents the apostles as taking care to appoint reliable successors, who would both carry on their work and perpetuate their teaching. These in turn were followed by others in regular succession down to the time at which he wrote.³ In proof thereof he adduces by way of example the Church of Rome, in which the succession of bishops from the apostles may be traced, in contrast to the unauthorised and separatist Gnostic assemblies.⁴ A Clement or a Polycarp, for instance, who had conversed with apostles, or had even been appointed by them, were in a position to communicate to their successors and also to other churches what they had learned from them, and thus to hand on the true tradition. "In this order and by this succession," he concludes, after enumerating the succession of bishops in the Roman Church, "the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles and the preaching

¹ Tertullian, "De Præscript. Hær.," 25. Clement of Alexandria tells of the current belief that Jesus, after His resurrection, imparted a fuller revelation to James, John, and Peter, which they in turn imparted to the rest of the apostles and the Seventy. Eusebius, ii. 1. Quotation from his lost "Hypotyposes."

² They use the term tradition in the sense of the substance of the faith handed down by the apostolic succession of the ministry as well as the written teaching of the apostolic writings and the Old Testament.

³ "Adv. Hær.," III. iii. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, III. iii. 2-3.

of the truth have come down to us.”⁵ Even if the apostles had left no writings to witness to their teaching, there is thus in the tradition, handed down by a series of office-bearers, a sure means of knowing what they taught. Many barbarian nations, though they have never read the apostolic writings, have yet obtained a knowledge of the true faith by means of this tradition, which has been preached to them. In the Catholic Church alone, in contrast to the Gnostic sects, the apostles deposited the truth as a rich man deposits money in a bank. To learn the truth in case of any dispute, we have only to turn to the Churches by whose office-bearers this deposit has been handed down.⁶ Hence the Catholic Church is now the Church infallibly possessing the truth in contrast to the Gnostic sects.⁷ Its bishops and presbyters, as the successors of the apostles and men of sound speech and blameless life, have received “the certain gift of truth,”⁸ and what they affirm against the Gnostics, who are mere pretenders to truth and are, besides, men of bad character, must, therefore, be true.⁹ Both *alike* are invested with the prestige of apostolic succession, though the bishop seems to be invested with the major share of this prestige, whilst both are superior to the deacons, of whom apostolic succession is not predicated. His view of their succession differs, however, from that of Ignatius. With Ignatius the bishop is the representative of Christ; the presbyter the successor of the apostles. With Irenæus both alike are the apostolic successors, and the theory of succession has thus undergone a modification.

Tertullian in his pre-Montanist period and Hippolytus also emphasise apostolic succession as a guarantee of the truth against the heretics.¹⁰ According to Tertullian, who makes reiterated use of this argument in the “*De Præscriptione Hæreticorum*,”¹¹ the apostles derived their teaching from Christ and communicated it to the bishops, whom they appointed in the Churches founded by them. In these Churches and in those which, though founded at a later time, may nevertheless claim to be apostolic in virtue of their agreement with the teaching of the apostles, the true tradition is alone to be found. This deposit of truth has been handed down intact through the succession of bishops in these Churches, for, unlike Irenæus, he makes no mention of the apostolic succession of presbyters. In confirmation of this he, like Irenæus, appeals

⁵ “*Adv. Haer.*,” III. iii. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, III. iv. 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, III. iv. 1; *cf.* III. xxxviii. 1 (III. xxiv. 1).

⁸ *Charisma certum veritatis*.

⁹ “*Adv. Haer.*,” IV. xl. 2 (IV. xxvi. 2-5).

¹⁰ For the view of Hippolytus, see “*Philos.*,” Pref. to bk. I.

¹¹ Dated by Monceaux about 200. “*Hist. Lit. de l’Afrique Chrétienne*,” i. 198.

to the testimony of the apostolic Churches, in which are the very chairs of the apostles and their original unmutilated writings are read. You have only to turn to that of Corinth, or Philippi, or Thessalonica, or Ephesus, or Smyrna, or Rome. In such you will undisputably find the true deposit of the faith, and such evidence no heretic can produce in support of his version of the apostolic tradition.¹²

This appeal to apostolic succession as a guarantee of the true tradition in opposition to the Gnostics is, in both Irenæus and Tertullian, in effect, an appeal to history. The Catholic Church, they contend, possesses the truth, because it can historically trace its origin to the apostles, and has preserved the truth as derived from them. The appeal to the sources, as evidence of what is apostolic and what is not, is, from the historical point of view, on the right lines. Let history decide as between Catholics and Gnostics, is a forcible argument, and this is what the contention of Irenæus and Tertullian amounts to. For them apostolic succession does not involve the idea of succession in virtue of ordination. They emphasise what they deem the fact of the historic succession of the Catholic ministry from the apostles downwards, not their ordination, as a guarantee of the possession and preservation by this ministry of the apostolic faith against its perverters. The early doctrine of apostolic succession is concerned, not with the question of episcopal ordination, but with the claim of the Catholic ministry to be descended from the apostles and thereby to possess and preserve the apostolic teaching. It is only later (Cyprian, for instance) that the doctrine comes to include the idea of succession in virtue of episcopal ordination and that such ordination becomes the indispensable mark of a valid ministry.¹³ Both Irenæus and Tertullian emphasise the historic aspect of succession, and Irenæus, in particular, is fond of reasoning thus—I have heard such and such a fact or verity from a certain presbyter, who had heard it from those who had seen the apostles.¹⁴

On the other hand, it is evident that they were not sufficiently critical or well informed in their appeal to history in proof of their contention that the Catholic Church, in virtue of apostolic succession, possesses the true tradition. They are prone at times to pass off later beliefs about the apostolic age as facts without attempting critically to test their truth. Both, for instance,

¹² "De Præscriptione Hær.," 20, 21, 27, 32, 36, 37.

¹³ On the early meaning of apostolic succession as denoting only succession in the historic sense, see Headlam, "Doctrine of the Church," 124 f. He controverts forcibly Gore's conception of it as involving succession by ordination. "The Church and the Ministry," 59 f.

¹⁴ See, for instance, IV. xlii. 2 (IV. xxvii. 1).

assume that the ecclesiastical development of their own time was identical with the actual conditions of the apostolic age. Irenæus erroneously makes Paul summon the bishops *and* presbyters of Ephesus and other neighbouring cities to Miletus, and thus, by distinguishing between them,¹⁵ misinterprets Acts xx. 17 f. Again, he passes off as a fact the erroneous tradition that Jesus began His ministry in His thirtieth year and continued it for ten years, *i.e.*, till His fortieth year.¹⁶ He, as well as Hegesippus, another zealous adherent of the succession theory, gives a list of the bishops of Rome from the time of the apostles onwards. But there are serious reasons for doubting whether the earlier ones were bishops in the later sense. Similarly Tertullian evidently regards the bishops of his own time as already instituted by the apostles and retails as a fact the story that John was plunged into boiling oil at Rome from which he emerged unhurt and thereafter returned to Patmos.¹⁷

Still more uncritical is the tendency, in Irenæus especially, to ascribe the infallible gift of truth to the office-bearers of the Church in virtue of apostolic succession.¹⁸ If they possessed this gift in virtue of succession, how was it, for instance, that the teaching of St Paul was so generally misunderstood and misinterpreted even in the early Catholic Church? How, further, explain the development of Christian thought since the apostolic age, and its divergence in important respects from the apostolic teaching? Or the variety of teaching and the recurring doctrinal conflict within the Church? The fact is, as we may learn from the "Sources of the Apostolic Canons," that some of the bishops might be so illiterate that they were unable to expound the Scriptures. Mere succession is thus by no means a test of the infallible possession of truth. It is of the same artificial and formal character as the old theory of the mechanical inspiration of the Scriptures as a guarantee of their infallibility. The real test of the possession of truth which rests on history consists in finding out the facts by means of critical investigation. Even then we are liable to err owing, it may be, to the scantiness or the imperfection of our sources of information, or our misinterpretation of them. The mere assumption of infallibility of this artificial kind will not lead us to the truth. Nay, it will inevitably prevent us from getting near the truth at all.

At the same time, Irenæus retains the earlier view of the gift of the Spirit in the individual Christian and of the community as the sphere of the Spirit's operation. "Where the Spirit of

¹⁵ III. xiv. 2.

¹⁶ II. xxxiii. 3 (II. xxii. 5).

¹⁷ "De Præscriptione Hær.," 36.

¹⁸ IV. xl. 2 (IV. xxvi. 2).

God is, there is the Church and every kind of grace." Its operation is only limited to the true Church as against the heretics.¹⁹ He recognises, too, the gift of prophecy as still in vogue in the Church,²⁰ and rates its exercise very highly. The tendency of the theory is, nevertheless, as we have noted, to relegate the prophetic class to a subordinate place in the Church in favour of an official class of bishops and presbyters, who, as the successors of the apostles, are invested with the certain, if not altogether the exclusive, gift of truth.

In order to prove the historic succession of the single bishop of apostolic Churches from apostolic times, lists of such bishops were drawn up from about the middle of the second century onwards. As we have seen, Hegesippus and Irenæus made such a list for the Roman Church, and lists for the other apostolic Churches later came into existence. Such lists are anachronisms for the more primitive Church, and it is only from the end of the first century or the beginning of the second that, as we have noted, the single bishop appears at Antioch and in certain Churches in Asia. In the case of Corinth, Philippi, Rome, Alexandria the single bishop only appears later in the second century. The argument for the succession of the later single bishop from the time of the apostles, with the doubtful exception of those of Jerusalem, in succession to James, is thus historically untenable. Take the case of the Church of Alexandria, in which Eusebius knows of a succession of single bishops from Mark downwards.²¹ From a letter of the Emperor Hadrian, about the end of the first quarter of the second century, which may be authentic, we learn that there were bishops and presbyters in the Alexandrian Church at the time at which he wrote. It is not quite clear from the letter whether they were still identical. But the fact that bishops are mentioned in the plural seems to point to the conclusion that they were, and it certainly leads us to question the historic validity of a list of single bishops of Alexandria purporting to go back to Mark. The fact seems to be that the presbyters in the Alexandrian Church preserved, down to the end of the second century, much of their ancient power and importance, even after they came to have a recognised president or single bishop. They nominated this bishop from their own number and he seems to have been at most their president and to have been, only in this respect, different from the body to which he belonged. Clement of Alexandria towards the end of the second century speaks, indeed,

¹⁹ III. xxxviii. 1 (III. xxiv. 1).

²⁰ I. vii. 3 (I. xiii. 4) and other passages.

²¹ See the list in M'Giffert's trans. of the "Hist. Eccl.," 402.

in some passages of his works, of the threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. But in others he knows only of presbyters and deacons, and it appears that at the time at which he wrote the distinctive function of the bishop in the Alexandrian Church was not so clearly defined as it had come to be in other churches, and as Demetrius, the Alexandrian bishop in the early third century, strove to make it. Of apostolic succession Clement knows nothing. "The organisation of the Church of Alexandria," says De Faye, "was certainly still rudimentary. Monarchical episcopacy did not yet exist. Demetrius seems to have been the first who constituted it at Alexandria. Up to his time the real authorities in the communities had been the elders,²² the depositories of tradition, the living chain which connected with the apostles and whose opinions and utterances Clement loves to recall."²³

THE RULE OF FAITH

The true faith guaranteed by the apostolic succession of the Catholic ministry is embodied in the primitive Catholic creed or Rule of Faith,²⁴ which the Catholic theologians opposed to the Gnostic teaching. The germ of a Rule of Faith already appears in the numerous short confessional passages in the New Testament,²⁵ and in the baptismal formula "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" of the First Gospel,²⁶ and the "Didache" towards the end of the first century. A rudimentary form of it is later discernible in the Epistles of Ignatius and the Apologies of Aristides and Justin.²⁷ It

²² ἀρχαῖοι πρεσβύτεροι.

²³ Clement, 15. In regard to the growing tendency to emphasise apostolic succession, Dr Farnell discerns the influence of Græco-Roman ideas. "The insistence on the apostolic succession in the various churches, a primary article of faith with many at the present time, is entirely in keeping with a very old Mediterranean tradition: for we find it not infrequently maintained in Hellenic paganism that the priest should descend directly from the God whom he serves, or from the first apostle who instituted the particular cult or mystery; we hear of the priest being qualified 'by descent and by divine appointment.'" "The Evolution of Religion," 49-50 (1905); cf. his "Higher Aspects of Greek Religion," 59 (1918).

²⁴ Κάνων τῆς πίστεως or ἀληθείας; Regula fidei or veritatis. The Gnostics also professed faith in the Creed, which they had altered in accordance with their particular beliefs. Christ is, for instance, born "through" (διὰ), not "from" (ἐκ) or of" Mary. For "He shall come to judge," they substituted "has come" (ἦκει). See Müller, "Kirchengeschichte," i. 74. For the creed of Apelles, the disciple of Marcion, see Harnack, "Marcion," 228 f.

²⁵ See these in detail in Burn, "Intro. to the Creeds," 86 (1889); Curtis, "Creeds and Confessions," 34 f. (1911).

²⁶ Matt. xviii. 19.

²⁷ See Tral. 9, etc.; Arist. 2; Justin, i. 13 and 31.

ultimately emerges in more elaborate form, in connection with a specific community, in the Roman creed which dates before the middle of the second century, and may have been derived, as Loofs assumes, from Asia Minor.²⁸ This creed, with some additions, came to be known in the third century as the Apostles' Creed, though it cannot historically be traced to the apostles and did not originate from them.

It emphasises belief in God, the Father Almighty, and in Christ Jesus, His only begotten Son, His birth from the Holy Spirit and the virgin, His crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension, and coming to judge the living and the dead. It further confesses belief in the Holy Spirit, in holy Church, forgiveness of sin, and the resurrection of the flesh. In the earlier and more rudimentary form of Ignatius the opposition to Gnostic (Docetic) speculation had already appeared in the emphatic assertion of the reality of Christ's humanity, as attested by the virgin birth, and of His suffering, death, and resurrection. The opposition is still more marked in this more developed Roman creed. In addition to the actual birth by the virgin, it emphasises the uniqueness of His sonship,²⁹ as the only begotten Son of the Father as against the Gnostic æons, the holy Church as against the Gnostic sects, and the resurrection of the flesh, which they rejected. It was gradually enlarged into what became known as the Apostles' Creed by additions, in which the anti-Gnostic influence is also discernible. Witness the description of the Father as the "Maker of heaven and earth" and the amplification of the phrase "holy Church" into "the holy Catholic Church." It was not till the eighth century that, with the further addition of the descent into hell, the communion of saints, and the life everlasting, it appears in the final form in which it has come down to us.³⁰

The tendency to insert additional matter into it, under anti-Gnostic influence, is further observable in the free versions of it given by Irenæus, Tertullian, and Origen. Irenæus and Tertullian

²⁸ "Symbolik," 27 (1902). See also Caspari, "Quellen zur Geschichte des Taufsymbols" (1866) and "Alte und Neue Quellen" (1879). It is given by Hahn, "Bibliothek der Symbole," 22 (1897, 3rd ed.), and Lietzmann, "Kleine Texte," 17, 18 (1906). See also Seeberg's article, "Zur Geschichte der Entstehung des apostolischen Symbols,"—"Zeitschrift f. Kirchengeschichte" (1922). The story that the twelve apostles drew up the Rule of Faith before scattering from Jerusalem, each contributing an article, is a mere legend, first mentioned by Ambrose and Rufinus. It was first called in question by Valla, Erasmus, and Calvin.

²⁹ ἰδιὸν αὐτοῦ μορφωμένη.

³⁰ See Kattenbusch, "Das apostolische Symbol" (1894-1900); Burn, "The Apostles' Creed" (1914) and "Introduction to the Creeds" (1899); Stewart, "Creeds and Churches" (1916).

each give three such versions,³¹ and in all of these as well as that of Origen the repudiation of Gnosticism is unmistakable. They emphatically assert the unity of the Father-God, who is also the creator or maker of the world, and Origen pointedly calls Him "the just and good God, who Himself gave the Law and the prophets, and is also the God of the apostles and of the Old and New Testaments." Tertullian and Origen further represent Him as creating the world out of nothing, in denial of the Gnostic belief in its creation out of pre-existent matter. All three associate with Him the pre-existent Son in creation, and Tertullian explicitly identifies Him with the God known to the patriarchs and the prophets. Equally emphatic the assertion by all three of His real incarnation in the virgin. According to Irenæus, "He united His manhood to God." According to Tertullian, He is "Son of man and Son of God." According to Origen, He was "God incarnate, who, though He became man, remained God, and took a body like our body, differing in this only that it was born of the virgin and the Holy Spirit, and suffered in truth, and not in appearance only, the death common to all." They are equally emphatic in asserting the reality of the resurrection, and Irenæus, following Ignatius, expressly affirms His ascent in the body to heaven. Unlike the Roman creed, Irenæus and Tertullian denounce hell-fire against the Gnostic heretics at the coming of Christ to judgment.

Such is the Rule of Faith as formulated in these amplified, anti-Gnostic versions of it. Whilst these versions embody the main doctrines of the Roman creed, they elaborate and interpret the creed in a speculative fashion. They contain a distinctive theology as well as affirm certain historic facts or what are deemed to be facts. They affirm, for instance, the creation out of nothing, the pre-existence of the Son or Logos, His creative function, His essential divinity, His twofold nature, divine and human. The tendency is thus not only to elaborate and interpret, but to invest this interpretation with apostolic authority. In other words, the theological views of the writers are read back into the Regula as authoritative articles of apostolic belief. For Irenæus this enlarged belief is also that of the whole Church of his time, and he appeals unhesitatingly to the fact that it is held by all the Churches from Gaul to the East.³² Tertullian as dogmatically asserts that it was taught by Christ Himself, was professed by all

³¹ Irenæus gives a fourth in his "Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching."

³² "Adv. Haer.," i. 3 (I. x. 2).

the Churches, and that Scripture ought to be tested by it as the new law or norm of belief.³³

It is nevertheless questionable whether this speculative elaboration of the Roman creed was in all respects an exact reflection of the teaching of Christ Himself or of the earliest tradition concerning Him. Nor is it demonstrable that the creed itself was professed throughout the whole Church of the late second and early third centuries. Irenæus may be trusted for its profession in the case of Gaul and Asia Minor; Tertullian for Carthage.³⁴ But it is very doubtful whether it was professed at Alexandria in the time of their contemporary Clement or in the Eastern Churches.³⁵ It is not till towards the close of the third century that a Rule of Faith was prevalent in the Church at large, though it was not necessarily, as Kattenbusch maintains, derived from that of Rome.³⁶ "There can be no doubt," says Harnack, "that from the last decades of the third century onwards one and the same confession, identical not in its wording but in its main features, prevailed in the great confederation of churches extending from Spain to the Euphrates, and from Egypt to beyond the Alps."³⁷

CANON OF CATHOLIC SCRIPTURES

The Gnostics appealed in support of their teaching to the apostolic writings, which they interpreted allegorically after the fashion of their Catholic opponents, who applied this method to the Old Testament Scriptures. Witness the "Exegetica" of Basilides and the commentary of Heracleon on the Fourth Gospel.³⁸ So interpreted, they regarded these writings as authoritative Scriptures. They seem, in fact, to have been the first to raise them to the rank which the Old Testament had at first possessed in the Christian communities. They produced, in addition, a number of pseudo-apostolic Gospels and Acts. They not only allegorised and invented. They criticised, and Marcion was the first to produce a closed canon of the New Testament, consisting, as has been noted, of the Gospel of Luke and ten of Paul's Epistles,

³³ "De Præscript. Hær.," 13, 14, 19, 20, 28. Nova lex et nova promissio regni cœlorum.

³⁴ "De Præscript. Hær.," 36.

³⁵ Harnack, "Hist. of Dog.," ii. 32 f.

³⁶ "Das apostolische Symbol," ii. 194 f., and see Curtis, "History of Creeds," 60 f.

³⁷ "Hist. of Dog.," ii. 37.

³⁸ De Faye, "Gnostiques," 25; Brooke, "Fragments of Heracleon," 48.

amended in accordance with his Gnostic theory of two gods.³⁹ Hence the counter-attempt of the early Catholic Fathers to produce a canon of authoritative apostolic Scriptures in disproof of the garbled version of Marcion and the fabrications of the Gnostics.

From the outset, the authoritative canon of the primitive Church was the Old Testament, which had been completed only about the advent of Christianity. To Jesus Himself it contained the authoritative revelation which it was His mission to fulfil, if also to amplify and even amend. To it the apostolic preachers appealed in demonstration of His claim to be the Messiah, and Paul adduced it in support of his version of the Gospel. During the apostolic age in the stricter sense and beyond it, these sacred writings⁴⁰ alone constituted the Christian canon. To them alone was applied the term Scripture.⁴¹ Ultimately, however, as the sayings of the Lord⁴² were committed to writing, Gospels in the written sense—by no means confined to the four finally included in the New Testament canon—came into existence and acquired a growing authority. A growing authority was also accorded to the Epistles of Paul and other early writings, which, along with the Hebrew Scriptures and the Gospels, were read in the common assemblies for worship⁴³ and edification. As in the case of the Gospels, the Christian writings read in the churches included a number of works, such as the First Epistle of Clement, the Epistle of Barnabas, and "The Shepherd of Hermas," which were ultimately deemed uncanonical.

There was thus no lack of documents, to which a growing authority was attributed, for the formation of a canon of Christian Scriptures, along with those of the Old Testament. This growing authority is evinced by the quotation from or allusion⁴⁴ to one or more of the synoptic Gospels and apostolic Epistles in the literature of the subapostolic period. Clement, for instance, is familiar with the synoptic Gospels, the Pauline Epistles, the Epistle to the Hebrews. Barnabas also borrows from them, though more sparingly. Ignatius and Polycarp make use of a collection of

³⁹ Harnack, "Marcion," 32 f.; Krüger, "Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur," 32 f. (1895).

⁴⁰ τὰ βιβλία.

⁴¹ γραφή, γραφαί. The term is applied to the Pauline Epistles in 2 Peter iii. 16. But this epistle is pseudonymous and belongs to the second century. In the Epistle of Barnabas (c. 4) it first denotes a New Testament writing (Matthew). So also in the so-called Second Epistle of Clement (c. 2) (c. A.D. 150) it denotes the Gospel of Matthew.

⁴² λόγια κυριακά.

⁴³ Justin, "Apol.," i. 66, 67; cf. "Dialog.," 103. Justin speaks of the Memoirs of the Apostles and means the Gospels only.

⁴⁴ These allusions may, however, have been taken from the unwritten Gospel tradition.

Paul's Epistles as well as the Johannine writings; Justin and Tatian of all the Four Gospels. Quotation or allusion does not, however, necessarily betoken that these writings formed a canon or part of a recognised canon of Christian Scriptures from the early second century onwards. At most they show that for individual writers they possessed a high authority. In this limited sense they may be regarded as constituting the germ of the later canon. There certainly was not yet a recognised and authoritative canon of such Scriptures, equal in rank with the Old Testament, for the whole Church. Such a canon only came into existence as the fruit of the Gnostic controversy of the second half of the second and the early third century.

Its composition was by a process of selection rather than collection—in other words, the separation of what was regarded as of apostolic authorship in the narrow sense from what was not so regarded. But there was not at first unanimity as to the writings thus selected as authoritative Christian Scriptures. For long these Scriptures did not embrace all that the canon ultimately included, and they included some that were ultimately excluded. Irenæus in the second last decade of the second century accepts the Four Gospels, twelve of the Pauline Epistles (excluding Philemon), the Acts of the Apostles, First Peter, the first Johannine Epistle, and the Apocalypse as canonical. The Muratorian Fragment at the end of the century adds the Epistle to Philemon, the second Johannine Epistle, the Epistle of Jude, the Wisdom of Solomon. Both exclude Hebrews (as also does Tertullian), the Epistle of James, the third Johannine Epistle, and Second Peter. Clement of Alexandria accepts Hebrews and would include, besides the Apocalypse of Peter, the Gospels of the Hebrews and of Peter, the Epistles of the Roman Clement and Barnabas, and "The Shepherd of Hermas," which the Muratorian Fragment explicitly rejects. His successor, Origen, is also liberal in his selection of what was ultimately deemed non-canonical, and includes the "Didache." In the first quarter of the fourth century, according to Eusebius,⁴⁵ the Four Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles of Paul (including presumably Hebrews), First Peter, First John were universally accepted.⁴⁶ But the Apocalypse, Second Peter, Second and Third John, James, and Jude are still open to doubt,⁴⁷ whilst Barnabas, "The Shepherd," the Apocalypse of Peter, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the "Didache," and the Acts of Paul, etc., are rejected⁴⁸ as uncanonical. It is only towards the end of the fourth century

⁴⁵ "Hist. Eccl.," iii. 25.

⁴⁶ Homologoumena.

⁴⁷ Antilegomena.

⁴⁸ Nothoi, from νόθος, a bastard.

(the third local Council of Carthage, 397) that the list of canonical books corresponds to the New Testament as known to us, and not till three hundred years later that this list was formally accepted as canonical for the whole Church.⁴⁹

Indisputably the Church chose well. The writings finally selected are, as a whole, of supreme religious and ethical quality, even if the strictly apostolic authorship of some of them is open to question. They are and remain the pearls of early Christian literature, and contrast strikingly with the spurious, apocryphal Gospels and Acts, whether of Catholic or Gnostic authorship, which, as inspired Christian Scriptures, they finally displaced.⁵⁰

In virtue of its possession of the true tradition, guaranteed by apostolic succession as against the false or falsified Gnostic tradition, an infallible Rule of Faith, and a fixed canon of authentic and authoritative Scriptures, the Church thus becomes Catholic in the sense of the true or orthodox, as well as the universal Church, in contrast to the Gnostic sects and the Marcionite and Montanist Churches.

CHAPTER XI

INNER CONFLICT

THE EASTER CONTROVERSY

THIS controversy was largely of a chronological nature and need not detain us long. It arose over the question of the date of the celebration of Easter. The churches of the province of Asia, following a tradition which they traced to Philip the evangelist and the apostle John, celebrated the death of Christ on the 14th day of the month of Nisan (roughly our April), which in the year of the crucifixion was a Friday.¹ Owing to the irregularity of the Jewish calendar month, the 14th of Nisan frequently fell on one of the other days of the week. The Christians of Asia, in accordance with the Johannine tradition, observed the 14th whenever it so occurred, irrespective of whether it was a Friday

⁴⁹ Seventh Œcumen. Council at Constantinople, 692, called also the Quinisextum.

⁵⁰ For fuller accounts see Milligan, "New Testament Documents" (1913); Gregory, "Canon and Text of the New Test." (1907); Souter, "Text and Canon of New Test." (1913); Murray in "Peake's Com." (1920). See also Loisy, "La Naissance du Christianisme," 417 f. (1933). There are many special works in German from Zahn's "Geschichte des N.T. Kanons" onwards (1888-92).

¹ They were hence known as Quarto-decimans.

or not. On that date they fasted till towards evening (3 o'clock), and then concluded their fast by celebrating the Christian Passover (common meal and Eucharist) in memory of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross as the Passover Lamb in the Christian sense. The Roman Church and the Church generally, on the other hand, observed a fast on the Friday as the day of the week on which Christ's sacrifice actually occurred, regardless of the day of the month on which the 14th of Nisan might fall. They continued their fast till the following Sunday, the day of the resurrection (the traditional forty hours), and concluded it with the festal celebration of the Eucharist in memory of the Lord's resurrection. In the one case, the Easter observance culminates in the celebration of the death of Christ as the Paschal Lamb in the Christian sense and shows a tendency to have regard to Jewish traditional custom.² In the other, it culminates in the festal celebration of the resurrection on the Lord's Day, and reveals a tendency to emphasise the specific Christian character of the Easter observance. The difference is not a very material one. It is rather one of accent than of creed. Both sides showed their sense of the importance of Christ's death by fasting, though the fasting of the Asian Christians did not last so long as at Rome and elsewhere outside Asia. The former, equally with the latter, firmly believed in the resurrection, as the letter of Polycrates of Ephesus to Victor of Rome shows. They presumably celebrated it in their own fashion, if not necessarily on the Sunday, at any rate on the day of the month on which, according to their reckoning, it fell to be celebrated.

On the other hand, it was certainly desirable, if not imperative, that there should be conformity of practice throughout the Church in celebrating the most important events in Christian history. It was rather awkward and unseemly at least that, whereas the Asian churches should be fasting and communing on certain days in commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection, those in the other regions of the Empire might be taking no notice of these events, and vice versa. On practical grounds alone, it was therefore natural that this divergence should give rise to protests and discussions, and that attempts should be made to put an end to it. Hence the convention of synods for this purpose in the second half of the second century in Palestine, Osroene (Eastern Syria), Rome, and Gaul.³ With the exception

² Hippolytus goes so far as to accuse the Quarto-decimans of a predilection for Jewish, in contrast to Christian, ideas and forms. "Philos.," viii. 18. This is, however, really predicable only of the strict Jewish Christians or Ebionites.

³ Eusebius, v. 23.

of Asia all these decided in favour of the more general practice, without going the length of disallowing the Asian one and refusing communion with the Asian Church. It also formed the subject of discussion between Polycarp and the Roman bishop, Anicetus, about the middle of the century (c. 155).⁴ Though Polycarp held fast to the Asian practice and Anicetus to that of the Church at large, they agreed to differ, and maintained communion in spite of this difference. Anicetus, in fact, requested Polycarp to celebrate the communion in his church. About fifteen years later it was discussed anew by Melito of Sardis, who defended, and Apolinarius of Hierapolis, who attacked, the Quarto-deciman celebration. It found in Blastus a zealous champion who carried the controversy to Rome itself in the time of Bishop Victor, and against whom Irenæus entered the lists.⁵ His self-assertion appears to have stirred the Roman bishop into vigorous action. He not only deposed Blastus,⁶ but required the Asian bishops to conform to the Roman practice, apparently under threat of excommunication. In reply, Polycrates of Ephesus convened a numerously attended synod, and in its name sent a point blank refusal, based on the ground that the Asian practice had the sanction of Philip, John, and Polycarp, besides many distinguished bishops and martyrs. "We observe the exact day, neither adding nor taking away, for in Asia great luminaries have fallen asleep." In conclusion he is not afraid of Roman threats. "For they have said, who were greater than I, 'We ought to obey God rather than man.'" His brethren are unanimous in their agreement with his letter of non-compliance. "If I should write their names (of the bishops attending the synod) they would be many multitudes, and they knowing my feeble humanity, agreed with the letter, knowing that I do not bear in vain my grey hairs, but that I have ever lived in Christ Jesus."⁷ Whereupon Victor, transforming a question of ritual into a question of faith, excommunicated them for their "heterodoxy,"⁸ and wrote letters to this effect to the Church at large. "But," adds Eusebius, "this did not please all the bishops," who, though they approved the Roman practice, sharply reproved his high-handed action, and exhorted him to preserve peace and unity, and love to the brethren. Irenæus joined in this protest and exhortation in a letter to Victor, though he also

⁴ Eusebius, iv. 14; v. 24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 20. In a work *περι σχίσματος*; Pseudo-Tertullian, "Adv. Om. Haer.," 8.

⁶ Eusebius, v. 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 24.

⁸ *ἑτεροδοξίας*.

agreed with his view of the question.⁹ The Church of Asia, nevertheless, persisted in its observance till the Council of Nicæa, which authoritatively declared the more general practice obligatory for the whole Church.

CONTROVERSY OVER THE LAPSED

The controversy over the Lapsed arose out of the Decian persecution. The question was, in the first place, a moral and religious one. But it was also one of far-reaching constitutional importance, since it involved the further question of the official episcopal authority against the claims of an unofficial element in the Carthaginian Church, which had the support of a section of the clergy and ultimately led to schism. To Cyprian it afforded the opportunity of vindicating and strengthening this authority, as well as restoring and heightening the moral standard in the Church at large, and of formulating and realising a definite policy to this end. The Church had, as we have seen, enjoyed nearly forty years of peace and had attracted a great accession of strength from paganism. Its growth had, however, been extensive rather than intensive. Many of its members and even of its clergy had been infected by a worldly spirit and might be described as easygoing. With the outbreak of a persecution so comprehensive and searching as that of Decius, there was bound to be demoralisation and widespread lapse. If the chief pastor of Carthage flinched and fled, and some even of the clergy apostatised, the general effect could not fail to be disastrous. As we have seen, many, in order to escape the ordeal or to obtain relief in the midst of torture, either sacrificed,¹⁰ or bought certificates to this effect,¹¹ or made false statements in regard to their faith.¹² What to do with these lapsed Christians became an urgent practical question. Had they, by their apostasy, forfeited for ever the right to communion with the faithful at the Lord's Table? According to the old rigorist view they had, the Church having no power to forgive the heinous sin of lapse into idolatry even under the stress of persecution. It could only commend the lapsed sinner to the mercy of God. It could not admit him to the Lord's Table even in return for true penitence. He must take the position of a catechumen, who might hear the Word of God, but not communicate. There was, however, the possibility of restoration to communion available by means of a special revelation vouchsafed to a prophet, or of the special merits of the martyrs and confessors,

⁹ Eusebius, v. 24.

¹⁰ *Sacrificati* or *thurificati*.

¹¹ *Libellatici*, from *libelli*.

¹² *Acta facientes*.

to whom, in virtue of their sufferings for Christ's sake, the right of pardon in His name was reserved. Such was the old theory in accordance with which in former times of trial, as in the persecution of the Christians of Lyons in the days of Marcus Aurelius, the lapsed sinner might be admitted to communion. If the Decian persecution had produced a host of apostates, it had also gained for a minority the glory of confession in spite of prison and torture. To these martyrs and confessors (so-called according to the degree of their suffering) the weaker brethren, who had fallen, now had recourse for "letters of peace," or recommendations to the clergy in favour of their restoration. The hero worship, the flattery of which they were the objects, enhanced their self-exaltation and their sense of their superiority, and some of them were only too ready to cultivate this popularity by complying with these solicitations, without inquiring too narrowly as to the character of the applicants or considering the demoralising effects of their action. Lucian, for instance, who assumed a general dispensing power and gave recommendations wholesale on the strength of a commission to this effect from the martyr Paulus, who had died in prison.¹³ Fortified with these letters, some of the lapsed resorted to threats and even, it would seem, in some places to riot, in order to intimidate the clergy to grant them communion. In this grave situation a section of the Carthaginian clergy had written to Cyprian on the question. In reply he evaded a decision on the ground that he had resolved to do nothing without the advice of the presbyters and the consent of the people, and proposed to postpone its consideration till he could return and hold such a consultation.¹⁴ At the same time, he was corresponding with his fellow-bishops and with the Roman clergy in pursuance of his plan of arriving at a common policy to be applied when peace should be restored to the Church. Meanwhile, however, these presbyters took it upon them, without further consultation with him, to receive some of the lapsed into communion on their own authority. To them the lapse of so many members constituted a serious danger to the Church, and in presence of the actual situation and the protracted absence of their bishop, who continued to postpone his return and could not but appear in a rather unheroic light, the local clerics were driven to waive the punctilious regard for the episcopal authority, on which Cyprian laid so much stress, and act on their own responsibility. To their absent bishop, however, their action appeared both contemptuous towards him and detrimental to

¹³ Cyprian, Ep. 22 (21) ; cf. 27 (22).

¹⁴ Ep. 14 (5).

order and morality. He sent an angry epistle bitterly aspersing their conduct in setting both at naught and threatening them with condign punishment.¹⁵ To the martyrs and confessors and the people he wrote in the same strain, striving to play off both against the presumptuous clerics,¹⁶ who appear to have desisted from communion with the lapsed in deference to his veto.¹⁷ They even earned his commendation in excommunicating the presbyter Gaius of Didda, and his deacon who had persisted in such communion.¹⁸ His own plan was to grant communion to those of the lapsed in danger of death, who were recommended by the confessors, but to defer the consideration of the case of the others till persecution had ceased. This plan he submitted to the Roman clergy,¹⁹ who expressed their agreement with it. It was, in fact, in part the expedient which they themselves had recommended in their letter to the Carthaginian clergy at the beginning of the persecution. They undertook to gain the adhesion of the bishops of Sicily and Italy.²⁰ He won for it, too, the approval of the Roman confessors, whose support he assiduously courted in a couple of effusive epistles,²¹ and of his fellow-bishops of the province of Africa. According to this agreement, the bishops were to meet in council both in Africa and Italy to agree on the principles to be applied in the case of the lapsed. Thereafter each bishop, with his clergy and people, was to act accordingly in the treatment of individual cases recommended by the confessors, whose rights in the matter are thus recognised, though the ultimate decision on the question of readmission remains with the constituted authority.

He now felt strong enough in the support of the Roman clergy and confessors and his fellow-bishops to give scope to his autocratic temperament. He indited an epistle to the lapsed in his most imperious manner, applying the words of Christ to Peter to the bishops as the foundation of the Church, claiming for them the prerogative of controlling it in virtue of the power of the keys, and severely rebuking the temerity of lapsed sinners in arrogating the right to communion in virtue of letters of peace granted by confessors, and in daring to dispute the episcopal authority. He adopted the same lordly attitude towards the section of the clergy who seem to have still favoured a more clement attitude towards the fallen, though they had complied with his demand to discontinue communion with them. The strain between him and

¹⁵ Ep. 16 (9).

¹⁶ Ep. 15, 17 (10, 11).

¹⁷ Ep. 20 (14).

¹⁸ Ep. 34 (27).

¹⁹ Ep. 20 (14).

²⁰ Ep. 30 (30), 35 (29).

²¹ Ep. 28 (24), 37 (15).

them had evidently continued, and it was not lessened by the fact that Cyprian, whilst convinced of the necessity of adapting his policy in the interest of order and sound discipline, insisted on combining with it an ecclesiastical theory in the interest of the episcopal power. There appears in the correspondence an undercurrent of clerical opposition to his high ecclesiastical views, and he apparently ascribed it to the old opponents of his episcopal election.²² Whether this was so, or not, he determined to crush it by the drastic measure of appointing a commission of three bishops and two presbyters to supersede the clergy in the government of the Church at Carthage.

REVOLT AND SCHISM AT CARTHAGE

The result of this high-handed tactic was an open rupture and a schism led by the deacon Felicissimus and five presbyters, chief of whom was Novatus, who not only advocated a policy of clemency, but resented the autocratic spirit and methods of their bishop. These he directed to be excommunicated²³ and denounced as conspirators against the episcopal authority and subverters of the divine, priestly order in the Church. As usual in these quarrels, he gives them a very bad character and ascribes to them the worst of motives. Despite these charges, the fact should not be overlooked that these presbyters had not run away from persecution and had borne the brunt of a trying situation which Cyprian's flight had aggravated. They had, too, been asking awkward questions about his protracted absence and his reiterated excuses for it. Their real offence seems to have lain in their presuming to differ from him on this difficult question. In his eyes it is not permissible to dissent from the bishop. To do so is to depart from the true Church, since the Church is founded on the bishop and is non-existent without him. "There is one God and one Christ, one Church and one (episcopal) chair founded on Peter by the word of the Lord. Another altar cannot be constituted, another priesthood cannot be made beyond the one altar and the one priesthood."²⁴ This is the reasoning of an arrogant ecclesiasticism which makes the acceptance of his ecclesiastical policy essential to membership of the Church. It nevertheless received the sanction of a Council of the African bishops convened at Carthage in the spring of 251, after the return of Cyprian,²⁵ which concurred in the excommunication of Felicissimus and his adherents. The Council also decided, in

²² Ep. 43 (39).

²³ Ep. 41 (37), 42 (38), 43 (39).

²⁴ Ep. 43 (39).

²⁵ Ep. 44 (40).

regard to the lapsed, that each particular case should be carefully investigated, that communion should be granted to the *Libellatici* after long protracted penitence, and that this privilege should be withheld from those who had actually sacrificed till the hour of death.²⁶ It thus broke with the old rigorist view, whilst entirely ignoring the claims of the confessors in the matter, and disallowing the too-ready clemency of Felicissimus and his faction.

With this decision a council assembled at Rome by Cornelius, the successor of Fabian, agreed.²⁷ A year later, however, another African Council, in prospect of renewed persecution, went the length of granting communion to all penitent lapsed.²⁸ The drift of this legislation was thus to come nearer the standpoint of the excommunicated Felicissimus and recede from that originally adopted by Cyprian. It did not, however, put an end to the schism, whose adherents set up Fortunatus, one of the five recalcitrant presbyters, as their bishop and dispatched Felicissimus to Rome to gain for him the recognition of Cornelius, who ultimately repelled his overtures.²⁹ Against him and Fortunatus and in defence of the episcopal authority, Cyprian indited one of his most vehement fulminations. He equates the bishop with the Old Testament priest and claims for him the same divine authority, the same unquestioning obedience. He even quotes the text in Deuteronomy, which sentenced to death those who refused to hearken to the priest, in support of his demand for absolute submission to the episcopate. Heresy, he contends, has had its root in disobedience to God's priest, as he calls the bishop. The bishop alone is invested with the priestly authority. He judges in the stead of Christ, and to presume to judge him is to judge God Himself. His appointment by the suffrage of the people and the consent of his co-bishops expresses the judgment of God. To oppose him is to be the adversary of Christ and the enemy of his Church. Only in communion with and obedience to him can the Church exist. Outside this Church there are only factions and conventicles of abandoned criminals, like Fortunatus, who is a pseudo-bishop, and Felicissimus, who is a rebel against God. At the same time, he is ready to remit their sin and receive them back into the Church.³⁰ The whole epistle is an extraordinary specimen of the self-assurance and intolerance of the ecclesiastic who claims, in virtue of official position, an absolute monopoly of truth, rectitude, and authority, and sees in personal opponents the enemies of God.

²⁶ Ep. 55 (51).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Ep. 57 (53).

²⁹ Ep. 59 (54).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

THE NOVATIAN SCHISM

Meanwhile the question of the lapsed had produced schism in Rome itself in the interest not of lenity but of severity. Its author was the presbyter Novatian, with whom Novatus, who had betaken himself to the capital and seems to have changed his standpoint in accordance with the circumstances, vigorously co-operated.³¹ For fifteen months (January 250 to March 251) the Roman Church had remained without a bishop. During the vacancy Novatian had taken the chief part in the government of the Church, and, if we may believe his rival Cornelius, aspired to his own election to the vacant chair. Before his conversion he had been a philosopher, probably of the Stoic school, and he carried his ascetic tendency into his Christian life. He was the author of the letter of the Roman clergy to that of Carthage at the outbreak of the Decian persecution, and though he was at this stage in favour of a considerate treatment of the lapsed, he ultimately veered towards the rigorist view. He opposed the election of Cornelius, who was accused of having himself fallen during the persecution and was inclined to treat the lapsed with leniency.³² Backed by Novatus and by the Roman confessors, who, unlike those of Carthage, were against the lenient policy, he allowed himself to be nominated bishop by the rigorist party. The schism evoked the usual charges against his character. There can, however, be no doubt of the purity of his life and his ability as a writer and a theologian, in spite of the insinuations and sneers of his opponents.³³

Both sides appealed for the support of the African bishops, and Cyprian and his council, on the receipt of the report of a deputation which they sent to Rome, decided in favour of Cornelius.³⁴ Having made up his mind to support Cornelius' election, Novatian was for him necessarily a schismatic, a heretic, and a most objectionable person. Whatever the real merits of his controversy with his rival, that he should dare to continue his opposition after the bishop of Carthage had decided the question

³¹ Ep. 52 (48).

³² Ep. 55 (51).

³³ "Epistle of Cornelius to Fabius of Antioch," Eusebius, vi. 43. Among the charges he makes against him is the assertion that he was ordained by three bishops who were drunk at the time, and he retorts the charge of cowardice in time of persecution which was levelled against himself. These charges seem to be pure calumnies. Fabius was inclined to take his side against Cornelius. Eusebius, vi. 44. His works, "De Trinitate" and "De Cibis Judaicis," are translated by Wallis and appended to the works of Cyprian in the "Ante-Nicene Lib."

³⁴ 44 (40), 45 (41).

was to put himself outside the pale not only of the Church but of Christianity. "We ought not even to be curious," he wrote to Bishop Antoninus, who had doubts on the matter, "what he teaches so long as he teaches outside the pale of the Church. Whoever he may be and whatever he may be, he who is not in the Church of Christ is not a Christian."³⁵

This schism proved, however, to be a far more serious affair than that of Felicissimus, and though the Roman confessors ultimately abandoned Novatian,³⁶ who was excommunicated by Cornelius and a Roman council, he continued to hold his ground in Rome, and by his propagandist activity gained many adherents in the West and the East as well as in Africa.³⁷ In spite of the rebuff of his emissaries by Cyprian and his fellow-bishops, he secured the adhesion of a rigorist party at Carthage, who ordained Maximus as their bishop.³⁸ As the result of the controversy over the lapsed there were thus three bishops of Carthage, representing the three standpoints of laxity, compromise, and extreme severity. The spread of the movement in Africa is evidenced by the fact that according to the Novatian contention as many as twenty-five of the bishops of Numidia alone forthwith became its champions. Though Cyprian contested the accuracy of the figures, it is plain from his own avowals that the secession was of considerable dimensions. Despite its condemnation by Dionysius of Alexandria and other eastern bishops, it won the sympathy of Fabius of Antioch and took a firm hold in the East, especially in Phrygia. In the face of this fact, Cyprian's insistence in the indefeasible right of the one bishop against his schismatic rivals was by no means universally accepted as an essential of Christianity. At this stage it was not more than a theory, though the ecclesiastical trend was in this direction. The Novatianists, in fact, laid more stress on a rigorous discipline than on ecclesiastical uniformity. They were Puritans (Cathari)³⁹ of the Montanist school—like them rejecting second marriage and insisting on an ascetic morality—and the forerunners of the Donatists.

THE REBAPTISM OF HERETICS

In the near sequel Cyprian himself went very near disrupting the Church on the question of the rebaptism of heretics. This question arose out of a query, directed to him by a layman Magnus, whether Novatianists who sought admission to the Church

³⁵ Ep. 55 (51).

³⁶ Ep. 49 (45).

³⁷ Ep. 44 (40), 55 (51), 68 (66).

³⁸ Ep. 59 (54).

³⁹ They called themselves by this name.

should be rebaptized. He replied in the affirmative.⁴⁰ It is evident that, in so doing, he was in part actuated by his animus against the sect, which he unjustly denounced as heretics as well as schismatics. At the same time, he claimed that rebaptism was the practice of the African Church. It had been introduced by Agrippinus, one of his predecessors as Bishop of Carthage, and a council of African bishops about thirty years before his time.⁴¹ It had also been adopted somewhat later by a council of bishops at Iconium in Asia Minor, which had decreed that Montanists, who returned to the Church, must be rebaptized.⁴² It had, however, not prevailed universally in North Africa in spite of Cyprian's assertion to the contrary, and it was not in accordance with the practice of the West. It was, in fact, a comparatively recent innovation in both North Africa and Asia Minor. Another letter on the subject from a number of Numidian bishops led him in 255 to summon a council to Carthage, which confirmed the African practice with reasons given.⁴³ To a Mauretanian bishop, named Quintus, he sent this decision with additional arguments in support of it. From this letter it appears, however, that a number of the African bishops favoured the opposite view. More serious was the opposition of Stephen, Bishop of Rome, the successor of Lucius, who only held the episcopate for eight months (253-254) in succession to Cornelius. The Roman bishop was a staunch supporter of the traditional practice and was inclined to adopt a more tolerant attitude both towards the Novatianists and towards repentant bishops who had lapsed and sought rehabilitation at his hands. He seems, moreover, to have resented the vehement and overbearing spirit of his Carthaginian colleague, who, in 256, sought to fortify his position by holding another council and sent him the renewed decision in favour of rebaptism.⁴⁴ In his letter Cyprian does not presume to dictate to his fellow-bishop. He recognises that in such matters each is at liberty to act in accordance with his convictions. Though the staunch advocate of episcopal unity, he was ready to admit diversity of view and practice in matters not for him vitally important. But he writes in a style which makes it apparent that the traditional practice is a very reprehensible one, and that the practice of Carthage is superior to that of Rome. He speaks, for instance, of those baptized outside the Church as "stained with the taint of profane water." This in itself was sufficient to rouse

⁴⁰ Ep. 69 (75). ⁴¹ Ep. 73 (72). ⁴² Ep. 75 (74). ⁴³ Ep. 70 (69).

⁴⁴ Ep. 72 (71). Along with it was another invalidating the ordination of schismatic clerics and admitting them to the Church only as laymen on the ground of certain Old Testament texts which he applied to them.

the indignation of one who held the more tolerant view and considered himself better entitled to judge the matter than his officious provincial colleague. According to his opponents, Stephen was of an obstinate and overbearing temper, and entertained a high opinion of his own position and prerogative as bishop of Rome. He seems, besides, to have been irritated by the dispute with Cyprian and the African bishops over the question of his tolerant attitude in the case of two lapsed Spanish Bishops, whom he had restored, and of the Novatianist bishop of Arles whom he had recognised. In both cases they had condemned his attitude and reversed his decisions. He accordingly replied in a most uncompromising tone, forbidding the innovation advocated by Carthage as against tradition, and declaring that the imposition of hands on the returned heretic was sufficient.⁴⁵ He paid back Cyprian, who, in his epistle to Magnus, had described those who approved of rebaptism as "fautors of Antichrist" and "traitors to the Church,"⁴⁶ in his own coin as "a false Christ, a false apostle, a treacherous worker."⁴⁷ He even seems to have gone the length of asserting his own superior authority as the successor of Peter over all other bishops, and of requiring them to submit to his dictation. He refused to receive a deputation of African bishops in conference, or to grant them hospitality. He threatened, in virtue of his prerogative, to excommunicate the bishops of both Africa and Asia Minor, if he did not actually proceed to do so.⁴⁸

Despite this fulmination, a third council, which met at Carthage in September 256 and was attended by as many as eighty-seven bishops from the three provinces of Africa, Numidia, and Mauretania, affirmed its adherence to the African practice, whilst agreeing to maintain communion with those who held a different opinion and recognising the right of the bishops of the Church to judge each for himself. Cyprian in his opening address condemned, in addition, the arrogance of Stephen in setting himself up as bishop of bishops and assuming the right to dictate obedience to his will.⁴⁹ Similarly, Firmilian of Cappadocian Cæsarea, to whom Cyprian wrote and whom Stephen threatened to excommunicate, along with those of Asia Minor,⁵⁰ stoutly maintained the eastern practice and vigorously protested against

⁴⁵ Ep. 74 (73).

⁴⁶ Ep. 69 (75).

⁴⁷ Ep. 75 (74).

⁴⁸ We learn these facts chiefly from the epistle of Firmilian of Cæsarea in Cappadocia to Cyprian. Ep. 75 (74); cf. 74 (73).

⁴⁹ *Sententiæ Episcoporum*. "Opera," iii., Pt. I., 435 f. Trans. in vol. ii. of "Ante-Nicene Lib."

⁵⁰ Eusebius, vii. 5.

the Roman pretension to lay down the law to the Church universal.⁵¹

On the question at issue, if not on that of his personal pretensions, Stephen had not a few supporters even in Africa. His view appears also to have been favoured by Dionysius of Alexandria, who wrote pacific letters on the subject.⁵² The one party championed a narrow view whilst allowing liberty of dissent from it to individual bishops; the other a liberal view whilst arrogantly disallowing such dissent. For Cyprian the conception of the Church as a unity, founded on the episcopate, seemed to demand rebaptism. Its rites and acts are alone valid. Outside it there is neither truth nor grace of any kind. Admit the contrary and his doctrine of the Church seemed null. The heretic has never really been baptized unless he was baptized within the Church before his lapse into heresy. He can never have received the Holy Spirit, the remission of sin, regeneration. This the heretic baptizer can never give. It is not really a question of rebaptism but only of baptizing one who has not been baptized at all. It is of no avail to plead the faith of the recipient of heretic baptism, since he only believes what is false and has no real faith. Of no avail either to plead custom. Truth is not dependent on custom. As usual he fortifies his position by reiterated forced quotations from the Old Testament as well as by appeals to the New, and thereby only weakens it.

Stephen, on the other hand, seems to have objected⁵³ to rebaptism as an innovation of the traditional practice of merely imposing hands on returning heretics "for repentance." For him this act did not betoken, as Cyprian contended, that they had not previously in their baptism received the Holy Spirit. He rebutted the assumption that baptism performed by a heretic was necessarily a profane or sacrilegious ceremony, or that the apostles had taught the rebaptism of heretics. Baptism in the name of Christ is valid by whomsoever performed. Its efficacy does not depend on the baptizer. It is not confined to the Church or dependent on it, for the Church is not a society without stain or error, and God does not necessarily confine His grace to its priests. Heresy does beget by its baptism children of God, though it exposes them as soon as they are born, and it is the function of the Church to gather these children and rear them for the Lord.

⁵¹ See *supra*, c. vii., on the Roman Primacy. For the genuineness of the letter in Cyprian's correspondence see Benson, "Cyprian," 377 f.

⁵² Eusebius, vii. 9.

⁵³ His contentions on the other side have only been preserved in the fragments contained in letters of his opponents.

Apart from the theological and ecclesiastical aspect of the controversy, the tendency represented by Stephen was evidently the more enlightened and liberal one. It was dictated not only by a natural predilection for the practice of the Roman Church, but by the larger conception that moral and spiritual forces are not necessarily dependent for their operation on a given theory of the Church, or on the correctness of theological speculation, or the exclusive prerogative of an orthodox priest. To have granted the opposite contention would simply have been to limit the divine working to the measure of the Cyprianic mind, which was certainly narrow enough in its conception of heresy, and very uncharitable and vituperative in its judgment of heretics. Neither side seems to have grasped the fact that a ceremony like baptism is only after all a symbolic act, and that in itself it does not necessarily betoken the regeneration of human nature. This essentially concerns the will and the heart of man, and no mere ceremony can work a moral or spiritual transformation. It is the moral and spiritual, not the theological aspect of the matter that is really important. It was at least a gain for liberal thought that Cyprian and his councils, in spite of their claim to a monopoly of divine enlightenment, proved the losing side. On this question Rome finally ousted Carthage.

THE MONARCHIAN CONTROVERSY

In the Monarchian controversy we pass from ecclesiastical practice to theological speculation. The Rule of Faith confessed belief in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It did not define what this belief involved as a theological doctrine. It merely set forth the threefold existence of Father, Son, and Spirit in what was called "the economy"⁵⁴ of creation and redemption, as it is reflected in the Christian Scriptures. It expressed what has been termed "the economic-trinitarian" conception of the Godhead, without defining or explaining the nature and relation of this threefold Deity. As we have seen, Irenæus, Tertullian, and, later, Origen in their expanded versions of the Rule of Faith gave it a more theological content. By the beginning of the third century the metaphysical doctrine of the Trinity appears in the works of Tertullian and Hippolytus,⁵⁵ in which Christ, as the Logos, or Word of God, and the Holy Spirit appear, along with the Father, as each endowed with personality. To many this developed

⁵⁴ *οικονομία* (Eph. i. 10), dispensation, or working out of the divine plan.

⁵⁵ *Trinitas*, Tertullian, "Adv. Praxean," 2; *τριάς, τριάδος*, Hipp., "Agst. Noetus," 14.

doctrine seemed to involve belief in three Gods (Tritheism), and thus to subvert Christian monotheism. They objected, in particular, to the intrusion into faith of the conception of Christ as the pre-existent, personal Logos or Word and Son of God.

Hence the rise of a series of theologians who insisted in the single personality of God, and to whom the term Monarchian was applied by Tertullian and Hippolytus.⁵⁶ They held that there is only one Person, not a threefold personality, in the Godhead. But they differed on the question of the Being of Christ and His relation to this one Divine Person. One section, like the Ebionites, with whom, however, they seem to have had no historic connection, held that He was "a mere man,"⁵⁷ elected by God to fulfil His redemptive mission and endowed by Him with a special rank and power to this end. He was the Son of God by adoption and is not to be metaphysically conceived as the Second Person of the Godhead. This section has been termed Adoptionists, or Dynamic Monarchians. Another section held that Christ was a Divine Being, but was not distinguishable from God the Father, being merely the mode of the revelation of the one Divine Being or Person. These are known as Modalists. They were also termed Sabellians in the East, and Patripassians in the West. They were the more numerous section. Whilst they inclined to Docetism, their Docetism was not actuated by Gnostic motives or reasons, but by the reaction against Trinitarianism which had been metaphysically formulated by Tertullian and was implied in the Rule of Faith.

THE ADOPTIONISTS

To the first section—the Adoptionists—the Alogi (Deniers of the Logos), who appear about 170 in Asia Minor, where these divisions evidently originated, seem to have belonged. They rejected the Fourth Gospel as well as the Apocalypse, both of which they ascribed to Cerinthus,⁵⁸ and with them the conception of Christ as the eternal Logos or Word of God. They subjected them to a keen criticism, quite in the modern fashion, maintaining that the Logos-Christ of the Fourth Gospel is irreconcilable with the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels. Whilst holding that Jesus only became Christ and Son of God at the baptism, they do not seem to have denied the virgin birth, and this probably accounts for their comparatively mild treatment by Irenæus⁵⁹ and Hippolytus. They claimed to be Catholic Christians, though

⁵⁶ "Philos.," ix. 9.

⁵⁷ ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος.

⁵⁸ Epiphanius, "Panarion," 51.

⁵⁹ "Adv. Haer.," III. xvi. 17 (III. xi. 9).

they appear to have been ultimately excluded from the Church of Asia. It is uncertain whether Theodotus of Byzantium—"the cobbler" or "worker in leather" as Epiphanius⁶⁰ calls him—who taught Adoptionist views, was connected with them⁶¹ since he accepted the Fourth Gospel. What is certain is that he strove to assert these views at Rome, and was excommunicated by Bishop Victor⁶² (c. 195). As far as we know, he was the first non-Gnostic Christian to be expelled from communion with the Catholic Church, though he professed the Rule of Faith, which, he evidently held, did not necessarily teach the absolute divinity of Christ. Whilst in virtue of His special endowment by the Holy Spirit, Christ surpassed all men in His life and works, He was not God. According to some of the disciples of Theodotus, He only became God after His resurrection.⁶³ This, they contended, had hitherto been the doctrine taught in the Church.⁶⁴ Though their contention is historically questionable, it is the fact that the Adoptionist conception of Christ has its place in the early tradition, and, as the rise of the Alogi shows, seems to have been maintained within the Church, even on the basis of the Rule of Faith, as well as by the Gnostics outside it. His disciples, among whom was a namesake, the banker Theodotus, attempted to establish a separate Church, and to enforce their views by a critical, non-allegorical examination of the Scriptures.⁶⁵ Their Church, under Bishop Natalius, who ere long rejoined the Catholic Church, did not survive long. But their theological standpoint continued to find expression in individual teachers like Artemas, or Artemon, who, about a quarter of a century later (c. 230-240), also appears at Rome. What happened to him we are not told. Thereafter the movement exercised little or no influence in the West.

PAUL OF SAMOSATA

In the East, on the other hand, it found, in the second half of the third century, a redoubtable exponent in Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, who is said to have been influenced by Artemon. As we have seen, Paul appeared in a very worldly light to his opponents, who met in a largely attended synod at Antioch in 264 to consider his Christological teaching.⁶⁶ The consideration of

⁶⁰ *σκυτέυς*. "Panarion," 54.

⁶¹ As Epiphanius asserts.

⁶² Eusebius, v. 28.

⁶³ Hippolytus, "Philos.," x. 35; Epiphanius, "Panarion," 54.

⁶⁴ Eusebius, v. 28.

⁶⁵ Eusebius, v. 28, quoting from a work entitled "The Little Labyrinth," whose author was perhaps Hippolytus or Caius. The extant fragments of it in "Ante-Nicene Lib.," v.

⁶⁶ See Eusebius, vii. 27 f.

the case dragged on for several years and it was only in 268 that a second synod condemned and excommunicated him.⁶⁷ From the Acts of the Synod which condemned him, and other fragmentary notices, it appears that he taught the single personality of God. "God is one person,⁶⁸ together with the Logos or reason, as man and his reason is one." For him the Logos or Divine Reason is an eternal attribute of God,⁶⁹ not a distinct person of the Godhead, though he speaks of it as being begotten by God, and in this impersonal sense it may be called the Son of God.

Jesus, whilst conceived by the Holy Spirit, was a mere man. He was "like one of us," though on the assumption, which Paul accepted, that he was conceived of the Spirit, this seems highly disputable. What was born of Mary was, therefore, not the incarnate, pre-existent Logos, in the personal sense, as his opponents maintained, but the man Jesus, who was inspired⁷⁰ by the impersonal Logos or Divine Reason, which joined itself to Him, as the special instrument of its operation in man's redemption. Whilst born a man, He was, in virtue of His conception by the Spirit, and His endowment with the Logos, superior to all other men in His life and works. He was pure from sin and His life was a continuous progress⁷¹ in goodness. Finally He became Divine and was united⁷² to God in perfect harmony of will, and was given the name above every name. By general consent Paul's conception of Christ is thus the Adoptionist one, and though Loofs has recently questioned this general conclusion, he is constrained to admit that his conception has an Adoptionist, or, as he prefers to term it, a dynamic-Monarchian⁷³ colouring.

It is evident, at all events, that Paul represents a reaction towards a more historical conception of Christ from the philosophical interpretation and elaboration of the Rule of Faith

⁶⁷ How many synods convened to consider the case is not clear. Loofs is probably correct in inferring only two, though others assume three. See "Paul von Samosata," 35 f., "Texte und Unters.," 3 Reihe, xiv. (1924).

⁶⁸ *πρόσωπον ἐν τῷ θεῷ.*

⁶⁹ In this sense he applies *ὁμοούσιος* to it.

⁷⁰ *ἐπέπνευσεν.*

⁷¹ *προκοπή.*

⁷² *ἠνώθη, συνήφθη τῷ θεῷ.*

⁷³ "Paul of Samosata," 255. Loofs thinks it probable that Paul held the economic-Trinitarian view of Son and Spirit of the creed. His monograph on the subject is thorough and exhaustive, and contains a critical examination of all the fragments relative to his teaching. The difference between him and others is really a difference as to the passages which are to be received as authentic. On this point scholars may legitimately differ. Harnack, on the other hand, holds that his theology is Adoptionist. So, too, Lawlor, who has also given a collection of "The Sayings of Paul of Samosata," "Journal of Theolog. Studies," 1918. Criticisms by Loofs in the above work. Bardy, "Paul de Samosate" (1923). Routh also gives a collection, "Reliquiæ Sacræ," iii. (1846).

on the part of the Catholic theologians. Like his fellow-Monarchians, he was repelled by the growing tendency within the Church to Hellenise the historic Jesus, to conceive Him in the light of the Logos idea, to personalise this idea and embody it in Him as the Second Person of the Trinity. His conception is certainly nearer the historic reality.

THE MODALISTS

Modalism was a more formidable movement. As a distinctive tendency it also originated in Asia with Noetus of Smyrna and Praxeas of Ephesus.⁷⁴ Equally with the Adoptionists, they rebutted the conception of Christ as the incarnate Logos or Word of God. But, unlike them, they insisted on His absolute divinity by identifying Him, in the interest of monotheism, with the Father Himself. They revolted against the Trinitarian conception of God, which they regarded as involving belief in three Gods, and therefore as unscriptural and polytheistic. In support of their Monarchian conception, they appealed to certain passages in the New Testament as well as the Old. According to Hippolytus, who wrote against Noetus,⁷⁵ he and his followers, Epigonos and Cleomenes, rejected the distinction between Father, Son, and Spirit, and maintained their absolute identity. Christ is the Father Himself, Who was born, and suffered, and died.⁷⁶ If Christ is God, He must be the Father Himself. If He is God and suffered, it was the Father Himself that suffered.⁷⁷ Hippolytus, in accordance with his theory that all heresy is traceable to Greek philosophy, derives his Modalism from the philosopher Heraclitus. He calls him "a disciple of Heraclitus, not of Christ," and professes to give the actual words in which Noetus set forth the Monarchian conception of God in its Modalist form. "This is what he (Noetus) says: When the Father had not been born, He was rightly designated the Father. But when it pleased Him to undergo birth, He, having been born, became the Son of Himself, not of another. Father and Son, so called, are one and the same, not another from another, but Himself from Himself. He is called by name Father and Son according to the change of

⁷⁴ Modalism seems, however, to go farther back. There is a trace of it as early as Justin, who refers to this tendency. "Apol.," i. 63. It is, in fact, traceable to the teaching of Ignatius, whose emphasis on the absolute divinity of Christ seems to have led to the conclusion of the complete identity of Father and Son. See Kroymann, *Introd. to Tertullian*, "Adv. Praxeas," 11 f.

⁷⁵ *εἰς τὴν ἀρεσκίαν Νοητοῦ τῆς ὁμοίας*, ed. Wendland; Eng. trans., "Ante-Nicene Lib." See also "Philos.," ix. 10, ed. Wendland iii., trans. by Legge.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, i.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, ii.

times. This One it was Who appeared and underwent birth from a virgin and lived as Man among men, acknowledging Himself to those who saw Him to be a Son by reason of this birth that had occurred, but not concealing from those capable of grasping it that He was the Father. He suffered, being nailed to the tree, and gave up His spirit to Himself, and died, and did not die. And raised Himself on the third day, having been buried in a tomb, and pierced with a spear, and nailed with nails."⁷⁸

This teaching was described as Patripassian, and for so teaching Noetus was excommunicated by "the blessed presbyters" of the Church of Smyrna.⁷⁹ The heretic, nevertheless, maintained that it was no heresy to identify Christ with the one and only God. "What harm am I doing in glorifying Christ?" The heresy lay rather with those who, by differentiating between the Father and the Son, seemed to derogate the absolute divinity of the latter, as well as endanger Christian Monotheism. In his allegiance to the divine Monarchy, he accordingly founded his own school.⁸⁰

The Modalism of Praxeas is, in the account of Tertullian, identical with that of Noetus, with this difference, that not the Father Himself but only the flesh actually suffered.⁸¹ He was an active propagandist and, towards the end of the second century, migrated to Rome in the time of Bishop Victor, whom he induced to abandon his tolerant attitude towards the Montanists. He appears, too, to have won over the Roman bishop to his Modalist teaching. "Praxeas," says Tertullian, in his blunt fashion, "managed two businesses for the devil at Rome. He drove out prophesy (Montanism); put to flight the Paraclete and crucified the Father."⁸² From Rome he went on to Carthage, where Tertullian entered the lists against him so successfully that he was fain to make a written retraction.⁸³ Modalism had, however, taken a grip at both Rome and Carthage, and somewhat later was advocated at Rome by Epigonos, a disciple of Noetus, and his pupil Cleomenes, both natives of Asia.⁸⁴ They gained the patronage of the Roman bishops Zephyrinus and Callistus, Victor's immediate successors in the first quarter of the third century, and won adherents among the Marcionites and the

⁷⁸ "Philos.," ix. 10.

⁷⁹ "Adv. Noet.," i. The actual words of Noetus are probably derived from an account of his trial at Smyrna.

⁸⁰ "Adv. Noet.," i.

⁸¹ "Adv. Prax.," 29.

⁸² "Adv. Prax.," i.

⁸³ "Adv. Prax.," i. Kroymann, following D'Alès, "La Theologie de Tert.," 68 (1905), holds that not Praxeas himself but an emissary went to Carthage. Intro. to edition of the "Adv. Prax.," 4 (1907).

⁸⁴ "Philos.," ix. 7.

Montanists.⁸⁵ Their success roused Tertullian to write a second time against Praxeas (c. 210), who had apparently revived his Modalist propaganda. The movement received a notable recruit in Sabellius, who is said to have been a native of Libya, and appears as an active propagandist at Rome under both Zephyrinus and Callistus. Whilst it is not clear what his brand of Modalism exactly was, it evidently included explicitly the Spirit⁸⁶ as well as the Father and the Son as a distinctive manifestation of the same Divine Being. Father, Son, Spirit are the three successive modes or aspects⁸⁷ of the manifestation of the single Divine personality in creation, redemption, and sanctification. He seems, further, to have used the portentous term "consubstantial"⁸⁸ of these modes in the sense (differing from the later Trinitarian one) of the sameness of the Divine Being thus manifesting Himself. For teaching this doctrine he was excommunicated by Callistus, and, like Noetus at Smyrna, set up a school at Rome, which exerted a powerful influence in the East, where it was opposed by Origen and Dionysius of Alexandria, if not in the West, where it was controverted by Novatian and by the Roman Dionysius.⁸⁹ To his rival Hippolytus, Callistus, like Zephyrinus, was a pure trimmer who courted or spurned the Modalists as it suited his personal purpose. Probably both, as ecclesiastics, saw rather the need for compromise in order to obviate a serious schism. The Christological creed ascribed to them by Hippolytus shows the tendency to steer clear, on the one hand, of the Ditheism which Callistus ascribed to Hippolytus, and the Modalism which wholly rejected the Logos conception of Christ.⁹⁰

CHAPTER XII

COMMUNAL RELIGIOUS LIFE

JUSTIN AND THE ROMAN COMMUNITY (c. 150)

IN the closing chapters of his First Apology Justin Martyr has left a description of the rites and worship of the Christian community at Rome about the middle of the second century. As in

⁸⁵ Harnack, "Hist. of Dog.," iii. 53.

⁸⁶ See Eusebius, vii. 6, and Harnack, "Hist. of Dog.," iii. 84 f. Also his article on the Monarchians in the latest edition of the "Ency. Brit."

⁸⁷ πρόσωπα.

⁸⁸ ὁμοούσιος.

⁸⁹ Novatian, "De Trinitate." Harnack, iii. 73 f.

⁹⁰ See "Philos.," ix. 11, for Zephyrinus' belief; 12 for that of Callistus.

the "Didache," baptism is preceded by instruction, and also by prayer and fasting, in which some of the brethren participate. Those thus prepared for the rite are then brought to a place "where there is water." It is performed by immersion in the triune name, and brings about the remission of sin, the regeneration, and also, as in the mystery cults apparently, "the illumination" of the baptized persons.¹ There is no mention of the laying on of hands or of the baptism of children. This rite the demons have counterfeited in the pagan ceremony of sprinkling and washing before entering the temples and shrines.² The baptized are then introduced, at what is apparently a special service, to the brethren, who offer prayers for them and themselves and all Christians. The mutual kiss of peace follows the prayers, and thereafter the bread and wine, mixed with water, are brought to the president of the brethren, who is not further characterised. After the president has offered thanks and the people have expressed their assent by saying Amen, the deacons give the bread and wine to all baptized members present, and carry a portion to those who are absent.³ This nourishment, he explains, is called the Eucharist,⁴ and is not regarded as common bread and wine, but, in virtue of their consecration by prayer, as the flesh and blood of Christ.⁵ As Jesus became incarnate by the Word or Will of God, so this consecrated food is regarded as the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, and by assimilation nourishes their flesh and blood. Whilst the language is thus very realistic, he lays emphasis on the rite as an act of thanksgiving to God for all His gifts, as a commemoration of Christ's suffering, and as a spiritual sacrifice. He further expressly distinguishes between the Christian rite and what he deems the imitation of it in the mystery religion of Mithras, whose votaries have been inspired thereto by the demons.⁶ At the same time it is questionable whether his own conception of its effects on the body as well as the soul does not show a trace of the influence of current pagan theurgy. It is not, however, a secret rite, as in the pagan mysteries. Justin does not hesitate to describe it minutely in an apology written for public perusal. Nor is it connected with a common fellowship meal or Agape, as in the early period. Of this meal he tells us nothing, though from later evidence (Hippolytus) we know that it was still held at Rome in the early third century. In Justin's

¹ φωτισμός. "Apol.," i. 61.

² *Ibid.*, i. 62.

³ *Ibid.*, i. 65.

⁴ Εὐχαριστία. The term, which properly signifies thanksgiving, was already applied to the elements used in the celebration. Réville, "Les Origines de l'Eucharistie," 9.

⁵ "Apol.," i. 66.

⁶ "Apol.," i. 66. See also "Dialogue with Trypho," 41, 70, 117.

time it had already been separated from the celebration of the Eucharist, which had become a regular part of the Sunday morning service, whilst the Agape continued to be a social evening gathering.⁷

Justin adds some interesting details of the weekly worship of the community in town and country. It assembles together on Sunday, the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, at one meeting-place to hear the memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets (the Gospels and the Old Testament Scriptures) read by the reader, to sing hymns and offer thanksgiving for God's providential care and other blessings.⁸ This is followed by the sermon of the president, which consists of instruction and exhortation. Then the whole assembly rises and prays together, after which follows the celebration of the Eucharist, as above described. There does not appear to have been anything of the nature of a set liturgy in these meetings, since, as in the "Didache," the president offers prayers and thanksgivings "according as he is able." Thereafter those who are able and willing offer gifts to the president, who distributes them to the widows and orphans, the sick and the poor, and to the strangers who may be sojourning in their midst.⁹ The service thus described may be regarded as the pattern of the weekly meeting for worship and edification which was henceforth to prevail in the Church at large.

ACCORDING TO IRENÆUS

Irenæus does not describe the communal worship in such detail. Incidentally we learn that for him, as for Justin, baptism signifies the remission of sin and the regeneration of believers. They are thereby "reborn unto God"¹⁰—a phrase reminding of the phraseology of the mystery religions. At the same time, he condemns the Gnostic tendency to impart to the rite strange formulas and practices derived from this alien source.¹¹ Whilst the water and the Spirit are both necessary for regeneration, and even the body participates in incorruption through baptismal grace, stress is laid on the spiritual side of the process through the operation of the Spirit.¹² It was evidently by this time adminis-

⁷ See Lietzmann, "Messe und Herrenmahl," 257 f. (1926).

⁸ Thanksgivings and singing of hymns are referred to in "Apol.," i. 13. Probably the Psalms and the Christian hymns to which Eusebius refers as in early use in worship (v. 28).

⁹ i. 67.

¹⁰ "Adv. Haer.," II. xxxiii. 2 (II. xxi. 4). *Renascuntur in Deum.*

¹¹ "Adv. Haer.," I. xiv. 2 (I. xxi. 3).

¹² *Ibid.*, III. xviii. 1 (III. xvii. 2).

tered to infants and children as well as adults.¹³ In confutation of the Docetic conception of Christ, he, like Justin, speaks in very realistic terms of the Eucharist. In it Christ's body and blood, by which the body as well as the soul of the partaker are nourished unto incorruption and immortality,¹⁴ seem to be present. But there is evidently no transformation of the bread and wine into the actual body and blood. Though after consecration the bread and wine are no longer common, they remain bread and wine.¹⁵ He emphatically distinguishes between the earthly and heavenly components of the Eucharist.¹⁶ These gifts of bread and wine (the first-fruits) and its prayers the Church throughout the whole world offers to God, with thanksgiving, as a pure (spiritual) sacrifice in contrast to the old impure Jewish sacrifice and incense.¹⁷ In accordance with the prophecy of Malachi (i. 10-11) *pure* sacrifice and incense are to be found in the Christian Church, and the sacrifice consists in the offerings of bread and wine in the Eucharist, in accordance with Christ's direction to the disciples at the Last Supper to offer to God the first-fruits of His own created things.¹⁸ The offering or sacrifice does not imply the offering anew of Christ in the elements of bread and wine. These are offered "through Jesus Christ," not Jesus Christ through them.¹⁹ The sacrifice is of a spiritual character—the thankful offering to God of gifts which are of his own creation. Its spiritual character appears in the reference to the "incense," in the Christian sense, as "the prayers of the saints" in Rev. v. As Christ chose the bread and wine to be the vehicle of His body and blood, the offering thus brings the believer into immediate communion with Him.

Though Irenæus gives no description of the actual rite, it appears to consist of four stages: the presentation of the gifts of the members; the thanksgiving (*eucharistia*); the evocation of

¹³ "Adv. Haer.," II. xxxii. 2 (I. xxii. 4).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, V. ii. 3.

¹⁵ "Adv. Haer.," IV. xxix. 5 (IV. xvii. 5). Eum qui ex creatura est panis. . . . calicem similiter, qui ex ea creatura, etc. He emphatically condemns the Gnostic charlatan who pretended by his invocation to transform the wine into the blood of Christ (I. xiii. 2).

¹⁶ "Adv. Haer.," IV. xxxi. 4 (IV. xviii. 5); and see the emphatic repudiation of the notion that the bread and wine are the actual body and blood. Frag. 13, Harvey, ii. 483.

¹⁷ "Adv. Haer.," IV. xxxi. 1 f. (H.); IV. xvii. 5-6 ("Ante-Nicene Lib.").

¹⁸ The reference is to the offering of the new corn on the 16th of Nisan, the third day of the Passover Feast, which was also the day of Christ's resurrection.

¹⁹ "Adv. Haer.," IV. xxxi. 3 (IV. xviii. 4). Verbum per quod offertur Deo, not Verbum quod offertur Deo. The reading is disputed, but this seems to be the preferable sense.

God's blessing on the elements; their consecration resulting therefrom.²⁰ Incidentally we get glimpses of other aspects of the communal religious life. In spite of his tendency to magnify the official ministry, the gift of prophecy is still operative in the community. Exorcism and faith-healing are common features, and the miraculous even includes the raising of the dead, which evidently means the recovery through the prayers of the Church from a prolonged swoon.²¹ "It is impossible," he concludes, "to recount the multitude of graces which the Church throughout the whole world has received from God in the name of Jesus Christ, and of which she daily makes use for the benefit of the Gentiles, neither deceiving any, nor taking money. . . . Nor does she perform anything by means of the invocation of angels, or incantations, or other wicked, curious art, but by directing her prayers in a pure, sincere, and straightforward spirit to the Lord, who made all things, and invoking the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, she has worked miracles for the benefit of man."

TERTULLIAN AND THE COMMUNITY AT CARTHAGE

From Tertullian we again get a more detailed insight into the communal religious life at Carthage and in North Africa in the early years of the third century. The community is a religious society, knit together by a common faith and hope and discipline. It has a meeting-place or Church,²² in which it assembles early on Sunday morning for worship under its presiding elder, as he calls the bishop,²³ who are men of tried character. The service consists of prayer, including prayer for the Emperors and their ministers and for the general welfare and the prevalence of peace; of praise, such as the Hallelujah and other psalms, with responses by the congregation²⁴; of the reading of the sacred Scriptures and instruction or exhortation by preaching. It includes the reprimand or censure, on occasion, of unworthy members.²⁵ The celebration of the Eucharist is preceded by the kiss of peace.²⁶ Only the bishop distributes the elements to the people. "We take also in the meeting before daybreak, and from the hand of none but our presidents, the Sacrament of the Eucharist."²⁷ The flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ.²⁸ He speaks

²⁰ See Hitchcock, "Irenæus," 279 f. (1914).

²¹ "Adv. Haer.," II. xlix. 3 (II. xxxii. 4-5).

²² "De Vel. Virgin," 13.

²³ "Apol.," 39. Praesident probati quique seniores.

²⁴ "De Orat.," 27.

²⁵ "Apol.," 39.

²⁶ "De Orat.," 18.

²⁷ "De Cor.," 3. *Eucharistia, sacramentum.*

²⁸ "De Cor.," 8.

of drinking the Lord's blood and receiving the Lord's body,²⁹ and shows a superstitious fear lest any portion of the elements, which are consecrated by the bishop, or by a presbyter authorised by him, and the deacons distribute to the people, should fall on the floor.³⁰ At the same time, there is no transubstantiation of the bread and wine, and in other passages he emphasises, as in 1 Peter ii. 5, the spiritual character of the Christian sacrament in the eucharistic prayer offered at God's altar with psalms and hymns. "We offer to God the sacrifice of prayer or thanksgiving."³¹ Like Irenæus, he contrasts it with the gross sacrifices of the Jews.³² Moreover, in some passages he seems to regard the bread and wine as purely symbolic. The bread "represents"³³ the body. Christ, in saying "This is my body," meant, "This is the figure of the body."³⁴

From this celebration gross sinners are debarred, since the members are under obligation to live a holy life, in accordance with their Christian profession. The old rigorist view, which allowed no remission for wilful sin committed after baptism, has been relaxed by the beginning of the third century. Such relaxation, which, as we have seen, had been advocated by Hermas fully half a century earlier, had evidently become the general practice. Penitents are readmitted to communion on condition that the delinquent after a period of severe penance, such as fasting in satisfaction for his sin, appears before the congregation and makes a public confession.³⁵ This confession is made with tears and groans, and the penitent prostrates himself at the feet of the presbyters and implores the prayers of the brethren on his behalf.³⁶ For a second lapse into wilful sin there is no remission.³⁷ For the grosser sins of relapse into idolatry, adultery, and murder no remission is possible, in accordance with the decree of the apostolic conference at Jerusalem.³⁸ Tertullian joined Hippolytus in denouncing and withstanding the more liberal policy of the Roman bishop Callistus in extending remission to repentant adulterers and fornicators.³⁹ It was only during the Decian

²⁹ "De Bap.," 16; "De Orat.," 19.

³⁰ "De Cor.," 3.

³¹ "Apol.," 30; "Adv. Marc.," iv. 35.

³² "De Orat.," 28; "Adv. Jud.," 5; "Adv. Marc.," iii. 22.

³³ *Representat*, "Adv. Marc.," i. 14.

³⁴ *Figura corporis*. *Ibid.*, iv. 40; *cf.* iii. 19.

³⁵ *ἔξομολόγησις*.

³⁶ "De Pœn.," 9. See also Hazlehurst, "Penitential Discipline in the Early Church," 56 f. (1921).

³⁷ "De Pœn.," 7, 9.

³⁸ "De Pud.," 12. Tertullian understands the prohibition of "blood" in the apostolic decree of Acts xv. 29 to mean murder.

³⁹ "De Pud.," 1.

persecution in the middle of the century that those who had lapsed into idolatry were readmitted on their profession of repentance.

Whilst the Agape is still observed, it has been separated from the Eucharist. It has become largely a social function for the benefit of the needy, though it retains its religious character. It is prefaced and closed with prayer. The meal itself is frugal, and contrasts in its moderation with the carousings usual at pagan club banquets. Each is asked to sing a hymn from the Scriptures or his own composition—a proof for the pagan scoffers and scandal-mongers of the Christian moderation in drinking. Such is the practice sketched in "The Apology." "We go from it not like troops of mischief-makers nor like bands of roamers; not to break into acts of licence, but to show as much care of our modesty and chastity as if we had been at a school of virtue rather than at a banquet."⁴⁰ In the tract on "Fasting," on the other hand, written in his Montanist period, excess in eating and drinking has become all too common. Whilst allowance must be made for exaggeration and religious bias, the ideal of "The Apology" has been distinctly lowered. Love is showing its fervour in saucepans, faith its warmth in kitchens; hope is centred in waiters, and sexual licence is insinuated.⁴¹ This is the outburst of a puritanic asceticism which, in the Montanist movement and in the Puritan party within the Church, deplored and resisted the growing tendency of the community to accommodate itself to the world in conduct as well as custom. This asceticism, in turn, as formerly in Hermas, was tending to invest outward acts, such as fasting and celibacy, with a meritorious quality in the sight of God. They have even a sacrificial, propitiatory character, inasmuch as they tend to appease an angry God.⁴²

Besides the prayers in common worship, the members engage in regular prayer at least three times a day, in addition to morning and evening prayer, and before food or even taking a bath.⁴³ In prayer they turn to the East⁴⁴ and adopt a kneeling posture, except on the Lord's Day and during the interval between Easter and Pentecost—the season of exultation—the only two festivals of the Christian year. They celebrate the anniversaries of the dead and commemorate the martyrs by special celebrations.⁴⁵ They are married in the presence of the congregation and with the benediction of the Church.⁴⁶ Another feature of their piety is

⁴⁰ "Apol.," 39.

⁴² "De Jejun.," 7, 16; "De Res. Car.," 8.

⁴³ "De Orat.," 25.

⁴⁵ "De Corona," 3.

⁴¹ "De Jejun.," 17.

⁴⁴ "Apol.," 16; "Ad Nat.," i. 13.

⁴⁶ "Ad Uxor.," ii. 8; "De Pudicitia.," 4.

the superstitious custom of making the sign of the Cross in connection with all the acts of ordinary life.⁴⁷ They have evidently carried into their Christianity the pagan belief in charms. They fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.⁴⁸

The community has a common fund, like other *collegia* or clubs, to which the members voluntarily subscribe every month. These gifts are piety's deposit and are spent, not in feasting and drinking, but in support of the clergy,⁴⁹ the maintenance and burial of the poor, the care of orphans, the aged and infirm, those who have suffered shipwreck, or been banished to the mines and the islands, or shut up in prison for their fidelity to the cause of God.⁵⁰ "See how they love one another; how they are ready to die for one another."⁵¹ Even their enemies are thus constrained to bear testimony to the self-denying power of Christian faith. The communist spirit in the Christian sense still prevails. "We are a true brotherhood, and family possessions, which generally divide brothers among you pagans, create fraternal bonds among us. Being one in heart and soul, we do not hesitate to share our goods with one another. Everything is held in common among us, except our wives."⁵²

The community itself still takes an active part in the administration of its affairs, especially the election of its office-bearers, including the bishop. In his pre-Montanist period, Tertullian rather resents its activity and its keenness to assert its rights as against the clergy. Modesty and respect for their superiors in authority is the only fitting attitude of laymen. Envy of the episcopal office is the mother of schism. Women, in particular, should not usurp the right to teach or baptize, as in the tale of Paul and Thecla, whose author was deposed from his office of presbyter by the Church of Asia.⁵³

Within the community the catechumens and the penitents⁵⁴ are sharply distinguished from the faithful (*fideles*) or baptized members. They may be present only at the ordinary worship, not at the celebration of the Eucharist. The rite of baptism has undergone some elaboration since Justin's time. As in Justin and Irenæus, it signifies regeneration and remission.⁵⁵ It is essential to salvation. Faith is not sufficient as some contend, though martyrdom—the baptism by blood—may be a substitute

⁴⁷ "De Corona," 3.

⁴⁸ "De Jejun.," 14.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁰ "Ad Martyr.," 2; "Apol.," 39.

⁵⁴ *Pœnitentes*, those excluded from communion on account of gross sins.

⁵⁵ "Adv. Marc.," i. 28.

⁵¹ "Apol.," 39.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ "De Bap.," 17.

for it.⁵⁶ The simplicity of the rite stands in striking contrast to its effects and to the pomp of the pagan mysteries, from which Tertullian dissociates it. Though so simple, it involves the attainment of eternal life.⁵⁷ By the invocation of God, the water has a sanctifying, sacramental power.⁵⁸ Apparently a superstitious view of the rite is coming into vogue, though faith is essential to its efficacy, and baptism does not of itself convey the Spirit, but only prepares for its reception.⁵⁹ It takes place, as a rule, at Easter and Pentecost.⁶⁰ The catechumens, after a long period of instruction, prepare for it by spending the previous night in fasting, vigils, and confession of past sins.⁶¹ On the morrow they present themselves at the door of the meeting-place, accompanied by their sponsors, and are invited by the president to disown, in the presence of the congregation, the devil, his pomp, and his angels. They are then immersed three times in water, in the triune name, after making profession of their faith; are anointed with oil, partake of a mixture of milk and honey, receive the sign of the Cross on the forehead⁶² and the Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands, and refrain for a week from the daily bath. The ceremony is performed by the bishop (*summus sacerdos*) or by the presbyters and deacons acting on his authority. If no cleric is available, a layman may baptize.⁶³ Children, in Tertullian's opinion, should not be baptized, and delay rather than precipitation is advisable, in view of the weight of responsibility involved in the rite.⁶⁴ In conclusion, they are admitted to communion, of which they partake clad in white garments. "We baptize the flesh," says Tertullian, in explanation of the various parts of the rite, "in order that the soul may be cleansed. We anoint it in order to consecrate the soul. We seal it with the sign of the Cross in order to fortify the soul. We impose hands in order that it may be enlightened by the Spirit."⁶⁵

⁵⁶ "De Bap.," 12 f.

⁵⁷ *Consecutio aeternitatis*. "De Bap.," 2, 5.

⁵⁸ "De Bap.," 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 20; "De Pæn.," 6.

⁶² "De Res. Carnis," 8. The sign of the cross and the imposition of the hands of the bishop or "sealing" (*σφραγίζειν*). Eusebius, vi. 43. *Consignatio*, consignation or confirmation. It was performed by the bishop immediately after baptism, or if the bishop was not present, as early as possible afterwards. Confirmation is not yet a separate ceremony. It probably did not become so till shortly before the middle of the third century. See Harnack, "Hist. of Dog.," ii. 141.

⁶³ "De Bap.," 7 f.; "De Corona," 3.

⁶⁴ *Pondus baptismi*, "De Bap.," 18; "De Pæn.," 6.

⁶⁵ "De Res. Carnis," 8.

HIPPOLYTUS AND THE ROMAN COMMUNITY.

Our next source—"The Church Ordinance of Hippolytus"—portrays the communal life of the Roman Church as it had developed by the fourth decade of the third century. Hippolytus paints in dark colours the moral laxity of the community under the latitudinarian régime of Zephyrinus and Callistus (c. 199-223) in contrast to the strict discipline of the party of which he himself was the rival bishop or anti-pope.⁶⁶ Callistus, it seems, made the remission of sin cheap for adulterers and other gross sinners, winked at concubinage, and permitted second marriage to the clergy.⁶⁷ These accusations come from a bitter and narrow-minded enemy, who presents the character of his opponent in the worst possible light. For him Callistus is a dishonest, unscrupulous adventurer and worldly ecclesiastic who had in early life been banished to the Sardinian mines for his misdemeanours. Otherwise, the "Church Ordinance" may be taken as reflecting the communal religious life of both parties, and the schism seems to have died out with Hippolytus himself, who, according to the "Liber Pontificalis," was sent to the mines of Sardinia⁶⁸ along with Pontianus, the second of Callistus' successors, and died a martyr in 235.

As in Tertullian, habitual prayer is enjoined. On rising believers shall wash hands and pray, and on any day on which there is no common morning worship they shall, in addition, read the Scriptures. They are further enjoined to pray at the third, sixth, and ninth hours, in recognition of their importance in the crucifixion story. They are to pray before going to bed and again at midnight, with washing of hands.⁶⁹ The members assemble on certain days of the week in the meeting-house for morning prayer and edification, and all are under obligation to attend these services, for the church is the place where God speaks through him that expounds the Word, and where the Holy Spirit dispenses grace.⁷⁰ At these assemblies as well as the regular Sunday morning service, the women, who must be

⁶⁶ He appears as a bishop in the preface to the "Philos.," and Eusebius (vi. 20) also calls him a bishop, though he is ignorant of the place. Similarly, Jerome, "De Vir. Illust.," 61. As the result of Döllinger's researches ("Hippolytus und Kallistus," Eng. trans. by Plummer, 1876) he is now generally believed to have been rival Bishop of Rome, not of Portus as Bunsen contended ("Hippolytus and His Age," 1852). He is regarded as anti-bishop of Rome by Duchesne, "Anc. Hist. de l'Eglise," 312 f.

⁶⁷ "Philos.," ix. 12.

⁶⁸ Mommsen, "Liber Pontif.," 24.

⁶⁹ c. 36.

⁷⁰ c. 35.

veiled, sit apart from the men and the catechumens from both.⁷¹ As in the "Didache," in the case of the Syrian Church, over a hundred years earlier, the "Ordinance" gives a detailed description of the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist, after the dismissal of the catechumens and any pagans present at the Sunday morning service, as this celebration had developed in the Roman Church in the interval. It begins with a common prayer, and thereafter the men and women respectively exchange the kiss of peace—not promiscuously, as seems to have been the case at an earlier time. The puritanic tendency of the writer here betrays itself. Possibly the custom had been abused and set malicious tongues wagging. The deacons bring the gifts of bread and wine to the altar. The bishop blesses these gifts, and with the presbyters lays hands on them. A short liturgy, with responses, follows. The bishop, "The Lord be with you." The people, "And with thy spirit." "Lift up your hearts." "We have, to the Lord." "Let us give thanks to the Lord."⁷² "It is meet and right." The bishop then offers the eucharistic prayer, in which he renders thanks to God for the redemption effected by His Son, Jesus Christ, His inseparable Word, and offers to God the bread and wine in commemoration of His death and resurrection, in accordance with the words of institution. It ends with the petition for the Holy Spirit to the strengthening of the faith of the participants.⁷³ The rite is a commemoration and a communion, not a sacrifice of Christ's body and blood, and its effects are purely religious. A tendency is discernible to regard and speak of it as "a holy mystery,"⁷⁴ and a superstitious anxiety is shown that no portion of the elements should be spilt, lest a malignant spirit should take possession of it.⁷⁵ The bishop breaks the bread and hands it to the people, who may not partake of food beforehand, and come one by one to the altar. In handing the bread he repeats the words, "Heavenly bread in Christ Jesus," and the recipient responds with "Amen."⁷⁶ He hands the cup with the words, "In God the Father Almighty, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Church," the communicant again responding with the "Amen."⁷⁷ In conclusion,

⁷¹ c. 18.

⁷² εὐχαριστήσωμεν τῷ κυρίῳ.

⁷³ c. 4, which gives the eucharistic prayer as on the occasion of the consecration of a bishop and may be taken as an illustration of that used at an ordinary communion.

⁷⁴ c. 7.

⁷⁵ c. 32. The bread and wine are, in fact, referred to in c. 23 as typical of the body and blood, and the eating of the body of Christ in c. 32 is evidently figuratively meant.

⁷⁶ c. 23.

⁷⁷ c. 23.

the people lay their voluntary gifts—oil, wine, bread, milk, honey, fruits, vegetables—on the altar, and the bishop offers thanksgiving and invokes a benediction on them, the people responding with the doxology.⁷⁸ Besides these free gifts the offering of the first-fruits of the earth, from which the clergy derive their maintenance, is obligatory.⁷⁹

The instruction and admission of catechumens are carefully regulated.⁸⁰ These novices are largely drawn from the class of inquiring pagans who attend the ordinary meetings for worship. Applicants must be accompanied by a Christian friend who can vouch to the bishop and presbyters for his or her fitness to receive such instruction. In the case of slaves the assent of the master is indispensable "in order that no scandal may arise." Strict inquiry is made regarding the motives of candidates for desiring membership of the community, and their character and occupation. As befits an Ordinance emanating from the strict party at Rome, no fornicator need apply. Married persons, in particular, are interrogated minutely about their domestic relations. Those living in concubinage must either give up this practice or get lawfully married. If any one is engaged in an occupation connected with idolatry; if he is a state official, an actor, a gladiator, a pagan priest, a keeper of prostitutes, a magician, a soldier, he must give up his calling before being admitted to instruction.⁸¹ The true inquirer who passes this test is received with great joy and is placed under the charge of a teacher, who is, as a rule, a presbyter, but may be a layman. The instruction is concerned with the Christian faith, as contained in the creed, and with the principles and practice of the Christian life. It extends, as a rule, over three years,⁸² during which the catechumen must attend the ordinary worship, but withdraw before the celebration of the Eucharist.⁸³ In case any of them is martyred before admission to baptism, the shedding of his blood for the faith is held to be an equivalent.

Baptism is administered at Easter. The candidates are examined by the bishop several days before the ceremony, and those found deficient in knowledge of the Word are temporarily rejected. Good Friday is spent in fasting and on the Saturday they again appear before the bishop, who exorcises them by laying hands and breathing on them, and after the reading of the Scriptures, delivers an appropriate exhortation.⁸⁴ At the close they present their offerings, and spend the Saturday night in

⁷⁸ chs. 5 and 6.

⁷⁹ c. 28.

⁸⁰ c. 16.

⁸¹ c. 16.

⁸² c. 17.

⁸³ c. 19.

⁸⁴ c. 20.

fasting, vigil, and prayer. On Easter Sunday morning, at cock-crow, they assemble at the place of baptism. The bishop blesses the water, and he or a presbyter first baptizes the children of Christian parents, the parents answering in their behalf if the children are too young to do so. Then comes the turn of the adults, first the men, then the women, who have divested themselves of their garments. It begins with the solemn renunciation of Satan and all his angels and works, in response to the direction of the officiating presbyter, on whose right and left stands a deacon with the vessels containing the anointing oil. After the renunciation the presbyter anoints the body in token of the removal from it of the unclean spirits. The anointed male then descends into the water along with a deacon,⁸⁵ and in response to the threefold question of the bishop or presbyter, makes confession of his faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. At each affirmative response he is immersed in the water. A second anointing follows. Thereafter comes the reception in the church of all the newly baptized, on whom the bishop lays his hands, anoints them anew on the forehead (the consignation or confirmation), and gives them the kiss of peace, with the words "The Lord be with you." The rite concludes with the celebration of the Eucharist in the manner already described, with the addition that the newly baptized partake of milk and honey⁸⁶ as well as the bread and wine. In essentials the ceremony is identical with that outlined by Tertullian.

As at Carthage, the Agape is still held.⁸⁷ In addition the wealthier members give suppers to widows, and these ought to be concluded before nightfall.⁸⁸ The Agape, on the other hand, takes place in the evening in the church. It is provided by one of the members. As at Carthage, it is a frugal meal, and excessive eating and drinking, which appears to have occurred occasionally, are forbidden. The "Church Ordinance" portrays in detail for the first time the procedure at such a social and religious gathering. Catechumens may be present and partake of a piece of exorcised bread, but must retire before the actual meal begins. At sundown the lamps are lighted, and the bishop, who presides, or, in his absence a presbyter or deacon, repeats a short liturgy, in which the guests join and which concludes with a thanksgiving prayer.⁸⁹ During the meal the bishop addresses the guests

⁸⁵ The women are apparently accompanied by a deaconess.

⁸⁶ Symbolic of the fact that they are babes in Christ and of the sweetness of all good things.

⁸⁷ c. 26.

⁸⁸ c. 15.

⁸⁹ If no cleric is present a layman may preside, but not conduct the introductory liturgy.

individually, the others preserving a respectful silence. What remains after its conclusion is reserved for the widows and the sick. The children present say their prayers, the guests join in singing psalms, the deacon recites the Hallelujah (Psalm cxi), and the bishop pronounces the final thanksgiving.⁹⁰

A strict discipline is preserved by the bishop and presbyters,⁹¹ in keeping with the rigorous tendency represented by Hippolytus and his party. Excommunication is the penalty for gross misdemeanour, and, as we have seen, the test of membership and morality is a very exacting one. As at Carthage, stress is laid on the observance of the stated fasts (Wednesdays and Fridays and before Easter). Easter and Pentecost, though not as yet Christmas, are observed with appropriate solemnities. The visitation of the sick and the care of the poor are enjoined on the members as well as the deacons, whose special office it is. On the other hand, the charismatic ministry of the early community has largely disappeared. Some indeed claim the gift of healing, but apparently only as a recommendation for admission to the official ministry, and the gift is to be tested before the claimant is ordained.⁹² The ministry and the community alike are haunted by the current belief in demonology, which amply appears in its religious ceremonial and certain liturgical acts—the sign of the cross, exorcism, anointing, the consecration and preservation of the eucharistic elements. In this respect the communal religious life is markedly influenced by its pagan environment.

THE EASTERN CHURCH

The communal religious life in the East, as depicted in the "Didascalia," is identical in its main features with that of the West. As in the West, the community consists of rich and poor, and Christianity has ceased to be a proletarian religion, though there is evidently a considerable proportion of needy members who live, in part or whole, from the gifts of their fellow-Christians. All are, nevertheless, equal before God, as children of the common Father in Christ. If persons of high rank are present at worship, the bishop is not to take special notice of them. At the Sunday morning service the bishop occupies a throne at the east end of the church, and the presbyters are seated on either side of him. If no reader is available, the bishop reads the Scriptures as well as preaches the sermon and offers prayers. As in the case of Anicetus of Rome and his visitor, Polycarp, if a stranger bishop

⁹⁰ c. 21.

⁹¹ c. 16.

⁹² c. 15.

is present, he gives him his own seat and invites him to address the congregation and consecrate the sacramental elements, in token of the unity of the universal Church.⁹³ The members are seated in accordance with sex, but without distinction of class, and the catechumens and penitents appear to occupy the rear part of the building.⁹⁴ The service, which concludes with the celebration of the Eucharist, is practically identical with that reflected in the other documents, though it is not detailed as in the "Church Ordinance" of Hippolytus. Prayer is made with the face to the East.⁹⁵ The bread after consecration is "the simile of Christ's body,"⁹⁶ and both it and the wine after consecration in prayer are distributed to the people by the deacons, not by the bishop and the presbyters. They are described as "divine food which nourishes eternally."⁹⁷ Before partaking the deacon warns those at variance to be reconciled and the bishop exhorts them to make their peace.⁹⁸ The rite ends with the presentation of gifts by the faithful.⁹⁹ A eucharistic service is also held in the cemeteries at the burial of departed members. The Agape is celebrated as a separate function.¹⁰⁰

The admission to instruction with a view to baptism seems to be less exacting than in the "Church Ordinance" of Hippolytus. Every earnest inquirer who professes repentance for his past life and confesses his faith is welcome. The baptismal rite and its effects are practically those of the Church at large. In the case of women, we are explicitly informed that the bishop or his depute anoints only the head; a deaconess the rest of the body.¹ The actual immersion is, however, performed in all cases by a male cleric, women being expressly forbidden to baptize.² As in Justin, baptism signifies the illumination of the soul in the Christian sense.³

Very prominent is the philanthropic work of clergy and community. The community supplies in most generous fashion, in proportion to its means, the fund in kind and money, which the bishop and the deacons administer for the benefit of the needy, the clergy, and the afflicted members, including those suffering for the faith. Its practical philanthropy is the fruit of love. It is the most compelling feature of its communal life, the most cogent evidence of the power of Christian faith. Its gifts as well as its prayers are offerings presented to God.⁴ Even the poorest manages, by fasting, to give something for Christ's sake.

⁹³ c. 12.⁹⁴ c. 10.⁹⁵ c. 12.⁹⁶ c. 26.⁹⁷ c. 13.⁹⁸ c. 11.⁹⁹ c. 9.¹⁰⁰ c. 26 and 9.¹ c. 16.² c. 15 and 16.³ c. 21.⁴ c. 9.

The widow and the orphan are God's altar, to which its gifts are brought. The art of giving at the cost of self-sacrifice is an art common to all, the hall-mark of true Christianity. At the same time, the element of self-interest is discernible in this generous almsgiving.⁵ The more anyone gives, the greater the reward in heaven. It is a sort of premium against the Day of Judgment. The motive and character of the giver are to be closely scrutinised, and the gifts of unworthy Christians refused. Of those, for instance, who oppress the poor, or ill-treat their servants, or are dishonest in business, or engage in certain trades connected with idolatry, usurers and extortionate tax-gatherers, etc. Evidently such unworthy members strive to cover over their misdemeanours or secure their readmission to the community by the liberality of their gifts. Such gifts the bishop shall not receive in the interest of Christian honour and discipline, even if the refusal entails poverty and hardship for the churches. "If the churches are so poor that the needy must be maintained by such persons, it would be better to die of hunger than take relief from the wicked."⁶ On the other hand, care is to be taken that the gifts are not wasted on those who will not work, and join the community for what they can get out of it.⁷ The bishop himself is warned against the abuse of his eleemosynary powers. These powers were unrestricted, and since his own maintenance depended on the gifts of the community, he might be tempted to help himself too liberally and not be too squeamish about the character and motives of the givers. The care of the orphan is a special obligation of bishop and community. The boys are placed in a Christian family and taught a craft in order that they may ultimately become self-supporting. The girls are adopted by parents who have a son of the same age, to whom the girl is ultimately married.⁸

Discipline is to be strictly maintained. The wilful sinner is publicly rebuked by the bishop, who is judge in place of God, as well as pastor, and dismissed from the congregation in order that he may repent of his sin.⁹ Only on giving proof of his repentance and doing penance, in the form of several weeks' fasting—more or less according to the offence¹⁰—is he readmitted to communion. At the same time, the hope of readmission is held out. They are allowed to attend worship apart from the members, and the bishop is to do his utmost to reclaim the offending brother or sister. As in the "Church Ordinance," the penitent is publicly readmitted by the laying on of hands, whereby the Spirit is anew conferred. In case of non-repentance, transgressors are ex-

⁵ c. 17.⁶ c. 18.⁷ c. 17.⁸ c. 17.⁹ c. 5.¹⁰ c. 6.

communicated.¹¹ As at Rome and elsewhere, there is a puritanic party in the community which would finally exclude wilful sinners on the ground that the Church is "the congregation of the saints." With its growing expansion this narrow attitude was proving impracticable. Like Hermas and Callistus of Rome, the writer favours a more liberal policy in the interest of the community itself, and also in keeping with the forgiving spirit of the Gospel and the more accommodating attitude of the third-century Church. Even adultery and lapse into idolatry are no bar to ultimate re-admission after due probation. In support of this contention, the writer appeals to the story of Christ and the adulteress and the example of Manasseh.¹²

In their relations with one another, the members are to behave as befits brethren. They are on no account to go to law with one another in the pagan courts, but submit their grievances to the arbitration of the bishop and the presbytery. These form the recognised court of arbitration between disputants, which meets on Mondays, and in which the deacons are assessors. If the dispute is between a Christian and a pagan, the Christian is to suffer wrong rather than appear in a pagan court.¹³ The community still stands, in fact, in sharp opposition to its pagan environment. If the pagans suspect and calumniate the Christians, the Christians rather invite than disarm their hostility by their isolation and their contempt for the pagan cults, which can only lead to their eternal damnation. They and their priests are to be avoided as "unclean." Their worship is pure demonolatry, though they imitate Christian rites.¹⁴ Nor should the Christian read pagan literature or frequent the theatres. He has all he needs in the Scriptures, which are the unique depository of the best wisdom, history, poetry, science, as well as piety.¹⁵

A puritanic simplicity in dress and demeanour is obligatory for both sexes. For both minute rules are laid down.¹⁶ Husband and wife are to show mutual affection and respect, equal diligence in the practical work of life, and exercise a strict discipline in the upbringing of their children.¹⁷ On the other hand, the writer is no ascetic. He commends marriage and allows even second marriage; condemns vegetarianism, and commands the thankful use of what God has created for the benefit of mankind. To practise an unnatural asceticism is to fall into heresy and "judaise."¹⁸ In this respect, he represents a relatively liberal and spiritual Christianity.

¹¹ c. 10.¹² c. 7.¹³ c. 11.¹⁴ c. 9.¹⁵ c. 2.¹⁶ chs. 2 and 3.¹⁷ chs. 2, 3, 22.¹⁸ c. 24.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CHARACTERISTIC of the Christian life of the period is the tendency, on the one hand, to accentuate asceticism ; on the other, to lower the Christian ideal, in virtue of expediency, and accommodate it to the world.

ACCENTUATED ASCETICISM

An ascetic conception of life was inherent in Christianity from the outset. For Jesus Himself the Christian life is the life of self-renunciation and denial. It is the preparation for the kingdom of God, which is at hand, and the gate into the kingdom is the narrow one. True life consists in dying to self and all its passions and selfish pursuits, and taking up the Cross and following Him. He Himself and all His followers are, in this sense, ascetics. Similarly for Paul, life is a process of dying to the flesh in order to live to the Spirit. To this end he prefers the celibate life, if, like his Master, he recognises marriage as a divine institution¹ and a sacred obligation. Though the Christian life is the life of freedom from legal restriction, he is ready to practise abstinence from meats for the sake of a weak brother. In the First Johannine Epistle the ascetic strain appears in the absolute antithesis between the world and the lust thereof and the community of the children of God. We may infer from the Apocalypse, the Epistles of Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and "The Shepherd of Hermas" the existence in the communities of the first half of the second century of both men and women, apart from the official widows and virgins, who practised virginity in the pursuit of the higher life. In the Apocalypse, for instance, the seer, in the vision of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, beholds 144,000 of the redeemed "who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins."² Later in the second century, Justin and Athenagoras explicitly vouch the fact. According to Justin, "many, both men and women, who have been Christ's disciples from childhood, remained pure at sixty or seventy years of age, and I boast that I could produce many such from every race of men."³ Athenagoras also knows of many men and women in the communities who have grown old unmarried in the practice of closer communion with God.⁴ Galen testifies from observation during his

¹ 1 Cor. vii.² 2 Rev. xiv. 4.³ "Apol.," i. 15.⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

travels in Asia Minor, Egypt, and Italy, to the lifelong continence of Christian men and women in refraining from cohabitation and equalling the philosophers in self-control.⁵ The martyr Attalus of Lyons rebukes Alcibiades, his fellow-confessor, for the austere asceticism which led him to live only on bread and water, and Alcibiades desists and accepts the creatures of God with thankfulness.⁶

Whilst these ascetics seem to have derived the inspiration to the life of virginity from Christian sources, others were influenced by their pagan environment in the same direction. As we have seen, some of the Christian Gnostics imparted to their Christianity an extreme asceticism based on the dualism between God and matter. This extreme asceticism was, in fact, a striking feature of the pagan thought and practice of the age, and its influence in accentuating the ascetic tendency among Christians from about the middle of the second century can hardly be disputed.⁷ It undoubtedly meets us in the Encratites (those who exercise an excessive self-control),⁸ who carried their asceticism the length of condemning and abjuring marriage and the use of meats and wine. According to Irenæus, they were a Christian Gnostic sect who derived their origin from Saturninus and Marcion. He regards Tatian as their leader,⁹ and Eusebius mentions "a certain Severus" as his successor.¹⁰ For Hippolytus, on the other hand, they represent a tendency rather than a sect. They were Catholics, not Gnostics on principle, who, whilst professing the common faith, carried their asceticism, apparently under the influence of the Cynic-Stoic philosophy, beyond that hitherto observed in the Christian communities. He calls these perverted Catholics cynics rather than Christians, and confronts them with the warning contained in 2 Tim. iv. 1-5 against such extreme doctrines.¹¹ In reply they, as well as the Gnostic ascetics, appealed to the teaching of Christ and the apostles. They were only imitating the Lord Himself, who neither married nor possessed anything, and claimed that they alone understood the Gospel.¹²

⁵ Harnack, "Expansion," i. 213.

⁶ Eusebius, v. 3.

⁷ See, for instance, Hardman, "The Ideals of Asceticism," 35 (1924).

⁸ ἐγκράτεια.

⁹ "Adv. Haer.," I. xxvi. 1 (I. xxviii. 1). Tatian set forth his Gnostic asceticism in a work, "Concerning Perfection According to the Saviour" (περὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὸν σωτῆρα καταρτισμοῦ), of which only fragments have been preserved by Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Jerome. Eng. trans. of them in vol. iii., "Ante-Nicene Lib."

¹⁰ c. iv. 29.

¹¹ Philos. viii. 20. They are also known as Cathari καθαροί.

¹² Clement of Alexandria, "Strom.," iii. 6. There were evidently ascetic Christian communities at Alexandria in Clement's time.

The appeal was, nevertheless, very one-sided. Jesus was no ascetic in the sense of these extremists. He did not condemn marriage, but recognised the sacredness of the marriage bond. He even, in controversy with the Sadducees, contemplated without demur the possibility of a widow marrying seven times. Whilst he spoke of some making themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom,¹³ he did not enjoin the practice, and left the celibate life to individual choice. He condemned ostentatious fasting, and broke through the legal restraints of his time in his practice of the natural human life. Like Paul later, he regarded the earth as the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and recognised the fatherly providence which provided liberally for the bodily as well as the spiritual needs of His children.

As we have seen, the accentuated ascetic tendency appeared also in the Montanist movement, though Montanists like Tertullian repudiated the principle on which the extreme Gnostics and Catholic ascetics based it. Whilst grudgingly recognising marriage in deference to the infirmity of the flesh, Tertullian disallows a second marriage not only for the clergy, but for all Christians.¹⁴ He intensifies the Neo-legalism which the conception of Christianity, as the New Law, had substituted in the post-apostolic period for the freedom of the Gospel. Habitual fasting is not merely expedient. It is an essential of the perfect life and of the vision of God.¹⁵ It is the best weapon for driving out the demons and preparing for the ingress of the Spirit. Equally with the Encratites, he one-sidedly regards the ascetic life as the divinely prescribed form of the Christian life, as exemplified by Christ Himself, the pattern of virginity, and foreshadowed by Old Testament saints like Elijah. "You have nothing to do with the joys of the world. You are, indeed, called to the very opposite."¹⁶ "Keep pure for Christ his betrothed virgin."¹⁷ "Christianity is understood by none more than the once married, the often fasting."¹⁸ The same ascetic strain, though without the Montanist sectarian narrowness, is characteristic of the Alexandrian theologians. For Clement, the ascetic Christian in the higher Gnostic sense is the Christian athlete, who wins the prize of immortality in the struggle with the passions of the flesh.¹⁹ "To him the flesh is dead; he himself lives alone having consecrated the sepulchre into a holy temple to the Lord."²⁰ Origen in his youthful zeal carried this ascetic consecration the length of self-

¹³ Matt. xix. 12.

¹⁴ "De Monog.," 5 f.

¹⁵ "De Jejun.," 6.

¹⁶ "De Cor.," 13.

¹⁷ "De Fuga Pers.," 14.

¹⁸ "De Jejun.," 8.

¹⁹ "Strom.," vii. 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, iv. 22.

mutilation, in literal fulfilment of Matt. xix. 12, in order to ensure himself against the danger to his virginity from his association with his feminine pupils.²¹ Nor was he the only example of this misguided asceticism,²² which earned the admiration of Bishop Demetrius, though he disapproved of the literal interpretation of the saying of Christ. In his zeal for the life of poverty, he refused the aid of friends, sold his books, and maintained himself on the barest pittance of four oboli a day. He disciplined himself day and night in the pursuit of "the philosophic life," slept little and this little on the ground, not in a bed; is said for many years not to have worn shoes, in strict fulfilment of Christ's command, and fasted so consistently from wine and food as to undermine his constitution. He infected many of his pupils with his own zeal.²³

In contrast to him, other zealots went to the opposite extreme of proving their ascetic heroism by living in the same house and even sleeping in the same bed with a virgin "sister," on the questionable warrant of 1 Cor. ix. 5.²⁴ No wonder that Cyprian roundly denounced the all too common and unconscionable practice as subversive of Christian morality, and warmly approved the excommunication of the deacon who was accused of such compromising conduct.²⁵ At the same time, he too was a warm advocate of the virgin life for men as well as women, properly understood and applied.²⁶ In the case especially of the consecrated virgins of the Church, such a life is equal to that of the angels, and ensures the greater reward in heaven.²⁷ Among the disciples of Origen, Pierius and Hieracas continued the ascetic teaching and practice of their master towards the end of the third and in the early years of the fourth century. Pierius was known as "the Younger Origen" in respect both of his distinction as a teacher and eloquent writer, and his ardent pursuit of self-discipline.²⁸ Hieracas, still more distinguished as a writer, scholar, astronomer, and physician, and equally devoted to the ascetic life, attracted, in spite of his heterodox views on the resurrection and the salvation of children, many disciples whom he formed into an ascetic society at Lentopolis, and thus became the founder of Monasticism in its early form.²⁹

²¹ Eusebius, vi. 8.

²² See, for instance, Justin, "Apol.," i. 29.

²³ Eusebius, vi. 3.

²⁴ Cf. 7, 36 f.

²⁶ "De Habitu Virg.," 2.

²⁵ Ep. 61 (4).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

²⁸ Eusebius, vii. 32; Jerome, "De Vir. Illust.," 76.

²⁹ See Epiphanius, "Pan.," ii. 67; ἦν δὲ ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐκκληκτος τῇ αὐτοῦ ἀσκήσει καὶ δυνάμενος πείσαι ψυχὰς αὐτίκα πολλοὶ τῶν ἀσκητῶν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων αὐτῷ συναπήχθησαν.

In Methodius we have another distinguished ascetic who, whilst objecting to some points in Origen's teaching, advocated virginity³⁰ as the ideal for all Christians. He extols it as the most noble and beautiful manner of life, the ripe result, the flower and first fruits of incorruption. To those who have proved their virginity the Lord promises entrance into the kingdom of heaven. "For virginity, whilst walking on earth, reaches up to heaven."³¹ Christ is "the archvirgin," and in following His example, the soul attains to likeness to God and escapes corruption.³² The "Convivium" is a striking example of the tendency of these virgin panegyrist of virginity to indulge in prurient and morbid descriptions of the sex relation and function. In spite of their striving to repress the sex instinct, and to a certain extent because of it, their imagination is haunted by gross pictures of the sex function in both men and women. In this respect many of them were evidently not the virgins they professed to be in deed. At all events they show a strange predilection for imagining and describing the very thing that they profess to abhor and abjure.³³ In this subtle fashion, nature has a way of avenging herself.

DOCTRINE OF A DOUBLE MORALITY

As the fruit of this accentuated asceticism, there developed the doctrine of a double morality. Its germ is already found in "The Shepherd of Hermas," who emphasised the religious value of doing more than is commanded and thus earning special honour in God's sight. Hence the distinction between the life of evangelical perfection, in accordance with the evangelical counsels and that in accordance with the precepts of Christ in the Gospel. In support of this distinction, the votaries of the perfect life appealed in particular to Christ's saying to the rich young man, who had kept all the commandments, to sell in addition all his possessions for the benefit of the poor and follow Him in order to have treasure in heaven.³⁴ By the end of the third century this double moral standard had become a recognised principle. As definitely formulated by Eusebius, it distinguishes between the higher or superior life of the Christian athlete and the inferior life of the ordinary Christian. The latter is the more human and concedes the right to marry and engage in general secular occupations, including military service and civic activity as well as trade. The other is above nature and beyond common

³⁰ *παρθενία*.

³² *Ibid.*, i. 5.; *ἀρχιπαρθένης*.

³³ See, for instance, "Convivium," 2.

³¹ "Convivium Decem Virginum," i. 1.

³⁴ Mark x. 21.

human living, involving celibacy, aloofness from the world and its affairs, and entire devotion to the service of God.³⁵ It transfers to the practical Christian life the Gnostic distinction between faith and knowledge and between the spiritual Christian, who is alone capable of the higher knowledge and life, and the psychic Christian, who can only attain to faith. Connected with this principle is the growing tendency, already observable in Second Clement and "Hermas," to emphasise the Gospel of salvation by meritorious works. Ascetic exercises, martyrdom, almsgiving, and other self-sacrificing practices in this life assure the forgiveness of sins, and merit their due recompense in the life to come.³⁶

THE SOLITARY LIFE AND INCIPIENT MONASTICISM

The accentuated tendency to asceticism finds its most extreme expression in the life of seclusion from the world, which is regarded as under the dominion of the devil and the demons. Hence the anchorite or hermit life—the retirement to the solitude of the desert in the pursuit of evangelical perfection. Its origin lies in Egypt. Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, retired, indeed, to the desert towards the close of the second century to lead "the philosophic life." But he did so, not on principle, but to escape the slanderous opposition of his enemies, and ultimately resumed his episcopal office, with the assistance of Bishop Alexander.³⁷ Egypt was the nurse of the anchorite life, which appears as a distinctive movement in the second half of the third century. It seems to have been influenced to some extent by its pagan environment. Asceticism was a feature of the cult of Sarapis, and in the Jewish-Egyptian sect of the Therapeutæ and of the Essenes in adjacent Palestine, the Christian could find a model of the ascetic religious life. Moreover, the wide desert wastes adjoining the Nile would provide for natures predisposed to it an incentive to the solitary life as well as a refuge in times of persecution. It has, indeed, been contested that pagan or Jewish asceticism had any influence on the Christian anchorite movement in Egypt of the third century.³⁸ At the same time, the ascetic tendency was very much in the air in the third century in Egypt,

³⁵ "Demonstratio Evangelica," i. 8. Greek Text, Migne, xxiii., Ferrar's trans. (1920); and see C. J. Cadoux, "The Early Church and the World," 468 f. (1925), and *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1923.

³⁶ Tert., "De Jejuniis," 7; "De Res. Carnis.," 8.

³⁷ Eusebius, vi. 9, 10, 11.

³⁸ See Mackean, "Christian Monasticism in Egypt," 18 f. (1920), following Preuschen, "Mönchthum und Serapiskult," 27 f. (1903).

and Christians could not escape its suggestiveness.³⁹ Both non-Christian religious practice and geographical conditions tended to nurture, if they do not entirely explain the rise of Christian monasticism in Egypt. The tendency to flee the world to the solitary life is distinctively Egyptian in origin. It is significant of this tendency that all the early devotees of Anchoretism—Paul, Anthony, Hieracas, Pachomius—were Egyptians. In addition, the disturbed political, economic, and social state of the country throughout the third century⁴⁰ provided a strong motive for dying to a world which was itself slowly but surely dying. Equally strong the motive to flee even from the Church, of which the worldly spirit was taking an increasing grip,⁴¹ and seek perfection of life and peace of mind in the hermit's cave.

The first of such fugitives that we hear of in detail is the hermit Paul, a wealthy young Christian skilled in Greek and Egyptian learning, who, according to Jerome, lived in the Lower Thebaïd at the time of the Decian and Valerian persecutions. Threatened with the loss of his possessions and his life, the blessed Paul fled to a cave in the remote desert wilds to spend the years of his long life in solitude and prayer. Of the adventures of another hermit, Anthony, who set out at the age of ninety to discover his whereabouts, Jerome fables in the style of a Rider Haggard. He is evidently writing with his tongue in his cheek and on the principle that "all things are possible to him that believeth."⁴² The monsters of the desert which he encounters beat even the Loch Ness monster, since they are not only hideous, but speak Coptic, or was it Greek, and it has not yet been recorded that the Loch Ness monster speaks Gaelic or any other civilised language. At last, by their guidance, he reaches the mountain cave where Paul abides to find that the raven which daily brought him his portion of bread had provided a double portion for the occasion! The story, of which this is a characteristic sample, is palpably a religious romance, and the sceptics⁴³ have rather hastily denied his very existence. The same credulous spirit appears in the "Life of Anthony" attributed to Athanasius. If Athanasius wrote it, as seems to be the case, it is more creditable to his credulity than

³⁹ Hardman, "Ideals of Asceticism," 35 (1924). See also Workman, "The Evolution of Monasticism," 86 f. (1927).

⁴⁰ See Mackean, 63 f., following I. G. Milne, "Hist. of Egypt under Roman Rule," 67 f.

⁴¹ See Harnack, "Das Mönchthum," 19 f.

⁴² "Life of Paul," 6.

⁴³ Weingarten, "Ursprung des Mönchthums" (1877); Gwatkin, "Early Church History," i. 245. "Paul of Thebes is only an invention of Jerome."

his intelligence.⁴⁴ Like Paul, Anthony resolved in his youth to sell his possessions and embrace the solitary life—at first outside his native village. Working for his bread to sustain life, he struggled against the youthful temptations with which the devil assailed him by fasting, sleeping on the ground, and shutting himself up in a tomb, where he endured the scourging of a multitude of demons and experienced a variety of horrible apparitions. Thereafter he took up his abode in a remote fort, where for nearly twenty years he continued to defy the devil and the demons, “never going forth and but seldom seen by any.” His fame for sanctity nevertheless spread and attracted many to the spot, who wrenched off the door of his cell. Whereupon he at length came forth as hale and hearty as he had been before he started the hermit life. He performs marvellous cures, exorcises the demons, and persuades many to adopt the solitary life. Accordingly a colony of devotees arose in the desert, whose mentor he became, and to whom he delivers a long homily in praise of monasticism, which occupies many sections of the “Life.”⁴⁵

During the persecution of Maximinus in the early years of the fourth century, he suddenly turned up in Alexandria and incessantly encouraged the martyrs, though he himself missed the coveted prize of the martyr's crown. His forte was, however, not the active ministry, and he returned to his solitary life, increasing its severity by intensifying the martyrdom of his body. He fasted unremittingly, never bathed nor washed even his feet, and allowed the dirt, and presumably also the vermin, to accumulate under his hair garment. Ultimately he withdrew to a more remote mountain in the desert, cultivating a patch for his subsistence and weaving baskets which he exchanged for the food brought by visitors. His further career lies beyond our period, since he died in 356 at a very advanced age.

His importance consists in the impetus he gave to the Anchorite movement, whose votaries, Pachomius, who possessed the administrative gift lacking in him, organised in the first half of the fourth century into a monastic order under a prescribed rule.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ On the arguments for his authorship, see Robertson's Introduction to his translation of the “Vita” in “Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,” iv.; Müller, “Kirchengeschichte,” i. 211. Against, Gwatkin, “Studies in Arianism,” 98 f.; Weingarten, “Ursprung.”

⁴⁵ 16-43.

⁴⁶ What professes to be the Rule of Pachomius is given by Sozomen, “Eccl. Hist.,” iii. 14. Hannah (“Christian Monasticism,” 24 f., 1924) accepts it as actually drawn up by him. This is rather risky in view of the difficulty of knowing exactly what is original in it, and what is due to later development. See also Ladeuze, “Étude sur le Cénobite Pakhomien” (1898); Forbes, “Rise and Earliest Development of Christian Monasticism” (Edinburgh Univ. Ph.D. Thesis in Eccl. Hist., 1928).

In this institution we see the beginnings of what ultimately became one of the great civilising forces in the West, if not in the East. In its incipient form of the purely solitary religious life, it appears as a morbid obsession, which fostered and bred a gross superstition. Nothing could be more unlike the life of active service on behalf of the kingdom, which Christ taught and exemplified, and of which the world in the third century stood in such dire need. These visionaries might claim that, in the pursuit of individual sanctity and self-discipline, they were following in the footsteps of their Master. In so far as Jesus retired at times for solitary prayer and meditation there was some ground for the claim. But Jesus was no ascetic in the later hermit sense. The motive of His occasional retirement was to seek and find renewed strength for His active mission of healing and teaching in a suffering and sorrow-laden world. He denounced the legalist spirit of the scribes and Pharisees and in practice disregarded it. He lived the life of active well-doing in the service of others, and the life of service, not of self-concentration, is the Christian ideal as He conceived and taught it. Anchoretism pure and simple can only be regarded as a travesty of Christianity, which substituted religious egotism and superstition for the Gospel of the kingdom. If it was a visionary reaction from a secularised Church as well as from the world on the part of laymen, the Church at first tolerated and then disciplined and made use of it as an adjunct of its mission on the ethical side.

ACCOMMODATION TO THE WORLD

In striking contrast to this extreme asceticism is the accentuated tendency to lower the Christian ideal and accommodate it to the world. In the early period, the Church is the community of the saints which practises a rigorous discipline, though the tendency to relax its rigour, and at the same time introduce a double moral standard, is already visible in "Hermas," for instance. As we have seen, this relaxation definitely appears at the beginning of the third century in the liberal and opportunist policy of Callistus towards gross sinners. In spite of the organised opposition of Hippolytus and later of Novatian,⁴⁷ and the insistence of individual churchmen like Tertullian, Clement, Origen, Cyprian, on the disciplined life, this policy ultimately prevailed. Instead of a community of saints, the Church became a mixed community of

⁴⁷ Novatian is called by Cornelius of Rome "the Avenger of the Gospel"; *ἐκδικητὴς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου*. Eusebius, vi. 43—"The staunch maintainer of the evangelical life."

saints and sinners.⁴⁸ "In order to be a Christian, a man no longer required in any sense to be a saint."⁴⁹ A saint, that is, in the more ascetic sense. An average morality sufficed for the mass. With the ever-widening expansion of the Church, it had perforce to reckon with the more prosaic mental and moral capacity and outlook of the average man, who had to make the best of an imperfect world, in which he lived and worked. From this point of view it was becoming increasingly difficult to avoid a relaxation of the more primitive ideal of the Church as the community of saints, if it involved the risk of increasing secularisation, and with it, its moral and spiritual enervation. To maintain in practice the professed theory of the absolute separation of Church and world was proving unworkable. A world-wide institution cannot, in the nature of things, remain a purely otherworldly sect. The Church was, therefore, fain not only to relax the old rigorist discipline, but to tolerate the tares among the wheat. It endeavoured indeed, to counteract this tendency by the catechetical training of its converts in the principles of Christian morality and by the nurture of the spiritual life of its members through its stated worship and its sacraments. That it continued well into the third century to exercise by this means a powerful moral influence on its members, we learn from Origen. In refutation of Celsus, he can still confidently maintain that the Christian communities "are as beacons in the world."⁵⁰ In proof of this he asks the antichristian sceptic to compare the communities at Athens, Corinth, Alexandria, or any other place with the popular assemblies in those cities. In character their members who form "the Church or city of God" are far superior to the pagan assembly or council,⁵¹ to which the civic rule is entrusted. In this fact he finds a convincing proof of the superior divinity of Jesus compared with such a pagan deity as Aristeas.

At the same time, from the cessation of persecution in the second half of the third century a distinct enervation of the Christian life is growingly perceptible. The Church itself has taken on the character of an organisation modelled on that of its imperial environment. It has shaped its constitution on that of the Empire. In so doing it has accommodated itself in a striking fashion, whilst so powerfully increasing its efficiency as an institution. In thus adapting itself in this respect to the world, it has ceased to be an otherworldly association, whose citizenship is in heaven, as it appears in the New Testament writings and in

⁴⁸ *Corpus permixtum.*

⁴⁹ Harnack, "Hist. of Dog.," ii. 125.

⁵⁰ "Contra Celsum," iii. 29, 30; *ὡς φωστῆρες εἰσιν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.*

⁵¹ *βουλῆ.*

"The Shepherd of Hermas," and other second-century documents. It might still in the third century be the community or city of God. But in constitution, custom, and to a growing extent in spirit, it has become more conventional and worldly. Paganism is increasingly invading its worship and practice. Superstitious beliefs and usages, derived from this source, are on the increase. The veneration of the martyrs, for instance, is being transformed into a cult, in which the old polytheism is asserting its influence. The worldly spirit is taking possession of members of the episcopal order, who, like Paul of Samosata, the Procurator of Zenobia, assume secular office and give rein to their worldly ambition in their lust of domination. Paul and his supporters among the clergy are also accused by their enemies—with what truth we do not know—of gravely undermining Christian morality by their relations with the *subintroductæ*⁵² or so-called spiritual paramours. Even Origen earlier in the century is constrained to admit that his parallel in favour of the Christian communities, compared with their pagan counterparts, is not absolute. There are bishops who are very remiss in their duty.⁵³ Of the forty years from the cessation of persecution under Gallienus to its renewed outbreak under Diocletian in the opening years of the fourth century, Eusebius draws a very sombre picture.⁵⁴ The picture is probably over-coloured in order to give point to the providential judgment which he sees overtaking a worldly Church in the ordeal of the Diocletian persecution. If rhetorical, it is not merely homiletical in its lurid description of the laxity, hypocrisy, clerical ambition and strife, which the long interval of freedom and peace had nurtured. Making allowance for the exaggeration of the writer under the influence of this dogmatic assumption, it is thus evident that the secularisation of the Church and the Christian life was in process long before the conversion of Constantine had allied Christianity with the State.

CHAPTER XIV

CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

DIVERSITY OF DOCTRINAL TEACHING

THROUGHOUT the period there is no absolute consensus of theological opinion among all Christians. Apart from the

⁵² Eusebius, vii. 30, *συνελακτοι*. Cf. the "Pseudo-Clementine Epistles," i. 10, for the prevalence of this abuse.

⁵³ "Contra Celsum," iii. 30.

⁵⁴ viii. 1 and 2.

Gnostics, whom the Church as a whole repudiated, there is observable a wide diversity of view in the interpretation of the faith within the Christian communities as represented by the leading theologians of the period. There is, indeed, a common faith in the Father-God, and in Jesus Christ as the revealer of God and the God-sent Redeemer, who lived and died and rose from the dead, will reappear as the Judge of the world, and in His life is the exemplar of that of His disciples. But the intellectual apprehension and the interpretation of this Gospel vary with the individual. In contrast to the subapostolic period, the speculative tendency, and with it the divergence of theological opinion, becomes very marked. This tendency reveals the influence of personality, culture, religious experience, and historic conditions on the theological thought of the period. It reflects the education as well as the faith of the individual. The conceptions of Greek Philosophy and Roman Law colour and enter into it. Witness the writings of Justin, Irenæus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, and others. Beyond the few fundamental beliefs incorporated in the early Rule of Faith there is, accordingly, a striking diversity of doctrinal teaching. Speculation is surprisingly free, and though Gnosticism is repudiated, heresy-hunting only occasionally manifests itself within the Catholic Church. Theological opinion is markedly individualist, and remains in a state of flux until a series of General Councils, from the early fourth century onwards, grappled with the task of authoritatively defining the dogmatic faith of the Church. Even so, the process was only completed after centuries of bitter theological controversy and ecclesiastical division. Theological individualism has never been without its influence and its representatives in the Church, even under the mediæval Papacy and the mediæval Inquisition.

THE EARLY GREEK APOLOGISTS

In passing from the subapostolic to the Catholic period, theology becomes distinctively philosophical. Whilst the Greek apologists share with the so-called Apostolic Fathers the common faith of the Christian community, they have absorbed certain ideas from the current philosophy and combine these with the common faith. In this respect they represent "the gradual Hellenisation of Christianity,"¹ as the Gnostics represent it in its more acute form. The influence of this tendency, already more or less discernible in the Pauline Epistles, the Epistle to the

¹ Loofs, "Leitfaden," 114 (4th ed., 1906); Harnack, "Hist. of Dog.," ii. 247.

Hebrews, the Fourth Gospel, and the Epistles of Ignatius, is very marked in the theology of the Apologists. In all of them (with the exception of Aristides) the doctrine of the Logos predominates. In this respect they follow the lead of the author of the Fourth Gospel who applied this term to the Son of God, and Justin, in particular, goes beyond the Fourth Gospel in making the Logos the Divine Reason, which has revealed itself in the human mind (though imperfectly owing to the power of the demons to mislead mankind) as well as through the prophets and the incarnate Word. With the exception of the author of the Epistle to Diognetus, they show, too, a predominating interest in the philosophical rather than the redemptive or soteriological aspect of the Logos doctrine. The Logos is the agent of Creation, the medium between a transcendental God and the universe, the expression of the self-revelation of God rather than the Saviour of mankind. They also represent what has been called the intellectualist as well as the moralist view of Christianity. Christianity is both a new knowledge and a new law. It furnishes the true satisfaction of the intellectual and the religious needs of man.

Common to all are likewise the doctrine of the unity and transcendence of God, whose existence is demonstrable from the order and grandeur of the universe; of a divine Providence; of a special and certain revelation of God, in addition to that derivable from the human mind and the universe; of the creation of man in God's image and of the world for man's sake; of the freedom of the will, human responsibility, the resurrection of the body, and a retribution in a future life. At the same time, there is not a definite dogmatic, which is obligatory for all Christians. Each views Christianity as he knows and has experienced it. There is nothing like a uniform apprehension or an adequate discussion of such doctrines as the Trinity, the God-Man in His relation to the Father, the two natures of Christ.

JUSTIN MARTYR

From the theological point of view, Justin is the most important, and may, on the whole, be taken as representative of the others. For him God is the Creator of the universe out of unformed matter.² With Him is associated in the work of creation the Logos,³ who was begotten by the Father by an act of will,⁴ and is therefore His

² "Apol.," i. 10.

³ Trypho, 61, 62.

⁴ Trypho, 61. The reference to Prov. viii. 27, the classic passage with him and the other apologists, which speaks of wisdom being with God in the beginning before the creation and taking part in this act. "Apol.," i. 12, 21, 23, etc.

first-begotten Son, but not from eternity. This begetting is by derivation, as light from the sun or fire from fire, not by abscission from the divine.⁵ As in John He is God,⁶ for He participates in the divine essence (*οὐσία*), and is, therefore, the object of worship.⁷ But he is subordinate, subject to the highest God—the Maker of all things—a second, dependent God, numerically distinct, though one in thought or will.⁸ It is this second God, as distinct from the supreme God, that figures in the Old Testament,⁹ that has spoken through the philosophers and especially through the prophets, that became incarnate in Christ, was born of the Virgin by the power of God, was crucified and rose again.¹⁰ It is thus that Justin and the other apologists strove to make clear to themselves and their readers the causation, for the purpose of creation and revelation, of the Logos, which they express by the term “begotten.” In Him the Eternal comes forth into time, and thus He is to Justin a second God, and is not created in the sense that the world and man are. It is by means of an act of emanation, rather than of creation, that the Logos comes into distinct being.¹¹ In becoming man He became wholly man—body, reason, and soul.¹² At the same time, he does not explicitly distinguish between the two natures in Christ and seems to identify the Logos and the Man, Jesus. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is regarded as a dependent divine Being in the second degree,¹³ and is apparently subordinate to the other two, though he does not attempt a metaphysical explanation of his belief in this threefold Deity, which he evidently holds in a tritheistic or pluralist sense. In one passage, the exact meaning of which is disputed, he even mentions the angels as objects of worship, along with the Father, Son, and Spirit.¹⁴ It is certain that he did not conceive of the Deity in the later Trinitarian sense.

The purpose of the incarnation is man's salvation—his

⁵ Trypho, 128; *οὐ κατὰ ἀποκομήν.*

⁶ “Apol.,” i. 64; *θεός.* In distinction from the Father who is *ὁ Θεός*, as in “Philo.”

⁷ Trypho, 64.

⁸ Trypho, 56; *θεός ἕτερος ἐστὶ τοῦ τὰ πάντα ποιήσαντος θεοῦ, ἀριθμῶ, ἀλλὰ οὐ γνώμῃ.*

⁹ Trypho, 36, 37, 56-60.

¹⁰ “Apol.,” i. 23, and many other passages. Here there is apparently a reference to a rudimentary creed.

¹¹ See Loofs on this point, “Leitfaden,” 121-122; Goodenough, “Theology of Justin Martyr,” 147 f. (1923).

¹² “Apol.,” ii. 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, i. 13.

¹⁴ “Apol.,” i. 6. On the meaning of this passage, see Engelhardt, “Das Christenthum Justins,” 142. The attempts to alter the construction of the passage so as to except the angels from worship do not seem to me successful.

deliverance from sin, death, and the power of the devil and the demons. By His incarnation and suffering Christ fulfilled the divine plan or "economy" in creation and redemption by destroying death and the power of the devil and thus undoing the evil which the devil had wrought through the disobedience of Adam and Eve.¹⁵ He thereby "recapitulated (summed up or brought to completion) in Himself the divine economy in creation and redemption."¹⁶ In this conception there is a distinctive echo of that of Paul. Equally reminiscent of Paul are the ascription of the forgiveness of sin to faith through the blood of Christ as foreshadowed in Isaiah liii., which he quotes at length,¹⁷ and the reiterated emphasis on the Cross of Christ.¹⁸ At the same time, like his fellow-apologists, he has not grasped and assimilated the redemptive teaching of Paul. For him Christ is characteristically the Teacher who by His incarnation has taught the full knowledge of God for "the conversion and restoration of the human race"¹⁹ and the highest and most exacting morality,²⁰ and has delivered man from the power of the demons."²¹ In consequence of his conception of the Logos as the incarnate Divine Reason, the vocation of Christ as Revealer and Teacher naturally takes the chief place in his view of His redemptive work. Equally prominent is his doctrine of the freedom of the will.²² Man is responsible for his salvation or his condemnation, since he may accept or reject the Gospel, though his liability to be deceived by the demons increases the difficulty of choosing aright. He is thus the staunch opponent of Stoic and Gnostic fatalism and holds strongly the doctrine of eternal punishment in virtue of human freedom.²³ He does not believe either in predestination or in original sin. "Each one will perish by his own sin and each will be saved by his own righteousness."²⁴ Nor does he limit man's salvation exclusively to the historic work of Christ. He believes that all who have lived righteously will be saved.²⁵ Though all this was ultimately to be declared heresy, it was evidently not heresy about the middle of the second century, when its enunciation was quite compatible with the common faith of the Christian community, in which

¹⁵ "Trypho," 45, 86, 100.

¹⁶ Irenæus, IV. vi. 2. Unigenitus filius venit ad nos . . . suum plasma in semet ipsum recapitulans. Irenæus is quoting from Justin's lost work against Marcion; cf. Eusebius, iv. 17. This doctrine of recapitulation is based on Eph. i. 9, 10.

¹⁷ "Trypho," 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 89, etc.

¹⁹ "Apol.," i. 23; ἀλλαγή και ἐπαναγωγή.

²⁰ "Apol.," i. 15 f.

²¹ *Ibid.*, ii. 6.

²² "Apol.," i. 12; ii. 7; "Trypho," 141.

²³ "Apol.," ii. 7.

²⁴ "Trypho," 140.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

Justin shared. The heretics of his day were the Gnostics and the Ebionites or extreme Jewish Christians, with whom he does not agree and whom he denounces as false teachers.²⁶ Within the Church, of which he was the most influential teacher of his time, there was still room for the profession of views which later would have unchurched him, equally with the Gnostics and the Ebionites. At this period a man could evidently claim to be a Christian without believing in the pre-existence of the Logos or even the virgin birth, for though Justin believes in both, he is ready to acknowledge as Christians those who believe in neither, if they will only believe that Jesus is the Christ by election of God.²⁷

IRENÆUS

Irenæus was very probably a native of Asia Minor. His association with Polycarp in early life is vouched by his own testimony, but it gives no certain clue to the year of his birth, which most writers have placed during the first or in the opening years of the second quarter of the second century. From the knowledge of Hebrew and the Syriac version of the New Testament (Peshito) with which he is credited, Harvey²⁸ conjectures that he was a Syrian, but the fact that he knew an Oriental language²⁹ does not necessarily imply that he was an Oriental. In view of his own statement that he was a pupil of Polycarp at Smyrna, it seems far more likely that he was a native of the province of Asia. Equally conjectural is the statement that he accompanied Polycarp to Rome in 154 on his mission to discuss the Easter controversy with the Roman bishop Anicetus, though there is some evidence that he was there at the time of Polycarp's martyrdom in the following year. During this sojourn he may have been a pupil of Justin Martyr, whose influence is reflected in his works. On a later occasion he appears to have lectured

²⁶ "Trypho," 35 and 47.

²⁷ "Trypho," 48; cf. 67. See also Engelhardt, 275-276. A number of other works—a discourse and an address to the Greeks, a work on the sole government of God, etc.—are ascribed to him. Donaldson is on the whole adverse to their authenticity and Harnack considers only the Apology and the Dialogue as certainly by him. "Altchristliche Literatur," i. 99; cf. his disquisition on Justin's writings in "Texte und Untersuchungen," i. Justin mentions a work of his written against the Gnostic heretics, which has not survived. See "Apol.," i. 26. His theology is discussed in detail by Engelhardt, "Das Christenthum Justins" (1878), and more recently by Goodenough, "Theology of Justin Martyr" (1923). He gives an exhaustive bibliography.

²⁸ "Life of Irenæus," in Introduction to his edition of his works, i. 153-154.

²⁹ In regard to the question of language, whilst he himself makes no pretension to any skill in the use of Greek, Jerome praises his style as *doctissimus et eloquentissimus*.

against Gnosticism, and in a fragment preserved by Photius Hippolytus tells us that he attended these lectures. By the year 177 we find him labouring as a missionary in Gaul, with the title of presbyter, for in that year he was sent with an epistle to the Roman bishop Eleutherus by the churches of Lyons and Vienne in reference to the Montanist controversy.³⁰ After the martyrdom of Potheinos, he was chosen bishop in his stead in the following year (178). He continued, as we have already noted, to prosecute missionary work in Gaul till towards the end of the second century, when we lose all certain trace of his activity. It was during this period, too, that he wrote his work against the Gnostic heresies, which had penetrated from the east as far west as Gaul. From internal evidence it must have been written between the years 182 and 189. Whilst strenuously controverting the Gnostics, he exerted himself to preserve the Church from schism over the question of the date of the celebration of Easter, as his letter to Bishop Victor of Rome shows.³¹ "Thus," writes Eusebius, "Irenæus, who was truly well named, became a peacemaker in this matter, exhorting and negotiating in this way on behalf of the peace of the churches, and he conferred by letter about the question at issue not only with Victor, but also with most of the other rulers of the churches."³²

He was a voluminous writer as well as an ardent missionary, but besides his work "Against Heresies," the greater part of which is preserved only in an imperfect Latin translation, and his "Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching," recently recovered in an Armenian translation, his other writings have been lost, or only preserved in fragments.³³ He was the first theologian since the days of Paul to attempt a sustained, if not a systematic demonstration of Christian ideas. He belonged to the theological school of Asia Minor of which the author of the Fourth Gospel may be

³⁰ Eusebius, v. 3 and 4.

³¹ Eusebius, v. 24; Harvey, "Works," ii. 473-477. ³² Eusebius, v. 24.

³³ The title given by Irenæus himself to his work against heresies was *Ἐλέγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως* ("Detection and Refutation of Falsely Called Knowledge"). The Armenian original of the "Demonstration" was discovered and published with a German translation by Mekertschian and Minassiantz, "Des Heiligen Irenæus eis ἐπίδειξεν τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ κηρύγματος," in vol. i., "Texte und Untersuchungen," 3rd series (1907). An improved edition with Eng. translation by Mekertschian and Wilson (1912). French trans. by Barthoulot, with Introduction by Tixeront (1916). "Patrologia Orientalis," xii. (1919). See also Conybeare, "Expositor," July 1907. The "Demonstration" adds nothing to his theological ideas expressed in his work against the Gnostics. In addition to these two works, see also the Pfaffian Fragments in "Texte und Unters.," v., and in Harvey, ii. (trans., "Ante-Nicene Lib."). For his dependence on Justin and Athenagoras, see Harnack, "Texte und Unters.," i. 130 f.

regarded as the founder and Ignatius as the continuator. His thought was, however, influenced by the necessity of refuting Gnosticism, and though his theology may be described as scriptural and apostolic, in its dependence on that of Paul and the Fourth Gospel, he is really an ecclesiastical theologian, who writes under the influence of the developing ecclesiasticism in opposition to Gnosticism. The conception of the Church versus the Gnostic school or sect, as this conception had been shaped by the Gnostic controversy, moulds his thought.

In his "Refutation of Gnosticism" he maintains the Catholic faith as derived from the apostles and expressed in the Regula or creed.³⁴ He reviews and refutes the various Gnostic systems. He asserts the unity of God against the Gnostic distinction between the supreme God and the Creator of the world, and controverts the Platonic hypothesis of the existence of a higher world, of which the visible world is the image—a hypothesis on which the Valentinian Gnostics partly based their theories.³⁵ He attacks their arbitrary and fanciful method of interpreting the Scriptures,³⁶ which was, however, common to non-Gnostic as well as Gnostic Christians. He emphasises the superiority of the teaching of the inspired apostles over that of the Gnostic pretenders to a higher knowledge, whose speculations were unknown to the apostolic churches,³⁷ though he ought to have known that the germ of Gnosticism is discoverable in the heresies denounced by New Testament writers. He claims inspiration for the Gospels in contrast to the false gospels of the heretics,³⁸ and denies any antagonism between the teaching of Paul and the other apostles against both Marcionites and Ebionites,³⁹ though he ignores the fact that there were both disputes and discrepancies of view among the apostles. He rejects the Docetic distinction between Jesus and Christ, whose real humanity as well as His divinity he accentuates.⁴⁰ He appeals to the testimony of Christ, Moses, and the prophets, as well as the apostles, in support of the traditional view of God, Christ, and Christianity,⁴¹ but he is unaware that his method of explaining passages to suit a preconceived theory is historically most objectionable. He vindicates the Old Testament representation of God from Gnostic objections,⁴² though some of them were by no means without justification, and claims that the exposition of the Scriptures by

³⁴ I. ii. 1 f. (I. x. 1 f.).

³⁵ II. i. 1 f.

³⁶ II. xl. 1 f. (II. xxvii. 1 f.).

³⁷ III. i. 1 f.

³⁸ III. v. 1 f.

³⁹ III. xiii. 1 f.

⁴⁰ III. xvi. 1 f.; cf. V. i. 1 f.

⁴¹ IV. i.-xi.

⁴² IV. xlii. 2 f. (IV. xxvii. 1 f.).

the Church is the true one.⁴³ Finally he argues in favour of the resurrection of the body,⁴⁴ and, following Papias, the millennial reign of Christ on earth, both of which the Gnostics denied.⁴⁵

In confuting Gnosticism he develops a theology which is a speculative enlargement of the Rule of Faith, derived partly from the apologists, especially Justin, partly from the Scriptures—notably from the Epistles of Paul, whom Marcion had revived, the Fourth Gospel, and Ignatius. Distinctive is the conception of Christianity as a redemption—the culminating feature of the Gnostic systems—which is accomplished by the Logos-Christ. Scared by the Gnostic emanation theories,⁴⁶ he does not expatiate on the relation of God and the Logos, while asserting the distinction of the Father and the Son, and ascribing a certain subordination of the latter to the former.⁴⁷ At the same time, though He is “the only begotten,” “the first-born,”⁴⁸ the Son has always existed with the Father, and sometimes he seems to speak of them as if identical.⁴⁹ His absolute divinity is markedly emphasised. Nor does he say how the Spirit, to whom Deity is also attributed,⁵⁰ is related to the other two. He does not formulate a doctrine of the Trinity.

Against the Gnostics emphasis is laid on the humanity as well as the divinity of the incarnate Logos. The Son, being truly God, became truly man. “The Son of God was made the Son of man,”⁵¹ he insists against the varied Docetism of the Gnostics, though he does not, like Tertullian, explicitly formulate the later doctrine of the two natures—the divine and the human in Christ. The object of this real incarnation of the divine is to bring to completion God’s plan of the redemption of man⁵² who has become subject to death through the Fall. Christ (in Pauline terms) is the second Adam, through whom man regains what he has lost through the first Adam.⁵³ To this end, it was essential that the Son of God should become man, inasmuch as only thereby can man’s reunion with God, his attainment to immortal divine life, his deification be achieved. To deify human nature God, through His Son, must “adopt” it, and thereby impart to

⁴³ IV. xxxv. 1 f. (IV. xxi.-xxvi.).

⁴⁴ V. iii. 1 f.

⁴⁵ V. xxxii. 1 f.

⁴⁶ See, for instance, II. xli. 1 f. (II. xxviii. 1 f.).

⁴⁷ Harnack, “Hist. of Dog.,” ii. 265.

⁴⁸ III. xvii. 1 f. (III. xvi. 2 f.).

⁴⁹ IV. xlviii. 1 (IV. xxxi. 2); and see Harnack, “Hist. of Dog.,” ii. 264; Loofs, “Leitfaden,” 142.

⁵⁰ IV. xi. 5 (IV. vi. 7).

⁵¹ III. xvii. 2 (III. xvi. 3).

⁵² *Recapitulatio, ἀνακεφαλαιώσις*. III. xxxii. 2 (III. xxiii. 1), etc. It is equivalent to the restoration of man in accordance with his true destination as purposed by God.

⁵³ III. xviii. 1.

it the divine quality of immortality, incorruption. "How shall man be transformed into God unless God has been transformed into man?"⁵⁴ "Jesus Christ on account of His immense love became what we are in order that He might make us what He himself is."⁵⁵

This redemption is set forth partly from a speculative, partly from a Pauline-moralist point of view. From the speculative point of view, it is the means of attaining the perfection, incorruptibility,⁵⁶ immortality which man did not, at his creation, actually possess, but which he was capable of attaining, and was destined to attain, by the right use of his reason and his freedom, in which his likeness to God consists. By the misuse of these, in his disobedience to the Divine will, he became subject to death, incapable by himself of immortality, deification. Nevertheless, the Fall was not an unmixed calamity. It really tended to man's development. It interfered with, but did not abrogate his destination to incorruptibility, immortality. It enabled him to know by experience the effects of evil and to prefer the good in freely obeying God's commandments. What Christ does, as Redeemer, from this point of view, is to reunite man with God, and teach mankind how to attain incorruptibility, deification by the right use of his freedom in obedience to God. This redemption includes the body as well as the soul, for, unlike Paul, whom he misinterprets, he believes, with all these second-century theologians, that through Christ the body at the resurrection gains incorruptibility equally with the soul.

With this he inconsequently combines the Pauline view of the Fall as an act of sin, involving the penalty of death, and the work of Christ, from this point of view, is to procure salvation from sin and its effects, in which Adam's posterity shared. Christ became the second Adam, the representative of humanity, through whom man receives what he had lost through the first Adam. In working out this conception he reproduces to a certain extent the characteristic teaching of Paul, to whose Epistles he constantly appeals. The redeeming work of Christ, for instance, is set forth in Pauline terms. "He redeems us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh." "He propitiates the Father against whom we had sinned." "By His passion He reconciled us to God."⁵⁷ Salvation is the free gift of God; is due to the grace of God to those who cannot save themselves. Men are not justified by themselves. For him, as for Paul,

⁵⁴ IV. lii. 1 (IV. xxxiii. 4).

⁵⁵ Preface to V.

⁵⁶ ἀφθάρσια.

⁵⁷ V. i. 1; V. xvii. 1; III. xvi. 9.

Abraham was justified by faith.⁵⁸ On the other hand, his conception of salvation deviates, in essential points, from that of Paul. Sin, for instance, is not the radical corruption of human nature, as it was for Paul. It is not a crime to be expiated, but a weakness, a disease to be healed. Christ's death is not really a sacrifice, an expiation for sin. It is the means of man's ransom from the dominion of the devil, to whom he became enslaved through the Fall, not of the emancipation of the sinner from the sense of personal guilt. Faith is not the sole means of the sinner's justification, but, as in the case of Abraham, his justification is the result of both faith and works, by which the sinner can merit salvation. Whilst professing to reproduce the Pauline doctrine of salvation, Irenæus thus largely nullifies it in important essentials. What he presents in a Pauline guise is, in reality, the moralist conception of salvation, as it had developed in the Church of his time, which, whilst canonising the Pauline Epistles, was incapable of apprehending and rightly assimilating their distinctive soteriological teaching. His importance as a theologian lies in his elaboration of this moralism as an integral part of the traditional apostolic teaching, which became the predominant one in the Church, though, in the case of that of Paul at least, at the expense of historic insight and accuracy. Equally important the elaboration of the conception of the deification of man through Christ, which was to wield a moulding influence on later theological thought.⁵⁹

TERTULLIAN AND HIPPOLYTUS

Like Irenæus, Tertullian developed his distinctive theology in controversy with the Gnostics and also with the early Monarchians. Though he vigorously denounced philosophy, he had evidently profited by the study of it, and was strongly influenced by Stoicism, as his doctrine of the corporeality of God and the soul, for instance, shows. He makes use, too, of juristic terms, such as substance, person, property, status, with which, as a lawyer, he was familiar, in the elucidation of Christian ideas.⁶⁰ His im-

⁵⁸ V. xv. 1; IV. xxvii. 2; IV. v. 5; V. xxxii. 2.

⁵⁹ In more detail, Böhringer, "Die Kirche Christi," ii. (2nd ed., 1873); Werner, "Der Paulinismus des Irenæus," Texte und Unters., vi. (1889); Harnack, "Hist. of Dogma," ii.; Loofs, "Leitfaden" (4th ed., 1906); G.N. Bonwetsch, "Die Theologie des Irenæus" (1925); Hitchcock, "Irenæus of Lugdunum" (1914); A. Dufourcq, "Saint Irénée" (1926); McGiffert, "Hist. of Christ. Thought" (1932).

⁶⁰ Harnack, "Hist. of Dog.," ii. 257; iv. 121 f. Loofs ("Leitfaden," 155) minimises his use of specific juristic terms and thinks that such terms had come into common usage. See Macintosh, "Person of Christ," 155. Stier maintains that he took his terminology from philosophy, not from law. These terms were

portance, from the point of view of doctrinal development, lies in his use of a terminology, derived from philosophy and law, in which he anticipates the later formulation of the dogma of the Trinity.⁶¹ In the Tract against the Monarchian Praxeas, in particular, he applies such terms as substance, person, status, property, nature in working out and vindicating the Catholic belief in this doctrine. In opposition to Praxeas, he maintains the divine unity in a Trinity of persons who are of one and the same substance.

As we have seen, the point in dispute was whether the belief in one God did not necessitate the belief that Father, Son, and Spirit constitute the self-same person. No, contends Tertullian, if one in substance, condition, power, they are three in their distinctive being—three in order, form, aspect. "They are," in his own words, "three not in condition (*statu*), but in order (*gradu*), not in substance, but in form (*forma*), not in power, but in aspect (*specie*). Being of one substance,⁶² one in condition and power, they constitute one God under the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."⁶³ The three are "one in respect of their divine substance; but they are not one (person)."⁶⁴ Each person has, moreover, his distinctive "properties."⁶⁵ Nevertheless, though susceptible of number, there is no division or severance in the Godhead, but only an extension of the divine substance⁶⁶ from which Son and Spirit derive their being. The distinction of the persons is thus not incompatible with the oneness of God. God is a unity in a Trinity. The creed, in formulating belief in Father, Son, and Spirit, does not teach three Gods or invalidate the Divine unity, "the monarchy," in this sense, of the one God.

In proof of the plurality of the Divine Persons, he quotes a

in use in philosophy. "Die Gottes und Logoslehre Tertullians," 74 f. (1899). Tertullian also makes use of juristic terms in connection with the work as well as the Person of Christ—reward, satisfaction, merit. See Fisher, "Hist. of Christ. Doctrine," 92 (1897).

⁶¹ He is the first of the Latin Fathers to use the word Trinity of the threefold Deity of Father, Son, and Spirit. "De Pud.," 21.

⁶² *Unius substantiæ* (ὁμοούσιος).

⁶³ "Adv. Prax.," 2; ed. by Kroymann (1907); cf. "Apol.," 21.

⁶⁴ "Adv. Prax.," 25. He makes use of the term "*persona*" which is not exactly the equivalent of the modern "person," in speaking of the distinct existence of Son and Spirit. "Adv. Prax.," 11, 31. It is equivalent to the Greek τὸ πρόσωπον. But this term as expressing divine personality was subsequently discredited by its association with Sabellianism. Its place was taken by *ὑπόστασις* which at this time meant substance like *οὐσία*. For the various meanings of these terms, see Hatch, "Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church," 274 f.

⁶⁵ *Proprietatis*; *Ibid.*, 24, 25.

⁶⁶ "Apol.," 21.

number of passages from the Old Testament. "Let us make man in our own image and after our own likeness" (Gen. i. 26). "Behold the man is become as one of us" (Gen. iii. 22). "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee" (Ps. ii. 7). "Behold my son whom I have chosen, in whom I am well pleased" (Isaiah xlii. 1). To many such passages from the Old Testament he subjoins quotations from the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles of Paul.⁶⁷ From the Fourth Gospel he proves, too, the distinction of the Holy Spirit from both Father and Son.⁶⁸ But what of the monotheism of the Old Testament? The emphasis on the one God of the Old Testament, replies Tertullian, is due to the necessity of protesting against idolatry.⁶⁹

Specifically, the Son is the definite manifestation of the Divine Reason (Logos) which existed eternally in God in an impersonal form, but which took a personal form in the Son for the purpose of creation and redemption.⁷⁰ He is, in a sense, an emanation,⁷¹ though not in the Gnostic sense, since there is no severance of the Divine Being into the Son. Nevertheless, if there is no severance, there is subordination. "The Father," he says crudely, "is the entire substance, but the Son is a derivation and portion of the whole."⁷² The relation of the Father and the Son is like that of the sun and the ray, or the fountain and the river.⁷³ "Everything which proceeds from something else must needs be second to that from which it proceeds, without being, on that account, separated." "There was," he asserts, anticipating Arius, though not in the Arian sense, "a time when there was not a son."⁷⁴ Moreover, there will come a time when the Son will restore His sonship to the Father and be subject to Him.⁷⁵

By His incarnation, the Son assumed, in addition to His divine, a human nature or rather substance, so that He contained in Himself two natures—that of God and that of man, both equally real,⁷⁶ and both distinct. These are conjoined, not confused, in the one person Jesus, who was alike God and man.⁷⁷ In this he sets forth more explicitly than Irenæus the later doctrine of the two natures in one person, which was authoritatively decreed by the Council of Chalcedon.

⁶⁷ "Adv. Prax.," 11 f.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁹ c. 18.

⁷⁰ c. 5 f.

⁷⁴ "Adv. Hermogenem," c. 3. *Fuit tempus cum ei filius non fuit.* His doctrine is not really Arian, since he holds the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, and does not, like Arius, regard him as a creature.

⁷⁵ "Adv. Prax.," 4, quoting 1 Cor. xv. 24 f.

⁷⁶ "De Carne Christi."

⁷⁷ "Adv. Prax.," 27.

⁷¹ c. 8. *Prolatio, προβολή.*

⁷² c. 9. *Derivatio totius et portio.*

⁷³ c. 8; cf. "Apol.," 21.

Lastly his doctrine that the soul, which, though spiritual, is of a corporeal nature, as well as the body, is derived from our parents through generation⁷⁸ tended towards that of original sin,⁷⁹ though he does not explicitly formulate it. Equally important in its future formative influence the doctrine of the co-operation of grace received in baptism with meritorious works as a satisfaction to God for sin.⁸⁰

Whilst in the working out of his Trinitarian doctrine, he shows a nimble dialectic against Gnostics and Monarchians, his dialectic is at times more resourceful than convincing. The threefold personality in the one God perforce involves a tritheistic rather than a monotheistic conception of Deity, and cannot really be reasoned into harmony with a monotheistic one. Personality in any real sense involves individuality. However derived, it necessarily carries with it a numerical distinction, which Tertullian is fain to admit, as well as subordination. The contention that there is only a distinction but not a division in the Godhead does not satisfactorily meet this difficulty. If Jesus is Divine in the Tertullian sense of a distinct Divine personality, He must be regarded as a second, subordinate God, as Justin conceived Him to be. He thus practically teaches Tritheism—a supreme God and two subordinate gods—though he is firmly convinced that this teaching, in virtue of the unity of substance, accords with monotheism or “Monarchy.” Nevertheless, the reasoning, if unconvincing, was of great perspective significance, inasmuch as it contributed materially to the ultimate general acceptance of the metaphysical Trinitarian belief. His importance as a theologian lies, not in the cogency of this doctrine in itself, but in this contribution, which was amplified, and systematised by his disciple Novatian,⁸¹ and, with some modification, became the orthodox theology of the future.

Hippolytus appears to have been a disciple of Irenæus,⁸² and his theology betrays the influence of his distinctive thought as well as that of Tertullian and the apologists. Like these two Fathers, he develops his theological ideas in controversy with “the heretics” of his time, notably the Monarchian Noetus.

⁷⁸ Traducianism.

⁷⁹ “De Test. Animæ,” 3; “De Anima,” 41. See also Loofs, “Leitfaden,” 163, and Harnack, ii. 274.

⁸⁰ “De Anima,” 21; “De Pœn.,” 7, etc.

⁸¹ See Harnack (“Hist. of Dogma,” ii. 313 f.) on Novatian’s “De Trinitate.”

⁸² So Photius who, though a very late witness (he was Patriarch of Constantinople in the ninth century), evidently derived his information from a lost work of Hippolytus, the “Syntagma,” of which only some fragments remain. See Achelis, “Hippolytus-Studien, Texte und Unters.,” i. (1897).

He follows Tertullian, in making use of technical terms borrowed from philosophy and law.

For him, as for Tertullian, God is, at first, the alone existing. In Him everything existed potentially in His reason, wisdom, power, counsel.⁸³ Whilst the Logos in the sense of the Divine Reason eternally dwelt in Him,⁸⁴ He only became the Word in the personal sense—the personal expression of the ideas conceived in the Father's mind—for the purpose of creation. "Though eternal in His essence He was not eternal in His personality."⁸⁵ To this end He was begotten by God, and is "His first-born."⁸⁶ The invisible became the visible and is thus "Light of Light," "the light bringing word" or voice.⁸⁷ As the divinely begotten, he is "the substance of God" and is God.⁸⁸ In this respect He is unlike other being, which is created out of nothing⁸⁹ (as in Theophilus). Nevertheless there are not two Gods, as Noetus and others conclude, but two Persons,⁹⁰ or, including the Holy Spirit, three, in the one God. "For the Father is indeed one, but there are two Persons, because there is also the Son, and there is a third, the Holy Spirit." As in Tertullian, the relation of Son and Father is like that of the water from the fountain, the ray from the sun.⁹¹ The two or three Persons by no means justify, he insists, the charge of ditheism or tritheism which the Monarchians and Callistus bring against him,⁹² though there was some force in it. On the contrary, the unity of God cannot be rightly conceived or God adequately glorified without the Trinity⁹³ of Persons. At the same time, as in Tertullian, the subordination of the Son to the Father is emphasised and His creation seems to be implied.⁹⁴ "If God had willed to make thee (man) a God, He could have done so. Thou hast the example of the Logos."

The Son is not only the Agent of the creation. He is the Revealer of the Father and His will through the prophets, as he expounds at length in the "De Christo et Antichristo."⁹⁵ Not

⁸³ "Contra Noetum," 10.

⁸⁴ λόγος ἐνδιάθετος. "Philos.," x. 33.

⁸⁵ Dorner, "Hist. of Doctrine of the Person of Christ," ii. 88 (1862).

⁸⁶ πρωτότοκος. "Philos.," x. 33. "Contra Noetum," 10.

⁸⁷ "Noetum," 10; φῶς ἐκ φωτός.

⁸⁸ θεός, οὐσία ὑπάρχων θεοῦ. "Philos.," x. 33. He also uses the word δύναμις at times for substance.

⁸⁹ ἐξ οὐθενός. "Philos.," x. 33.

⁹⁰ πρόσωπα δὲ δύο, the personæ of Tertullian. "Noetum," 14.

⁹¹ "Noetum," 11.

⁹² "Philos.," ix. 11, 12.

⁹³ τριάς. "Noetum," 14.

⁹⁴ "Philos.," 33. Harnack thinks that there is "a remnant of polytheism" in his conception. "Hist. of Dog.," ii. 258.

⁹⁵ 2 f.; "Philos.," x. 33; "Noetum," 11-12.

only so. He himself became incarnate in the virgin, and it was only in the incarnation that His sonship became complete, that He became perfect Son.⁹⁶ The object of this incarnation is the redemption of man, and, as in Irenæus, it distinctively consists in the regeneration, the deification of man, the re-creation of humanity, the transformation of the old man into the new.⁹⁷ To this end it was essential that He should become man and live the real human life, and submit to suffering and death for man's sake. Only thus could man be made divine, immortal, incorruptible, God.⁹⁸ In this connection he emphasises, with Tertullian, the two natures in the incarnate Logos—His divine and His real, though sinless human nature.⁹⁹

ORIGEN

Origen was the first Catholic theologian to give a conjunct and comprehensive exposition of his theological views, in opposition to Gnostic and other heretics. This he did in the "De Principiis" or "First Principles."¹⁰⁰ It professes to be based on the teaching of the prophets of the Old Testament, Christ, and the apostles, as contained in the creed, of which he gives an extended version.¹ This teaching has been transmitted to the Church by "orderly succession from the apostles," and is to be regarded as the norm of right belief. "That only is to be accepted as truth which differs in no respect from ecclesiastical apostolic tradition."² Throughout the work the touchstone of truth is for him the testimony of the Old Testament and the apostolic writings. In this respect he is like Irenæus, a Biblical theologian. He implicitly accepts the mythology, angelology and demonology, as well as the didactic teaching of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures as the authoritative standard of truth, and constructs

⁹⁶ "Noetum," 15.

⁹⁷ "De Christo," 3, 4, 26. The ἀναπλάσσειν δι' ἑαυτοῦ τὸν Ἀδὰμ is equivalent to the ἀνακεφαλαιῶν of Irenæus.

⁹⁸ "De Christo," 4; "Philos.," 33, 34.

⁹⁹ A tract, "Concerning the Faith," ascribed to Hippolytus (German trans. by Bonwetsch, "Texte und Unters," i., 3rd series) is spurious.

¹⁰⁰ περὶ ἀρχῶν. Only parts of the third and fourth books are extant in the original Greek. The Latin translation of Rufinus, as we learn from Jerome ("Ep. ad Avitum"), is often misleading, inasmuch as he tampered with the original in the interest of the orthodoxy of his time. It may be used only as a general indication of his theological system, and this with caution. The standard edition is that of Koetschau, vol. v. of Origen's works in the series, "Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte" (1913). Other sources are his work against Celsus, on Prayer, and his commentaries.

¹ "Pref.," 4 f.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

his theological system on this basis. The apostles, he holds, expressed themselves with complete clearness on the essentials of the faith. At the same time, they left to their successors the task of examining the grounds on which it rests, elaborating its *raison d'être*. On this principle, there was thus ample scope for the exercise of the speculative faculty in the amplification of revealed truth, and of this liberty of speculation he makes full use. Though professing at every step of it to be guided by Scripture, his own highly developed speculative faculty, his wide knowledge of Philosophy, especially of Plato, and ancient lore, his fertile imagination materially contributed to it. The "De Principiis" is a grand synthesis on which the influence of Plato and the Gnostics, as well as the apostles and the apologists is writ large. It would probably have astonished the prophets and the apostles, though the capacity of the writer for finding hidden meanings in Scripture in proof of his speculative ideas, which he shares with his predecessors, if it astonishes the modern reader, would not have appeared strange to them. The work is, indeed, constantly reminiscent of the age in which it was written, with its strange medley of high thought and traditional beliefs and fancies, which his powerful and fertile brain worked into a congruent theological system, though this system is rather marred by frequent digressions and repetitions.

Our knowledge of God is only relative, for God is, in Himself, incomprehensible. "Whatever knowledge or understanding we can have of Him, we must necessarily believe that He is by many degrees far better than we can perceive Him to be." He is incorporeal, the absolute, uncompounded Spirit, or Reason, from whom all rationality, all existence is derived.³ An eternal, rational, absolute, ever-active unity,⁴ not a duality, is the starting-point of Origen's speculation. He ascribes to God such attributes as omniscience and omnipotence, though metaphysically he limits Him. He cannot, for instance, do what is contrary to His nature.⁵ Himself unbegotten, He eternally generates by His will the Son, who thus does not emanate from Him, in the sense of a division or separation, as the Gnostics taught.⁶ He is of the same substance⁷ and is one with God. At the same time He is a distinct hypostasis, "a second God,"⁸ as in Justin. Nevertheless the Son being one with God in thought and will, the two constitute

³ "De Prin.," i. 1, 4 f.

⁴ *ἐνός*.

⁵ "Contra Celsum," v. 23.

⁶ "De Prin.," i. 2, 6. *No prolatio, προβολή*.

⁷ In a Latin fragment of his commentary on Heb.

⁸ "Contra Celsum," v. 39; "Commentary on John," bk. VI., 38-39 (ed. Preuschen, 1903); "De Orat.," 15.

only one God, and the Christians are not ditheists. They do not worship two Gods, as Celsus avers.⁹ On the other hand, though of the same substance and eternally existent, the Son is subordinate to the Father.¹⁰ Being eternally generated, there was not a time when He was not.¹¹ He is known by a variety of names such as Word or Wisdom. He is the image of the invisible God, the Logos, the Revealer of the Eternal Reason. He was generated in order that God might be known by His creatures,¹² though it is possible to obtain a certain knowledge of Him from His works.¹³ As in Justin, the Logos manifests Himself in all rational beings.¹⁴

The Holy Spirit is also conceived as an eternal, divine hypostasis of the Godhead, and with Father and Son completes the divine unity of the Trinity.¹⁵ But He differs from the Son who, as Word or Reason, imparts Himself to all rational beings, in confining His presence to the saints, *i.e.*, to those who have turned to the higher life and seek to abide in God.¹⁶ His conception of this Trinity is, however, not definitely thought out, for he expresses a doubt as to the rank of the Spirit. He is not sure whether He was created or not, and makes Him subordinate to the Son, to whom He owes His existence.¹⁷ At all events, he did not hold the doctrine of the Trinity in its ultimate orthodox sense of the Godhead in three equal hypostases or Persons.

In addition to begetting the Son, God created through Him the spirit world, which also existed from eternity. If He had not produced such a spiritual world to exercise His power on, He would not be almighty, since His power would be in abeyance.¹⁸ Hence the assumption of the creation of a spiritual order of existence, preceding that of the material universe. It includes, besides the principalities and powers of the Pauline Epistles, the pre-existent rational spirits of men, for, unlike Tertullian, and following Plato, he believes in the pre-existence of the rational

⁹ "Contra Celsus," viii. 12.

¹⁰ "De Prin.," i. 2, 13; i. 3, 5. This subordination appears from the version of these passages given by Jerome, in contrast to Rufinus, who garbles and omits in the interest of later orthodoxy. Jerome, "Epistle to Avitus"; cf. Origen, "Comm. on John," ii. 2, where the Son is said to be *θεός*, but not *ὁ θεός* like the Father.

¹¹ "De Prin.," I. ii. 9; cf. I. ii. 2; iv. 28.

¹² *Ibid.*, I. ii. 6 f.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, I. iii. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, I. iii. 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *ῥημάς*, I. iii. 2; II. ii. 3; IV. i. 28 and 32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I. iii. 5.

¹⁷ "Comm. on John," bk. II., 10; "De Prin.," Pref. 4. Rufinus translated the phrase "whether created or not created" by "whether born or not born," *natus an imatus*. Jerome more correctly *factus an infactus*. "Ep. ad Avitum." Rufinus here tampered with the original for doctrinal reasons.

¹⁸ "De Prin.," I. ii. 10.

part of man as well as the angels and the demons. These spirits were created good and were incorporeal.¹⁹ But they differed from the Deity in the fact of their creation. They were not self-existent; they were subject to change. Nor were they absolutely good in essence or nature like the Godhead.²⁰ Moreover, being all alike endowed with a rational nature and free will, they might fall away from the good into evil in greater or less degree, according to the use of their freedom. They were all created capable of growth or development, of progress or degeneration in the one or the other.²¹ They were free to work out their own destiny. "It lies within ourselves and in our own actions to be happy and holy, or by sloth and negligence to fall into wickedness and perdition to such a degree that, through too great proficiency in wickedness, if anyone be negligent to such an extent, he may fall into that state that he will be made what is called an opposing power."²² In the exercise of their freedom some spirits—the Devil and his angels—fell into evil to such a degree that they became demons, antagonistic to God, in contrast to the good angels, who, in the exercise of their freedom, chose and strove to cleave to the good.²³ Others—the pre-existent spirits of human beings—likewise fell, though not to such an extent as the Devil and the demons. The fall of man thus takes place in the spirit world. For Origen the fall of Adam, man, in the story in Genesis is merely symbolic of the fall in his pre-existent state.²⁴ This moral defection in the spirit world is the cause of the creation through the Logos of the material universe, which, unlike the spiritual creation, is only temporary, and by which the spirits become corporeal in varying degree. These embodied spirits occupy a place in the material universe corresponding to their moral status. The angels occupy the higher regions and are embodied in the stars. Those who become human beings, and who are composed of spirit (reason), an animal soul, and a material body, the earth; the demons the air. Human beings are further defiled by their contact with a material body. They are besides exposed to the temptations of the Devil and the demons, whilst succoured by the angels, man being the object of the activity of both angels and demons.

But if sin in the spirit world is the cause of the creation of the

¹⁹ Rufinus obscures Origen's doctrine of the incorporeality of these spirits in accordance with the later doctrine of the sole incorporeality of the Godhead. He manipulated the original text in accordance with this later view.

²⁰ "De Prin.," I. v. 3, 5; I. viii. 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, I. vi. 3; II. ix. 6.

²² *Ibid.*, I. v. 5.

²³ *Ibid.*, I. viii. 3 f.

²⁴ "Contra Celsum," iv. 40.

universe, the object of it is redemption. The fall in the spirit world is not irrecoverable.²⁵ There will be an ultimate purification, restoration of spirits, and this is accomplished for man by means of the incarnation of the Logos. In the incarnation the Divine Logos, who could not unite Himself directly with a material body, assumes a human body by means of a pre-existent pure soul which alone, of all other souls, has preserved its original sinlessness and was, on account of its purity, destined for the purpose of the incarnation.²⁶ Unlike other souls, it has perfectly maintained fellowship with the Logos. It is this soul, united with a body, and capable of suffering—the human Jesus—which the Logos assumes. “The immortal God, the Logos, assumes a mortal body and a human soul.”²⁷ In virtue of this assumption, the human Jesus, thus united to the Logos, forms one Being with Him. “The soul and body of Jesus formed one Being with the Logos.”²⁸ The union thereby created between the Divine Logos or Son of God and the human Jesus is so complete that Jesus is called in Scripture both Son of God and Son of man.²⁹ At the same time, the eternal Divine Logos was not confined exclusively to the human Jesus, but continues, as before, to act in all pious souls.³⁰ The distinction between the Logos in Jesus and the Logos in others is one of degree, intensity.³¹ Nor was it the eternal, Divine Logos, but only the human Jesus that suffered and died on the Cross.³² Though the human body, in which He became incarnate, was real, it was not actually like an ordinary body, since the Logos was able to adapt it to any given situation, to give it at any moment the form required to produce the proper impression on men.³³ There is in this conception of the God-Man a trace of Gnostic-Docetic ideas. Whilst distinguishing between the human and the divine in the God-Man, Origen does not hold what became the orthodox doctrine of two distinct natures in one Person. What takes place in the incarnation is the gradual deification of the human Jesus, which becomes complete with the resurrection and the ascension. This deification is, in fact, its object and its effect. Through the deified Jesus, believers also ultimately attain this deified state.³⁴ Humanity attains what it failed to be through its moral declension. It is, however, not the

²⁵ “Contra Celsum,” I. vi. 2.

²⁶ “De Prin.,” II. vi. 3 f.; cf. Jerome, “Ad Avitum,” 6.

²⁷ “Contra Celsum,” iv. 15; cf. iii. 28, 29.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, ii. 9; vi. 47.

²⁹ “De Prin.,” II. vi. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, IV. i. 30.

³¹ *Ibid.*, i. 32-33; ii. 64; iii. 41.

³² *Ibid.*, iii. 28.

³¹ *Ibid.*, IV. i. 29.

³² “Contra Celsum,” iv. 15.

old body but a spiritual body that will rise³⁵ and be the worthy envelope of deified man. In this final restoration to God the whole human race and all created spirits—the demons included—will share. Origen is a whole-hearted universalist and optimist. Even the Devil will “tak’ a thoct and mend,” as Burns sanguinely expressed it. But for the demons, and also the persistently wicked among mankind, the process of restoration will be a lengthy one, and will involve a more or less lengthy period of suffering, purification in purgatory, suffering being conceived in a spiritual sense through the medium of conscience. When all are restored, the new heavens and the new earth will be inaugurated and continue till another defection in the spiritual world necessitates the renewed process of creation and redemption.³⁶

All this is, however, for the Christian Gnostic, who is alone capable of rising to an esoteric knowledge of the Christian redemption. For those who are capable only of faith—“the simple Christians”—this higher knowledge is not fitted. They must be content with accepting the Christian revelation according to their lower capacity—in an unphilosophical sense and as a matter of fact. From this lower point of view, redemption is a vicarious expiation of sin and a price paid by God to the Devil, in the knowledge that the Devil will be powerless to retain possession of the Divine Christ, and will thus have the worst of the bargain. God is, in fact, represented as perpetuating an act of deception in order to realise His purpose! The incongruity of such an action on the part of God does not seem to have been sensed either by the writer or his age, to which the deception of an enemy was quite legitimate. For the Christian Gnostic, on the other hand, redemption consists in the higher knowledge and life revealed and imparted by the Logos-Christ, and appropriated by the enlightened Christian. For him it is not the historic life of Christ, but its Gnostic meaning that is the main thing. Faith is merely the first step in the initiation of the believer into the divine mysteries. Christ is the Grand Mystagogue, the Illuminator, the Educator of humanity in the higher saving knowledge. It is what the Gnostic Christian thus learns of God and the higher life of the spirit through the Logos-Christ, as the Revealer of the Divine Reason, that is important.

In this vaulting synthesis the influence of Greek philosophy and Gnosticism is unmistakable. Like the Gnostics he acutely Hellenised Christianity, though, unlike them, he strove to harmonise it with the traditional Catholic faith of his time. Whilst

³⁵ “De Prin.” II. x. 1 f.

³⁶ So apparently according to Jerome, “Ad Avitum,” 5.

betraying the influence of Gnosticism, he attempted to combat it with its own weapon and to give Catholic Christianity a philosophic form, which should commend it, instead of Gnosticism, to the Greek mind. In so doing, he, like them, borrowed liberally from the science and philosophy of his age. "Platonism, Stoicism, the Gnostic theology of the second century, Aristotle even, as well as the Scriptures and Christian tradition, provided him with the elements of his system. His originality consists in the utilisation of all these elements, and in the skilful fusion which he knew how to make. From such disparate materials, in origin so diverse, he had the skill to compose a vast conception of the world, visible and invisible, of its *raison d'être* and its ends, which figures with honour among the systems to which the genius of philosophers and thinkers has given birth."³⁷

Whilst seeking, by an ingenious, if frequently forced exegesis and reasoning, to keep this philosophical Christianity within the limits of Scripture and creed, it is, in important points, at variance with current Catholic belief, and naturally tended to give rise to dissent and protest, even if Catholic belief had itself become to a certain extent speculative. Though himself conscious of the novelty and boldness of his own ideas, Origen held that they were in accord with both Scripture and tradition. He claimed liberty of speculation for himself, and was prepared to allow this liberty to other Catholic theologians, and even to waive his own opinion in deference to that of those who might adduce clearer proofs from Scripture in support of theirs.³⁸ As it turned out, other theologians, whilst themselves speculating, were not prepared to reciprocate this liberty. They would only allow Scripture and creed to be speculatively interpreted in the way that they deemed to be the orthodox way. Hence the long and acrid controversies, which already began in the third century, and continued till far into the sixth, when his teaching was finally condemned as heretical. Among the earlier of the long series of notable antagonists was Methodius, Bishop of Olympus in Lycia and later of Tyre,³⁹ at the beginning of the fourth century, who attacked his views of creation, the soul, free will, the resurrection.⁴⁰ On the other hand the Arians and their sympathisers, like Eusebius of Cæsarea, claimed him as their master. This Athanasius and

³⁷ De Faye, "Origène," iii. 287.

³⁸ "De Prin.," II. vi. 7.

³⁹ Jerome, "De Vir. Illust.," 83.

⁴⁰ See, for instance, his "Discourse on the Resurrection," in which he maintains the bodily resurrection, 3 f. Jahn, "Opera Methodii," trans. "Ante-Nicene Lib.," xiv. See also Harnack, "Hist. of Dog.," ii. 104 f.

Rufinus, among his orthodox champions, denied, whilst others of the orthodox party, like Jerome and Epiphanius, joined in the outcry against him as a heretic.⁴¹

⁴¹ See "Dictionary of Christian Biog.," art. "Origenistic Controversies." On Origen's theology, in detail, see the recent critical exposition of De Faye, "Origène," iii. (1928). De Faye gives a critical account of the more recent works on the subject (i. 221 f. ; ii. 216 f.). See also Harnack, "Hist. of Dogma," ii. 332 f., and the 4th ed. of the German original, i. 650 f. (1909) ; Loofs, "Leitfaden," 191 f. ; McGiffert's chapter on Origen, "History of Christian Thought," i. 208 f. (1932).

PART VI

CATHOLICISM AND CULTURE

CHAPTER I

CATHOLIC APOLOGETIC

It was not only in the increasing number of its adherents that Christianity had evinced its vitality as a growing movement in the second and third centuries. It had become a power in the intellectual life of the age. It was arousing interest, if also antagonism in the schools, and was making its influence felt among the cultured class. At the beginning of the fourth century it had long ceased to be what we might call a lower-class religion. It was in truth threatening the supremacy of the old culture as well as the old cults. Its progress in this respect was of superlative importance for the realisation of its universal mission. In order to win the ancient world for Christ it was not sufficient to displace the popular cults. It had to capture Greek culture, if it would really conquer the Græco-Roman world. This was the hardest part of its task as an aggressive religion, and the realisation of this task depended, in no small degree, on the attitude of its Catholic exponents towards the culture of the age.

THE APPEAL TO FAITH

In its earlier form as preached by Paul and his fellow-missionaries, Christianity is a Gospel of redemption which is to be received as an authoritative divine message. It makes an appeal to faith, not to reason, for Paul, especially after his failure at Athens, rejects philosophy, though there is a certain amount of philosophy in his teaching. He glories in the foolishness of the Gospel and demands the unquestioning submission of the intellect as well as the heart and the will. The Gospel is to win its way to supremacy in virtue of its divine authority and its inherent power as a religion of redemption. It is not a philosophy; is, in truth, the antagonist of philosophy in the Greek sense and is to be appropriated by faith, however foolish it may seem to the Greek intellect. Though, as we have seen, Paul's distinctive gospel of redemption did not maintain its hold on the developing Church,

his uncompromising attitude towards culture, his antithesis of faith and reason, his antagonism to philosophy remained, more or less, as a distinctive feature of Christian teaching. It is reflected in the apologetic writings of Aristides, the author of the Epistle to Diognetus, Tatian, Theophilus, Tertullian, for instance. For these writers, too, Christianity is an authoritative divine message, and philosophy is the enemy of faith. As thus proclaimed, it doubtless won many adherents among the uncultured mass and, to a certain extent, among the educated class. Such an authoritative divine message was fitted to satisfy the widespread craving of the age for a more definite knowledge of God, for the redemption of the soul from the power of evil, for an assured hope of eternal life. For this many were prepared to renounce reason and take refuge in Christian faith.

THE APPEAL TO REASON

On the other hand, such a message was by no means fitted to take an overmastering grip of the thought of the age. To denounce reason and harp exclusively on faith was to represent Christianity in the light of an irrational religion, and was the surest way to accentuate the prejudice of the Greek mind against it. Such a religion could hardly hope materially to influence the culture of Athens, or Ephesus, or Alexandria. Hence the counter-tendency, with the growing expansion of Christianity in the Græco-Roman world, to bring about an accommodation between it and culture, to make use of reason as the ally of faith in the interest of the Christian mission. The tendency is already apparent in the Fourth Gospel, and at an earlier time it had found expression in the work of Philo who, as we have seen, attempted to combine Greek philosophy and Jewish religion, to harmonise the reason of the Greeks with the faith of the Old Testament, and whose influence appears so markedly in the Epistle to the Hebrews. This tendency was continued by the more large-minded of the Christian apologists of the second and third centuries, by writers like Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, who had been philosophers before they became Christians, and Origen, who had been taught philosophy under Christian auspices. In contrast to the uncompromising attitude of a Tatian, or a Tertullian, these writers realised the necessity of adapting Christianity to its wider culture environment, of making it intelligible and acceptable to the Greek mind, and thus rendering it more effective as a missionary religion. They laid stress on the affinities rather than the antagonisms between it and Greek thought. Christianity,

they contended, is the true philosophy as well as the true religion. It completes rather than conflicts with philosophy, and embodies the sure and certain truth, of which philosophy is an imperfect anticipation. In thus representing Christianity they were not only following in the footsteps of Philo, in the case of Judaism, and the author of the Fourth Gospel. They were also following a distinct tendency of their own time which impelled the philosophers of the Stoic and neo-Platonist schools to ally philosophy with some form of religion superior to the popular cults.

ATTEMPTED ACCOMMODATION

The attempt to establish what we might call an *entente* between Christianity and culture was not necessarily a visionary one. Affinities between them existed, as we have noted, in the common ideas of the unity, transcendence, and perfection of God, of the Logos as the active expression of the Divine Mind, of a Divine Providence, of the immortality of the soul, of the spiritual and ethical nature of man. There was much that was of religious and moral value in Greek thought, and from the missionary and apologetic point of view it was exceedingly short-sighted to adopt an attitude of radical hostility to it, to denounce it as darkness and error, to limit all religious truth to the Jewish-Christian revelation. The more enlightened apologists were fain to modify this attitude in the interest of the Christian mission. They conceived a juster view of Greek thought as an effort to apprehend God and attain the higher life. They recognised in the development of the rational and moral nature an avenue to the knowledge of God and the higher life. In so doing they conceived, too, a larger view of God's presence and working in history as well as in the Jewish-Christian revelation. Along this avenue God had been revealing Himself to man and drawing man to Himself, had been working out the Divine plan in creation and history. In support of this view they made use of the Logos theory. The Logos, the Divine Reason, not only became incarnate in Christ. He had throughout the ages been present in the world, enlightening the human mind in the measure in which it was able to receive such enlightenment. Already in the prologue of the Fourth Gospel the Logos is the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The irenic apologists seized on this conception of the illuminating activity of the Logos in human thought and worked it out more fully in their effort to win philosophy for Christ. The knowledge of God and the divine life was not the exclusive possession of any individual or race. God through the Logos

has been present in the human mind and all truth is divine. Only, the truth has been more fully revealed through the Jewish prophets and in Christ, who has appeared as the incarnate Logos. In receiving Him as the supreme Teacher and the religion taught by Him as the true religion, the philosophers may, therefore, attain to the fullness of knowledge and life.

The apologetic and missionary value of this presentation of Christianity is evident. It could not fail to wield a certain attraction for the Greek mind. It met the widespread craving for a certain knowledge of God and an assured hope of eternal life. It was based on a large and reasonable view of man and his history. It freed Christianity from the undue depreciation of philosophy, the all too exclusive demand on faith, which could not fail to be a stumbling-block in the path of its progress in the world of Græco-Roman culture. In working it out, however, its exponents were in danger of representing Christianity in a false light, of transforming it from a thing of the spirit into a thing of the intellect. To take from Greek philosophy the Logos conception and assume its incarnation in Christ was a very questionable procedure from the historical point of view. It tended to put in the place of the historic Christ a philosophic abstraction, or at least to combine this abstraction with the historic reality, and thus distort or obscure it. It might, too, aggravate the tendency to substitute for the simpler, living Christianity of the pristine age a system of doctrines coloured by philosophical speculation to be received as the absolute truth, as an inherent part of the content of revelation, and thus distort and obscure Christianity itself. In a word, philosophy might come to pose as revelation, the theological system be regarded as the *sine qua non* of Christian belief, dogma in the speculative sense take the place of religion.

CULTURED CHRISTIAN TEACHERS AND CLERICS

This accommodation was facilitated by the fact that men of culture ere long appear among the exponents of Christianity. From the middle of the second century an increasing proportion of the teachers and clergy of the Church were more or less distinguished by their knowledge of Greek philosophy and literature. The function of the teacher, which long survived¹ that of the apostle and prophet, was now exercised by men like Justin and Ptolemæus at Rome,² and Pantænus,³ Clement, and Origen at

¹ See, on this point, Harnack, "Expansion," i. 444 f.

² Justin, "Apol." ii. 2, and the "Martyrium of Justin."

³ Of Pantænus Eusebius tells us that he had been educated in the Stoic philosophy, v. 10.

Alexandria, whose education fitted them to mediate between Christianity and culture by means of the instruction which they imparted to their pagan pupils. The office of teacher in the hands of such men became one of capital importance from this point of view, for it was through the Christian school, especially that of Alexandria, that philosophy obtained an ever-firmer footing in the Church. The teacher, as we know from the case of Origen, did not strictly belong to the order of the clergy. He was not ordained to his office like the bishop, presbyter, and deacon, and was ultimately by the end of the third century superseded by the clergy in the work of instruction, as the apostle and prophet had been at an earlier time. But though the office ultimately disappeared, it had borne permanent fruit in contributing to give to the Church an educated ministry. Already in the second half of the second century not a few of the clergy were distinguished by their knowledge as well as their zeal—bishops like Melito of Sardis, Apolinarius of Hierapolis, Theophilus of Antioch, and Irenæus, for instance. All four were men of considerable culture and wrote apologies for Christianity as well as vindications of the true faith against the heretics. Those of Melito, Apolinarius, and Irenæus have been lost, and we do not know what attitude they adopted towards Greek culture. The fragment of Melito's "Apology to Marcus Aurelius" preserved by Eusebius is, however, couched in a very reasonable strain.⁴ Of that of Apolinarius addressed to the same Emperor not even a fragment remains. The title of another effusion, "Against the Greeks,"⁵ which has also been lost, does not sound very promising, and we get the same impression of a lost work of Irenæus and of that of another writer Miltiades, of whose history nothing is otherwise known, which bear the same title.⁶ Though Irenæus is said to have been a pupil of Justin at Rome,⁷ his extant writings deal mainly with the Gnostic heresy, and it is as an ecclesiastical theologian, not as an interpreter of Christianity to the Greek mind in the spirit of a Justin and a Clement, that he occupies a distinctive position in ecclesiastical history. His pupil, Bishop Hippolytus, who exceeded his master in erudition, was evidently an earnest student of philosophy, of which he gives a preliminary review in his book against the Gnostics, and though he ascribes the Gnostic heresy to this source, he speaks of Greek thought in terms of respect, and at the close of it appeals to the Greeks in a sympathetic spirit to

⁴ Eusebius, iv. 26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, iv. 27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 17 and 26.

⁷ Hitchcock, "Irenæus," 27 f. (1914).

accept Christianity as the true and reasonable religion.⁸ Of the attitude of Theophilus his discourse addressed to Autolycus, which has been preserved entire, leaves us in no doubt. He has nothing but contempt for the philosophers and the same position is taken up by the presbyter Tertullian, who was nearly the contemporary of these writers. But the bitterest antagonist of philosophy among the clergy could not shake himself free from the influence of his mental and literary training, and the philosophic influence is amply apparent in his theology.

In the third century the number of cultured clerics increases and Eusebius has preserved the names of those who were ardent and sympathetic students of philosophy, and were trained in the school of Alexandria or were influenced by the teaching of Origen. Heraclas, for instance, one of Origen's converts, who became his assistant in the Alexandrian school and afterwards succeeded Demetrius as bishop, continued to wear his philosopher's mantle, even after he became a presbyter of the Alexandrian Church. His reputation as a master of both sacred and secular learning was almost as great as that of Origen himself.⁹ Another pupil, Dionysius, who became Heraclas' successor both as head of the school and as bishop, acquired widespread reputation as a critic and theologian as well as an ecclesiastic.¹⁰ Towards the end of the century the fame of the school was maintained by Pierius, whose learning earned him the title of "the younger Origen," and by Achilles, "the great Achilles," as Athanasius calls him, who also ultimately became bishop of the Alexandrian Church.¹¹ Among the eastern clergy, too, we hear of a number of bishops and presbyters who, in the spirit of Origen, combined the study of philosophy with that of theology. Eusebius specially emphasises the merits, in this respect, of the presbyters Dorotheus, Malchion, and Lucian of Antioch,¹² of the presbyter Pamphylus of Cæsarea, of Anatolius, Bishop of Laodicea in Syria and his successors Stephen and Theodotus, of Meletius, "bishop of churches in Pontus."¹³ Of Anatolius, for instance, he says that "he stood first among the ablest men of his time in learning and skill in Greek philosophy." His reputation was so widespread that he was invited by the citizens of Alexandria to establish a school of the Aristotelian philosophy in this city. Meletius was known among the learned of his day as "the honey of Attica," and Eusebius credits him

⁸ See the *Proemium* and the concluding chapters of the "Philosophoumena" or "Refutation of All Heresies."

⁹ *Ibid.*, vi. 3, 15, 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vi. 40 seq.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vii. 32.

¹² Eusebius, vii. 30, 32; ix. 6.

¹³ vii. 32.

with a knowledge which was encyclopædic in its range. Bishop Gregory of neo-Cæsarea in Pontus, the enthusiastic pupil of Origen, and Methodius of Tyre, a strenuous antagonist of Origen, were both distinguished scholars as well as theologians. To these we might add Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, about whose merits as a thinker and a man of culture Eusebius is silent, in view of his sinister reputation as a heretic.

The appeal on behalf of Christianity, made by those who were thus imbued with the spirit and ideas of Greek thought, could not fail to be far more effective in cultured circles than that of its simpler exponents of an earlier time. There is, in fact, explicit evidence that it was not without considerable practical effect. Already Justin could claim that Christianity counted among its adherents philosophers and soldiers as well as artisans and entirely uneducated people.¹⁴ His testimony is confirmed by Clement of Alexandria. "The word of our teacher," he says, "won not a few philosophers."¹⁵ Justin and Clement are themselves proof of the truth of the assertion, though in most cases the term philosopher must be taken in the more popular sense of one who knew something, or pretended to know something, of the teaching of the philosophers in the real sense. On the other hand, Origen, according to Eusebius, attracted to his lectures those who made the study of philosophy the vocation of their lives, and who showed their appreciation of his teaching by either dedicating their works to him or submitting them for his judgment.¹⁶ Ammonius Saccas, whose lectures Origen attended, was for a time a Christian, though, according to Porphyry, he ultimately renounced his Christian faith.¹⁷

ANTAGONISM OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

At the same time, it cannot be said that Christianity, while exerting an increasing influence on the cultured class in the wider sense, made much impression on the various schools of philosophy. On the whole, the attitude of philosophy, like that of the State, was in the second and third centuries a hostile one. For one thing its democratic tendency repelled rather than attracted the aristocratic instinct of the professional philosopher. A religion that on principle welcomed the slave and the outcast to its membership and knew no distinction, in this respect, between bond and free, wise and simple, was offensive, on social grounds,

¹⁴ "Apol.," ii. 10.

¹⁵ Strom., vi. 18.

¹⁶ vi. 18, 19.

¹⁷ Eusebius, vi. 19.

to the aristocracy of intellect as well as of rank and wealth. On political grounds, it might well seem to the conservative spirit, which dominated the schools as well as society, a dubious policy to encourage a movement that bade fair to revolutionise the old system on which the State rested. On intellectual grounds, it was by no means easy to win acquiescence in a religion that denied the philosophic belief in the eternity of matter and proclaimed the doctrine of its creation out of nothing, that emphasised such doctrines as those of the incarnation and of the resurrection of the body. The Greek philosopher and the Christian teacher might be at one in criticising and rejecting the crude beliefs of the popular cults. But to the philosopher, who regarded matter as the source of evil, the notion of a God who had been born and crucified and risen bodily from the dead must have seemed the height of irrationality. From the intellectual point of view Christianity, superficially judged, could only appear in the light of a new and vulgar superstition.

Hence the antagonism between it and the representatives of the various schools, some of whom not only rejected its claims, but attacked it with more or less hostility. The sceptic Lucian, for instance, ridiculed it as a mixture of credulity and superstition in his exposure of the pseudo-Christian Peregrinus, whom he represents, not too impartially, as a hypocritical impostor who deludes the guileless Christians into believing in him till they learn to know better.¹⁸ The cynic Crescens disputed with Justin at Rome and lectured against it, though, according to Justin, he had not taken the trouble to acquaint himself with it, and merely repeated the popular calumnies in order to ingratiate himself with the mob.¹⁹ Stoicism, as represented by Fronto,²⁰ Junius Rusticus, and Marcus Aurelius, was also hostile, despite the fact that the later Stoic teaching was, in some respects, akin to that of Jesus. The rhetorician Aristides denounced it as an illiterate and obscurantist pretension and contemptuously rebutted its claim to be a philosophy.²¹ The Platonist Celsus hated it on both political and philosophical grounds and launched against it his "True Discourse,"²² which Origen's reply has preserved for us. Lactantius wrote his "Divine Institutes" to repel the attacks of

¹⁸ See "Works of Lucian," translated by W. W. and F. G. Fowler, iv. 82-84; McCrindle's trans. of the "Death of Peregrinus," 5 f.; Dill, "Roman Society from Nero to Marcus," 353 f.

¹⁹ "Apol.," ii. 3.

²⁰ "Correspondence of Fronto," ii. 282 f. (ed. and trans. by Haines, Loeb Class. Lib., 1919-20); Marcus Aurelius, "Meditation," xi. 3 (Haines); Rusticus; Justin, "Martyrium."

²¹ "Orat.," 46, ed. Dindorf, ii. 307 f. (1829).

²² *λόγος ἀληθής*

Hierocles, to whom Christ was only an earlier edition of Apollonius of Tyana, and of other philosophical opponents both Greek and Latin.²³ Most significant of all, neo-Platonism, the mystic philosophic system, which Ammonius started and Plotinus developed in the third century, refused to abandon its elevated philosophical creed in its favour, and Porphyry entered the lists against it with the most formidable of all the criticism of it,²⁴ which the Christians not only tried to answer, but took care to destroy.

CHAPTER II

EARLY CATHOLIC PLEA FOR CHRISTIANITY

ARISTIDES AND THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

ARISTIDES introduced his plea for Christianity with a conception of God which is evidently derived from the Stoic-Platonic philosophy of his day. He is a monotheist and his monotheism is inspired by the contemplation of the orderly arrangement of the universe. Hence the conviction of a supreme controlling and directing Being who is eternal and self-sufficient, is above the things of sense, and needs neither sacrifice nor libation, though all men stand in need of Him.¹ This sublime truth the various races of men have failed to grasp and have given themselves over to the worship of the creature instead of the creator. This thesis he proceeds to demonstrate by an examination of the polytheistic religions of the Chaldæans, the Greeks, and the Egyptians in the conventional style of the Jewish-Christian polemic against polytheism. The Greek poets and philosophers in sharing this erroneous conception of Deity have materially contributed to perpetuate it by their assumption that, as the gods all alike share in the divine nature, the worship of many gods is entirely justifiable. This assumption is inadmissible and absurd. God is one in His essence and this essential oneness excludes a multiplicity of gods,

²³ v. 2-4. The title of Hierocles' work is *Λόγοι φιλαλήθεις πρὸς τοὺς Χριστιανούς*. Eusebius also wrote against him. See his "Reply," Greek text and trans. by Conybeare (Loeb Class. Lib.) appended to Philostratus, "Life of Apollonius," ii. 484 f.

²⁴ *Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν Λόγοι*. Harnack finds some fragments of it in the *Apocriticus* of Macarius Magnes, "Expansion," ii. 133 f.

¹ The same conception appears in the "Kerygma Petri," which Dobschütz thinks was written in the first quarter of the second century, of which only a few fragments remain; and which would appear to be the earliest extant apology of its kind. "Texte und Untersuchungen," xi. (1894).

who, moreover, show by the actions ascribed to them the greatest diversity of nature. Even the Jews, who acknowledge and worship the one God, have erred in the angel worship, which he wrongly ascribes to them, in their ritual observances, and especially in their rejection of the Son of God, through whom the Christians have attained to the knowledge of the truth. This knowledge, of which he gives a brief summary—evidently an early form of the Creed—is contained in the Christian faith in the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. For the evidence in support of it, he refers the reader to the Christian Scriptures, to which he owed his conversion. Though assuming the title of philosopher and deriving his conception of God from the current Stoic-Platonic philosophy, his knowledge of philosophy is of the popular kind. He appears to know nothing of the Logos doctrine and bases his faith on the Christian revelation, which alone contains the truth. Apart from the Christians, who constitute a new people and through whose prayers the world abides, there is no real religious knowledge—only darkness and error.²

The same note is characteristic of the Epistle to Diognetus, whose author is, however, a far more capable writer and reflects more effectively the spirit and power of apostolic Christianity. He is still more anti-Jewish, for to him the Jewish worship, barring its monotheism, is as ridiculous as that of the Gentiles. He is more contemptuous towards the philosophers,³ though he, too, shares the philosophic conception of God, and, unlike Aristides, knows the doctrine of the Logos, through whom God has created and maintains the world. Christianity is the great and unspeakable conception which God formed in His mind, which He communicated to His only begotten beloved Son alone, and which the Son has realised. As in the Fourth Gospel, the Son is the Logos in a personal sense, the divine Creator, Revealer, Redeemer. His coming is, too, a manifestation and a proof of the love of God. This coming, for which history is the long preparation, was delayed not because God had no interest in or care for man, but that man might become conscious of his sin and his moral helplessness, of spiritual death and the impossibility of attaining to life through his own works. At length He came, the holy, the righteous, the incorruptible, Immortal One, to take upon Himself the burden of man's iniquities and ransom him, who could not

² c. 16.

³ c. 8. In c. 11 he speaks of himself as a pupil of the apostles. This may merely mean that he derived his Christianity from their writings. The last two chapters are, however, probably a later addition. Harnack, "Chronologie," i. 513-515. Some critics have unjustifiably placed the epistle as late as the fourth century. Harnack, "Altchristliche Literatur," ii. 757-758.

otherwise be justified and redeemed from sin, death, corruption. In this redemption he participates by faith. It is only by faith that he can attain the true knowledge of God and the true ethical life, of which, as created in the image of God, he is capable.

This is Christianity as Paul and John proclaimed it, Christianity as a deliverance from sin and death, as a manifestation of the divine love, as a realisation of a new and higher life. It is an appeal to the heart rather than the intellect, couched in throbbing language and revealing a passionate love of souls, and it has all the force of personal religious conviction behind it.⁴

JUSTIN MARTYR

In Justin's presentation of Christianity, on the other hand, the note of rationality is very marked. This is due to the fact that he had not only interested himself in philosophy before he became a Christian, but retained his appreciation of it after his conversion. He has more right to be termed a philosopher than Aristides, though this is not saying much. While he shows considerable knowledge, his knowledge is rather superficial and sometimes inaccurate, and he is no profound or systematic student of Greek thought. He is better acquainted with the current textbook than with original writings, in spite of his quotations from Plato which have evidently been picked up at second hand, and he cannot be regarded as a master of Greek thought or an original thinker.⁵ As a writer he is greatly inferior to the author of the Epistle to Diognetus, and his lack of literary power and of the faculty of clear systematic thought is only too evident in his rambling, redundant style.⁶ From the literary and philosophical point of view the "Apology" is rather a feeble performance. Nevertheless it is the work of an interesting personality, and its attitude towards Greek culture is so distinctive

⁴ In c. 11 he indeed contends that Christianity is in accord with right reason. But this and the succeeding chapter strike a different tone from the rest and are evidently later additions.

⁵ On his slight knowledge of Philosophy, see Goodenough, "Theology of Justin Martyr," 57 f. (1923).

⁶ There is no foundation for Wehofer's contention that the "Apology" was written in the form of an oration. It makes the impression of being one of those productions which show no thought-out plan at all. Wehofer, "Die Apologie Justin's in Literarhistorischer Beziehung" (1897). What is termed the Second Apology is rather a supplement of the first. Eusebius (iv. 18) mentions a Second Apology, but this was a distinct work from the two we possess, from which Eusebius quotes as from one work (iv. 8). Donaldson, "Critical Hist. of Christ. Lit.," ii. 281; Harnack, "Chronologie," i. 274 f.; Blunt, "The Apologies of Justin Martyr," Introd., 44 f. Goodenough questions the supplement theory. "Theology of Justin Martyr," 85 f.

as almost to be original. What distinguishes it is a certain liberality of view which his conversion did not seriously affect, and fitted him to present Christianity in a persuasive, if not too forcible a fashion to the Greek mind.

Of the life of the writer we know very little. He tells us that he was a native of Flavia Neapolis in Samaria, the ancient Sichem, the modern Nablous,⁷ and implies that he was a Samaritan by birth.⁸ But he was evidently not a Samaritan by race. The name of his grandfather (Bacchius) was Greek, that of his father (Priscus) Latin, and he appears as a Gentile in his discussion with Trypho.⁹ He was probably born about the beginning of the second century, and if the opening chapters of the "Dialogue with Trypho" may be taken as biographical, resided and taught at Ephesus¹⁰ before his conversion, which evidently took place in mature manhood. From his youth he had, he tells us, been a seeker of the truth in philosophy, and had sought instruction from the representatives of the various schools—Stoic, Peripatetic, Pythagorean, Platonic. The Stoic left him as wise as he was before. The Peripatetic disgusted him at the outset by asking a fee; the Pythagorean by advising a preliminary examination. The Platonist greatly aided him in his quest and he became an enthusiastic follower of Plato's philosophy, and ultimately donning the philosopher's cloak, professed philosophy himself. One day he chances to enter into conversation with a venerable old man, who enters on a discussion concerning philosophy and its limitations, and at the close of it directs him to the writings of the prophets, who have proclaimed the certain truth about God and His son. Whether the incident is historical or not—the "Dialogue" looks like a set composition—it is evident from his emphasis on the Scriptures, *i.e.*, the Septuagint and the apostolic writings, as the chief source of the true knowledge of God, that he was led to adopt Christianity by his study of the Old Testament. It is equally evident that he was predisposed thereto by the heroism of the Christians in suffering persecution,¹¹ and by its ethical power as exemplified in the Christian life. In becoming a Christian, he did not, however, cease to be "a philosopher." He continued to wear the philosopher's mantle and devoted himself to the task of winning converts from the educated class to Christianity as the true philosophy. He became, in fact, a philosopher-evangelist¹² after the fashion of the itinerant

⁷ "Apol.," i. 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ii. 15.

⁹ See, for instance, "Dialogue," c. 43.

¹⁰ Eusebius, iv. 18.

¹¹ "Apol.," ii. 13.

¹² Eusebius, iv. 11.

exponents of the various intellectual and practical systems of the time.

In this capacity he spent a number of years at Rome—how many we cannot tell. His sojourn was not continuous, for he mentions at his trial that he was staying at Rome for the second time. Ephesus would be another centre of his intermittent activity as a Christian teacher, and probably other cities as well. He not only taught those who, like Tatian,¹³ resorted to hear him in his lodging at Rome.¹⁴ He took part in public discussions with hostile philosophers like the cynic Crescens,¹⁵ and wrote his "Apology" and his "Dialogue" on behalf of Christianity. He also wrote a work against the Gnostics, which he himself mentions, but which has been lost.¹⁶ The same fate has overtaken his numerous other productions, whilst a number of others, such as "The Discourse to the Greeks," have been erroneously ascribed to him. By his writings he acquired a great reputation among his fellow-Christians, and many succeeding Christian writers show the trace of his influence. As we have previously seen, he suffered martyrdom in the early part of the reign of Marcus.

As an apologist he felt the necessity of coming to an understanding with Greek thought. He saw that the method of emphasising the antagonism between faith and reason was apologetically bad, and that the denunciation of Greek thought as darkness and error was not only unjust and unenlightened, but tended to overlook the larger sphere of the Divine in history. He therefore set himself to present Christianity to the Greek mind in a less obscurantist form. This he does by means of the twofold conception of the Logos as the Divine Reason and the Incarnate Word. The Logos in the sense of the Divine Reason has been and is, in a certain measure, active in all men in virtue of their moral and rational nature. From the Stoics he takes the doctrine of the spermatik Logos,¹⁷ or seed of the Divine Reason implanted in all men, by which they are enabled, according to their ability, to know God and live a good life. The human mind has thus always been more or less the medium of the activity of the Divine Word or Reason. Socrates, for instance, in combating the errors of his time, who was persecuted for championing the truth, just as the Christians are to-day. So, too, Heraclitus, Plato, the Stoics, in

¹³ Irenæus, I. xxviii. 1.

¹⁴ "Martyrium," 2.

¹⁵ "Apol.," ii. 3.

¹⁶ "Apol.," i. 26. For notices of his work against Marcion and others, see Irenæus, IV. xi. 2 (IV. vi. 2); V. xxvi. 2; Tertullian, "Adv. Val.," 5.

¹⁷ λόγος σπερματικός. It was from the Stoic-Platonic philosophy rather than from Philo that Justin took his conception of the Logos. He does not seem to have read Philo. See Engelhardt, "Justin," 435 f. (1878).

as far as they apprehended the truth and lived reasonably, gave expression to the Divine Reason immanent in them. Whatever the philosophers and the lawgivers uttered well, they did so by means of this spermatic Reason. They were, in fact, Christians before Christianity, and all truth in philosophy belongs to the Christians.¹⁸ There is no necessary antagonism between the two. Christianity is the completion not the contradiction of philosophy. The only difference in the matter of the apprehension of the truth is one of degree. But there is a difference in this respect. For the philosophers have by no means fully grasped the truth, and have been guilty of error, because they were only very partially illumined by the Divine Word. The Christians, on the other hand, possess the whole Word, because the whole Word has become incarnate in Christ, the Son of God become flesh.¹⁹ Christianity is, therefore, the whole, the absolute truth, of which philosophy is but the imperfect anticipation. The proof of this is to be found in prophecy, and on prophecy, rather than on the miracles of Christ, which he only mentions in passing,²⁰ he lays the utmost stress. The prophets, through whom the Divine Word spoke in a special sense, foretold the virgin birth, the death, resurrection, and ascension of the incarnate Logos,²¹ and he strives to substantiate his contention by citing numerous passages from the prophetic writings, which he interprets in accordance with the conventional allegoric method.²² All that they have foretold of Christ has come to pass. An additional proof is the fact that all that Christ Himself foretold has come to pass.²³ Nor need the conception of the incarnate, suffering, risen and ascended Son of God be a stumbling-block to the Greeks, whose mythology contains so many tales of gods who have been born and died and ascended to heaven.²⁴ Moreover, Christianity evinces its truth by its moral effects. It is the highest ethic as well as the highest reason. It lays the greatest stress on the ethical character of God and on the necessity of living a life worthy of Him.²⁵ This he proves by apt quotations from the teaching of Christ²⁶—the greatest of teachers—and by the appeal to the Christian life. If, nevertheless, these considerations do not appear convincing to the Greek mind, it is because the evil demons, who have beguiled men into worshipping them under the form of the gods, do their utmost to distort the truth

¹⁸ "Apol.," ii. 13.

¹⁹ He does not use the term, *προφητικός*, but *μορφωθείς*, i. 5.

²⁰ i. 22; 48.

²¹ The Logos in the personal sense is the same as in the Fourth Gospel, though it is doubtful whether he derived it directly from this source. It was already part of the common Christian belief.

²² i. 30 *seq.*

²³ i. 12.

²⁴ i. 21, 22.

²⁵ i. 10.

²⁶ i. 15-18.

and prevent men from accepting it.²⁷ Justin is a great believer in demonology.

This large-minded recognition of philosophy as a partial revelation of the Divine and as a means to attain to truth and goodness contrasts most creditably with the short-sighted denunciation of it as darkness and error. It was better fitted to secure a hearing for the Christian message in the schools. Christ as the incarnate Divine Reason, Christianity as the highest reason and the highest life was an arresting message. At the same time, the argumentation in support of it was by no means irrefutable. To see in the prediction of the prophets the proof of the incarnation of the Logos Son of God is rather an artificial guarantee of its truth. It was, moreover, open to the objection that Christ Himself, though the greatest of religious teachers, did not claim to be the realisation of the Greek Logos theory, of which He had probably never heard. That Christianity was the highest reason was difficult to accept in the face of such beliefs as the virgin birth and the bodily resurrection,²⁸ for both of which Justin contends and which the philosophers were not disposed to admit. It certainly did not tend to induce acquiescence in these beliefs to appeal to the analogies in Greek mythologies in support of them. This was to appeal to the very superstition which both Justin and the philosophers condemned. Equally questionable the naïve assertion that Plato and the philosophers borrowed from Moses and the prophets.²⁹ For these and other reasons the "Apology" is far from being a self-evident demonstration of the truth of the Christian Logos theory or of Christianity as the highest reason, as Justin presents it. In this respect it could not make much impression on the philosophic mind. Its strongest features are its insistence on the rational and moral nature of man as the vehicle of the knowledge of God and goodness, and the emphasis on the superiority of Christianity to paganism on religious and ethical grounds.

In the "Dialogue with Trypho," which, though a discussion with a Jew, was also meant as a vindication of Christianity to the Greeks, he confines himself to the argument from revelation as contained in the Scriptures. To this end he enters into a long and wearisome examination of the sayings of the prophets. Unfortunately it is vitiated by the method of fanciful and arbitrary exegesis, which Trypho has no difficulty in exposing at times, and which failed to convince his opponent, though the disputants part on good terms. Whilst confining himself to the Scriptural argument, he gives proof on occasion, as

²⁷ i. 10, 14, etc.

²⁸ i. 19, etc.

²⁹ i. 59-60.

in the "Apology," of his large-mindedness. There is, in truth, little trace of doctrinal acrimony in him. Though he does not love a heretic³⁰ or an Epicurean and has certain absolute convictions, he is ready to argue with those who differ from him in a reasonable, persuasive spirit, and to regard all who accept Christ as Christians, whether they accept all his opinions about Him or not. In contrast to the more intolerant Gentile Christians, he expresses his readiness to communicate with Jewish Christians, even if they retain their attachment to Jewish practices.³¹ Nay, he will not insist on his own creed as the exclusive test of orthodoxy. If, for instance, Trypho cannot believe in a pre-existent Christ, who became man in a miraculous fashion, he will be content if he will only believe that Christ, though born the son of human parents, became the Christ by election of God.³²

ATHENAGORAS

Like Justin, Athenagoras treats the philosophers with respect. He also had been a student of philosophy before he became a Christian, though, like him, he seems to have acquired his knowledge from the compilations in vogue at the time he wrote,³³ which was towards the close of the reign of Marcus Aurelius.³⁴ Beyond the fact that he was a philosopher and wrote his "Plea" for the Christians and another work on the resurrection, nothing is known of his life. His education and his ability were superior to those of Justin, and he is by far the better writer, though, like him, he is not a profound or original thinker. Like him, too, he makes use of the Logos theory. The Logos is the active expression of the Eternal Mind and Reason and the Agent of Creation.³⁵ He does not, however, concern himself with his manifestation in history³⁶ and seems rather to evade the question of His incarnation, death, and resurrection. Even in his treatise on the resurrection, which he endeavours to render plausible by an elaborate argument, he does not mention that of Christ. Nor does he share Justin's

³⁰ See c. 35, where he condemns the Gnostic heresies without enlarging on them.

³¹ c. 47.

³² c. 48.

³³ Geffcken, "Zwei Griechische Apologeten," 171-176 (1907). Schwartz's edition in "Texte und Unters.," iv.

³⁴ At the time he wrote both Marcus and his son Commodus, to whom the "Plea (*πρὸς βέλαια*) for the Christians" is addressed, were Emperors, and as Commodus was nominated Emperor in 176, it must have been written between this year and 180.

³⁵ 4, 6, 10; *νοῦς καὶ λόγος*.

³⁶ He refers only to his ethical teaching which is exemplified so effectively in the Christian life.

view of His immanence as the Divine Reason in man, or in the prophets who were inspired, not by the Logos, but by the Divine Spirit, whose distinct existence he emphasises. Like him, however, he recognises that the philosophers have been actuated by a striving to seek and find the truth and that in this striving they were responding to a certain divine impulse. They were, in his own words, "moved thereto by sympathy with the divine afflatus."³⁷ He emphasises, too, the harmony between the philosophical and the Christian conception of God in the matter of the divine unity.³⁸ In their insistence on this cardinal truth, the Christians are at one with Euripides, the Pythagoreans, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. But the effort of the philosophers to apprehend God by way of reason has been very imperfect, for the true knowledge of God can only be derived from God. For him revelation is practically the only means by which we can attain to this knowledge. It has been given to the prophets who have been guided by the Spirit of God.³⁹ He refrains, however, from entangling himself in a forced and fanciful exegesis in order to prove this, whilst holding that this revelation is the highest reason, which it would be irrational to reject for mere human opinions.⁴⁰ At the same time, he shares Justin's artless belief in demonology and angelology.⁴¹

TATIAN

In contrast to Justin and Athenagoras, Tatian is the enemy of philosophy and Greek culture in general. He tells us that he was an Assyrian and that he had in the earlier part of his life studied philosophy⁴² and acquired great proficiency in it.⁴³ In reality as his "Oration to the Greeks" shows, he had but a superficial and confused knowledge of it and Greek literature, though he gives himself the airs of portentous learning. He knows the literary gossip about the Greek philosophers.⁴⁴ He has not really studied their works.⁴⁵ From Assyria he wandered as a rhetorician from city to city, picking up a superficial miscellaneous knowledge, as far as Rome,⁴⁶ where he became a hearer of Justin,⁴⁷ and, like him, incurred the hostility of the cynic Crescens.⁴⁸ As we have previously noted, he ascribes his conversion to the reading

³⁷ κινήθητες μὲν κατὰ συμπάθειαν τῆς παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ προῆς, 7.

³⁸ c. 6.

³⁹ c. 7.

⁴⁰ δόξαι ἀνθρωπίναι.

⁴¹ 24-27.

⁴² "Oratio," 42.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁴ 2, 3.

⁴⁵ Geffcken, 110-113.

⁴⁶ "Oratio," 35.

⁴⁷ Irenæus, I. xxvi. 1 (I. xxviii. 1).

⁴⁸ "Oratio," 19.

of "certain barbaric writings," *i.e.*, the Hebrew Scriptures. He was deeply impressed by the simplicity of their language, their intelligible account of the creation of the world, their prediction of future events, the excellence of their precepts, their monotheism. He shows also a knowledge of the apostolic writings. In the light of their divine truth, which frees the mind from the domination of the demons and restores to it the knowledge it has lost in consequence of error, he learned to recognise the pernicious character of philosophy, which leads to perdition.⁴⁹ After Justin's martyrdom, he returned to the East where, according to Irenæus, he fell into heresy of the Gnostic type and wrote his "Oration to the Greeks,"⁵⁰ which shows the trace of this heresy, and his "Diatessaron" or "Harmony of the Four Gospels,"⁵¹ and other works. He developed, too, a strongly ascetic tendency and became a leading man among the Encratites, who eschewed marriage and the use of wine and flesh, not, as Irenæus,⁵² who is followed by Eusebius, wrongly states, their founder. His "Oration" certainly shows Gnostic leanings, and as a reputed heretic he incurred the severe condemnation of Irenæus and other orthodox Fathers, who are not over charitable judges of opponents. He was, at all events, an extremist and an ill-balanced critic of men and systems, and things in general. He writes in the mood of the chronic grumbler and his antipathy to Greek culture is enhanced and embittered by his resentment at the Greek assumption of superiority to "the barbarian" race to which he belongs, though he had evidently received a Greek education. He ridicules the gods. He scoffs at the philosophers, both ancient and contemporary, who have pilfered from Moses what grains of distorted truth they have ever taught, and threatens them with hell-fire. He rails at everything Greek and Roman—at actors, pugilists, gladiators, at drugs and grammar, at logic and astrology—is thoroughly antipathetic towards the world in general, and holds, in short, everybody to be a fool but himself. The "Oration" is not devoid of a certain atrabilious cleverness. But it is a philippic rather than a vindication, and was certainly ill-fitted to make the

⁴⁹ "Oratio," 29.

⁵⁰ The Greek text is edited by Schwartz in vol. iv. of "Texte und Untersuchungen." Harnack thinks the date cannot be put later than 165 and may be as early as 155. "Chronologie," i. 284-289.

⁵¹ Eusebius, iv. 28. The "Diatessaron" (τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων εὐαγγέλιον) is not preserved, but it has been reconstructed by Zahn from an Armenian translation of Ephraem's commentary on it, and an old Latin "Harmony of the Gospels." An English version is given in the additional volume to the "Ante-Nicene Lib.," ed. by Menzies.

⁵² "Adv. Haer.," I. xxvi. 1 (I. xxviii. 1); iv. 29.

enemies of Christianity in the schools less hostile or fewer in number.

He, too, operates with the conception of the Logos, who was in God from eternity and is, by generation, the active creative power of God in a personal sense.⁵³ He, in turn, begat the world from created matter, angels, and man. As created by Him, man was capable of incorruptibility and immortality. But being endowed with free will, he lost both by the misuse of his will and came under the dominion of the demons, who, as in Justin and Athenagoras, are the Greek gods.⁵⁴ Thus the soul, which is not immortal by nature, has lost the pristine knowledge of God, and is liable to perish along with the body. It can only regain knowledge and immortality by seeking union with the Divine Spirit and living the higher or spiritual life.⁵⁵ To do this, it must repudiate the material, which hampers the spiritual life, and tends to draw it away from God and render it mortal. Through Christianity alone can it attain its true destiny, though the Christianity he represents is evidently of the Gnostic-ascetic type. It is especially through the teaching of the prophets, who have lived in union with the Divine Spirit, that its superiority to Greek thought and culture is patent. Greek philosophy which is full of fallacies and contradictions is as contemptible as Greek mythology. Apart from the Logos theory he knows nothing of the historic Christ, though like Athenagoras he quotes on occasion the Christian writings. The Logos is apparently the same as the Divine Spirit, through union with whom man regains what he has lost through the Fall.

THEOPHILUS

Like Tatian, Theophilus was converted to Christianity by reading the Hebrew Scriptures.⁵⁶ He shares his contempt for the philosophers whilst professing an extensive knowledge of philosophy and literature, which is, however, not deeper than that of his predecessors. His education, such as it was, was Greek. But it evidently did not go beyond the textbooks, and his learned airs do not conceal his essential shallowness and ignorance,⁵⁷ though he is usually represented as a man of deep and wide culture. According to Eusebius, he was the sixth Bishop of Antioch from the apostles,⁵⁸ and his episcopate began about the middle of the

⁵³ 5. *ἔργον πρωτόγονο τοῦ πατρὸς γίνεσθαι*. Schwartz's ed., "Texte und Unters.," iv.

⁵⁴ 7, 8, etc.

⁵⁵ 12, 13, 15.

⁵⁶ "Ad Autolycom," i. 14.

⁵⁷ Geffcken, 250-251.

⁵⁸ iv. 20.

reign of Marcus Aurelius.⁵⁹ From internal evidence, he must have written his "Apology" after the death of this Emperor, so that his episcopate extended into the reign of Commodus, and as Maximus, his successor at Antioch, became bishop between the years 189 and 192,⁶⁰ he must have lived till near the end of the reign of Commodus. Besides his "Apology" he wrote against heresy⁶¹ and a work on History.⁶²

His "Apology" was provoked by a discussion with his friend Autolykus, who was a pagan and had rebutted his arguments in favour of Christianity.⁶³ His thought is conventional, though he presents his case with considerable if ill-arranged eloquence. He is a rhetorician, if not a thinker. He repeats with little variation Tatian's depreciation of the philosophers, and like his predecessors makes use of the argument from prophecy and of the Logos theory. He emphasises in his grandiloquent style the revelation of God through His works, though this revelation can only come to the soul fitted to receive it.⁶⁴ Instead of thus learning to know God through His works, the poets and philosophers, inspired by demons, have lost themselves in a maze of error.⁶⁵ They contradict each other and even themselves. Their teachings are absurd, godless.⁶⁶ There is not a stray morsel of truth in their nonsense.⁶⁷ This is, however, too sweeping even for our rhetorician, and he is fain to contradict himself and admit that, after all, some grains of truth are to be found in their writings. But it is mixed with error, and what is true—for example their teaching on righteousness, judgment, and the punishment of evil—they have stolen from the prophets.⁶⁸ The prophets alone, who were inspired by the Spirit of God, and also the Sibyl, in whose favour he makes an exception and whose prophecies were received as Christian, have uttered the Divine Wisdom, as the fulfilment of their predictions shows.⁶⁹ Through them the Logos, who was generated for the purpose of creation and revelation, spoke. To him he explicitly applies the current philosophical distinction between the indwelling Logos or Reason of God and the manifested Logos or Word of God in creation and revelation, as in the

⁵⁹ Eusebius, "Chron.," 287 (ed. Fotheringham).

⁶⁰ Harnack places its date between 181 and 191. "Chronologie," i. 319-320.

⁶¹ Eusebius, iv. 24.

⁶² "Ad. Aut.," ii. 30. According to Jerome he was also the author of a commentary on the Four Gospels. But that which later passed under his name has been shown by Harnack to be spurious. "Texte und Untersuchungen," i., and see McGiffert's notes to Eusebius.

⁶³ i. 1; ii. 1.

⁶⁴ i. 2-8.

⁶⁵ ii. 8.

⁶⁶ ii. 47; iii. 3 *seq.*

⁶⁷ ii. 12.

⁶⁸ i. 14; ii. 8; ii. 37, 38.

⁶⁹ i. 14; ii. 9.

Fourth Gospel.⁷⁰ As the Agent of Creation He creates all things out of nothing⁷¹ and along with the Spirit forms a Divine Trinity.⁷² Like Tatian, he does not even mention the historic Christ, whilst referring to some of His sayings.⁷³ In proof of the infallibility of this revelation, the antiquity of which he emphasises,⁷⁴ and its superiority to the teaching of the philosophers, he contends not only that the predictions of the prophets have been fulfilled, but that they always agree with one another. Like Justin he handles the Scriptures in a very unscientific fashion and greatly weakens his argument by a fanciful exegesis.⁷⁵ He is more convincing in emphasising their ethical teaching.⁷⁶

TERTULLIAN

With certain qualifications, Tertullian is also the enemy of philosophy. But he is no mere superficial rhetorician like Tatian or Theophilus, or popular philosopher like Justin and Athenagoras. He is an original thinker and a powerful writer, though at times all too addicted to rhetoric.

He was born probably about 160 at Carthage, where his father was a centurion in the service of the proconsul, and where he received his education and spent most of his life.⁷⁷ He was born a pagan and in his youth was addicted to dissipation. He took delight in the brutalities of the arena, the vulgar buffooneries of the theatre,⁷⁸ which he afterwards denounced so severely. He was, he confesses, guilty of adultery,⁷⁹ and it was a pain to him to remember the life he had lived before he became a Christian.⁸⁰ He joined in ridiculing the doctrines of the Christians. "Formerly we also made fun of these things; we have come from your ranks; Christians are made, not born."⁸¹ At the same time, he was an ardent student of literature, law, philosophy (especially the

⁷⁰ λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός, ii. 10 and 22. As the indwelling Logos He is the *οὐὸς καὶ φῶρησις* of God, as in Athenagoras.

⁷¹ ii. 4 and 13.

⁷² *τριάς*. He is the first Greek writer to apply this term. But his thought on the subject is confused and obscure. He also uses the word "person" (*τὸ πρόσωπον*) of the Logos, who is said to have impersonated God in the Garden of Eden. He is not, however, to be understood as speaking of the Second Person of the Godhead in the later Trinitarian sense. He uses it in the sense of the actor who acts a part in the theatre; *ἀναλαμβάνειν τὸ πρόσωπον*, ii. 22.

⁷³ iii. 13, 14.

⁷⁵ ii. 11 *seq.*

⁷⁴ iii. 23, 26, 29.

⁷⁶ ii. 34, 35; iii. 9-12.

⁷⁷ Jerome, "De Viris Illustribus," 53; Noelfdechen, "Tertullian," 19-24 (1890).

⁷⁸ "Apol.," 15 (Latin text and trans. by Glover in Loeb Class. Lib.; trans. also in "Ante-Nicene Lib."); "Ad Nationes," i. 10.

⁷⁹ "De Res. Car.," 59.

⁸⁰ "De Spect.," 19.

⁸¹ "Apol.," 18.

Stoic philosophy), and even medicine.⁸² Of his extensive knowledge of all these his writings afford evidence, so that we hardly need Eusebius to assure us that "he was well versed in the laws of the Romans."⁸³ He wrote in Greek⁸⁴ as well as Latin, though his knowledge of Hebrew is apocryphal. Like Augustine, he seems to have followed for a time the profession of a rhetorician, and his works certainly reveal a master of declamation. Whether he actually practised as a pleader is doubted by some, though his "Apology" and others of his writings evince the pleader's skill, and the statement of Eusebius seems to imply that he was a jurist as well as a rhetorician.⁸⁵

His thirst for knowledge seems to have led him to examine the religion of the Christians, though exactly how and when he was converted we do not know. All that we can say with certainty is that he had evidently been a Christian several years before he wrote his "Apology" about the end of the second century.⁸⁶ Eusebius implies that he sojourned for a time in Rome, where he appears to have acquired a great reputation as pleader and rhetorician. He speaks of him as "one of those especially distinguished in Rome."⁸⁷ That he visited Rome we know from his own testimony,⁸⁸ and he is said to have also visited Greece. Ultimately he became a presbyter of the African Church,⁸⁹ and though he himself does not explicitly state the fact, he writes in some of his works as if he belonged to the clerical order.⁹⁰ In his conversion Christianity won a most strenuous and highly gifted defender and a personality of marked individuality. His fervid temperament and powerful intellect at once made themselves felt in attack and defence. He was fearless, uncompromising, pugnacious, irrepressible—ever making enemies and ever fighting them, pagans, Jews, heretics, and finally the Church itself, of which he was an office-bearer and from which he ultimately seceded. How he escaped martyrdom with so many enemies on his track is a mystery. He was the great extremist of his time, and yet he does not seem to have been seriously molested by the authorities. His independent, fervid temperament carried him over to the Montanists, when the Roman clergy, to whom the Bishop of Carthage probably appealed, sought to curb his fanatic puritanism and his insubordination.

⁸² "De Anima," 25.

⁸³ ii. 2.

⁸⁴ The "De Baptismo" was originally written in Greek, c. 15.

⁸⁵ The identification of him with the jurist Tertullian is only a hypothesis.

⁸⁶ Generally accepted date, 197.

⁸⁷ ii. 2.

⁸⁸ "De Cultu Fem.," i. 7.

⁸⁹ Jerome, "De Vir. Ill.," 53.

⁹⁰ "De Bap.," 17-18, for instance.

This at least seems to be the explanation of the words of Jerome, that he lapsed into Montanism by reason of the ill-will and insults of the Roman clergy, though, as we have seen, he was predisposed to join such a movement.⁹¹ He showed his resentment and his contempt for the growing pretensions of the Roman bishop (Callistus) by denouncing him as a usurper of powers that did not belong to him.⁹² Even with the Montanists he took to quarrelling and finished his pugnacious career, probably about 220, when the last of his works, the "De Pudicitia," appears to have been penned, as the head of a sect of his own (the Tertullianists). At any rate after this date the trace of his activity ceases.

He was a man of sterling character and fine instincts—unselfish, honest, truth-loving, austerely moral, ready to sacrifice everything for right and truth. He was, too, a man of sharp contrasts, because he was ill-balanced, incapable of moderation, and the two sides of him appear prominently in his writings. He is, for instance, restive under authority, but prone to dominate. Whilst depreciating reason in contrast to faith, he has the most absolute belief in his own convictions. A dogmatist himself, he is thoroughly intractable towards others of like nature, if they venture to differ from him. The least patient and the most choleric of men, he writes on patience. The champion of a painful self-control, he is, in this respect, often Satan reproving sin.

By his wide and real culture he was better fitted than any of his predecessors to be a sympathetic interpreter of Christianity to philosophical circles. Unfortunately his pugnacious and extremist temperament hindered him from making the best use of this advantage. He does not, indeed, take up an attitude of absolute hostility to philosophy or consistently harp on the antagonism between faith and reason. He is quick to recognise anything in philosophy that can support the claim he makes for Christianity as the absolute truth. Reason can conceive though it cannot fully comprehend God. From the works of God, it can, he holds with Theophilus, attain a knowledge of His existence. Man has, too, a certain innate consciousness of Him, and in this sense the soul is naturally Christian. He does not, in fact, need to become a Christian to be conscious of God. The soul has this by nature. The ruder, the more ignorant it is, the greater its instinctive consciousness of Him, as is proved by such involuntary ejaculations as "God grant it," "God bless you," "God willing," etc.⁹³ It has, too, instinctively the conviction of a life after death,

⁹¹ "De Vir. Ill.," 53.

⁹² "De Pudicitia," 13, 21.

⁹³ "Apol.," 17; "De Test. Animæ," 2.

a resurrection, and a future judgment. Its very nature teaches these things, and its teaching is from God, the soul being divine. It is a revelation which it is impossible to doubt.⁹⁴ Religion has thus a rational basis, and true religion, in this elementary sense, exists apart from any special revelation. But such a revelation is necessary to the full knowledge of God and His will. Like the Greek apologists he finds this in the writings of the Hebrew prophets, whose fulfilled predictions and miracles attest their divine message. Their antiquity and their majesty afford additional proof of the same fact. Judaism was, however, but a stage in Divine revelation which was completed by Christ, whom the prophets foretold, whom the Jews blindly rejected, and in whose historic appearance and activity he, unlike his predecessors, lays the greatest stress. Christ, the Son of God, is the Incarnate Logos, the Reason and Power of God, the Creator of the world, as Zeno and Cleanthes have also, in their own fashion, conceived. The incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ form the grand and distinctive content of Christianity. "We worship God through Christ." Even your gods, who are really demons, bear witness to Him, for they acknowledge the power of His name and obey the commands of His followers. You may mock at Christianity. But catch the demons joining in your mockery. They know better than that. Your very gods confirm our faith.⁹⁵

This revelation is, he holds with Justin, the completion of the knowledge of God already innate in, if imperfectly apprehended by, the human soul. Only, Justin appeals to the teaching of the philosophers in proof of this. Tertullian rather to the soul, unaffected by letters and learning, though he is ready to accept whatever confirmation he can find in philosophy of the truth of Christianity. Christianity is the full development of the germ of truth which we possess in virtue of our rational nature, and, as the complete revelation of what we otherwise only imperfectly know, enables our reason to attain to the truth. But in order that reason may thus attain the truth, faith also is indispensable. We must, in other words, believe that the facts are as Tertullian represents them. It was here that the difficulty with the philosophers came in. The philosophers might ask whether it was really the case that the rude, unlettered man could have a more certain knowledge of God than the trained intellect. They might, for instance, question the story of the virgin birth or the resurrection of the body, and ask how such stories could be in accord with reason. They might ask whether Tertullian's

⁹⁴ "De Test. Animæ," 5-6.

⁹⁵ "Apol.," 18-23.

demonology was not a mere hallucination. Tertullian retorts by fiercely turning on the philosophers and denouncing philosophy as the enemy of faith. Reason must, in fact, be subordinate, humbly subservient to faith, and if it refuses, it is the enemy to be destroyed. In this sense it is a false guide. It is, moreover, the teacher of heretics. "The philosophers are the patriarchs of heretics."⁹⁶ There can, therefore, be no alliance between them and the Christians. "What likeness is there between a philosopher and a Christian? What between a disciple of Greece and one of heaven?"⁹⁷ He quotes approvingly Paul's warning against philosophy and demands, with special reference to the connection between it and heresy, what Athens has to do with Jerusalem, what concord there can be between the academy and the Church? He will not allow his faith to be troubled by dialectics, faith being in these matters the supreme and all-sufficient arbiter.⁹⁸ Any Christian artisan knows more about God and manifests Him better than all the philosophers, with their absurd and contradictory doctrines and their lax morality. He descends to personal vilification. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the rest of them were apparently bad men as well as apostles of error. Whatever truth is in them, he repeats with the Greek apologists, they have borrowed from the prophets and corrupted.⁹⁹ He will accept philosophy as an ally as far as it is in accord with his faith. As soon as it threatens to become critical, he emphasises the antagonism between faith and reason and exalts faith at the expense of reason. "To know nothing against the rule of faith is to know everything."¹⁰⁰

(It was an unsatisfactory attitude to adopt. In the case of ignorant, credulous persons, it merely meant that ignorance and credulity were to lord it over reason and silence it with its dogmatism. Even Tertullian, who could not be charged with ignorance, was too extreme and uncritical to be allowed a monopoly of truth against the philosophers, merely because he might be a Christian. His treatment of Scripture, his belief in demonology, for instance, are too uncritical to allow him this privilege. His supercilious rodomontade was ill-fitted, in spite of his powerful dialectic and his fervid genius, to attract the enlightened seeker after truth, which after all must be in accord with the enlightened as well as the unenlightened reason. Needless to add that his criticism of philosophy in his angry moods is itself not above criticism, and that he is by no means fair or charitable in his judgment of its exponents.

⁹⁶ "Adv. Hermog.," 8.

⁹⁷ "Apol.," 46.

⁹⁸ "De Præscriptione Hær.," 7.

⁹⁹ "Apol.," 47.

¹⁰⁰ "De Præscriptione Hær.," 14.

MINUCIUS FELIX

The aim of Minucius Felix was evidently not to thrust a supercilious and defiant dogmatism on his cultured friends, but, in the spirit of a Justin, to gain them to Christianity as the true philosophy. He is himself a good example of the cultured Christian, for, like Tertullian, he was a widely read man and a skilful, if more moderate, writer. Like Tertullian, too, he was a native of Africa and a distinguished jurist who had settled at Rome. The two other figures in the "Dialogue" are also Africans by birth, one of them, Octavius, being a Christian who endeavours to win over the other, Cæcilius, a pagan, to Christianity. The critics are hopelessly divided as to the period of his life, some placing the date of the "Octavius" before, some after that of the "Apology" of Tertullian, to which it has such a close resemblance, and one critic even as late as the beginning of the fourth century. The last conjecture is inadmissible, since Lactantius, who wrote at this period, refers to the "Octavius" as an old work, and we may safely put its composition as far back as the first half of the third century. On the other hand, it cannot be earlier than the reign of Antoninus Pius, for it mentions the philosopher Fronto who flourished in this reign. It was most probably written in the first half of the third century, and in any case later than that of Tertullian.¹ The resemblances between the two works are so striking that one is tempted to conclude that either Tertullian borrowed from Minucius or Minucius from Tertullian. An alternative explanation is that both made use of a common source and that this was the "Apology" of Apollonius, as contained in his Acts. But this "Apology" is too slender to bear the weight of this hypothesis, and there seems to be no ground for the assertion of Jerome that Apollonius wrote a large apologetic work. This is evidently merely an assumption based on the fact that he defended Christianity at some length on the occasion of his hearing before the Senate.² The most probable explanation is that Minucius borrowed from Tertullian, whose mind was, besides, by far the more original. But his fellow-African is not his only source. He draws largely on the "De Natura Deorum" of Cicero and also imitates Cicero in his style. He owes something, too, to Seneca and Apuleius. He adopts, however, a much more conciliatory attitude towards the philosophers, in the earlier part of the "Dialogue" at least. The work is evidently addressed to

¹ See the remarks of Monceaux on this subject, i. 466 *seq.*

² Harnack, *Proceedings of Royal Prussian Academy* (1893); Conybeare, "Monuments of Early Christianity," 31; Monceaux, i. 470-472.

the cultured class with the object of convincing it not merely that Christianity should not be persecuted, but that it is worthy of being accepted by reasonable, educated people. Christianity, urges Octavius against Cæcilius, who, though a sceptic, believes in the advisability of respecting the old cult, is, in some of its characteristic doctrines, in accord with the teaching of the philosophers. He emphasises the fact that every one endowed with reason recognises in the universe the evidence of a supreme intelligence, its creator and governor. Design, providence is everywhere apparent and impresses on the mind the conviction of the one infinite intelligence called God. All the great thinkers of antiquity agree in recognising this in their own fashion.³ Their teaching is almost Christian in this respect. After the usual attack on the current polytheism and the refutation of the conventional calumnies against the Christians, he seeks to render credible the doctrine of a resurrection and a future judgment, which the philosophers also, in some measure, confirm. In the concluding chapter he, indeed, speaks rather slightly about some of them. But he prefers to emphasise their agreement with Christianity rather than their disagreement, and he adduces this as a sufficient reason why men of culture ought to accept it. This suffices at any rate to disarm the antichristian objections of the pagan Cæcilius, who, without material proof, is supposed to represent the opinions of the Stoic philosopher Fronto—also a native of Africa—and who closes the discussion by professing his adhesion to the Christian sect. This success is, however, achieved at the expense of ignoring what is most characteristic of Christianity. Minucius seeks to win converts from the cultured class by representing Christianity as merely a clearer and fuller statement of the conventional deism it already professes. He does not present it as a revelation by the Logos through the prophets and the historic Christ. He does not make use of the Logos theory or of the argument from prophecy, though he refers in passing to the writings of the prophets and knows the conventional assumption that the philosophers borrowed from them.⁴ He refers only indirectly to the historic Christ in refuting the charge that the Christians worship a crucified criminal and his cross,⁵ and appears intentionally to shun all questions of Christian doctrine. One would be tempted to infer that his Christianity was merely an enlightened type of the deism represented by the best thought of the philosophers, if he had not informed us at the end of the "Dialogue" that the discussion

³ 17-19. Latin text and trans. by Rendall in Loeb Class. Lib.

⁴ 33, 34.

⁵ 29.

would be continued for the further enlightenment of Cæcilius. At all events it was certainly his intention thus to represent Christianity for propagandist purposes among the educated class.

CHAPTER III

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

THE contrast to Tertullian is still more marked in Clement of Alexandria, who, with his teacher Pantænus and his pupil Origen, established the fame of the Alexandrian school and imparted to it its distinctive mediating character. They sought to assimilate what they deemed good in Greek thought in opposition to the self-sufficient Christians, who rejected all accommodation with it. In the syncretistic spirit of the age, they attempted to do within the Church what the Gnostics attempted to do outside it.¹

LIFE OF CLEMENT

Clement's early life as a seeker after truth resembles that of Justin. Born probably at Athens about the middle of the second century, he acquired an extensive knowledge of Greek literature, philosophy, and religion. Like Justin, he interested himself in the various philosophies, but, unlike him, his knowledge was not confined to the current compilations, though it seems to have been derived in part from this limited source. He had evidently read Plato, Homer, Hesiod, and other Greek writers. He later acquired a thorough knowledge of Philo's works, and of the Septuagint and the New Testament writings. Even discounting his indebtedness to the textbooks, he is no mere pretender to learning. The extent of his erudition may fairly be compared to that of Tertullian.² Like Justin, too, he failed to find in philosophy the permanent satisfaction of his quest for truth. Before his student days at Athens were finished, he had become the disciple of a Christian teacher, whose name he does not specify, and who is supposed by some to have been Athenagoras. He merely calls him an Ionian, who was the first of a number from whom, in the

¹ Harnack, "Hist. of Dogma," ii. 11.

² For a favourable estimate of his attainments against those who seek to belittle them, see Geffcken, who, whilst pointing out his limitations, acknowledges his first-hand knowledge of Plato and Philo. See also his latest biographers, De Faye, "Clément," 18 (1898); Patrick, "Clement," 26-30 (1914); and Tollinton, "Clement," 7-8 and 162-167 (1914). Also Bigg, "Christian Platonists of Alexandria" (1886).

course of his student wanderings, which he undertook for the purpose of enlarging his knowledge of the faith, he sought instruction. These wanderings took him to southern Italy (Magna Græcia), Syria, Palestine, and finally to Egypt. Strangely enough, he does not mention any of these additional teachers by name. He only gives their nationality, and one is tempted to conclude that "the Assyrian" may have been Tatian or Bardaisan. Not that they were men of little account, for he acknowledges his deep indebtedness to them and professes in his "Stromateis" merely to be repeating what he had learned from them. There can be no doubt, at all events, that the one that attracted him to Egypt was Pantænus, to whom he refers as "the Sicilian bee"—the native of Sicily who so sedulously gathered knowledge from "the prophetic and apostolic meadow," and to whom he owed most. Him, he says, he hunted out in his concealment in Egypt,³ and Eusebius, less mystifying, expressly tells us that he was a pupil of Pantænus at Alexandria,⁴ who himself had passed from Stoicism to Christianity. Like Justin he was drawn to Christianity by both intellectual and religious motives. He found in it the clearer knowledge of God, the fuller realisation of the higher life, which as a student he ardently sought in the philosophy and the mystery religions of his native Greece. His writings amply reveal the trace of this double interest, and his knowledge of the Eleusinian mysteries is so intimate that the conjecture that he had been initiated into these mysteries is a highly probable one. His conversion was, however, not of the convulsive sort, and in this respect, too, he bears a striking resemblance to Justin. It is merely the last stage of his intellectual and moral development. He found in Christianity the completion of his quest for the highest truth and the highest life, and this fact is radiantly reflected in his conception of Christianity and in the mediating attitude he adopted towards Greek thought. In becoming a Christian, he did not cease to be a philosopher or renounce philosophy as unmitigated error. Like Justin, though in a far more intensive degree and from a larger principle, he sought to ally what was valuable⁵ in philosophy with Christianity. He did not do so merely from apologetic motives, but from a deliberate conception, which with him is fundamental and not merely of apologetic value, of the divine in human thought and history.

³ Strom., i. 1.

⁴ v. 10, 11.

⁵ He indeed discriminates between the various schools. He rejects *in toto* the doctrines of Epicurus, and in part those of the Stoics. By philosophy he understands what is best in Greek thought, especially the teaching of Plato and the neo-Pythagoreans. On this point, see De Faye, "Clément," 151 f.

After being the pupil of Pantænus, probably from about 180, he became his assistant and probably his successor as teacher in the Alexandrian school and a presbyter of the Alexandrian Church.⁶ This office he continued to hold till the year 202 when, apparently owing to the persecution under Septimius Severus, he retired from Alexandria, leaving as his successor his famous pupil Origen.⁷ Some years later we hear of him sojourning at Jerusalem with Bishop Alexander, his old pupil, and still later at Antioch, to which church Alexander warmly commended him.⁸ He apparently renewed his wandering life in his later years, but as a teacher,⁹ not as a learner. In a subsequent letter to Origen Alexander mentions his death and touchingly commemorates his character and work.¹⁰ What manner of man he was, how and what he taught, we can form a more exact idea from the writings which have survived. He was evidently a very winning personality, with an open eye for the good in men and systems. In breadth of mind and sympathy, in gentleness of temper, the complete antithesis of the fiery doctrinaire of the type of a Tertullian! Though very inferior to him in verve and power as a writer, apt to be burdened and overwhelmed with his knowledge, to be discursive, too, and garrulous, he was yet capable of inspiring his pupils with his ideas, as well as with affection for himself, and original enough to form the distinctive school which Origen and his pupils developed.

Though a voluminous writer,¹¹ only four of his works have survived in their entirety—the “Exhortation to the Greeks,”¹² “The Instructor,”¹³ the “Miscellanies,”¹⁴ and the “Quis Dives Salvetur.”¹⁵ Happily the first three contain what is distinctive in his interpretation of Christianity as the true religion, as the higher life, and as the perfect knowledge or gnosis. Whether they were written in the order mentioned is a much disputed question. They seem at all events to represent stages of his instruction as a teacher and of his own experience as a Christian.¹⁶

⁶ Eusebius, v. 11; vi. 6; vi. 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vi. 3, 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, vi. 11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, vi. 11.

¹⁴ *Στρωματεῖς*, literally canvas bags containing bedclothes, applied in a literary sense of a collection of thoughts and observations.

¹⁵ *Τίς ὁ Σωζόμενος Παύσιος*. These works are edited by Stählin, 1905-1909. They are translated in the “Ante-Nicene Lib.” The “Exhortation” and the “Quis Dives” in Loeb Class. Lib., with Greek text. Text of the “Quis Dives” ed. by Barnard in “Texts and Studies,” v.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the question, see the recent works of Patrick and Tollinton, who both incline to favour the view that they were written chronologically in the order given against those who would place the “Stromateis” in part or in whole before “The Instructor.”

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vi. 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vi. 13.

¹² *λόγος προτροπτικὸς πρὸς Ἕλληνας*.

¹³ *ὁ παιδαγωγός*.

" THE EXHORTATION "

The "Exhortation" is not an apology in the usual sense of a defence of Christianity against the charges of its enemies. Its aim is not to defend Christianity, but more particularly to commend it to the educated Greeks. The better to do so he starts with a lengthy indictment of polytheism (including the Greek mystery religions) in the conventional manner, but with, at times, rather prurient details, derived from a wide reading and, evidently in addition, his own personal experience. The fellowship with heaven originally implanted in man has thus been darkened by ignorance and beastly superstition, which have imagined a great variety of gods who are really demons in disguise.¹⁷ This thesis he elaborates in conventional style in order to prove that polytheism is an immoral travesty of the divine. Like the other apologists, he will have no compromise with the accursed thing, and will allow it no religious value at all. He, too, only sees the lower vulgar side of it, and strives hard to quicken the revulsion of serious minds from it. He takes no account whatever of the religious feeling and the aspiration for a higher life which the mystery cults undoubtedly contributed in their own way to nurture in earnest souls. He certainly adduces some damaging and even damnable facts. But he ignores the better side of Greek religious life, and does not even know that there is a better side. Even for the religious teaching of many of the philosophers, including that of Aristotle and the Stoics, he has nothing but contempt, though he admits that it has "a dream of truth," and makes an exception in favour of Plato, who has at least touched the surface of the truth, of Antisthenes, Xenophon, Cleanthes, the Pythagoreans, the Sibyl, Euripides and others of the poets. In virtue of a certain divine effluence, or inspiration, these have, even if reluctantly, recognised the one eternal God, though Plato in particular has borrowed from Moses. It is from the prophets and apostles, and especially from Christ, that we alone learn the full truth. Unlike Justin, however, he does not emphasise the power of prediction on the part of the prophets as the evidence of this divine message. Nor does he indulge in fanciful exegesis to prove their testimony to Christ. He lays stress on their ethical monotheism and on the historic revelation of the Creator-Logos, the Divine Teacher, who spoke through the prophets, became incarnate in Christ, as in the Fourth Gospel, and Himself teaches us the truth and enables us to attain everlasting life, salvation

¹⁷ 2, 3, 4.

from judgment and wrath. In this part of his "Exhortation"¹⁸ he emphasises the fatherly love of God in Christ, and urges faith in Him in the emotional, experimental tone of the "Epistle to Diognetus," whose author Lightfoot has ventured to identify with Pantænus, his own teacher. Like him, he shows the marked influence of the Gospel according to Paul and John. Since, therefore, the Word has come from heaven, we need no longer go to Athens and the rest of Greece, or to Ionia in our search for the truth. The Word is the Teacher, whose message of salvation has superseded all others who only guessed at the truth, and whose domain is the whole world. And who is He, this Christ, this Word? The Word of truth and incorruption that regenerates man by bringing him back to the truth, that urges to salvation, that destroys death, that builds up the temple of God in men so that God may take up His abode in them.

"THE INSTRUCTOR"

The function of the Word is not only to exhort men to receive the truth and thus attain salvation. It is also to train them in the higher life, of which faith in Him is the genesis. Hence "The Instructor,"¹⁹ which is a rather prolix and tedious exposition of how the Christian converts—men and women alike—are to realise the higher life in the Christian sense, under the instruction of the Word. The Word, Himself sinless, God in man, is the Christian ideal, which the Christian must strive to realise, even if necessarily imperfectly.²⁰ Man is God's workmanship, made in His image, and in the incarnate Word we have the model of what he should be. In becoming Christians, they have become children of God to be taught by Him. They are, however, not children in the sense that their education is of a childish or imperfect character, as the Gnostics assert. By their faith and baptism they are regenerated from sin, illuminated by the light of God. They are already perfect, immortal, already emancipated from sin and death. In this matter faith makes all Christians alike, raises all to the same equality before God, the same fellowship with Him. There is no distinction here between Gnostics and psychics. All have become a new, a holy people, have put off the old man and put on the new, are alike children, sons of God. But though faith and baptism work this change of condition, the perfect life is not actually attained in this. And here the need of instruction, training comes in. This is a gradual process which the Word carries out. This He did for the Jews, the ancient people

¹⁸ 8-12.

¹⁹ i. 1.

²⁰ i. 2.

of God, by the discipline of the law and by prophecy. This he does, in His own person as incarnate God, for the new people, who embrace the whole of humanity and are no longer under the law, but under grace, though even the law in its own fashion was "ancient grace."²¹ Here again the Gnostics err in assuming that the Just God, the God of the law and the prophets, is not the Good God, the God of the new dispensation. They are the same, the one God, for in the training in the higher life God, through the Word, makes use of severity as well as goodness, fear as well as love, threatening as well as persuasion.²² In this way He accomplishes the training of His children to be truly the image and likeness of God, which He Himself exemplified in His life as man. Thus is the Christian assimilated to God by participation in the highest ethical life.²³ And this life is also the truly rational life, because it realises best the highest reason, virtue being, as the philosophers often also teach, right reason, vice irrational.²⁴ In other words, Christianity is the highest practical philosophy.

Divested of its prolixity, its mysticism, its mixed metaphors, this is the Christian ethic which, in the first book of "The Instructor," Clement substitutes for the pagan moral ideal and strives to implant in the hearts of his pupils. It bears trace of the influence of the experience of the mystery religions, which he brought over into his Christianity, whilst permeated with the moral inspiration of the Incarnate Logos, the divine personality as reflected in the Scriptures and in Christ. In the two remaining books he proceeds to apply it in a still more tedious fashion to the common life of a great city, with its manifold dangers to Christian morality. He treats, with all too much detail, of how the Christian is to eat, drink, banquet, walk, dress, shave, sleep, etc. He has something to say even on shoes as well as jewels and other ornaments, on the use of the bath and on cosmetics, on effeminate men as well as immoral women, on the amusements of the theatre and the arena, etc. There was certainly room for the message of the practical moralist, charged with the education of the young in a city where luxury and vice were only too much in evidence. Much of what he says is reasonable and salutary. Some of it is trivial and smacks of the formalist, whilst all of it throws an interesting light on the social life of the age.

THE "STROMATEIS."

In the "Stromateis" he introduces his converts to Christianity as the perfect knowledge or gnosis. The Word teaches as well

²¹ i. 7.

²² i. 8, 9, 10.

²³ i. 12.

²⁴ i. 13.

as exhorts and trains, and in this work he attempts to set forth this teaching in its higher or Gnostic aspect. It shows the influence both of philosophy and the Gnostic movement, which the ecclesiastical theologians were striving to refute as a travesty of Christianity. In opposition to them he frankly accepts the Gnostic principle of Christianity as a higher knowledge vouchsafed to the enlightened Christian, whilst rejecting its extravagances and errors, and seeking to engraft it on the orthodox tradition. He recognises, too, philosophy as a revelation of truth far more unreservedly than in the "Exhortation," and seeks to combine it with the Christian revelation. In attempting this synthesis, he shows a larger conception of the divine in human thought and history than that which confined both to the Christian revelation, and not only combated Gnosticism, but decried philosophy as darkness and error and the mother of heresy, and emphasised the Christian tradition as the only true knowledge. He seeks to meet the Greek striving for a rational knowledge of God by presenting Christianity to the Greek mind in a higher form than that of a faith based on authority, whilst acknowledging this authority. He combines rather than disjoins faith and reason.

He had considerable doubt as to the advisability of publishing the "Stromateis." Its standpoint was new and likely to arouse the apprehension and even the hostility of those who professed the faith in its traditional form. Both Gnosticism and philosophy were in bad odour with the ecclesiastical theologian. This is at bottom the point that troubles him most in the lengthy preface in which he gives his reasons for undertaking the work.²⁵ He is in the anxious position of one who is breaking new ground in theology, and knows that he is very liable to be misunderstood and stir prejudice. His motives at any rate were of the highest, and he resolved to brave the antagonism of the votaries of an exclusive and unquestioning faith (the orthodoxists, as he calls them), and perform what he esteemed his duty as a teacher. Fortunately for him, the school was not yet under ecclesiastical control. He was a cautious man, however, and intentionally seeks to mystify his meaning,²⁶ after the fashion of the Gnostic secret or esoteric teaching, though his general views are clear enough. He writes not for the simple Christian, but for the Christian Gnostic in the right sense of the term Gnostic, who can see truth through the veil.

²⁵ "Strom.," i. 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, i. 1-2.

DIVINE GIFT AND FUNCTION OF PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy, he contends, was a divine gift to the Greeks, though some have calumniated it.²⁷ By philosophy he does not mean any particular system, but the truth contained in the various philosophies—philosophy in the eclectic sense.²⁸ Like nuts, their teaching is not all eatable. The arts even are from God and show “God’s manifold wisdom.”²⁹ God is the cause of all good things and among His gifts is philosophy.³⁰ It is the covenant peculiar to them that God made with the Greeks. In spite of its errors, the truth in it is from God.³¹ The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. He is a strong believer in Providence, which implies the idea of man’s history as a revelation of God’s working. Philosophy was to the Greeks a training in righteousness and, in making man virtuous, it is a work of God.³² It is part of the divine plan, the divine education of man. It was, too, a preparation for Christianity. As the law was for the Hebrews a schoolmaster to Christ, so was philosophy for the Greeks.³³ Truth is one and into it, as into a perennial river, flow streams from all sides. He quotes Philo in testimony of the utility of philosophy to theology, and his attitude towards it was evidently materially influenced by his writings.³⁴ It enables us to comprehend the content of faith and thus affords an invaluable training.³⁵ In its doctrine of Providence and a future life, it teaches Christian theology. Christianity itself is a philosophy. Ignorance is not necessarily an adjunct of faith. Paul, he holds, rather venturesomely, does not condemn philosophy in itself, but only the Epicurean variety of it, which disbelieves in Providence and deifies pleasure.³⁶ All the philosophic schools, both Greek and barbarian, contain some truth, for all have been illumined by Him who is the Light, the Divine Word. It is a fragment of the eternal truth, which we find complete in the perfect Word, who is the truth.³⁷ It is, in this respect, very inferior in the extent of its knowledge of God, in certainty and power to Christianity. In proof thereof he examines the Jewish revelation, emphasises, like his predecessors, its far higher antiquity and the superiority of the Mosaic law, from which Plato borrowed, and concludes that in divine things the Greeks are as children compared with the Hebrews.³⁸ Thus philosophy must be supplemented by revelation in order that we may attain to the true knowledge, gnosis, though the Christian Gnostic will make use of it in his quest of the higher knowledge.³⁹

27 i. 2.

28 i. 7.

29 i. 4.

30 vi. 8.

31 vi. 8.

32 vi. 17.

33 i. 5.

34 i. 5.

35 i. 6.

36 i. 11.

37 i. 13.

38 i. 20 *seq.*

39 vi. 10, 18.

FAITH AND PHILOSOPHY

At the same time, faith is the basis of the true knowledge of God. It is, in fact, a necessary element of all knowledge of God, whether in philosophy or Christianity. In seeking to know God, whether by the way of reason, or from revelation, we must begin with an act of faith. The first principle, God, cannot be demonstrated. In this respect the apprehension of the truth taught by the Word does not differ from the apprehension of things transcendental by the philosophers. It is, in both cases, a matter of intuition, not of demonstration, though it is not a natural gift, but a grace which comes from God. Faith in the Christian sense is thus not a mere device of ignorant and unenlightened minds, as the philosophers in their pride of intellect opine. The Christian in demanding faith as the condition of the knowledge of God, as revealed by the Word, is only asking what the philosophers themselves admit as the condition of the knowledge of first principles. He thus places the acceptance of Christianity with its supernatural claims on the level of the acceptance of the transcendental truths of philosophy. He overlooks the fact that to accept the conviction of the existence of God, as an intuition of the reason, is something different from accepting the truth of revealed religion, with its supernatural claims, based on prophecy, miracles, etc., on the authority of the Christian Scriptures, especially if, as he himself does, they are interpreted in a credulous and unhistoric sense. The philosopher might reply that the two cases are not identical.

TWOFOLD CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is, however, not solely a matter of faith. Clement conceives of it in a twofold sense—in the ordinary sense of a scheme of salvation, to be appropriated by faith, and in the sense of a higher knowledge or gnosis, which raises the Christian Gnostic above the level of the ordinary believer. In this respect he shows the influence of the Gnostic tendency to transform Christianity into an esoteric religion, based on a secret apostolic teaching, which was meant for the truly illuminated, in contrast to the ordinary Christian. In the "Stromateis" he accepts the Gnostic distinction between faith and knowledge, between a higher spiritual (Gnostic) class and a lower (psychic) class of Christians, which he had rejected in "The Instructor." He, indeed, rejects the heretical or false Gnosticism with its dualism, its fatalism, and its fantastic cosmological theories. He combats its fatalism and its dualism, and engages in a recurring controversy with it in the

“Stromateis.” At the same time, its influence is markedly discernible in his twofold distinction between Christianity as a scheme of salvation and as a higher knowledge. Christianity begins with the faith that is common to all Christians—“the common faith,” as he calls it. Faith in the Word is indispensable to all, Gnostic and simple Christian alike. All alike, as in “The Instructor,” appropriate salvation from sin by faith, and are on an equal footing in this respect. But the simple Christian is actuated by fear and hope, the fear of punishment, the hope of reward. Fear and hope have, indeed, their moral value. The fear of punishment, for instance, leads us to repent of sin and to shun evil. The Law itself is meant to excite this fear, and fear, in this sense, is the beginning of wisdom. So, too, the hope of a future life is an incentive to the good. There are good effects of faith, and he argues against the Gnostics who decry the Law, depreciate faith, and deny the utility of fear and hope.⁴⁰ But this is only an elementary stage of Christianity, an inferior species of the Christian life. From faith we must advance to gnosis, which leads to perfection both of knowledge and life. It begins in faith. “The common faith lies beneath it as a foundation.”⁴¹ But faith, in this elementary sense, recedes into the background. The further we rise in the ascent to gnosis, the more we get beyond such incentives as fear and hope. In this Gnostic ascent the great incentive is not fear and hope, but love. Love is the elimination of self and all its desires, and of all other motives except that of being good and doing good, as God is good and does good.⁴²

THE TRUE GNOSTIC

The true Gnostic, as an imitator of God, seeks to become assimilated to God.⁴³ He does good, not from fear of punishment or hope of reward, but for the sake of the good itself.⁴⁴ He no longer acts from the desire to be saved, but from the desire to know God and to be like God. He has reached a state of apathy to self, passionlessness in which he loves only God and the good, apart from any ulterior considerations whatsoever.⁴⁵ In love and knowledge he eventually becomes as God. He attains to vision, contemplation of God, absolute serenity, peace, bliss in union with God.⁴⁶ This vision, this contemplation involves the highest purity of heart and mind, righteousness, active well-doing,⁴⁷ for

⁴⁰ ii. 6, 7.

⁴¹ v. 1. *ἡ μὲν γὰρ κοινὴ πίστις καθάπερ θεμέλιος ὑπόκειται.*

⁴² iv, 14, 18, etc.

⁴³ ii. 19, 22.

⁴⁴ iv. 22.

⁴⁵ iv. 2; vii. 3.

⁴⁶ iv. 23.

⁴⁷ iv. 23; vi. 7.

this higher knowledge is ethical as well as intellectual and religious. Only the pure in heart can see God. This higher knowledge constitutes the mystery, the deep things of which the apostle speaks—the truth behind the symbol, the secret teaching which is hidden to the ordinary believer, and is understood only by the true Gnostic.⁴⁸ Human language cannot adequately express God in Himself. No one can rightly express Him wholly.⁴⁹ The Word alone can do so. The Word is the teacher of all men; He has been training and making us perfect from the foundation of the world “at sundry times and in diverse places.”

Here, then, we have Christianity as Gnosis—the higher Christianity. The influence of Gnosticism is palpable, whilst Gnosticism itself is constantly repudiated.⁵⁰ Christian Gnosticism is, however, not antagonistic to the common Christianity—the Christianity of the creed and the Church. It is only an advance upon it, though it also liberates the mind from the limits of a stereotyped formal belief, and raises it into a higher atmosphere of individual thought and aspiration, in which it seeks and finds God by an inner illumination. It has in it elements taken from Philo, Plato, and the Stoics. Plato, in particular, is cited only less frequently than the Scriptures, and Plato, in virtue of the assumption of borrowing or stealing from the Scriptures, is almost as great an authority as Paul. The Gnostic Christian is a combination of the Platonic-Stoic wise man and the Christian idealist. His ideal of a life completely independent of the passions, from which affection, anger, grief, envy, jealousy, etc., are eliminated, was, indeed, out of touch with the life of common humanity. It is not, however, the life of quietism, mysticism, mere ecstasy, though the mystic element is there. It manifests itself in action as well as contemplation. In the Gnostic wise man we have the Greek conception of a spiritual aristocracy. In Clement the ascent to Christian Gnosticism is, indeed, open to all. The psychic, the lower may become the higher, the spiritual Christian. The ordinary Christian may philosophise. In reality the Gnostic ideal is attained only by the few, though he has a high conception of the natural goodness and greatness of human nature. It is rather idealised humanity, of which he forms the conception, and the common humanity of Alexandria was not fitted to raise his estimate of the actual Christian. It is hardly out of this humanity that the perfect Gnostic grows. The many must be content with the milk, not the meat of the Word, though he had maintained in “The Instructor” that the milk and the meat were the same. The

⁴⁸ v. 4 f.; vi. 15.

⁴⁹ v. 12; vi. 18.

⁵⁰ See particularly vii. 15 f.

mysteries are for the elect. "It belongs only to the few to grasp these things."⁵¹

The influence of the mysteries is no less apparent in the inward purification, the higher illumination of the Gnostic Christian. The Word is the true Mystagogue. Add to this the frank acceptance of philosophy as an aid to the higher gnosis, and we have a representation of Christianity, which was fitted to appeal powerfully to the tendency, about to find expression in Neo-Platonism, to unify faith and reason, religion and philosophy, knowledge and righteousness, and at the same time to energise the ideal of the good and make the vision of God, the deification of man⁵² realities.

On the other hand, this representation of Christianity must have been somewhat of a shock to the Christian of the Creed and tradition, even if Clement strives to keep within the line of both. It is subjective religion, not orthodoxy that he really represents, though it is subjective religion within strict moral limitations and freed from the vagaries, the moral laxity, the exaggerated asceticism of Gnosticism. Nor can it be said to represent historical Christianity, for the Logos takes the place of the historic Jesus, and the secret teaching of Paul displaces too much that of the doctrine of justification by faith. Whilst he lays stress on the incarnation, he has little about sin, atonement, reconciliation. The allegoric exegesis, which persists in quoting Plato and other philosophers as products of Hebrew inspiration, and makes Moses and the prophets yield proofs of Gnostic Christianity; the belief in cryptic teaching; the mania for finding symbols in the plainest matters of fact could not but play havoc with history.

CHAPTER IV

ORIGEN AND CELSUS

LIFE OF ORIGEN

ORIGEN was born of Christian parents in 185.¹ His father, Leonidas, who was of Greek descent, if not a Greek by birth,

⁵¹ v. 50.

⁵² θεοποίησις, θείωτης μετέχειν ἔστιν, v. 10.

¹ Eusebius (vi. 2) says that he was not quite seventeen at his father's death, which appears to have occurred in 202. This gives the year 185 as the date of his birth. The additional name Adamantius was probably a surname, not an epithet denoting his untiring endurance.

had been converted to Christianity and evinced his faith by his martyrdom in the tenth year of the reign of Septimius Severus. He was evidently a man of culture, and himself imparted to his son his early education, which was completed in the catechetical school under Clement. His precocity in the knowledge of the Scriptures as well as of other subjects gave a foretaste of his future eminence as a Christian scholar. Of his early ardour as a Christian we may see a proof in the story of his eagerness to share in his father's martyrdom, which was only frustrated by the device of his mother in hiding his clothes, and thereby compelling him to remain at home. Thus debarred from sharing his father's fate, he wrote a letter exhorting him to be steadfast. "Take heed," he urged, "not to change your mind on our account."² With his ardent study of the Scriptures he combined that of Greek literature, and after the martyrdom of his father, whose property was confiscated, he endeavoured by teaching to maintain his mother and six younger brothers. He was also indebted for some time to the generosity of a wealthy Christian lady, who took him into her home. He gave further proof of his youthful zeal by refusing to associate with a heretic named Paul of Antioch, of whom she was also the patroness. He was evidently not so tolerant as his master Clement. After his father's death and the withdrawal of Clement, he continued unofficially his master's instruction in the catechetical school,³ whilst acting as a tutor in other subjects, until he was officially appointed to the charge of the school by the bishop, Demetrius.³ His teaching attracted many pupils, a number of whom attested the Christian zeal with which he inspired them by their martyrdom. The Edict of Severus was directed against conversions to Christianity, not against those who had been born of Christian parents, and this explains why he escaped sharing their fate. Though more than once in grave danger of death throughout the second half of the reign, and the object of hostile demonstrations on the part of the Alexandrian mob, he continued at his post, and even invited persecution by his fearlessness in attending the martyrs to execution.⁴ Unlike Clement, he practised a strict asceticism which, by a misinterpretation of Matt. xix. 12, he even carried the length of self-mutilation,⁵ though in his more mature years he confessed this impulsive and unlawful act to have been an error.⁶

² Eusebius, vi. 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vi. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, vi. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vi. 8.

⁶ It was illegal by the civil law and was formally condemned by the Council of Nicæa.

Whilst teaching others, he continued to be a hard student, and besides the study of theology, he read Greek philosophy,⁷ both ancient and contemporary, and attended the lectures of Ammonius Saccas, the founder of the Neo-Platonist school of thought. Like Clement, he read the works of Philo. His reputation as a philosopher as well as a theologian became so great that the philosophers in turn sought instruction from him and quoted him in their writings.⁸ "Many others also," says Eusebius, "drawn by the fame of Origen's learning, which resounded everywhere, came to him to make trial of his skill in sacred literature. And a great many heretics, and not a few of the most distinguished philosophers, studied under him diligently, receiving instruction from him not only in divine things, but also in secular philosophy. For such as he perceived to be possessed of superior intelligence, he introduced also to such preliminary studies as geometry, arithmetic, and other preparatory subjects, and then advanced to the systems of the philosophers, explaining and commenting upon each of them, so that he became celebrated as a great philosopher even among the Greeks themselves."⁹ He had undoubtedly himself, and sought to inspire in his pupils, a keen sense of the value of a comprehensive knowledge. In the panegyric which his pupil Gregory delivered in his presence before his departure from Cæsarea, the breadth of his culture receives a glowing, if fond appreciation. Like Clement, he realised that in order to commend Christianity to cultured pagans, it was imperative to try to understand their standpoint. Moreover, though he does not seem to have realised so explicitly as Clement the value of philosophy in itself, he regarded it as the handmaid and ally of theology, and the training in it to which he subjected himself is amply apparent in his theological works. "I wish you," he wrote to Gregory, "to extract from the philosophy of the Greeks what may serve as a course of study or a preparation for Christianity, and from geometry and astronomy what will serve to explain the Sacred Scriptures. All that the sons of the philosophers are wont to say about geometry and music, grammar, rhetoric, and astronomy, as fellow-helpers to

⁷ Denis inconclusively argues that he had only a superficial knowledge of Greek philosophy and science. He thinks that his writings do not show anything more than this, and that Porphyry, who exalts his great knowledge, confounded him with another Origen, the philosopher. He rejects the testimony of Gregory Thaumaturgus as rhetorical. "La Philosophie D'Origène," 12 f. (1884). De Faye, on the other hand ("Origène," i. 16 f.; 214 f.), rightly demonstrates his extensive knowledge of philosophy.

⁸ Eusebius, vi. 18 and 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, vi. 18.

philosophy, we may say about philosophy itself, in relation to Christianity."¹⁰

The most convincing tribute to his rising fame is the fact that he was invited by the Governor of Roman Arabia to visit him, apparently to discuss the question of religion.¹¹ Eusebius also tells of visits paid at this period to Rome, where he made the acquaintance of Hippolytus,¹² and to Cæsarea in Palestine in consequence of the massacre in 216, in which Caracalla gave scope to his vengeance for the satires against him emanating from Alexandria.¹³ Though a layman, he yielded to the request of the Palestinian bishops to preach in the churches during this visit,¹⁴ and his compliance brought upon him the censure of Demetrius, who summoned him to return. The Palestinian Church had evidently retained the old freedom of prophesying open to any member of the congregation, at least with the episcopal sanction. That of Alexandria, on the other hand, had adopted the practice, which had by this time apparently become widespread, of restricting edification to the bishop or the presbyter. Origen evidently felt himself at liberty to disregard the Alexandrian practice in a region where it did not apply, and probably resented the rather overbearing conduct of Demetrius. He obeyed the summons to return, however, and continued, with the assistance of his pupil Heraclas, who later became Bishop of Alexandria, his educational and literary labours till 231, when he was dispatched by Demetrius on a mission to Greece.¹⁵ It was whilst on this journey that he was ordained a presbyter at Cæsarea by the Palestinian bishops.¹⁶ He had, by this time, enemies who disliked and suspected his teaching, as well as admirers at Alexandria. These in his absence succeeded in winning over Demetrius, to whom his ordination gave offence, and who was, according to Eusebius, jealous of his fame. On the double charge of heresy and insubordination, apparently, he was in 232 deposed and excluded from the Alexandrian Church in a synod over which Demetrius presided.¹⁷ With the exception of the short

¹⁰ "Origen to Gregory" (trans. by Crombie in "Ante-Nicene Lib.," vol. x., and by Menzies in the additional volume of the same library, p. 295).

¹¹ Eusebius, vi. 19. ¹² *Ibid.*, vi. 14; Achelis, "Hippolytus-Studien," 28.

¹³ Eusebius, vi. 19, and McGiffert's note.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, vi. 19.

¹⁵ Eusebius, vi. 23; cf. 26; and see McGiffert's note in his trans. of Eusebius, 395 f.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vi. 23.

¹⁷ Eusebius along with Pamphilus wrote a Defence or Apology of Origen in which he gave the details of the controversy at Alexandria, and to which he refers the reader of his "Eccles. Hist." for further information. It is unfortunately lost. On the proceedings against him, in more detail, see De Faye, "Origène," i. 34 f.

interval of the persecution under Maximinus (235-237), when he retired to Cappadocia, he spent the greater part of the remaining years of his life at Cæsarea. Here he founded a theological school, which attracted a large number of students, some of whom, such as Gregory Thaumaturgus,¹⁸ subsequently attained distinction. At Cæsarea he added further to his already numerous works.¹⁹ His commanding influence on the Eastern Church is shown by the fact of his extensive correspondence, which has unfortunately been largely lost, and by the active part taken by him in settling the theological controversies that disturbed the church in Arabia.²⁰ His reputation in the East is further attested by his relations with Julia Mammæa, the mother of Alexander Severus, who summoned him to an interview at Antioch to discuss Christianity with her.²¹

The cause of his death, which occurred at Tyre in 253 or 254, at the age of sixty-nine, was the effects of the tortures to which he was subjected during the Decian persecution.²²

His productivity as a writer was phenomenal. According to Jerome, he wrote more than any single mortal could read,²³ and Epiphanius tells us that he was believed to have produced 6,000 volumes! Jerome reduces the total to less than one-third of this number,²⁴ and the reduction was evidently still an exaggeration. Even so, it may safely be said that he holds the record for literary fecundity in the ancient world. It was at the instigation of his wealthy friend Ambrose, whom he had converted from Gnosticism, and who provided him with a number of shorthand writers and copyists, that he began this prolific literary activity. A large number of his works were exegetical-commentaries on a large number of the books of the Bible, which he vitiated by a lavish use of the allegoric method. The Scriptures, he held, contained a threefold meaning, corresponding to body, soul, and spirit in man. Though he gives the literal or "bodily" sense of the text, he assigns it a very subordinate place in his exposition, in comparison with the allegorical or spiritual meaning. As a commentator he was thus one of the worst of many sinners against the historic sense, which the more rational school of Antioch, at a later period, vainly strove to vindicate. Of these exegetical works only a small proportion has been preserved, including parts of

¹⁸ Eusebius, vi. 30.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vi. 24 and 33.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vi. 33 and 37.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vi. 21. There is a dispute among modern critics as to the date of this interview, some placing it as early as 218, others after 230.

²² *Ibid.*, vi. 39.

²³ "Letter to Paula," No. 33 in the selection in "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers"; cf. "Letters," 82 and 83.

²⁴ "Adv. Rufinum," ii. 22.

his commentaries on the Gospels of Matthew and John in the original Greek,²⁵ and that on the Epistle to the Romans in the abbreviated Latin translation of Rufinus. Another of his larger Biblical works was the Hexapla,²⁶ which he compiled as a preparation for his exegetical works, and which gave, along with the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, and the Hebrew words in Greek letters,²⁷ the various Greek translations besides the Septuagint, in parallel columns. He had some knowledge of Hebrew and studied it in order to fit himself the better to elucidate the Scriptures. But with him, as with most, a little Hebrew went a long way, and the extensive knowledge of it, with which it was formerly the fashion to credit him, does not seem to have existed. Of his homilies, a couple of hundred have been preserved, mostly in the translations of Rufinus and Jerome.²⁸ Of a practical nature were the works on Martyrdom, and on Prayer, both of which have survived.²⁹ The former, written during the persecution of Maximinus Thrax in 235, is an exhortation to his patron Ambrose and the presbyter Protoktetus, who had retired from Cæsarea, to win the martyr's crown in steadfast confession of their faith. In the latter he sets forth the necessity and the efficacy of prayer against those who deny both, and contends that prayer is not to be offered to Christ, but to God alone, through Christ. His work against Celsus, with which we are particularly concerned in this chapter, is a Defence of Christianity—the greatest in some respects of its class—which is extant in the original Greek, whilst he gave systematic expression to his philosophical and theological ideas in the *περὶ Ἀρχῶν*, or First Principles.

CELSUS

Celsus was the most formidable of the literary antagonists of Christianity in the second century—so formidable that his work against it, the "True Discourse,"³⁰ became a quarry for its subsequent enemies. We know very little about him, and his work has only been preserved in Origen's reply to it. Origen himself

²⁵ These are translated by Menzies and Patrick in the additional vol. of the "Ante-Nicene Lib." On his characteristics as a commentator, see Preuschen's Introduction to that on John, Bd. iv. of "Werke," 82 f. (1903).

²⁶ Eusebius, vi. 16.

²⁷ This transliteration was important in view of the fact that the Masoretic text was unpointed.

²⁸ Edited by Baehrens (1920 f.).

²⁹ "Werke," i. and ii., ed. by Koetschau (1899)

³⁰ ἀληθῆς λόγος. Reconstructed from Origen's "Reply" by Keim, 'Celsus' Wahres Wort' (1873); more recently by Glöckner, "Kleinè Texte" (1924).

had but very scanty information on the subject. He tells us that there were two Epicurean philosophers of this name, who flourished in the reigns of Nero and Hadrian respectively,³¹ and implies that he was one of them. In the early part of his reply, he certainly regards him as an Epicurean who concealed his true opinions and professed Platonism in order the better to attack Christianity.³² At a later stage of it,³³ he is no longer sure that he was Epicurean, and suggests as an alternative supposition either that he had renounced Epicureanism for Platonism, or that he was a different person from the Epicurean philosopher of this name, whom he had mentioned before. In spite of this hesitation, there can be no doubt that the Celsus who wrote the "True Discourse" was not an adherent of Epicurus, but an eclectic philosopher with a strong predilection for Platonism.³⁴ At the time at which Origen wrote, *i.e.*, towards the middle of the third century, he was long dead,³⁵ and from internal evidence we may reasonably conclude that the "True Discourse" was written late in the second half of the reign of Marcus Aurelius.³⁶ He was not only a master of Greek thought, he had travelled extensively, had made a special study of Christianity as well as other Oriental religions—Jewish, Egyptian, Persian—and knew how to apply the comparative method. He had read the Septuagint and most of the New Testament Scriptures, especially the Gospels, some of the Gnostic writings, and probably also the works of the early apologists. "I know all about them,"³⁷ was no empty boast. His interest in Christianity was, however, not that of the scientific inquirer, but of the confirmed antagonist. He was repelled by what he considered its irrationality, and read the Scriptures merely for the purpose of confuting it. His antagonism was, too, in part actuated by his patriotism. He saw in Christianity a menace to the stability of the State, at a time when it was exposed to the inroads of the barbarians on the northern and eastern frontiers. He evidently regarded the political apathy of the Christians as a mischievous dereliction from the obligation of citizenship at a time of grave national peril.³⁸ He believed, too, that the growth of a humanitarian and exclusive religion like Christianity was a danger to social and political order, as well

³¹ i. 8.³² i. 8.³³ iv. 54.

³⁴ Keim's attempt to identify him with Celsus, the Epicurean friend of Lucian, is not convincing. "Celsus' Wahres Wort," 275 f. Koetschau, the latest editor of the "Contra Celsum," rejects this conclusion.

³⁵ i., Pref. 4.

³⁶ Between 176 and 180, Patrick, "The Apology of Origen," 5 (1892); 178 and 180, De Faye, "Origène," i. 141.

³⁷ i. 12.³⁸ viii. 68.

as to the polytheism with which it was so intimately associated. Of polytheism, philosophically interpreted, he was an ardent adherent, which he desired to reform, not to uproot, in favour of an unpatriotic and irrational cult.³⁹ To him the Christians were revolutionaries, and their religion was obnoxious on this ground, as well as on the ground of its irrationality and its exclusiveness. At the same time, he was ready to compromise and allow it a place alongside the official polytheism, and even make use of its moral force in reforming and elevating the life of the people. It is thus that at the end of a bitter polemic he is fain to come to terms with it, on condition that the Christians will come half-way and resile from their exclusive standpoint.

His "True Discourse" long remained without an answer, or at any rate without an answer that has survived. But its arguments were so formidable that Origen's friend Ambrose felt that an attempt must be made to meet them, and he sent the work to him with the request to undertake the task.⁴⁰ He was over sixty years old at the time⁴¹ and only reluctantly complied. He was, moreover, of opinion that no formal defence of Christianity against such an indictment was really called for. Jesus did not defend Himself against the accusations of His enemies at His trial. His own life was the best refutation of these calumnies, and the lives of His followers are the best defence of Him and His claims. Nevertheless, for the sake of the weak brethren, who might be troubled by such an effusion, he yielded to his friend's request. He was better qualified for the task than any man living, for if Celsus had an intimate knowledge of the Christian writings, he had a wide knowledge of Greek philosophy, and was his equal in dialectic power. Tertullian might have done it more effectively from the point of view of a slashing logic and a brilliant style. But Tertullian was too much given to mere bluster in controversy, too contemptuous of Greek thought to adequately meet such an antagonist. In breadth of sympathy, in insight, in self-restraint, if not in knowledge and intellectual force, Origen was better fitted for the task than the narrow and overbearing, if highly gifted and cultured African. He made the mistake, however, of underrating the enemy. He is all too optimistic, and affects to consider the work of Celsus as of no weight and incapable of shaking the faith of believers.⁴² He does not seem to have realised the really

³⁹ For his view of the utility of national religion to a State, see "Contra Celsum," v. 25, 26, 35.

⁴⁰ "Contra Celsum," i., Pref.

⁴¹ Eusebius, vi. 36. The date of his reply cannot, therefore, be earlier than 245, since he was born in 185.

⁴² i., Pref.

formidable nature of the attack and he does not always succeed in meeting it. He writes hastily and sometimes contradicts himself.⁴³ He began it on one plan and continued it on another.⁴⁴ Moreover, it is too detailed and redundant to be generally effective.

The duel between two such antagonists is, in comparison to those that had preceded, as a pitched battle to a skirmish. The attack is the most sustained, comprehensive, and searching to which Christianity had been subjected, and the defence consequently deals with a greater variety of problems than the earlier apologists had been called on, or indeed were able to grapple with. Celsus and Origen both deserve the distinction of anticipating even modern criticism on the subject. The "True Discourse" is also interesting as showing how the case for Christianity, as contained in the Scriptures and presented by the early apologists, appeared to a highly gifted lover of the old culture and the old ways, and with what arguments he could parry those of their opponents. It is instructive to see the reverse side of the picture, to be reminded that the reasonings of the apologists were by no means always conclusive in the eyes of critical readers, and to learn for ourselves why this was so.

THE ATTACK OF CELSUS

In his preface Celsus denies the originality and superiority of both Judaism and Christianity, contrasts them unfavourably with philosophy and with other religions, and emphasises the irrationality and credulity of the Christians. In the guise of a Jew he then assails the historical foundations of Christianity and strives to belittle Jesus and subvert the belief of His Jewish followers in Him. Dropping the Jewish guise and writing in his own person, he next attacks both Jews and Christians and their beliefs; criticises and contraverts these beliefs from the philosophical point of view; contrasts the rational ideas of the philosophers about God with those of Christianity to the detriment of the latter; defends philosophical polytheism; and concludes by suggesting a compromise between it and Christianity.

The following is a sample of his polemic.

The Christians discard reason and follow a blind faith. "Do not examine, but believe," is their watchword. They decry wisdom and exalt foolishness.⁴⁵ Why should culture be deemed

⁴³ Geffcken, 262-263.

⁴⁴ i., Pref.; i. 41, where he says that he has resolved not to adopt an orderly and logical treatment, but to take the subjects as they come in Celsus' ill-arranged book.

⁴⁵ i. 9, 12.

an evil? Why not an aid to the attainment of truth? ⁴⁶ They appeal to and attract only the ignorant and the stupid.⁴⁷ It is only sinners, *i.e.*, evildoers, that they invite into the kingdom of God, not, as in the case of the mysteries, those that live well.⁴⁸ God is sent to sinners, who cannot really be transformed into good men.⁴⁹ By means of the allegoric method they explain the Scriptures to suit themselves, and have manipulated the Gospels in the interest of their beliefs.⁵⁰ The Jewish Scriptures represent God in a crass and incredible fashion. They are full of immoral actions and old wives' fables.⁵¹ The more reasonable Jewish and Christian writers are ashamed of these stories and vainly strive to explain them away by the allegoric method.⁵² The Mosaic account of the creation, which Christians as well as Jews believe, makes God the Creator of evil, repent of His own work, and destroy His own offspring.⁵³ Moses and the prophets make God sanction cruelty, perpetrate wicked and shameful things. The Jewish-Christian claim to be in possession of a special knowledge of God is unfounded. There is really nothing original in their beliefs and customs.⁵⁴ Judaism from which Christianity originated was borrowed by Moses from the Egyptians and other sources, and so far as it is not the appropriated wisdom of others, it is a mixture of false monotheism, angel worship, and sorcery.⁵⁵ The teaching of the Old Testament contradicts that of Jesus in many points.⁵⁶ Contrast this teaching with that of the divinely inspired poets, especially of Plato, the master of theological science, who rises above such gross conceptions, and seeks in a rational manner to enlighten men.⁵⁷ The teaching of Plato is both far better expressed and far less pretentious. In his doctrine of God, the chief Good, he does not brag of a special revelation or demand implicit faith, but appeals to reason. Jesus borrowed some of His sayings from him, and what the Scriptures say about the kingdom of God was much better said by him.⁵⁸ Some of their cosmological ideas the Christians have taken over from him, though they have misunderstood him, and from Mithraism.⁵⁹ They have formed the notion of a devil as the adversary of the Son of God from the old myth of a war among the gods, and derive their notion of a Son of God from the same mythical source.⁶⁰

Jesus, the more recent founder of Christianity, invented His birth from a virgin. In reality (repeating a Jewish calumny) He

⁴⁶ iii. 49.

⁴⁷ iii. 44.

⁴⁸ iii. 59.

⁴⁹ iii. 62 f.

⁵⁰ ii. 27.

⁵¹ iv. 33.

⁵² iv. 48.

⁵³ vi. 59, 63.

⁵⁴ v. 41 f.

⁵⁵ i. 21 f.

⁵⁶ vii. 18 f.

⁵⁷ vii. 41 f.

⁵⁸ vi. 15 f.

⁵⁹ vi. 19 f.

⁶⁰ v. 42 f.

was the offspring of an act of adultery on the part of the wife of Joseph with a Roman soldier. He learned the art of sorcery in Egypt, and on the strength of His powers as a sorcerer, proclaimed Himself a God.⁶¹ The virgin birth is on a level with the Greek fables of a similar character. The predictions of the prophets do not necessarily refer to Him, or substantiate His claims. Many other fanatics and impostors have claimed that they were the person thus predicted.⁶² Why, if He were the predicted Son of God, did God allow Him to be condemned and suffer? ⁶³ Jesus himself said that every man is a son of God, and why should He be different from others in this respect? ⁶⁴ Why should the Son of God have been under the necessity of fleeing to Egypt to escape the designs of Herod, and afterwards wandering about in Palestine like a fugitive criminal, with half a score of wretched followers, instead of being a king? ⁶⁵ Was the Great God not able to guard Him? ⁶⁶ Granting that He performed miracles, are the Egyptian magicians, who perform feats equally wonderful, also sons of God? ⁶⁷ How can He be accepted as a God who could not save Himself from death and was deserted by His disciples? ⁶⁸ These disciples afterwards pretended that He foreknew and foretold all that happened to Him, and that these things happened because they were predicted.⁶⁹ What is the use of saying that He, who claimed to be immortal and yet proved mortal, foretold His death? You do not give even an air of credibility to your inventions.⁷⁰ How could a crucified man be the Divine Logos, and why did those who put Him to death escape scot-free? Why does He not now at least give some proof of His divinity and punish those who insult both Him and His Father.⁷¹ What induced you to accept Him as the Son of God? Was it His miracles? He Himself admits that the sorcerers can work miracles.⁷² Was it the prediction of His resurrection? Many impostors have practised this trick as the Greek fables show. The story of the resurrection was started by a half-frenzied woman, and such stories are the fruit of dreams and imaginations.⁷³ Why all this secrecy, these furtive appearances to His disciples? His death was seen by all. Why not His resurrection? Why did He not manifest Himself to His enemies and thus leave no room for doubt? ⁷⁴

The Jewish-Christian belief in the descent of a God and the

⁶¹ i. 28.

⁶² i. 49, 50.

⁶³ i. 54.

⁶⁴ i. 57.

⁶⁵ i. 61.

⁶⁶ i. 66.

⁶⁷ i. 68.

⁶⁸ ii. 9.

⁶⁹ ii. 13.

⁷⁰ ii. 13, 16.

⁷¹ ii. 34 f.

⁷² ii. 49.

⁷³ ii. 55, 60.

⁷⁴ ii. 63.

incarnation of God in Jesus is scandalous.⁷⁵ For God, who is the perfection of Good and other divine attributes, to become man is to be subject to change, imperfection, mortality, and such an incarnation, which implies a degeneration of the divine, is impossible.⁷⁶ Can God not transform man by His divine power without sending some one to do it for Him? ⁷⁷ How could the Son of God be born of a woman and not be polluted? Why send Him to an obscure corner of the earth and not to all the world? ⁷⁸ Why, if He made the world for the sake of man, allow so long a time to pass before showing His interest in his welfare? ⁷⁹ Did He who is omniscient need, then, to send Him in order to find out what goes on on earth? The quarrel between Jews and Christians over the question whether the predicted Son of God has come or not is thus a quarrel over an ass's shadow. The Jews are not to be blamed for observing their national religion. Each people is entitled to do so in the interest of public utility, since it is an act of impiety for any people to renounce its religion.⁸⁰ Moreover, the Christians quarrel among themselves over this Son of God, and have split into a number of sects, though they maintain a semblance of unity for fear of their external enemies.⁸¹

Both Jews and Christians agree in denouncing polytheism as idolatry and demonolatry. This is pure imbecility, since they might learn from Heraclitus that the images of the gods, philosophically considered, are merely symbolic.⁸² If you Christians refused to worship any but God alone, there might be some point in your objection. But you worship in addition One whom you call Lord, and exalt Him even above God.⁸³ Why, then, stand aloof from the public festivals in honour of the gods? Why not, he asks in a more conciliatory spirit, perform this duty in accordance with the laws? If these idols are nothing, what harm can there be in taking part in the public ceremonies? But the gods are not the nonentities you think them to be. What oracles, revelations, have they not vouchsafed? How often appeared in visible forms? How often delivered men from disease and famine? How often granted prosperity in return for reverence shown them, or adversity because of the neglect of them. What miracles have they performed, etc.? ⁸⁴ What will become of the Empire if we neglect them and transfer our worship to your god. God, you say, will fight for us against the

⁷⁵ iv. 2.⁷⁶ iv. 14.⁷⁷ iv. 3.⁷⁸ vi. 78.⁷⁹ iv. 7.⁸⁰ v. 25 f.⁸¹ iii. 1 f.⁸² vii. 62.⁸³ viii. 15.⁸⁴ viii. 45.

barbarians. Well, what has He done for the Jews, who have been left without an inch of territory to call their own, or to hinder the persecution of Christians? You should really stop this humbug and do your duty as citizens to the State, if this be necessary for the maintenance of the laws and religion.

Celsus undoubtedly succeeded in probing some weak points in the armour of both Jews and Christians. There is force in his criticism of the Jewish-Christian Scriptures, of their human representation of God and the unhistorical method of interpreting them, of the exaggerated emphasis on prophecy, in the sense of prediction, as a proof of truth, of the limitation of inspiration to them, of their infallibility as a test of truth, of the incarnation of God in the literal sense by means of the virgin birth, of a bodily resurrection, etc. This criticism shows that the apologists had by no means the field all to themselves, that the case for Christianity, as put by them, was far from being in all respects irresistible. On the other hand, he is unquestionably actuated by a bias and animosity which render him both a blind and unfair critic. He does not understand the sublime figure of Jesus, and sets himself, of purpose, not merely to criticise, but to belittle and calumniate Him, in the spirit of the supercilious intellectualist. He accepts the malignant Jewish-pagan stories about Him without the slightest effort to examine into their truth. He seems at times even to falsify the Gospel narratives, or at any rate to misinterpret them under the influence of passion. He too often indulges in sneers instead of arguments. He is lacking, in this respect, in the sobriety and equability of the serious inquirer, and fails to deal objectively with the problems arising from the life of Jesus. He too often writes, as Origen rightly points out, not from a love of truth, but from a spirit of malice and hatred.⁸⁵ He therefore lays himself open to the charge of seeking rather than finding faults. To rail at the Christians because they belong largely to the humble class is a bad exhibition of the intellectual and social snobbery which characterised the age. His eagerness to score a point against his adversaries is not always creditable to his honesty. He knows, for instance, the distinction between the bulk of Christians belonging to the Catholic Church and the Gnostics, and yet he assumes their identity, when adducing Gnostic extravagances as a sample of Christian belief applicable to all. He personates a Jew and his blunders in this rôle frequently give Origen the chance of asking some sarcastic questions about this Jew, and showing his self-contradictions. Nor is he by any means free from the credulity with which he reproaches the

⁸⁵ i. 16.

Christians. He pours scorn, for instance, on Biblical miracles and yet gravely believes in those of Æsculapius.⁸⁶ He is as convinced a believer in demonology as Justin or Tertullian. He rails at Jewish-Christian anthropomorphism, yet believes in polytheism which was anthropomorphic enough even in a philosophic sense. The taunt that Christianity is the religion only of the ignorant and the stupid, of those who champion a blind faith and ban knowledge might be explicable as a retort to those Christian preachers, like Tatian and even Tertullian, who indulged in indiscriminate abuse of philosophy and culture. It was not a fair estimate of Christianity, which was certainly worthy of the serious consideration of the best intellect. That Jesus borrowed from Plato is even worse than the Christian assumption that Plato borrowed from Moses. Worst of all, perhaps, he has no appreciation, at least in the heat of controversy, for the sublime ethics of the Gospel, or for the spiritual and ethical power of the Christian life, which he is incapable of appreciating. In this respect he has not much to offer in place of Christianity except a passionate devotion, on political and social grounds, to a worn-out system.

ORIGEN'S DEFENCE

In reply Origen admits that the ordinary Christians base their religion on faith and not on investigation. This is unavoidable, if only because most people have no time or capacity for special investigation. But so do the ordinary adherents of the various schools who prefer the views of Plato, or the Peripatetics, or other leading teachers, because they believe them to be superior to those of other schools, not because they have investigated the truth of all systems. Moreover, if faith in Christ leads the multitudes to change their evil life for a better, they may well dispense with an inquiry whether it is rational or not. It is, however, not true that all Christians repose in a blind faith. Many do seek to investigate the truth of what they believe, and there is at least as much investigation among Christians as among the adherents of other systems.⁸⁷

In defence of the allegoric method of interpretation, he merely says that it is impossible to understand the Old Testament Scriptures rightly without taking account of the intention of the writer to impart a twofold meaning to what he says—one for the simple reader, another for those endowed with greater wisdom. If the

⁸⁶ iii. 3.

⁸⁷ "Contra Celsum," i. 9, 10, 11; ed. Koetschau, i. and ii. of "Werke" (1899).

Greeks thus interpret their myths, why not the Christians their writings? This might be a reply to Celsus. But he does not see that a revelation which necessitates such a method is liable to be vitiated by the subjective ideas of the exegete, and is really dependent on the vagaries of the individual mind.

He has no difficulty in disposing of the caricature of Jesus which Celsus derived from Jewish calumny. How, he asks most forcibly, if Jesus had really been the despicable character Celsus represents, could he possibly have created Christianity, inspired His disciples with so profound a belief in His teaching, exercised such a far-reaching moral influence, and gained so many followers throughout the world? ⁸⁸ The stories which he retails about His birth and early life are false. The virgin birth is proved by prophecy, which he thinks, too sanguinely, is conclusive. But if the evidence of prophecy is rejected by the Greeks, there is the further argument that it is by no means incredible that, if God desired to send a divine teacher to the human race, He should cause Him to be born in an extraordinary manner. It does not, however, strengthen the argument to say that there are some animals which propagate their species without sexual intercourse, or to refer to the fable, which he himself does not believe, that Plato was the offspring of the intercourse of Apollo with his mother! ⁸⁹ That Jesus was a vulgar sorcerer is, he forcibly concludes, excluded by the fact that He was so great a religious teacher. ⁹⁰ That the prophets predicted the coming of Christ, he strives to prove by quoting passages from them, though he certainly strains the sense of them, so as to make them apply to the actual Christ, and does not satisfactorily answer the question why, if they so clearly predicted His coming, the Jews did not at once adhere to Him? ⁹¹ Nor does he adequately meet the Jewish objection that such prophecies refer, as a rule, to the nation, rather than to the individual, which is the true historic interpretation. That Jesus came as a suffering Messiah is no contradiction of these prophecies, as Celsus supposes. For the prophets predict two advents—one as sufferer, a second as triumphant judge and king. Whether the 45th Psalm proves this, as he holds, is a different question. ⁹² Origen's false principle of interpretation often invalidates his trustworthiness as an exegete.

Much more effective is the refutation of Celsus' misrepresentation of Jesus' ministry in Palestine, and the emphasis on its divine power as manifested in the lives of His disciples. ⁹³ The whole world is evidence of this power. Witness the churches

⁸⁸ i. 29-31.

⁸⁹ i. 37.

⁹⁰ i. 38.

⁹¹ i. 49-54.

⁹² i. 56.

⁹³ i. 62-64.

which his followers have established and the moral character of their members.⁹⁴ That Celsus can compare the work of Jesus to that of mere sorcerers, shows that he does not understand the difference between a charlatan, who performs tricks only for show, and a great moral reformer like Jesus, who only performed His miracles for moral ends, and who is Himself, unlike such charlatans, the pattern of a most virtuous life.⁹⁵

The Jewish Christians, he retorts, have not abandoned the law of their fathers in becoming Christians, as the practices of the Ebionites show, although it is true that Jesus taught the Jews to observe the spirit rather than the letter of the law, and inaugurated a more spiritual religion.⁹⁶ Whether it is true that Jesus performed nothing worthy of His claims, He leaves to every intelligent reader of the Gospels to judge.⁹⁷ To the charge that the disciples merely ascribed to Him as God the foreknowledge of all that happened to Him, he replies that Jesus *did* possess the power of prediction. Would, for instance, the disciples have invented the prediction, so disreputable to them, that all would deny Him, if the prediction had not really been made? ⁹⁸ It is not true that the Christians have manipulated the Gospels. Only Marcion and the Gnostics have done so, he insists too sanguinely. Nor is it incredible that, being God, Jesus should predict His death and should die accordingly, since He had resolved to be a pattern to men in dying for them, and His death was necessary for the benefit of the whole world. Is it strange, in the case of one who performed so many wonderful works, that his soul, if it so pleased, might leave His body and return to it, if He so willed? It is not a question of how a dead man could be immortal. It is not the dead man, but the divine Christ who is immortal. It would, however, hardly strengthen belief in opponents like Celsus to add that many persons are recorded to have risen from the dead.⁹⁹ Nor is there anything incredible in saying that Jesus' sufferings were voluntary, and yet that he shrank from them. Having voluntarily assumed a human body for the purpose of carrying out His mission as Saviour, He was bound to suffer pain and naturally desired that the cup might pass from Him.

In proof that Jesus, though a crucified Man, was the Logos, he refers to the theory that He was the first-born of all creation and the Creator,¹⁰⁰ though he ignores the fact that Jesus Himself did not claim to be the Logos. As to the query why He does not now at least give some incontrovertible proof of His divinity and

⁹⁴ i. 67.⁹⁵ i. 68.⁹⁶ ii. 1 f.⁹⁷ ii. 9.⁹⁸ ii. 13, 15.⁹⁹ ii. 17.¹⁰⁰ ii. 31.

punish those who insult Him, let those of the Greeks, who believe in providence and portents, give an answer to the question why the Divinity does not punish those who insult Him and subvert this doctrine.¹ That the bodily resurrection of Jesus was not the hallucination of a half-frenzied woman, but a fact, is, he thinks, conclusively proved by the preaching of the disciples, who would not have insisted on it with such courage if they had merely invented it, and by the great results it has produced.² That He did not show Himself to the multitude and thus put all doubt out of the question, he explains by saying that the multitude were not capable of seeing Him in His resurrected form. Only a few of His followers, in fact, were thus capable, just as only three of the disciples were capable of seeing Him transfigured on the Mount.³ This is ingenious and is in accordance with Origen's assumption of a higher knowledge vouchsafed to the advanced Christian. It was hardly fitted to convince Celsus.

He admits the existence of difference of opinion among Christians even from the beginning on certain questions of doctrine and usage. But the existence of heresy is not necessarily due to a spirit of faction and strife with which he reproaches the Christians. It is an indication of a spirit of inquiry, especially after Christianity began to attract the attention of educated men. Difference of view, heresy is no more discreditable to Christianity than are the numerous heresies among physicians and philosophers discreditable to medicine or philosophy. It is not fair to confuse such sects as the Cainites and the Ophites with the mass of Christians,⁴ especially, he might have added, as Celsus knew well enough the distinction. That Christianity is the religion solely of the uneducated and appeals only to them is not true. It invites all to accept Christ as the Saviour, and it is surely no objection to a religion that it seeks to raise even the lowest to a higher moral level. It does not condemn education, which is a blessing and very serviceable to the knowledge of God. It also has a teaching for the wise in contrast to the multitude of believers, and places wisdom, knowledge above faith. Origen had evidently not forgotten the lessons of his master Clement. He thinks that Celsus' taunt that it is meant only to be the religion of the uneducated is due to a misinterpretation of Paul's condemnation of the wisdom of the Greeks, and seeks to show that the apostle did not despise knowledge in itself, but rather emphasised its value for the Christian teacher.⁵ At the same time, he rather ignores his hostile attitude towards the philosophers, and he says

¹ ii. 35.² ii. 56, 58.³ ii. 63-67.⁴ iii. 11-13.⁵ iii. 44 f.

nothing about the Christian obscurantists, who followed him in his estimate of philosophy and gave more point to the charge than he is willing to allow.

Celsus denies that human nature can really be transformed. Christianity, retorts Origen with great force, is the complete disproof of such an error. The Gospel has indisputably proved itself to be a religion of the spirit and of power.⁶

The descent of God, the incarnation is not a monstrous doctrine. It is silly to ask the questions, Was it to learn what goes on on the earth, Can He not by means of His divine power improve men without Himself becoming one? God has ever been present in holy souls, in prophetic men, teaching and making men better. What becomes of free will if men can only be reformed by an act of omnipotence?⁷ The incarnation was actuated by the desire to liberate man from his wretchedness.⁸ It was delayed until the time was suitable for it,⁹ and before this God was not indifferent to man's salvation, but was continually striving by means of the holy souls He inspired to make men righteous.¹⁰ There was no change and no degeneration in the divine nature in becoming mortal. Humiliation there was, but no change from good to evil, from happiness to misery. The divine and the human are distinct in the Logos. God essentially remains God and only His body and soul suffer.¹¹ He does not, however, explain how, in this case, God could be said really to have become man, if it was only a man that suffered. This is hardly a real incarnation, but rather a theophany. Nevertheless, he holds that there was a real, and not a feigned manifestation of God in Christ.¹²

This manifestation is in keeping with the dignity of man, whose body is a temple of God, with his rational and moral nature, with his affinity to God, and his high place and vocation in the universe. This he seeks to establish in the course of a long argumentation against the contention of Celsus that it was not created for his sake. The most attractive feature of his view of the incarnation is that which presents the historic Jesus, not as the realisation of the Logos theory, though this is constantly emphasised, but as the embodiment of the divine purpose and power. In Him there was a union of the divine and the human, and this union is possible to all who by faith take up the life which He taught.¹³ In other words, what Jesus was we may become.

Whilst accepting what is good in philosophy, he, like all the

⁶ iii. 68.

⁷ iv. 3.

⁸ iv. 6.

⁹ ii. 30.

¹⁰ iv. 7.

¹¹ iv. 14-15.

¹² iv. 18.

¹³ iii. 28.

other apologists, will have nothing to do with polytheism, even as philosophically interpreted, though he does not make the mistake of merely railing at it. But on this subject we have already had enough from his predecessors.

CHAPTER V

THE NEO-PLATONISTS

AMMONIUS SACCAS

THE reputed founder of Neo-Platonism was Ammonius Saccas, who during the first four decades of the third century taught at Alexandria, and according to Porphyry, though born a Christian, had renounced Christianity for philosophy.¹ Among his pupils were the Christian Origen and a pagan philosopher of the same name, Longinus, and Plotinus. The fact that he attracted three pupils of such distinction is in itself a convincing testimony to his power as a teacher, and both Longinus and Plotinus expressed their deep indebtedness to him. Plotinus, in fact, professes to be merely the exponent of his master's teaching. This is evidently an exaggeration. He was far too original a thinker to be a mere interpreter of the teaching of another. Apart from an unquestioned originality as a thinker, Zeller² has adduced strong reasons for doubting the later assumption that he was but the echo of Ammonius. As Ammonius himself wrote nothing, and none of his pupils has left an account of what he actually taught, we are not in a position to say exactly to what extent his teaching is contained in that of his most gifted pupil. At the same time, we may conclude that he was an eclectic teacher, who possessed the power of stimulating the minds of his pupils, and started Plotinus on the train of thought which was to blossom into the distinctively Neo-Platonic system.

PLOTINUS

Born about 205 at Lycopolis in Egypt, he was twenty-eight years old before he became a hearer of Ammonius. He was so

¹ Eusebius (vi. 19) contradicts Porphyry's statement that he had renounced Christianity and says that he remained a Christian to the end of his life. But he evidently confuses him with another Ammonius whose works he mentions.

² "Philosophie der Griechen," iii. 2, 501 f. (4th ed., 1903).

impressed that he exclaimed, "This is the man for whom I was seeking."³ For eleven years he continued to attend his lectures, and then, desiring to know something of the philosophy of the Persians and the Indians, he joined an expedition of the Emperor Gordian against the Persians in 242. The expedition ended in disaster. Two years later he took up his residence in Rome, where he spent the remainder of his life, which closed in 270, lecturing to a growing circle of disciples and influential admirers, and writing, in very imperfect Greek, the philosophical essays which his disciple Porphyry collected under the title of the "Enneads."⁴

He owed the influence which he wielded, and which gained him the favour and friendship of the Emperor Gallienus and the Empress Salonina, to his high character as well as his power as a thinker. He devoted himself intensely to the things of the spirit and infused his own spiritual enthusiasm into his lectures. He carried his aversion to the things of sense the length of concealing his birth and parentage, refusing to have his portrait painted,⁵ and practising a strict asceticism. He possessed in a remarkable degree the power of inspiring the confidence of his pupils and friends, and, after his death, was the object of a reverence that came near to worship, as is evident from the epithet "most divine"⁶ applied to him and from the tales of supernatural favour which Porphyry relates with evident credulity in his biography. He was a profoundly religious man, though his religion was of the intellectual rather than of the emotional caste. Nevertheless he is credited with great practical ability and extraordinary insight into character, and was frequently entrusted not only with the education of young people, but with the management of the affairs of minors and with the arbitration of disputes between Roman citizens.

³ τοῦτον ἐζητοῦν. Porphyry, "Vita Plotini," 3.

⁴ Six books of nine essays each. The Greek text, edited by H. F. Mueller, with the "Vita" by Porphyry prefixed (1878), and by Volkman (1883-84, Teubner). The more recent Greek text, with French trans. by Bréhier (1924-31) of the first five "Enneads." This has superseded the older French trans. by Bouillet (1857). English trans. by MacKenna, i.-v., and vi., in collaboration with B. S. Page (1917-30). This has superseded the partial English trans. by Taylor, edited by Mead in the Bohn Series. Bréhier gives along with his translation a general examination of each of the essays. An excellent recent exposition in English is Dean Inge's "Philosophy of Plotinus" (1918), also a brief survey in "The Religious Philosophy of Plotinus" (1914). Excellent, also, the older ones of Benn and Whittaker. See also Ed. Caird, "The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers," ii. (1904), and the Histories of Philosophy of Zeller, Windelband, Erdmann; Bigg, "Chief Ancient Philosophies" (S.P.C.K.); and "Christian Platonists of Alexandria" (2nd ed., 1913).

⁵ "Vita," i.

⁶ θεοῦτατος. "Most divine." By Proclus, for instance. See Inge, "Philosophy of Plotinus," i. 110.

HELLENIC CHARACTER OF HIS THOUGHT

His system was an attempt to construct a philosophy which should furnish a true theory of the universe and man's existence in it, and at the same time satisfy man's religious and moral nature. It has its philosophic and its religious side, and in both respects it keeps within the sphere of Greek thought. It is a genuine product of the Greek mind and ignores Christianity, with its claim to a special revelation and its distinctive conception of the one supreme, personal God, whether based on Hebrew monotheism, or as influenced by Greek speculation. Plotinus knew Christianity, in its Gnostic form at least, and combated Gnosticism in one of his essays. But he does not allow it to influence his thought, which, if eclectic, is purely Hellenic. Even on its religious side, it is free from the religious syncretism of the age, which sought to amalgamate Oriental religion with Greek polytheism. According to Mr Benn, the attack on the Gnostics was inspired by an indignant reaction of Greek Thought against the inroads of Oriental superstition, and the same character belongs more or less to the whole system of its author.⁷ According to the same author, it is no less independent, on its philosophic side, from any Oriental influence. "It may be doubted whether there is a single idea in Plotinus which can be shown to have its exact counterpart in any of the Hindoo and Asiatic systems, whence he is supposed to have drawn. . . . He says nothing which cannot be derived, either directly or by a simple and easy process of evolution from Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics."⁸

Its essentially Greek character is reflected in its eclecticism. Plotinus, its real founder, was a master of synthesis, and in the working out of his distinctive theory, he borrowed from Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and the Sceptics.⁹ To Plato and Aristotle—and in greater measure to Plato—he owed the spiritualism which is the most characteristic feature of his system; to the Sceptics the distrust of empirical knowledge and the agnostic tendency of his thought; to the Stoics the monism which derives the all from the One, though in a spiritual, not in a materialist, or pantheist, sense.¹⁰

⁷ "Greek Philosophers," 584 (2nd ed., 1914). He controverts the Gnostics in c. 9 of the Second Ennead.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 578. This is the view also of Zeller, iii., Pt. II., 484 f.; and Whittaker, "The Neo-Platonists" (1901).

⁹ Mr Benn, in contrast to Zeller, thinks that he was not influenced by the Sceptics, 578-580.

¹⁰ Zeller, iii., Pt. II., 468 f., especially 496-498.

HIS METAPHYSIC

Considered as a metaphysic, his system is monistic, though, like those of Plato and Aristotle, it emphasises the distinction between spirit and matter and stands in sharp contrast to both Stoic and Epicurean materialism. The source of all being he calls the One, the ultimate unity from which the all is derived. In his conception of the One he holds the Platonic and Aristotelian doctrine of the divine transcendence in its most extreme form. The One is so absolutely different from anything that we can predicate of Him that He is practically inconceivable. To conceive of Him, as did the Christian apologists, as the absolute perfection of moral and rational being, is inadmissible. We cannot ascribe to Him even being, self-conscious thought, will, activity, since this would be to reduce Him to the level of the finite and conditioned. We can only conceive of Him as the One, who is not anything that we can conceive, not even being in its highest form of rational self-consciousness. He is the absolute antithesis of what man, as a finite being, can think Him to be. This is really equivalent to putting Him out of existence, as we know existence, and reminds us of the absolute nothing of Basilides.

Nevertheless from this One the all, everything is derived. It comes into being, however, by no creative act, for conscious volition, as something finite and human, is not attributable to the One. It is due to an overflowing rather than an emanating of power or energy which manifests itself in a gradually descending series of being. The first and highest form of it is the divine Reason¹¹ or thought, of which being or existence may first be predicated. From this divine Reason proceeds the All-Soul, the active formative principle of the supersensible world, which realises the ideas of the divine Reason. These three—the absolute One, the derived Reason, and the All- or World-Soul constitute a Trinity—the Neo-Platonic Trinity in three hypostases. From the World-Soul proceeds the individual soul and the sensible world. The lowest product is matter as distinct from spirit, though connected with it.

Whilst the theory is monistic, it is not materialistic. Matter is an ultimate product of spirit, whilst distinct from it. It constitutes the lowest form of existence, is the farthest removed from the One, and is, in this sense, evil—the source of the passions and impulses that clog the life of the spirit, though, in

¹¹ *νοῦς*. Mackenna translates it "The Intellectual Principle." "Plotinus," i. 119 (1917).

contrast to the Gnostics and in spite of his own tendency to asceticism, the actual world is not necessarily evil. How matter proceeds from spirit and yet may be antagonistic to it, how, in other words, what is evil proceeds from good, is, however, not clear. It is not convincing to say that it is the non-existent or only negatively exists.

This metaphysic is a grand attempt to construct a theology by a sustained and elevated effort of abstract thinking within the limits of Greek Thought. In its severe rationality it is greatly superior to the Gnostic theology with its fantastic mythological or quasi-mythological representation of the emanation of existence from Deity. Even if it shows traces of the current polytheism, from which the most abstract Greek Thought could not shake itself free, "the gods are generally little more than a fossil survival."¹² Plotinus, for instance, calls the three hypostases of his divine Trinity, Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus. Gods and demons exist in the "Enneads." It shares with Judaism and Christianity a highly spiritual conception of God. In emphasising with Clement, Origen, and other Christian theologians, the incomprehensibility of the One, it provided a not unneeded corrective of the traditional tendency in both to represent the supreme reality back of and beyond all finite being in terms of the finite and the human. Modern science, in revealing the vastness of the universe, has made it increasingly difficult for us adequately to conceive of this Reality or Power, in itself so infinitely beyond the grasp of the finite mind, in the anthropomorphic terms of Jewish or even Christian monotheism. Neo-Platonism deserves the credit of striving by pure thought to rise to the level of God instead of bringing down God to the level of the understanding of man.

On the other hand, to deny existence, personality, conscious will to the One is to create an abstraction, an enigma, and call it God. From this Absolute overflows, indeed, the divine Reason "as a sort of mediation to us of the Unknowable One,"¹³ and it, in turn, engenders the World-Soul which realises the ideas of the divine Reason in creation. In so far existence is predicable by us of Deity, if not of the Absolute One itself. But it is doubtful whether either the divine Reason or the World-Soul is personal, and the One itself certainly is not. Such an abstract, impersonal God, even in His Trinitarian form, is hardly a satisfying substitute for the Christian conception of Him as the perfection of rational and moral being—the supreme Reason and the supreme Good—of which personality is an essential. God is, must be,

¹² Mackenna, i. 121.

¹³ *Ibid.*, i. 119.

this, even if our conception of it is perforce imperfect. It rebuts us to affirm with Plotinus and his school, whether pagan or Christian, that we can only say what God is not, but not what He is. God must be of the nature of the highest Reality as we can conceive it—Spirit, the fullness of rational and moral personality; no blank abstraction. A nonentity, even if clothed in a philosophic terminology, cannot be God. Even in the metaphysical sense the ultimate Absolute must be the real object of knowledge, must answer in some fashion to the highest conceivable by man as a rational and moral being. Actually, as Dean Inge points out, the Absolute of Plotinus does not remain so absolutely above the conceivable as his dialectic makes it “The criticism will certainly be made that Plotinus, after protesting that nothing can be said of the Absolute, tells us a good deal about it or him, investing him in fact with the attributes of a personal God. The faculties of Spirit are, after all, ascribed to the First Principle, only *per eminentiam*, with apologies for the weakness of human thought.”¹⁴

HIS ETHIC

This paradoxical metaphysic has, however, its ethical side, and on its ethical side the system of Plotinus is more attractive, though still open to objection. If the human soul is part of a descending series of being and is under the influence of its sensuous environment, it is also capable of ascending back to the One, its ultimate source. This capacity lies in its higher nature, which instinctively leads it to seek reunion with the divine, involving elevation above the finite and in the last resort above even consciousness, personality. This aspiration belongs to its proper being, and in its realisation lies its true destiny, its real blessedness. Its indispensable condition is the purification of the soul from its sensuous environment, and this purification has a practical and a spiritual side. On its practical side the first stage of it is the elimination of the passions, which tend to degrade the soul, and the cultivation of the virtues. He who would ascend to God must exercise himself in the practice of wisdom, temperance, courage, justice. In the case of Plotinus himself the practice of the virtuous life shows a tendency to asceticism. He does not, however, like the Neo-Pythagoreans and certain of the Gnostics, inculcate an ascetic view of life. This seems to be more a matter of individual temperament. The sensuous is for him not wholly evil, for it is capable of incorporating the beautiful, and the

¹⁴ “Philosophy of Plotinus,” ii. 115.

beautiful is a reflection of the divine. The emotions of the soul, due to sense, are not necessarily to be mortified as absolutely incompatible with the higher life. But they are to be strictly controlled by the will, and self-control, rather than asceticism, is an essential of the moral life.

The virtuous life is, however, only a lower and preliminary stage in the purification of the soul. It has its spiritual as well as its practical side, which involves the elimination of whatever retards the ascent of the soul to pure thought, to the divine Reason. Dialectics is higher than ethics in the sense that it leads the soul into the sphere farthest removed from the sensible world, the sphere (as I understand him) of ideas as they exist in the divine Reason, of thought in its most abstract form, which is yet the highest reality. In other words, it is apparently only as we think in terms of the divine Reason, not of sense as influenced by the conceptions of this lower sensible life, that the soul attains this higher stage of purification.

HIS MYSTICISM

There is, however, an even higher stage in the ascent to the ultimate One—the stage in which thought, reason gives place to contemplation, and conscious personality is lost in ecstatic union with the One, is absorbed in the One who, as we have seen, is Himself above consciousness. Through this mystic, passive, truly blessed contemplation it loses itself in the ultimate reality beyond even self-conscious thought. This supersensible, super-conscious state he is said by Porphyry to have attained four times, Porphyry himself only once. What this experience of union with the ineffable source of the Good and the Beautiful was, is best described in his own words. “Therefore we must ascend again towards the Good, the desired of every soul. To attain it is for those that will take the upward path, who will set all their forces towards it, who will divest themselves of all that we have put on in our descent (from the One), . . . until passing, on the upward way, all that is other than God, each in the solitude of himself shall behold that solitary-dwelling Existence, the Apart, the Unmingled, the Pure, that from which all things depend, for which all look and live and act and know, the Source of Life and of Intellection and of Being. And one that shall know this vision with what passion of love shall he not be seized, with what pang of desire, what longing to be molten into one with This, what wondering delight! If he that has never seen this Being must hunger for It, as for all his welfare, he that has known must love

and reverence it as the Very Beauty ; he will be flooded with awe and gladness, stricken by a salutary terror ; he loves with a veritable love, with sharp desire ; all other loves than this, he must despise, and disdain all that seemed fair. . . . Beholding this Being, resting, rapt, in the vision and possession of so lofty a loveliness, growing to its likeness, what Beauty can the soul yet lack ? . . . And for this the sternest and the uttermost combat is set before the souls ; all our labour is for this, lest we be left without part in this noblest vision, which to attain is to be blessed in the blissful sight, which to fail of is to fail utterly. . . . ' Let us flee then to the beloved Fatherland.' . . . The Fatherland to us is There whence we have come, and There is the Father. . . . When you perceive that you have grown to this (the perfection of goodness through the discipline of the soul), you are now become very Vision ; call up all your confidence, strike forward yet a step—you need a guide no longer—strain and see."¹⁵

There is a certain affinity between the system of Plotinus on its ethical and religious side and Christianity. Both are imbued with the otherworldly spirit ; keenly conscious of the superlative significance and importance of the things of the spirit, in contrast to the things of sense. We seem to see the shadow of Paul in the last of the great Greek thinkers, whose highest interest, like that of the apostle, is the realisation of the true spiritual life in conflict with "this body of death." The Greek thinker and the Christian apostle alike strive for the life of mystic union with God and find in this union the supreme end of the upward striving of the soul. Yet how different the method and the means. Here we have salvation by philosophy, which to Paul, in the light of the revelation of God in Christ, was "foolishness." Here the soul seeking its way to the true life in virtue of its innate divine light and capacity. Here the highest that philosophy could accomplish in bringing humanity back to God. Here a redemption without a redeemer, for the soul redeems itself by a moral and spiritual process which, in its own way, and on the lines of genuinely Greek Thought, leads to the goal of eternal life and blessedness.

In view of his predilection for the abstract, it is hardly likely that Plotinus had any interest in the historic redeemer of the Christian Gospel or troubled to acquaint himself with the concrete example of the highest religious and ethical life, as reflected in the unique person and mission of the prophet of Nazareth. It is still more unlikely that he would appreciate the Pauline version of this Gospel, though he might well have exchanged compliments

¹⁵ "Ennead," I. vi. 7-9, Mackenna's trans. ; cf. VI. ix. 3, 4, 11, and see that of Bréhier, who gives also the Greek text.

with Origen, as Dean Inge puts it. In spite of certain affinities, traditional Christianity, with its acute sense of sin, its emphasis on the incapacity of the sinner to attain the higher life apart from the grace of God in Christ—notwithstanding its appropriation of the Greek doctrine of the freedom of the will—its Gospel for the uneducated mass of mankind, and its appeal to sinners without distinction of class and culture would, as in the case of a Celsus, a Fronto, a Marcus Aurelius, probably repel rather than attract. He is so concerned with the ascent of the individual soul to God that he seems to have little interest in the altruistic life in the Christian sense—the life not merely for self, but for others. At all events, it is not adequately emphasised, and one would not conclude from the “*Enneads*” that he was living at a time of tragic stress and crisis for the body politic and social. The actual world of suffering and struggle hardly exists for him. In this respect the system is all too abstract and self-centred, though in his abstract world Plotinus is indeed a noble figure, and in the circle of his cultured friends and disciples a most charming and enthusing personality. At the same time, he does not seem to have been actively hostile to Christianity in its Catholic form, and confined his opposition to the Gnostic version of it.¹⁶ Otherwise he appears to have ignored it, and there is no trace of its influence on his thought. On the other hand, he was destined to wield a profound influence on Christian thought. This influence is patent in that of Augustine, for instance. His mysticism, in particular, moulded the later Christian mysticism which took its rise with the pseudo-Dionysius in the fifth century, and perpetuated itself in that of the later mediæval mystics, from Scotus Erigena onwards.

PLOTINUS AND POLYTHEISM

Towards the traditional gods he seems to have adopted an attitude of aloofness. When invited by his disciple and friend, Amelius, to take part in their worship, he treated the invitation with what sounds like contempt. “It is their business to come to me ; not mine to go to them.” For him religion was spiritual,

¹⁶ Schmidt seeks to show that he was the active opponent not merely of Gnosticism, but of Christianity itself, and that he is to be regarded as the real inspirer of the Neo-Platonist polemic against it. This contention he seeks to prove from the essay against the Gnostics. “Plotin’s Stellung zum Gnosticismus und kirchlichen Christenthum,” “*Texte und Unters.*,” v., Neue Folge (1901). Dean Inge, on the other hand, thinks that he was not actively hostile to Catholic Christianity, and even conjectures that he advised his friend and patron, the Emperor Gallienus, to grant them toleration. “*Philosophy of Plotinus.*,” i. 64.

subjective, and this religion needs no temples, images, altars for its nurture. The philosophic mystic is independent of this formalism, which is a hindrance, rather than a help to the soul in quest of union with God. This union comes not as the result of any incitement like that of formal worship, but in a state of mental passivity. The soul after purifying itself by virtue and thought can only wait for the beatific vision. Its true attitude is that of the quietist. Plotinus freely and arbitrarily allegorises the old myths and does not really believe in them. He admits that there may be something in magic, astrology, and divination, and ascribes life and divinity to the heavenly bodies, whilst guarding against an anthropomorphic conception of them. He believes, too, in the demons, the demigods. Besides the One and the divine Reason and Soul, there is room for other subordinate deities. The philosophic trinity does not possess a monopoly of divinity. He even defends the worship of images. In this respect, his thought is to a certain extent under the influence of the superstition of the age. But such notions are not an integral part of his system, and the fact seems to be that, whilst paying tribute to current superstitious conceptions, he did not hold them in a very literal fashion, and sought to interpret them philosophically.¹⁷

PORPHYRY

His philosophical abstraction was in truth ill-fitted to coalesce with the current polytheism, or to excite the kind of religious feeling associated with it. In his disciples Porphyry and Iamblichus, who expounded and developed his teaching, this aloofness from the gods disappears in increasing degree. Porphyry was born at Tyre,¹⁸ in 232 or 233, studied under Longinus at Athens, and became a disciple of Plotinus at Rome in 263. He lived in closest friendship with his master, whose literary productivity he stimulated¹⁹ and whose works he edited. He retired to Sicily some time before the death of Plotinus in 270 to recover from the depression brought on by overwork. He appears to have spent the next thirty years till his death, about the beginning of the fourth century, partly in Sicily,²⁰ partly at Rome, where he became the leading exponent of his master's system. Though he

¹⁷ See Zeller, iii., Pt. II. 675 f.; Benn, 578-579. Benn ascribes to Plotinus a smaller share in the current religious belief than Zeller does.

¹⁸ "Vita Plotini," 7. His Semitic name was Malchus, which he hellenised into Porphyry.

¹⁹ Plotinus only began to write in later life and was not naturally disposed to literary work.

²⁰ Eusebius, vi. 19.

was not an original thinker, he possessed great learning and no little critical ability, and was far superior to Plotinus as a writer. He differs from him in inculcating the ascetic life, as a matter of principle, and in his active championship of polytheism both against the Christians and as an aid to the higher life.

Under his auspices Neo-Platonism definitely took up an antagonistic attitude not merely to Gnosticism, but to Christianity itself, if it also shows traces of its influence. Theoretically he seems to share the religious spiritualism of Plotinus. The true temple of God is the soul of the wise man, and God requires not sacrifice; but a pure heart and a pious life. In the letter to the Egyptian priest Anebo, he adopts even a sceptical tone towards the popular gods and their worship. This mood seems, however, to have been only a transient one, and he is at bottom a superstitious believer in gods and demons, good and bad, including the Jewish angels and archangels, with whom his Old Testament studies had made him acquainted. He sees in the popular polytheism—in magic, astrology, exorcism, divination, oracles, theurgy—the necessary handmaid of his philosophic religion, though he would reform it to a certain extent, and evidently prefers those cults which lend themselves to a spiritual interpretation. He recognises the merits of Judaism and, unlike Celsus, admires Christ as a man and a religious teacher.²¹ But for the Christians, who see in Him a God and have falsified His teaching, he has nothing but contempt. He refers in very depreciating terms to Origen, whom, as a youth, he had met, apparently at Tyre,²² and wrote a lost work in fifteen books against Christianity. It seems to have been extremely strong on its critical side,²³ for Porphyry, as a pupil of Longinus, was an expert in philology and literary criticism. His attack, unlike that of Celsus, was not actuated by a political motive. He does not seem to have objected to Christianity because it was detrimental to the State, for, like Plotinus, he appears to have had no interest in the Empire, which during the greater part of his life was, indeed, past praying for. He attacked it because, as he strove to show by a critical examination of the Christian Scriptures, it appeared to him to rest on an uncritical and unhistoric foundation, and mixed up myth with fact. He opposed it, further, because of its false dialectic and what seemed to him the sophistry of its exponents

²¹ Another disciple of Plotinus, Amelius, pays a high tribute to the "Prologue of the Fourth Gospel."

²² Eusebius, vi. 19.

²³ He concluded, for instance, that the Book of Daniel was written in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes.

like Paul, and their obscurantist antagonism to philosophy, with which its leading doctrines are altogether incompatible. Whilst he revered Christ, and assimilated something from Christian ethics,²⁴ he detested Paul as a mere sophist, whose reasoning appears to him incomprehensible, and rejected his theology.

His criticism caused no small trepidation as well as vexation to the Christian writers—Eusebius, Methodius, and others—who attempted to refute him, and whose counter-attacks have also been lost. Eusebius affects to see calumny and not argument, in his criticism.²⁵ This is, however, only the device of the angry controversialist. In his "Commentary on Daniel" Jerome indulges in personal vituperation and thus gives proof both of the formidable nature of the attack and his incapacity to recognise the force, on scientific grounds, of his criticism. Lactantius adopts the same contemptuous tone towards the nameless Neo-Platonist critics whom he mentions in his "Divine Institutes,"²⁶ and one of whom some historians, not very probably, have identified with the redoubtable leader of the School. Augustine is more discriminating and pays a deserved tribute to his character and his learning, and the modern historian is constrained to admit that the much-abused ancient critic has the best of the argument as against the crude Christian exegesis and uncritical dogmatism of the age.²⁷ On the other hand, the religious standpoint which permitted an alliance between philosophy and the current superstition was still more vulnerable. This tendency is even more pronounced in his pupil, the Syrian Iamblichus, in whom Neo-Platonism becomes more theological and theurgic—a mystery cult in which magic and miracle, as well as philosophy, play an important part. The philosopher assumes the rôle of the hierophant.

²⁴ He borrows the Christian virtues, faith, hope, charity, to which he adds a fourth, truth.

²⁵ vi. 19.

²⁶ v. 2, 4; and see Monceaux, iii. 310-311.

²⁷ Harnack believes that the fragments of Porphyry's book have been preserved in the "Apocriticus of Macarius Magnes," and from these he seeks to elucidate his antichristian attitude. "Expansion," ii. 133 f.; see also Geffcken, 295-304.

PART VII
THE VICTORY OF THE CATHOLIC
CHURCH

CHAPTER I

THE FINAL CONFLICT

ACCESSION OF DIOCLETIAN

THE decade succeeding the death of Aurelian in 275 witnessed a series of short-lived Emperors, under whose régime the Empire was the helpless prey of internal strife and anarchy. Tacitus, the first of the series, was the choice of the senate, on which the chiefs of the army devolved the task of filling Aurelian's place. The experiment of reviving the senatorial power as a poise to that of a mutinous soldiery, and a guarantee of more stable and efficient government, was not a success, and the army went on as before, filling the vacancies usually made by the assassin's dagger. The last of them, Carinus, a worthy compeer in vice of Commodus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus, was got rid of in 284 by Diocletian, who, in the interest of his personal advancement,¹ had already avenged the murder of the virtuous Numerian on his inhuman father-in-law, Arrius Aper.

Army and senate having proved their incompetence effectively to preserve the Empire from anarchy and threatening dissolution, Diocletian profited by their incapacity to render the supreme power independent of both. He transformed the old hybrid imperial Government into an absolute monarchy, supreme over army, senate, and people. Moreover, he not only adopted the old expedient of associating a colleague with himself in the government. He divided the supreme power for administrative purposes, retaining the government of the eastern half of the Empire in his own hands and conferring that of the west on Maximian, with the title of Augustus. In order further to increase its efficiency, each was assisted by a subordinate ruler, who bore the title of Caesar, which he conferred on Galeius and Constantius

¹ According to Vopiscus, "Numerian," 12 f.

Chlorus for the east and west respectively. The system promised to obviate the bane of government by the will of the army, since it deprived it of the power to make and unmake Emperors, and placed this power in the reigning Augusti for the time being. These were to choose the Cæsars or subrulers, and they in turn were to step into the places of the Augusti on their decease or retirement after a stated period (twenty years) of supreme power. The Empire was to be governed by a series of rulers who should derive their right to rule in virtue of the nomination of their predecessors, not of the suffrages of the legions. In order to enhance the prestige of the supreme ruler, he assumed the royal diadem and invested his Court with the pretentious ceremonial of the Oriental despot.

For nearly twenty years the Christians were left in peace under the new régime. Since the Edict of Gallienus the Church had prospered exceedingly. Its recognition as a *religio licita* contributed materially to increase its members. Its growth among the higher classes is evidenced by the fact that many Christians were appointed to public office, including even the governorship of provinces. They were dispensed from the duty of sacrificing, which these offices involved. They wielded a powerful influence in the imperial household. The most trusted of the officials of Diocletian's Court, such as Dorotheus and Gorgonius, were Christians.² Lactantius even assumes that the Empress Prisca and her daughter Valeria had at heart secretly been won for the faith.³ The bishops now enjoyed not only the protection, but the favour of the State officials, and in the cities large churches were erected for the crowded congregations that the old meeting-houses could no longer accommodate.

The picture of expansion and prosperity drawn by Eusebius has, however, its reverse side. The long immunity from persecution was marked by spiritual deterioration, showing itself in laxity and sloth, party spirit and bitter animosities, hypocrisy and dissimulation.⁴ This declension is probably, as we have elsewhere observed, overcoloured in order to provide a providential explanation of the last and worst of the persecutions. The persecution must have come as a shock to the Church, to which a lengthy security had evidently been no unmixed blessing.

² Eusebius, viii. 1.

³ "De Mortibus Persecutorum," 15. Brandt's edition in the "Corpus Scriptorum Eccl. Lat." (1897). Eng. trans. in "Ante-Nicene Lib." Brandt assails, Bury (ed. of Gibbon, ii. 531 f.) upholds the authorship of Lactantius.

⁴ Eusebius, viii. 1.

ORIGIN OF THE PERSECUTION

It was not till the closing years of his reign that Diocletian broke with the tolerant policy of Gallienus. Like Septimius Severus he was suddenly and unexpectedly transformed from a friend into a relentless foe. There had, indeed, been stray cases of persecution⁵ in the earlier part of the reign. But it was directed against recalcitrant Christian soldiers, and their execution was for military insubordination rather than on account of their religion.⁶ There can be little doubt that he was for long friendly to Christianity and only with reluctance became its persecutor. He was, indeed, in religion an adherent of use and wont. He honoured the gods⁷ and he seems to have had a predilection for the worship of the sun god⁸ and Æsculapius. He shared the superstition of his time and anxiously consulted the oracles and the diviners as to the future. But he was too astute a politician and too self-controlled⁹ to be, like Domitian, a zealot in religion. "He was," says Vopiscus, "an outstanding man and wise, devoted to the Commonwealth and to his kindred, duly prepared to face whatever the occasion demanded, forming plans that were always deep, though sometimes over-bold, and one who could by prudence and exceeding firmness hold in check the impulses of a restless spirit."¹⁰ We cannot imagine him, as some writers have represented, embarking on a crusade against Christianity from purely religious motives. It was too firmly rooted in the devotion of a large proportion of his subjects for him to risk the stability of his government in a rash effort to eradicate it. He was inclined to avoid extremes for political reasons, to show clemency rather than cruelty, and on this account condemned the cruelties of Aurelian.¹¹ "Aurelian," he said, "ought to have been a general rather than an emperor."

If in principle Christianity might be a challenge to his autocratic temperament, he must have known from the experience of his persecuting predecessors that, in the last resort, the Church

⁵ Eusebius, viii. 1.

⁶ To the earlier part of the reign is ascribed the massacre of the Theban Legion in Gaul—a legion, or at least part of it, supposed to have been composed of Christian soldiers from Egypt—recorded in the "Acts of St Maurice." The massacre is ascribed to Maximian. It is greatly exaggerated and is of doubtful authenticity.

⁷ "Aurelius Victor," 39.

⁸ See Mason, "Persecution of Diocletian," 77-79. He seems to have worshipped Jupiter under this aspect particularly.

⁹ Vopiscus emphasises this trait. "Numerian," 13.

¹⁰ "Numerian," 13. Latin text and trans. by Magie (Loeb. Class. Lib., 1932).

¹¹ Vopiscus, "Aur.," 44; cf. "Numerian," 15.

would refuse to bend to the will of a persecuting Emperor. He must also have learned from the example of the Christian officials, of whose services he made use in his Court and in the imperial administration, that it could loyally accommodate itself to his absolute system of government, if he left it alone. It was in the sphere of religion and morals, not of politics, that it took up an antagonistic position towards arbitrary power. All power being ordained by God, the State might indifferently be a republic or an absolute monarchy, if it did not persecute its members. Nay, the Church, with its wonderful organisation, might well seem a powerful adjunct of the new imperialism which he had inaugurated. The old Roman cult was lacking in this respect, and even the imperial cult, if it might tend in some degree to foster the imperial unity, was, in organisation and as a religious force, but a feeble counterpart of the Church. Of all its rivals, whether Roman or Oriental, Christianity might well seem to be best fitted, politically as well as spiritually and ethically, to be the completion of the new imperial system. Only if it could be shown to be politically dangerous would it forfeit the tolerant good will of the sagacious and wary statesman who had so effectively remodelled the imperial constitution.

That he ultimately came to believe it politically dangerous was due to the influence of the Cæsar Galerius. Galerius, an uncultured, superstitious Dacian of brutal temperament, owed his rise from a cowherd to be the Emperor's son-in-law and Cæsar to his military ability. His hatred of Christianity he seems to have imbibed from his mother, who was a devotee of the Phrygian Cybele, in whose worship the Christians of her native village refused to participate.¹² His exploits against the Persians and his position as the husband of Valeria gave him a commanding influence in the Eastern section of the Empire. The Christian officials of the imperial Court doubtless dreaded the prospect of his accession, in a couple of years, as Emperor of the East, in accordance with the remodelled constitution. Some of them, if not all, appear to have conceived the plan of frustrating this dreaded contingency by displacing him in favour of some one—possibly the young Constantine—who would be likely to continue Diocletian's tolerant policy. Galerius evidently came to suspect some such design and spent the winter of 302-303 at Nicomedia in close communication with his father-in-law. He apparently succeeded in infusing into his father-in-law's mind his own suspicion of a plot to frustrate his arrangement for the stable government of the Empire. The suspected plot was not against

¹² See Lactantius, "De Mortibus," 11.

the Emperor himself. The suspected Christian officials could have had no motive for plotting against their benefactor.¹³ There were strong reasons why they should seek to prevent his subordinate from succeeding him, even if his displacement involved the risk of the civil strife against which Diocletian had sought to secure the Empire. Though actual proof of a Christian plot is not available, and Lactantius ascribes the machinations of Galerius solely to his fury against Christianity, one suspects that his one-sided representation is due either to his ignorance of the actual facts, or, more probably, to his desire to slur over anything that might seem to incriminate his fellow-Christians.¹⁴ Some kind of political intrigue to the disadvantage of the obnoxious Cæsar there appears to have been, and it is quite feasible that Galerius, apart altogether from the question of religion, succeeded in convincing his father-in-law that the future success of his system of government, and with it the future peace of the Empire, were in jeopardy by reason of the suspected intrigue of certain Christian officials.

This being so, it was natural that he should consult some of his civil and military advisers on the question of persecution, as Lactantius avers.¹⁵ Some of these advised a general suppression of the Christians as the enemies of the old State religion, as Galerius appears to have urged. Others demurred, but finally complied in deference to the Cæsar's insistence. Diocletian was not yet prepared to go this length, and referred the question to the oracle of the sun god at Miletus (Apollo). The oracle also voted for persecution.¹⁶ Even then he declined to launch a general persecution against the Christians whom he evidently did not believe to be guilty of disaffection to himself. He refused to proscribe Christianity itself, whilst proceeding against his Christian officials and curtailing its free profession within the Empire. Throughout he appears, as he had always shown himself to be, the master who decides for himself, not as the mere tool of a masterful subordinate.¹⁷ His action was dictated by political, rather than

¹³ Burckhardt rejects the assertion of Lactantius that the initiative in the persecution was due to Galerius, and contends that it was due to his discovery of a Christian plot against Diocletian himself. "Die Zeit Constantins," 290 f. (2nd ed., 1880). This is most unlikely, whereas it is most likely that there should be a design to oust Galerius from the succession on the part of Christian officials, and that Galerius should suspect it.

¹⁴ Eusebius explicitly avoids dealing with the causes of the persecution, apparently from the same motive.

¹⁵ "De Mort.," II.

¹⁶ Lactantius, "De Mort. Pers.," II. Eusebius, "Vita Constantini," ii. 50.

¹⁷ Mason seems to me to misrepresent Diocletian in picturing him as a weak old man successively yielding to the persistence of a younger, who was determined to exterminate the Christians. "The Persecution of Diocletian," 57 f. (1876). McGiffert's disquisition on the subject is far more forcible in its contention that

religious motives; that of Galerius by a mixture of personal interest and religious prejudice.

SUCCESSIVE EDICTS AGAINST CHRISTIANITY

Hence the first of a series of edicts against the Christians, which was issued on the 24th February 303, and bears the stamp of Diocletian's cautious statesmanship, directing the churches to be demolished, the Scriptures to be burned, Christian officials in the palace and throughout the Empire to be degraded and lose their civic rights, and their free servants to be reduced to slavery.¹⁸ The two last clauses were based on that of Valerian. The clause directing the burning of the Scriptures was a new departure, and betrays a sense of their importance in furthering the Christian propaganda. It may have been due to Hierocles, president of the province of Bithynia and a member of the imperial council, an ardent Neo-Platonist who had criticised the Christian Scriptures in his "Philaethes."¹⁹ The clause referring to the demolition of the churches re-establishes in a new form the illegality of the Christian assemblies. As a whole the edict materially infringes, if it does not wholly supersede, the tolerant policy of Gallienus. Early on the previous day a military force, under the prefect of the Prætorian Guard, anticipated its first two provisions by bursting into the great church of Nicomedia, pillaging its sacred furniture, burning the Scriptures, and levelling the building itself to the ground, Emperor and Cæsar watching its destruction from a window of the palace. Its first martyr was an indignant Christian of Nicomedia, who tore down the edict with the ironic words, "More victories over the Goths and Sarmatians," and who was instantly seized and burned alive.²⁰ Shortly after a fire broke out in the palace. It was followed by another about a fortnight later. Who but Christians could have been guilty of this crime? The fire may have been accidental.²¹

Diocletian was genuinely convinced by Galerius that there was a political plot dangerous to the State, and that he convinced himself of the necessity of taking a certain action against it. The assumption of Hunziker and others that the persecution was the culmination of a long-cherished plan in the mind of Diocletian is untenable.

¹⁸ Eusebius, viii. 2; Lactantius, "De Mort. Pers.," 13; cf. Arnobius, "Adv. Gentes," iv. 36.

¹⁹ Lactantius, "Divinæ Institutiones," v. 2 and 3, and "De Mort. Pers.," 16. The Greek title is *λόγοι φιλαλήθεις πρὸς τοὺς χριστιανούς*. See also Eusebius' "Treatise Against the Life of Apollonius," 1 f. Greek text and trans. by Conybeare.

²⁰ Lactantius, "De Mort. Pers.," 13; Eusebius, viii. 5.

²¹ Constantine later ascribed it to lightning, "Oratio," 25, apparently in order to disculpate the Christians.

But the repetition seems to indicate intention. Probably it was the work of some irate Christians within the palace in revenge for their degradation; possibly, as Lactantius avers, of the agents of Galerius, who adopted this expedient in order to hurry the Emperor into harsher measures.²² If Lactantius speaks truly, he feigned fear of the Christians, and fled from the city in order to intensify the panic. Lactantius is, however, too biased a witness to be implicitly trusted. It is hardly likely that the sagacious Diocletian would be outwitted by such a device. After the first outbreak, he sought, by torturing his domestics, both pagan and Christian, to discover its authors. Infuriated by the second, he appears to have seen in both a proof of Christian treachery, and ordered his Christian domestics to sacrifice as a test of their innocence. Their refusal, in spite of inhuman tortures, he interpreted as a proof of guilt and punished with death. Among the numerous victims, who were arraigned and suffered for imputed treason rather than for their Christian faith, were Gorgonius and Dorotheus. Even his wife and daughter were compelled to sacrifice.²³ Anon came reports of disaffection in Syria and at Melitene in Cappadocia, in which the Emperor appears to have seen a further evidence of Christian treachery.²⁴ In his acutely suspicious mood, the Empire might well seem endangered by a widespread Christian conspiracy.

Hence the attempt to nip this supposed, far-flung conspiracy in the bud in a second edict directing the imprisonment of the clergy—"the rulers of the churches"—throughout the Empire.²⁵ Whilst this edict also followed on the lines of that of Valerian, who had similarly sought to paralyse the Church by attacking its leaders, it differed from it in substituting imprisonment for the death penalty. These edicts were vigorously enforced in the East. Eusebius tells of the destruction of the churches and the burning of the Scriptures in the market-places which he himself witnessed.²⁶ In Italy, Spain, and especially in Africa which were under the sway of Maximian, who shared the animus of Galerius against the Christians, the crusade was also very active. He found ready instruments of his will in Anulinus in proconsular Africa, Florus in Numidia, and Dacianus in Spain. Many who refused to surrender the Scriptures and persisted in secretly meeting for worship were tortured, in spite of the fact that the

²² "De Mort. Pers.," 14.

²³ Eusebius, viii. 6; Lactantius, 15.

²⁴ Eusebius, viii. 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, viii. 2 and 6; Lactantius, "De Mort. Pers.," 15. Both accounts are confused.

²⁶ viii. 2.

first edict prescribed no penalty for such action. Some quailed before the ordeal and gave up the sacred books (*traditores*); others concealed them, or like Mensurius of Carthage delivered heretical books instead.²⁷

Under the régime of the tolerant Constantius Chlorus the edicts were more considerably applied in Gaul and Britain. Like Diocletian, Constantius had hitherto been the patron as well as the protector of the Christians, and to him their persecution was evidently a most distasteful necessity. He allowed the churches to be destroyed,²⁸ but he does not seem to have proceeded against the clergy, or to have dismissed the Christian officials in his service who refused to renounce their Christianity. According to Eusebius, he saw in their fidelity to their religious convictions a proof of their fidelity to himself, and only dismissed those whose compliance with the edict shook his confidence in their integrity in other matters.²⁹

In these edicts Diocletian still refrained from forcing the Christians to sacrifice and inflicting the penalty of death for refusal. The second was evidently actuated, more by political than religious motives, the Christian clergy being regarded as dangerous plotters. In a third edict, issued probably on the occasion of his vicennalia at Rome (the twentieth anniversary of his accession) in December of the same year (303), he offered the imprisoned clergy their freedom if they would agree to sacrifice as a test of their fidelity. This looks like a conditional offer of amnesty, though the condition attached to it made it impossible for conscientious prisoners to take advantage of it. Many yielded and were set at liberty. Many others refused, in spite of the torture to which they were subjected in order to bring them to comply, and to which not a few seem to have succumbed. Others were allowed by humane magistrates to get off after a more or less formal performance, even although they protested that they had not sacrificed and never would. In such cases the authorities were too anxious to empty the prisons to be particular about the exact fulfilment of the edict.³⁰

At length in the following year (probably April 304) appeared the fourth edict, which boldly eschewed half measures and struck at Christianity itself. In the words of Eusebius,³¹ it enjoined

²⁷ For details, see the lengthy description of Mason, "Persecution of Diocletian," 150 f.

²⁸ Lactantius, "De Mort.," 15. Eusebius' assertion that he left the churches intact seems to be incorrect (viii. 13).

²⁹ See "Vita Constantini," i. 16.

³⁰ See Eusebius, viii. 3, and "Martyrs of Palestine," 1.

³¹ "Martyrs of Palestine," 3.

all to sacrifice forthwith and offer libations to the idols. At one fell stroke it revoked the edict of Gallienus and explicitly made Christianity once more a *religio illicita*, adherence to which was punishable by death. It was the work of Maximian and Galerius rather than of Diocletian, who was incapacitated by illness at the time of its promulgation, though he seems to have done nothing afterwards to stop its execution. The results were bloody enough, as we learn from Eusebius and other sources, though it is impossible to give a detailed consecutive account of them. Wherever the sway of Maximian and Galerius reached it was remorselessly enforced, and even in Gaul and Britain we hear of some martyrdoms, including that of St Alban.³²

The abdication of Diocletian and Maximian in 305 brought immunity to Italy, Spain, and Africa, as well as Gaul and Britain, in which, as Eusebius notes,³³ the persecution under the fourth edict lasted less than two years. This immunity was due to the fact that Maximian's son, Maxentius, who seized the government of his father's dominions, reversed his persecuting policy from political motives.³⁴

In the East, on the other hand, under the auspices of Galerius, it lasted for six years longer, and was especially severe in Syria and Egypt, which were under the government of his nephew, Maximinus Daza. It is a terrible picture that Eusebius gives of the régime of this sensual and savage Dacian and his worthy superior. He limits his survey to Syria and Egypt and only incidentally speaks of other regions, as in the case of the burning of a Phrygian town with all its Christian inhabitants, and of martyrdoms in Pontus, Cappadocia, Mesopotamia, and Arabia.³⁵ Maximinus gave orders to the magistrates of the cities in the provinces under his rule to see that no one abstained from sacrifice. At Cæsarea in Palestine Eusebius describes how the heralds by order of the governor of the province summoned all the citizens—men, women, and children—to the temples, where the chiliarchs called each by name from a roll, so as to prevent the possibility of evasion.³⁶ Here and elsewhere the recusants were tortured and thrown to the wild beasts, or slowly burned alive, or cast into the sea, or crucified, or starved to death, or mutilated and sent to the mines, with, in addition, the vile expedient of

³² Possibly, as we have seen, these may have taken place during the persecution of Decius or Valerian.

³³ "Martyrs," 13.

³⁴ Eusebius, viii. 14.

³⁵ viii. 11, 12. Lactantius, apparently referring to the same incident, says that it was the church, in which the Christian population had taken refuge, that was burned. "Div. Inst.," v. 11.

³⁶ "Martyrs," 4.

sending Christian virgins, who would not recant, to the public brothels. The horrible cruelty of this long drawn-out tragedy would seem incredible were it not for the statement of Eusebius that he himself had witnessed at Cæsarea and in Egypt some of the worst scenes he depicts.³⁷

Nevertheless, instead of terrorising the Christians into compliance, it merely fanned the spirit of defiance even to the point of a fanatic recklessness in courting torture and death. Some in their fiery zeal, indeed, tempted their doom by interrupting the sacrifices and conjuring the votaries of the gods to forsake the worship of idols and demons for that of the true God. One zealot, for instance, went the length of seizing the hand of Urbanus, the Governor of Palestine, as he was in the act of offering a libation, and denouncing his idolatry.³⁸ Others would rush forward to the judgment seat, where their fellow-Christians were being arraigned, and proclaim that they, too, were Christians.³⁹ The exalted spirit, thus aroused, unfortunately also showed itself in schism and faction, which Eusebius notes with sorrow, but on which he refrains from enlarging.⁴⁰

At the same time, it contributed to render the policy of brutal repression, which only whetted the martyr spirit, absolutely futile. In 308 there was a short interval of what the persecutors deemed a humane relaxation of this savagery. The relaxation consisted, according to Eusebius, in mutilating the victims of persecution, instead of butchering them outright. In the typical case, for instance, of a batch of about one hundred prisoners from Egypt at Cæsarea in Palestine, whose right eyes were cut out and the sinews of their left feet burned, and who were sent to toil in the mines of Palestine.⁴¹ The Roman conception of humanity in this brutal age was certainly peculiar. There seems, however, to have been at least a partial lull in the persecution in Egypt and elsewhere, during which the death penalty was suspended. The sufferers in the mines of Thebais were released. "For a little time," says Eusebius, "we were beginning to breathe pure air."⁴² But the respite was brief, and with the issue of a new edict—the fifth—in the names of Galerius and Maximinus, the butchery recommenced in the East. It directed the rebuilding of the fallen pagan altars, enjoined anew the obligation to sacrifice and to partake of the sacrificial meat on all males, their wives, children, and servants, and prescribed the sprinkling of all articles of food sold in the market-places with the sacrificial libations.⁴³ It thus

³⁷ viii. 9.

³⁸ "Martyrs," 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8, and viii. 12.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

proposed to starve the Christians into compliance and apparently assumed, if it did not, in the version of Eusebius, explicitly prescribe the death penalty for refusal. The gruesome work of martyring the recusants recommenced. It lasted till 311, when Galerius, stricken with a loathsome and incurable disease, at last was fain to confess himself baffled before the invincible faith which had continued to endure the most terrible suffering in splendid fidelity to a higher will than that of any earthly tyrant.

THE EDICT OF TOLERATION

Hence the edict issued in April of this year in his own name and those of Constantine and Licinius, and restoring the toleration which, partly under his prompting, Diocletian had violated with such terrible consequences to the Christians in the eastern half of the Empire. Both Eusebius and Lactantius ascribe its promulgation to the horrible disease which his physicians were powerless to heal, and led him to make trial of the efficacy of the Christian God. The edict does ask for the prayers of the Christians for his welfare, and this was evidently one reason for its promulgation. At the same time, it contains a plain admission of the failure of the policy of brute force, though the admission is veiled in a specious phraseology, which has been variously interpreted, in order to save the face of the arch-persecutor. In effect it acknowledges that Christianity simply cannot be eradicated by persecution however brutal, and therefore the Christians must be tolerated once more. The preamble states the object of the persecution to have been to secure a general conformity with the ancient Roman laws and discipline, and, in particular, to bring back the Christians, who have forsaken the religion of their ancestors, to this conformity. The Christians, in their wilfulness and stupidity, had refused to follow any longer the institutions of the ancients, which perhaps their own ancestors had first established. In accordance with their own caprice they had made laws for themselves and formed their own separate assemblies in diverse places (in opposition, that is, to the old Roman cult). Hence the attempt to compel them to observe the ancient institutions. In consequence, many were overcome by the danger and submitted. But many (by their obstinacy) were undone, and many persisted in their belief (in spite of persecution). A further result has been that the Christians have neither been brought to worship the old gods, nor have been permitted to worship their own God. In this impasse it has seemed good to the Emperors, in their wonted clemency, to ordain that it may be lawful for the

Christians to exist again⁴⁴ and resume their assemblies, provided they do nothing contrary to good order.⁴⁵ Wherefore, in virtue of this indulgence, it will be their duty to pray to their God for the imperial welfare, that of the State, and their own, that the public weal may be preserved everywhere, and they themselves may live in security in their own abodes.⁴⁶ The persecutor thus backs out of an impossible situation with a virtual confession of the failure of the policy of brutal repression, which has turned out to be a mistake. The confession of this mistake, for which, however, he makes no apology, has been wrung from him by the calamitous state of the Empire, to which this mistaken policy has materially contributed. Evidently, also, his own personal affliction, which compels him to appeal for their prayers, has had something to do with his all too tardy enlightenment.⁴⁷

The name of Maximinus does not appear in the edict. Most probably he would not have approved it, though he grudgingly gave instructions, through his prætorian prefect, Sabinus, to the provincial governors to waive further persecution.⁴⁸ There was great rejoicing in the East as the prisons were emptied, the exiles came back from the mines or their hiding places, and the local assemblies of the Christians were resumed. The rejoicing was short-lived. Within six months, at the instigation of Theotecnus of Antioch, a Christian apostate, Maximinus, after prohibiting the Christian assemblies in the cemeteries in honour of the martyrs, hit on the expedient of getting the local authorities to petition for the expulsion of the Christians. To this he added that of circulating what seems to have been an abominable calumny of Christ in the form of forged "Acts of Pilate," which was posted up for public perusal and which the schoolmasters were directed to teach to their pupils. We hear, too, of a renewal of the attempt to paralyse the Church by striking at its leaders, in

⁴⁴ Ut denuo sint Christiani.

⁴⁵ Lactantius, "De Mort. Pers.," 34; Greek trans. by Eusebius, viii. 17.

⁴⁶ Galerius does not, I think, give a hypocritical account of the motive of the persecution by representing it as an attempt to bring back the Christians to the Christian faith in its primitive form. This interpretation is a misreading of the edict (by Keim, "Baur's Theolog. Jahrb.," 1852, 217 f.; Mason, "Persecution of Diocletian," 302 f.; Müller, "Kirchengeschichte," i. 164). The passage, "The institutions of the ancients which perhaps their own ancestors had established," refers to the ancient pagan religion, which the Christians had renounced, not to primitive Christianity from which the Christians had departed, and to which Galerius had striven to bring them back. Nor does the claim "that they may again be Christians" mean that he had persecuted them in order that they might be Christians again in the primitive sense. It simply means that Christianity, in virtue of this edict, may be tolerated as it had been before its promulgation.

⁴⁸ Eusebius, ix. 1.

the persons of such notable churchmen as Silvanus of Emesa, Lucian of Antioch, Peter of Alexandria, Anthimus of Nicomedia.⁴⁹ Under the same prompting he strove to reform the pagan cult as a counterpoise to Christianity, and to organise it after the model of the Catholic Church. Its high priests were empowered to prevent the building of churches and otherwise molest their members. It was an anticipation of the reforming policy of the Emperor Julian at a later time, and it might have had some success had his religious policy had time to mature. It was denied this chance by the breach between him and Licinius, who had succeeded to the European part of Galerius' dominions. To obviate the disaffection of his Christian subjects pending the coming conflict between them, he was fain towards the end of 312 to issue an instruction, which, in sheer lying on the score of his past treatment of the Christians, must have made them gasp in amazement, that they should be allowed to follow their own religion. At the battle of Adrianople (30th April 313) the victory went to Licinius, who drove his fugitive rival through Asia Minor beyond the Taurus. Here he made a last effort to conciliate his Christian subjects by an edict granting full toleration and restoring their confiscated lands and other property. Soon after, being an inveterate drunkard and libertine, he died in the summer of 313 in a fit of what was apparently delirium tremens, in which Lactantius and Eusebius, as usual, discern the judgment of an avenging god.⁵⁰

CHAPTER II

THE CONVERSION OF CONSTANTINE

EARLY LIFE

By this time Christianity had received the permanent guarantee not only of toleration but of triumph in the conversion of Constantine, whose rise to power and ultimately to sole supremacy over the Empire is thus of superlative significance in the history of the Church as well as the Empire.

The date of his birth is usually placed in the year 272 or 274, though it has been fixed as late as 288.¹ His birthplace was

⁴⁹ Eusebius, ix. 6; *cf.* viii. 13.

⁵⁰ Lactantius says he poisoned himself, 49; Eusebius that he died of violent internal inflammation, ix. 10.

¹ Seeck, "Geschichte des Untergangs der Antiken Welt," i. 47. He founds on the "Corpus Inscript. Lat.," i., Pt. II., 302 and 435.

probably Naissus, the modern Nish, and his mother Helena—who was long afterwards credited by patriotic English historians with a royal pedigree as the daughter of a British king, Cœlus²—was the daughter of an inn-keeper at Drepanum, near Nicomedia, and became either the wife or the legitimate concubine of his father, Constantius Chlorus. Constantius was at this period an officer, but his ability and his kinship with the Emperor Claudius gained him the favour of Diocletian and Maximian, who in 293 raised him to the rank of Cæsar with the government of Britain and Gaul. Maximian, in addition, gave him his daughter Theodora in marriage. From this date Constantine, whose mother he had divorced on his second marriage, was brought up at the Court of Diocletian at Nicomedia. Of his career till he emerges into history as the successor of his father in the West, in 306, little is known. Whilst still young he became the husband of Minervina, who bore him a son, the unfortunate Crispus, but who, according to Aurelius Victor,³ was only his concubine, not his regularly wedded wife. Unlike his nephew Julian, he had not the benefit of a liberal education, though he afterwards attempted to acquire a knowledge of philosophy as well as Christian theology. Eusebius, indeed, who saw him whilst passing through Palestine with Diocletian on an expedition to Egypt, credits him, in his flattering manner, with a liberally cultivated mind as well as a fine physique.⁴ In reality his literary education seems to have been rather meagre,⁵ and at this period his only distinction consisted in the fact that he was the son by a repudiated marriage of the subordinate ruler of Gaul and Britain. His residence with Diocletian afforded him, however, the opportunity of acquiring experience of the art of war and a knowledge of government, and his subsequent career shows that he had proved an apt pupil in the practical school in which his youth and early manhood were spent.

He was already, according to Aurelius Victor and Zosimus,⁶ ambitious of rule and his hopes of elevation to the Cæsarship were, according to Lactantius,⁷ shared by the army, with whom he was very popular. He was, however, disliked and distrusted

² The old King Cole of the song.

³ "Epit.," 5-8. This relation was not deemed illegal or immoral by the code of the time.

⁴ "Vita Constantini," i. 19.

⁵ "Anon. Valesii.," 471.

⁶ Quod tolerare nequiers Constantinus, cujus jam tum a puero ingens potensque animus ardore imperitandi agitabatur. Aur. Victor, "De Cæsaribus," c. 40; cf. Zosimus, ii. 8, who also emphasises his ambition and his disappointment.

⁷ "De Mort. Pers.," c. 18.

by Galerius, and at his instigation, according to the same authority, who is confirmed by Eusebius,⁸ Diocletian was persuaded to pass over his claims. On his abdication he nominated Severus and Maximinus Daza as Cæsars instead of Constantine and Maxentius the son of Maximian. Thereafter Constantine took the first opportunity of seeking safety and the satisfaction of his ambition in flight to his father in the West.⁹

The immediate sequel was to show that the policy of Diocletian for the better government of the Empire was incapable of standing the strain of rival ambitions. On the death of Constantius Chlorus at York in 306, Constantine was immediately proclaimed Augustus by the legions in Britain, regardless of the arrangement made for the government of the Empire by the abdicated Emperor. Similarly, Maxentius was raised by the Prætorian Guards to the imperial dignity at Rome, and induced his father, Maximian, to resume the purple. Instead of two Emperors and two Cæsars, there were thus four Emperors and two Cæsars to dispute the possession of the Empire. Galerius, who was now, by the abdication of Diocletian and Maximian and the death of Constantius Chlorus, sole legal Emperor, was fain to recognise the elevation of Constantine, with the title of Cæsar, and in the meantime he acquiesced in his decision. He refused the same favour to Maxentius, who had usurped the place of the Cæsar Severus, to whom Italy had been assigned, or to recognise the resumed dignity of Maximian, and attempted to crush the usurper and his father. The attempt failed. Severus was murdered, and Galerius himself, who advanced into Italy to his aid, was compelled to retreat back to Illyricum. In the place of Severus he nominated Licinius, and thus the plethora of potentates continued, Constantine's rank being enhanced in 308 to that of Emperor of the western provinces. For four years longer he refrained from intervening actively in the general politics of the Empire, and contented himself with continuing his father's task of guarding the Rhine frontier against the barbarians, and fostering the prosperity of the provinces by his vigorous administration.¹⁰ But he was evidently watching events and awaiting the opportunity of playing a more decisive part.

⁸ "Vita Constantini," i. 20.

⁹ The flight is ascribed by Eusebius, i. 20, and Lactantius, c. 24, to his apprehension for his life, and by Lactantius, in addition, to his desire to see his father. They say nothing about his ambition.

¹⁰ "Eumenii Panegyricus Constantino," c. 22, in Migne, t. 8.

THE CONQUEST OF ITALY

The opportunity came ere long, and on Constantine's ability to make full use of it hung momentous consequences for both the Empire and the Church. On his self-assertion at the opportune moment depended his progress towards the imperial supremacy, and on the attainment of this supremacy depended the ascendancy of Christianity over paganism throughout the Empire. The opportunity came in 312 in the quarrel between him and Maxentius, a quarrel which ended in the victory at the Milvian Bridge and the conquest of Italy. There is no need to assume that at this stage he had consciously formed the design of conquering the sole domination against all his fellow-rulers. This would have been too daring a reversal of the system of Diocletian. The immediate object—the conquest of Italy—was, in itself, hazardous enough to suffice his enterprising mind. And the provocation he received was sufficient to set his army in motion, apart from any motive of personal aggrandisement. He had become the son-in-law of Maximian by his marriage to his daughter Fausta in 307. The restive old Emperor or ex-Emperor had been driven out of Rome by his son, who refused to allow him more than titular authority, successfully countered his attempt to set him aside by a military *coup*, and forced him to seek refuge with his son-in-law across the Alps. Maximian proved, however, a treacherous guest. He first attempted to seduce his soldiers from their allegiance, and on the failure of this attempt, tried to murder him. His son-in-law, who had condoned the first act of treachery, put an end to his machinations by giving him the choice of the death he would die (A.D. 310) and allowing him to hang himself.¹¹ The execution of his father furnished Maxentius with a pretext¹² for war, and his hostile preparations left Constantine no alternative but to make or await an attack. He chose the former alternative. With a greatly inferior force¹³ he completed a series of victories in northern Italy over divisions of the army of Maxentius, by the signal triumph over the tyrant himself at the Milvian Bridge over the Tiber on the 28th October 312.

HOW HE BECAME A CHRISTIAN

This battle was the first of his triumphs on behalf of Christianity as well as over his personal enemies. It was as the votary of the

¹¹ Lactantius, "De Mort. Pers.," chs. 29 and 30.

¹² Zosimus, ii. 14. *πρόφασις τοῦ πρὸς Κωνσταντῖνον πολέμου.*

¹³ For the respective forces of the two rivals, see Zosimus, ii. 15, who exaggerates those of Constantine, and cf. Seeck, "Geschichte," i. c. 4.

God of the Christians that the Emperor of the West led his scanty army against the hosts of Maxentius. Hitherto, like his father before him, he had shown at least a sympathetic interest in Christianity and had adopted his tolerant policy towards the Christians. Eusebius, indeed, appears to claim his father as a Christian.¹⁴ This is a too sanguine assumption. He was at most a monotheist of the Neo-Platonist type. He believed in one supreme God, and seems to have been attracted by the moral and spiritual vitality of the Christian faith. He not only did his best to protect the Christian clergy, he admitted them to his Court and gladly accepted their prayers on his behalf.¹⁵ Nor can his son be claimed as a Christian before the year 312, though Lactantius¹⁶ seems to assume that he was. He may have shared his father's monotheism as he certainly did his tolerant attitude. His vision on the march to Rome shows that he had some knowledge of Christ, the central figure of the Christian faith, and of the cross as the symbol of this faith, and that he had previously been revolving in his mind its possible efficacy in human affairs. But his supreme Deity was not the Christian God,¹⁷ but the sun god, Apollo, to whom he ascribed his victories over the Frankish invader. To the pagans the efficacy of a religion consisted in the proof of its practical utility to its votary. That the Christians were not superior to this conception of the Deity, there is not lacking evidence in a writer like Eusebius, though it would be erroneous to assume that they overlooked the spiritual side of religion. Constantine worshipped Apollo because he believed him to be the god to whom he owed his successes against the barbarians; perhaps, too, because he believed him to be the only god worthy of the name. By such a utilitarian conception of deity he was, I think, led, in the first place, to become a votary of the God of the Christians, and eschew paganism for Christianity. We may assume that he had, as a precondition of his conversion, a predilection for the monotheistic faith of his father. But what really led to it was not the purely religious impulse to find out God, not a revulsion from paganism on moral or spiritual grounds. It was the march on Rome with

¹⁴ "Vita," i. 17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, i. 17.

¹⁶ "Divine Institutes," i. c. 1. Lactantius says that "he was the first of the Roman emperors to acknowledge and honour the majesty of the one and only true God." This might only signify the profession of a monotheistic faith. But Lactantius evidently means the Christian God. Written before 311 and may have been begun in 304. See Bury's note to Gibbon, ii. 288, and Lawlor, "Eusebiana," 237 (1912).

¹⁷ See "Eumenii Panegyricus," c. 21, Migne, t. 8.

a small if intrepid army against vast odds,¹⁸ not any conviction of the heinousness of idolatry, that impelled him to turn from Apollo to the God of the Christians. Mayhap this God would prove mighty enough to frustrate the machinations of his enemy and prosper his hazardous enterprise. His naïve form of reasoning is betrayed by his panegyrist, Eusebius. Maxentius had by far the stronger army and was, besides, striving to move the supreme powers by magic arts to lend efficacy to his arms. The final issue of the war was extremely doubtful in spite of initial success. Maxentius might overwhelm his scanty force by sheer weight of numbers before the walls of Rome. Or he had only to keep his army within the walls to force his scanty legions to retreat.¹⁹

With these anxious thoughts burdening his mind, what more natural than that Constantine should bethink himself of the supreme God whom his father had worshipped and who had prospered him in all his undertakings. Might not this God be the God of whom the Christians spoke with such assurance, and whose enemies—Severus, Galerius, Maximian, for instance—had come to an evil end? To this God Constantine now appealed, that he would make Himself known to him and grant him His help. So Eusebius.²⁰ The conception is thoroughly utilitarian. That of a man who doubts the gods of his pagan fellow-rulers and is prepared to make trial of the Christian God, of whose real nature he is ignorant. The main thing is to achieve a victory over Maxentius. In this anxious mood he may have seen the vision of the cross in the sky, for visions of heavenly armies and such-like celestial manifestations, which an excited fancy conjures, are not unknown in the crises of history. Nazarius tells us, for instance, that at this very crisis such visions were forthcoming in Gaul, in which Constantius appeared at the head of his legions in swift passage to the aid of his son. These celestial legions even spoke. "Constantine we seek. To the aid of Constantine we rush."²¹

The vision of Constantine himself is related rather hesitatingly

¹⁸ The expedition seemed so dangerous in view of the greatly superior strength of Maxentius that Constantine's officers remonstrated against his rashness. See "Panegyricus Vetus," ix. 2.

¹⁹ Seeck has forcibly brought out the difficulties of the situation, from the military point of view, which faced Constantine in his march on Rome. His army was far too small either to risk a battle with any reasonable prospect of success, or to carry out an attack on the walls of Rome, if Maxentius, who had adopted this expedient against Severus with effect, chose to sit still and thus foil the design of his enemy. He had been compelled to leave a large part of his army in Gaul to defend the Rhine (i. c. 4).

²⁰ "Vita Constantini," i. 27, 28.

²¹ "Nazarii Panegyricus," c. 14, Mignc, t. 8.

by Eusebius, who says he would not have believed it, if the Emperor had not himself long afterwards assured him of the fact. Nazarius, who was a contemporary, knows nothing about it. Neither does Lactantius, likewise a contemporary and a Christian to boot, and, as the tutor of Constantine's son, Crispus, likely to have known all about it. For the vision of the cross with its flaming motto "By this conquer,"²² was, Eusebius says, seen by the whole army. If so, it is exceedingly strange that no contemporary, in speaking of the expedition, seems to have noted the fact till after the death of Constantine himself. The silence of Nazarius and Lactantius inclines us to doubt the story in its actual form. Even Eusebius knows nothing about it in his History, which was written whilst Constantine was still alive, and merely says that he invoked the God of heaven and His Word Jesus Christ.²³ Possibly some cloud formation resembling a cross²⁴ may have been visible, and possibly Constantine, whose mind was preoccupied by the suggestion, imagined that he saw the words inscribed on it. That the whole army saw the inscription as well as the cross, as Eusebius, on information supplied by Constantine himself "long afterwards," avers, is certainly an overdraft on our credence.

On the night following the vision, Constantine dreamed, and the dream is more credible. It is mentioned by Lactantius, and it is to the effect that Christ appeared to him and directed him to make a standard in the form of the cross and follow it to certain victory. Accordingly he had the Labarum fashioned in the morning, consisting of a spear with a transverse bar from which was suspended a square cloth, and surmounted with a wreath wrought of gold and precious stones, and containing the Christian monogram, the XP.²⁵ The cross seems to have figured on pagan military banners, as Justin tells us,²⁶ and even the XP, according to Rapp,²⁷ appears on Græco-Bactrian coins of the second and first centuries B.C. The Labarum, thus inscribed, would, therefore, be no novelty to Constantine's army, though to him and the Christian soldiers in it, it would have a special Christian significance. In Christian circles there was already a

²² τούτῳ νικά. Hoc vince.

²³ "Hist. Eccl.," ix. 9.

²⁴ Prof. Flinders Petrie suggests mock suns in a communication to Prof. Bury. Note at the end of vol. ii. of his edition of Gibbon.

²⁵ "Vita Constantini," i. 29-31. Lactantius merely says that he inscribed the cross with the Christian monogram on the shields of his soldiers. "De Mort. Pers.," 44.

²⁶ "Apol.," i. 55.

²⁷ "Das Labarum und der Sonnenkultus," 116 f., and see Bury's Appendix 19 to vol. ii. of Gibbon.

tendency to ascribe a superstitious efficacy to Christian as well as pagan emblems—the cross, the monogram being regarded by the Christians as capable of assuring immunity from danger and victory in battle. Eusebius, for instance, evidently believed in the cross—"the salutary sign"—as a sort of talisman.

With this talisman Constantine's army tramped southwards, and its intrepidity, heightened by this talisman and seconded by the Emperor's masterly tactics and the bad generalship of Maxentius, won for him the victory near the Milvian Bridge. It won for Christianity, too, the ultimate supremacy as the religion of the Empire. Maxentius had not, indeed, persecuted the Christians. He had merely exiled the leaders of the two parties, the moderate and the extreme, who quarrelled even to the shedding of each other's blood in the streets of Rome over the question of the lapsed, and such repression was justified in the interest of public order. But he was a superstitious votary of the gods, and was, besides, a detestable tyrant who maintained a régime of blood and licence, which was among the worst in Roman annals, according to every authority, pagan and Christian alike. His overthrow might well seem, and did seem, to contemporaries a divine judgment for his crimes, and was hailed as a deliverance by both pagans and Christians. To Constantine, however, it was more than this. It was an unmistakable proof of the power of the Christian God and an indefeasible claim on his personal allegiance to this God. Of this fact he gave convincing testimony in the immediate sequel. According to Eusebius, who in his enthusiasm anticipates the future, he not only sought instruction in the doctrines of the faith to which he owed his victory, but "made the priests of God his counsellors." More credible is the statement that he "deemed it incumbent on him to honour the God, who had appeared to him, with all devotion."²⁸ Hence the erection of a statue of himself at Rome holding a spear in the form of a cross, and ascribing to this "salutary sign" the liberation of the city from tyranny.²⁹ The inscription on the arch erected by the Senate is less explicit, but it, too, ascribed the overthrow of the tyrant to divine aid, though in general terms.³⁰

²⁸ "Vita," i. 32.

²⁹ "Vita," i. 40; cf. "Hist. Eccl.," ix. 9. Brieger (*Zeitschrift f. Kirchengeschichte*, 1881) and others doubt this episode. On the other side, see Victor Schultze in the same journal (1885).

³⁰ *Instinctu divinitatis*—"at the suggestion of the Deity." The inscription is still extant on the Arch of Constantine. The inscription has been regarded as a later Christian correction of a purely pagan one, *mutu Jovis Op. Max.* Burckhardt, "Zeit Constantins," 323. This is an unfounded assumption.

ACCORDS COMPLETE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

A still more convincing evidence of his recognition of his obligation to the God of the Christians was ere long forthcoming. From Rome he repaired to Milan to give his sister Constantia in marriage to his colleague Licinius, and to confer with him on the general interest of the Empire. The chief subject of their deliberation was the religious question. Both had given effect within their respective dominions to the edict of Galerius granting toleration to the Christians, whilst Maximinus had done so only partially and had resumed the policy of intolerance. The most pressing duty was, therefore, to come to a mutual understanding and unequivocally guarantee liberty of worship for the Christians of the East as well as the West, where it was already, by the defeat of Maxentius, practically assured in virtue of the edict of Galerius. Both Emperors were in favour of toleration—Constantine because he was by this time in principle, if not officially, a Christian himself; Licinius because he had given his adhesion to the edict of Galerius. At the same time, the negotiation of a mutual agreement was not without its difficulty, since the large majority of the Empire as a whole was still pagan, and Licinius himself, though tolerant, was also an adherent of the old religion. Wise statesmanship in handling the situation was imperative. In the circumstances Constantine could not venture to press for the recognition of Christianity as the true religion, even if he secretly harboured this conviction. To have done so would have been to wreck the negotiation at the outset. As a practical statesman he knew better. He also did better, and asked instead for the recognition of the principle of complete individual liberty in religion. It was a masterstroke both of principle and policy to hit on this expedient as the only possible solution of the religious problem, in the meantime at least. Religion should henceforth be a matter of individual judgment, with which the State had nothing to do, and therefore all, pagans and Christians alike, should be free to choose and follow whatever cult they preferred. Whether the adoption of the new principle and policy was more than a political device time would show. At all events it was the only possible expedient in the present juncture, and formed the basis of the agreement reached by the two Emperors.

This agreement found formal expression in the general edict issued from Milan³¹ towards the end of 312 or at the beginning

³¹ Lactantius, "De Mort. Pers.," 48, who gives it in its original Latin form; Eusebius, x. 5, who gives a Greek version of it. The existence of a general edict of toleration promulgated by the two Emperors from Milan, as the result

of 313. It starts with a purposely vague reference to "the Divinity." Reverence for the Divinity demands the grant of complete liberty to the Christians and all others to practise their own religion. No one, Christian or pagan, is to be denied this liberty. Hence the express abolition of all previous edicts against the Christians, and the specific enactment that any one is free to choose and practise Christianity without let or hindrance, and pagans are legally entitled to adopt it if they choose. The same complete freedom to profess and practise their religion is granted to all non-Christians of whatever religious persuasion. Moreover, along with the unrestricted liberty of worship, the edict decreed the free and prompt restoration of the Christian churches and other ecclesiastical property, whether these had been acquired by purchase, or gift, or confiscation, though the owners might obtain compensation from the imperial treasury. The motive, both of this unrestricted liberty and equitable treatment is to secure the continuance of the favour of the Divinity, which the Emperors had already experienced in matters of the greatest importance—a reference, apparently, to the overthrow of Maxentius by Constantine. The conception of "the Divinity" and of religion is characteristically utilitarian. These concessions are not made purely on the merits of the case, but with an eye to the benefits to be conferred in reward of service rendered by their majesties. This does not necessarily betoken a purely hypocritical profession of religious zeal, a mere juggling with things sacred for political purposes.³² It only proves that Constantine's conception of religion was, in this respect, no higher than that of the world of his time. The assumption was all too general that success is the

of their agreement on the religious question, has been questioned or denied on the ground that we hear only of the promulgation of a toleration edict by Licinius for the East, and that otherwise no general edict addressed by them to the whole Empire has been preserved. But Eusebius explicitly says that the Emperors drew up "a full and most complete decree on behalf of the Christians" and sent a copy of it to Maximinus in the East (ix. 9), and Lactantius further says that Licinius sent it to the Governor of Bithynia with instructions to promulgate it. In itself it is highly probable that the Emperors drew up and jointly issued from Milan an edict embodying so important a decision and directed it to the Western as well as the Eastern half of the Empire. This is clearly inferable from the statement of Eusebius in ix. 9, and also from the rescript of Constantine to Anulinus in Africa, in which he refers to the agreement regarding the Christians, and clearly presupposes the existence of a general edict directed by him and his fellow-Emperor to the whole Empire. Eusebius, x. 5. The denial of its existence by Knipping in a recent article, "Das angebliche Mailänder Edikt" (*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 1922), does not therefore seem to me to be conclusive. Seeck, in an article in the same journal (1891), had previously denied the existence of the so-called general edict of Milan.

³² Gibbon represents Constantine's conversion to and profession of Christianity as largely political. "Decline and Fall," ii. c. 20.

test of religion and that religion is the guarantee of success. For sharing this utilitarian assumption he is the more to be excused, inasmuch as the Christian bishops, if Eusebius and Lactantius truly reflect their views, helped him to nurture it. Both reiterate, in their own naïve fashion, the view that it is not only incumbent on every one to accept Christianity because it is the true religion, but because it is the only religion on which success depends. How should we expect a converted pagan like Constantine to be any better informed?

SOLE EMPEROR

In his case it certainly did prove to be the successful religion, and even the pagan Licinius is represented by Eusebius and Lactantius as sharing in this success as long as he observed the edict of Milan. He fought, we are told, a successful battle against the tyrant Maximinus, who continued to persecute the Christians as well as, like Maxentius, give full rein to his passions. He, too, as the result of a dream, invoked the supreme God, and therefore overthrew the tyrant at Adrianople in 313, and ultimately forced him to make an end of his abominable tyranny and of himself at Tarsus.³³ Ere long it was the turn of Licinius to experience that even a pagan who was ready to tolerate Christianity had no chance against a rival who was an undoubted Christian. Licinius, who had become Constantine's brother-in-law, and was now sole potentate of the East, fell out with his august relative, and in 314 was worsted in two battles fought at Cibalis in Pannonia, and Mardia, or Jarba, in Thrace—in this case also, according to Eusebius and Lactantius, because the former was a pagan and the latter a Christian. For several years he took the lesson to heart and reigned in tolerable prosperity over what part of the eastern Empire Constantine had left him. But finally his discontent got the better of his discretion. He began to persecute, and thus provoked his own undoing, according to the ecclesiastical historians, at the hands of God as well as Constantine. According to Eutropius,³⁴ Constantine was intent by this time on the sole dominion of the Empire; according to Zosimus,³⁵ who is, however, a bitter enemy, he was a perfidious aggressor. It is at all events patent that there was no room for a pagan and a Christian Emperor to rule side by side even a world so vast as that of

³³ See Lactantius, 35 f., and Eusebius, "Eccl. Hist.," ix. 9 f.

³⁴ "Lib.," x. 5. *Principatum totius orbis affectans*—aspiring to the government of the whole world.

³⁵ ii. 18 and 28.

imperial Rome, especially as the Christian Emperor was the more masterful potentate of the two. As a Christian and the patron of the Church, Constantine could not suffer his fellow-ruler to lapse into the odious policy of persecution, by which he aggravated the political contention between them. The final struggle, which took place in 323,³⁶ whatever its other motives, thus inevitably became a struggle between Christianity and paganism. To some extent, at least, it was a religious war, and the victory of Constantine meant once more, and on a grander scale, the victory of the Cross.

CHAPTER III

CONSTANTINE AND THE CHURCH

HIS RELIGIOUS POLICY

GENERALLY stated, the object of Constantine's religious policy was, on the one hand, the ultimate supremacy of the Catholic Church as an important adjunct of the State ; on the other, the gradual subversion of paganism. Before the final overthrow of Licinius, he was hampered by the political situation in carrying out this policy, and it was only after he became sole ruler of the Empire in 323-324 that he set himself to realise it on an extensive scale. To this end he accordingly appears as the persistent if cautious patron of the Church, and even at times the ardent propagandist of the Christian faith, as he understood it.

ACTIVE PATRON OF THE CHURCH

Hence, from 313, the grant of large sums from the imperial treasury for the maintenance of the clergy¹ and exemption from taxation and the onerous duty of discharging municipal and other public duties.² He thus placed the Christian clergy on the same footing, in this respect, as the pagan priesthood. He emphasised their high vocation as priests of God, gave the sanction of his authority to the decrees of their synods, and forbade the provincial

³⁶ Battles of Adrianople and Chrysopolis.

¹ Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," x. 2 and 6.

² Eusebius, x. 7 ; "Codex Theod.," XI. i. 1 ; XVI. ii. 1 and 2. Godefroy's ed. and the more recent ed. of Mommsen and Meyer (1905). He afterwards restricted this privilege because persons of means sought admission to the Christian ministry in order to evade their civic obligations.

governors to annul these decrees.³ He further augmented their prestige and influence by making bishops, like Hosius of Cordova and Eusebius of Cæsarea, his most trusted counsellors. Even in his military expeditions he had his suite of bishops in the belief, apparently, that their presence would ward off disaster and secure success for his arms, and provided a tent of great splendour in the form of a church for worship on the march.⁴ He himself claimed to be a bishop in the exercise of a general supervision over the affairs of the Church. "I, too, am a bishop," he remarked to a number of those who were enjoying his hospitality. "You are bishops whose jurisdiction is within the Church. I, also, am a bishop ordained by God to oversee whatever is external to the Church."⁵ In his episcopal capacity he strove by edict and personal example to strengthen the appeal of Christian usages. Witness the edict enjoining the observance of the Lord's Day and prescribing a monotheistic prayer to be offered by his troops on this day, though he avoided offence to his non-Christian subjects by designating it Sunday.⁶ Hence, too, the edict respecting the observance of the Church festivals, especially of Easter, and the commemoration of the martyrs.⁷ He abolished the penalties against celibacy which the stricter Christians regarded as an adjunct of the Christian life.⁸ Equally significant, his zeal in spending large sums in restoring and enlarging the ruined churches and building new and magnificent ones, such as the Church of the Anastasis at Jerusalem, and of the Apostles and Sophia at Constantinople.⁹ His zeal in this pious work was intensified by that of his mother Helena, on whom he conferred imperial rank and whom he won over to the Christian faith.¹⁰ He promoted by preference Christians to high offices of state, and thus greatly increased the influence of the Church throughout the Empire;¹¹ legalised its manumission of slaves and the right to bequeath property to it;¹² recognised the right of asylum in the churches equally with the temples,¹³ and forbade the compulsory participation of Christians in heathen festivals.¹⁴

³ "Vita Constantini," iv. 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iv. 56.

⁵ *Ibid.*, iv. 24. τῶν εἰσω τῆς ἐκκλησίας . . . τῶν ἐκτός.

⁶ Dies Solis, "Vita," iv. 18 f.; "Codex Theod.," II. viii. 1.

⁷ "Vita," iv. 22-23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, iv. 26.

⁹ *Ibid.*, ii. 45-46; iii. 25 f.; iv. 58-59. Burch attempts to show that the Church of the Apostles is a later foundation. "Myth and Constantine the Great," 156 f. (1927).

¹⁰ "Vita," iii. 41 f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ii. 44.

¹² "Codex Theod.," XVI. ii. 4, and notes of Godefroy to IV. vii. 1.

¹³ See Schiller, "Geschichte der Römischen Kaiserzeit," i. 208.

¹⁴ "Codex Theod.," XVI. ii. 5.

In the "Vita" of Eusebius he appears not only as the active patron of the Church, but as the zealous apologist and propagandist of the Christian faith. Realising the missionary value of the Scriptures, he entrusted the scholarly Bishop of Cæsarea with the task of supervising the transcription and circulation, at his expense, of copies of them "to be written on prepared parchment in a legible manner and in a convenient portable form by professional transcribers thoroughly practised in their art."¹⁵ After the final victory over Licinius, he addressed a missive to the people of the eastern provinces in which he boldly denounces the persecution of the Christians at the hands of Licinius and other Emperors, who had all experienced the divine vengeance; acknowledges his indebtedness to the Christian God and "the sacred sign" under which he had led his armies to victory; expatiates on the superiority of Christianity as the true religion revealed by the Son of God over polytheism, whilst assuring its votaries full religious liberty in the hope that they may be thereby won to the truth.¹⁶ "Let those, therefore, who still delight in error be made welcome to the same degree of peace and tranquillity which they have who believe. For it may be that the restoration of equal privileges to all will prevail to lead them into the straight path."¹⁷ This remarkable effusion was probably composed for him by his Court bishops, though Eusebius, who gives a Greek translation of the original, says that it was in his own handwriting. At the same time, it was meant to be taken as the expression of his own mind and will, and may be regarded as a substantial reflection of his own convictions as well as those of his Christian ministers. His public creed is no longer the profession of a vague monotheism, as in his earlier deliverances on the religious question. It is an explicit confession of faith in the Son of God, through whom He has revealed Himself.¹⁸ Now that he is sole ruler of the Empire, the vagueness of an earlier time has given place to explicit confession. On the whole, the document tends to support the open and ardent, if, in some respects, crude, profession of Christianity, as he and his Court bishops conceived it, with which Eusebius credits him. "Truly he maintained a continual testimony to the Christ of God with all boldness and before all men; and so far was he from shrinking from an open profession of the Christian name, that he rather desired to make it manifest to all that he regarded this as his highest honour."¹⁹ He even carried his

¹⁵ "Vita," iv. 36.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, iv. 48 f.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, iv. 56.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, iv. 57.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, iii. 2.

Christian propaganda beyond the confines of the Empire, and wrote to Shapur II. on behalf of the Christians in Persia.²⁰

Later legend sought to improve on the testimony of these documents to his zeal in the service of the Church by fabricating others in the papal interest. The most astounding of these documents is the so-called "Donation of Constantine" in connection with his fabled baptism by the Roman Bishop Sylvester. In this concoction Constantine makes detailed confession of the orthodox faith, as professed by the Roman bishop, the supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church. Formerly a persecutor of the Christians, God had smitten him with leprosy in order that he might bring him to a knowledge of the truth. The physicians being unable to effect a cure, the pagan priests, to whom he had recourse, directed him to bathe in a tub filled with the blood of innocent infants. Moved by the lamentations of their mothers, he rejected the horrible expedient. On the following night, the apostles Peter and Paul appeared to him in a dream and admonished him to seek healing in the bath of Christian baptism at the hands of Bishop Sylvester, promising him an instantaneous cure. Having undergone the prescribed penance and made confession of his faith in the presence of the people, he was accordingly baptized by the bishop, and emerged from the consecrated water completely cleansed. In honour of this miracle, he recognised, along with the Roman senate and people, the bishop as the Vicar of Christ and the supreme ruler of the Catholic Church, conferred on him and his successors the Lateran Palace, the imperial diadem and other insignia, etc., and conveyed to him and his successors the sovereign dominion over the city of Rome, the whole of Italy, and the provinces of the western part of the Empire. In consequence of this gift, he retained only the eastern provinces as his imperial dominion and transferred his capital from Rome to Byzantium (Constantinople), "since it is not right that where the chief of the priesthood and the head of the Christian religion has been constituted by the heavenly King, there an earthly king should have power."

This egregious concoction thus ends by founding the papal monarchy of the West, as the Middle Ages conceived it. Needless to say it is a piece of gross mendacity. In the early part of his reign Constantine did not persecute the Catholic Church in Italy or elsewhere. He did not suffer from leprosy. He did not seek baptism till the eve of his death when he was stricken by the illness to which he succumbed in 337. He was baptized by

²⁰ "Vita," iv. 9 f.

Eusebius of Nicomedia,²¹ not by Sylvester of Rome. He bequeathed the sovereign dominion over Italy to his youngest son Constans, and that over the western provinces to his eldest son Constantine II.²² In view of his lavish liberality to the Church at large, it is credible enough that he made large gifts to that of Rome.²³ This generosity was gradually expanded by an interested and unscrupulous credulity during the following five centuries into the legend which, in its final circumstantial form, found a place about the middle of the ninth century, in the collection of largely forged documents, falsely ascribed to Isidore of Seville. The legend, nevertheless, was adduced in support of the papal claim to supremacy over the mediæval Empire as well as the mediæval Church, although there were not lacking voices to proclaim its spuriousness down to the twelfth century. It was only in the fifteenth century that the humanist Laurentius Valla showed its fictitious character.²⁴

SUBVERSION OF PAGANISM

In contrast to his active patronage of the Church is the increasingly negative attitude which he appears to have adopted towards paganism. It is probably near the truth to say that he contemplated its gradual subversion, if not its actual repression, in the interest of the Church. On the other hand, Burckhardt, Brieger, and others have seen in his religious policy evidence of a non-committal attitude towards Christianity and a tendency to maintain the balance between it and paganism. They reject and largely discount the testimony of Eusebius and other Christian partisans to the contrary. Against this testimony they adduce that of historic fact which seems to be incompatible with an anti-pagan policy. He retained, for instance, the title of Pontifex Maximus, or high priest of the old State cult, and continued the grants to its priesthood. His coinage bears pagan as well as Christians symbols. He erected two pagan temples in his new

²¹ "Vita," iv. 61 f. The story related and rejected by Sozomen ("Hist. Eccl.," i. 5) that he sought baptism, apparently from Sylvester, in order to expiate the guilt of the murder of his son Crispus, is equally fabulous.

²² Zosimos, ii. 39; Gibbon, ii. 212 f.

²³ The "Liber Pontificalis" purports to give a long list of such gifts; ed. Mommsen, 47 f.

²⁴ Valla was forced to retract his demonstration. The republication of his work by another humanist, Ulrich von Hutten, in 1518, served to strengthen the attack by Luther on the papal supremacy. Both the "Donatio," as dedicated to Pope Julius II., with a preface in repudiation of Valla by Bartholomew Pincernis, and Valla's refutation, as republished by Von Hutten, are to be found in a volume entitled "Donatio Constantini," in Edinburgh University Library.

capital of Constantinople, and dedicated it with pagan as well as Christian ceremonial. He delayed his baptism till the eve of his death, etc. Facts like these do not, however, necessarily prove a non-committal policy. Constantine was a statesman as well as a Christian. As sole ruler of an Empire still largely pagan, it might well seem expedient to retain a title which, whilst gratifying his pagan subjects, enabled him to control the functionaries of the old State cult. Moreover, it had long been the custom to perform the functions of this office by deputy.²⁵ The erection of a couple of temples, containing the statues of Rhea (Magna Mater) and Tyche, like the decoration of the city with statues taken from heathen temples,²⁶ was probably actuated by æsthetic motives. The issue of coins bearing pagan symbols probably betokens no more than a tribute to convention,²⁷ and it is significant that in the later period of his reign coins with Christian symbols predominate. The postponement of his baptism till the close of his career is certainly singular on the part of so convinced a Christian as Eusebius represents him to have been. One reason given by himself in what purports to be an address to the bishops, whom he had summoned to his sick-room at Nicomedia, was his desire to be baptized in the waters of the Jordan in imitation of the baptism of Christ.²⁸ More likely is the supposition of Gibbon that, like other Christians of his age, in their dread of forfeiting their salvation by post-baptismal sin, he deferred the rite to the close of his life as a final lustration from past sins.²⁹ Though this conception of baptism as a reserve asset of salvation was gravely defective from the religious and moral point of view, it was not incompatible with a decided if all too utilitarian profession of Christianity. Moreover, under the influence of what proved to be a fatal illness, he seems to have owned the imperfection of his former profession and proclaimed his resolve, if spared, to prescribe to himself henceforth "such a course of life as befits God's service."³⁰

Against the non-committal thesis based on such dubious grounds, the anti-pagan legislation of the later half of his reign seems to be conclusive. In this series of anti-pagan edicts the striving to subvert paganism is plainly discernible. Witness the

²⁵ *Pro-magister*. See Schultze, "Geschichte des Untergangs des Gr. Römischen Heidenthums," i. 61 (1887).

²⁶ Zosimos, ii. 51. That the temples to Rhea and Tyche were purely ornamental appears from the fact that pagan rites were not celebrated in them. Schultze, *Zeitsch. f. Kirchengeschichte*, 352 f. (1885).

²⁷ Burch in his remarks on the subject ("Myth and Constantine," 141 f.) overlooks this feature.

²⁸ "Vita," iv. 62.

²⁹ ii. 308 f.

³⁰ "Vita," iv. 62.

prohibition of private divination,³¹ of private sacrifice,³² the participation by the imperial officials in public sacrifices,³³ the rebuilding of the fallen temples or the erection of new images,³⁴ or the setting up of his own image in the temples.³⁵ Witness, further, the despoiling of the temples for the ornamentation of Constantinople and for fiscal purposes, and the destruction of those in Phœnicia and Egypt devoted to licentious practices.³⁶ Equally significant his refusal to join in the procession of the equestrian order to do honour to Jupiter on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of his reign (his vicennalia) at Rome in 326,³⁷ and the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary ten years later (tricennalia) at Constantinople with exclusively Christian ceremonial.³⁸ Finally, according to Eusebius, this subversive policy culminated in the edict forbidding all sacrifice whatsoever.³⁹ The existence of such a general edict is, indeed, problematic, and the statement of Eusebius has been doubted or rejected outright by some as an unfounded exaggeration. It has been interpreted by others as referring to private and nocturnal sacrifice.⁴⁰ So drastic an aberration from the edict of Milan is not easily credible, and if it rested only on the statement of Eusebius, might reasonably be rejected as unhistoric. But this testimony seems to be confirmed by an edict of Constantius in 341 directing the general abolition of superstition and sacrifice as "contrary to the law of our divine father."⁴¹ In any case,

³¹ "Codex Theod.," IX. xvi. 1-2. This may, however, have been dictated by political reasons, since he allowed public divination.

³² "Codex Theod.," XVI. x. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. 45; iv. 25.

³³ "Vita," ii. 44.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, iv. 16.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, iii. 55; iv. 25. Their destruction is, however, sufficiently explicable on moral apart from religious grounds.

³⁷ Zosimos, ii. 29.

³⁸ Eusebius, "Orat.," 2.

³⁹ "Vita," ii. 45; iv. 75; Sozomen, "Hist. Eccl.," i. 8. It is ignored by Socrates ("Hist. Eccl.," i. 17), who, however, gives only a very limited notice of his anti-pagan policy. Gibbon wrongly assumes that it was also ignored by Sozomen, ii. 391.

⁴⁰ The existence of such a general edict is rejected by Gibbon, ii. 391; Brieger, "Z.K.G.," iv. 181; Allard, "Le Christianisme et l'Empire," 184 f. (1908), and others. It is doubted by Burckhardt, "Zeit Constantins," 361. Beugnot thinks it refers only to private sacrifice, "Hist. de la Destruction du Paganisme," i. 100 (1835). His view has been followed by Richardson in his notes in the "Vita Constantini." It is accepted by Schultze, "Geschichte des Untergangs," i. 55 f., and "Z.K.G.," viii. 530; Zahn, "Constantin und die Kirche," 23 (1876).

⁴¹ *Contra legem divi principis parentis*. "Codex Theod.," XVI. x. 2 (Mommsen and Meyer). Allard thinks that in issuing this edict Constantius merely attributed his own predilection to his father ("Le Christianisme et l'Empire," 184 f.). Neander rightly says that it was issued by Constantius ("Church Hist.," iii. 41), Beugnot by both Constantius and Constantius (i. 138). In the "Codex Theod." it is ascribed to Constantius alone.

assuming its existence, this general law of Constantine was apparently little more than an imperial gesture in favour of Christianity at the suggestion of the ecclesiastical zealots of his *entourage*, and does not seem to have been enforced. At the same time, even if its existence is dubious, his other enactments against paganism sufficiently reveal the policy of its subversion. Whilst he did not go the length of actually suppressing polytheism as a religious system and compelling his subjects to accept Christianity, he undoubtedly initiated the intolerant policy which was ultimately to eventuate in its repression under Theodosius and his successors. His nephew Julian, who characterised him as "the innovator and disturber of the ancient laws and received customs,"⁴² rightly divined the trend of his religious as well as his secular policy. The assumption that he strove to maintain a religious parity between Christianity and paganism,⁴³ in accordance with the edict of Milan, does not seem to be in accord with his later attitude and practice at least. His active bias in favour of the Church at the expense of the pagan cults is unmistakable. It was only the logical outcome of his policy of subversion when Constantius and Constans sought to transform it into one of repression, and the votaries of the old gods, at least in isolated cases, were exposed to the persecution which they had inflicted on the Christians in the long period of their adversity. Nor were there lacking, in the reigns of his sons, zealots like Maternus to proclaim, now that Christianity was in the ascendant, the Christian obligation of the use of force in the service of religion, which Lactantius had condemned thirty years before during the Diocletian persecution. "Religion," protested Lactantius, "cannot be imposed by force. . . . Religion is to be defended not by putting to death, but by dying."⁴⁴ A very different note was now struck by Maternus in the philippic against Profane Religions, which he addressed to Constantius and Constans. "Necessity demands that you take vengeance on and punish the evil. It is enjoined by the law of the highest God that you pursue with your severity the detestable crime of idolatry. Hear and take to heart what God commands against this crime."⁴⁵ He then proceeds to quote passages from Deuteronomy, which denounces destruction against idolaters and idolatry.

⁴² "Am. Marcellinus," xxi. 10.

⁴³ Brieger, "Constantins Religions politik," "Z.K.G.," iv. 181. Der Staat Constantins war ein paritätischer. He follows Hein. Richter, "Das Weströmische Reich," 84 f. (1865).

⁴⁴ "Div. Inst.," v. 20.

⁴⁵ "De Errore Profanarum Religionum," c. 30, Migne, xii.

ATTITUDE TO CHRISTIAN DISSENT

In his treatment of Christian dissent, Constantine belied still more flagrantly the tolerant spirit of the edict of Milan. As the active patron of the Catholic Church, he strove in the later period of his reign to repress the various Christian sects—Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulians or followers of Paul of Samosata, Montanists or Kataphrygians. Witness the missive against these sects, in the preamble of which the rabid Christian scribe, who probably composed it, gives full rein to his ecclesiastical prejudice and hatred. As pestilent criminals and enemies of the truth, they are accordingly forbidden to assemble in public or private, and their meeting-places are made over to the Catholic Church. A search is instituted for their heretical books, which, it seems, they seek to evade by every kind of subterfuge. The inquisition is simply a renewal of the repressive methods of which the Christians had been the victims, and to which the Catholics and their imperial patron were but too ready to have recourse.⁴⁶ "Thus," concluded Eusebius admiringly and without the slightest inkling of its glaring inconsistency with the spirit of the edict of Milan, "the members of the entire body became united and compacted in a harmonious whole (*sic*), and the one Catholic Church, at unity with itself, shone with full lustre, while no heretical or schismatic body anywhere continued to exist."

Towards the Donatist schism which, in contrast to these older sects, dated only from the earlier years of his reign, he adopted at first a less intolerant attitude. This schism arose out of a disputed election to the primatial See of Carthage, and was destined long to divide and desolate the Church of North Africa. On the death of Bishop Mensurius in 311, the Carthaginian Church, with the co-operation of the bishops of proconsular Africa, elected as his successor the archdeacon Cæcilian, who was consecrated by Bishop Felix of Aptunga. An opposition party objected both to the election without the co-operation of the bishops of Numidia, and to the consecration of the new bishop by Felix, whom they denounced as "a traditor," *i.e.*, one who had delivered up the sacred books during the Diocletian persecution. This party appealed to the bishops of Numidia, whose rights in the election had been ignored, and who elected the reader Majorinus as the

⁴⁶ "Vita," iii. 64 f.; and see "Codex Theod.," XVI. v. 1, date 326. In an enactment in "Codex Theod.," XVI. v. 2, the Novatians are, however, treated with more consideration.

lawful successor of Mensurius. On the death of Majorinus in 315, his supporters elected Donatus, who gave his name to what was to prove a long and formidable schism in the African Church.⁴⁷

From a letter to Cæcilian, it appears that Constantine had been informed of the dissension in the African Church shortly after his victory over Maxentius had extended his rule over Italy and Africa.⁴⁸ In these circumstances this dissension might well seem a menace to the unity of the State. Hence his espousal of the Catholic side and his denunciation of "the mad folly" of these African schismatics in the letter to Cæcilian, in which, after announcing a handsome contribution for the support of the African clergy, he directs him to denounce them to the judges for punishment. Against this intolerant attitude the opposition bishops appealed, reminding him of the example of his father in refraining from persecution and praying him to appoint a commission of Gallican bishops as judges in the strife between them and their opponents.⁴⁹ Whereupon he decided to make trial of negotiation, and empowered Miltiades, Bishop of Rome, to examine and decide the case, along with three Gaulish bishops and fifteen from Italy selected by the Roman bishop. He further directed Cæcilian and ten of the bishops of his party, along with an equal number of the opposition bishops, to appear before this assembly. After a three days' hearing, the synod pronounced him innocent of the charges against him and declared him to be the rightful Bishop of Carthage (October 313).

The opposition refused to accept the decision and again appealed to the Emperor on the ground, particularly, of Cæcilian's ordination by the traditor Felix. Whereupon he ordered Ælianus, the proconsul of Africa, to hold an inquiry whether Felix was actually a traditor. On the evidence submitted by the magistrates of Aptunga and other witnesses, the proconsul decided that Felix was not a traditor. Though irritated by the continued recalcitrance of the opposition, Constantine decided to grant them a second chance to present their case to a larger and more representative assembly at Arles in August 314, in the hope that "this dissension, which ought to have ceased after the judgment had already been given by their own voluntary agreement, should now, if possible, be brought to an end and brotherly harmony,

⁴⁷ The Donatists were at first so named after Donatus, Bishop of Casæ Nigræ, one of the early leading spirits of the movement, and later after Donatus, surnamed the Great, who became the successor of Majorinus.

⁴⁸ See his letter in Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," x. 6.

⁴⁹ Optatus, "De Schismate Donatistarum," i. 22, Migne, t. xi., and Ziwsa, "Corpus Script. Eccl. Lat.," xxvi. (1893); Oberthür (1789).

though it be but gradually, may be restored.”⁵⁰ The council once more exonerated Cæcilian and appears to have affirmed the validity of his consecration by Felix. It further passed a canon, evidently bearing on the Donatist controversy and expressly laying down the principle that such a consecration is valid if the person ordained is personally worthy. It apparently did so on the ground that the validity of ordination does not depend on the character or conduct of the ordaining bishop.⁵¹ At bottom this was the question at issue between the Catholic Church and the Donatist opposition. The dissension became something more serious than a squabble over a disputed election. It ultimately involved a fundamental difference of ecclesiastical principle. On the Donatist side, the Church, as distinct from the world, is conceived in the puritan sense of an exclusive assembly of the saints, in which, alone, its sacramental rites have validity. On the Catholic side, it is conceived in the institutional sense of the general community of professing Christians, which includes pure and impure members, and in which the validity of the sacraments does not depend on the moral condition of its ministers.

Hence the tenacity of those stubborn sectaries, who now appealed from the council to the judgment of the Emperor himself. They thus recognised the imperial jurisdiction in ecclesiastical as well as secular causes, which they were later wholly to renounce. Constantine, who vigorously denounced their persistence as pure devilry and treachery to Christ,⁵² ultimately acceded to their request, and summoned the leaders of both parties to appear before him at Rome, whence he removed the trial to Milan. Though in his letter to the Donatist bishops he pledged himself to give them an impartial hearing, his judgment appears to have been a foregone conclusion. After hearing both sides in November 316, he accordingly gave judgment for Cæcilian and denounced his accusers as calumniators. He followed up his verdict by an edict decreeing the confiscation of their churches and fining the recalcitrant Donatist bishops. As usual, persecution only stiffened the backs of these schismatics. After four years' trial of it, he was fain to resort to the principle of toleration, which he had thus violated in his zeal for the unity of the Church. His repressive policy proved a failure, and he virtually admitted the fact. Persecution, he confesses, is both futile and unchristian.

⁵⁰ Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," x. 5.

⁵¹ Canon 14. See Hefele-Leclercq, "Hist. des Conciles," i., Pt. I., 289-290.

⁵² Letter to the council giving the members leave to return to their homes. Its genuineness has been questioned. It is accepted by Hefele-Leclercq, "Hist. des Conciles," i., Pt. I., 296, and Ziwsa.

Patience and moderation are the only befitting attitude of the Christian, who should leave vengeance in the hands of God. These misguided fanatics should, therefore, be left unmolested in the conviction that the schism will ultimately languish and die out. Whilst the decision was wise, the forecast was all too sanguine. Under the capable and resolute leadership of Donatus, the schism grew instead of diminishing, and perpetuated itself throughout the fourth and into the fifth century in North Africa, if it won no adherents in the Church at large. Though the dissidents began by appealing to the head of the State against their opponents, they finished by enunciating and maintaining the complete independence of the Church from the State.⁵³

VIRTUAL HEAD OF THE CHURCH

Though by his conversion Constantine had made Christianity the imperial religion, it had not thereby become the religion of the Empire. It had become the creed of the Emperor, not the creed of the Empire. He was, moreover, still officially at least Pontifex Maximus, High Priest of the State cult. As Pontifex Maximus it was part of the function of the Roman Emperors to supervise the religion of their subjects, and Constantine as a Christian Emperor appears to have practically continued this antique conception of his office in his relations with the Catholic Church. In spite of his deferential attitude towards the Christian priesthood, he really dominated both it and the Church. His power over the State was absolute. He claimed to rule by divine right and did not hesitate to extend this right over matters ecclesiastical. As we have seen, he explicitly assumed an episcopal function over the Church, and though he professed to limit it to things external, he did not scruple to extend it on occasion to ecclesiastical doctrine and practice. Practically he assumed supremacy over both the Church and the State, in virtue of the traditional conception of the religious as well as the secular function of the Emperor alike as Pontifex Maximus and Imperator. "The people of the Roman Empire," says Dr W. W. D. Gardiner, "were accustomed to the domination of the Emperor in every department, and so at first he slipped easily into an ecclesiastical

⁵³ The chief sources are the work of Optatus, Bishop of Milevis, "De Schismate Donatistarum," towards the close of the fourth century, and the controversial writings of Augustine, especially the "Breviculus Collationis cum Donatistis" (A.D. 411), "Opera," Migne, xliii. See the modern account in Hefele-Leclercq, "Hist. des Conciles," i., Pt. I., 265 f. (1907). See also the chapter on "Constantine and the Donatists" in J. B. Firth's "Constantine the Great," 159 f. (1905).

position similar to that which he had occupied in the pagan cult. He plainly wished to command such a status."⁵⁴ He summoned ecclesiastical assemblies and sanctioned their decisions. He even, on occasion, took part in their proceedings and did not hesitate to pronounce judgment himself. He intervened in episcopal elections. He directed the people of Antioch, for instance, not to withdraw Eusebius of Cæsarea from his See in order to replace the deposed Eustathius.⁵⁵ He sought to repress schismatics and punished alike heretics like Arius and orthodox churchmen like Athanasius. He wrote missives to his subjects, both pagan and Christian, which read like pastorals. According to Eusebius he frequently preached long sermons in his palace on knotty points of divinity, and this though he was not even a baptized Christian.⁵⁶ He had no hesitation about his right, as sole and absolute head of the Empire, to dominate the religious beliefs and practice of his subjects. "I confess," wrote he to Ælianus, the proconsul of Africa, in reference to the Donatist controversy, "that I esteem it in no way compatible with my divine right that I should ignore contentions and divisions of this sort. For by these, perchance, the highest Divinity may not only be moved to anger against the human race, but against myself, to whose care the direction of all earthly affairs has been consigned by His heavenly will, and against whom He might in His wrath launch His decree."⁵⁷ There was, indeed, no little justification for his energetic intervention in ecclesiastical affairs in view of his conviction of the necessity of the unity of the Church as an adjunct of the unity of the State, which these quarrelling churchmen tended to endanger. Many of these ecclesiastics by their intolerance and doctrinaire beliefs were both a nuisance and a danger to the stable government of the Empire. Their doctrinal intolerance provoked the sarcasm and invited, if theoretically it might not justify, the application of the curbing hand of the strong ruler. Admirable as well as sarcastic was his rejoinder to the Novatian Bishop Acesius, who insisted on the absolute necessity of excluding from communion those who had sinned after baptism. "Place a ladder against the sky and climb up alone to heaven."⁵⁸ Admirable, too, the letter in which he condemned the disposition of theologians like Alexander and Arius to quarrel so fiercely on abstruse points of

⁵⁴ "The Church in the Empire under the Constantians," 45, Edin. Univ. D.Litt. Thesis in Eccl. Hist., 1925.

⁵⁵ "Vita," iii. 60 f.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, iv. 29.

⁵⁷ Optatus, "De Schismate Donatistarum," 181, ed. Dupin, and see Loening, "Geschichte des Deutschen Kirchenrechts," i. 66.

⁵⁸ Socrates, i. 10; Sozomen, i. 22.

divinity, and the persecution of brethren by one another, which he denounced as "an intolerable spirit of mad folly," as mischievous as it was futile.⁵⁹ His intervention in ecclesiastical disputes was not exclusively actuated by political motives. With no little force he could adduce in support of it the interest of the Christian religion itself, in view of the scandal caused by theological strife, which invited the ridicule of pagans and seriously lamed the Church's influence. "Now that the impious hostility of the tyrants has been for ever removed by the power of God, our Saviour," he exhorted the Council of Nicæa, "I pray that that spirit which delights in evil may devise no other means for exposing the divine law to blasphemous calumny; for in my opinion intestine strife within the Church of God is far more evil and dangerous than any kind of war and conflict; and these our differences appear more grievous than any outward trouble. . . . As soon as I heard that intelligence which I had least expected to receive, I mean the news of your dissension, I judged it to be of no secondary importance, but, with the earnest desire that a remedy for this evil also might be found through my instrumentality, I immediately sent to require your presence."⁶⁰ He regarded himself as the chosen instrument of God to carry out the divine purpose. "I myself was the instrument whom He chose and esteemed suited for the accomplishment of His will."⁶¹ In view of such pronouncements, it might be said with no little justification that the Church had won its freedom from a persecuting State only to surrender this freedom to the Christian head of the State. This was the danger to which it was exposed and, in its enthusiastic if indiscriminating devotion to its imperial patron, tended to succumb. Co-operation might easily pass into oppression. "For the help of the State the Church must pay by submitting to the State."⁶²

With this estimate of himself the bishops appear to have agreed. Judging from the attitude of Eusebius, they virtually recognised his supremacy over the Church. To Eusebius he appears not only as its patron, but its lawgiver. He seems to recognise his autocratic will as the ultimate law in both Church and State. The distinction between the spiritual and the temporal power was, indeed, inherent in Christianity, and the Church, in conflict with a persecuting State, had heroically maintained this principle and vindicated its inherent rights even unto death. As a religious

⁵⁹ "Vita," ii. 64-72.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, ii. 28.

⁶² Lot, "La Fin du Monde Antique." In its English form, "End of the Ancient World," 50 (1931).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, iii. 12.

association, it had developed into a state within the State, and while recognising the divine right of the State within its own sphere, had strenuously upheld the distinction between the things of Cæsar and the things of God, on which the Emperors might not encroach. In theory it might still be so. Practically, with a Christian Emperor on the imperial throne, it ignored the distinction between the spiritual and temporal power, and was only too ready to pay tribute to the antique concept of the right of the State, in its new form, to dominate mind and conscience in matters religious. It recognised in the Christian Emperor a kind of general bishop constituted by God to exercise a peculiar care over the Church, and not only convene synods to settle ecclesiastical disputes, but take part in their debates. In this capacity the Emperor certainly took pains to ascertain the general will of the Church in synod or council in order the better to direct it. At the same time, if he sought to direct, he did not hesitate on occasion to command, in virtue of his sovereign jurisdiction. In the case of Athanasius, for instance, whom he peremptorily ordered to admit Arius to communion; and on his refusal, threatened with banishment,⁶³ and, though for a different reason, ultimately, in 336, carried out his threat. About the same time a like fate befell Bishop John Archaph,⁶⁴ the leader of the Meletian schism, which had originated with Meletius, Bishop of Lycopolis in Egypt, who advocated the more rigorous treatment of the lapsed during the Diocletian persecution in opposition to Bishop Peter of Alexandria and Bishop Alexander. Equally significant of his autocratic will in ecclesiastical affairs the threat of banishment against the bishops who should disobey his command to attend the Council of Tyre, in the previous year, on the ground that "it does not become such to resist an Emperor's decrees issued in defence of the truth."⁶⁵

For Constantine the Church was thus a department of State, in which the imperial will was the supreme law. With him originated the system of imperial ecclesiastical jurisdiction which was to merge the Eastern Church in the State and was later known as Cæsaropapalism. It was a heavy price to pay for the imperial patronage which Eusebius and his fellow-Court bishops were only too ready to pay in the exuberance of their gratitude to their imperial patron, though the case of Athanasius shows that there were some bishops who were not prepared to surrender conviction

⁶³ Sozomen, ii. 22.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. 31. See also Idris Bell, "Jews and Christians in Egypt," 38 f. (1924).

⁶⁵ "Vita," iv. 42.

and conscience at the imperial behest. Under his son Constantius the immediate fruits of this system already appear in the course of the renewed Arian controversy, in which he took the Arian side. "Whatever I will," retorted he to the recalcitrant bishops who, at the Synod of Milan in 355, appealed to the canons of the Church, "be that esteemed a canon. Either obey, or go into banishment."⁶⁶ The Donatist query, "What has the Emperor to do with the Church?"⁶⁷ now resounded within the Catholic Church itself. These arbitrary tactics had at length forced the question of the independence of the Church on the bishops of the Athanasian party. Liberius of Rome, Hosius of Cordova, Hilary of Poitiers emphasised its rights as a divine institution, in distinction from the State, and rebutted the imperial claim to exercise absolute authority over it. "Intrude not yourself into ecclesiastical matters," wrote Hosius, the aged friend of his father, to Constantius, "neither give commands to us concerning them. . . . God has put into your hands the kingdom; to us He has entrusted the affairs of the Church."⁶⁸ They not only reminded him of the rights of the Church. They appealed to the still more compelling right of conscience. "Persecution," insisted Athanasius, "is a device of the devil."⁶⁹ "The truth is not preached with swords or darts, nor by means of soldiers, but by persuasion and counsel. But what persuasion is there where fear of the Emperor prevails, or what counsel, when he who withstands them receives at last banishment or death? . . . It is the true part of godliness not to compel but to persuade."⁷⁰ Such appeals would have been more forcible if the appellants had shown themselves more disposed to honour this sacred right in their treatment of conscientious opponents, who differed from them in theology. The Nicæan Fathers (Athanasius included) do not appear to have so protested when Arius was condemned and banished by Constantine.

⁶⁶ Athanasius, "Historia Arianorum," 33, Robertson's trans. There is some dubiety whether he actually used these words. Gwatkin, 152. In any case they express the spirit of his policy.

⁶⁷ "Quid imperatori cum Ecclesia," Migne, t. viii. 776.

⁶⁸ Athanasius, "Historia Arianorum," c. 44.

⁶⁹ "Apologia de Fuga," c. 23.

⁷⁰ "Historia Arianorum," chs. 33 and 67.

CHAPTER IV

THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY AND THE
COUNCIL OF NICÆA

OUTBREAK OF THEOLOGICAL STRIFE

VERY noteworthy is the outbreak of theological controversy on an extensive scale on the recognition of the Christian Church by the State. Throughout the previous three centuries the controversial spirit had, indeed, been sufficiently active, as the Gnostic, the Montanist, the Novatian, and the Monarchian controversies show. What was denominated heresy had, in fact, from early times, ever and anon threatened to rend the unity of the Church. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church had asserted and maintained itself with tolerable unanimity against such disturbing tendencies, and at the beginning of the fourth century, controversy had only resulted in the strengthening of the consciousness of its unity in the faith.¹ But the faith was not as yet a system of clear-cut dogmas, and there was much diversity of thought and expression in the speculative interpretation of it, as the varying opinions of the earlier Fathers show. Moreover, the pressure of persecution as well as the fluidity of Christian thought tended powerfully to preserve the sense of unity. When this pressure was finally withdrawn in the second decade of the fourth century, diversity and antagonism of speculative opinion made themselves felt in a series of dogmatic contentions, which involved the whole Church in fierce strife, brought into existence the General Councils, and induced long and bitter schism. This internal conflict replaced persecution from without by persecution within at the hands of the various parties, which for the time being succeeded in gaining the majority in General Council and the mastery in the State. What Sozomen, who ascribes the controversial spirit largely to the personal contentiousness of individual clerics, later says in reference to the ecclesiastical situation at the close of Julian's short reign, holds equally of that at the close of the Diocletian persecution.² "The presidents of the churches now resumed the agitation of doctrinal questions and discussions. They had remained quiet during the reign of Julian, when Christianity itself was endangered and had unanimously offered up their supplications for the mercy of God. It is thus that men, when attacked

¹ See Harnack, "History of Dogma," iii. 123.

² "Hist. Eccl.," vi. 25.

by foreign enemies, remain in accord among themselves; but when external troubles are removed, then internal dissensions creep in." ³ The theology which finally triumphed in the orthodox creeds was fashioned in the mould of party strife, of which the great Councils were the arenas. It was the work of great ecclesiastical parliaments in which party leaders fought out their rival contentions with, unfortunately, the accessories of party intrigue and even at times party violence.

ARIUS AND THE ARIAN MOVEMENT

Arianism was the mature fruit of the theory of the subordination of the Son to the Father, which had found not a few exponents and representatives among the earlier theologians. Even Origen had enunciated a form of this theory and was claimed as, in this respect, a forerunner of Arius. The real forerunner of Arius was, however, Lucian, his teacher ⁴ and the founder of the theological school of Antioch. This school was distinguished by its rational, critical spirit, and its emphasis on the historical and grammatical sense of the Scriptures, in contrast to the allegorising tendency especially characteristic of the Alexandrian school. Of Lucian and his theological opinions our knowledge is misty. He acquired his early theological training in the school of Edessa, became a presbyter and an influential teacher of the Church at Antioch, and suffered martyrdom at Nicomedia under Maximinus Daza in 311. Whether he was a follower of Paul of Samosata is a disputed question, though the general view is that he was. ⁵ If so, he must have substantially modified Paul's Christological teaching. Both held that Christ was a creature, but while Paul conceived of Him as a mere man in whom the impersonal Divine Wisdom or Logos manifested itself, Lucian and his school regarded Him as a heavenly being who was created by God out of nothing, ⁶ in whom the Divine Logos becomes personal, who, at the incarnation, assumed a human body, but not a human soul, and whose

³ vi. 4.

⁴ See Theodoret, "Eccles. Hist.," i. 4.

⁵ Harnack, "Hist. of Dogma," iv. 3; Bethune Baker, "Early History of Christian Doctr.," 110 f. (1903); Hefele-Leclercq, "Hist. des Conciles," i. Pt. I., 347; M'Giffert, "Hist. of Christian Thought," i. 246 f. (1932), and many others assume that he was. On the other side, Gwatkin, "Studies of Arianism," 17 f. (2nd ed., 1900), and especially the more recent discussion of Loofs, "Texte und Unters.," xiv. 180 f., 3te Reihe, 1924, who argues that the passage in Theodoret, "Hist. Eccl.," i. 3, on which this assumption is founded, refers, not to Lucian the presbyter, but to Lucian the successor of Paul as bishop of the Paulian community at Antioch.

⁶ εἰς οὐκ ὄντων.

mission it was to reveal the Father. But He was not God in the absolute sense and was not eternal.⁷ In thus emphasising the creatureliness of the heavenly Christ, they sought to maintain the unity and transcendence of God, which the theology of Antioch derived from the philosophy of Aristotle.

It was this conception of Christ that Arius set forth in more elaborate form at Alexandria, and thus started what is known as the Arian Controversy. He seems, indeed, to have been involved in controversy from the commencement of his career as deacon of the Alexandrian Church. He is found at first siding with Meletius in the schism which distracted the Egyptian Church over the question of the lapsed during the Diocletian persecution; then changing sides; again reverting to the Meletians; suffering excommunication in consequence thereof at the hands of Bishop Peter, and subsequently being received into communion and ordained presbyter by Peter's successor, Achillas.⁸ He was appointed minister of one of the churches of the city and ere long achieved a high reputation by his learning, his attractive manners, and his austere life. He had, too, the logical faculty⁹ needful to assert and defend his opinions, and his readiness to make use of this faculty in theological controversy ultimately brought him into collision with his ecclesiastical superior, Bishop Alexander, with whom he seems, besides, to have had friction on personal grounds. The theological dispute began, according to Socrates,¹⁰ on the occasion of a discourse delivered by Alexander to his clergy on the unity of the Trinity, when Arius ventured to contradict the bishop.¹¹ In the course of the controversy which ensued, and led to his excommunication, along with his followers among the Alexandrian clergy, by an Egyptian synod held in 321 or 322, the divergence of view between bishop and presbyter became more definite. Alexander maintained the coeternity and equality of Father and Son.¹² Arius, on the contrary, insisted that God alone is eternal and has no equal; that He created the Son out of nothing; that the Son is, therefore, not eternal, nor is God eter-

⁷ On the other hand, a creed adopted by the semi-Arian Synod of Antioch in 341 (Socrates, ii. 10), and, according to Theodoret, emanating originally from Lucian, sounds orthodox. But this was probably a redaction of that of Lucian. See Harnack, iv. 5-6.

⁸ Soz., i. 15.

⁹ Socrates, i. 5.

¹⁰ i. 5.

¹¹ Constantine in his letter to Alexander and Arius says he understands that the dispute began on the occasion of the bishop asking the presbyters their opinion on a certain passage of Scripture. Eusebius, "Vita Const.," ii. 69.

¹² The views of Alexander are found in his own letter to the Bishop of Byzantium (not yet Constantinople), and that of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia. Theodoret, i. 3 and 4. The early correspondence relative to the Arian Controversy is given in Athanasius' "Werke," Theil I., ed. by Opitz (1934).

nally the Father, since "there was (a time) when the Son was not";¹³ that He is of a different substance from the Father and is subject to change; that He is not truly God, though He was capable of perfection and became a perfect creature—the Logos in a real human body. Christ is thus for him a secondary deity or demigod, who partakes, in a certain measure, of the qualities of both the divine and the human, but is not God in the highest sense.¹⁴ This conception reveals the influence both of the philosophical view of God as transcendent, isolated from the world (Aristotle), and of polytheism which assumed the existence of lower gods under a supreme Being.¹⁵

It was on behalf of these views that Arius, on being driven from Alexandria, appealed to the bishops of the Eastern Church, especially to his old fellow-student at Antioch,¹⁶ Eusebius of Nicomedia, and to Eusebius of Cæsarea, the most erudite bishop of his age, whilst Alexander also sought to justify his views and his action in letters to his fellow-bishops throughout the East.¹⁷ Certain it is that he found many sympathisers, though his claim that all the Eastern bishops agreed with him is evidently an exaggeration,¹⁸ and his appeal produced a powerful impression throughout the East and greatly widened the area of the controversy. "Disputes and contentions," says Theodoret, "arose in every city and in every village concerning theological dogmas. . . . These were indeed scenes fit for the tragic stage, over which tears might have been shed. For it was not, as in bygone days, when the Church was attacked by strangers and enemies; but now nations of the same country, who dwelt under one roof and sat down at one table, fought against each other, not with spears, but with their tongues."¹⁹ He strove to gain adherents by popularising his doctrines in a work entitled "Thalia," or Banquet, of which only a few fragments have been preserved by Athanasius,²⁰ and in the songs which he wrote for various classes—millers,

¹³ ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν.

¹⁴ For the views of Arius, see his letters to Eusebius of Nicomedia and Alexander; fragments of his "Thalia," or Banquet, in Athanasius, especially "De Synodis," 15; the letters of Bishop Alexander in Socrates, i. 6; and Theodoret, i. 3. Harnack gives a very good summary in "Hist. of Dog.," iv. 15-19; Dorner, "Person of Christ," Div. I., ii. 227 f; Hefele-Leclercq, "Histoire des Conciles," i., Pt. I., 349 f.; Tixeront, "Histoire des Dogmes," ii. 24 f. (3rd ed., 1909).

¹⁵ See Gwatkin, "Studies of Arianism," 20 and 27.

¹⁶ He calls him in his letter, co-Lucian, Συλλουκιανιστής.

¹⁷ Given by Socrates and Theodoret, as above.

¹⁸ See his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia in Theodoret, i. 4.

¹⁹ Theod., i. 5.

²⁰ See "De Synodis," 15, and "Orationes contra Arianos," i. 2, 10.

sailors, travellers, etc.²¹ The widespread sympathy which his teaching excited is evidenced by the fact that a synod in Bithynia, over which Eusebius of Nicomedia presided, espoused his cause. Arius, in fact, felt so strong in the sympathy of so large a following that he ventured to return to Alexandria and resume his charge. Though he had previously written to Alexander in a conciliatory spirit, he had not retracted his specific doctrines, and the controversy raged afresh. It became, in fact, so notorious that it forced the Emperor himself to intervene in the interest of peace.

ATHANASIUS AND HIS TEACHING

Constantine treated the matter as a squabble about words and severely lectured the disputants on "the mad folly" of disturbing the peace of the Church and compromising its usefulness by quarrelling about what neither understood. The imperial intervention at Alexandria, though seconded by the personal efforts of Hosius, Bishop of Cordova, his emissary, was unavailing. Constantine did not apparently realise the seriousness of the situation or the impassioned interest it was exciting far and near. Besides, behind Alexander was a more powerful mind, one equal to that of Arius himself in its logical force, and still more tenacious of its convictions. Athanasius had by this time entered the debate, and with him a masterful opponent emerges on the scene. Of his early life there is little to tell. He was born about the close of the third century and was evidently carefully instructed in Greek literature and philosophy. His works show knowledge of the Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neo-Platonic philosophy as well as of Greek poetry and eloquence. To this he added a mastery of the Greek Scriptures—the Septuagint and the New Testament, though he knew no Hebrew. In his familiarity with sacred and secular Greek literature, he is thus a characteristic product of the Alexandrian school, though he was to show that he could strike out in an independent path, when the occasion arose, and became the founder of the new Alexandrian school of theology, which was more mystic and less rational than that of Clement and Origen. His ability and earnestness attracted the notice of Bishop Alexander, who made him his secretary and ordained him a deacon, and whose successor he was destined to become on his death in 328. It is probable, indeed, that the theological views which Alexander enunciated in his letter to the Eastern bishops against Arius were formulated by his secretary,²² who subsequently

²¹ "Philostorgius," Epistle ii. 2.

²² See Robertson's "Prologomena to the Works of Athanasius" in "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers," iv.

elaborated them, though not systematically, in a series of controversial works, which the conflicts of his stormy career called forth.

What is characteristic of his christology is the fact that he views the problem of Christ's divinity from the soteriological not from the cosmological standpoint. He does not consider the Logos so much as the instrument of creation,²³ as did the older Fathers, but as the instrument of redemption. Christ came into the world to redeem mankind from sin and death, especially from death, and enable man to attain immortality and incorruption, as in Irenæus and Origen, and the true knowledge of God.²⁴ "For He was made man that we might be made God; ²⁵ and He manifested Himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father; He endured the insolence of men that we might inherit immortality." Now, the Godhead of Christ is essential to His work of redemption, salvation. "It was in the power of none other to turn the corruptible to incorruption, except the Saviour Himself that had at the beginning also made anew all things out of nought; none other could create the likeness of God's image for men save the image of the Father; and none could render the mortal immortal save our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the very life; none other could teach men of the Father and destroy the worship of idols save the Word that orders all things and is alone the true, only begotten Son of the Father."²⁶ Only God can redeem; salvation cannot be the work of any creature. The Son is eternally begotten in God; but He is not created. "Plainly divine Scripture says through Moses of the creatures, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,' but of the Son it introduces not another, but the Father Himself, saying, 'I have begotten thee from the womb, before the morning star.' . . . If, then, Son, therefore not a creature, if creature, not Son."²⁷ It was a divine Being that took flesh for our sakes. "The Word was made flesh in order to offer up this body for all, that we, partaking of His spirit, might be deified—a gift which we could not otherwise have gained than by His clothing Himself in our created body. But as we, by receiving the Spirit, do not lose our own proper substance, so the Lord, when made man for us, and bearing a body, was no less God."²⁸ "He was not man, and then became God, but He was

²³ See "Orat.," ii. 24 f.

²⁴ See, for instance, "De Incarnatione Dei," chs. 10, 11, 54.

²⁵ "De Incarnatione Dei," c. 54. αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνηθρῶπῆσεν ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν.

²⁶ "De Incarnatione Dei," c. 20.

²⁷ "De Decretis," 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

God and then became man, and that to deify us.”²⁹ But to be God, He must be eternal. There was not (a time) when He was not. “The Son did not come out of nothing, nor is in the number of originated things at all, but is the Father’s image and Word eternal, never having not been, but being ever, as the eternal radiance of a Light which is eternal.”³⁰ Moreover, as God has always been the Father, the very name Father implies the eternity of the Son. And the Son is of the same essence or substance with the Father.³¹ “For the Father is in the Son, since the Son is what is from the Father and proper to Him, as in the radiance the sun, and in the word the thought, and in the stream the fountain. For whoso thus contemplates the Son contemplates what is proper to the Father’s essence.”³² Son and Father form a unity,³³ one God. “He and the Father are one in propriety and peculiarity of nature and in the identity of the one God.”³⁴ But they are not one in the Sabellian sense. There is a duality in the unity. “They are two, because the Father is Father and is not also son, and the son is Son and is not also Father.”³⁵

Athanasius thus stands for the absolute Deity of Christ, which for him is essential to his theory of a divine redemption. His conception of Christ is dominated by his religious conviction that in Him God Himself entered into humanity in order thereby to enable man to attain life divine. This religious motive dominates it, and he develops it with much resource and ingenuity in the assertion and defence of his preconceived theory of redemption. The conception is liable to the drawbacks of all preconceived theories applied to a historic personage. It is a metaphysical rather than a historic evaluation of Christ, as the authentic record of His life reveals Him, and the historian cannot but ask whether it accords with historic actuality. He will, moreover, ask whether, in the face of this historic actuality, it is so absolutely necessary that in order to redeem humanity Christ must be God Himself. Why should we limit God by a preconceived theory of this kind and make dogmatic assertions on the strength of it? Is it not at least debatable that God might choose to work out His redemptive purpose through a chosen and uniquely endowed instrument of this purpose? This is at least fairly inferable from the authentic record of Christ’s mission of teaching, healing, and dying as the founder of the kingdom of God. In this record He is the unique personality, the Son of

²⁹ “Orat.,” i. 39.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, i. 13.

³¹ ὁμοούσιος.

³² “Orat.,” iii. 3.

³³ μόνος.

³⁴ “Orat.,” iii. 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, iii. 4.

God in the Messianic and also in the filial sense, in whom the Spirit of God operates, as in no other. He Himself does not claim to be God. He is the Sent of God, chosen to preach His kingdom; to prepare the way for its ultimate establishment, to bring men into it by His revelation of God, His unique life, and His redemptive self-sacrifice in their behalf, and at His death He is exalted to the Lordship of humanity. He did not expatiate on His own nature and His relation to God in the later theological fashion. While expressing His filial relation in a special sense to God, He distinguishes between Himself and God as the absolute Good. Even Paul, who goes beyond the primitive record and conceives of Him as the pre-existent Son of God and God's instrument in the creation as well as the redemption of the world, does not equate Him with God in the absolute sense. As His instrument, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."³⁶ It is only in the late Fourth Gospel and in later Greek theological speculation that he becomes God in the absolute sense, though usually with some reservation (subordination). Athanasius, from religious motives, is the thoroughgoing representative of this speculative conception of Christ and the sworn antagonist of all previous divergent views, which culminated in the teaching of his contemporary, Arius. Though highly gifted and deeply religious, he was evidently deficient in the historic sense, the critical faculty that could apprehend and appraise the historic Jesus in the light of His own authentic testimony, even if he professes to find the confirmation of his religious conviction in the evangelic record. He seems to have been incapable of distinguishing between the Christ of this record and the Christ of the Johannine writings—the Logos, who was "the true or real God," and the actual Christ who lived and taught on earth.

In addition to the difficulty of reconciling this metaphysical conception with historic actuality, there is the difficulty of harmonising the belief in the duality of Father and Son with that in the unity of the Godhead. As Harnack points out, in reference to the contradictions in his thought, the view of Athanasius is "that the Godhead is a numerical unity, but that nevertheless Father and Son are to be distinguished within this unity as two."³⁷ On the one hand, the duality of the Godhead seemed to nullify

³⁶ 2 Cor. v. 19.

³⁷ "Hist. of Dog.," iv. 46. In his essay on "Athanasius the Modernist" ("Price of Progress," 76 f., 1924), Dr Mellone pronounces Harnack's charge of contradictions in the thought of Athanasius as "extraordinary perversity." His attempt to substantiate this perversity by insisting on "the unity in difference" does not seem to me to obviate the inference that the duality, in spite of unity of substance, really involves two gods.

the unity. Even if the Son is of one and the same substance with the Father—"begotten of the substance of the Father"—He must be credited with personal existence, if He is not to be regarded as identical with the Father. But personal existence implies a real distinction in the Godhead,³⁸ and this distinction seems to involve the belief in two Gods or Ditheism. On the other hand, the unity seemed to nullify the duality. To the opponents of Athanasius, at all events, it savoured of Sabellianism. It suggested that the Son was merely the mode or manifestation of the one God, the Father. Though Athanasius strongly repudiated such a conclusion, his reasoning in support both of the duality and the unity is not so flawless in logic or so compelling as he was prone to assume.

From the logical as well as the historic point of view, this reasoning was thus bound to raise serious objections. The unity in duality might religiously be preferable to the created Arian demigod with its polytheistic implications. At the same time in view of its ditheistic and Sabellian implications, it might well seem not the only alternative. This alternative might reasonably be sought in a more historic and less metaphysical train of thought. Moreover, the use of an abstruse philosophical terminology might well repel as an unscriptural and artificial method of diagnosing the concrete Christ, and at the same time burdening the faith of His followers with alien concepts under the influence of Greek and Jewish-Hellenist speculation. In any case, in the face of such objections, to transform a questionable speculation of this kind into an essential dogma and demand its acceptance as a cardinal article of faith, under penalty of excommunication, deprivation, and banishment, was, to say the least, a very unreasonable procedure. It was, besides, a gross infraction of the liberty of Christian thought in purely speculative questions.

THE COUNCIL OF NICÆA

This is what happened at Nicæa. The debate on the Christological question, once started, aroused such passionate feeling on

³⁸ Athanasius does not seem to have realised the importance of the question of the distinct personality of the Son. He has no term to denote it, since for him the terms *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις* are identical and are interchangeably used to denote the divine "substance" common to Father and Son. He does not use *πρόσωπον* to express the personal existence of the Son, as it was capable of the Sabellian sense of "aspect." It was only later that "hypostasis" came to denote the person of the Son, and *οὐσία* the substance or nature of the Godhead. His treatment of the question of personality is indefinite if not evasive. On the theological use of *πρόσωπον* and *ὑπόστασις*, see Schlossmann, "Persona und *πρόσωπον* im Recht und im Christlichen Dogma," 73 f., 1906; see also Bethune Baker, "Texts and Studies," 1901.

both sides that it threatened to rend the unity of the Church. The unity of the Church being indispensable to the unity of the State, it seemed imperative to obviate such a disruption on political as well as religious grounds. On both grounds the situation was a grave one. In order to cope with it Constantine convened the first General Council at Nicæa in 325, and thus gave the Church the opportunity to express its mind on this burning politico-religious question.

It can hardly be said to have represented the whole of Christendom. There were comparatively few deputies from the West, and of the three hundred bishops or thereabout³⁹ who attended, the overwhelming majority belonged to the Greek-speaking world. Among their number were some men of outstanding learning or ability, including Hosius of Cordova, the confidant of the Emperor, Alexander of Alexandria, who was accompanied by his secretary, the deacon Athanasius, Eustathius of Antioch, Marcellus of Ancyra, the two Eusebius of Nicomedia and Cæsarea respectively, and Arius, who was apparently present in the capacity of an accused person.⁴⁰ The majority seem, however, to have been of mediocre talents and knowledge.⁴¹ The Bishop of Rome did not attend, but was represented by two presbyters.⁴² The assembly was swelled by large numbers of the lower clergy and laymen. But though these seem to have taken part in the discussions, they were not entitled to vote,⁴³ and the decision cannot, therefore, be regarded as expressing their views. The Emperor himself was not only present, but, in his striving to effect an agreement, took an active part in the debates.⁴⁴

The Council was, in truth, greatly influenced by the imperial will, and the fact that Constantine, who had at first been disposed to regard the matter as an ordinary theological squabble, had come to take a more serious view of it and was favourably disposed towards the Athanasian view, doubtless tended to increase the adherents of this view. It ere long appeared that it was divided

³⁹ The numbers are variously estimated. 318 is the usual figure. See the superscription of the list (incomplete) edited by Turner. It is the number given in the "Liber Pontificalis," 48, of Mommsen's ed. But it is not exact, as the subscriptions to the Nicene Creed are not complete.

⁴⁰ Soz. i. 19.

⁴¹ See Socrates, i. 9, who, however, does not agree with the estimate of Sabinus, which he reports.

⁴² Theod., i. 6.

⁴³ Socrates, i. 8.

⁴⁴ "Vita Const.," iii. 12, 13; cf. Socrates, i. 9, where Constantine says that he himself undertook the investigation of the truth along with the bishops. The bishops had discussed the tenets of Arius before the formal opening of the Council by the Emperor and before his arrival. Soz. i. 17.

into three parties—the Arian or Lucianist party, led by Eusebius of Nicomedia ; what may be called an intermediate, or Origenist party, whose leader was Eusebius of Cæsarea ; and the Athanasian party, whose chief exponent was Bishop Alexander, with Athanasius himself as a vigorous seconder.⁴⁵

THE MAKING OF THE CREED

Of these, the Arian proved to be much the weakest party.⁴⁶ A creed, embodying their faith and presented by Eusebius of Nicomedia, was decisively and contemptuously rejected at the outset, and its adherents for the most part gave up the cause as hopeless. It had invited this summary discomfiture by overconfidence and by neglecting to come to an understanding with Eusebius of Cæsarea and his followers.⁴⁷ "They drew up a formula of their faith," says Theodoret, "and presented it to the Council. As soon as it was read it was torn in pieces, and was declared to be spurious and false. So great was the uproar raised against them, and so many were the reproaches cast on them for having betrayed religion, that they all, with the exception of Secundus and Theonas, stood up and took the lead in publicly renouncing Arius."⁴⁸ They now resolved to follow Eusebius of Cæsarea, who presented a creed which acknowledged the deity of Christ, but ignored the Homousios and the eternity of the Son.⁴⁹ "Eusebius," says Dr Gwatkin, "held a sort of intermediate position, regarding the Lord not indeed as a creature, but as a secondary God derived from the will of the Father."⁵⁰ It was nevertheless welcomed by a large number as a satisfactory statement of belief, as it carefully avoided the technical metaphysical terms in dispute, and Athanasius and Marcellus were fain generally to accept it as far as it went. But whilst generally accepting it, they were determined to amend it, and ultimately succeeded in inserting certain phrases which would nullify the evasion of what were to them essential truths. The Son is declared to be of the

⁴⁵ Socrates, i. 8 ; Sozomen, i. 17.

⁴⁶ They were not above twenty in number. Sozomen, i. 20, says seventeen.

⁴⁷ See Harnack, "History of Dogma," iv. 51.

⁴⁸ i. 6.

⁴⁹ The creed is given in Socrates, i. 8, and Theod., i. 11. See also Gwatkin, "Arian Controversy," 26 (1908). Christ is said to be God of (or from) God, etc., born before all creation, begotten before all ages. This does not make Him consubstantial, nor does it shut out the phrase, "there was (a time) when He was not."

⁵⁰ "Arian Controversy," 26. On his Christology, as contained in his "Demonstratio Evangelica," see Ferrar's Introduction to his translation of this work, 24 f. (1920). See also his "Præparatio Evangelica," bk. VII., chs. 12-15. Gifford's ed. and trans. (1903).

essence or substance ⁵¹ of the Father, to be true God of true God, to be begotten, not made, and to be consubstantial ⁵² with the Father. Moreover, they added the explicit condemnation of the distinctive Arian tenets ("once when he was not," "made out of nothing," "of other substance or essence than the Father," ⁵³ "created or subject to moral change or alteration" ⁵⁴).

This dogmatic interpretation of the mystery aroused long debates, in which the Emperor took part. ⁵⁵ To a large section of the Council the use of Homoousios smacked both of materialism and Sabellianism, and not only laboured under the objection of being non-Scriptural, but had been rejected by the synod of Antioch which condemned Paul of Samosata. Ultimately, however, in deference to the imperial will, ⁵⁶ and in their anxiety to attain at least external agreement, the dissidents, with two exceptions, acquiesced in this form of the creed, many of them, like Eusebius of Cæsarea, only at the expense of no little sophistry and of infidelity to their real convictions. ⁵⁷ The two who unflinchingly adhered to their Arian convictions, in the face of both Emperor and Council, were, as already noted, Secundus and Theonas, who incurred exile as well as excommunication. To these were added, soon after the Council, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicæa, who, though they subscribed the creed, were suspected by Constantine and were accused of actively opposing the imperial will in matters of religion. ⁵⁸ Excommunication and banishment were also meted out to Arius and several fellow-presbyters, ⁵⁹ and not only did Constantine order the writings of the obnoxious heretic to be burned, but decreed the penalty of death against those who should venture to conceal them. ⁶⁰ "This, therefore, I decree, that if any one shall be detected in concealing a book compiled by Arius, and shall not instantly bring it forward and burn it, the penalty for this offence shall be death; for immediately after conviction the criminal shall suffer capital punishment. May God preserve you!"

⁵¹ οὐσία.

⁵² ὁμοούσιος.

⁵³ ἐξ ἐτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας.

⁵⁴ See Socrates, i. 8; Theod., i. 11; cf. Gwatkin, 29, 30, and "Studies of Arianism," 45 (1900). It is given by Kattenbusch, "Das apostolische Symbol," i. 228-229, and by Hefele-Leclercq, i. Pt. I., 443-444. Curtis, "Creeds and Confessions," 70, and M'Giffert, "Hist. of Christian Thought," 262 in Eng. trans.

⁵⁵ Theod., i. 11.

⁵⁶ See Harnack, iv. 56.

⁵⁷ See the letter of Eusebius, Theod., i. 11.

⁵⁸ See Constantine's letter, Theod., i. 19.

⁵⁹ Socrates, i. 8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, i. 9.

THE IMMEDIATE SEQUEL

The Athanasian party had triumphed owing to the pressure of its imperial patron in its support and the pliability of its opponents. With it, too, had triumphed the spirit of intolerance in theological discussion and the principle of inflicting and enforcing, by the State, civil penalties for theological opinion. Whatever the demerits of Arianism as a theology, it may fairly be described as, at this stage, a plea for liberty of theological discussion. Athanasius, indeed, avers that there was no compulsion and that the truth was deliberately vindicated.⁶¹ But liberty of discussion is rather a naive conception when excommunication and exile are the penalty of dissent. In supporting this persecuting policy the Athanasian party was setting an evil example, which its Arian opponents were later only too ready to follow in the day of their opportunity. "Though the exile of Arius and his friends," says Dr Gwatkin, "was Constantine's work, much of the discredit must fall on the Athanasian leaders, for we cannot find that they objected to it at the time or afterwards."⁶² Moreover the unanimity in accepting the Homoousian doctrine was more apparent than real in spite of the assurance of Athanasius that the truth was deliberately vindicated. It is, in fact, evident that the final decision of the Council in favour of this doctrine was far from being in accord with the real convictions of a majority of its members. There was undoubtedly a large amount of muffled dissent from the objectionable term, "consubstantial," owing to its association with the teaching of Sabellius. The discussion of the term, as Socrates remarks, in reference to the renewal of the controversy after the Council, "seemed not unlike a contest in the dark, for neither party appeared to understand distinctly the grounds on which it calumniated the other."⁶³ The formal unanimity of the decision was thus largely artificial. The Athanasian party who voted in favour of the Homoousian doctrine from conviction was really a minority. Its acceptance by the majority was due in large measure to the influence of the Emperor, who strove from political as well as religious motives to manipulate the result, and whose will, as the powerful patron of the Church, it would have required an extraordinary daring to resist. The Homoousian doctrine, as M. Lot rightly judges, "was enforced rather than accepted."⁶⁴

In reality it was a makeshift, and the decision was thus anything

⁶¹ "Epist. ad Episcopos," 13.

⁶² "Arian Controversy," 39.

⁶³ i. 23.

⁶⁴ "Fin du Monde Antique," 44.

but a final one. In the sequel it provoked nearly sixty years of fierce controversy and division. Instead of uniting the Church, Constantine found that he had virtually disrupted it. While the West welcomed the decision of "the great and holy Council," the East largely disliked it as an innovation. It was not to any great extent Arian, but it was not prepared to go beyond the older, more indefinite faith and profess the "consubstantiality" of Father and Son as an essential of the creed. "The triumph" (of the Athanasian party), says Gwatkin, "was rather a surprise than a solid victory. As it was a revolution which a minority had forced through by sheer strength of clearer thought, a reaction was inevitable when the half-convinced majority returned home. In other words, Athanasius had pushed the Easterns farther than they wished to go, and his victory recoiled on himself."⁶⁵ Under the leadership of Eusebius of Nicomedia and with the co-operation of his namesake of Cæsarea, they began an agitation against the Homoousian doctrine which they denounced as a reversion to the heresy of Sabellius.⁶⁶ Their controversial activity roused the religious fanaticism of the masses and turned the Eastern Church into a pandemonium of party and popular violence. They accused Eustathius of Antioch, the active champion of the Nicene creed, of Sabellianism and immorality, and having deposed him at a synod held in this city in 330, secured his banishment by Constantine.⁶⁷ Constantine himself was not proof against the reaction which the Council had provoked, in spite of the energetic vindication of the Nicene creed by Athanasius, the successor of Alexander in the See of Alexandria. He recalled not only the exiled bishops and restored them to their Sees on professing the Nicene faith (328),⁶⁸ but Arius himself, who also made what was deemed a satisfactory profession by omitting all reference to the points hitherto in dispute (331),⁶⁹ and demanded his restoration to his charge at Alexandria. This demand, though backed by the Emperor, Athanasius refused to yield, deeming compliance equivalent to a surrender of the true faith. His refusal exposed him to the Emperor's displeasure and the attack of the reactionaries. At a synod at Tyre in 335 they brought against him a false charge of murder, which he dramatically succeeded in disproving by producing the supposed murdered person, and of

⁶⁵ "Arian Controversy," 39.

⁶⁶ Socrates, i. 23; Sozomen, ii. 18.

⁶⁷ Socrates, i. 24; Sozomen, ii. 19. On Eustathius, see the monograph of Sellers, "Eustathius of Antioch" (1928).

⁶⁸ Socrates, i. 14.

⁶⁹ Socrates, i. 26. As a presbyter he was not required to sign the Nicene creed which was obligatory only on bishops.

sedition and other crimes, which were equally unfounded ; voted his deposition ;⁷⁰ and, on adjourning to Jerusalem, rehabilitated Arius by declaring his profession satisfactory.⁷¹ Against this harsh treatment, Athanasius, who suddenly turned up at Constantinople, dramatically appealed in person to the Emperor, who summoned his accusers to retry the case in his own presence. Finally, on the strength of the further false charge of hindering the corn supply of the capital, he exiled him to Treves (336).⁷² Marcellus of Ancrya, who had been his chief coadjutor at Nicæa, and held the Nicene doctrine in a practically Sabellian sense,⁷³ was also condemned and deposed by the bishops to whom Constantine referred the case. On the other hand, he directed the Bishop of Constantinople to receive Arius, who now explicitly professed his acceptance of the Nicene creed, into communion, and the recalcitrant bishop was only saved from compliance by the sudden death of the heretic on the day preceding that on which the ceremony was to take place.⁷⁴

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTIAN EMPEROR

DIVERGENT JUDGMENTS

IN deciding to become a Christian and assuming the virtual headship of the Church, Constantine was the instrument of a revolution of momentous importance in the history of early Christianity. In this respect, apart from his achievement in the political sphere, he was a maker of history. He was led to adopt Christianity by a utilitarian train of thought. But his choice was the choice of what was ethically and spiritually the best he could choose. He deserves the credit of making it at a time when all the weight of authority and prejudice was arrayed against it. His action betokens high courage, insight, and originality.

⁷⁰ Socrates, i. 28-32 ; Theodoret, i. 25-28.

⁷¹ Socrates, i. 33.

⁷² *Ibid.*, i. 34-35.

⁷³ For his views, see Gwatkin, "Arian Controversy," 52-56 ; Tixeront, "Histoire des Dogmes," ii. 38 f.

⁷⁴ Socrates, i. 37-38. His profession was probably not sincere, though, at the Emperor's demand, he confirmed it by an oath. Socrates relates "from hearsay" the silly story that he had written his real opinions on a piece of paper, which he had concealed under his arm and so could swear that he "held" the faith.

Ancient and modern historians have differed widely in their judgments of the man and his actions. Those of the ancient historians range from the adulation of the Christian Eusebius to the bitterly hostile accounts of the pagan Emperor Julian and Zosimos. Eusebius writes under the influence of what seemed to be the miracle which had transformed the head of the Empire into the ardent protagonist of the faith, in contrast to the deadly enmity of so many of his predecessors. To him he appears as the model Emperor, who read the Scriptures and prayed with his household, had himself represented on his coins and images in an attitude of prayer, repeatedly expressed in public as well as in private his obligations to the Christian God, and loved to discourse himself and eagerly listened to the discourses of his bishops on the Christian Gospel.¹ He was "perfect in discretion, in goodness, in justice, in courage, in piety, in devotion to God."² For him he is the model Christian as well as the model Emperor. In the circumstances his encomiums are natural, if at times misleading. He doubtless sincerely believed in his model, though he allows his enthusiasm to overcolour and even distort the original. To Zosimos, on the other hand, he is very nearly the incarnation of the devil. Constantine habitually broke faith, especially with Licinius, and carried his treachery the length of putting him to death, in violation of his pledged word to spare his life.³ He adopted Christianity merely to obtain absolution for the murder of his son Crispus, after the pagan priests had refused it, and the bishops had assured him of their ability and their willingness to absolve him.⁴ He contumeliously refused to take part in the sacred rites at Rome and thereby incurred the hatred of the senate and people.⁵ Finding his residence at Rome intolerable owing to the popular odium, he removed the capital to Constantinople.⁶ He gave himself up to luxury, maintained his power by a scandalous profusion, and oppressed the people with taxes in order to maintain it.⁷ He lavished wealth and office on unworthy favourites,⁸ and innovated injuriously the administration of the army and relaxed its discipline.⁸ Julian with cutting sarcasm represents him in "The Cæsars" as a degenerate apostate, who can find none of the gods willing to receive him as a compeere, except the goddesses Luxury and Extravagance, and whom the jovial old Silenus,

¹ "Vita," ii. 14; iv. 17, 22, 33, etc.

² "Oratio," 5.

³ "Historia," ii. 18 and 28; ἐθάππει γὰρ ὡς βωστέραί.

⁴ "Historia," ii. 29.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ii. 29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, ii. 30.

⁷ *Ibid.*, ii. 32, 38.

⁸ *Ibid.*

assuming the rôle of moralist, reproves as having lived the life of a cook or a hairdresser.⁹

LIGHT AND SHADE

Moderate writers like Eutropius and Aurelius Victor mingle praise with blame, and are, therefore, likely to be nearer the truth. Both admit that, in the earlier part of his reign, he was an excellent ruler, but degenerated as he advanced in years. "In the early part of his reign he may be compared to the best of princes; in the latter part of it to the mediocre ones."¹⁰ Aurelius Victor quotes the popular saying that for the first ten years he was a model sovereign, for the next dozen a brigand, for the last ten a spendthrift.¹¹ The reason of the growing unpopularity of his later régime lies in the oppressive taxation to which his profusion gave rise. He spent recklessly in maintaining a magnificent court, in gifts to his courtiers, in building and adorning his new capital, in erecting magnificent churches, in largesses to the soldiers and the populace. Even Eusebius admits his profusion and his misplaced generosity, and bewails "the grave evils" which they entailed,¹² if he also justly lauds his philanthropy in caring for the poor and the hungry.¹³ "None could request a favour from the Emperor and fail to obtain what he sought."¹⁴ In his passion for church building and his lavish generosity to the clergy, he was, like the Scottish King David, "a sair sanct for the crown."¹⁵ He was, it seems, inordinately fond of popularity and praise, and was only too ready to pay for applause,¹⁶ very susceptible to flattery, and, though kindly and affable as a man, too fond of ostentation and imperial pomp.¹⁷ On the other hand, both Eutropius and Aurelius Victor celebrate his enlightened patronage

⁹ "Cæsars." Greek text and translation by Wright, "Works," ii. 410 f. (Loeb Class. Lib., 1913). Julian's appreciation of Constantine in the "Oration" addressed to Constantine II. is largely insincere. See "Oration," i.; "Works," i. 18.

¹⁰ Vir primo imperii tempore optimis principibus, ultimo mediis comparandus. Eutropius, "Breviarium Historiæ Romanæ," x. 7.

¹¹ "Epit.," 41.

¹² "Vita," iv. 54.

¹³ *Ibid.*, iv. 44.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, iv. 1.

¹⁵ That he carried his zeal the length of building a basilica to Peter at Rome is mythical, though often asserted. Burch, "Myth and Constantine the Great," 116 (1927). Burch seeks to show that his building of churches has been greatly exaggerated. He accepts the building of the church of St Sophia at Constantinople, but rejects that of the apostles on what seems rather insufficient grounds.

¹⁶ Fuit vero ultra, quam æstimari potest, laudis avidus. Aur. Victor, "Epit.," 41.

¹⁷ Habitum regium gemmis et caput exornans perpetuo diademate. *Ibid.*, 41.

of liberal studies,¹⁸ in the pursuit of which, in spite of a neglected education, he strove to make good, and with considerable success, his own deficiencies. The former allows him, too, some credit as a legislator, though his legislation, in his opinion, was more distinguished for its quantity than its quality.¹⁹ He certainly sought to infuse a Christian spirit into his social legislation.²⁰ There are many testimonies to his continence,²¹ and in this respect his life contrasts favourably with the licence of Maximinus Daza and Maxentius. Unfortunately his memory is stained by the murder of his highly gifted and esteemed son, Crispus, which seems to have been actuated by unfounded suspicion of his loyalty, due apparently to the enmity of his stepmother Fausta.²² Fausta herself is said to have been the victim of his resentment or his remorse, at the instigation of Helena in revenge for the death of Crispus.²³ These tragedies, which were not the only ones of their kind,²⁴ are not easily reconciled with his Christian profession, and it is significant that his Christian panegyrist passes over them in silence. There is evidently some force in the sarcasm of Gibbon that "as he gradually advanced in the knowledge of truth, he proportionately declined in the practice of virtue."²⁵ "The equal of the Apostles," as the Greek Church came to call him, was evidently a very human compound. It is not surprising that he postponed his baptism till his impending death, which took place in May 337 in the sixty-third year of his age.²⁶

¹⁸ Eutropius, x. 7; Victor, "Epit.," 41.

¹⁹ x. 8.

²⁰ Troeltsch minimises the Christian influence on the imperial legislation after the State became Christian. "The influence of Christian ideas on the imperial legislation was quite insignificant." "Sozialehren," Eng. trans. "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches," 139 (1931). On the other side, see Gardiner, "The Church in the Roman Empire Under the Constantians," 59 f. (1925). See also Foakes-Jackson, "Hist. of Christ. Church," 284 f. (5th ed., 1909).

²¹ Seeck, however, holds that he was occasionally carried away into sexual pleasures," i. 66 f.

²² Aur. Victor, "Epit.," 41; cf. Eutrop., x. 6. Fausta conjugē, ut putant, suggerente.

²³ "Epit.," 41. The murder of Fausta is generally accepted by modern historians. It has, however, been questioned by Gibbon, Ranke, Görres, Schultze on the ground of the inference from a passage of the anonymous "Funeral Oration on Constantine II.," c. 4 (A.D. 340), that Fausta was still alive in this year. But this "Oration" appears not to refer to Constantine II. but to a later personage. See the arguments in support of this contention in Appen. I. to Bury's edition of Gibbon, ii. 534.

²⁴ Licinianus, the son of Licinius and of Constantia, the sister of Constantine, was also put to death.

²⁵ ii. 310.

²⁶ Eutropius says he died in his sixty-sixth year (x. 8); Aurelius Victor in his sixty-second ("De Cæsaribus," 41) or his sixty-third ("Epit.," 49). Eusebius says that he lived twice the length of his reign, which would make him about sixty-three. "Vita," i. 8; cf. iv. 53.

GENERAL AND STATESMAN

Was he a general and a statesman of the first rank? He must certainly be credited with extraordinary military and political ability. At his accession as Cæsar in 306, the Empire was torn by the dissensions of several masters or would be masters. He lived to make it subject to his sole sovereignty. In the course of his advance to supremacy he fought many battles against barbarian and Roman armies alike—sometimes against heavy odds—and he invariably proved the winner. His statesmanship appears in his determination to make an end of the old policy of persecution and substitute for it that of an alliance between Church and State. He improved on that of Diocletian by substituting a sole for a dual control. He sought to strengthen this sole control by making use of the wonderful organisation of the Church as an adjunct of Government. He had the sagacity to perceive that, in view of the threat of barbarian and Oriental invasion, the centre of Government must henceforth lie in the East rather than in the West, on the Bosphorus rather than on the Tiber, and accordingly transferred the capital from Rome to Constantinople or New Rome.

In conceiving and carrying out large schemes like these, he showed largeness and strength of mind. At the same time, his statesmanship shows a strange lack of prevenience. In treating the Empire as his personal patrimony,²⁷ in substituting for Diocletian's system the hereditary principle of succession and dividing it among his three sons Constantine, Constantius, and Constans, and his two nephews Annibalianus and Dalmatius, he paved the way for the undoing of his own political system. In seeking to dominate the Church he further paved the way for its enslavement to the State. In view of these results his statesmanship was fraught with future evils. His dictatorship had one fatal defect. The dictator may dispose of the present; he cannot dispose of the future, though he may prepare its ruin.

SOURCES FOR CONSTANTINE

Eusebius, "Hist. Eccl.," bks. VIII.-X., and "Vita Constantini." Standard edition of the original Greek of the "Vita" by Heikel (1902), trans. by Richardson, "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers" (1890). The "Vita" is not strictly a biography, but a wholehearted appreciation, in accordance with the conventional rhetorical method. It has been treated by many as gravely suspect, and by some extremists as largely a falsification of facts. On the

²⁷ "Vita," iv. 51, 63.

whole, if to a certain extent biased and indiscriminating, it is a very valuable repository of original documents and a reliable reflection of the Christianity of the age. Prof. Heikel, a most competent authority, adduces weighty considerations against the falsification theory, and rates it highly as a historic source. The critical reader can discount its bias and control it, in large part, from other sources. "Was die von ihm erzählten Fakta betrifft, so werden viele von ihnen durch die angaben sowohl heidnischer als von Eusebius unabhängiger christlicher Verfasser, durch Gesetze des Codex Theodosianus, durch Münzen und andere Denkmäler bestätigt." Introd. 50. Richardson also rates it highly as a source. From it and other sources he draws a large and favourable portrait of Constantine as a Christian and a ruler—too flattering at times. Heikel rightly regards the "Oration of Constantine to the Saints" as non-genuine. Eusebius was not its author. Introduction 102. On the "Vita" as a historical source, see also Foakes-Jackson, "Eusebius Pamphili," 102 f. (1933). The "Codex Theodosianus" (ed. by Godefroy with Latin notes and, more recently, by Mommsen and Meyer, 1905) contains a number of his edicts relative to Christianity. Lactantius, "De Mortibus Persecutorum" (ed. by Brandt, 1897, and trans. in "Ante-Nicene Lib."). Like Eusebius, strongly biased on the Christian side. The Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates (ed. Migne), Sozomen (ed. Hussey, 1860), Theodoret (ed. Parmentier, 1911), Eng. trans. in "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers." The works of the Panegyrist Eumenius and Nazarius and those of uncertain authorship (Migne). Eutropius, "Historiæ Romanæ Breviarium" (ed. by Weise, 1827, and Clark, with Eng. trans., 1722). Aurelius Victor, "De Cæsaribus and Epitome" (ed. by Weise, 1829). Athanasius, "Apologia contra Arianos," containing letters of Constantine (Migne). Optatus of Milevis, "De Schismate Donatistarum" (Migne). Relative works of Augustine, especially "Breviculus Collationis cum Donatistis." Emperor Julian, "Cæsares" (ed. by Hertlein, 1876, and more recently by Bidez and Cumont, 1922, and by Wright in the Loeb Class. Lib., 1913. Greek text and trans.). Ammianus Marcellinus, "Res Gestæ" (ed. by Gardthausen, 1874, and Clark, 1910-15). The first thirteen books have been lost. Zosimos, "Historia" (*Ἱστορία Νέα*) (ed. by Bekker with Latin trans.). "Corpus Scriptorum Byzantinæ," 1837 (by L. Mendelsohn, 1887). Prejudiced and antichristian. "Anonymus Valesii," a historical fragment for the period 293-337, so named after its first editor, H. Valesius (Valesius). Written in the fourth century (ed. by Mommsen in M.H.G., 1891). A collection of Papyri in the form of letters, some of which throw light on ecclesiastical matters after Nicæa, in which Constantine was concerned, edited by Idris Bell under the title, "Jews and Christians in Egypt" (1924).

Some important modern works. Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," ed. by Bury. A classic, but vitiated at times by a certain antichristian bias. Constantine actuated by ambition, i. 400; his attitude to Christianity and paganism that of the politician, ii. 290. Ranke, "Weltgeschichte," iv. Objective in spirit. Burckhardt, "Die Zeit Constantins" (2nd ed. 1880). Onesided. Regards Constantine as indifferent to religion and as a politician pure and simple. Brieger, "Constantin als Religionspolitiker," Z.K.G., iv. (1881). Whilst not denying a certain religious conviction, thinks that his recognition and profession of Christianity were dictated by policy. Seeck, "Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt," 1895-1920. Favourable account of Constantine's policy and character. Led not by ambition, but by the march of events—the faults and crimes of others—to the sole dominion of the Empire. On the other hand, it is prejudiced against Christianity. See G. Krüger's criticism in "Die Evangelische Theologie" (1928). Schiller, "Geschichte der Römischen Kaiserzeit," ii. (1887). In religion Constantine's attitude largely political. Victor Schultze, "Geschichte des Untergangs des Gr. Röm. Heidenthums" (1887-92). Constantine was, from 312, a confirmed adherent of Christianity, which he practically made the State religion. Aimed at supplanting paganism, though he proceeded cautiously. In this respect somewhat of an opportunist. Zahn, "Constantin und die Kirche" (1876). "Constantine robbed the Church of more than he gave it." Schwartz, "Kaiser Constantin und die

Christliche Kirche" (1913). Stein, "Geschichte des Spätromischen Reiches," i. (1928). Credits him with "a naive faith" as the basis of his religious policy, i. 146 f. Duc de Broglie, "L'Église et l'Empire Romain au IV^e Siècle" (1856). Admirably written from the traditional point of view. Constantine a convinced, if imperfect Christian, not a mere politician in Christian guise. Duchesne, "Histoire Ancienne de l'Église," ii. (1907). Moderate. Batiffol, "La Paix Constantinienne" (1914). Constantine a convinced Christian from the outset. Lot, "La Fin du Monde Antique" (Eng. title, "End of the Ancient World") (1931). "In his adherence to Christianity he sincerely played a part, and that part must have been great," 31. G. Costa, "Religione e politica nel imperio romano" (1923). Firth, "Constantine the Great" (1905). Favourable view of Constantine. Burch, "Myth and Constantine the Great" (1927). Chapters on Constantine in Hobhouse, "The Church and the World," 85 f. (1910); Ferrero, "Ruin of Ancient Civilization and the Triumph of Christianity," 127 f. (1921, trans. by Whitehead); Gwatkin, "Cambridge Mediæval History," i. Hobhouse believes that Constantine, though his knowledge of Christianity was superficial, became its ardent protagonist. For Ferrero he "regarded religion as a political instrument for maintaining order in the State."

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