"*A great and lucent book.*"
—C. V. Wedgwood

THE DESCENT OF THE DOVE

A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church

CHARLES WILLIAMS, who died in the summer of 1945 at the age of fifty-nine, was a man of genius in several kinds of writing. His work includes poetry, drama, literary criticism, novels, and several volumes in religion and theology. It is his novels, described as supernatural thrillers, for which he is best known; yet one cannot overlook the contribution of his theological works.

DESCENT OF THE DOVE is Williams' treatment of the history of Christendom. Here he traces the work of the Holy Spirit in the church throughout the centuries. Despite the destructive nature of the schisms in its past, the church continues as a unified whole, for every seemingly contradictory event is sustained by God for a purpose. All of Christendom is held together through what Williams terms "the web of exchange," in which man is united with his contemporaries and with former generations by practicing Williams' principle of "co-inherence," which involves substitution, sacrifice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. This produces a unity which is an expression of the Spirit of God working in history.

The history of Christendom, says Williams, is summarized in this statement: "This also is Thou; neither is this Thou"; God is present and active in history, yet to define history is not to describe Him fully.

Williams' aim is not to present a detailed historical account. Rather, he shows how in the course of history the principle of "co-inherence" is developed and expressed. This is the theme of his book and of all Christendom — the principle which we should experience and practice even today.

NOVELS

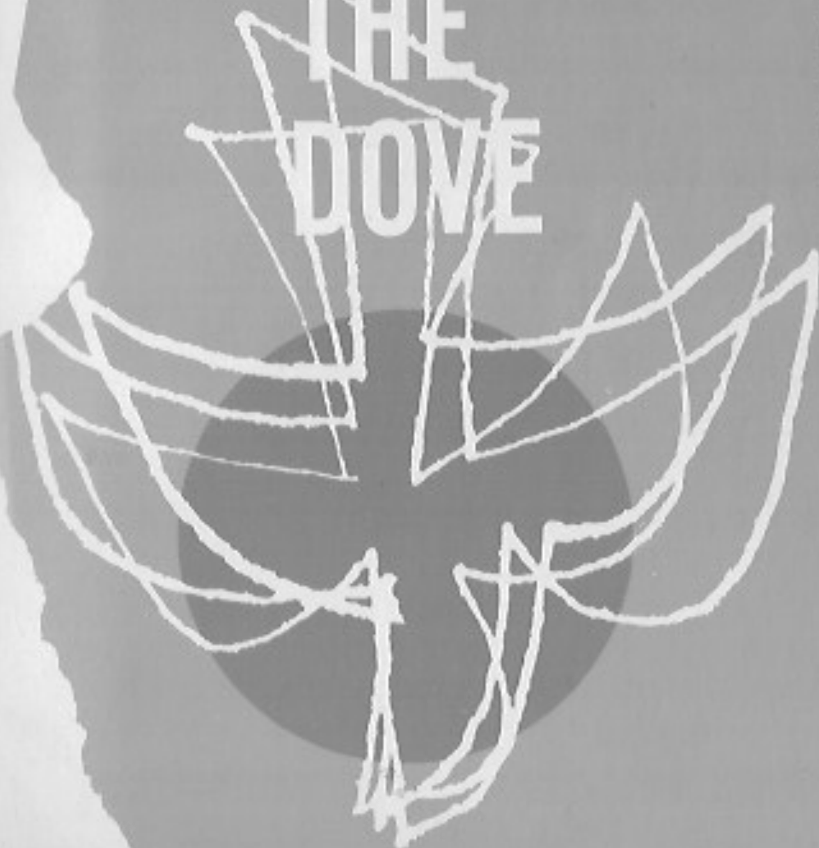
WAR IN HEAVEN
DESCENT INTO HELL
MANY DIMENSIONS
PLACE OF THE LION
SHADOWS OF ECSTASY
THE GREATER TRUMPS

WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.

$4.95
ISBN 0-8028-1225-2

COVER DESIGN: FRIEDRICHSEN

DESCENT OF THE DOVE



Charles Williams

PARADISE
by Lodovico Brea

THE DESCENT OF THE DOVE

A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church

by

CHARLES WILLIAMS

WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

PREFACE

My first intention for the title of this book was *A History of Christendom*: it was changed lest any reader should be misled. The frontispiece is a reproduction of a painting by Ludovico Brea. The presidency of the Holy Spirit over the "holy and glorious flesh" ("*la carne gloriosa e santa*") is there exhibited in the height; at the foot is the entombment of the consummate Flesh. Beyond the one lies the state known as the Beatific Vision; below the other the principle called the Harrowing of Hell. Between the two extreme points appears the great mass of created souls; those on earth, and, beyond a line of angelic beings, those "in heaven." There are recognizable faces, but they are momentary; they are travellers upon one or other of the Ways. But the painting, above and below, is of the co-inherence of the whole redeemed City.

The shy allusions to dates and the shyer quotations from theology are related in the main to the same points. It is open to any reader to complain that many names, of persons and events, which have been of immense importance to Christendom, have been omitted. But though they have been important their omission here is unimportant. It was inevitable that this particular book should talk about Dante and not about Descartes, since its special themes are found much more in Dante than in Descartes. Nevertheless, I hope the curve of history has been justly followed, as I hope and believe that all the dates and details are accurate. If I have made a mistake

anywhere, it is not for want of reference to the specialists, but from the mere stupidity of human nature. An effort has been made to keep proportion; the final modern chapter has not been allowed to run away with the book. A motto which might have been set on the title-page but has been, less ostentatiously, put here instead, is a phrase which I once supposed to come from Augustine, but I am informed by experts that it is not so, and otherwise I am ignorant of its source. The phrase is: "This also is Thou; neither is this Thou." As a maxim for living it is invaluable, and it—or its reversal—summarizes the history of the Christian Church.

I may perhaps be permitted to add that the themes of this book are also discussed, from different points of view, in other books of mine—in *Descent into Hell*, *He came down from Heaven*, and *Taliessin through Logres*. The first is fiction; the second is not; the third is poetry—whether that is or is not fiction.

The dedication of these pages is meant generally; but in particular for all those who have, in one place or another, cared to study with me "the half-read wisdom of dæmoniac images", and most especially for D.H.S.N., who nobly and happily disputed on the Nature of Love:

What make ye and what strive for? keep ye thought
Of us, or in new excellence divine
Is old forgot? and do ye count for nought
What the Greek did and what the Florentine?
We keep your memories well: O in your store
Live not our best joys treasured evermore?

C. W.

CONTENTS

Chapter I

THE DEFINITION OF CHRISTENDOM

The beginning of Christendom is, strictly, at a point out of time. A metaphysical trigonometry finds it among the spiritual Secrets, at the meeting of two heavenward lines, one drawn from Bethany along the Ascent of Messias, the other from Jerusalem against the Descent of the Paraclete. That measurement, the measurement of eternity in operation, of the bright cloud and the rushing wind, is, in effect, theology.

The history of Christendom is the history of an operation. It is an operation of the Holy Ghost towards Christ, under the conditions of our humanity; and it was our humanity which gave the signal, as it were, for that operation. The visible beginning of the Church is at Pentecost, but that is only a result of its actual beginning—and ending—in heaven. In fact, all the external world, as we know it, is always a result. Our causes are concealed, and mankind becomes to us a mass of contending unrelated effects. It is the effort to relate the effects conveniently without touching, without (often) understanding, the causes that makes life difficult. The Church is, on its own showing, the exhibition and the correction of all causes. It began its career by arguing about its own cause—in such time as it had to spare from its even greater business of coming into existence.

Historically, its beginning was clear enough. There had

appeared in Palestine, during the government of the Princeps Augustus and his successor Tiberius, a certain being. This being was in the form of a man, a peripatetic teacher, a thaumaturgical orator. There were plenty of the sort about, springing up in the newly-established peace of the Empire, but this particular one had a higher potential of power, and a much more distracting method. It had a very effective verbal style, notably in imprecation, together with a recurrent ambiguity of statement. It continually scored debating-points over its interlocutors. It agreed with everything on the one hand, and denounced everything on the other. For example, it said nothing against the Roman occupation: it urged obedience to the Jewish hierarchy; it proclaimed holiness to the Lord. But it was present at doubtfully holy feasts; it associated with rich men and loose women; it commented acerbly on the habits of the hierarchy; and while encouraging everyone to pay their debts, it radiated a general disapproval, or at least doubt, of every kind of property. It talked of love in terms of hell, and of hell in terms of perfection. And finally it talked at the top of its piercing voice about itself and its own unequalled importance. It said that it was the best and worst thing that ever had happened or ever could happen to man. It said it could control anything and yet had to submit to everything. It said its Father in Heaven would do anything it wished, but that for itself it would do nothing but what its Father in Heaven wished. And it promised that when it had disappeared, it would cause some other Power to illumine, confirm, and direct that small group of stupefied and helpless followers whom it deigned, with the sound of the rush of a sublime tenderness, to call its friends.

It did disappear—either by death and burial, as its opponents held, or, as its followers afterwards asserted, by some later and

less usual method. Those followers at any rate remained, according to all the evidence, in a small secret group in Jerusalem. They supposed themselves to be waiting for the new manifestation which had been promised, in order that they might take up the work which their Lord had left them. According to their own evidence, the manifestation came. At a particular moment, and by no means secretly, the heavenly Secrets opened upon them, and there was communicated to that group of Jews, in a rush of wind and a dazzle of tongued flames, the secret of the Paraclete in the Church. Our Lord Messias had vanished in his flesh; our Lord the Spirit expressed himself towards the flesh and spirit of the disciples. The Church, itself one of the Secrets, began to be.

The Spirit also had his epiphany to the farther world. He had manifested before the nations—those from the parts of Libya about Cyrene, strangers of Rome, and the rest. Before ever the official missions began, the dispersed thousands who on that day had caught something of the vision and heard something of the doctrine, and had even—some of them—been convinced by vision and doctrine to submit to a Rite, to baptism, had returned to their own land, if not as missionaries yet as witnesses. The Spirit took his own means to found and to spread Christendom before a single apostolic step had left Jerusalem. It prepared the way before itself. Yet this was but a demonstration, as it were; the real work was now to begin, and the burden of the work was accepted by the group in the city. That work was the regeneration of mankind. The word has, too often, lost its force; it should be recovered. The apostles set out to generate mankind anew.

They had not the language; they had not the ideas; they had to discover everything. They had only one fact, and that was that *it had happened*. Messias had come, and been killed,

and risen; and they had been dead "in trespasses and sin," and now they were *not*. They were re-generate; so might everyone be. "The promise," they called to the crowd at Jerusalem, "is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost." They had believed in Jesus of Nazareth, without very clearly understanding him; his Resurrection had seemed to justify them; but much more now they were justified, or rather he was justified. The thing had happened. In every kind of way it was true that the God of Israel would not leave their souls in hell nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption.

So far the apostles. They had, in their turn, to proceed to the operation which the Spirit had begun. But the operation had to be continued under conditions; and the conditions at that moment were three—Jewish religion, Roman order, Greek intellect. Messias had been necessarily rejected and denounced on his cross in all three tongues and by all three elements—piety, government, culture. The Church, though no doubt it later came to regard itself as being, eternally, the cause of Judah and of all salvations, appeared very much at the moment as nothing but a successor to and a substitute for Judah. It proposed at first to continue a habitual consciousness of Judah. Messias himself had been a Jew; he had been put to death for blasphemy, but for Jewish blasphemy. His comments on the Gentiles during his life had been strongly Judaic; nor is it hinted that after his Resurrection they were, since he had forgiven his executioners, any less Judaic. The apostles and disciples attended the Temple. The missionaries of Pentecost were Jews. All this gave rise to two arguments, one within and one without the Church.

The argument outside was with the Jews, and from the point of view of the Jews Christendom was nothing but a Jewish heresy. The dispute between orthodox Jews and heretical Jews was on one point only—had or had not the temporal mission of Judah been completed? had it been fulfilled? must Judah now abdicate? It is difficult for an individual (as is so often seen in family life) and almost impossible for an institution to abdicate in favour of its child and successor, especially in matters of philosophy. The Jews did not propose to try. They maintained the old orthodox view of the Covenant as against the new heretical view that, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Covenant had undergone a violent re-formation. There was certainly a Centre party, who were overthrown as Centres usually are. Gamaliel was the first, in Christian times, to utter a maxim too often forgotten by Christians —that there is no need to be too ardent against other people on behalf of the Omnipotence. But his protest, though at first successful, afterwards failed; and the scourging of the apostles was followed by the stoning of St. Stephen. There existed for a while an active persecution of the offending sect; it was pursued to other cities, and every effort was made to re-establish the philosophical sublimity of Unincarnate Deity.

Within the young Church another, and similar, argument was no less sharp. The general view among Jews outside the Church was that Jesus of Nazareth had been primarily a blasphemer. But the general view inside the Church was that he had been primarily a Jew. He had particularly not waived a single letter of the Law; he had hardly gone farther in liberal interpretation of the Law than some of the greater Rabbis. He had allowed that necessity might override ceremonial, but he had discouraged any light-hearted waiving of ceremonial. The apocryphal story of his comment to the

man seen gathering sticks on the Sabbath: "O man, if thou knowest what thou doest, blessed art thou; but if thou knowest not, thou art cursed," seems to have expressed his intention. "All that the Scribes and Pharisees bid you, observe and do." It was this maxim, and others like it, to which the more rigorous party clung. Their maxim involved two principles: (i) that the mission of the Church was solely to the Jews (ii) that therefore the whole Jewish ceremonial should be maintained in its fullness. It must be admitted that they were noble souls; rejected by the Jews, they maintained within the new society the paramount privileged order of the Jews. And they seem, at first, to have been the dominant party within the Church.

Yet they failed. The argument eventually was decided against them, and decided by the agreed voices of the leaders of the Church. The Council of Jerusalem issued its decision, with the ratification of a phrase almost incredible in its fullness, and yet natural in its simplicity: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." The sentence is, from one point of view, absurd; from another, quite ordinary. But it is neither; it is the serious implicit declaration by men that a union exists, a union denied, defeated, forgotten, frustrated, but, at the bottom of all, actual by a common consent. There are wild moments when anyone may find himself saying—with some truth—"It seems good to the Holy Ghost and to us." But the Church has never forgotten, though it may apostatize often, that this is the real claim towards which it must, inevitably and indefectibly, aspire, and in which, awfully, it believes: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost"—O vision of certainty! —"and to us"—O vision of absurdity!— . . . and what? "to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." It is the choice of necessity; it is the freedom of

all that is beyond necessity. But the analysis of that choice of necessity waited, and waits, for a farther vision, perhaps the understanding of the epistles of Paul.

The chief direct causes of the decision were the opinion of St. Peter, who declared that he had a vision of the proper method, the quite particular liberal intensity of St. Paul, and (at a later date) the destruction of Jerusalem. But these causes operated in support of an idea, and the idea was already latent in the controversy. The Christology of the Church already reposed in certain obscure and undeveloped formulæ. But this was a question, not so much of the nature of Christ, a phrase which might have seemed strange to the Apostolic Councils, as of the way in which that nature was to be regarded. Was the God-man (the phrase would not have been easy to them) to be regarded as Judaic? Or was Judaism only an accident of the God-Man? Was Manhood or Judaism to come first? The Church, or the Spirit in the Church, corrected its original misconceptions, springing from the phenomena of the human nature of Messias. Grace was to be mediated universally—to Gentile as to Jew—through all the new creation. Race had nothing whatever to do with it; rites had nothing whatever to do with it. The decision has lasted universally, in spite of any sins of individual Christians or of classes of Christians at various times. No idea, no nationality, no faith, no anything, has been allowed anywhere or at any time to interpose as a primal and necessary condition of Christianity. No personal experience, however it may have preceded or led to Christianity, has been allowed to interpose between the God-Man and the soul. All doctrine, and all doctors, have been relegated into subordination.

This result was achieved very largely by the event known as the Conversion of St. Paul. It was, in every way, a very

remarkable event. For first, it was the beginning of that great train of conversions and illuminations which form part of the history of Christendom—Augustine, Francis, Luther, Ignatius, Wesley, and the rest. No doubt all creeds are so accompanied; this is not the place to discuss the others. Such conversions cannot be supposed to prove the truth of a creed. Second, it turned, of course, a strong opponent of the Church into a strong supporter; but here it did more—it produced a kind of microcosm of the situation. It exploded an intense Judaizer into an anti-Judaizer. It united, as it were, Paul the Jew to Paul the man, and it gave the manhood the dominating place. But also it united Paul the man with Paul the new man, and it gave the new manhood the dominating place. It did all this in a personality which possessed, with much other genius, a desire to understand and a desire to explain. In order to understand and to explain the convert produced practically a new vocabulary. To call him a poet would be perhaps improper (besides ignoring the minor but important fact that he wrote in prose). But he used words as poets do; he regenerated them. And by St. Paul's regeneration of words he gave theology first to the Christian Church.

It was not, of course, then obvious. The Epistles were not bound up together and bought for a shilling. There must have been many of the Churches that he founded who were so illiterate as not to have heard of his best purple passages. He may have changed his mind upon certain points; he certainly took into consideration other points of view. The old silly view that he contradicted Jesus Christ on every important matter and that none of the other Apostles noticed it, or that their faint objections have faded from all record, has probably vanished along with other dim myths of the simple Gospel. The one practically certain thing about the

early Church is that all the Churches, by whomever founded or taught, largely agreed. And they seem to have agreed with St. Paul about the explanation as much as he agreed with them about the fact.

The fact then had happened. The doctrine of grace was the statement of the fact; the fresh morality was the adjustment of the individual to the fact; faith was the activity that united the individual to the fact. And the fact was (among other things) that the law—the law of right living, of holiness, of love—which could not be obeyed by man had discovered a way of obeying itself in every man who chose. Man perished if he did not obey the law. Yet the law was impossible, and it could not be modified or it would become other than itself, and that could not be. What then? how was man to find existence possible? By the impossibility doing its own impossible work on man's behalf, by the forgiveness (that is, the redemption) of sins, by faith, by eternal life; past, present, future states, yet all one, and the name of that state "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain"; "God had concluded them all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon them all."

The great phrases revealed man in the bottomless hell of the corruptible in order that that corruptible might put on incorruption, that we should all be changed. "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself . . . and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"—"an exceeding and eternal weight of glory." In such words there was defined

the new state of being, a state of redemption, of co-inherence, made actual by that divine substitution, "He in us and we in him."

It was then this apocalyptic definition which refused, for all Paul's own original godly Judaic past, to be contained either in Judaism or original godliness. Neither Judaism nor godliness could be a necessary preliminary. Certainly wherever the now multiplying missions of the Church went, they would, as a matter of courtesy, go first to the synagogue in any town they reached. It was the veil of the Jewish Temple that had been rent in twain, and was the holier for the rending. But if the Jews refused the knowledge of the fact, and indeed whether they did or not, then the missionaries turned to the Gentiles. It was not for the Jews alone that the witnesses to the Faith, to the Act, to the Happening and the Happened—were meant.

At that time, indeed, the Church seems to have moved in a cloud of wonders, as if the exact pattern of the Glory was for awhile discerned. It was not only her more formal and central Rites—Baptism and the Eucharist—which were maintained and spread and sacramentally pledged to converts. As if the Ascent of Messias had opened heaven, as if the Descent of the Paraclete had brought heaven out, the languages and habits of heaven seemed for a few years, a few decades, to hover within the Church after a manner hardly realized since except occasionally and individually. There were miracles of healing and even miracles of destruction. In that first full vision and realization, powers exchanged themselves between believers. As in other great experiences, the primal sense of this experience renewed energies more than mortal. At that time the Spirit in the Church sent "through every power a double power Beyond their functions and their

offices." And this power was recognized and accepted. "After the Eucharist, certain inspired persons began to preach and to make manifest before the assembly the presence of the spirit which animated them. The prophets, the ecstatics, the speakers in tongues, the interpreters, the supernatural healers, absorbed at this time the attention of the faithful. There was, as it were, a Liturgy of the Holy Ghost after the Liturgy of Christ, a true liturgy with a Real Presence and communion. The inspiration could be felt—it sent a thrill through the organs of certain privileged persons, but the whole assembly was moved, edified, and even more or less ravished, by it and transported into the Divine sphere of the Paraclete "[1]

These things were gradually to fade. There was among them another method, also to fade, and yet of high interest and perhaps still of concern, dangerous but dangerous with a kind of heavenly daring. There grew up, it seems, in that young and ardent body an effort towards a particular spiritual experiment of, say, the polarization of the senses. Our knowledge of it is very small, and is indeed confined to a famous passage of St. Paul, to a letter of St. Cyprian's, and to one or two disapproving Canons of various Councils. The method was probably not confined to the Church; it is likely to have existed in other Mysteries. The great necromancer Simon Magus carried with him on his wanderings a companion who may have been for that purpose, and there were attributed to her high titles.

Thou art Helen of Tyre
And hast been Helen of Troy, and hast been Rahab,
The Queen of Sheba, and Semiramis,
And Sara of seven husbands, and Jezebel,

[1] L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship.*

And other women of the like allurements,
And now thou art Minerva, the first Æon,
The Mother of Angels.

But Simon is said to have preached that he had himself appeared "among the Jews as the Son, but in Samaria as the Father, and among other nations as the Holy Ghost." Christians, less ambitious, attempted the experiment both within the doctrine and within the morality of the Church. This is clear from that passage in St. Paul which shows that in some instances the experiment broke down owing to the sexual element between the man and the woman becoming too pronounced. The Apostle is asked whether, in such cases, marriage is permissible, and he answers that though, all things considered (and he meant precisely *all things considered*), it would be better if they could have continued with the great work, because marriage means the introduction of all sorts of pleasant—but less urgent—temporal affairs, still there is nothing wrong with it, nothing against the Faith and the New Life. If sex is becoming an inconvenience, let them deal with it in the simplest and happiest way; it is better to marry than to burn.

It seems that there was, in the first full rush of the Church, an attempt, encouraged by the Apostles, to "sublimate." But the experimenters probably did not call it that. The energy of the effort was in and towards the Crucified and Glorified Redeemer, towards a work of exchange and substitution, a union on earth and in heaven with that Love which was now understood to be capable of loving and of being loved. In some cases it failed. But we know nothing —most unfortunately—of the cases in which it did not fail, and that there were such cases seems clear from St. Paul's quite simple acceptance of the idea. By the time of Cyprian,

Bishop of Carthage in the third century, the ecclesiastical authorities were much more doubtful. The women—*subintroductæ* as they were called—apparently slept with their companions without intercourse; Cyprian does not exactly disbelieve them, but he discourages the practice.[1] And the Synod of Elvira (305) and the Council of Nicæa (325) forbade it altogether. The great experiment had to be abandoned because of "scandal."

Tolstoy put the crude objection in the *Kreutzer Sonata*, and Cyprian more or less agreed. "But then, excuse me, why do they go to bed together?" Both wise men were justified as against a great deal of sentimental lust and sensual hypocrisy. But even Cyprian and Tolstoy did not understand all the methods of the Blessed Spirit in Christendom. The prohibition was natural. Yet it seems a pity that the Church, which realized once that she was founded on a Scandal, not only to the world but to the soul, should be so nervously alive to scandals. It was one of the earliest triumphs of "the weaker brethren," those innocent sheep who by mere volume of imbecility have trampled over many delicate and attractive flowers in Christendom. It is the loss, so early, of a tradition whose departure left the Church rather overaware of sex, when it might have been creating a polarity with which sex is only partly coincident. The use of sex, in this experiment, might have been to pass below itself and release the dark gods of D. H. Lawrence directly into the kingdom of Messias. It failed, and it must be added that St. Paul's foresight was justified. The Church abandoned that method in favour of the marriage method, which he

[1] "We must interfere at once with such as these, that they may be separated while yet they can be separated in innocence." *The Writings of Cyprian: Epistle lxi*: R. E. Wallis.

had deprecated, and eventually lost any really active tradition of marriage itself as a way of the soul. This we have still to recover; it is, no doubt, practised in a million homes, but it can hardly be said to have been diagrammatized or taught by the authorities. Monogamy and meekness have been taught instead.

Yet in some sense this experiment in polarization corresponded to the first knowledge of the Church; the grand experience of, and faith in, an otherness and a union, a life from others or from another. The lovers of that period—or some of them—realized the impact of Love, and desired to act and grow from it. It was the beginning, and they conceived it so. The point of its discovery was the point to be at once practised and transformed. Christianity is, always, the redemption of a point, of one particular point. "*Now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation." In this sense there is nothing but *now*; there is no duration. We have nothing to do with duration, and yet (being mortal) we have to do with nothing but duration; between those contrasts also all the history and doctrine of Christendom lies.

Immediacy and devotion, which created that lost experiment, had marked the existence and spread of the Church everywhere. The Epistles of St. Paul carry that *Now* to the highest point of exploration and of expression. But already in the Epistles themselves something else has come in. "It is!" they said, but then they had to go on saying "It is!" Time existed, and time itself had, as it were, to be converted, to be rededicated towards the thing out of time. Not only so, but it had to be converted in the case of every individual Christian. We have often been told how the Church expected the Second Coming of Christ immediately, and no doubt this was so in the ordinary literal sense. But it was certainly

expected also in another sense. The converts in all the cities of Asia and (soon) of Europe where the small groups were founded had known, in their conversion, one way or another, a first coming of their Redeemer. And then? And then! That was the consequent task and trouble—the *then*. He had come, and they adored and believed, they communicated and practised, and waited for his further exhibition of himself. The *then* lasted, and there seemed to be no farther equivalent *Now*. Time became the individual and catholic problem. The Church had to become as catholic—as universal and as durable—as time.

Time has been said to be the great problem for philosophers; nor is it otherwise with the believers. How, and with what, do we fill time? How, and how far, do we pass out of time? The apostates are only those who abandon the problem; the saints are only those who solve it. The prayer for final perseverance which the Church so urgently recommends is but her passion for remaining faithful, at least, to the problem —of refusing to give it up. What are the relations between that *Now* and the consequent *Then*? what are the conditions of the relation—not what ought to be, but what *are*? "The conversion of time by the Holy Ghost" is the title of the grand activity of the Church.

In the first century, in the Apostolic age itself, that time which the Church was to redeem was already becoming the bane of the Church. The first division between the Church and what has been called the Kingdom began to exist. The Kingdom—or, apocalyptically, the City—is the state into which Christendom is called; but, except in vision, she is not yet the City. The City is the state which the Church is to become. In the impact of Messias, in the evocation of her elements, in the impact of the Spirit, in the promulgation of

her unity, she for a moment, was one with her state. But she was too soon all but divided from her state. It was inevitable; had it not been so, she would have had no reason for existing. Her reason is not only in the error of the world; it is in her own error. Her error is her very opportunity for being. That is what she is about.

Time then existed, and she reconciled herself to it. The Jewish problem had been settled. But the other conditions, the Roman organization, the Greek culture, remained. Neither of them were—to use a favourite political phrase—"opposed in principle" to the Christian idea. "Scores of dim sects were struggling for existence among the lower classes"[1] and, one might add, among the upper. In a general way, the Roman Government entirely approved of its citizens and subjects preoccupying themselves with their private religious fancies. The Government's own business was to keep their world fed, to keep their world quiet, and to keep their world "hilarious." (It was *Hilaritas Populi Romani* on which, at a later period, the coins of Hadrian, as it were, congratulated the Emperor.) They had, for that reason, at a later period, to concentrate formal attention on the person and providence of the Emperor. But people were not sacrificing to the Emperor all the time, and in other rituals the Governments were not interested. St. Paul travelled in an Empire of which he approved, and which, largely, approved of him. He had the highest respect for the magistrates, and they had little fault to find with him. He had some odd deity, but that was common enough. Salvation, initiation, second birth, were ordinary dinner-talk and public-house chat. Nicodemus may have found difficulties in the idea, but no ordinary person in the non-Judaic world would have blenched. Pilate

[1] *Origins of Christianity*, Charles Bigg.

had been quite unmoved—except to a mild curiosity—by assertions that Jesus had called himself the Son of God; he was only a little surprised that the Jews should resent it. Christianity, so far as anyone understood it, was naturally supposed to be a tolerant religion, as tolerant as any of its rivals; its credal intolerance was as shocking then, when discovered, as it is to-day. The Jewish objections had involved the Apostles in dangers, but the final decision of the Government at Rome in St. Paul's own case seems to have allowed that Christianity was a permissible creed. It was roughly regarded as a variation of Judaism.

The break in this more or less agreeable unity was due directly to Nero; how exactly he was influenced we do not know. The Great Fire of Rome broke out in July A.D. 64. The natural tendency to blame someone unpopular caused rumours that the Emperor himself was responsible, much as the Roman Catholics were blamed for the Great Fire of London in 1666. The Emperor and the Government transferred the blame to the Christians, and the statement was accepted. The Christians were accused not only of the definite act but of the more general evil of "a hatred of mankind." Notable intellectuals like Tacitus accepted the notion. Tacitus, it has been said, was "a Stoic noble who hated Nero and hated the Christians and could not decide which he hated most." One would have supposed that this first outbreak of persecution would have caused all later Christians to have hesitated over belief in popular rumour, official assurances, and partisan histories. It has not done so. The blazing crosses of the Vatican gardens throw their lurid light on all our easy credulity, on the *I heards* and *he saids* of our daily life; our repetitions bark like the dogs to whom the faithful, wrapped in wild beasts' skins, were thrown. Christianity

became suspect and remained suspect. It was regarded with horror by many and with aversion by most. There was, however, some reason for the aversion (apart from the necessary spiritual scandal and from the fact that the Christians—or one of them—replied to the persecution with that admirable but extreme revolutionary pamphlet called *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*).

This suspicion obviously existed in different degrees at different times and in different places. Its effect was entirely incalculable. It depended on the feeling of the crowd, the temper of the magistrates, the progress of public affairs, the predilections of the Emperor, and a score of other chances. It depended also on the temperament and behaviour of the Christians. The more converts, the more variations in relation with their philosophical or religious neighbours. There were (as time went on) timid and tempestuous Christians, Christians who were delicate and quiet, and Christians who were disputatious and querulous. The main difference, indeed, was official and social, and even more social than official. The web of that vast Empire hummed steadily to the formal "adoration" of the Genius of the Emperor. But on the other hand no adoration could be less like anything meant by religious adoration than that. It was, no doubt, a more formal thing than our own genuflexions to the Throne, but then it would be treated also as more absurd. "I think I am about to become a god," said the dying Vespasian; it was embarrassing to everyone when the Christians solemnly and formally anathematized what no one had ever dreamt of believing. It is bad enough to be contradicted on what one does believe; it is intolerable to be contradicted—perhaps with vehemence or superiority—on what one obviously does not believe. The Jews, it is true, did not adore; but everyone knew about the Jews. They were

formally excused; they were a racial, not a religious, body, or only religious because racial; and they were not at all propagandist. It was extremely difficult to become a Jew. But it was becoming more and more difficult not to be harried by suggestions that one ought to become a Christian. The Church was attacking on all sides and in all manners—by persuasion, by argument, almost by threats. Its purpose, of which it made no secret, was to evangelize the world. In the eyes of most of the Empire, this meant primarily a separation from official activities, from social holidays, from festivities and games, from anything that involved the worship of the Genius of the Emperor and the admission that other deities might exist or other mysteries be illuminating. The quietest and nicest Christians tactfully stopped away on such occasions; if they came they did not inquire about "meats offered to idols"; they did not parade their consciences. But since they did not, in the last resort, wish to pour out libations to the household gods of their friends, they were all driven gradually —or suddenly—to drop dinner-parties. To any ordinary Roman it was all very odd and rather beastly.

With the growth of the Christian numbers the oddness and the beastliness became more marked. The Government became more and more conscious of this minority of dissidents. The position was rather like our own international position; war might break out at any time, but for surprisingly long periods it did not. Domitian, frightened by a conspiracy, struck at the Christians near his person. Pliny, as Governor of Bithynia, found Christians denounced to him. He tortured a few to discover what, in fact, they believed, and wrote to Trajan. Trajan took the proper Imperial view. Christians were not to be hunted down; informations against them were not to be encouraged, and if the informer were found to be

merely untruthful, he was to be punished. It was not, normally, the habit of the Government to encourage the delation of one set of citizens by others. But, on the same principle of encouraging a quiet life everywhere, if the delation were found to be justified, if so-and-so really did stand out against the public security, the public good, he must be dealt with as a criminal. He was, of course, a criminal. Christians regarded themselves as sinners, and other people regarded them as criminals.

It was probably the need for formal denunciation that explains "the brethren" visiting confessors in custody, quite apart from the obvious bribery of guards that went on. The journey of Ignatius from Antioch to Rome is the great example. A Christian under arrest, unless in a time of severe persecution, was a man guilty of a particular crime. It did not follow that his visitors were guilty of that crime. No doubt a certain risk was run; but no doubt also some Christians might be visited by pagan friends who, if sacrifice were demanded, would sacrifice. Any common informer against them might find himself in trouble. Hadrian even insisted that the "delator" must specify some misbehaviour besides Christianity. But in general Christianity was enough to justify examination, and examination meant death.

On the other hand, Christians were not attacked on religious grounds, and were in some ways even protected. Their burial places remained undisturbed, guarded by all the severe care of the Roman law for sepulchres. Cemeteries belonged to the *Dii Manes*, the gods of the underworld, and the mercy which the Genius of the Emperor refused in the light of the Roman day, the dark divinities beyond the tomb retained, as if in an awful recognition of the God who had gone among them and returned. The catacombs have been preserved to

us by that care, and by the careful legalism of the Roman Pontiffs who watched the propriety of the dead. Nor apparently were churches, when at last they came to be built, usually attacked. The Roman law was very careful of property. There may have been a little underhand legal work in the matter of forming guilds to own the churches, but there they were and there they stopped. The old pictures in which Roman soldiers broke in to seize the worshippers by the altar are defined by the admirable phrase: "My dear, you exaggerate." "Those who have died for the Christian faith", said Origen, "at different times have been few and are easily counted." He spoke relatively, no doubt, but he meant something like it. Delation, mob riots, but little interference by the official rulers of Rome. It was not until the beginning of the third century that Tertullian could cry out: "*Non licet esse nos*"—"it is not allowed to us to exist." Virgil and Peter then were at odds in the streets of Rome.

Such was the exterior position, through the first two centuries, of developing Christendom—uncertain, often difficult, sometimes fatal, but often tolerable, and even sometimes easy. Meanwhile Christendom had begun to understand itself—or at least to understand a little of itself. The grand discovery made by the Church, expressed by St. Paul, and promulgated with intense enthusiasm, had only begun to define, in the most general way, its own nature. "Remembering *how* she felt but *what* she felt Remembering not"—or rather not exactly knowing, the infant Church pursued its way, a very little distance down the ages. That happened to it which happens to all such tremendous experiences. The Romantic discovery was followed by a grand intellectual Romantic movement, as it might be called. It was inevitable; it was proper. But it went, as Romanticism unchecked will,

to the wildest extremes. It was almost a literary movement; in the days of printing it would have been a literary movement. It had two sections, the one harmless if unreliable, the second harmful and even less reliable. The first consisted of the romantic tales of Christ and the Apostles. There were accounts of the Childhood, and how the Lord at a tender age blasted his schoolmaster with a withered arm, or, even more fiercely, slew his uncivil boyish companion (and healed him after). There were stories of the Blessed Virgin, and what happened to the High Priest when he interfered with her funeral. There were more or less credible tales of the Apostles and the visions of the Apostles. There was as yet no Canon of Documents accepted by the Church as inspired, and these floated round with the more authentic writings. Some edified and some did not, but they did not much relate to serious matters.

The other part of this Romantic movement was much more deadly. It was a more philosophical Romanticism, or rather it was a Romanticism which expressed itself in terms of philosophy. Of the writings of this kind it has been said that they were those "which in larger or smaller circles were placed on a level with those of our Canon, but were regarded by the Church at large as the Book of Mormon or the writings of Mrs. Eddy are now."[1] They developed, and the teachers who were related to them developed, the usual marks of the lost Romantic. The lost or pseudo-Romantic, in all times and places, has the same marks, and he had them in the early centuries of the Faith. He was then called a Gnostic. The Gnostic schools were many. They sprang from the contact of the Faith with the less reputable Greek metaphysics and the wilder Near-Eastern inventions. But they all tended

[1] *Apocryphal New Testament*, M. R. James.

to develop along the same lines. They accepted the idea of Salvation; they accepted heavenly beings in operation; they accepted supreme and passionless Deity. They then proceeded to purify these ideas from the low and crude interpretations which a materialistic Christianity had somehow introduced into them. They did this, mostly, in three ways.

(1) They removed from that supreme Godhead of theirs any tendency to creation, especially any tendency to the creation of matter, and most especially any tendency to the creation of anything capable of "evil." They regarded creation in a Deity not so much as impossible as indecent. But they allowed to It certain emanations or supernatural outputtings, and to those yet others, and to those yet others again, until they had imagined "a long chain of divine creatures, each weaker than its parent," and came at last "to one who, while powerful enough to create is silly enough not to see that creation is wrong."[1] This was the God of this world.

(2) The exact relationships of the spiral of emanations differed in the different schools. But they agreed that somehow the pure light of the lower heaven had got involved in this unpleasant business of matter and had to be redeemed. It was set free by the descent of a Redemption which, however, itself put on merely the appearance of matter and withdrew it long before the Passion and Crucifixion could in any way stain its own lordly spirituality. At the Baptism, or thereabouts, the Divinity descended into the man Jesus of Nazareth; at the Arrest, or thereabouts, it withdrew. What was scourged and slain was not it. In some cases it was Jesus the man; but more fantastic inventions—not unattractive—were

[1] *Origins of Christianity*, Charles Bigg.

offered. The *Gospel of Barnabas*, for example (however late), recounted how the Lord had changed Judas Iscariot into an appearance of himself, so that the guard in confusion seized Judas, and finally in the same error crucified him; while the Lord from heaven surveyed his discreet vengeance.[1]

(3) There began to be drawn a definite division among Gnostic believers. There were the lower spiritual classes—the proletariat and bourgeoisie of heaven—who lived by faith. There were the upper spiritual classes who lived by knowledge; the illuminated, the perfect. No doubt the illuminated began low down in the scale, but they speedily rose; they saw. As if in an early parallel to our modern educational system, they passed by a series of scholarships of enlightenment from Council School to Secondary School and to University. Others, "not so blest as they," remained in the classes where they had been spiritually born. Like Mr. E. M. Forster's business man in a wood, they stared at the hierarchies of glory and could not see them. They were not capable of the *Gnosis*, of the Mystery.

All these views were fervently rejected by the general opinion of the Church. The revolt against the Gnostic influence depended on two things. There was the capacity of individual anti-Gnostic writers, such as Irenæus of Lyons. There was also—and far more important—the actual belief of the separate Churches. It was on many points yet undefined; there were speculative points on which it has not yet been defined. But all those groups in all those cities, founded in the apostolic doctrine, made it clear that they did not, in fact, believe what the Romantic philosophers declared; that this was not the Faith as they had received and held it.

[1] Assuming, as is suggested, that the present 16th-century text derived from the lost Gnostic Gospel which once existed.

What did the Churches believe? They believed that Almighty God—the final Deity—had Itself created heaven and earth, and was, as the First and Only Cause of them, finally responsible for them. They believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of the Father—in that Deity—and had been materially born on earth *ex Maria Virgine*. They believed, that is, that the First and Only Cause initiated, operated, and concluded Redemption. They rejected, with great energy, the idea that cause belonged to a subordinate Demiurgus and the idea that there was a special kind of superior redemption for superior persons. No doubt there were prophets and speakers with tongues and teachers and so on; no doubt Almighty God operated peculiarly through certain individuals. But they repudiated any opposition between faith and vision. Faith was not a poor substitute for vision; it was rather the capacity for integrating the whole being with truth. It was a total disposition and a total act. By definition, all men were in need of salvation; therefore, of faith and repentance in faith. The Gnostic view left little room for the *illuminati* to practise love on this earth; "they live as though they were indifferent," said Irenæus. The Church anathematized the pseudo-Romantic heresies; there could be no superiority except in morals, in labour, in love. *See, understand, enjoy,* said the Gnostic; *repent, believe, love,* said the Church, *and if you see anything by the way, say so.*

In some sense, the Gnostics avoided any "scandal" to the mind and soul. The stones they offered fitted the corners of many temples; only not of the City of Christendom. God was not really responsible for the appalling putrescence ot misery which we call the world. The soul and the body (so to divide them formally) were not responsible for each other. Men were not responsible for each other. The Gordian knot of

the unity was cut, and the bits fell radically apart. Toothache, cancer, women's periods, frustrated sex-love, these and other ills were without relation to the activity of the celestial spheres. "In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar the Christ came down from heaven," wrote Marcion, one of the last and one of the greatest of the Gnostics, but the orthodox answer was that, years earlier, he had been generated on earth: "the book of the generations of Jesus Christ."

Meanwhile the general consent of the Church was producing a written orthodoxy, "of whose authority", to quote the Articles of the Church of England, "was never any doubt in the Church." Never is a long time. But it is true that the Canon of the New Testament emerges about this time, not by dogmatic decisions but by a common assent, out of the growing mass of Christian writing. This, in fact, is its only ratification. Why the New Testament? because Christendom universally produced it. But why Christendom? Roughly, because if Christendom is what it says it is—for example, in the New Testament—then it is a Nature in which we choose to believe, as against the personal righteousness, the social order, the cultural speculation. By the end of the second century, the New Testament was all but complete and was certainly authoritative; by the same period, Christendom was organized, and the grand battle was about to open.

Chapter II

THE RECONCILIATION WITH TIME

From the middle of the second century five names stand out—Montanus, Marcus Aurelius, Tertullian, Clement, and Origen. Together they prefigure a kind of reconciliation between the Church and the ordinary process of things, even though in one instance that prefiguring takes the shape of a more violent conflict. It would not be true to say that the Church consented to have her extraordinary supernatural graces driven underground; it would be truer to say that she made preparations for drawing into herself the whole of normal human existence. A change of method, an assent already in operation, became more marked. She suffered, she manipulated, she hierarchized, she intellectualized. All this she had done already, but now she entered upon it as a steady mode of behaviour.

In one instance the prefigured reconciliation took its opposite shape. In the year 161 Marcus Aurelius Antoninus ascended the Julian throne. Under that strenuous and ethical rationalist, persecution began to change. The self-consciousness of the Empire as regards Christians took, through the mind and person of the Emperor, a more deliberate form. What had been irritation, fury, riots of the blood, became a deliberate moral and intellectual effort. The pressure of Christendom on Rome had become too great. The Empire

determined to shake itself free from this troublesome delirium of its mind, this haunting disease of its body. The effort was deliberate and prolonged. "The persecutions under Marcus Aurelius extend throughout his reign. They were fierce and deliberate. . . . They had the Emperor's direct personal sanction. They break out in all parts of the Empire: in Rome, in Asia Minor, in Gaul, in Africa; possibly also in Byzantium."[1] The "good" Emperors had come to regard Christianity as an evil, as all tolerant and noble non-Christian minds tend to do. Partly, no doubt, the best Emperors had the highest idea of their duty to the safety of the State. But also they had the highest sense of moral balance and the least sense of the necessity of Redemption. The worse Emperors —Commodus, Heliogabalus—had a more superstitious impulse which was certainly more in accord with the asserted dogmas of the Gospel. Gods, and the nature of the Gods, are likely to be better understood by sinful than by stoical minds.

In Asia Polycarp, in Rome Justin Martyr, in Gaul Irenæus, and many more perished. With the names of such men is registered under Severus the name of a slave who not only endured martyrdom but in a sentence defined the Faith. Her name was Felicitas; she was Carthaginian; she lay in prison; there she bore a child. In her pain she screamed. The jailers asked her how, if she shrieked at *that*, she expected to endure death by the beasts. She said: "Now *I* suffer what *I* suffer; then another will be in me who will suffer for me, as I shall suffer for him." In that, Felicitas took her place for ever among the great African doctors of the Universal Church.

Against that persecution, as against those that followed, the Church opposed that supernatural loyalty. But it opposed

[1] Lightfoot: quoted by B. J. Kidd, *History of the Church.*

also the protestation of a profound natural loyalty. It not only allowed the Empire; it took refuge in the Empire; it felt the Empire as a protection even while it feared it as a peril. This had been so, in some sense, from the beginning. Rome had not only held off the Germans; it had postponed Antichrist. "The mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way. And then that shall that Wicked One be revealed." God, was thus in Rome itself, in the existence and order of Rome. While this world lasted, and in proportion as time became more and more a necessity of the Christian life, public order, the Republic, became of almost equivalent value. Just after the Aurelian persecution had failed and faded under the ignoble Commodus, Tertullian proclaimed again the value of that temporal salvation. In his *Book of Apology Against the Heathen* he declared that Christians, far from being suppressed, were everywhere. "Men say that the State is beset by them, that Christians are in their fields, their fortresses, their islands. They murmur that each sex, each age, every consideration and every rank is going over to this sect." He protested that the Lords of the Empire made no true examination of it; no, "you harshly pass sentence: The law forbids you to exist!"

Yet he (he said), with nearly all Christians, desired to live in the sanctity of Rome. "The end of time itself, threatening terrible and grievous things, is delayed because of the time allowed to the Roman Empire." "That which God hath willed is in the Emperors, and therefore we would have that which God hath willed kept secure." He protested that Christians though they might not pray to the Genius of the Emperor, might, should, and did pray for his "good health." Many non-Christian Romans, some Emperors, and probably Marcus Aurelius himself, thought definitely that the good

health of the Emperor was much more important than his Genius or his attributed Deity. Between the two moderate views there was much agreement. But their division was final. The Church, organizing itself for that process in time, had accepted the view that its members, like itself, would always have to live their lives on the basis of "faith." And the very condition of that faith was that Deity was single, supreme, and *different*. Without difference there was no Reconciliation. And Reconciliation was the supreme aim of faith.

Two things followed—perhaps inevitably followed—from that organization for process. The first was the disappearance of the extraordinary supernatural impulses. It may be that our Lord the Spirit discontinued them; one is almost driven to that view on observing how the Church discouraged them. The very nature of the Church involves the view that, apart from human sin, what happened was right. This certainly gives a great advantage in argument to any hostile, intelligent, and sceptical mind, but the belief can hardly be abandoned because of that intellectual inconvenience. Messias seems to have indicated that in the Church, as well as in daily life, the Blessed One will conform his actions—at least, to a degree—to the decisions of his creatures. If the Church determined on something, then that something should have been or should be true; and it is arguable that Messias was born of a pure Virgin as much because the Church would believe it as for any other reason—all things else being therefore made conformable. At any rate the prophecies and the liturgies of the Spirit began to disappear.

There was one rally. It took place about the same time as the Aurelian persecution, beginning in Phrygia and spreading. It was known as the Montanist heresy, after its founder

Montanus. And it is the first and last of such revolts against the habits of the Universal Church. It was the last because it was still definitely related to the actual life of the young Church; it was not an effort to return to something that had been lost for centuries. It was the last also in the sense that it was still privileged to encourage central doctrines in the Church. It was the first in the sense that it is followed by other movements, at later times, which attempted a similar austerity and a similar freedom. One might almost say that the defeat of Montanism exhibits the Church as an Institution more clearly than any other moment, and an Institution committed to reconciliation (not compromise) with ordinary men.

Montanism was, first of all, a highly rigorist movement. In morals, as in everything, there are two opposite tendencies. The first is to say: "Everything matters infinitely." The second is to say: "No doubt that is true. But mere sanity demands that we should not treat everything as mattering all that. Distinction is necessary; more-and-less is necessary; indifference is necessary." The contention is always sharp. The Rigorous view is vital to sanctity; the Relaxed view is vital to sanity. Their union is not impossible, but it is difficult; for whichever is in power begins, after the first five minutes, to maintain itself from bad and unworthy motives. Harshness, pride, resentment encourage the one; indulgence, falsity, detestable good-fellowship the other.

Between the two good (and evil) things the idea of what the Articles of the Church of England call "works of supererogation" had already emerged. "If thou do any good thing outside the commandments of God thou shalt win for thyself more exceeding glory," wrote Hermas. It is a difficult and dangerous proposition—not made easier by the rather violent

language of winning glory for oneself in which Hermas indulged. Yet the idea has lingered in the Church, and been half-formulated in the talk of the Way of the Commandments and the Way of the Counsels. The Christian doctrine has been that the demanded surrender to God must be entire, in which case there could hardly be anything supererogatory. Yet it has also been universally felt that there were, so to speak, acts of love and devotion which were not absolutely required. How can absolute surrender leave non-absolute potentialities? The answer seems largely to have lain in the doctrine of Vocation. Some were called to a strictness, some to a laxity. It naturally happened that strictness, being more difficult, was regarded as superior. So, as far as difficulty is concerned, it is; but so, as far as vocation is concerned, it is not. Relaxation is no less holy and proper than rigour, though perhaps it can hardly be preached so. But the lovely refreshments of this world in some may not be without their part in the lordly rigours of the others; the exchanges of Christendom are very deep; if we thrive by the force of the saints, they too may feed on our felicities. The life of the Redeemer is at the root of all; it is all within the Church, and (said the same Hermas, in a nobler style) "she was created before all things and for her sake the world was framed."

To us the most relaxed morals of the Church of the second century are austere enough. But to the Montanists the faithful seemed to have fallen away almost damnably from their duty. They proposed to revive original decency—much fasting, no second marriages, no kind of relation to the State (as, for example, in education). They took the sternest attitude towards sins committed after baptism. They refused to allow that any of the faithful might escape from persecution. They said, in effect, to the Church about ordinary life:

"Come out of her, my people." They denounced the normal life of Christians at the time as sacrilegious, profane, and idolatrous. The normal Christians with less cause and as much heat retaliated. They even, to justify themselves, invented romantic details against the Montanists—such as child-murder and a cannibal Eucharist. The normal calumnies of piety flew to and fro, encouraged by two other differences in stress.

The first concerned the Prophets. The direct inspiration of the Spirit had, as usual, given rise to abuses. The oracles were paid for, a thing harmless enough in itself, since money also is a medium of exchange, but perilous. Priests might be, though in fact they usually were not, paid; they had their appointed job. But it was of the essence of the prophetic ministry that contract could not exist, nor control; the Spirit acted *proprio motu*. Contract and control belonged to the early developed hieratic ministry of the Church. There, indeed, in the whole business of the sacraments which began when the Church began, the Lord deigned to commit himself to the hands of men, and to fulfil his agreement at their demand. The prophet at the end of the first century remained only "here and there, a much venerated but solitary personage."

His office, in fact, had changed. The Prophecy had once been "a Voice conveying an immediate revelation; to Polycarp, as to Origen, it is an interpretative power, which discovers beneath the literal sense of Scripture mysteries which are not visible to the eye of mere common sense." It had moved from the meeting house to the study, though there it still had disciples. Something was, no doubt, lost; something gained. But there it is; in general it had moved. The Montanists proposed to bring it back. They were orthodox; they kept the sacerdotal system—the Orders and the Formulæ.

But they proposed to "enliven" these (no doubt, even then, with some cause) by subordinating them to the prophetic office and the inspired utterance. They even went further; they developed a grand principle. They were orthodox on the Nature of Christ; they were said to have been the first to use the word *homo-ousion, of the same nature*, presently to be of such import to the Church. But they possessed a special devotion to the Person of that Spirit by whom the prophets spoke. They asserted that his special age and dispensation had already begun. They are said to have been the first to call him God; if so, he permitted himself to be named in schism and defined by an error. They declared that he exhibited his moral scrupulousness by their conduct and his will by their prophets. On the general wrangle the Montanists were defeated; the prophets disappeared; morality was eased. The Universal Church secured a tenderness for men and preserved the contract with God. But it must be admitted that the Holy Spirit remained God.

Thus while on the one hand the Church declared the loyalty and claimed the protection of citizenship, on the other it organized itself into a regular and reliable method. It refused (if the phrase may be allowed) the irresponsible outbreaks and the moral extremism of the Holy Ghost for the established formulæ and the moral discipline of Messias. It had already established that system of Penance which is the only system of judgment ending, and meant to end, only in forgiveness. Sins were not to be forgotten; they were to be remembered. In those parts of Christendom where sacramental confession is not practised, the practice of confession to God has yet been retained. The fault, the failing, is to be offered to God: grace demands that everything should be recollected by man, as to God everything is present.

Man and God together can know all joyously; man without God. . . .

But there was another adjustment to be made, that of the intellect. It was not altogether easy for the Church, once she had defeated Gnosticism, to resolve on her attitude towards philosophy. Through her dioceses, among all her doctors, it was common ground that philosophy was negligible compared to the Gospel. But, that admitted, was philosophy as a study to be regarded with generosity or with reprobation? Ought a Christian to understand and speak its language? Great voices directed the Church in different ways. About the year 200 the opposite views were formulated in Africa. The vigorous rhetoric of Tertullian (soon to become a Montanist) proclaimed from Carthage the austere rejection of this world's intelligence. "Philosophy," he wrote, "is the theme of worldly wisdom, that rash interpreter of the Divine Nature and Order. And indeed the heresies are equipped by philosophy." He proceeded to run through a few Gnostic examples. Valentinus, a Platonist! Marcion, a Stoic! The Epicureans, Zeno, Heraclitus—philosophers and heretics spend their time asking whence evil came, and why; whence man came and how; and even (as Valentinus, it seemed, had done) whence came God. "Wretched Aristotle, who gave them the art of dialectic!"

He was answered by a more dulcet voice from another African city. Alexandria, the haunt of all philosophies, had nurtured also the Catholic. There among the many schools rose the Catechetical School of the Christians. Founded (it was improbably said) by St. Mark, and intended originally, as such schools everywhere were, for the instruction of believers before baptism, it grew now into the dialectic of high and subtle speculation. The educated, as well as

the uneducated, were to be convinced; nor need they reject their education and refuse their capacities to the intellect of the Faith. Since Athens there had hardly been such discussions as in Alexandria, and now Alexandria had more to discuss than Athens. Since Alexandria there has hardly been such freedom of intellectual talk until to-day, and though our freedom is as great our intellect is no greater.

"Philosophy," wrote Clement of Alexandria, "becomes conducive to piety; being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain to faith through demonstration. Perhaps philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily till the Lord should call the Greeks." Philosophy, he thought, was a way of preparation for the man who was to enter into "the perfection of Christ." He did not hesitate to think and speak of the *gnosis*, the knowledge. His own teacher had "engendered in the souls of his hearers a deathless element of knowledge." "There seems to me," he wrote, "to be a first kind of saving change from heathenism to faith, a second from faith to knowledge." But was there no distinction between the philosopher-Gnostic and the Christian-Gnostic? Yes surely, though Tertullian might think it insufficient. It was "the exercise of beneficence," "the love of God." Knowledge "as it passes on into love, begins at once to establish a mutual friendship between that which knows and that which is known"; he who reaches this becomes "a light standing and abiding for ever." It is perhaps worth remarking that here already are defined the stages of what came to be called the mystical Way: of Purgation, of Illumination, of Union. The first change is in belief; the second in discovery. The sweetness of Clement, brooding on pure Love, does not hide the nature of the heavenly order. "For the sake of each of us he laid down his life—worth no less

than the universe. He demands of us in return our lives for the sake of each other." This is love; it is this which is to be discovered; in the most luminous knowledge of this souls exist. Another voice than Tertullian's had laid down more simply, in Carthage, the great fundament: "Another will be in me who will suffer for me as I shall suffer for him." The two African cities proclaimed the universal web of exchange, and if the slave-girl's cry is more piercing than the philosopher's doctrine, yet it was to Clement that we owe the beginning of that philosophic thought which hinders, if it cannot by itself prevent, apostasy.

The vocabulary of Paul and the vocabulary of the Fourth Gospel were here united. The movement which began with Clement and culminated later in Athanasius preserved humanism for the Church. But the immediate successor of Clement, to deliver lectures in the School and to talk with his students in his house, was a greater than Clement, though perhaps a less than Athanasius; it was Origen. Origen has always been suspect. He has been condemned and denounced.

> Yet constantly the opinion hath prevailed
> In the Church (that Origen) was a holy man—

and not only holy but wise, and not only wise but correct. He has been suspected of a great orthodoxy, for the Church has not always been most comfortable with the most orthodox.

He continued the tradition and work of Clement. It would be improper—but not so improper—to say that the mark of the Alexandrian school was that they were all gentlemen. One must not deny the title to other saints and doctors. Yet there is about them a sense of the *naturalness* of Christianity, as distinguished from its catastrophic supernaturalness. Clement insisted on repentance and morality; and

Origen, in his heretical self-mutilation, carried morality to a morbid and immoral extreme. But their work is, as it were, without the macabre, the terrible, the smell of corruption. Clement loved philosophy, and Origen laboured at scholarship. He compiled the first Polyglot Old Testament, of six texts. He was a great commentator, a prophet (in the new sense), a great literary critic (in the noblest sense) according to his own time. He was the first to develop the allegorical method of Biblical criticism; the method by which the sense, meaning one thing literally, meant another morally or mystically or analogically. It depends, for its value, on an illumination of greatness; these meanings must be self-evident once they are pointed out, for they cannot be proved. Like prayer, their real aim is the interior conviction. As we contemplate the images of the poets, so the allegorizers studied the texts of Scripture. It is obvious that this is the most valuable, perhaps the only valuable, method with much of the text of the Bible. But it is obvious also that it lends itself to the wildest vagaries, as with, say, the Adamites, those simple believers in nature who supposed that by returning to nakedness (as in Eden) we should return to innocence (as in Eden), and vice versa. Origen, like all intelligent readers then as now, realized that he needed a check upon his own brain and he found it, where all Christians have found it, in the universal decisions of the Church. This authority he recognized; this relationship he desired. The recognition of authority is the desire for union, but also it is the knowledge that the individual by himself is bound to be wrong. The "State" of the Church was the "State" of a City. Schism was the worst sin, for schism was bound to nullify the justice from which it might arise. However right a man's ideas, they were bound to go wrong if he nourished them by himself. The value

of dogma, besides its record of fact, is the opportunity it gives for the single mind to enter the Communion of Saints —say, of Intelligences. The personal thought is vitalized by that and aspires towards that. "He ceases," wrote Clement, "to be a man of God and faithful to the Lord who sets on one side the tradition of the Church."

But Origen did something more than insist on a proper obedience to authority on earth: he discovered a central obedience in the secrets of heaven. Less than fifty years after his death there were born in Africa two great opponents, Arius and Athanasius. The followers of both claimed Origen as their own doctor. This curious double claim arose from an illumination which has perhaps in itself a slightly different value. The doctrine of the Trinity had been, by Origen's day, more or less established. The Father was Creator of all; the Son was God and Man; the Holy Ghost was—the Holy Ghost. Origen held to this; he said of the Divine Son: "*Non est quando non fuerit*"—"there is not when he was not" —never have two tenses so sublimely illuminated glory. But he did more. He strongly maintained, if indeed he did not discover, the voluntary Subordination of the Son; he contemplated in Deity Itself the joy of obedience: obedience which is a particular means of joy and the only means of that particular joy. The Son is co-equal with the Father (as Origen held, and as was afterwards defined), yet the Son is obedient to the Father. A thing so sweetly known in many relations of human love is, beyond imagination, present in the midmost secrets of heaven. For the Son in his eternal Now desires subordination, and it is his. He wills to be so; he co-inheres obediently and filially in the Father, as the Father authoritatively and paternally co-inheres in him. And the whole Three Persons are co-eternal together—and

co-equal. The Arians later denied it, but in the last struggle Athanasius and the representatives of humane culture won. It is true that the opposition is still maintained by the Unitarian bodies to-day—they deny love to God except by means of his creation. But the Church has not believed that there lack in Him any of love's experiences (analogically understood): of all Love's holiest loves, *non est quando non fuerit.*

The imaginations of the Alexandrian Fathers were courteous; their visions were humane. Origen extended that vision so far as to teach the final restitution of all things, including the devils themselves. It is impossible that some such dream should not linger in any courteous mind, but to teach it as a doctrine almost always ends in the denial of free-will. If God has character, if man has choice, an everlasting rejection of God by man must be admitted as a possibility; that is, hell must remain. The situation of the devils (if any) is not man's business. The charity of Origen schematized then too far; he declared as a doctrine what can only remain as a desire. It was one of the reasons why he was denounced; that and, among other things, a kind of Docetism—a fading of the flesh. He was not Manichæan, but in his high speculations the necessities of matter trembled into non-existence; he speaks somewhere of Our Lord's body being phenomenally different to each observer. On the other hand "he was the first of Christian thinkers to speak at large of the human soul in Christ, and the first to describe the union by the compound word God-man."[1]

He had grown up under the shadow of the persecution of Septimus Severus at the beginning of the third century: nearly fifty years afterwards he was tortured in the persecution of Decius, and died from the results. That century main-

[1] *History of the Church*, B. J. Kidd.

tained, with quiet periods, the effort of Marcus Aurelius. Decius himself is reported to have said that he would rather have a second Emperor by his side than a bishop in Rome. Under Septimus, under Decius, under Gallus and Valerian, under Aurelian, edicts were put forth against the faithful. It had been possible for Origen to say in his time that the number of those put to death for their belief, from the beginning, had not been great; it was, after his time, no longer possible.

There were certainly efforts at compromise. Heliogabalus was willing to include Christianity in his general scheme of the Mysteries, with the Sun-God and with the Palladium; and the more ethical Alexander set up a statue of Christ in his oratory beside Virgil, Orpheus, and Abraham—he even preferred that a disputed property in land should be given to the Christian society rather than to a guild of cooks. He thought that it was better for God to be worshipped "after whatever manner."

The persecutions set up other minor problems, and the relations of the Church to what may be called common sense grew more marked. The incarnation of that common sense was Cyprian, also of Carthage; he who discouraged the *subintroductæ*. Three points may be briefly mentioned—the question of flight, the question of the lapsed, and the matter of the confessors.

(i) The Montanists, and others, held that flight and secrecy were impermissible. Wild enthusiasms for martyrdom broke out. Christians hurled themselves at tribunals, demanding death. But the Mind of Christendom discouraged it. "We have no admiration for those who denounce themselves," wrote the Church in Smyrna to the Church in Philomelium; "not so does the Gospel teach us." Enthusiasm itself must

be purified; one had no right to involve oneself or the Government in the "shedding of blood." Clement of Alexandria fled in his day; so did Polycarp; so did Cyprian. Bishops ruled their churches from their hiding-places; it was not their individual loss or gain that mattered, but the convenience and administration of the whole body. The earlier maxim of St. Paul applied, a little altered: "Are you bound? seek not to be loosed. Are you free? seek not to be bound." None of these things *mattered*; all that mattered was belief, prayer, love.

(ii) The question of the lapsed was the subject of much discussion. If one, with or without torture, had denied the Faith—what then? It was perhaps a more crucial question than appears. By definition, the faithful *could* (in grace) remain steadfast; and there could be no greater evil than to deny, from fear or pain, the Way which was the basis of all existence. If this was pardoned, anything could be pardoned, for this was as near the sin against the Holy Ghost as was normally shown to man. Yet pain and fear did distract and break men, and—the Church swung towards mercy, and towards a fuller realization of its own Nature, which is that of redeemed sin. But the issue was complicated by a kind of rash exchange on the part of those who had not failed.

As, for example, (iii) The confessors who escaped death were regarded with a proper admiration by the rest of Christendom. They were supposed to have achieved by their sufferings a sacerdotal power; priesthood was attributed to them. A third-century document (the *Canons of Hippolytus*) laid this down; confessors need not be ordained, for the Holy Spirit had ordained them direct. They bestowed, on occasion, formal absolution. Such a recognition was natural, yet, if indeed the Church was to organize itself as an institution,

it was highly dangerous. Not only did it tend to introduce an irregular ministry, but it might easily have tended to turn the regular ministry, so infiltrated by confessors, into a superior spiritual grade. Besides making, as the Church of Rome and Cyprian saw, confusion of another kind. A man might have courage to be a confessor and even a martyr without having the determination to be holy or even virtuous. It was also held that the priesthood should be a little educated, and confessors might or might not be educated. At the cost of a good deal of dispute, the authorities carried their point. Let confessors be ordained—as many as possible and as quickly as possible. But unless ordained, let them not exercise priestly functions. In the sacred order they might have greater things, but those they had *not*. It was laid down for ever that the administration of spiritual things does not depend on the character of the administrator. A man may communicate to others, and himself starve; a man may preach to others, and himself be a castaway.

In the Church of Carthage a remarkable situation arose. It was encouraged by a local and clerical opposition to the Bishop St. Cyprian, but it contained in itself the seeds of a much greater doctrine—the common idea of substitution and exchange: such as Felicitas had epigrammatized and Clement had formulated. At Carthage the lapsed were many, and there was a movement towards their complete and permanent excommunication. Some of the repentant lapsed gave themselves up to the imperial magistrates. But the Carthaginian Church also had its confessors, and recourse was had to them on behalf of other sinners. The confessors were persuaded to "cover with their merits the demerits of the lapsed, and to give *libelli pacis* for their readmission." The opposition even put out an indulgence or absolution from "all the

confessors to all the lapsed." and desired Cyprian to promulgate it. Cyprian declined; it was against holy Order. The universal Church, in Councils at Carthage and Rome, in a Synod at Antioch, by the Bishop of Alexandria, followed Cyprian's lead. It was indeed an impossible proposal, if the Church as such was to retain any systematic control of its members. Yet it was based on almost the profoundest secret of all that the Church held, and centuries later the doctrine of the Treasury of Merits and the practice of indulgences was to popularize regularly the mysterious and irregular effort towards substitution made by the confessors of Carthage.

The last persecution of the third century took place in 257; under it Sixtus II was martyred in Rome while publicly teaching and Cyprian himself was beheaded at Carthage. But in 261 Gallienus revoked the edicts, and formally tolerated the Church: "let no one molest you." There was peace for forty years, with occasional partial exceptions. At the end of that time the "lord and god" Diocletian opened the greatest and last attack, the Tenth General Persecution.

Whatever the causes that led to it, the challenge was, in effect, final. It did not, at first, propose death; rather, it set the Faith again *hors la loi*. It destroyed churches; it commanded the burning of all Christian Scriptures; it degraded all Christian officials. Presently it ordered that the clergy should be imprisoned. The attack was once more on the organization, and the intelligence of Diocletian refrained from re-inspiring enthusiasm by martyrdoms. Christendom was to expire from lack of nutrition; churches, documents, sacraments, were to be removed; public service was forbidden; the Faith was to be flung back on solitude, poverty, ignorance, inconvenience, suspicion, and contempt. Such had been the practice in some earlier attempts; it was renewed.

It is difficult not to read into the situation more than perhaps is justifiable; it is difficult also to refrain from seeing it as a parallel to events in our own day, especially when the labour and the genius of the Emperor are considered. He "restored order for a time in the Empire, defended the State from foreign enemies, set bounds to the raging current of passions and ambitions, and carried out a prudent and extensive programme of reform in public and private life." The historian who so describes him[1] goes on to attribute the failure of his efforts and of the Empire to a decline of creative power. "Any creative power that remained turned away from this world and its demands and studied how to know God and be united with him." But that is hardly so; it had been decided otherwise when the Gnostics were defeated and when time was found to be a necessary condition of the Christian life. The new heresy of Manichæanism which was intruding from the East might indeed exclude matter and the world from its consideration. But the orthodox Faith, based on the union of very matter with very deity, could not do so. Its survival, its success, had partly been due to its interlocked charity, its habits of exchange of all wealth, its intense knowledge of the community. Its doctrines were defined precisely by the common belief; its bishops, for all their quarrels, were a federal college, half-appointed by the specialists, half-elected by the crowd; its problems were problems of the organization of time and the world. To know God it was necessary to love the brethren—first, as it were, from predilection and choice, but afterwards from him and through him. "We love, because He loved us." "If a man say that he love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar and the truth is not in him." Felicitas had asserted the

[1] *History of the Ancient World; Rome*, M. Rostovtzeff.

divine order—"Another for me and I for him." Clement had defined it among the faithful: "He demands of us our lives for the sake of each other." What the martyr and doctor declared another voice also proclaimed out of the desert. During the reign of Diocletian St. Antony, the first of the Christian hermits, whose life was to be written by Athanasius, took up his dwelling between the Nile and the Red Sea. Alone, ascetic, emaciated, he gave to the Church the same formula: "Your life and your death are with your neighbour."

Yet perhaps the greatest epigram of all is in a more ambiguous phrase. Ignatius of Antioch in the early second century, had tossed it out on his way to martyrdom: "My Eros is crucified." Learned men have disputed on the exact meaning of the word: can it refer, with its intensity of allusion to physical passion, to Christ? or does it rather refer to his own physical nature? We, who have too much separated our own physical nature from Christ's, cannot easily read an identity into the two meanings. But they unite, and others spring from them. "My love is crucified"; "My Love is crucified": "My love for my Love is crucified"; "My Love in my love is crucified." The physical and the spiritual are no longer divided: he who is *Theos* is *Anthropos*, and all the images of *anthropos* are in him. The Eros that is crucified lives again and the Eros lives after a new style: this was the discovery of the operation of faith. The Eros of five hundred years of Greece and Rome was to live after a new style; unexpected as yet, the great Romantic vision approached. "*My*" Eros is crucified; incredible as yet, the great doctrines of interchange, of the City, approached. "Another is in me"; "your life and death are in your neighbour"; "they in Me and I in them."

From the extreme corner of the Empire, out beyond the

Narrow Seas of Gaul, from Britain and the North, another figure was approaching. The Empire broke again into contending armies; the persecutions ceased, were renewed, hesitated, fell away, were renewed again. Six Augusti ruled the various provinces. Constantine, son of Constantius and Helena, afterwards a Christian, appeared in Gaul, and the Church there had peace. He crossed the Alps; one Augustus had been permitted by him to commit suicide at Marseilles, and now another fell in defeat at the Milvian Bridge. At Milan he made alliance with a third, Licinius. The Edict of Milan declared toleration of all religions; then the allied Augusti took measures against the fifth, Maximin, the persecutor of the East. Defeated at Adrianople, he fled back to Asia and in Cappadocia he too issued an edict of toleration. But the legions of the conquerors followed him; he fled to Tarsus, and there, while all over the Empire Christendom gave thanks for peace, the most furious of its enemies died in a raging delirium. Diocletian was also dead.

The two remaining Augusti recognized in full the existence of the Church; its worship was encouraged, its property was restored. By the wording of the Edict of Milan it was not the Church but the rest who were tolerated: "the open and free exercise of their religion is granted to all others as well as to the Christians." The operations of Constantine encouraged—severely—the morals of the Christians, and also unity in the Church. "Protection of all religions was fast becoming patronage of one." Fornication and the Donatist schism were alike heavily penalized; slaves gained a right to eventual freedom, and criminals were no longer to be branded on the face "because it is fashioned"—ordained the Emperor, anticipating Dante—"after the similitude of the heavenly beauty." His colleague leaned towards the old

gods. The breach between them was widened through ten years; the war came, and in 323 Licinius died at Thessalonica.

Constantine was master of the Empire; he looked to be more. "I am appointed," he said, "to be bishop of the relations of the Church to the world at large." There were disputes within the Church; they should be settled. He saw himself already in the most difficult of all offices, the crowned point of union between the supernatural and the natural. He summoned the first General Council; at Nicaea more than three hundred bishops met. They gathered in the large hall of the imperial palace, and their imperial—but unbaptized—patron appeared in his glory. "He appeared as a messenger from God, covered with gold and precious stones—a magnificent figure, tall and slender, and full of grace and majesty," wrote the historian Eusebius. He blushed; he kept his eyes on the ground; the bishops gestured towards him; he sat down on the throne of gold; he spoke. He raised before his audience a packet of letters of accusation written by many against many; exhorting all to pardon, peace, and joy, he solemnly burnt them. Then his Augustitude subdued itself; theology began. Presently, after two months, the great Assembly addressed the world.

The adorned figure of the Emperor, throned among the thirty score of prelates, hearing and declaring with them the witness of all the churches to the apostolic tradition, signifies many things. There the acceptance of time was completely manifested; there a new basis—a metaphysical basis—was ordained for society. The Roman past was rejected; the effort of the Middle Ages was begun. Intellect was accepted; marriage was accepted; ordinary life was accepted. The early vision of St. Peter was found to have wider meanings than had been supposed: "what I have cleansed that call not

thou common." The nature of the Church had not changed, and only fools suppose that it had. It remained reconciliation and sin redeemed; "my Eros is crucified"; "Another is in me." It was declared now by all the magnificence of this world, by the all-but-idol of the episcopate. It had become a Creed, and it remained a Gospel.

Chapter III

THE COMPENSATIONS OF SUCCESS

Christendom had set out to re-generate the world. The unregenerate Roman world was now handed over to it. No extreme difficulties were any longer to be put in its way, except under the noble but ill-fated effort of the Emperor Julian to restore the past. The old pagan rituals were not finally prohibited until the year 392, by Theodosius, and there was still a good deal of rhetorical and sincere opposition. But the no-man's land of religion, all the casual and fashionable sections of the Empire, became more or less formally Christian. All insincerity became Christian; neither Constantine nor the Church was to blame. Time had been a problem, and the Church had organized to deal with it; now space and numbers had become a similar problem. Christendom had been expanding within the Empire, and the acceleration had already become greater than the morality of Christendom could quite control. The acceleration and the corresponding loss of morality were highly increased.

Unfortunately they were so increased at the very moment when one of the profoundest divisions broke out—one can hardly say (by definition) within the Church, but within the apparent Church. The division had begun before Constantine; it was, in fact, the ostensible cause for the calling of Nicaea. Such divisions in the past had given opportunity for the

activity of the worst emotions, even of sincere converts. The emotions of only half-sincere converts were even more damaging, and human destructiveness was loosed on a greater scale than ever before within the suddenly enlarged boundaries of Christendom. The grand Arian controversy had opened.

That this should have been possible at all, three centuries after Christ, shows how slow the Church had been towards exact dogmatic definition; it had been, and always has been, engaged on something else. Christ was the Redeemer, that was certain; and he was also, in some real sense, God; and, at least since the Montanists and Origen, there was a formal Trinity of Godhead. But in what sense was he God? in the same sense as the Father (allowing for the Persons)? or only in a similar sense to the Father? Was he co-eternal and co-equal? The alternative proposition was set forth by the persuasive, virtuous and ingenious deacon of Alexandria, Arius: "There was when He was not." If the Father was truly Father and Source, and the Son truly Son and Result, there must have been when he had not been. He was "of God," and the rest followed. It was as logical and simple as that.

The Synod of Alexandria conferred, and excommunicated Arius. He left the City. The bishop of Nicomedia and others received both him and his doctrine. The quarrel spread bitterly through the East. Both sides quoted Origen. The archdeacon of Alexandria, a small Egyptian named Athanasius, wrote against him on behalf of his bishop. The Emperor, hearing of the agitation, wrote letters to both sides pointing out that Christians ought to concentrate on living well: "he can't be wrong whose life is in the right." He deprecated disputes over formulæ. He can hardly be blamed. He had just defeated Licinius and restored peace and unity to the Roman world; he did not want his new Christian empire, its

mobs and its magistrates, excited by abstract arguments. But the founder of a metaphysical empire has to put up with the drawbacks of the metaphysics. There had been civil wars in Rome, but none hitherto concerning the nature of the Godhead of the Emperor. But anything will do for a war. The world had been ready for its change, and Constantine had changed it. Three centuries of St. Paul's developed vocabulary had had their effect. Constantine's protest was natural; it was his misfortune that the point at issue should be one of the few more important and not one of the many less important. That is clear now; it was not everywhere equally clear then.

The Emperor summoned Nicaea; the Fathers got to work. The result is known. The question there asked was capable of translation into all categories, including the category of exchange. Was there, in the most Secret, in the only Adored —was there that which can be described only by such infelicitous mortal words as an equal relation, an equal goodwill, an equal love? was this in its very essence? was the Son co-eternal with the Father? If there had been no creation, would Love have practised love? and would Love have had an adequate object to love? Nicaea answered yes. It confirmed, beyond all creation, in the incomprehensible Alone, the cry of Felicitas: "Another is in Me." The Godhead itself was in Co-inherence. The doctrine of Arius had denied the possibility of equal exchange to God—outside creation. It is true that Arius, as well as Athanasius, held the other doctrine of free-will, and that in that sense every soul has it at choice to make exchange with God. But Nicaea went farther. Fourteen hundred years later, the doctrine was epigrammatized by an Anglican doctor when Dr. Hawarden, before the Queen of George II, asked Dr. Clarke: "Can God

the Father annihilate God the Son?" That the question is, so to speak, meaningless is precisely the definition of orthodoxy. The Divine Son is not only "of God"; he is "God of God."

Nicaea then was a double climax. The spectacle of magnificence was accompanied by an intellectual ostentation of dogma. "The great and sacred Synod" exhibited itself in the two worlds. Christ was throned in heaven and in Constantinople. Yet at times, as the jewels seem only jewels, so the words seem only words. "Father," "Son," "Holy Spirit," "Person," "essence and nature," "like and unlike" —what has such a pattern of definition to do with a Being that must exist always in its own incomprehensibility? It is not surprising that the human mind should revolt against the jewels and words. It is, of course, a revolt of immature sensibility, an ignorant, a young-romantic revolt, but it is natural. "The great and sacred Synod" looms sublimely anti-pathetic. From such revolts there have sprung the equally immature and romantic devotions to the simple Jesus, the spiritual genius, the broad-minded international Jewish working-man, the falling-sparrow and grass-of-the-field Jesus. They will not serve. The Christian idea from the beginning had believed that his Nature reconciled earth and heaven, and all things met in him, God and Man. A Confucian Wordsworth does not help there. Jewels and words are but images, but then so are grass and sparrows. And jewels and words are no less and no more necessary than cotton and silence.

Yet Christendom had felt the revolt even before Nicaea—only not as a revolt, but as a compensating movement. Antony had gone out into the desert and many had followed him. He had organized them, and away in south Egypt

another hermit, Pachomius, had done the same thing for other bands. The great and sacred labour in the imperial palace was balanced by the sacred and ascetic labour of the solitaries. Sleep and food and drink and clothing were reduced to the barest needs—and to less. A rivalry in repudiation ran about the desert, and the rumours of the gaunt and holy figures of its practitioners percolated through the bazaars of the great cities. "The sign of the solitary ascetics" wrote Athanasius (the Athanasius of Nicaea, of Alexandria, of humanism, of the Court and the Church) in his *Life of Antony*, "rules from one end of the earth to the other." It dominated the impressionable everywhere; it was said (improbably) that in one city were "more than two thousand virgins leading lives of ascetic excellence." Many more admired it than practised it, but many practised it. The notion of the way of complete rejection, of the reduction of both soul and body to as near a state of nothingness under God as might be won—gained strangely on life. The huts, the caves, the pillars of the ascetics did indeed hold those who concentrated on nothing but their relation with God, to whom the whole outer world and (but for one thought) the whole inner world had become temptation. New temptations at once sprung up—of rivalry, of pride, of *accidia*. But even the wild tales we have show how they too were recognized and denounced. "God hath not forgiven thee thy sins," said the hermit Bessarion to the harlot Thais, "because of thy repentance but because of thy thought to deliver thyself to Christ." And so a certain Elijah said: "Whatsoever hath its being for God's sake endureth and abideth for ever with those who are true."

Exchange therefore to them was always on the Way and as between hurrying travellers. It was an exchange of humility

and tenderness and (often) of remarkable intelligence. A danger, more obvious perhaps to us than to them, was in their awareness of virtue; they have sometimes that sense of strain which the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* in a later century denounced. It is why they saw the devil so often. Their comments on humility examine that virtue too feverishly to be quite convincing. But the greatest of them were peculiarly lucid. Macarius said to Arsenius: "I know a brother who had a few garden herbs in his cell, and to prevent himself having any sense of gratification, he pulled them up by the roots." Arsenius answered: "Good, but a man must do as he is able, and if he is not strong enough to endure, perhaps he should plant others." They knew also the remote principle. A certain brother said: "It is right for a man to take up the burden for them who are near to him, whatever it may be, and, so to speak, to put his own soul in the place of that of his neighbour, and to become, if it were possible, a double man, and he must suffer, and weep, and mourn with him, and finally the matter must be accounted by him as if he himself had put on the actual body of his neighbour, and as if he had acquired his countenance and soul, and he must suffer for him as he would for himself. For thus it is written *We are all one body*, and this passage also informs us concerning the holy and mysterious kiss."

The old Gnostic view that matter was evil had no doubt affected them, and the newer Gnosticism that had begun, in the form of Manichæanism, to sweep inward from the East. It had been forbidden by Diocletian as un-European, as a Persian import, before it was rejected by Christendom as un-Christian, as a diabolic luxury. But of all the heresies it is one of the few most generally and most subtly nourished by our common natures. There is in it always a renewed emotional energy.

It is due to Manichæanism that there has grown up in Christendom—in spite of the myth of the Fall in Genesis—the vague suggestion that the body has somehow fallen farther than the soul. It was certainly nourished within the Church by the desert ascetics—especially in their ingenuous repudiation of sex. This is probably the one thing generally known about them—except for the pillar of St. Simeon Stylites—and the contempt and hatred they too rashly expressed for it has been heartily reciprocated against them by a later world. It was no more than a part of their general passion for singleness of soul, even when that singleness tended to become a singularity. Sex—the poor ignorant creatures thought—was one of the greatest, most subtle, and most lasting of all distractions; nor had the Church—at least since the suppression of the *subintroductæ*—shown any striking sign of intending to exhibit it as sometimes the greatest, most splendid, and most authoritative of all inducements. Yet even in the Thebaid the rejection was, at best, regarded as no more than a method of the Way. "A monk met the handmaids of God upon a mountain road, and at the sight of them he turned out of the way. And the Abbess said to him: 'Hadst thou been a perfect monk thou wouldst not have looked so close as to perceive we were women.'"[1] The answer would have been perfect if she had said "Thou wouldst not have perceived we were women." Perhaps she did.

There is, no doubt, a lordlier state than that, to observe with adoration all shapes, including women; but the rebuke was—or at least may have been—charming, and exhibits, in the desert as in the city, the desire which is the Glory of Christendom. "Look," said the first founder when he lay

[1] *The Desert Fathers*, Helen Waddell. (The other quotations are from *The Paradise of the Fathers*, E. A. Wallis Budge.)

dying, "Antony ends *his* journey; he goes now wherever Divine Grace shall bring him."

Counterchecking the asceticism it admired, the formal doctrine of Christendom concerning matter remained constant. Two ancient canons, said to date from the second or third century, illuminate the official view. They run as follows: "If any bishop or priest or deacon, or any cleric whatsoever, shall refrain from marriage and from meat and from wine, not for the sake of discipline but with contempt, and, forgetful that all things are very good and that God made man male and female, blasphemously inveighs against the creation (*blasphemans accusaverit creationem*), let him be either corrected or deposed and turned out of the Church (*atque ex Ecclesia ejiciatur*). And so with a layman."

"If any bishop or priest or deacon does not feed on meat and wine on feast days, let him be deposed, lest he have his own conscience hardened, and be a cause of scandal to many."[1]

"Blasphemously inveighing against the creation"—if the whole of Christendom had taken to the desert and lived among the lions, it remained true that the authority of the pillared pontiffs would have been compelled to assert that marriage and meat and wine were "*valde bona*." Rejection was to be rejection but not denial, as reception was to be reception but not subservience. Both methods, the Affirmative Way and the Negative Way, were to co-exist; one might almost say, to co-inhere, since each was to be the key of the other: in intellect as in emotion, in morals as in doctrine. "Your life and your death are with your neighbour." No Affirmation could be so complete as not to need definition, discipline, and refusal; no Rejection so absolute as not to leave necessary

[1] *History of the Church Councils*, Hefele; the Greek original is there translated into Latin.

(literally and metaphorically) beans and a wild beast's skin and a little water. Those who most rejected material things might cling the more closely to verbal formulæ; those who looked most askance at the formulæ might apprehend most easily the divine imagery of matter. The Communion of the Eucharist, at once an image and a Presence, was common and necessary to both. The one Way was to affirm all things orderly until the universe throbbed with vitality; the other to reject all things until there was nothing anywhere but He. The Way of Affirmation was to develop great art and romantic love and marriage and philosophy and social justice; the Way of Rejection was to break out continually in the profound mystical documents of the soul, the records of the great psychological masters of Christendom. All was involved in Christendom, and between them, as it were, hummed the web of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, labouring, ordering, expressing, confirming, and often misunderstanding, but necessary to any organization in time and particularly necessary at that time in the recently expanded space.

There are two documents, of a date later by a century or two, which present the division between the Ways in the world of definitions, and as regards the Nature of God. One is the great humanist Ode "commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius"; the other is the *Mystical Theology* of Dionysius the Areopagite. Certainly the Creed talks about Incomprehensibility and Dionysius plans out the heavens. Neither document sustains the view of Eunomius bishop of Cyzicus, who "changed theology into technology" and is reported to have declared: "I know God as well as He knows Himself."[1] But the objective "humanist" may serve for a division; the climax of the one is what is known, allowing

[1] *History of the Christian Church*, Kidd.

the unknown; of the other what must be unknown, allowing the known. The union of both is in the phrase of Ignatius, quoted by Dionysius and dogmatically declared in the Creed: "My Love is crucified."

The Creed is the definition of salvation, and it lays down a primal necessary condition—that one shall believe in the existence of salvation and in its own proper nature. It does not go back to that other demand for a decision of belief in one's own existence which is almost always a desirable preliminary. One feels, one thinks, that one exists, but one hardly ever makes a serious act of belief in one's existence, whereas it might be held that a proper Christendom would be composed of people who believe that, through God, they exist but do not noticeably think or feel it. The Athanasian Creed, however, being a more advanced document, begins with the Creator. It sums up in those crossing and clamorous clauses all the business of Relationship in Deity; Deity, so, is one God—the word triumphs over the reduced plural: "there are not three gods, but one God." Thence it proceeds to the Incarnation: "it is necessary that he believe rightly." It is in this connection that it produces a phrase which is the very maxim of the Affirmative Way: "Not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the manhood into God." And not only of the particular religious Way, but of all progress of all affirmations: it is the actual manhood which is to be carried on, and not the height which is to be brought down. All images are, in their degree, to be carried on; mind is never to put off matter; all experience is to be gathered in. Images can be as disciplinary as their lack; their rejection itself can be a temptation. By the Substitution and the Sacrifice, the "good works" are all to be prolonged and gathered, and those who share in it are to find it eternal life.

This is the principle which is to be kept "whole and undefiled"; and who can? no; therefore it will keep itself, it will correct and illuminate itself; without that grand union—"perfect God and perfect Man; of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting"—man is bound to slip from vanity to vanity, from illusion to illusion, everlastingly perishing, everlastingly lost. "But the Catholic Faith is this . . ."

The other document is very different.

In the year 533 at Constantinople, the Patriarch of Antioch, Severus, a Monophysite, spoke of the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite. The books which were thus heretically invoked had at that time, as so many other writings had, an authority almost apostolic incorrectly attributed to them; to say "falsely" would imply a moral intention of which no one then thought. Dionysius, it was supposed, was an Athenian, a direct disciple of St. Paul, and (by his ordination) first bishop of Athens. He had produced a book on the Heavenly Hierarchy, and one on the Ecclesiastical, one on the Divine Names and one on Mystical Theology. It is now thought likely that he was a Syrian monk of the late fifth century, and a disciple of one Hierotheus, more or less identified with another Syrian, Stephen bar Sudaili. From the year 533 these writings have always hovered over Christendom almost like the unfooted Bird of Paradise—admired, worshipped, and yet by some distrusted. He was invoked as orthodox by Pope Victor I at the Lateran Council in 649; in 757 his books were sent by Pope Paul to the Church in Gaul; and the Emperor of the East Michael Balbus sent them also to Louis the Pious. They were translated, for Charles the Bald of France and for the West, by John Scotus Erigena. St. John Damascene had learnt from and annotated them; in the full power of Scholasticism Aquinas quoted from them as from any other doctor of

perpetual authority in the Church, and the anonymous author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, in his sublime rejection of images, and as he wrote of the final failing even of spiritual wit in the presence of the Alone, remembered one paragraph of Dionysius to confirm his own last cry.

They are, in fact, the climax of one great mode of speculation and of experience; they are hardly, yet they are, within the orthodoxy of Christendom. They provide the great negative definitions infinitely satisfying to a certain type of mind when it contemplates intellectually the Divine Principle. The conclusion of the *Mystical Theology* soars into the great darkness, lit faintly by the very phrases it rejects.

> "Once more, ascending yet higher, we maintain that It is not soul, or mind, or endowed with the faculty of imagination, conjecture, reason, or understanding; nor is It any act of reason or understanding; nor can It be described by the reason or perceived by the understanding, since It is not number, or order, or greatness, or littleness, or equality, or inequality, and since It is not immovable nor in motion, or at rest, and has no power, and is not power or light, and does not live, and is not life; nor is It personal essence, or eternity, or time; nor can It be grasped by the understanding, since It is not knowledge or truth; nor is It kingship or wisdom; nor is It one, nor is It unity, nor is It Godhead or Goodness; nor is It a Spirit, as we understand the term, since It is not Sonship or Fatherhood; nor is It any other thing such as we or any other being can have knowledge of; nor does It belong to the category of non-existence or to that of existence; nor do existent beings know It as it actually is, nor does It know them as they actually are; nor can the reason attain to It to name It or to know It; nor is It darkness, nor is It light, or error, or truth; nor can any affirmation or negation apply to it; for while

> applying affirmations or negations to those orders of being that come next to It, we apply not unto It either affirmation or negation, inasmuch as It transcends all affirmation by being the perfect and unique Cause of all things, and transcends all negation by the pre-eminence of Its simple and absolute nature—free from every limitation and beyond them all."

It has been said that this is not the kind of being to whom man can pray; no, but without this revelation there is no sort of thing to whom men can *pray*, and the orisons of Christendom will be too much circumscribed. And Dionysius himself knew the other Way, and his book on the *Divine Names* is more akin to it—as when he refers to St. Paul, in its discussion of "My Eros is crucified." "And hence the great Paul, constrained by the Divine Yearning . . . says, with inspired utterance: 'I live, and yet not I but Christ liveth in me'; true Sweetheart that he was and (as he says himself) being beside himself unto God and not possessing his own life but possessing the life of Him for whom he yearned." For that which is beyond all categories and has only within itself its necessity of being, "is touched by the sweet spell of Goodness, Love, and Yearning, and so is drawn from his transcendent throne above all things, to dwell within the heart of all things, through a super-essential and ecstatic power whereby he yet stays within himself."[1]

Yet perhaps neither the Egyptian hermits and monks nor the Syrians on their interior "top of speculation" are the true compensation and balance of Nicaea, quite apart from the disturbances, riots, exiles and excommunications which immediately followed Nicaea. The Arians split into Arians and Semi-Arians; the declarations of the "great and sacred

[1] *Dionysius the Areopagite*, C. E. Rolt.

Synod" were hotly disputed, and if the Holy Spirit had there controlled the voice, he did not attempt to silence the voices, of Christendom. Bishops were banished and recalled; the Emperor swayed dangerously near the more understandable Arian point of view; Athanasius became Bishop of Alexandria and fled and returned and was driven out. He took refuge with the desert monks who were fanatically orthodox. Arius came back to Alexandria, fell from his mule, and died, but his death did not put an end to his doctrine. Accidents to such distinguished leaders were, to their opponents, nearly always miracles of judgment, and during this period there was encouraged in Christendom the view which attempted to discern in exterior events an index to interior and spiritual truth; the false devotion which in a later day invented terrifying death-beds for atheists and agonizing diseases for Sabbath-breakers. This in itself is dangerous enough; it is made worse by that fatal tendency in men to hasten God's work and to supply, on his behalf, the deaths and the agonies which they think his inscrutable patience has rashly postponed. So fomented into fire and bloodshed the Arian controversy pursued its way through Constantine's otherwise peaceful empire.

This, however, was the result of Nicaea. About the middle of the century, about the time of the death of Antony and the third exile of Athanasius, the real compensation to Nicaea was born at Thagaste in Numidia; its name was Augustine. He came to redress (or, as some have thought, to upset for ever) the balance of the Church. Speculation had, in the East, ascended from the foot of the imperial throne to the height of the heavenly, and the idea of exchange had been followed into the extremest corners of heaven. With Augustine theology returned to man and to sin. The Church

had always known about sin; some of her doctors (as Tertullian) knew a great deal about it. But on the whole, especially since the Alexandrian doctors, she had stressed the Redemption. So, no doubt, did Augustine; read the *Confessions*. Yet those very *Confessions* seem to contain everything except one thing, the *anima naturaliter Christiana*. They divide, in an agony, the natural body from the spiritual body, and their readers and followers have divided even more fervently. When St. Monica drove Augustine's eighteen-years paramour, the mother of his son, back from Milan to Africa, something went with her which perhaps Christendom and Augustine needed almost as much as they needed St. Monica, though not as much as Christendom needed Augustine. Christendom did not then get her. It got the style of Augustine instead, and that style never seemed quite to apprehend that a man could grow, sweetly and naturally—and no less naturally and sweetly in spite of all the stages of repentance necessarily involved—from man into new man. He certainly is the less likely to do so who dwells much on the possibility. But the movement exists and the great Augustinian energy of conversion, contrition, and aspiration lies a little on one side of it. Formally Augustine did not err; but informally? He also, for all his culture, followed the Way of Rejection of Images, and he inspired later centuries to return to that Way. He has always been a danger to the devout, for without his genius they lose his scope. Move some of his sayings but a little from the centre of his passion and they point to damnation. The *anthropos* that is Christ becomes half-hidden by the *anthropos* that was Adam. In Augustine this did not happen, for his eyes were fixed on Christ. But he almost succeeded, in fact though not in intention, in dangerously directing the eyes of Christendom to Adam.

"Augustine, from his small seaport on the North African coast, swayed the whole Western Church as its intellectual dictator."[1] He had been converted like St. Paul; he had seized Christ through Paul. He rose into Christendom from what seemed to him catastrophes. And the great primal catastrophe was the situation into which every man was born; the New Birth was the freedom from that catastrophe. Two famous sayings epigrammatize the change. The first is the reluctant sigh: "Make me chaste, my Lord, but not yet!" The second is the reconciled joy: "Command chastity; give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt!" Both come from the *Confessions*, which (Augustine said scornfully) men read from curiosity, or (he might have added) from a human sense of the human; it is not what that great Refuser of Images wished. Few things seemed to him more imbecile than that his autobiography should be admired for everything except the whole conclusion, climax, and cause of his autobiography. But a phrase in it—the second of the two quoted—was permitted by our Lord the Spirit to become the occasion of more controversy and of high decision in Christendom.

There was a meeting in Rome—perhaps a clerical conference or something of the kind. A certain Pelagius, an Irish Christian, was present at it. He was not a priest but he was in Rome on an effort to revive and excite religion; he was conducting a mission to the Romans. His particular method was to encourage men to be *men*. He was orthodox enough, and full of a real love for, and desire for the good of, his fellow-creatures, but he thought his fellow-creatures were perfectly capable of fulfilling the Will of God and of being chaste (or whatever) if they wished. Men need not sin unless they

[1] *The Idea of the Fall*, N: P. Williams.

chose, and if they did not choose they need not sin. This too was orthodox enough. He had had some success, and his influence was spreading. At this meeting there was "a certain brother, a fellow-bishop of mine," says Augustine. The bishop during the meeting quoted from the *Confessions*, already in wide circulation, the phrase: "*da quod iubes*," "give what thou commandest." This, Augustine adds, *Pelagius ferre non potuit*—Pelagius simply could not stand that sort of thing. Man was not in that kind of situation at all; no doubt he was tempted, but he could resist temptation. "Pull yourself together, my dear fellow," he said in effect, and he actually did say that to talk of virtue being hard or difficult, or to say it could not be done, or to moan about the weakness of the flesh was to contradict God flatly, and to pretend either that he did not know what he had made or did not understand what he was commanding: "as if . . . he had forced upon man commands man could not endure."

But this, which to Pelagius seemed so scandalous, seemed to Augustine merely truth. Chaste was what the law had bidden him to be and what he had not been able to be. The law was precisely impossible. Man precisely was not *in* a situation—not even in a difficult situation. He was, himself, the situation; he was, himself, the contradiction; he was, himself, death-in-life and life-in-death. He was incompetent. Augustine had felt that acutely; since his conversion he had been teaching it—that man was the situation and only the grace of God could alter the situation. Both Pelagius and he felt strongly the desirability of man overcoming sin, but the problem was what was sin and how best did you overcome it. The expanding circles of doctrine spread outward from Rome and Hippo. Never before had Christendom felt the two views so fully and so honestly developed. It had previously accepted a general notion that men were in a "fallen" state, but it had not pressed any definition of it. What definitions it had produced had tended to relate to the Person who redeemed men from the state. That, after all, was what its greatest minds and noblest souls had been concerned with. The clash of Pelagius and Augustine altered all that.

That man, in the person of Adam, had fallen was common ground. Pelagius said, in effect, that (i) Adam had been created in a state of natural good, (ii) that he had somehow sinned, and set a bad example of sinning, so that a sort of social habit of sin had developed, into which men were introduced as they grew up before they were reasonable, (iii) but that any man at any moment could get out of this distressing social habit by simply being firm with himself —"have courage, my boy, to say no," (iv) and that therefore no particular grace of God was needed to initiate the change, though that grace was a convenient and necessary help: which was always to be found by the right-willing man.

Against this the Augustinian view—with the great help of Augustine himself—asserted (i) that man was created in a state of supernatural good, of specific awareness of God, (ii) that Adam had got himself out of that state by sin, and his sin was "pride"—that is, "the act of deserting the soul's true 'principle' and constituting oneself one's own principle."[1] He had, as it were, claimed to have, and behaved as if he had, a necessity of being in himself. He had, somehow and somewhere, behaved as if he were God. (iii) His descendants therefore were not at all in a mere social habit of sinning; they did not merely sometimes sin; they were sinners, which was not at all the same thing. Nay, more, they had, all of them, been involved in that first original iniquity,

[1] *St. Augustine and French Classical Thought*, Nigel Abercrombie.

and in its guilt. "*Omnes enim fuimus in illo uno quando omnes fuimus ille unus*"—we were all in that one man when we all were that one man. Thus, being all guilty, we all deserved, and were on our way to, hell by the mere business of getting ourselves born, though not, of course, *for* getting ourselves born. This was precisely the agony: to be born was good, but that good meant the utmost evil, life-into-death and death-into-life. Some who managed to die again before the age of reason might suffer less thereafter. But for the rest men were *corrupt*; they existed in the night of dreadful ignorance and the storm of perverse love; they were for ever and ever sharers in that primal catastrophe which was the result of Adam imagining that he had a principle and necessity of existence within himself. (iv) It was therefore blasphemous and heretical nonsense to talk of man as being mildly and socially habituated to sin: he was in sin, and he could not get out by his own choice. He could not move but by grace, by that principle which was not in him. To Augustine Pelagius was practically teaching men to follow, to plunge deeper into, that old original catastrophe; he was almost declaring that man was his own principle, that he did his own good deeds. But all Christendom, and especially Augustine, knew that only Christ could act Christ.

But if only Christ acts Christ, who acts Anti-Christ? If all our good doing is God's doing, whose is our evil doing? Ours? Yes. God, as it were, determines and predestinates himself to do good in certain lives; this is his grace. And what of the lives in which he does not determine and predestinate himself to do good? Well—he does not. Those lives then are lost? Well—yes. God saves whom he chooses and the rest damn themselves. "His equity is so secret that it is beyond the reach of all human understanding." It is of

the highest importance to realize that, in that sentence, Augustine from the bottom of his heart meant "equity" and meant "beyond human understanding."

"The first modern," as Augustine has been called, had uttered the word "grace" with a new accent. Adam had suddenly returned. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" was to be analysed and discussed as the Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ had been. The secrets of man's corruption were to become as much a matter for the brooding intellect of Christendom as the secrets of his Redemption had been. The inclusion of the Saviour in the Godhead was followed by the exclusion of Adam to the opening, at least, of the pit, and of all his children whom the unpredictable Equity did not choose out of so many myriads to redeem. Yet it may be noticed that Augustine, perhaps to the danger of his own thought, and certainly to the danger of the thought of his successors, was aiming at the same principle of inevitable relationship which in so many other things governed the orthodoxy of the Church. "*Fuimus ille unus*" he said; "we were in the one when we were the one." Whatever ages of time lay between us and Adam, yet we were in him and we were he; more, we sinned in him and his guilt is in us. And if indeed all mankind is held together by its web of existence, then ages cannot separate one from another. Exchange, substitution, co-inherence are a natural fact as well as a supernatural truth. "Another is in me," said Felicitas; "we were in another," said Augustine. The co-inherence reaches back to the beginning as it stretches on to the end, and the *anthropos* is present everywhere. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"; co-inherence did not begin with Christianity; all that happened then was that co-inherence itself was redeemed and revealed by that very redemption as a supernatural principle as well as

a natural. We were made sin in Adam but Christ was made sin for us and we in him were taken out of sin. To refuse the ancient heritage of guilt is to cut ourselves off from mankind as certainly as to refuse the new principle. It is necessary to submit to the one as freely as to the other.

The new principle had been introduced into the web, and only that principle could separate one soul from another or any soul from the multitude. The principle was not only in the spirit but in the flesh of man. Pelagius declared that man had moral freedom, as Nestorius later declared that there were in Christ two beings united by a moral union and not one divine Person. "The Nestorian God is the fitting Saviour of the Pelagian man."[1] It was this that caused Nestorius to deny that the Blessed Virgin was *theotokos*, the mother of God. But he denied also, inevitably, that she was *anthropotokos*, the mother of Man. The opposite school maintained that she was both, for both the Fall and the Redemption were in soul and body. The mystery was in flesh and blood. It was this profundity of exchange and substitution, natural and supernatural, that the zeal of Augustine profoundly declared through Christendom. Christendom never quite committed itself to Augustine; it has spent centuries escaping from the phrases of Augustine. But without Augustine it might have ceased to be Christendom.

He did more. He did much more. "Seen against Christian philosophy as a whole even thinkers like Clement and Origen are only forerunners of Augustine; for they philosophize about God and human nature, but not about the divine sphere, the sphere of communion with God, which did not exist as a problem for the philosophical consciousness before the

[1] *Our Lord's Human Example*, W. Gore; quoted by N. P. Williams, *The Idea of the Fall.*

Civitas Dei."[1] It was not only the book called by that name which was the expression of that thing, nor only that Augustine was imagining a heavenly state. A hundred apocrypha of the apocalypse had imagined *that*; the Church had never paused in affirming *that*. There were in Augustine two points of farther greatness. He had carried the Redemption back, as it were, in man's nature almost—quite—to the point at which man's error began. The very sin which a man had committed in Adam before his own birth was the starting-point of the predestinating grace which, before his own birth, awaited the moment of his birth to begin its immediate operation. The City of God leaps upon its citizens, presiding like the god Vaticanus over the first wail of the child, separating it for ever from the transient earthly cities, making it a pilgrim and a sojourner. The Equity of Redemption is immediately at work; it predestinates whom it chooses, and it does not predestinate whom it does not choose. But its choice is (beyond human thought) inextricably mingled with each man's own choice. It wills what he wills, because it has freedom to do so. Predestination is the other side of its own freedom. Words fall away from the inscrutable union, which can be the inscrutable separation.

And this heavenly state was a sphere of operation. The equity of predestination was to a state of love. Augustine gave his genius not to a description but to a suggestion of that *state* of love. The sensibility of the *Confessions* vibrates with this; the universals of the City of God make an effort to diagrammatize its relation with history—that is, with time as known by man. He hypothesized history into the workings of the Divine Providence, and the hypothesis has been,

[1] "Platonism in Augustine's Philosophy of History," Ernst Hoffman (*Philosophy and History*, edited by R. Klibansky and H. J. Paton).

intellectually, made too often merely dull. But the real significance was in the vast accident, the vast sense of opportunity. It is Augustine's sense of opportunity which springs active everywhere, and everywhere that dash of vision opens on all that opportunity holds. Christ had been the opportunity; St. Paul had formed a vocabulary for that opportunity; Augustine turned the vocabulary into a language, a diction, a style. The Athanasian speech was the more highly specialized, Augustine's the more universal. He renewed the good news—man was utterly corrupt, and his scope was love. He renewed the City; he made humility possible for all. "Perfection consists not in what we give to God but in what we receive from him."[1]

The exterior crisis of the world in his age exposes to us that expansion of the Apostolic word at the moment when the world was ruining. On 24 August, in the year of the City 1164 and in the year of the Fructiferous Incarnation 410, the Goths under Alaric entered and sacked Rome. "My voice sticks in my throat," said Jerome, "and sobs choke me as I dictate. The City which took the whole world captive is itself taken." He uttered the sensations of all, both Christians and heathen. There has been no such shock to Europe since. Refugees fled to Sicily, to Syria, to Africa (Pelagius among the last; Augustine saw him in Carthage). Twenty years later, "in the seventy-sixth year of his age and the thirty-fifth of his episcopate, Augustine died, 28 August, 430, his eyes fixed on the penitential psalms and the sound of a besieging host of Vandals in his ears. . . . They offered the Holy Sacrifice at his burial."[2] It was the summary and consummation of his life and doctrine; he had saved Christendom at the moment when Honorius, Emperor of the West, lost Rome.

[1] *The Life of the Church*, edited by M. D'Arcy, S.J. Bk. II; *Christianity and the Soul of Antiquity*, by P. Rousselot, S.J. and J. Herby, S.J.
[2] *History of the Church*, Kidd.

Chapter IV

THE WAR OF THE FRONTIERS

Not many years after the fall of Rome, the last Emperor of the West died at Ravenna. The few Senators who were with him escaped from Italy, and at Byzantium laid the fealty of the West at the foot of the Throne. The Empire was again one, as it had been in the days of the Divine Augustus.

But the differences from that early state were many. The alteration of the centre had changed the frontiers. Italy itself was now a frontier to the Government at Byzantium and Gaul was not much more than a distant No-man's-land of battle. Persia and the Near East were now the peril, though so far it was a secular prestige only which threatened the secular and sacred Emperor. Another two centuries were to pass before the voice of the Prophet would begin to sound nearer and nearer to New Rome. The ancient idea of Rome had been translated into a new language of which the chief and most resounding word was the living form of the Emperor, "the Basileus High-Priest," "the chief Bishop outside the Church," the single figure in which were exhibited the two complementary offices of men, sacred and secular, as the two Natures had been united in Christ. The Throne and the City were to last for a thousand years, and when they fell at last they were to fall not to any rebellious principate or patri-archate of the West, but to the Eastern despot who expressed