

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 25

### INNOCENT AND THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

A new field of blood, and an entirely new character of warfare, were now brought before the mind of the voracious priest of Rome. It was a war not against the enemies of the faith abroad, or against the refractory kings at home, but the army of the church warring against the confessed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a new thing in the annals of Christendom.

By the favour of the princes and by the indifference of the clergy the **Albigenses** had been allowed for centuries to preach the gospel and to spread the truth unmolested. Roman Catholicism had nearly perished from the provinces of Count Raymond. The people generally were well inclined to break off their connection with the church of Rome altogether. When this state of things came to the ears of Innocent, he called for a crusade against the heretics of Languedoc, and rested not until he had swept the whole population from the soil of France.

But we must first of all go back a few steps in order to connect the line of witnesses for Christ and His gospel.

### THE CHAIN OF WITNESSES

When we parted with the **Paulicians** — the Eastern witnesses for God and His truth — we promised to meet with them again in the regions of the West. It is asserted that in their missionary zeal they spread themselves over Europe; but whether they remained a distinct and characteristic sect, or mingled with the sectaries of the West, has been a question with historians. Among the various forms of heresy which were denounced by the dominant church, scarcely one of them escaped the charge of Manicheism — the brand affixed to the emigrants from the East. But it would be unreasonable to contend from this general charge that the Western sects were the fruit of their mission, though branded with the same name. It is more than likely, however, that they found many separatists in spirit, though not openly so, and in such cases may have become their teachers, and in this way perpetuated their principles.

The Western witnesses we have no doubt were the result of the same spirit of grace and truth, through the faithfulness of God, who never left Himself without a witness, but we see no ground to speak of them as the descendants of the misrepresented Paulicians. More likely there was an *intermingling* of these seceders from the established church.

We shall now endeavour to trace the *silver line* of God's grace, which was actively at work, though under different forms and names, during the darkest period of the papal oppression. There is no difficulty in identifying God's witnesses from the earliest period down to the Reformation, or in tracing the unbroken chain of testimony against the wickedness of Rome, and for the true gospel of the grace of God. We brought the line of witnesses in the history of the Paulicians down to the tenth century; we shall now notice the more prominent sects which arose in the West before and since that period.

1. **Claudius**, a Spaniard by birth, was famous as a commentator on the scriptures in the court of Louis in Aquitaine. His patron, the Emperor, promoted him to the bishopric of Turin in the year 814. He is spoken of in history as the Wycliffe of the ninth century, and the strenuous advocate of primitive Christianity. On reaching his diocese he found the churches filled with images and embellished with flowers and garlands. He at once, and in the most unceremonious manner, ordered all such ornaments to be removed. No distinction was to be made in favour of any picture, relic, or cross; all were to be swept away as with the besom of destruction. He denounced the worship of such things as the renewer of the worship of demons under other names, in place of preaching the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He declared that the apostolic office of St. Peter ceased with the life of the apostle. He therefore made light of papal censures and the alleged power of the keys. It has been said that he went the length of separating his church from the Romish communion.

But, like many other reformers, Claudius was rough and intemperate in his zeal. The fearful corruptions of the clergy and the idolatries of the people led him to speak and write in strong and passionate terms. Nor need we wonder. But the Lord watched over him in the most marvellous way. Though he was a bold reformer and a fearless iconoclast in an Italian city, he was permitted by the unseen hand of Providence to finish his labours in the full privileges of a bishop, though not unopposed.

As a link in the chain of witnesses, Claudius has a very distinct place. His influence was great and widely spread. Theodemir, abbot of a monastery near Nismes, ingenuously confesses, says Milman, that most of the great transalpine prelates thought with Claudius. And the hostility to the Romish church and her many sacraments, which afterwards prevailed in the Alpine valleys, has been generally traced to the reformer, Claudius. He died in the year 839.

## **PETROBRUSSIANS**

2. About the year 1110, a preacher, named **Peter de Brueys**, began to declaim against the corruptions of the dominant church and the vices of the clergy. As a missionary, he laboured chiefly in the south of France, Provence, and Languedoc. And, what may seem strange to us, he was allowed to disseminate his new doctrines with impunity for about twenty years. The

enemy could neither silence nor kill the witness until his testimony was finished. But as nearly all we know of such men comes to us through the writings of their adversaries, we only hear of what were called their heresies. The venerable abbot of Cluny wrote a treatise against Peter's followers — thence called *Petrobrussians*: they are charged with many offences but which may be reduced to the following — opposition to infant baptism, to the mass, celibacy, crucifixes, transubstantiation, and the efficacy of prayers for the salvation of the dead. But nothing which the founder of this sect did or said seemed to rouse the public feeling against him until he burned a number of crosses bearing the image of Christ. The priests then succeeded, a popular tumult was raised, and he was burned alive at St. Gilles in Languedoc. But his protest was not so easily consumed. Divine light may be overshadowed for a time, but it can never be extinguished.

### HENRICIANS

3. The fire which burned Peter de Brueys neither discouraged nor silenced his followers. One of these, named **Henry, a monk of Cluny**, and a deacon, became a more daring and a more powerful preacher than Peter. In the retirement of his monastery he had devoted himself to the study of the New Testament; and having gained a knowledge of Christianity from the pure word of God, he longed to go forth into the world to proclaim the truth to his fellow-men. His personal appearance, and his private education, combined to make his preaching most powerful and awakening. The rapid change in his countenance is likened to a stormy sea; his stature was lofty, his eyes were rolling and restless; his powerful voice, his naked feet and neglected apparel, attracted an attention, which was fixed by the fame of his learning and his sanctity.

In years he was but a youth, yet his deep tones, his wonderful eloquence, with his remarkable appearance, appalled the clergy and delighted the people. In the spirit of a John the Baptist he called upon the people to repent, and turn to the Lord, and not infrequently assailed the unpopular vices of the clergy.

But the opposition which Henry encountered from the clergy only attracted the people the more towards him. Multitudes, both of the poorer and the wealthier classes, received him as their spiritual guide in all things. He is first heard of historically at Lausanne, but he traversed the south of France from Lausanne to Bordeaux; and, as Neander observes, "he chained the people to himself, and filled them with contempt and hatred towards the higher clergy — they would have nothing to do with them. The divine service celebrated by them was no longer attended. They found themselves exposed to the insults and gibes of the populace, and had to apply for protection to the civil arm." The prudent bishop of Le Mans, seeing the influence he had gained over the people, contented himself with simply directing Henry to another field of labour. The zealous monk quietly withdrew, and made his appearance in Provence, where Peter de Brueys had laboured before him. Here he

developed still more clearly his opposition to the errors of the church of Rome, and drew down upon himself the bitter hostility of the hierarchy.

Henry was apprehended by the archbishop of Arles; he was condemned as a heretic by the Council of Pisa, which was held in 1134, and sentenced to confinement in a cell. In a short time he escaped, and returned to Languedoc. Desertion of churches, it is said, total contempt of the clergy, followed the eloquent heresiarch wherever he went. A legate, named Alberic, was sent by Eugenius III to subdue the revolt; but his mission would have been fruitless, had he not prevailed on St. Bernard to share with him the labour and the glory of the enterprise. "Henry is an antagonist," he said, "who can only be put down by the conqueror of Abelard and of Arnold of Brescia."

The powerful abbot of Clairvaux wrote to the prince of the Provence to prepare for his arrival, and signifying the object of his coming. "The churches," he wrote, "are without people; the people without priests; the priests without honour; and Christians without Christ. The churches are no longer conceived holy, nor the sacraments sacred, nor are the festivals any more celebrated. Men die in their sins — souls are hurried away to the terrible tribunal — without penitence or communion; baptism is refused to infants, who are thus precluded from salvation." The abbot wrought miracles, as was believed; the people wondered and admired; Henry fled; Bernard pursued, purifying the places infected by the pestilence of heresy. At length the heretic was seized; he was handed over in chains to the bishop of Toulouse, who consigned him to prison, where he soon afterwards died suddenly. He was thus delivered from all his persecutors in the year 1148, and entered into his rest.

### **VAUDOIS, ALBIGENSES, WALDENSES**

4. The origin of the Western sectaries, so-called, under the common name of **Waldenses**, has been the subject of much controversy. One class of writers, favourable to Romanism, with the view of involving them in the common charge of Manicheism, have endeavoured to prove that their opinions were of Eastern, or Paulician origin, while the opposite party affirm that they were free from the Manichean error, and that they have been the inheritors and maintainers, from father to son, of a pure and scriptural Christianity, from the time of Constantine, if not from the days of the apostles.

But as it is not so much our object at present to trace the history of these ancient, simple, and devoted christian people, as to bring out another feature of the papacy under Innocent, in its most fully expressed blasphemy and cruelty; we will merely satisfy the reader as to who these people were, and as to the scene of their slaughter. "The terms," says Dr. Gilly, "Vaudois in French, Vallenses in Latin, Valdisi in Italian, and Waldenses in English ecclesiastical history, signifying nothing more or less than '**men of the valleys;**' and as the valleys of Piedmont have had the honour of producing a

race of people who have remained true to the faith introduced by the first missionaries who preached Christianity in those regions, the synonyms have been adopted as the distinguishing names of a religious community, faithful to the primitive creed, and free from the corruptions of the church of Rome.”

The **Albigenses**, though essentially one with the Waldenses in matters of faith, were so called because the greater part of Narbonnese-Gaul which they inhabited was called Albigesium, or from Albi, a town in Languedoc. The Alps separated the two communities. God found an asylum for the Waldenses in the valleys on the eastern side, and for the Albigenses in the valleys on the western side, of that great mountain range, where they were preserved and fortified for many centuries.

### **PETER WALDO**

From a similarity of names, Peter Valdo, or Waldo, the reformer of Lyon, has frequently been spoken of as the first founder of the Waldensian sect. This we think a mistake, but one easily made, and one which the Romanists eagerly improved as an argument against their antiquity, and one which has been adopted by most of the general histories. But Mr. Elliot, in his “*Horae Apocalypticae*,” and those mentioned in the note above, have examined the question with great patience and research, and, we believe, clearly established the conclusion of the orthodoxy and the antiquity of the “men of the valleys.”<sup>174</sup>

At the same time **Peter Waldo** is worthy of all praise for his self-denying services in the cause of truth, and against error. His piety, zeal, and courage were most conspicuous at a period when the papal hierarchy began to persecute all who questioned its authority and infallibility. He was no doubt raised up of God just at that time to give greater distinctness to the testimony of the Alpine peasants. The simplicity of their worship, and the scene of their tranquillity, appear not to have excited the jealousy of their neighbours or the suspicion of the universal church till about this time. It happened, under the hand of God, in this way.

About the year 1160 the practices of idolatry which accompanied the doctrine of transubstantiation deeply impressed Peter with an alarming sense of the wickedness of the times, and the dangerous corruptions of the papacy. This led to the true conversion of his soul to God. From that moment he was devoted to His service and His glory. He abandoned his mercantile occupations, and distributed his wealth to the poor, in imitation of the early disciples. Numbers gathered around him; he felt the need of instruction in the things of God; where was it to be found? He became deeply desirous to understand the Gospels which he had been accustomed to hear in church. He employed two ecclesiastics to translate them into the native tongue, with some

---

<sup>174</sup> See Marsden’s *Dictionary*, “Albigenses.” Milner, vol. 3, p. 92. Bartlett’s *Scenery of the Waldenses*, Introduction.



other books of scripture, and some passages of the Fathers. This was Waldo's greatest work, for which he deserves the best thanks of posterity. The scriptures at that time were in a great measure a sealed book in Christendom being only in the Latin tongue. The followers of Waldo being thus provided with copies of the scriptures in their own tongue, they were able to explain to the people that they were not advancing doctrines of their own, but a pure faith as it really existed in the Bible. After the manner of the seventy, he sent out his disciples, two by two, into the neighbouring villages to preach the gospel.

This awoke the thunders of the Vatican. As long as Waldo and his friends confined themselves to their own protest against the innovations, the hierarchy did not seriously molest them; but as soon as they employed that dreaded engine, the scriptures in the vulgar tongue, they were immediately anathematized and excommunicated. As yet they contemplated no secession from the church, but only its reformation. They persisted in preaching the glorious gospel of the grace of God to lost sinners: an interdict was issued against them by the Archbishop of Lyon. Waldo resolutely replied, "We must obey God rather than man." From that time "the poor men of Lyon," as they were called, were branded by the Clergy with obloquy and contempt as heretics. For three years after his first condemnation, which took place in 1172, Waldo contrived to remain concealed in the city of Lyon or its neighbourhood, but Pope Alexander the Third fulminated his threats and terrors so effectually not only against Waldo, but against all who should dare to hold the slightest communication with the reformer, that, for his friends' sake, he fled from Lyon, and became a wanderer for the rest of his life. After seeking a shelter in several places, but finding a resting-place in none, he passed from among the Bohemian mountaineers, the ancestors of Huss and Jerome, into his eternal rest about the year 1179.

### **THE DISPERSION OF WALDO'S FOLLOWERS**

When Waldo fled, his disciples followed him. The dispersion took place similarly to that which arose on the occasion of Stephen's persecution. The effects were also similar; the blessed gospel was more widely disseminated throughout Europe. Their great strength was their possession of the sacred scriptures in their own language. They read the Gospels; they preached and they prayed in the vulgar tongue. Many of them, no doubt, found their way to the valleys of Piedmont and the cities of Languedoc. A new translation of the Bible was doubtless a rich accession to the spiritual treasures of that interesting people.

The scene was now ready for Pope Innocent: the papal threatenings having been transmitted to his vigorous hand, were executed with a willing and unrelenting mind. He who had humbled the great kings of Germany, France, and England, and had received implicit submission from almost every part of Christendom, was still disowned as supreme head of the church by the

Waldenses wherever they were found. It was not likely that such a spirit as Innocent's would continue to endure with calmness this resistance to his boasted universal supremacy. But what was their crime? where were they to be found? and how were they to be dealt with?

1. They had the highest reputation everywhere, even from their worst enemies, for modesty, frugality, honest industry, chastity, and temperance. "In no instance," says a high authority, but not very favourable to what he calls the antisacerdotalists, "are the morals of Peter Waldo and the Alpine Bible-Christians arraigned by their bitterest foes." Their mortal sin was found in their appeal to the scriptures, and to the scriptures alone, in all matters of faith and worship. They rejected the vast system of tradition-religion, as maintained by the church of Rome. Both in life and in doctrine they were noble witnesses for Christ and the simplicity of the gospel; but they formed a powerful protest against the wealth, the power, and the superstitions of the dominant religion. They rejected the almost innumerable sacraments of Rome, and maintained that there were only two in the New Testament — baptism and the Lord's supper. In general we may say that they anticipated and held the same doctrines which, after the lapse of three centuries, were to be promulgated by the Reformers of Germany and England, and which form the creed of Protestants at the present time.

2. The progress of "**the poor men of Lyon,**" after their persecutions, appears to have been rapid, and widely extended. They spread abroad, we are told, into the south of France, into Lombardy, and into Arragon. "In Lombardy and Provence," says Robertson, "the Waldenses had more schools than the Catholics; their preachers disputed and taught publicly, while the number and importance of the patrons whom they had gained, rendered it dangerous to interfere with them. In Germany they had forty-one schools in the diocese of Passau, and they were numerous in the dioceses of Metz and Toul. From England to the south of Italy, from the Hellespont to the Ebro, their opinions were widely spread."<sup>175</sup>

3. Such was the state of things on the accession of Pope Innocent III. With anxious forebodings, and a far-seeing eye, he watched this spirit of religious independence, but how to crush it effectually was the question. Besides, at that time, as the reader will remember, his hands were full. He was seeking to destroy the balance of power in Germany and Italy, he was contending with the kings of France and England by turns, he was directing the march of the Crusaders, and overturning by their means the Greek empire at Constantinople; yet was he watching, and determined to punish every dissent from the tenets of the church of Rome, and every exercise of the thinking faculty on religious subjects. It was loudly rumoured about this time that the **two** principal seats of this disaffection towards Rome were the valleys of

---

<sup>175</sup> J.C. Robertson, vol. 3, pp. 179-202. Waddington, vol. 2, p. 187. Sir. J. Stephen's *History of France*, vol. 1, p. 218.

Piedmont and the south of France. The Piedmontese Christians flourished in comparative obscurity, while the Albigenses were rendered more notorious, as well as more dangerous, by the protection afforded them in the wealthy cities of Languedoc. **Raymond VI**, Count of Toulouse, not only favoured those of the Waldensian creed as the best of his subjects, but employed them in his family, though avowedly himself a Roman Catholic. The Count of Foix was married to a Waldensian, of his two sisters, one was said to be a Waldensian, and the other a catharist, or puritan.

### THE REGION OF ALBI

The name of *Languedoc* was given to these remote provinces of the kingdom, because of the rich, melodious, and flexible language which was then vernacular there. In refinement, wealth, and liberty, both political and religious, they surpassed all the rest of France. The old Roman civilization still lingered in the valleys of Languedoc and Provence. The feudal chieftains, especially the counts of Toulouse and Foix, though owning the king as lord paramount, possessed and exercised sovereign authority in their own domains. By the favour of Raymond, and the indifference of the other chiefs, this beautiful region had advanced far more rapidly towards civilization than any other part of Europe, but this civilization, observes Milman, was entirely independent of, or rather hostile to, ecclesiastical influence. The curse of popery, as we have often seen, is not only ruinous to the souls of men, but destructive of all progress in the arts of life and in general civilization. Even the face of a Catholic country seems blasted by its withering influence. The mind must be kept ignorant, superstitious and enslaved, if popery is to flourish. But for a long time the inhabitants of Languedoc had been left unmolested by the hierarchy of Rome, and, as a natural consequence, their cities were filled with a peaceful, industrious, and wealthy community.

But, on the other hand, as was most natural, in proportion as the word of God and liberal opinions prevailed, the church of Rome and the clergy sank into the greatest contempt. Nobles and knights no longer allowed their younger sons to be trained for the church, but put sons of their serfs into benefices, and appropriated the tithes. Equally hated by the nobility and the common people for their grasping and unprincipled conduct, the priests could offer no resistance to the progress of the new opinions. They were no longer feared for their spiritual power, and they were despised for their **sensuality**. They became the song and the jest of the Troubadours; their spoiling of orphans, their swindling of widows, their dishonesty, gluttony, and drunkenness, were proverbial, and undeniable. "So sensible," says Robertson, "were they themselves of their ignominy, that they were fain to hide their tonsure by drawing the hair from the back of the head over it." The simplest peasant, on hearing of a scandalous action, was in the habit of saying, "I would rather be a priest than be guilty of such a deed." So numerous were the seceders from Rome become, that they constituted the mass of the population. The Jews were also numerous and wealthy; and, of course' a number of individuals properly



of no sect, peopled the flourishing cities of Languedoc; but we must now speak of them all under the common name of Albigenses.

### INNOCENT AND THE ALBIGENSIAN PERSECUTION

Such was the state of things in that sunny, peaceful, prosperous region, when a dark thunder-cloud gathered in the horizon. Innocent heard with dismay the progress of the new opinions, and resolved to crush them. With this object in view, he first of all addressed a letter to the prelates and princes of southern France, exhorting them to take vigorous measures for the suppression of heresy, all heretics were to be anathematized and banished. But to Raymond and others such a merciless requisition appeared so arbitrary, that it met with little attention. "We have been brought up with these people," replied Raymond; "we have relations among them, we know that their life is honest; how can we persecute those whom we respect as the most peaceable and loyal of our people?" It was obvious that in such a sacrifice of the population the interests and the revenues of the princes were involved, and that it would amount to a process of extermination; but to this fearful process the supreme shepherd of Christ's flock did not hesitate to resort, however much the temporal sovereign might. The Albigenses were excommunicated, and placed under an anathema, which extended to every one who might lodge or shelter them, deal with them in trade, or join with them in social intercourse. But the disobedient Raymond still showed favour to his heretical subjects, and the enraged pope, in consequence, next sent two legates — Reinerius and Guido — to inquire into the causes of the failure, and armed with full authority to extirpate the heretics. Many of these inoffensive people were arrested, condemned, and committed to the flames; still Raymond was inactive, and the heresy grew and gathered strength.

What was to be done? New powers were demanded; sterner and more active agents were required. Raymond, an independent sovereign, and knowing the blameless character of his subjects, refused to execute the demands of Rome. St. Bernard, long the champion of the papacy, was dead, but the pope turned to his spiritual descendants. **Peter of Castelnau**, a Cistercian monk, was sent to Raymond as apostolic legate, in the year 1207, to demand that he should exterminate his heretical subjects with fire and sword. But the tolerant prince, who seems to have been a gay, pleasure-loving man, without strength of character to be either a heretic or a bigot, could not be aroused to obey the papal mandate. Twice he refused, and twice he was excommunicated, and his dominions laid under a solemn interdict. Innocent sanctioned what his legate had done, and wrote a letter to Raymond, unexampled in the arrogance and insolence of its language. "Pestilent man! imperious, cruel, and direful tyrant; what pride has seized your heart, and what is your folly, to refuse peace with your neighbours, and to brave the divine laws, by protecting the enemies of the faith? If you do not fear eternal flames, ought you not to dread the temporal chastisements which you have merited by so many crimes? For verily the church can have no peace with the captain of freebooters and

robbers — the patron of heretics — the contemner of the holy seasons — the friend of Jews and usurers — the enemy of the prelates, and a persecutor of Jesus Christ and His church. The arm of the Lord shall still be stretched out against thee, until thou art crushed to dust and atoms. Verily, He shall make thee feel how difficult it is to withdraw thyself from the wrath thou hast called down upon thine own head.”

Such is a specimen of the vehemence of papal invective in mediaeval times. And for what? the reader may inquire. Not for immorality, however bad he may have been; but because he refused to be the pope’s executioner, and shed the blood of his own peaceful, industrious, faithful subjects. But such was the power of these incarnate fiends, that Raymond was frightened into submission. He signed a treaty, most reluctantly, for the extermination of all heretics from his dominions. He was slow, however, in proceeding with the work of persecution. The legate perceiving this, could not conceal his rage, but broke out in the most reproachful language against the prince — called him a coward, accused him of perjury, and renewed the excommunication in all its plenitude. Need we wonder that a feudal prince was irritated to wrathful indignation by the daring impudence of the monk? He is reported to have exclaimed, in an unhappy moment, that he would make Castelnau answer for his insolence with his life. It is supposed that the menace was heard by one of his attendants, who, the following day, after an angry debate, drew his poignard struck the legate in the side, and killed him. The quarrel as has been observed, assumed an aspect similar to that which raged a short time before this between Henry II of England and Thomas a Becket.

### **RAYMOND A SPIRITUAL OUTLAW**

Innocent had now obtained what he wished — a decent pretext for the full outpouring of the vials of his wrath. The honours of martyrdom were decreed to the victim, Raymond was denounced as the author of the crime, and proclaimed a spiritual outlaw; and the faithful were called upon to assist in his destruction. “Up, soldiers of Christ,” he writes to Philip Augustus of France, “up most christian King! hear the cry of blood; aid us in wreaking vengeance on these malefactors. Up ye nobles, knights of France, the rich and sunny lands of the south will be the reward of your valour.” The preaching of the crusade was entrusted to the Cistercian order, under their fanatical abbot, Arnold; “a man,” says Milman, “whose heart was sheathed with the triple iron of pride, cruelty, bigotry.” Just at this moment, the missionaries fell in with the notable Spaniard, **Dominic**, ever since famous as the founder of the *Inquisition* and the *Dominican* friars. His heart was in no wise softer than Arnold’s, and he was more successful as a preacher. Not a moment was lost in denouncing the crime and its perpetrators. Every heart and hand was engaged to take vengeance for the insult upon God in the person of His servant. The same indulgences which had ever been granted to the champions of the holy sepulchre were assured to those who should enter upon the new crusade against Raymond and the Albigenses. The clergy everywhere preached with

indefatigable zeal this new way of obtaining the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life.

“To that ignorant and superstitious generation,” says Sir James Stephens, “no summons could have been more welcome. Danger, privations, and fatigue, in their direst forms, had beset the rugged paths by which the crusaders to the East had fought their way to the promised paradise. But in the war against the Albigenses the same inestimable recompense was to be won, not by self-denial, but by self-indulgence. Every debt owing to man was to be cancelled, every offence already committed against the law of God was to be pardoned, and an eternity of blessedness was to be won, not by a life of future sanctity, but by a life of future crime; not by the restraint, but by the gratification, of their foulest passions; by satiating their cruelty, their avarice, and their lust, at the expense of a people whose wealth excited their covetousness, and whose superiority provoked their resentment.” Forward to this mingled harvest of blood and plunder, of priestly absolution and military fame, rushed all the wild spirits of the age. The whole of Europe resounded with preparations for the holy war.

### THE HOME CRUSADE

In the year 1209, in answer to the call of one man, and he professedly the chief pastor of the church of Christ, three hundred thousand soldiers gathered around the infected provinces. Some of the writers of that age raise the number to half a million, and all wearing in solemn mockery the symbol of the cross. They formed three great armies, over each of which presided an archbishop, a bishop, and mitred abbot. But eminent above all the leaders of this sacred war was the notorious Simon de Montfort, lord of a fief near Paris, and Earl of Leicester, in right of his mother, an English lady. Satan had skilfully selected his instruments Innocent, Arnold, Dominic, and de Montfort are names of awful memory in history. It would be difficult to say which of the four hearts was most thoroughly sheathed in the triple iron.

**Raymond**, being wholly unprepared to meet such a host, took refuge in submission. The pope promised absolution on certain conditions. But these were hard and cruel in the extreme. 1. He must clear himself of the murder of Castelnau; 2. as a proof of his sincerity he must surrender seven of his best castles; 3. that he should do public penance for his past offences; 4. that he should in his own person become a crusader against his own subjects. The poor count complained of the terms imposed on him, but such were the tender mercies of the pope, and they must be rigorously fulfilled to the letter. He submitted and received absolution in St. Gilles in the presence of three archbishops and nineteen bishops. He next appeared in the cathedral where Castelnau was buried, with naked shoulders, and a rope round his neck, either end of which was carried by a bishop; the scourge was then applied, not as a mere ceremony, but with hearty goodwill, till, covered with blood, the unhappy count was permitted to escape from his tormentors and from the vast

crowd which had gathered to witness this almost incredible degradation of their suzerain lord. But this was not the worst penalty; he was obliged to accompany the crusaders against his own loyal subjects, and against his nephew, Raymond-Roger, the Viscount of Beziers, whose territories were said to be full of the odious Albigenses.

The vindictive soul of the pope being so far propitiated with having abased and duped his enemy, the mighty armament moved on. Three hundred thousand infuriated warriors poured into his beautiful states. "Forward," was the cry of the holy abbot, "you shall ravage every field, you shall slay every human being; strike and spare not. The measure of their iniquity is full, and the blessing of the church is on your head." Thus instructed by the priest, De Montfort was prepared to act. The vast army marched through the land of vineyards, and of oliveyards, burning, slaying, ravaging, as they went. The peasantry were ridden down and slaughtered in cold blood.

### **THE SLAUGHTER AND BURNING OF BEZIERS**

**Raymond-Roger**, a gallant young man of twenty-four, displayed a braver spirit than his uncle, and resolved to defend his people against the crusaders. His two great cities, Beziers and Carcassonne, were his chief strength. He threw himself into the latter, the stronger place. "The soldiers of the cross the priests of the Lord," as they called themselves, appeared before Beziers; which had been well provided and garrisoned by the viscount. The bishop of the place was in the army: he was allowed by Arnold to offer his advice to the people and recommend a surrender. "Renounce your opinions and save your lives," was the bishop's advice; but the Albigenses firmly replied that they would not renounce a faith which gave them the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The Catholics joined with the heretics in declaring that, rather than surrender, they would suffer death in its worst form. "Then," said Arnold, "there shall not be left one stone upon another; fire and sword shall devour men, women, and children." The town fell into the hands of the besiegers, and fearfully was the injunction obeyed. The knights, pausing at the gates, asked the abbot how the soldiers were to distinguish catholics from heretics; "Slay them all," he replied, "the Lord knoweth them that are His." The slaughter began: men, women, children, clergy, were massacred indiscriminately, while the bells of the cathedral were rung till the slaughter was complete. Trembling multitudes fled to the churches, in hope of finding a sanctuary within the hallowed walls; but not one human being was left alive. The vast population of Beziers, who so lately had thronged the streets and marts, now lay in slaughtered heaps. The numbers thus slain are estimated variously from twenty to one hundred thousand. So many from the open country flee for refuge to the cities at such times, that numbers cannot be correctly estimated. The city was given up to plunder, and then set on fire.

Never did the dragon-abbot say a truer word than that "the Lord knoweth them that are His," though he said it in awful derision, and was himself an

utter stranger to the remaining part of the verse, “And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (2 Tim. 2:19) The Lord surely knows all who believe in Him, and infinitely precious to Him is the feeblest of His saints. And Arnold will one day see, in the same glory with their Lord, those whom he denounced as heretics and slew with the sword. What a day that will be when the persecutor and the persecuted, the accuser and the accused, shall stand face to face in the presence of Him who judges righteously! Till then, may we walk by faith, seeking only to please the Lord.

## **THE SIEGE OF CARCASSONNE**

From Beziers, of which nothing now remained but a burning pile, the crusaders moved on in the direction of Carcassonne. As they advanced, they found the country desolate. The terrible example of Beziers struck terror into all hearts. The inhabitants of the defenceless villages fled as they saw the smoking ruins of the strong city. Woes innumerable tracked the polluted steps of these dragon hosts. They stood before the walls of Carcassonne: Roger commanded in person, and sustained a long siege with great valour. **Simon de Montfort** was foremost in the assault. On the other side, Roger was seen exposing himself everywhere at the head of the defenders, and animating their courage by words and example. During forty days the siege was continued, and the besiegers were repulsed with great loss. But for the treachery of the abbot, Raymond-Roger would have triumphed. Thus matters stood.

The soldiers of the cross were only required to serve forty days, both by feudal law and in order to gain all the privileges of crusaders. At the end of this period many of the leaders and the great mass of the troops returned home disappointed and dissatisfied. The excessive heat, the scantiness of water, the infected atmosphere from the unburied dead, the rapacity, cruelty, and perfidy of the priests, led many to welcome the close of their feudal term. In these extremities and surrounded with disorderly troops the abbot had recourse to craft — the wiles of Satan. The noble and brave viscount was decoyed into a conference. On the oath of the legate and the barons of the army that good faith would be maintained, Roger came out with three hundred of his followers. But with so formidable a heretic faith was not to be kept. And just as he was beginning to propose terms, the legate exclaimed that no faith was to be kept with one who had been so faithless to his God; and ordered the viscount to be put in chains and cast into prison with his followers. But he was soon relieved from his humiliation and suffering by death, which was popularly attributed to the hand of Simon. The people, dismayed by the loss of their chief, abandoned the city and escaped by means of a subterranean passage, but the priests consoled themselves by seizing about four hundred of the citizens, whom they hanged and burned for the common offence of heresy.

The city of Carcassonne and the princely heritage of Raymond-Roger were now in the hands of the papal party, and according to the law of conquest



entirely at their disposal. The legate and his clergy presented these rich lands to Simon de Montfort as the firstfruits of a glorious victory over the heretics; and he was hailed as Viscount of Beziers and Carcassonne, promising to hold his dignities and territories on condition of a yearly tribute to the pope as liege lord of the conquered territories.

The election of Simon was confirmed by the pope, though the great principles of justice and the faith of treaties were so glaringly and shamelessly violated; but the King of Arragon, as suzerain, refused to invest Simon in his new possessions. The conquest appeared to be complete, but it was not really so. The Duke of Burgundy, the Count of Nevers, and other French noblemen, withdrew from the crusade, being greatly offended with the arrogance of the pope's mercenaries. De Montfort, being thus left with a comparatively small force, was unable to maintain his position. Many cities and castles that had been taken by the papal party were again lost, and an incessant war was carried on; now marked by the fierce exasperation of the people, and the most relentless cruelties on both sides. De Montfort wrote in despair to the prelates of Christendom for a fresh army.

The trumpet of Rome was again sounded: a fresh crusade was preached. **“Swarms of monks,”** says Greenwood, “issued from the numberless cells and monasteries of the Cistercian order, preaching perdition to heretics, and boundless pardons to all who should shed the blood — were it only of one — of the accursed brood. There was no crime so black, no vice so rooted in the heart, but that a forty-days' campaign against these outcasts would wipe it away, even to the last trace of guilt, nor leave the faintest sense of remorse behind.” Attracted by the promise of great earthly spoils in the sunny south, and of eternal felicity in heaven, unnumbered troops of fanatics flocked to the standard of De Montfort. In the spring of 1210 he received a large reinforcement under the command of his wife, and the war recommenced with fresh fury.

### **THE RUIN OF RAYMOND DETERMINED**

The submission of Count Raymond to the papal terms of reconciliation appears to have been complete. He had surrendered his castles, had undergone the basest personal humiliation, and had accompanied the crusades, notwithstanding his bleeding shoulders, against his own kinsman Roger. Surely the church will be satisfied, express her approbation, and receive him back into her bosom. But, alas, it was just the opposite. True, the pope in the most treacherous manner professed to embrace him as his obedient son, absolved him from his alleged guilt as to the murder of Castelnau, and gave him a cloak and a ring. With these valuable presents the count returned to his own country, in the hope that the pope's concessions would be confirmed by his legates. But here, history has lifted the veil, and revealed the most deliberate and avowed treachery that ever blackened the policy of any ruler. In a letter written by this pontiff to his legates in Toulouse, he refers to the

words of the apostle in justification of his deceitful conduct, “Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.” (2 Cor. 12:16) Thus he writes, “We counsel you with the apostle Paul to employ guile with regard to this count, for in this case it ought to be called prudence. We must attack separately those who are separated from unity. Leave for a time this count of Toulouse, employing towards him a course of dissimulation, that the other heretics may be the more easily defeated, and that afterwards we may crush him when he shall be left alone.” The confiding but doomed count, as a matter of course, urged the fulfilment of the pope’s decree. But the crafty legates, Theodosius and Arnold, who were in their master’s secret, had other intentions. They contrived delays, made demands, until the count found his cast was hopeless in their hands. On being told that he had not cleared himself of the crimes of heresy and murder, and that they could not absolve him, he burst into tears; when the iron-hearted churchmen mocked his disappointment, quoting the text; “Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him” (Ps. 32:6); and pronounced his excommunication afresh.

### **THE REAL OBJECT OF THE CATHOLICS**

The reader has now before him the real, though then concealed, object of these Satan-inspired men. It is the old, the cruel story of Naboth and his vineyard: Jezebel must have the charming regions of the south as her own vineyard, the blood of Naboth the Jezreelite must be shed. It will be seen from the pope’s secret injunctions to his legates, that the ruin, not only of Raymond, but of all the princes in Languedoc, was determined; and that he had deceived Count Raymond by a feigned reconciliation, so as to separate him from the rest of the Languedocian nobles, that they might be destroyed one by one with greater ease. This was the policy of Innocent as written by his own hand and still extant, and his legates were apt disciples of their master. But the spoils of the Count of Toulouse and all his partisans were a matter of necessity to Simon and his allies the legates; nothing less than the whole south could satisfy the cupidity of De Montfort and the fanaticism of the rapacious priests. It was therefore determined to involve the Counts of Foix, Comminges, and Beam, with all their territorial dependencies.

The **Count of Toulouse** was suzerain of five great subordinate fiefs. The courts of these petty sovereigns vied with each other in splendour and gallantry. Life, we are told, was a perpetual feast or tournament. Some of them had been amongst the most distinguished of the crusaders in the East and had brought home many usages of oriental luxury. It was no question with such of either heretic, Waldensian or Albigensian. They were good catholics outwardly; but their religion really was chivalry, and the music of the troubadour. Still there were some honourable exceptions; we can trace the *silver line* of God’s rich sovereign grace in the courts of these gay princes. We read of **Almeric**, lord of Montreuil, and his sister, the Lady Geralda of Verville, who were Albigenses, and who defended their own cities against the catholics, but were overpowered; and these lords and ladies with many others

were instantly destroyed. Almeric, with eighty nobles, was brought before De Montfort. He ordered them all to be hanged the overloaded gibbets broke down; they were hewn to pieces; the Lady Geralda was thrown into a well and huge stones rolled down upon her. Only a few escaped the general massacre of Vetville to tell the tale. But the whole country shared a similar fate. The true Christian, the gay courtier, the gallant knight, the pleasure-loving multitude who were too enervated through the influence of the luxurious habits of the country to be either heretic or bigot — must either submit to the pope's terms, or to the halter, the stake, or the faggot.

Every department of the south was now charged with the guilt of sheltering heretics; and Raymond as suzerain lord was summoned to appear before the council at Arles. All concealment of their savage iniquity was now thrown off. The count was accompanied by his friend Pedro, king of Arragon, a good and devoted catholic, who pleaded his cause and offered to become security for his fidelity. Their terms of reconciliation were these: let the reader note them carefully as a sample of popish arrogance and audacity in those days “That Count Raymond should disband his army; that he should raze all his castles, recall all the commandants of his walled towns and strong places; that he should renounce all the tolls and dues from which the principal part of his revenue was derived, that he should compel all gentry and commonalty of his domains to wear a penitential garb; that he should deliver up all his subjects suspected of heresy to be converted or burned, as the case might be; that he should hold himself personally in readiness to pass over to Palestine to serve under the brotherhood of St. John of Jerusalem till recalled by the pope; that every head of a family should pay yearly fourpence to the legate; that he should be obedient to the church, pay all the expenses which they charge on him, and during his whole life submit himself without contradiction. All these terms duly fulfilled, his lands would be restored to him by the legate and the Count de Montfort.”<sup>176</sup>

The intent of this fresh outrage was not to be mistaken; the unhappy count, in defiance of the council's order, rode away, in company with his intercessor, the king of Arragon. Judgment was then given. “The Count of Toulouse was condemned as a declared heretic — an enemy of the church, and an apostate from the faith, and his domains and property, public or personal, were adjudged to the first occupants who should seize and appropriate them.” These terms and decrees will give the reader some faint idea of how the church, under the most sanctified language and pretensions, accomplished the ruin of a nobleman in those days, in order to obtain possession of his lands and his wealth. It was everywhere so. The prince and his people must be drowned in blood or consumed in fire, if his possessions cannot be obtained by milder means. Every Naboth must deliver up his field to Jezebel if she covets it. And before leaving this point, let the reader bear in mind, that, just at this

---

<sup>176</sup> Greenwood, book 13, chap. 7, p. 546; Milman, vol. 4, p. 218; Sir James Stephen's *Lectures*, vol. 1, p. 225.

moment, when the pope and his legates were working the ruin of the count and his vassal chiefs, the inquisitors Dominic and Reinerius were busily engaged in a “religious reconnaissance of the whole area of heresy,” having full authority from the pope himself to inflict capital punishment upon heretics. That dreadful tribunal, which then obtained, and yet retains, the name of the **Inquisition** was first opened this year — a year of awful memory, A.D. 1210, in a castle near Narbonne.

### **THE WAR CHANGES ITS CHARACTER**

Count Raymond hastened to Toulouse; he caused the ban of excommunication, with the hard terms of his absolution, to be publicly read aloud; the citizens were indignant, and declared that they would rather submit to the greatest extremities than accept such shameful conditions. As the news spread from town to town, the same enthusiasm prevailed throughout his dominions. The character of the war was now completely changed. It was evident to all, that the crusaders were determined to conquer the provinces for the purpose of converting them into dependencies of the See of Rome; and the provinces were equally determined to resist the crusaders as base hypocrites, and to cast off the cruel and usurping tyranny of Rome. The professedly religious purposes of the crusade had degenerated into a war of universal carnage and plunder. The whole nation was thus in a state of general insurrection against the dominant church as against a foreign invader.

War was now proclaimed, but the combatants were unequal. Raymond seems to have been a gentle, kindly, indolent monarch; much loved by his people; and unambitious, save for the pleasures and gratifications of this life. There is no evidence that he was the least inclined to the Albigensian religion, but professedly a true Roman Catholic. On the other hand, Simon de Montfort, the great general of Rome, was considered the most daring and skilful military leader of his day, and the sworn champion of the papacy. He was regular in the exercises of his religion, and heard mass daily. “But,” observes one, “even with Simon’s better qualities were combined some of the vices which not uncommonly seek their sanctification from high religious profession — a vast ambition, a daring unscrupulousness as to the means of pursuing his objects, a ruthless indifference to human suffering, and an excessive and undisguised rapacity.”<sup>177</sup> At the head of a new host of crusaders, to execute the sentence of the church, and to win the noble prize of Raymond’s dominions, he marched through the devoted land. Slaughter, rapine, and the most savage barbarities, such as may not be described, tracked his every step. Heretics, or those suspected of heresy, wherever they were found, were compelled by the legate Arnold and De Montfort to ascend vast piles of burning faggots, while the monks revelled in their sufferings and mocked the shrieks of burning women.

---

<sup>177</sup> J.C. Robertson, vol. 3, p. 351.

The whole country, as the papal army advanced, became the scene of the most wanton cruelties: they destroyed vineyards and growing crops, burnt villages and farmhouses, slaughtered unarmed peasants, women, and children, they spread desolation over the whole land, and then spoke of their sanctified zeal for religion. The exasperated people retaliated — nor need we wonder — and a savage war was waged on both sides. But details must be left to the civil historian. Having placed the real motives and objects of the pope in this unparalleled outrage on humanity and religion, in as clear a light as brevity would allow, we will now only note a few of the principal engagements in this great struggle, which brought it to a close, and which manifest yet more fully the character of Simon and the monks of Citeaux, under the direction and sanction of the pontiff.

### **THE BARBARITIES OF SIMON AND ARNOLD**

Simon de Montfort, as feudal lord of the Viscounty of Beziers and Carcassonne, was bound by his ecclesiastical tenure to extirpate the heretics. He therefore continued his campaign; many towns and castles fell into his hands, some by force, some by panic. In the diocese of Albi, the chief seat of the obnoxious doctrines, the war was conducted with the most savage cruelty. When La Minerve, near Narbonne, after an obstinate defence, surrendered, one in whose heart a spark of humanity yet remained, proposed that the vanquished should be allowed to retire, if they would recant their heresy; but such mild terms were objected to by the merciless monks. “The terms are too easy,” they exclaimed, “we come to extirpate heretics, not to show them favour!” “Be not afraid,” replied the abbot in cruel mockery, “there will not be many converts.” And he was right, but not in the sense in which he spoke. His intention was to kill every one of them; but their intention, or rather, firm purpose was, to accept of death rather than the papal terms. The Albigenses in the meantime were assembled for prayer. The abbot of Vaux-Cernay found a number of christian women in a house quietly engaged in prayer and waiting for the worst that could befall them. They expected no mercy from these holy fathers, and were prepared to die. He also found a number of men on their knees in another house peacefully awaiting their end. The abbot began to preach to them the doctrines of popery; but with one voice they interrupted him; and all exclaimed, “We will have none of your faith; we have renounced the church of Rome, your labour is in vain, for neither death nor life shall make us renounce the truth we hold.” De Montfort was asked to speak to them. He visited both the men and the women, in all about one hundred and forty. “Be converted to the catholic faith,” he said, “or mount this pile.” He had previously caused an enormous pile of dry wood to be raised. Not one of the Albigenses wavered for a moment. They denied the supremacy of the pope and the authority of the priesthood; they owned no head but Christ, and no authority but His holy word. Irritated to rage at their constancy and calm firmness, he ordered the fire to be lighted, the pile was soon one mass of flames. The undaunted confessors of the name of Jesus, committing their souls



into His hands, rushed voluntarily into the flames, as if ascending to heaven in a chariot of fire.

When the castle called Brau capitulated, De Montfort plucked out the eyes of more than a hundred of the defenders, and otherwise shamefully mutilated them, leaving one of them one eye that he might lead away the rest. Not, says the abbot of Vaux-Cernay, that the count took pleasure in such things, “for of all men he was the mildest,” but because he wished to retaliate on the enemy. Such was the judgment of the monkish historian. At **Lavaur**, the city of the good Roger Bernard, Count of Foix, the barbarities surpassed all precedent even in this fearful war. The count is claimed by the Waldenses as one of themselves. “Of all the provincial princes,” says Milman, “the Count of Foix was the most powerful, and the most detested by the church as a favourer of heretics. In this case the charge was an honour rather than a calumny. He was a man of profound religion; the first to raise the native standard against De Montfort, he was a knight of valour as of christian faith.” At length the city fell into the hands of the besiegers; a general massacre was permitted; men, women, and children were cut to pieces, till there remained nothing to kill except some of the garrison and others reserved for a more cruel fate. Four hundred were burned in one great pile, which caused universal rejoicing in the camp. And amid all this rioting in fiendish cruelty, the bishops and legates stood chanting, “Come, Holy Ghost.” It was here that lord Almeric with eighty nobles was brought before De Montfort, who ordered them to be hanged, as we have already seen. The pious Lady Geralda also suffered here; of whom it is said, “No poor man ever left her door without being fed.”<sup>178</sup>

### **THE SIEGE OF TOULOUSE**

From the blazing pile of four hundred human beings and gibbets overloaded with noble lords, the champion of the church advanced to the siege of **Toulouse**. His numerous conquests had rather inflamed than satisfied his “undisguised rapacity.” He hoped to add to his possessions the lordship of Toulouse, and thus to raise himself to a level with sovereign princes. The bishop Fouquet was in his camp. This new bishop of Toulouse, placed there to suit the pope’s purpose, is spoken of by historians, as one of the most treacherous, cruel, sanguinary and unscrupulous men that ever breathed. Rabenstein was deposed to make room for him that he might work within the gates the ruin of the count, while the inquisitors and crusaders were doing it outside. But in spite of all the pope’s treachery and Simon’s bravery the tide of fortune was on the turn. The Count of Toulouse, under the stern discipline of prolonged calamity showed that he was really gifted with courage and force of character. He had gathered around him his allies with their followers, who defended the city, and also made such bold sallies from the garrison that Simon was compelled to break up the siege. He revenged himself by wasting the gardens, vineyards, and fields. The state of matters was now completely

---

<sup>178</sup> *Latin Christianity*, vol. 4, p. 223; Gardner’s *Faiths of the World*, “Albigenses.”

changed. Raymond, instead of acting on the defensive, became the active and energetic assailant, and before a few months had elapsed, he recovered most of the places which had been seized by the crusaders. The forty-days' feudal principle caused continued fluctuation in Simon's army, and no doubt prevented him from improving his advantages to the full, so that his successes were chequered by occasional reverses. The triumph of Raymond, however, was but a temporary respite, and the prelude to a terrible defeat.

A fresh crusade was preached in Germany and northern France; many adventurers, trained in the wars of Germany and of the East, now joined the new army. All temporal blessing in a beautiful country, with heaven at last, induced numbers to assume the cross. The archbishops of Rheims and Rouen, the bishops of Paris, Laon, Toul, were with them, and William, archdeacon of Paris, was the chief engineer of the army. The poor discouraged Albigenses, at the approach of such a myriad host, fled from the open country and sought a refuge either among the woods and mountains, or in the large cities. Raymond, feeling his own weakness, sought the alliance of his kinsman Don Pedro, king of Arragon, the gallant Spaniard promised him his support, but before engaging in the war he made an appeal to the pope in favour of Raymond.

Moved by the king's appeal, and becoming jealous of the growing power of De Montfort, his holiness, for a moment, seemed disposed to alter his line of policy. He intimated his displeasure to the legates: they had, he said, laid hands on territories that had never been polluted with heresy, he commanded the restitution of the lands of the Counts of Foix and Comminges, and of Gaston de Beam. He also suspended his indulgences to the crusaders. But all this appearance of justice or pity was mere sentiment in the mind of the pope. He very soon revoked all his own concessions. The letters of his legates and inquisitors were absolutely furious — "Arm yourself, my lord pope, with the zeal of Phineas; annihilate Toulouse, that Sodom, that Gomorrah, with all the wretches it contains; let not the tyrant, the heretic, Raymond, nor even his young son, lift up his head, already more than half-crushed, crush them to the very utmost. The purification of Languedoc must not be thought of until the city of Toulouse be razed to the ground, and the citizens put to the sword. If the Raymonds be allowed to lift up their heads, they will take unto themselves seven other devils worse than the first. Let your apostolic wisdom provide against this evil; let not your hand be withheld from this holy and pious work until the serpent of our Moses shall have swallowed up the serpents of this Pharaoh; until the Jebusite with all the uncircumcised and impure be dispersed, and your people rejoice in the quiet possession of the land of promise."

### **THE POPE TEMPORIZES — THE BATTLE OF MURET**

The pope was in a difficulty, he yielded to a necessity. He alone had called forth the movement; but the power to control it had slipped from his hold; his

agents were only carrying out his instructions; he had no right to complain. Making a virtue of necessity, he sharply rebuked the **king of Arragon** the chief support of the Catholic cause in Spain — charged him with misrepresentation, threatened him with a crusade, and confirmed his sentence of excommunication against Raymond and his allies. De Montfort was proclaimed the active servant of Jesus Christ, and the invincible champion of the Catholic faith, he was also authorized to retain his conquests. The patience of the long-suffering king of Arragon was now exhausted, and, provoked by the insolence of the clergy, he flew to arms. At the head of a thousand knights and a large army, he crossed the Pyrenees, and encountered the crusaders at the little town of Muret, about nine miles from Toulouse. At the head of the warriors of the cross, attended by seven bishops, appeared Simon de Montfort in full military array. “His army,” says Greenwood, “though fewer in numbers, consisted of the heavy-armed chivalry of France, eager, by victory over the heretical host, to earn immortal honour, or by martyrdom to be wafted into the presence of the saints in paradise.” The battle which followed was fierce, short, and decisive. Don Pedro with many of his nobles was numbered with the slain. The remnant of his army, deprived of his command, broke and dispersed, and the whole of the raw and ill-armed militia of Raymond and his allies were either put to the sword, or drowned in the Garonne to the last man.

The cause of the Albigenses in consequence of the great **victory of Muret** had now become desperate, and the fate of the devoted land appeared to be decided for ever. Raymond was stripped of his territories; De Montfort was acknowledged as prince of the fief and city of Toulouse, and of the other counties conquered by the crusaders under his command. Overwhelmed by his misfortunes, and by the censures of the church, Raymond offered no opposition. Fouquet, the pope’s bishop, took possession of the palace of his ancestors, and, with a cruel impudence which no language can describe, ordered the noble count and his family to retire into obscurity. Such *were* and *are* the tender mercies of the Romish priesthood, even to their own flock if reckoned disobedient, for Raymond never was accused of heresy, only of sheltering heretics in his dominions — or, in other words, of refusing to massacre in cold blood his most dutiful and loyal subjects: this was his whole crime in the sight of Rome, as heaven will surely judge.

### **THE CONQUERORS QUARREL AMONG THEMSELVES**

The conquest appeared to be complete, and the conquerors began to divide the spoil; but Arnold and De Montfort quarrelled about the **ducal crown of Narbonne**. Each claimed the dukedom. The legate had assumed the archbishopric of Narbonne, to which he affirmed the rights of temporal sovereignty were attached, but De Montfort, who took to himself the title of Duke of Narbonne, felt indignant that a priest should lay claim to that temporal authority which he asserted was all his own as prince and sovereign of the whole land. The quarrel became serious. Simon, branding Arnold and

all his adherents as heretics, invaded the prelate and took possession of the city by force of arms; the legate, exercising his spiritual authority, excommunicated the great crusader, and laid all the churches of the city under an interdict. The pope, regarding with jealousy the formidable power of these great rivals, and not feeling equal to interfere in this strife, convened — A.D. 1215 — the fourth **Lateran Council**, in order to bring to an end the crusade against the Albigenses, and finally to dispose of the conquered territories.

This was the most numerous council ever held in Christendom. But we must not venture even on the faintest description of its proceedings. We would only notice what immediately affects our present subject. “Raymond and his son accompanied by the Counts of Foix and Comminges, and many other nobles of Languedoc were admitted to the presence of the pope, seated in full consistory among his cardinals and other prelates. They knelt before him: the young Raymond presented letters from his uncle the king of England. The English monarch expressed his indignation at the usurpation of the inheritance of Raymond by Simon de Montfort. The pope was moved by the beauty and graceful bearing of the young prince, thought of his wrongs, and was observed to shed tears.” This noble youth of the old ancestral house of Toulouse, and connected by blood or marriage with all the sovereigns of Europe, and who had never been accused of the taint of heresy in any way, had been robbed and spoiled by the pope’s agents, and driven into exile. The son was followed by the father, and the other counts, who complained of the injustice of the legate and of De Montfort; of the pillage of their lands and the lawless massacre of their subjects. The enormous cruelties of Fouquet were dwelt upon by all the witnesses, whom they denounced as the destroyer of more than ten thousand of the flock entrusted to his pastoral care.

Something like pity seemed for a moment to touch the heart of Innocent on hearing the depositions of so many noble witnesses, and all professedly Catholics. Many members of the Council were also touched with remorse, and spoke in favour of the dispossessed princes. But this tendency to something like justice on the part of the Council raised the indignation of Simon’s partisans to the most vehement height. They assured his holiness that, if the legate and De Montfort were compelled to surrender the territories and lordships which they had, no one henceforth would ever embark in the cause of the church; no one would ever be found to run any hazard in her defence. Still the pope seemed disposed to listen to the complaints of the princes; and raising his voice said, “I give leave to Raymond of Toulouse and his heirs to recover their lands and their lordships from all who hold them unjustly.” The prelates were furious. The pope stood dismayed before the power he had created, and by which he was now compelled into injustice. De Montfort was confirmed in all his conquests, with the exception of the territory of the Venaisin, which was reserved for the younger Raymond if his conduct should satisfy the legate. Philip Augustus acquiescing in this sentence, granted to Simon de Montfort the investiture of the Countships of Toulouse, of Beziers,

and of Carcassonne, and of the dukedom of Narbonne. Simon was now on the throne which he had reached through oppression, tyranny, and blood; he was proclaimed sovereign of Toulouse, and general of the armies of God, the son and darling of the church. The clergy and people came out to meet him with the blasphemous salutation, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." But the triumphing of the wicked is short; his end and his eternal award were near at hand.

### **THE LIES OF FOUQUET**

The decree of the Lateran Council, which prohibited the further preaching of the crusades, deprived De Montfort of fresh supplies. This changed state of affairs revived the spirit of the younger Raymond, who resolved to raise an army and make an heroic effort to regain the conquered dominions of his father. He was soon at the head of a large force; the hope of deliverance from the cruelties of Simon, and attachment to their hereditary sovereigns, animated the whole population of Languedoc. De Montfort now treated Toulouse as a conquered city, exacting enormous sums, and endeavouring to secure them by the sternest measures. A general rising of the oppressed citizens was evident, but they unwisely accepted the treacherous mediation of their bishop, the perfidious Fouquet. He assured them that not a hair of their heads would be touched if they agreed to the terms of De Montfort. The citizens agreed, and thus he swore to them: "I swear by God, and the holy Virgin, and the body of the Redeemer, by my whole order, the abbot and other dignitaries, that I give you good counsel, better have I never given; if Count de Montfort inflict on you the least wrong, bring your complaints before me, and God and I will see you righted." How cruel! This is popery. These were the sheep of his own pasture. We are not now speaking of the rights or the wrongs of the war, but of the perfidious falsehoods of the avowed shepherd of the sheep.

The people were now in the snare of Satan. They were treated as subjects detected in revolt, and punished by the bishop himself with all his relentless cruelty. The first act of De Montfort was "the demand of *thirty thousand* marks of silver, the demolition of the walls, and every stronghold in the city, and the plunder of the inhabitants to the very last piece of cloth, or measure of meal." Thus they had to spend the winter, but the ensuing spring brought relief.

### **THE DEATH OF DE MONTFORT**

On the appearance of the old Count and his son beneath the broken-down walls of Toulouse with a large army, fear gave way to the enthusiastic joy with which the people welcomed back the Raymonds to the palace and the dominions of their ancestors. Many of the nobles of Languedoc raised troops and threw themselves into the city. Simon and his son, Guy, hurried to the spot, but were ignominiously repulsed. The bishop of Toulouse and the wife



of Simon sought help in France. A new crusade was preached, but De Montfort could not keep an army more than forty days; numbers flocked to the Raymonds. The siege lasted nine months, it was the scene of many a fierce encounter. In the spring of 1218, De Montfort came against Toulouse with a fresh company of *one hundred thousand* crusaders. "You are about to conquer the city," said the lying spirit, "to break into the houses, out of which no single soul, neither man nor woman, shall escape alive; not one shall be spared in church, in sanctuary, in hospital!"

Such were the counsels of Rome, but God had decreed otherwise. When kneeling at high mass, a shout announced that the besieged had made a sally; instantly springing to his feet, Simon placed himself at the head of his veterans and hastened to the place of attack. But little did he think it was for the last time; at that moment he was wounded by an arrow from the city walls; this evidently troubled him in spirit; he retired a few paces, when a fragment of a rock, thrown from a machine struck him on the head and severed it from his body. As the lifeless trunk lay on the ground, his admirers dared to reproach God with his death, and to arraign the divine justice. But there we must leave them: Simon is before God, and has learnt his eternal doom.

The siege was raised, the besieging army was entirely defeated. The bell was tolled to call the citizens to offer thanksgivings in tumults of exultation. Raymond was hailed as their lawful and now undisputed sovereign; and again the standard of the house of St. Gilles waved above the palace and the ramparts of Toulouse.

### **THE KINGS OF FRANCE AND THE ALBIGENSES**

Innocent III was now dead, and the papal throne was occupied by the third **Honorius**, who entered with great ardour into the cause of De Montfort, and was warmly supported by the kings of France. The prospect of peace to the poor Albigenses under the mild government of Raymond was intolerable to the new shepherd of Rome. To gratify the infuriated pope, and under the pretence of fulfilling his vow and ensuring his eternal welfare, Louis, son of Philip Augustus, conducted a crusade as early as the year 1219. All the atrocities of the former time were renewed and surpassed, if possible, under the direction of the clergy. But we spare the reader the description of the satanic mixture of deceit, hypocrisy, perfidy, baseness, and savage cruelty, displayed by the clergy under the sanction of the sovereign.

The elder Raymond died, leaving the defence of his states to his son, then in the vigour of his age and hopes. It is said by Milner, "that he died of sickness, in a state of peace and prosperity, after his victory over Simon — that no man was ever treated with more injustice by the popedom." Philip Augustus also died, leaving his crown to Louis. The younger De Montfort, in the year 1224, despairing of success, finally abandoned Languedoc, and Raymond VII sat on the throne of his ancestors, with no enemy to dread, excepting the pope and

his sovereign — his pastor and his liege lord. But Raymond had a beautiful portion in France, and Louis was impatient to unite it to his crown.

Jezebel again plots; she convenes a council at **Bourges**, in the year 1225, at which Louis is enjoined to purge the land of heretics, and raises money for that purpose. Louis accordingly takes the cross, and attended by his barons and their followers, to the number of two hundred thousand men, advances once again to devastate the budding fields of Languedoc, and to exterminate all heretics according to the decrees of Rome. Poor unhappy Languedoc! When will Rome, the dragon, the devourer of God's saints, be satiated with blood? — with the blood of infants, of little children, of mothers and maidens, of unarmed, inoffensive young men and fathers! A name could be given to the beast that symbolizes the Chaldean, Persian, and Grecian empires, but the fourth beast which symbolizes the Roman, whether pagan or papal, must be left unnamed. "After this I saw in the night visions," says Daniel, "and, behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns." (Dan 7: 7) As a matter of interpretation, Daniel's vision refers more directly to the civil power, but the ecclesiastical aspect of the beast as in Revelation is more blood-thirsty than the civil ever was.

This unnamed monster we have now before us in the king of France urged to extremities by the pope. At the approach of the two hundred thousand crusaders under the banner of their own sovereign, the hearts of the people sank within them. Town after town yielded, for all the defenders had died. "They had so repeatedly endured all the horrors of war in all their most frightful forms, that the barons, knights, and communes of Languedoc, with one accord, hastened to avert, by timely concessions, the continuance of these intolerable calamities." But just at this moment when all seemed lost, the hand of the Lord interposed. A **pestilence** broke out in the invading camp. Louis himself was carried off, and thirty thousand of his soldiers were swept away by the contagion. The impending ruin of the inhabitants, and of the house of Raymond, was postponed for a little.

At the death of Louis VIII his son, who was but a child, succeeded to the throne of France, and the reins of government meanwhile fell into the hands of his mother, **Blanche of Castile**. By her orders the siege of Toulouse was renewed. The advantages of the war were all in favour of Raymond; but the glory of his victories, according to one chronicler, were sullied by the cruelty with which he treated the vanquished who fell into his hands. The siege of Toulouse was protracted and difficult; the crusaders were losing hope; in their perplexity, Fouquet, the evil genius and the lying spirit of Toulouse, suggested the only means of a successful attack. By his advice all the vines, the corn, and the fruit trees were destroyed, all the houses burned for miles round the city, till the country was converted into a desolate wilderness; and the city of

Toulouse stood in the centre of a desert. Of course no supplies of any kind could be procured. This was the work of the bishop of the place, this was his diocese, these were the people over whom he had been appointed as overseer! The reader must judge whether he partakes more of the spirit of Daniel's fourth beast, or of Him who says to every shepherd, "Feed my sheep... Feed My lambs." (John 21)

When this new vial of papal wrath was poured out on their devoted land, and every green thing withered up, the inhabitants of the city were so discouraged, and the spirit of Raymond their leader so completely broken, that at the end of three months peace was obtained on the most humiliating terms. The **treaty of Paris**, which terminated the war for a time, was signed in the month of April, 1229. The terms were dictated by the papal legate, and approved by the king of France. Raymond VII whose comely form and graceful manners, together with the sense of his wrongs, drew tears from Innocent in the great Lateran Council, now bows his neck to a foreign yoke, and bares his shoulders to a spiritual despotism. He was led by the legate to the church in Paris and, like his father in St. Gilles, with naked shoulders and bare feet, he underwent the same public and ignominious flogging by priestly hands. On his knees, in the church of Notre Dame, he solemnly abdicated all his feudal sovereignty to the king of France, and submitted to the penance of the church. The reader may remember that the father in his penance renounced seven castles, now the son renounces seven provinces. Thus it was ordered by Him who rules over all, and ordered for the future humbling of Rome, that the peace of Languedoc turned out so much to the advantage of Rome, as of the rapidly increasing monarchy of France. Philip Augustus had wrested from the feeble hands of John the continental possessions of the English crown, and now the dominions of the Count of Toulouse, and of the king of Arragon, north of the Pyrenees, were added to the French crown. "The possession of Normandy," says James White, "had already made France a maritime power; and now, by the acquisition of the Narbonnais and Maguelonne from Raymond VII, she not only extended her limits to the Mediterranean, but, by the extinction of two such vassals as the Count of Toulouse and the Duke of Normandy, incalculably strengthened the royal crown."<sup>179</sup>

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE CALAMITIES OF LANGUEDOC**

To every thoughtful mind, to every man of faith, especially to those who study history from a scriptural point of view, the wars in Languedoc are most suggestive. They are the first of the kind on record. It was reserved for Innocent III to inaugurate this new character of warfare. There had been many instances of individuals being sacrificed to the prejudice of the

---

<sup>179</sup> For fuller details both as to the papal and the Albigensian side of this bloody warfare, see du Pin, *thirteenth century*; Sir J. Stephen's *Lectures*, vol. 1, pp. 214-242; Milman, vol. 4, pp. 167-238; J. White, pp. 282-289; J.C. Robertson, vol. 3, pp. 340-433; Milner, vol. 3, pp. 92-155; Gardner's *Faiths of the World*, "Albigenses."

priesthood, such as Arnold of Brescia: but this was the first experiment on a great scale, which the church made to retain her supremacy by force of arms. It was not, observe, *the army of the church* going forth in holy zeal against the pagan, the Mahometan, the denier of Christ, but **the church itself in arms** against the true followers of Christ against those who acknowledged His deity, and the authority of the word of God.

We might fill pages with quotations from their worst enemies as to the soundness of their faith, the purity of their morals, and the simplicity of their manners. We will only give two or three from the highest authorities in the church of Rome. "They denied," says Baronius, "the utility of infant baptism; that the bread and wine became the body and blood of the Lord by the consecration of a priest; that unfaithful ministers had any right to the exercise of ecclesiastical power, or to tithes or firstfruits; that auricular confession was necessary. All these things the wretched men asserted that they learned from the Gospels and Epistles, and that they would receive nothing, except what they found expressly contained therein; thus rejecting the interpretation of the doctors, though they themselves were perfectly illiterate." Reinerius, the inquisitor, and persecutor of the Albigenses, says, "they were the most formidable enemies of the church of Rome, because they have a great appearance of godliness, because they live righteously before men, believe rightly of God in all things, and hold all the articles of the creed; yet they hate and revile the church of Rome and the clergy; and in their accusations they are easily believed by the people." St. Bernard, who knew them intimately, lived amongst them, yet deemed it his duty to oppose them as being enemies to the pope, candidly admits, "If you ask them of their faith, nothing can be more christianlike; if you observe their conversation, nothing can be more blameless, and what they speak they make good by their actions. You may see a man, for the testimony of his faith, frequent the church, honour the elders, offer his gifts, make his confession, receive the sacrament. What more like a Christian? As to life and manners, he circumvents no man, overreaches no man, does violence to no man. He fasts much and eats not the bread of idleness; but works with his hands for his support."<sup>180</sup>

Such then, was the spiritual, moral, and social character of the Albigenses, as evidenced by their enemies. They were true witnesses for Christ, evidently formed by the grace of God to show forth His praise in the world. And had we as many of their writings as we have of the Reformers of the sixteenth century, we might find that they were more simple on certain points of doctrine than these were. But according to the mind of the Lord, other three hundred years were necessary to ripen Europe for the Reformation; and in the meantime the arts of printing and paper-making were discovered.

What then, it may be asked, was the crime of the Albigenses? The head and front of their offence was simply this they denied the supremacy of the pope,

---

<sup>180</sup> See Milner and Gardner, as quoted above.

the authority of the priesthood, and the seven sacraments as taught by the church of Rome; and, in her eyes, greater criminals there could not be on the face of the whole earth: therefore utter extermination was the one unchangeable decree. Those who escaped the sword of the crusader must be caught in the **toils of the inquisitor**.

“In hundreds of villages,” says the historian, “every inhabitant had been massacred. Since the sack of Rome by the Vandals, the European world had never mourned over a national disaster so wide in its extent, or so fearful in its character.” What a record! what a witness! and if such be the records of earth, what must they be in heaven! Oh, Rome! Rome! drunken with the blood of God’s saints, and covered with the execrations of millions, what must thy future be? How wilt thou bear the reproaches of those whom thou hast deceived with thy lies and caused to perish with thy sword? Do any think that we speak too strongly? let them listen to the address of one of the bishops to the crusaders before the battle of Muret: “Whosoever has confessed his sins to a priest, or has the intention of doing so after the battle, will in dying, obtain eternal life, and escape the passage through purgatory. I will be your surety in the day of judgment. Depart in the name of Christ.” Was not this a soul-deceiving lie? But Jezebel will hear of it again. “For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double... Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her... And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” (Rev. 18: 5-24)

But Rome overreached herself. Though Languedoc was desolate, the Albigenses who escaped the sword, fled into other countries. By the grace and the good providence of God, they preached the gospel in almost every part of Christendom, and testified against the cruelties, the superstitions and the falsehoods of the church of Rome. From this time it begins to lose its hold on the confidence and reverence of mankind. Thus the Lord prepared the way for Wycliffe and Huss, Melancthon and Luther.



# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 26

### THE INQUISITION ESTABLISHED IN LANGUEDOC

By the treaty of Paris, A.D. 1229, the open war against the Languedocians was at an end, but the **Inquisition** continued its secret, and hardly less destructive crusade. It was not enough that the treachery of Arnold and the sword of Montfort had exterminated these heretics; steps must be taken to prevent their reappearance in all time coming. Dominic and his associates, although we have not seen them in the siege or in the battle, have been doing their dreadful work in secret. But now the Inquisition is to be canonized. At a Council held in Toulouse in November, 1229, it was ordered that a permanent Inquisition should be established against the heretics. One of the canons indirectly reveals the root of Satan's rage, and reflects great honour on the name of the Albigenses, but throws a deep shade of guilt on the name of their persecutors. It was discovered by the inquisitorial missionaries, that the Bible was the principal source of their opinions; therefore, to prevent its perusal by the people, the Council passed the following decree — "We prohibit the books of the Old and New Testament to the laity; unless, perhaps, they may desire to have the Psalter, or Breviary, or the Hours of the blessed Virgin Mary; but we expressly forbid their having the other parts of the Bible translated into the vulgar tongue." The scriptures had long been withheld from the laity, but this is the first direct prohibition that we meet with.

The papal interpretation of this canon, or justification of its severity, will give the reader a fair specimen of how the clergy quoted and applied scripture in those days. "If so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned or thrust through with' a dart." The people were as beasts because of their ignorance, the word of God was as a mountain, and, if they dared to touch it, they were to be instantly killed. Innocent had a general acquaintance with scripture and used it largely in his letters and edicts, after this style; but the divine words, though misapplied, had an immense power over the ignorant mind. One grand object of the Inquisition was to keep the people in utter darkness as to the divine mind on spiritual subjects, so that the power of the clergy might be unquestioned and absolute; or, rather, the power of Satan, the prince of darkness. Not only was all public teaching suppressed by the Council of Toulouse, but freedom of thought in secret was condemned under the severest penalties. It would be difficult to conceive of wickedness more daring: to withhold the word of life, to suffer the people to perish, and to make the possession of it a capital crime, is surely the height of diabolical enmity to Christ and precious souls. And these were the professed shepherds of the sheep, who swore they would lead them by the green pastures and the still waters. But we must not stay to moralize, although it is difficult to pass

on without expressing the indignation which rises in the heart against such spiritual iniquity. But knowing their just sentence is with the living God, we may withhold ours.

### **THE STATUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF TOULOUSE**

The following brief notice of the statues against heresy, will give the reader some idea of the unrelenting cruelties of the Catholics, and the oppressed state of the feeble **remnant in Languedoc**. “The archbishops, bishops, and abbots, were to appoint in every parish one priest, and three or four lay inquisitors, to search all houses and buildings, in order to detect heretics, and to denounce them to the archbishop or bishop, the lord of his bailiff, so as to ensure their apprehension. The lords were to make the same inquisition in every part of their states. Whoever was convicted of harbouring a heretic forfeited the land to his lord, and was reduced to personal slavery. Every house in which a heretic was found was to be razed to the ground, the farm confiscated, the bailiff who should not be active in detecting heretics was to lose his office, and be incapacitated from holding it in future. Heretics who recanted were to be removed from their homes and settled in Catholic cities, to wear two crosses of a different colour from their dress, one on the right side, one on the left. Those who recanted from fear of death were to be imprisoned for life. All persons, males of the age of fourteen, females of twelve, were to take an oath of abjuration of heresy, and of their catholic faith, if absent, and not appearing within fifteen days, they were held suspected of heresy.”

The above extracts from a Catholic code of persecution are sufficient to show the reader what the spirit of popery was in those days, and what it would be today if it had the same power. And these laws were considered by the legate not strict enough; and so he summoned a Council at Melun, where new statutes were enacted more rigorous and efficient. But as the heretics could only be judged by a bishop or an ecclesiastic, and the work becoming so laborious from the number of apprehensions, Pope Gregory IX in the year 1233, committed this formidable jurisdiction into the hands of the Dominicans, and the Inquisition was then erected into a distinct institution. Having said so much about the Inquisition as to its origin, it may be interesting to glance for a moment at the gradual expansion of the inquisitorial idea in the church from its commencement.

### **THE HISTORY OF THE INQUISITION**

Previous to the reign of Constantine, or to the union of Church and State, heresy and spiritual offences were punished by excommunications only; but shortly after his death capital punishments were added. **Theodosius** is generally allowed to have been the first of the Roman Emperors who pronounced heresy to be a capital crime. But the inquisitors at that time did not belong to the clerical order, they were laymen appointed by Roman

prefects. Priscillian, the Spanish heretic, was put to death about 385. Justinian in 529 enacted penal laws against heretics, and as centuries rolled onward, the proceedings against them were marked by increasing severity. It was not, however, as we have just seen, until the thirteenth century that the court of Inquisition was established by canon-law. Then it became a criminal tribunal, charged with the detection, prosecution, and punishment of heresy, apostasy, and other crimes against the established faith. Whether Dominic or Innocent is to have the credit of the invention, it evidently had its origin in the Albigensian war. The papal legate discovered that the open slaughter of heretics would never accomplish their utter extermination. This difficulty led to the creation of a new fraternity, called the order of the Holy Faith the members of which were bound by solemn oaths to employ their utmost powers for the repression of free inquiry in matters of religion and for maintaining the unity of the faith, for the destruction of all heretics and for the rooting out of all heresy from the homes, the hearts and the souls of men. But it was reserved for Gregory IX, in the Council of Toulouse to fix the **establishment of the Inquisition** in the form of a tribunal, and at the same time to give it positive laws.

This terrible tribunal was gradually introduced into the Italian states, into France, Spain, and other countries; but into the British islands it never was allowed to force its way. In France and Italy it required strenuous and persevering efforts to organize and establish it; Germany successfully resisted a *permanent* Inquisition; in Spain, however, though it met with some opposition at first, it speedily gained a footing, and in time attained a magnitude which, from a variety of causes, it never reached in any other country.

Gradually the authority of the inquisitors was extended, and they were called upon to pronounce judgment, not only upon the words and actions, but even upon the thoughts and intentions of the accused. During the fourteenth century, its progress was steady, whilst its rigour and energy were continually on the increase. But it was not till the close of the fifteenth century; when Isabella, wife of Ferdinand of Arragon, had ascended the throne of Castile, and when the different kingdoms of Spain — Castile, Navarre, Arragon, and Portugal — were united under these sovereigns, that the Inquisition became general in the country, and assumed that form which it retained until the period of its dissolution in 1808.<sup>181</sup>

### **THE INTERNAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE INQUISITION**

Under this head, as all know now, the darkest deeds, the most irresponsible tyranny and inhuman cruelties that ever blackened the annals of mankind, might be written; but lengthy details, however painfully interesting, would be

---

<sup>181</sup> See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "Inquisition," vol. 12, p. 283. Llorente's *History of the Inquisition*. Gardner's *Faiths of the World*. Milman, vol. 5, p. 16.

out of place in our “Short Papers;” so we will content ourselves with a few brief statements and extracts. No tribunal, we may safely affirm, so regardless of justice, humanity, and every sacred relationship in life, ever existed in the dominions of heathenism or Mahometanism.

When a man was **slightly suspected** of heresy, spies, called the *Familiars* of the Inquisition, were employed narrowly to watch him, with the view of discovering the least possible excuse for handing him over to the tribunal of the Holy Office. The man may have been a good Catholic, for Llorente assures us that nine-tenths of the prisoners were true to the Catholic faith, but, perhaps, he was suspected of holding liberal opinions, or he may have shown in conversation that he knew more of theology than the illiterate monks, or differed with them on some point of doctrine. Any of these things would be enough to create suspicion; for nothing was more to be dreaded than new light or truth; he was now marked and denounced by the familiars.

At midnight a knock is heard, the suspected man is ordered to accompany the messengers of the Holy Office. His wife and family know what that means; their distress is great; they must now take a last farewell of the beloved husband and the beloved father. Not a word of entreaty or of remonstrance dare be breathed. Thus suddenly and unexpectedly this frightful institution pounced upon its victims. Wives gave up their husbands, husbands their wives, parents their children, and masters their servants, without a question or a murmur. Terror constituted the great element of its power. No man, from the monarch to the slave, knew when the knock might come to his door. An impenetrable secrecy characterized all the proceedings of this institution. This feeling of insecurity and the workings of the imagination lent their aid to exaggerate the fearful reality. Neither rank, nor age, nor sex, afforded any defence against its watchful vigilance and its pitiless severity.

The prisoner, the helpless victim, is now within the gates of the Inquisition; and few who ever entered there left it absolved and acquitted; not more, it is said, than one in a thousand. Certain forms were gone through as to the question of the alleged guilt of the accused, but all were a gross mockery of justice. “The court sat in profound secrecy, no advocate might appear before the tribunal, no witness was confronted with the accused; who were the informers, what the charges, except the vague charge of heresy, no one knew. The suspected heretic was first summoned to declare on oath that he would speak the truth, the whole truth, of all persons living or dead, with himself, or like himself, on suspicion of heresy, or Waldensianism. If he refused, he was cast into a dungeon, the most dismal, the most foul, the most noisome, in those dreary ages. No falsehood was too false, no craft too crafty, no trick too base, for this deliberate, systematic moral torture which was to wring further confession against himself, denunciation against others. It was the deliberate object to break the spirit; the prisoner’s food was to be slowly, gradually, diminished till body and soul were prostrate. He was then to be left in darkness, solitude, and silence.” The next part of the procedure of the Holy

Office in these secret prisons was the application of bodily torture. The helpless victim was charged with the culpable concealment and denial of the truth. In vain did he affirm that he had answered every question fully and honestly to the utmost extent of his knowledge; he was urged to confess if ever he had entertained an evil thought in his heart against the church, or the Holy Office, or anything else they chose to name. No matter what answer he gave, he was denounced as an obstinate heretic. After some hypocritical expressions as to their love for his soul, and their sincere desire to deliver him from error, that he might obtain salvation, a vast apparatus of torturing instruments were shown to him, the rack must now be applied to make him confess his sin.

### THE APPLICATION OF TORTURE

Were it not that truth and impartial history demand that the real nature of the papacy should be told, we would much rather not describe, even in the briefest way, those scenes of torture; but few of our young readers in these peaceful times have any idea of the cruel character of popery, and of its thirst for the blood of God's saints. And that nature, let it be remembered, is unchanged. **As late as 1820**, which may be said to be our own day, when the Inquisition was thrown open in Madrid by the orders of the Cortes, twenty-one prisoners were found in it: not one of them knew the name of the city in which he was; some had been confined for three years, some a longer period, and not one knew perfectly the nature of the crime of which he was accused. One of these persons was to have suffered death the following day by the *Pendulum*. This method of torture is thus described. "The condemned is fastened in a groove, upon a table, on his back suspended above him is a pendulum, the edge of which is sharp, and it is so constructed as to become longer with every movement. The victim sees this implement of destruction swinging to and fro above him, and every moment the keen edge approaches nearer and nearer; at length it cuts the skin of his face, and gradually cuts through his head, until life is extinct." This was a punishment of the Secret Tribunal in 1820!

The penances and punishments to which the accused were subjected, in order to obtain such a confession as the inquisitors desired, were many and various; the rack was usually the first. The naked arms to which a small hard cord was fastened, were turned behind the back, heavy weights were tied to the feet; and then the sufferer was drawn up by the action of a pulley to the height of the place he was in. Having been kept suspended for some time, he was suddenly let down with a jerk to within a little distance of the floor, this done several times, the joints of the arms were dislocated whilst the cord, by which he was suspended, cut through the skin and flesh, and penetrated to the bone, and by means of the weights appended to the feet, the whole frame was violently strained. This species of torture was continued for an hour and sometimes longer, according to the pleasure of the inquisitors present, and to what the strength of the sufferer seemed capable of enduring. The torture by



fire was equally painful. The prisoner being extended on the floor, the soles of his feet were rubbed with lard, and placed near the fire, until, writhing in agony, he was ready to confess what his tormentors required. A second time the judges doomed their victims to the same torture, to make them own the motives and intentions of their hearts for their confessed conduct or sayings; and a third time, that they might reveal their accomplices or abettors.

When cruelties failed to wring a confession, artifices and snares were resorted to. Persons were sent into the dungeons, pretending to be prisoners like themselves, who ventured to speak against the Inquisition, but only with the view of ensnaring others that they might witness against them. When the accused was held to be convicted, either by witnesses or by his own forced confession, he was sentenced according to the heinousness of his offence. It might be to death, to perpetual imprisonment, to the galleys, or to flogging. Those sentenced to death by fire were allowed to accumulate, that the sacrifice of a great number at once might produce a more striking and terrible effect.

### **THE AUTO-DA-FE**

The cruel death by which the Inquisition closed the career of its victims was styled in Spain and Portugal as AUTO-DA-FE, or “**Act of Faith,**” being regarded as a religious ceremony of peculiar solemnity; and to invest the act with greater sanctity, the cruel deed was always done on the Lord’s day. The innocent victims of this papal barbarity were led forth in procession to the place of execution. They were dressed in the most fantastic manner. On the caps and tunics of some were painted the flames of hell, and dragons and demons fanning them to keep them brisk for the heretics; and the Jesuits thundering in their ears that the fires before them were nothing to the fires of hell which they would have to endure for ever. If any brave heart attempted to say a word for the Lord, or in defence of the truth for which he was about to suffer, his mouth was instantly gagged. The condemned were then chained to stakes. Any of the persons confessing that he was a true Catholic and wished to die in the Catholic faith, had the privilege of being strangled before he was burned; but those who refused to claim the privilege, were burnt alive, and reduced to ashes.

A quantity of furze, sometimes green, and pieces of wood were laid around the bottom of the stakes and set on fire. Their sufferings were indescribable. The lowest extremities of the body were sometimes actually roasted before the flames reached the vital parts. And this appalling spectacle was beheld by crowds of people of both sexes, and of all ages, with transports of joy, so demoralized were the people by Romanism. For upwards of four centuries the Auto-da-Fe was a national holiday in Spain, which its kings and queens, princes and princesses, witnessed in the pomp of royalty.

According to the calculations of Llorente, compiled from the records of the Inquisition, it appears that from the year 1481 to 1808 this tribunal

condemned, in Spain alone upwards of three hundred and forty one thousand persons And if to this number be added all who suffered in other countries, then under the dominion of Spain, what would the total number be? **Torquemada**, on being made Inquisitor-general of Arragon in 1483, burned alive, to signalize his promotion to the Holy Office, no less than two thousand of the prisoners of the Inquisition. Sovereigns, princes, royal ladies, learned men magistrates, prelates, ministers of state were boldly and fearlessly accused and tried by the Holy Office. But the Lord knows them all — He knows the sufferers, He knows the persecutors, He knows how to reward the one and how to judge the other. The dark deeds of those secret dungeons, the pitiful wail of the helpless sufferers, the cruel mockings of the unaccountable Dominicans, must all be revealed before that throne of inflexible justice, of overwhelming purity. The pope and his college of cardinals, the abbot and his fraternity of monks, the inquisitor-general and his gaolers, tormentors, and executioners, must all appear before “the great white throne” — the judgment-seat of Christ. There we leave these wicked men, thankful that we have not to judge them, and perfectly content with the Lord’s decisions. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

He who rebuked His disciples for entertaining the thought of calling down fire on the Samaritans will judge them by His own standard. He then placed on record what should have been a guide to His people in all ages. He rebuked the disciples, and said, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” (Luke 9:55, 56)

It may be necessary just to state here, that we do not consider all who suffered by the Inquisition to be martyrs, or even Christians. The crimes of which the inquisitors took cognisance were heresy in all its different forms; such as Judaism, Mahometanism, sorcery, polygamy, apostasy besides, we have not the privilege of knowing the final testimony of the sufferers. It was quite different with the martyrs under the heathen emperors. At the same time, it is impossible not to be strongly moved with horror as well as compassion, in reading the histories of that dark and diabolical period.

The reader has now before him the commencement and the general character of the Inquisition; individual cases of its cruelty will come before us in the progress of our history. Next in order to be noticed, however briefly, are the new orders of monks which sprang out of the same memorable Albigensian war.

## **ANCIENT AND MODERN MONKS**

The origin and early history of monachism are carefully traced in the first volume of our “Short Papers;”<sup>182</sup> but, as it completely changes its character in the thirteenth century, it may be well rapidly to sketch its progress from these

---

<sup>182</sup> See Chapter 12: “The Origin and Growth of Monasticism”. See also Chapter 21: “St. Bernard and Monasticism”.

early times, and thus more clearly see the contrast. This plan will also give us an opportunity of glancing at the internal condition of the church of Rome before the light of the Reformation penetrated and revealed its fearful darkness.

Towards the end of the third century, but especially during the fourth, the deserts of Syria and Egypt had been the abode of monks and hermits. The most private and unfrequented places in the wide wilderness were selected by the original recluses. The accounts of their sanctity, miracles, and devotion, became the literature of the church. The infection spread. Men who were anxious to excel in holiness, or to obtain the reputation of a peculiar piety, embraced the monastic order. The practice prevailed so rapidly, that before the beginning of the sixth century it was almost coextensive with Christendom. There were three classes of those ancient monks. 1. *Solitaires* — those who lived alone in places remote from all towns and habitations of men hermits. 2. *Coenobites* — those who lived in common with others in the same house for religious purposes, and under the same superiors. 3. *Sarabaites* — They are described as strolling, irregular monks, who had no fixed rule or residence. They may be considered as seceders from the Coenobites, who lived within their own gates. The wall which confined them, in some instances, enclosed also their wells and gardens, and all that was necessary for their sustenance, so as to leave no pretext even for occasional intercourse with a world which they had deserted for ever.

Those whom we call monks now-a-days are Coenobites, who live together in a convent or monastery, make vows of living according to a certain rule established by the founder, and wear a habit which distinguishes their order.

The revolutions of the West, in the fifth century, proved favourable to monasticism. The barbarians were awed by the numbers, peculiarities, and professed sanctity of the monks. Their abodes, therefore, were undisturbed, and became a quiet retreat from the troubles of the time. Superstition honoured them; wealth began to flow in, but with it degeneracy and corruption. Already there was room for a reformer, and the person who was to appear in that character was the famous St. Benedict.

## **ST. BENEDICT**

As nearly all the monastic institutions throughout Europe, for more than six hundred years, were regulated by the Rule of St. Benedict, we need only to give some account of this celebrated order to know the constitution and character of them all. And, as their name is *legion*, we will thus save a great deal of repetition.

This remarkable man was the son of a Roman senator born at Nursia, in Italy, A.D. 480. At the age of twelve he was sent to study at Rome. He had probably heard and read about the lives of the holy anchorites and hermits of the East.

With these examples before his mind, and the irregularities of his fellow-students around him, he longed for solitude. When about fifteen, unable to endure any longer the corrupt state of Roman society, he separated himself even from his faithful nurse, Cyrilla, who had been sent with him to Rome by his parents, and left her to lament over his mental derangement. The ferocious Huns and Vandals had made even the heart of Italy a wilderness, so that the youthful hermit found a secluded spot not far from Rome. For years he lived in a lonely cave; the only person acquainted with the secret of his retreat was a monk, named Romanus, who supplied him with bread, by saving a portion of his own daily allowance. But as a steep rock lay between the cloister of Romanus and the grotto of Benedict, the bread was let down by a string to the mouth of the cave. At length he was discovered by some shepherds, who were delighted to hear his instructions and witness his miracles. As the fame of his piety increased, he was persuaded to become abbot of a monastery in the neighbourhood; but the strictness of his discipline displeased its inmates, and they agreed to rid themselves of the severe recluse by mixing poison in his wine. But on his making the sign of the cross, which he usually did over his meat and his drink, the cup flew into pieces; whereupon he mildly rebuked the monks, and returned to his mountain cave.

**Benedict** now became an object of greater interest than ever. His fame spread, great multitudes flocked to him, men of wealth and influence joined him, and large sums of money were placed at his disposal. He was now in a position to build twelve monasteries, each of them consisting of twelve monks, under a superior. Having succeeded in so far accomplishing the object of his residence in the district, and being disquieted by the jealous interference of Florentius, a neighbouring priest, he quitted Subiaco with a few followers in the year 528. After some wanderings, he arrived at Monte Cassino, where Apollo was still worshipped by the rustics. With great skill and energy he uprooted the remains of heathen idolatry among the peasants. He cut down the grove, destroyed the idol of Apollo, and on the site of the altar an oratory was erected, which he dedicated to St. John the Evangelist and St. Martin. This was the germ of the great and renowned monastery which became the parent root of the innumerable branches which in a short time covered the face of Europe. Here Benedict drew up his famous Rule, about the year 529. It consists of seventy-three chapters, we are told, which contain a code of laws regulating the duties of monks to each other, and between the abbot and his monks. He provides for the administration of an institution, composed of every variety of character, engaged in every variety of occupation, but all to be perfectly subject to one absolute ruler. The comprehensiveness of his system is astonishing, as being the result of one mind, and without example or precedent. It is regarded by the learned as the most celebrated monument of ecclesiastical antiquity, and was in its operations the very strength and watchword of the satellites of Rome.

## THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

The wisdom of this great monk as a legislator, and the superiority of his discipline to all that had previously existed, are mainly found in the place which he gives to **manual labour**. This was the distinctive feature of the new order — hard, healthy, bodily labour. Monasticism had been hitherto almost entirely a life of mere seclusion and contemplation, supported by the charity of the public, or the overawed peasantry in the neighbourhood of the monastery. Benedict had seen the evil effects of this idle, dreamy, state of existence, and made ample provision for the occupation of the monks. Idleness he branded as the enemy of both soul and body. They were not only to labour in the way of prayer, worship, reading, and the education of youth; but they were to labour with their hands, as with the axe in the forest, the spade in the fields, and the trowel on the walls. The advantages of this new system were great. The Benedictine abbeys became industrious agricultural settlements. Husbandry, and the arts of civilized life, were introduced into the most barbarous regions, and the wilderness, under the hands of the monks, blossomed with fertility.

Although the order of St. Benedict was in every way contrary both to the letter and spirit of the word of God, it had more of reason and common sense than the idle and languishing systems of the East. “He was one of those who held,” says Travers Hill, “that to live in this world a man must do something — that life which consumes, but produces not, is a morbid life, in fact an impossible life — a life that must decay — and therefore, imbued with the importance of this fact, he made labour, continuous and daily labour, the great foundation of his rule.” His penetration is also seen in his consideration for the unfriendly climate of the West, and for European constitutions. His laws were milder and more practicable than had been attempted in Eastern countries; the diet rather more generous, and he did not propose any extreme mortification, but permitted his followers to live according to the common habits of their respective countries. In these wise and reasonable considerations lay the whole secret of the wondrous success of the Benedictine order.

But with our modern notions of good living, and of comparatively few religious services in the course of a week, the reader may be disposed to question what we have said of the mildness of the **monastic rules**, and of the generous nature of the diet. We have spoken of these as compared with the East, where monasticism originated.

At two o'clock in the morning the monks were aroused for vigils, on which occasion twelve psalms were chanted, and certain lessons from the scriptures read or recited. They assembled again at day-break for matins; this service was almost the same as the first, so that in their vigils and matins twenty-four psalms were to be chanted each day, that the psalter might be completed each week. The time for their in-door devotions and their out-door labours was



arranged, in summer and winter, as the superior saw fit. But they were obliged to attend at least seven distinct religious services every twenty-four hours, besides seven hours each day for labour. They breakfasted about noon, and dined in the evening. Their usual food consisted of vegetables, grain, and fruit; one pound of bread per day for each monk, and a small quantity of wine. On the public table no meat was allowed; only to the sick was animal food given. Sometimes they had eggs or fish with an evening meal. But every day in Lent they fasted till six in the evening, and were allowed less time for sleep.

The dress of the monks was to be coarse and plain, but variable, according to circumstances. They were allowed the luxury of boots. Their outer garment was to be a loose black gown, with large wide sleeves, and a cowl on their heads, ending in a point behind. Every monk had two coats, two cowls, a table-book, a knife, a needle, and a handkerchief. The furniture of their cells was a mat, a blanket, a rug, and a pillow. Each had a separate bed, and they slept with their clothes on. A dean was to preside over each dormitory, and a light was to be kept burning in each. No talking was allowed after they retired. For small faults they were shut out from the meals of the brotherhood, for greater they were excluded from the chapel; incorrigible offenders were excluded from the monastery.

Thus the long and tedious day of the self-doomed monk was spent; from his midnight vigils till his evening vespers, all his observances were merely mechanical. On entering the monastery, he renounced wholly every species of personal liberty. His vow of implicit obedience to his superiors in everything was irrevocable. No one could receive a present of any kind, not even from a parent, nor have any correspondence with persons outside the monastery, except by its passing under the inspection of the abbot. A porter always sat at the gate, which was kept locked day and night, and no stranger was admitted without leave from the abbot, and no monk could go out unless he had permission from his superior.

The garden, the mill, the well, the bakehouse, were all within the walls, so that there might be no necessity for leaving the monastery. The trade or the occupation of every monk was to be determined by the abbot. A monk who once was rich and of high birth was now penniless, and might be appointed cook or waiter, tailor, carpenter, or ditcher, according to the pleasure of the absolute superior; the quality and quantity of his food were prescribed and limited as if he had been the merest child. He was not allowed to speak but at certain times. All conversation was strictly prohibited during meals; some one read aloud the whole time.

Thus was the man — **the social man** — isolated from society. Woman, whom God gave to man, was to be considered, not only a stranger to his thoughts, but the natural enemy of his lonely perfection. By the subtlety of Satan, self was the supreme object of all monks — of every system of

monkery. How forcibly the words of the apostle come into the mind when musing on the liberty of Christ and the slavery of Satan: “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” Mark these truly christian words, “what things were gain to *me* — *gain to me!*” If only *gain to me*, what is the good of them? I want Christ. I have seen Christ in the glory. I want to be like Him. Everything that religious flesh could boast of, which was gain to him, he flung behind his back as the merest dross. “Yea, doubtless,” he says, “and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” What blindness, what perversity, for any one to prefer the order of St. Benedict to Philipians 3 — to the love and liberty of Christ! But such was the deceiving power of Satan, that man thought the sure, if not the only, way to heaven was to become a monk.

### THE BENEDICTINES

Before the death of Benedict, which took place in 543, his order had been established in France, Spain, and Sicily. It spread rapidly far and wide. Wherever the monks travelled, they converted the wilderness into a cultivated country; they cleared forests, drained morasses, reared stately abbeys with their own hands, civilized rude populations, pursued the breeding of cattle and the labours of agriculture in every way. They also cultivated learning, and had schools for the young. But though the Benedictines soon became a great community, and spread through various countries, they were all subject to one rule. The time when this order came into England is well known. **St. Augustine** and his monks were Benedictines, and so was Gregory who sent them. But although they have the credit of reducing wastes into fertility by tillage, they have also the credit of choosing, when they had the opportunity, the fairest spots in the land for their settlements. “In every rich valley,” says Milman, speaking of England, “by the side of every clear and deep stream, arose a Benedictine abbey. The labours of the monks in planting, in cultivation, in laying out the sunny garden, or hanging the hills with trees, may have added much to the picturesque grace of these scenes; but in general, if a district in England be surveyed, the most convenient, most fertile, most peaceful, spot will be found to have been the site of a Benedictine abbey.”<sup>183</sup>

The first intention of St. Benedict was not to found a monastic order, but simply to prescribe rules for the Italian monks, in accordance with the practice of the anchorites and recluses of the early church. But the monks of Monte Cassino soon became famous for their superior intelligence, peaceful lives, correct habits, and earnest zeal. In a country and at a time when strife, rapine, ignorance, and dissolute manners were universal, the calm and holy monastery presented an inviting haven of shelter, where, during life’s brief period, man might attend to his religious duties, and end his days in peace with heaven and with mankind. The young ardent spirit entering the world

---

<sup>183</sup> *Latin Christianity*, vol. 1, p. 426. Hill’s *English Monasticism* p. 71. Gardner’s *Faiths of the World*, vol. 1, p. 318. Neander, vol. 3, p. 351.

had little choice of life; practically it was between a life of war, violence, and wickedness — a life of ferocious joys and sorrows, or of seclusion, humility, obedience, and self-denying labour. The more thoughtful and timid natures welcomed the new haven of rest. Men of all ranks left their luxury or their poverty, and joined the new community; and thus it went on increasing, till its wealth and power were incredible. The following statistics will give the reader a better idea of the opulence of these ancient Benedictine abbeys than mere descriptions.

“The property belonging to the parent monastery of Monte Cassino at length included four bishoprics, two dukedoms, thirty-six cities, two hundred castles, three hundred territories, thirty-three islands, and one thousand six hundred and sixty-two churches. The abbot assumed the following titles: — Patriarch of the Holy Faith; Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Cassino; Head and Prince of all Abbots and Religious Houses; Vice-chancellor of both the Sicilies, of Jerusalem, and Hungary; Count and Governor of Campania and Terra di Savono, and of the Maritime Provinces; Vice-Emperor; and Prince of Peace.”<sup>184</sup>

### THE MISSIONARY ZEAL OF BENEDICTINES

The Benedictines, in course of time, as their numbers increased, sent out missionaries to preach the gospel amongst the nations then plunged in the depths of Paganism. It has been estimated that they were the means of converting upwards of thirty countries and provinces to the Christian faith, or, as we would say, to the church of Rome. Still, the Lord in His mercy could, and no doubt did, use the cross of Christ as then preached for salvation. A very little bit of truth about the cross or the blood of Christ will convert the soul when the Lord uses it. A most remarkable change took place in the history of the church, or of Christianity, through the **preaching of the Benedictines**, and of St. Benedict's order, which we will merely name, and leave for the reflection of the thoughtful.

During the first three centuries of the Christian era, the emperors, and all earth's great ones, persecuted the faithful followers of Christ; but during the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries many emperors and kings resigned their crowns, and became monks of the Benedictine order; and also empresses and queens became nuns of the same order.<sup>185</sup>

From the seclusion of the Benedictine cells forty-eight popes were raised to fill the chair of St. Peter; two hundred cardinals, seven thousand archbishops, fifteen thousand bishops, fifteen thousand abbots, four thousand saints, and

---

<sup>184</sup> Marsden's *Dictionary of Christian Churches and Sects*, p. 635.

<sup>185</sup> For a list of the names and countries of these converts, with many particulars, see *English Monasticism*, by O'Dell Travers Hill, p. 101. See also *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 4, p. 562. The numbers do not quite agree in both, but, as *English Monasticism* was published as late as 1867, we accept the figures given there.

upwards of thirty-seven thousand religious establishments, including monasteries, nunneries, priories, hospitals, etc. The order has also produced a vast number of eminent writers, and other learned men. Rabanus established the first school in Germany, Alcuin founded the University of Paris, Guido invented the scale of music, Sylvester the organ, and Dionysius Exiguus perfected the ecclesiastical computation.

“The abbots were often little inferior to sovereign princes: their splendour was greatest in Germany, where the abbot of Angia, surnamed the Rich, had a yearly revenue of sixty thousand golden crowns, and into his monastery none were received but the sons of princes, earls, and barons. The abbots of Weissemburg, of Fulda, and St. Gall, were princes of the empire. The abbot of St. Gall once entered Strasburg with a retinue of a thousand horse.”<sup>186</sup> For six hundred years all rules and societies gave way before the universal prevalence of the Benedictine order. Many other sects arose during that period, and, though differing from each other in some points of discipline or dress, all acknowledged the Rule of Benedict. The **Carthusians**, **Cistercians**, and others innumerable, were only branches growing out of the original stock.

These boasted results of the rule of the solitary hermit of Monte Cassino extend over a period of at least seven hundred years, during which time the Benedictines, like all other human institutions, experienced many reverses and many revivals, which we need not attempt to trace. We would only further say under this head, that, in accordance with the often-told story, no sooner did the monks of St. Benedict become rich and luxurious, than they began to depart from the principles of their founder, and gave themselves up to indolence and every vice. They became involved in civil affairs and the intrigues of courts, seeking only to advance the authority and power of the Roman pontiffs.

### **THE NEW ORDERS — ST. DOMINIC AND ST. FRANCIS**

It has often been remarked that, where the Spirit of God is working by means of the gospel, and where there are manifest results, in the conversion of souls to Christ, there also the enemy is sure to be active. He will not quietly suffer his kingdom to be invaded. It may be in hindering the work by persecution, or in corrupting it by seducing to self-indulgence, or by imitating it in an evil and wicked way. We have many sad instances of such things in the history of both Israel and the church — instances too numerous to be referred to here; but we shall now see, at this period of our history of the monastic institutions, what will explain our meaning.

The special object of the new orders which sprang up in the beginning of the thirteenth century, was to *counterwork* the influence which the Albigensian preachers acquired over the poorer classes of the people by familiarly mixing

---

<sup>186</sup> Marsden's *Christian Sects*.

with them, and constantly preaching the gospel to them. Preaching the gospel of Christ suitably for the humbler classes had been completely neglected for centuries by the clergy of the Romish church. Sometimes an earnest preacher was raised up, such as Claudius, of Turin, Arnold, of Brescia, Fulk, of Neuilly; Henry, the deacon; or Peter Waldo, who devoted himself to the work of the gospel and the salvation of souls but these instances were few and far between. More commonly it was for some purely popish object, such as the Crusades, when the clergy attempted to rouse the people by their eloquence.

“In theory,” says the ecclesiastical historian, “it was the special privilege of the bishops to preach, but there were few amongst them who had either the gift, the inclination, the leisure from their secular, judicial, or warlike occupations, to preach even in their cathedral cities; in the rest of their dioceses their presence was but occasional, a progress, or visitation of pomp and form, rather than of popular instruction. Almost the only means of religious instruction was the Ritual, which, in so far as language was concerned, had long ceased to be intelligible; and the priests were almost as ignorant as the people; they had just learned to go through the stated observances in the most mechanical way. The married, or secular clergy, as they were called, though by far the most moral and respectable, were acting in opposition to the laws of the church, and even subject to the accusation of living in concubinage; their ministrations had very little weight with the people. The unmarried, or regular clergy obeyed the outward rule, but by every account they so flagrantly violated the severer principles of the church, that their teaching, if they attempted actual teaching, must have fallen powerless on the minds of the people.”<sup>187</sup>

Such a state of things in **the Established Church** left the way open for the heretics, so-called. They embraced the opportunity, stepped in, and laboured diligently to spread their doctrines among the people. Preaching in public and in private was the secret, under God, of the great success of the Waldenses and Albigenses. This was from the earliest times, and still is, the divine way of spreading the truth, and gathering souls to Jesus. The more public the preaching, the better. In all ages it has pleased God, by what the world calls “the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.” Open-air preaching, visiting and teaching from house to house, public testimony within-doors and out-of-doors, are ways and means which God will always bless. And such means seem to have been diligently used by those accused of heresy in Languedoc.

The watchful enemy, observing the effect of this mode of action, changes his tactics. In place of shutting up all the sincere and earnest and pious members of the church of Rome in monasteries, to think only about themselves, instruct themselves, pray and preach only to themselves, he now sends them out as open-air preachers, and to overrun the very fields which had been occupied

---

<sup>187</sup> Dean Milman, vol. 4, p. 243. J.C. Robertson, vol. 3, p. 363.



for centuries by the true followers of Christ. His emissaries had strict orders, not only to imitate the heretics, but to surpass them, in plainness of dress, humility, poverty, and familiarity with the people. A complete change now takes place in the history of the monastic orders; in place of cloistered monks, secluded from the eye of the world, saying their prayers, working in the fields, or gathering the fruit of their gardens, we have preaching friars at the corner of every street, and in every town throughout Europe, yea, begging from door to door. But this was not all; being favourites of the pontiffs, they had the direction of nearly everything in Church and State for three centuries. "They held the highest offices, both civil and ecclesiastical," says Mosheim, "taught with almost absolute authority in all the schools and churches, and defended the majesty of the Roman pontiffs against kings, bishops, and heretics, with amazing zeal and success. What the Jesuits were after the Reformation, the same were the **Dominicans** and **Franciscans** from the thirteenth century to the times of Luther. They were the soul of the whole Church and State, and the projectors and executors of all the enterprises of any moment."

### **THE ORIGIN AND CHARACTER OF THE DOMINICANS**

As we think it more satisfactory to know the beginning of things, we will now briefly describe the origin and character of these two great pillars of the proud temple of Rome. Up to this time — the beginning of the thirteenth century — the exertions of the popes have been almost entirely confined to the building of this temple — the establishment of their own supremacy in the church, and of their temporal authority over the State. But the increasing light of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the increasing depravity of the church, brought into the field of testimony many noble witnesses for Christ and for His gospel. The temple began to shake. The clergy had alienated the hearts of the common people by their grasping and oppressive power; and their indolence, indulgence, and immoralities, unfavourably contrasted with the industry, humility, self-denial, and consistency of those accused of heresy. The whole fabric was in danger for these heresiarchs were scattered throughout all provinces, and among all ranks and classes of society, even in Rome itself. The enemy, perceiving the necessities of the moment, hastened to the rescue of the threatened hierarchy. The two men adapted to meet the exigencies of the time were Dominic and Francis.

**Dominic** was born in 1170, in the village of Calaroga in Old Castile. His parents were of noble name, that of Guzman, if not of noble race. According to some writers, the effect of his burning eloquence as a preacher was foreshown by his mother dreaming that she gave birth to a whelp carrying a fire-brand in his mouth, with which he set the world on fire. But whether it was his mother or his monk historian that had the vision, he faithfully answered to the similitude. "Beware of dogs" never had a truer application than to Dominic; and literal fire, not merely the fire of his eloquence, was his chosen and favourite agent of destruction from the commencement of his

career. The flames of hell Dominic and his followers alleged, were reserved for all heretics, and they deemed it a good work to begin the eternal burnings in time. From infancy his life was rigidly ascetic. His nature, at an early period, showed signs of tenderness and compassion, but his religious zeal, in process of time, steeled him against every kindly impulse of nature. His nights were, for the most part, spent in severe penitential exercises; he flogged himself nightly with an iron chain, once for his own sins, once for the sinners in this world, and once for those in purgatory.

Dominic became a canon in the rigorous house of Osma, and soon excelled the others in austerities. In consequence of his reputation, the Spanish bishop of Osma — a prelate of great ability and of strong religious enthusiasm — invited Dominic to accompany him on a mission to Denmark. He had then reached his thirtieth year, and, though he was considered mild towards Jews and infidels, he was burning with unrelenting hatred towards the heretics. Having crossed the Pyrenees, the zealous bishop and his congenial companion found themselves in the midst of the Albigensian heresy; they could not close their eyes to the disgraceful state of the Romish clergy, to the contempt into which they had fallen, and to the prosperity of the sectaries. The Mass had not been said in some places for thirty years. The papal commission too, which had been appointed by Innocent III, about the year 1200, they found in a most dejected state. This mission, it will be remembered, consisted of such men as Reinerius, Guy, Castelnau, and the infamous Arnold, all monks of Citeaux, the spiritual offspring of St. Bernard. They bitterly lamented their want of success: heresy was deaf to their warnings and threatenings; it owned not the authority of the pope.

The papal legates, according to the good old style, had been marching through the land, from city to city, in the most hierarchical pomp, in rich attire, with their retinue, and a vast cavalcade of horses. “How expect success with this secular pomp?” replied the severer Spaniards. “Sow the good seed as the heretics sow the bad. Cast off those sumptuous robes, renounce those richly-caparisoned palfreys, go barefoot, without purse and scrip, like the apostles; out-labour, out-fast, out-discipline these false teachers.” The bishop of Osma and his faithful Dominic sent back their own horses, stripped themselves to the rudest monkish dress, and thus led on the spiritual army.

This was the deep subtlety of Satan. The power of the Holy Spirit had been manifested by the men of the valleys, and by the Poor Men of Lyon, who had spread themselves over the provinces; and now comes a great display of mock humility and false zeal, a base imitation of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. It was only by such lies and hypocrisy that the authority of Rome could be maintained, or that the enemy could hope to retain the nations of Europe in Captivity.

We have already spoken of Dominic’s labours in the Albigensian territory. There he spent ten years in endeavouring to root out heresy. A small

fraternity was then formed, who went out two and two, in imitation of the Lord's appointment of the seventy. (Luke 10; Matt. 10) The burnings in Languedoc then commenced. Like dogs of a keen scent, the Dominicans went from house to house, searching for prey to feed the sword of de Montfort, and the fires which they had kindled. Dominic's great achievements secured for him the favour of the pontiffs, Innocent III and Honorius III, who established him in the privileges of a "Founder." He died in 1221; but before he quitted the scene of his cruelties, no fewer than sixty monasteries of his order had sprung up in various regions of Christendom. He was canonized by Gregory IX in 1233. The fearful tribunal of the Inquisition directly or indirectly, we doubt not, owed its origin to Dominic, and the most numerous and merciless of its officials belonged to his brotherhood. A few more details may be given when speaking about the Franciscans, as they may be described together.

### **THE ORIGIN AND CHARACTER OF THE FRANCISCANS**

Contemporary with St. Dominic was his great compeer in ecclesiastical fame, **St. Francis**, who was to rival, and even exceed, the Spanish monk in celebrity. He was a native of Assisi, a town of Central Italy. The many absurd legends which crowd the pages of his Franciscan biographers need not be referred to; they are really blasphemous. Such was their enthusiastic frenzy, that they impiously maintained that St. Francis was a second christ; that the *stigmata*, or wounds of the Saviour, were miraculously impressed upon his body, in imitation of the crucified body of Jesus, and this imposture they dared to found on the text, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." (Gal. 6:17)

During a year's captivity in Perugia, and other bodily afflictions, he became the subject of the most extraordinary visions and raptures, by which he was encouraged to go forth into the world as a servant of God, and as a saviour of mankind. The feverish dreams of his weak mind were divine revelations to the Catholics.

Francis now began to talk mysteriously about his future bride — that bride was poverty. He exchanged his dress for rags. He was raised up, he said, "to oppose truth to error, poverty to the desire of wealth, and humility to ambition." He begged at the gates of monasteries; he discharged the most menial offices; he devoted himself to the care of lepers he washed their feet and dressed their wounds. "His mother," we read, "heard and beheld all his strange acts with a tender and prophetic admiration: but his father was ashamed of him, and treated him as a madman." But though at first he was mocked and pelted in the streets of Assisi, he was believed in by the church, sheltered by the bishop, and soon followed by a crowd of imitators.

Francis was now openly wedded to poverty by an oath never to be broken; and it was to be poverty in its lowest form — beggary. He accepted from an

old friend “a hermit’s attire, a short tunic, a leathern girdle, a staff, and slippers;” but this was too much fine and comfortable for the ideas of the young fanatic. Making the worst use of the Saviour’s instructions to His disciples in Matthew 10 and Luke 10, he threw away all he had, excepting a coarse dark grey tunic, which he tied round him with a rope, and set out through the city, calling all to repentance.

Such strange but fervent piety or fanaticism, at that period of dark superstition and ignorance, could not fail to kindle the zeal of others. The essence of the gospel as taught by Jesus Christ, he affirmed, consisted in the most absolute poverty of all things — that there was no safe path to heaven unless by the destitution of all earthly possessions. “Wonder grew into admiration, admiration into emulation, emulation into a blind following of his footsteps. Disciples, one by one, began to gather round him. He retired with them to a lonely spot in the bend of the river, called Rivo Torto. A rule was wanting for the young brotherhood. The Gospels were opened. Francis read three texts. 1. ‘If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor.’ 2. ‘Take nothing for your journey.’ 3. ‘If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’ (Matt. 19:21; Mark 6:8; Matt. 16:24) Francis made the sign of the cross, and sent forth his followers into the neighbouring cities, to the east and west, the north and south.”

Such was the origin, and such the character, of the new orders. Though somewhat different in their first constitution, they were very nearly assimilated in character, and even in profession, and entered upon the same career with almost the same objects in view and the same principles of action. Itinerant preachers under the vow of poverty characterized both. In their identification with the lowest of mankind they were entirely agreed. The enemy saw what the Poor Men of Lyon, or the Waldenses, were doing; and these were to be the poor men of the papacy, who were to meet the heretics on their own ground, and outdo them in poverty, humility, labour, and suffering. Having received the formal sanction and protection of the pope, Francis sent forth his followers, vowed to the service of God, to the extirpation of heretics, to chastity, poverty, and obedience.

The new orders included **nuns**, or a sisterhood, founded in connection with each of the brotherhoods. There was also a grade connected with the mendicant friars, called Tertiaries, who continued to be engaged in the common occupations of the world, and added greatly to the popularity and influence of the friars. It was an avowed link between the world and the church. A few words as to the habits of the **preaching friars**, in contrast with the earlier monastic orders, will be the simplest way of giving the reader a clear view of both. And, as we have no doubt, the new orders were permitted of God to uphold the tottering fabric of the Romish church, and to hinder the accomplishment of the Reformation for three hundred years, great interest is connected with their history. But the saints of God had a long

education to pass through and the true church of Christ to be enriched with a noble army of martyrs, before that glorious end was gained.

### **THE EARLIER AND LATER MONASTIC ORDERS**

We are fully aware that all human systems must be examined by the word of God, if we would rightly understand their real character. It is not by contrasting the later with the earlier that we can find out how far they may have wandered from the mind of the Lord. The word of the living God, by which all shall at last be judged, must be our only standard now. It matters very little what improvement may be found in one system compared with another, if both are the result of human invention. This is true as to all persons as well as all systems. The word of God must be the Christian's only rule, and Christ Himself the only head and centre, power and authority, in the system which He owns — the church, the assembly of God. But, as we have on different occasions looked into scripture on these points, we will now in a few words, state the difference between the earlier and later monastic systems.<sup>188</sup>

The chief, if not the exclusive, object of **the early hermits**, anchorites, and ascetics of every name, was their own religious perfection. The instruction or salvation of others formed no part of their creed. Isolation from the dangerous world, and seclusion in some lonely cell, with all its privations, were deemed necessary to this end. As the halo of their sanctity attracted and allured others, houses were built, and large tracts of land were cultivated, for the necessities of this life. These small beginnings sometimes grew up to be the most stately settlements in the country. And during the long dark night of the middle ages, with its barbarism and feudalism, the monasteries often proved a great mercy to the sick the poor, and the traveller. All must thankfully acknowledge this fact. During the five or six centuries which followed the subversion of the western empire, the monastic system became a powerful instrument in correcting the vices of society, and in protecting the lower classes from the lawless oppression of the feudal lord. Hospitality, or the entertainment of strangers and pilgrims, was one of the important uses of the monasteries at that time. Inns for the reception of travellers appear not to have existed earlier than the eleventh century. Almost the only two stately buildings which met the traveller's eye in those days, were the castle of the powerful baron and the abbey of the praying monks. The one was war, and the other peace. Religion, learning, and science found a refuge behind the monastery walls, and true piety could peacefully labour there, in writing, transcribing, and otherwise collecting and preserving useful information.

“The Benedictines,” says Travers Hill, “were the depositaries of learning and the arts; they gathered books together and reproduced them in the silence of their cells, and they preserved in this way not only the volumes of sacred writ

---

<sup>188</sup> See Chapter 12: “Reflections on the Principles of Asceticism”.



but many of the works of classic lore. They started the gothic architecture; they alone had the secrets of chemistry and medical science; they invented many colours; they were the first architects, artists, glass-stainers, carvers, and mosaic workers in mediaeval times. It was a mighty system and did good work in the world, but it went the way of a; 1 human things and human institutions, it became intoxicated with its power, blinded with its own splendour, and corrupted by its own wealth; its abbots grew avaricious, its monks voluptuous; they lost their original simplicity; the rule of their founder existed no longer in the activity of their husbandmen, their scholars, and their artists but was only to be found in the words mechanically read in the chapter house monasticism engendered its own corruption, and out of that corruption came death.”

The magnificent abbey of **Glastonbury** once covered sixty acres. Before the fall of the monasteries in England, the royal commissioners report concerning it; that they had never seen a house so great, good, and princely, with four parks adjoining, a great fishery five miles in compass, well replenished with pike, perch, bream, and roach; four manor houses, besides the chapel, hospital, tribunal, schools, and the great gate-house. Many of the houses of Glastonbury have been built out of the materials of this once superb abbey.<sup>189</sup>

The habits of the modern monks were a perfect contrast to the earlier. In place of dwelling within the walls of a superb abbey, the whole of Christendom in a short time was overspread with hosts of Dominicans and Franciscans. They were gathered from every country, and spoke, therefore, every language and dialect. They preached the old faith in its fullest mediaeval inflexible rigour, in almost every town and hamlet. Unswerving loyalty to the pope and the extirpation of heresy were their grand themes. And the pontiffs in return protected them, and conferred upon them the highest privileges and advantages. Before the century closed, the monasteries and nunneries of the Minorite order had reached the surprising number of eight thousand, and were inhabited by at least two hundred thousand inmates.

### **THE APOSTASY OF THE MENDICANTS**

The two rival orders the Dominicans and Franciscans, not contented with embroiling all Europe in discord, and angry strife, began soon after the decease of their respective founders, to contend with each other for precedence. And although the pontiffs of this and the following centuries used various means to compose and terminate these unseemly disputes, their attempts were fruitless; for these two great orders continued for many a long year to cherish this keen rivalry, and to hurl at each other the most bitter recriminations. They fought hard for the mastery in all the seats of learning in Christendom, but the most noted contest was that of the Dominicans with the university of Paris. Another prominent point of great controversy which

---

<sup>189</sup> *Johnston's Gazetteer.*

long raged, was the doctrine of **the immaculate conception** of the Virgin Mary. It was the favorite doctrine of the Franciscans, and was always violently assailed by the Dominicans. The famous **Thomas Aquinas** argued in favour of the Dominican view of the question, and Duns Scotus, the Dialectician, taking up the Franciscan view of the doctrine, entered the arena of debate, which has continued to this day; for although the present pope Pius IX has pronounced the dogma of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, the Dominican fraternity are unwilling to admit it. However it has now become an article of faith in the Romish church.

As early as 1256, when **Bonaventura** became the general of the Franciscans, he found they had begun to be faithless to their ungenial bride, poverty, and were struggling for a divorce. The affections of Francis had not survived in his followers. But under the prudent management of their new general, comparative tranquillity was maintained during his life; but after his death, which took place in 1274, dissensions broke out with as great violence as ever. Indeed these mendicant, or rather satanic, orders caused the most violent contentions in almost every country of Europe down to the period of the Reformation. But all classes, both in Church and State, had to bear with their pride and arrogance, as they were the most faithful servants and satellites of the Roman See.

The following brief sketch from the pen of **Matthew Paris**, a Benedictine of St. Alban's, who wrote about 1249, will place before the reader the real character and ways of these dreadful pests of society. The picture is by no means overdrawn, though Matthew belonged to the old aristocratic order and might despise his new democratic brothers. Solitude, seclusion, the lonely cell, the private chapel, communication with the outer world sternly cut off, was the old order; the following is a sample of the new, and of what prevailed in England in the thirteenth century.

“It is terrible — it is an awful — presage, that in three hundred years, in four hundred years, even in more, the old monastic orders have not so entirely degenerated as these fraternities. The friars, who have been founded hardly forty years, have built even in the present day in England, residences as lofty as the palaces of our kings. These are they, who, enlarging day by day their sumptuous edifices, encircling them with lofty walls, lay up within them incalculable treasures, imprudently transgressing the bounds of poverty, and violating, according to the prophecy of the German Hildegard, the very fundamental rules of their profession. These are they, who, impelled by the love of gain, force themselves upon the last hours of the lords, and of the rich whom they know to be overflowing with wealth; and these, despising all rights, supplanting the ordinary pastors, extort confessions and secret testaments, boasting of themselves, and of their order, and asserting their vast superiority over all others. So that no one of the faithful now believes that he can be saved, unless guided and directed by the preachers or friars minor. Eager to obtain privileges, they serve in the courts of kings and nobles, as

counsellors, chamberlains, treasurers, bridesmen, or notaries of marriages; they are the executioners of the papal extortions. In their preaching they sometimes take the tone of flattery, sometimes of biting censure; they scruple not to reveal confession, or to bring forward the most rash accusations. They despise the legitimate orders, those founded by holy fathers, by St. Benedict or St. Augustine, with all other professors. They place their own order high above all; they look on the Cistercians as rude and simple, half laic or rather peasants; they treat the black friars as haughty epicureans.”<sup>190</sup>

---

<sup>190</sup> Milman, vol. 4, p. 276; Mosheim, vol. 2, p. 523.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 27

### THE APPROACHING DAWN OF THE REFORMATION

Centuries before Luther nailed his theses to the church door in Wittemburg, the Lord was preparing both nations and individuals for the accomplishment of this great work. The weakening of the papal power and the increasing boldness of the witnesses, foretold what was approaching.

In our contemplations of Rome, we must always distinguish between the catholic church and popery, or the ecclesiastical and the temporal power. The church, though fallen and enslaved, was still the church; protestant in heart and faithful in measure to Christ, but to venture in her pious services beyond the defined limits of Roman orthodoxy subjected her to its severe discipline. The papacy vowed destruction on all trespassers. Immorality, irreligion, might be passed over, at least with a slight censure; but heresy or schism- in other words, *any form* of dissent from the Roman church, must be rooted out by fire and sword, and all heretics consigned by pontifical sentence to eternal death.

During the long reign of papal terror, the true saints of God witnessed and prophesied in sackcloth. But the *silver line* of sovereign grace was preserved unbroken from the days of the apostles, under the sheltering wing of the living God. He preserved His witnesses from the devouring dragon in the secret places of the earth; in mountains, valleys, and caverns; and in many quiet convents in the remote regions of Christendom.

But it may be interesting, first of all, to renew our acquaintance with the state of Christianity in some of the countries which we have already noticed. In this way we shall naturally fall in with our long line of witnesses, which go down to the days of Luther. And, first in order, we will notice the state of

### CHRISTIANITY IN IRELAND

Centuries have rolled on since we last looked at the state of things in the sister island. **St. Patrick** left behind him at his death in 492, a band of well-educated, devoted men, who greatly venerated their master and sought to follow in his footsteps. The fame of Ireland for its monasteries, missionary schools, and as the seat of pure scriptural teaching, rose so high, that it received the honourable appellation of "The isle of saints." On the testimony of Bede we learn that, about the middle of the seventh century, many of the Anglo-Saxon nobles and clergy repaired to Ireland, either for instruction or for an opportunity of living in monasteries of a stricter discipline.

We have already noticed the labours of the Irish clergy as missionaries.<sup>191</sup> The Culdees of Iona owed their origin as a christian community to the preaching of the Irish apostle Columba. Britain, France, Germany, the low countries, and different parts of the continent of Europe, were mainly indebted to Irish missionaries for their first acquaintance with divine truth. Charlemagne, himself a man of letters, invited to his court various eminent scholars from different countries, but especially from Ireland. For many ages she maintained her independence of Rome, rejected all foreign control, and acknowledged Christ only as Head of the church. But the invasion of the Danes about the beginning of the ninth century, and their occupation of the country, quenched the light, and changed the character of “the isle of saints.” These piratical and predatory hordes wasted her fields, slew her sons, or dispossessed them of their inheritance, demolished her colleges, and maintained themselves in the country with the cruelty and arrogance of usurpers. Moral, spiritual, and literary darkness followed, and prepared the way for Romanism. Up till this time religious institutions, and the labours of the ecclesiastics, form the chief subjects of her history; but since then, intestine wars, turbulence, crime, and desolation.

Various attempts had been made by Roman pontiffs to subject **the Irish church** to the See of Rome, but without success until the reign of Pope Adrian IV. He was an Englishman, known by the name of Nicolas Breakspear; born in poverty and obscurity, he became a monk of St. Alban’s, and was afterwards elevated in the revolution of human affairs, to the pontifical dignity. Though suddenly raised from indigence to opulence, his pride and arrogance were extreme. He took great offence at the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa for omitting to hold his stirrup, and refused to give him the kiss of peace. Frederic declared that the omission was the result of ignorance, and, submitting to the service as equerry to his Holiness, was forgiven, and received the kiss.

Amongst the earliest acts of this modest pontiff, was the assumption of authority over Ireland, and making a grant of it to Henry II, king of England. The ground on which the pope rested his right to make this grant was thus expressed: “For it is undeniable, and your majesty acknowledges it, that all islands on which Christ the sun of righteousness hath shined, and which have received the Christian faith, belong of right to St. Peter and the most holy Roman church.” In virtue of this right, he authorizes Henry to invade Ireland with a view to the extension of the church, the increase of religion and virtue, and eradicating the tares of vice from the garden of the Lord; on condition that a penny shall be yearly paid from each house to the See of Rome.

From this period, 1155, the Irish church came to be essentially Romish in its doctrines, constitution, and discipline. Long before the Reformation, “Nearly six hundred monastic establishments, belonging to eighteen different orders,

---

<sup>191</sup> See Chapter 14: “The Missionary Zeal of Ireland”.



were scattered over the entire face of the country. Ghostly friars, black, white and grey, swarmed in countless multitudes, practising upon an ignorant and deluded people.” In 1172, Henry completed his conquest of the country; an assembly of the Irish clergy convened at Waterford submitted to the papal dictation, proclaimed Henry’s title to the sovereign dominion of Ireland, and took the oath of fidelity to himself and his successors. Rapid declension now marked the church in Ireland. Her far-famed spirituality and intelligence were gone. At one time she had about three hundred bishops; at the dawn of the Reformation, we believe the number was under thirty. Jealousies, contentions, and rebellions, have blotted almost every page of her history, both civil and ecclesiastical, from the ninth to the present century.<sup>192</sup>

### CHRISTIANITY IN SCOTLAND

We have already seen, that the Roman clergy experienced great difficulty in obtaining a permanent footing in Scotland.<sup>193</sup> The **Culdees** — whom we are disposed to honour for their works' sake — continued for centuries to resist the encroachments of popery and to maintain their ground, notwithstanding all the efforts put forth by the church of Rome to crush and exterminate them. For they held fast by the word of God, like the reformers of a later day, as the only infallible guide and authority in all matters of faith and practice. Even Bede, the monk historian, in candour admits that “**Columba** and his disciples would receive those things only which are contained in the writings of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles; diligently observing the works of piety and virtue.” But Rome at length triumphed: the faithful Culdees, long oppressed, diminished in numbers, weakened in energy, through the sorceries of Jezebel, disappear from the page of history, and Scotland is again enshrouded in darkness and superstition. Monasteries rose rapidly, and soon overshadowed all the land; and as they reached a height of wealth and power, unsurpassed in any other portion of Europe, we must give them a brief examination.

The great mania for enriching churches began with Charlemagne: Alfred the Great imitated his example, and soon all Christendom was infected by this superstition. In the person of Margaret, the Saxon princess, it travelled northward. The invasion and conquest of England by the Normans, and the establishment of a new dynasty in that country, produced the most important effects on the history of the church in Scotland. Many of the Saxons fled into Scotland to escape from their new masters; and among others Margaret, who became the wife of the Scottish king, Malcolm III, and the mother of Alexander I, a powerful and vigorous prince, and of David I, who was a bigoted supporter of Romanism. Margaret’s piety, charity, and ascetic life are celebrated with enthusiasm by her confessor and biographer, Turgot, a monk of Durham, and bishop of St. Andrew’s. Malcolm, animated by the devout

---

<sup>192</sup> See Froude’s *History of Ireland*; Gardner’s *Faiths of the World*, vol. 2, p. 150; Edgar’s *Variations of Popery*, p. 153 & 192.

<sup>193</sup> See Chapter 14: “The First Preachers of Christianity in Scotland”.

spirit of his beloved wife, made some donations to the church; but the royal munificence of his son David in the endowment of bishoprics and abbeys has been rewarded by the praise of all monastic writers, although James I speaks of him as “a sore saint to the crown.” Yet his extravagant superstition tended not only to impoverish the crown, but to the oppressive taxation of the people. “He founded the bishoprics of Glasgow, Brechin, Dunkeld, Dunblane, Ross, and Caithness... The same pious liberality called into existence a multitude of abbacies, priories, and nunneries; and monks of every order and in every garb swarmed in the land.”<sup>194</sup>

The superior civilization of the Anglo-Saxon refugees, and their attachment to the English hierarchy, tended greatly to its establishment in Scotland. The **Celtic element** was depressed, while the Court took an English tone and character. From this period, we are informed, a stream of Saxon and Norman settlers poured into Scotland. They soon acquired the most fertile districts from the Tweed to the Pentland Firth; and almost every noble family in Scotland now traces from them its descent. These new proprietors following the example of the monarch, lavished their riches on the church. The passion to found and endow monasteries became so great, that long before the Reformation, there were upwards of a hundred monasteries spread over the country, and more than twenty convents for the reception of nuns.

A brief sketch of two or three of these religious houses may not be uninteresting to the reader; which will also show the state of things introduced by the Romish hierarchy into that once simple and primitive country. The statistics are taken from Mr. Cunningham’s history.

### **THE WEALTH OF THE ABBEYS IN SCOTLAND**

**Jedburgh**, one of the noblest abbeys in Scotland, was held by the red friars. Among the donations made to it by a succession of pious benefactors, we find — the tithe of the king’s hunting in Teviotdale, a house in Roxburgh, a house in Berwick, pasture for the monks’ cattle along with those of the king, timber from the royal forests according to their wants, the culture of the mill — a measure of corn — from all the men of Jedburgh, a saltpan near Stirling, exemption from any exaction on their tuns of wine, a fishing in the Tweed, acres, ploughgates and exgangs of land, with a villein to till, and several parish churches, with their tithes and other revenues. They followed the rule of St. Augustine, which bound them to devote the first part of the day to labour, and the remainder to reading and devotion.

**Paisley** — The *Abbey of Paisley* was anciently one of the richest religious houses in Scotland. It was founded by Walter Fitz-Allan, the high steward, about the year 1160, for Cluniac monks, who followed the order of St. Benedict. They were first located at Renfrew, but afterwards removed to Paisley, and were soon richly endowed by the pious liberality of successive

---

<sup>194</sup> For carefully collected details, see Cunningham, vol. 1, p. 106.

high stewards, and by some of the great lords of Lennox and the Isles. In the thirteenth century, they were in possession of thirty parish churches, with all their revenues; and about two-thirds of the whole soil of the extensive parish of Paisley had passed into their hands, with acres and ploughgates in almost every district in the west of Scotland. The stewards had moreover given them the tithe of their hunting, and the skins of all the deer taken in the adjoining forests, pasture for their cattle, a mill at Paisley, a salmon-net in the Clyde at Renfrew, a fishing at Lochwinnoch, the liberty of quarrying both building stones and lime stones for burning at Blackhall and elsewhere, of digging coal for the use of their monasteries, its granges, smithies, and brew-houses, of making charcoal of dead wood, and of cutting turf for covering in the charcoal, of green wood for their monasteries and grange buildings, and for all operations of agriculture and fishing.

Such were the monks, and such their revenues in those days. They might well rejoice in the abundance of all the good things of this life; but the parish priest, strange to say, was left in a state of poverty and dependence. The revenues of the parish were appropriated by the bishops and religious houses, so that a very scanty income was reserved for the parochial clergy. All went to fatten the idle friars; who, whatever their primitive virtues may have been, were now the scandal of the church. At the time of the Reformation, of the thousand parishes in Scotland, about seven hundred had been appropriated to bishops and religious houses. The more thorough and regular division of the country into parishes and dioceses took place about the beginning of the twelfth century.

Some of our youthful readers may be disposed to inquire, why it was that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries more especially, the kings and nobles of the earth strove with each other to enrich the church. Many causes combined to produce this state of things. The feudal charters in those days were signed with the king's X, as he could not write his own name, and all his subjects were rude, ignorant, and superstitious. The monks and friars had a high reputation, as we have frequently noticed in our history, for superior holiness, for the fervour of their devotions, and the austerity of their lives. These things attracted the attention and won the veneration of a credulous and superstitious age. Besides, the donor was assured that his donations would secure the repose of his soul after death, which then meant eternal life. It was by means of this great religious imposture that the clergy attained to such a degree of opulence and power; that the rich became their worshippers, and built them those beautiful houses, the very ruins of which still attract the traveller, and excite his admiration.<sup>195</sup>

---

<sup>195</sup> Cunningham, vol. 1, chap. 5.

## THE EFFECTS OF WEALTH ON THE CLERGY

Before the Reformation, according to the most trustworthy accounts, more than the half of the wealth of Scotland belonged to the clergy, and the greater part of this was in the hands of a few individuals. The effect of such a state of things, as it has always been in every age and country, was the corruption of the whole order of the clergy, and of the whole system of religion. “Avarice, ambition, and the love of secular pomp, reigned among the superior orders. Bishops and abbots rivalled the first nobility in magnificence, and preceded them in honours; they were privy councillors, and lords of session as well as of parliament, and had long engrossed the principal offices of state. A vacant bishopric or abbacy called forth powerful competitors, who contended for it as for a principality or petty kingdom. Inferior benefices were openly put to sale, or bestowed on the illiterate and unworthy minions of courtiers; on dice-players, strolling bards, and the natural sons of bishops. The bishops never, on any occasion, condescended to preach; from the erection of the regular Scottish Episcopacy down to the era of the Reformation history mentions only one instance of a bishop preaching, and that was Dunbar, Archbishop of Glasgow, for the purpose of excluding the Reformer, **George Wishart.**”

The lives of the clergy, corrupted by wealth and ignorance, became such a scandal to religion, and such an outrage on decency, that we cannot transfer the description of the most conscientious historian to our pages. But all historians are agreed, both Catholic and Protestant, that monasteries and all religious houses became the nurseries of superstition and idleness, and ultimately the haunts of lewdness and wickedness. Yet it was deemed impious and sacrilegious to speak of reducing their numbers or alienating their funds. “The kingdom swarmed with ignorant, idle, luxurious monks, who, like locusts, devoured the fruits of the earth, and filled the air with pestilential infection; with friars, white, black, and grey; canons regular, Carmelites, Carthusians, Cordeliers, Dominicans, Franciscan conventuals, and observantines, Jacobins, Premonstratensians, monks of Tyrone, and of Vallis Caulium, and Hospitallers, or Holy Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, nuns of St. Austin, St. Clair, St. Scholastica, and St. Catherine of Sienna, with canonesses of various clans.”<sup>196</sup>

Without an adequate knowledge of the state of Christendom before the Reformation, it would be impossible to form a just estimate of the necessity and importance of that most merciful revolution. At this distance of time and with such a changed state of society before us, it is difficult to believe that such-enormous abuses then prevailed in the church. Of the doctrines of Christianity almost nothing remained but the name. At the same time we as firmly believe, that the Lord had His hidden ones — His true witnesses, who mourned over the evil ways and intolerance of the high and dominant party.

---

<sup>196</sup> See a graphic description of the state of religion in Scotland before the Reformation, in Dr. McCrie’s *Life of John Knox*, pp. 7-13.

The Lord Himself in His address to Thyatira, speaks of a remnant then in separation from the corruptions of Jezebel, and that their good works increased as the darkness thickened. "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." The lives, faith, and works of this remnant were no doubt regulated by the word of God; but this very circumstance ensured their obscurity, and their absence from the page of history. The *silver line* of God's sovereign grace could never be interrupted, and tens of thousands from the darkest ages shall reflect the glory of that grace for ever. In quietness they fulfilled their peaceful mission, and as peacefully passed off the scene, but left no record of their labours of love on the pages of the annalist. Not so with the proud, the ambitious, the fanatic, the hypocrite: all such stand prominent on the pages of ecclesiastical history. But there is another tribunal besides that of posterity before which both must stand, and be measured by God's own standard.

But we return to our theme — the state of religion in Scotland before the Reformation.

### POPERY AS A SYSTEM

The word of God, which is able to make men wise unto salvation, was locked up from the people. Even the bishops were not ashamed to confess that they had never read any part of sacred scripture, except what they had met with in their missals. The religious service was mumbled over in a dead language, which many of the priests did not understand, and some of them could scarcely read; and the greatest care was taken to prevent even catechisms, composed and approved by the clergy, from coming into the hands of the laity. The sacrifice of the mass was represented as procuring forgiveness of sins to the living and the dead; and the consciences of men were withdrawn from the precious sacrifice the finished work — of the Lord Jesus Christ, to a delusive reliance upon priestly absolutions, papal pardons, and voluntary penances.

"They were taught," says the eminent historian of **John Knox**, "that if they regularly said their *aves* and *credos*, confessed themselves to a priest, punctually paid their tithes and church-offerings, purchased a mass, went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of some celebrated saint, refrained from flesh on Fridays, or performed some other prescribed act of bodily mortification, their salvation was infallibly secured in due time; while those who were so rich and so pious as to build a chapel or an altar' and to endow it for the support of a priest, to perform masses, obits, and dirges, procured a relaxation of the pains of purgatory for themselves or their relatives in proportion to the extent of their liberality. It is difficult for us to conceive how empty, ridiculous, and wretched those harangues were which the monks delivered as sermons. Legendary tales concerning the founder of some religious order, his wonderful sanctity, the miracles which he performed, his



combats with the devil, his watchings, fastings, flagellations; the virtues of holy water, chrism, crossing, and exorcism; the horrors of purgatory, and the numbers released from it by the intercession of some powerful saint; these, with low jests, table-talk, and fireside scandal, formed the favourite topics of the preachers, and were served up to the people instead of the pure, salutary, and sublime doctrines of the Bible.

“The beds of the dying were besieged, and their last moments disturbed, by avaricious priests, who laboured to extort bequests to themselves or to the church. Not satisfied with exacting tithes from the living, a demand was made upon the dead: no sooner had the poor husbandman breathed his last, than the rapacious vicar came and carried off his *corpse-present* — or a present from the corpse to the vicar which he did as often as death visited the family.<sup>197</sup> Ecclesiastical censures were fulminated against those who were reluctant in making these payments, or who showed themselves disobedient to the clergy. Divine service was neglected; and, except on festival days, the churches, in many parts of the country, were no longer employed for sacred purposes, but served as sanctuaries for malefactors, places of traffic, or resorts for pastime.

“Persecution, and the suppression of free inquiry, were the only weapons by which its interested supporters were able to defend this system of corruption and imposture. Every avenue by which truth might enter was carefully guarded. Learning was branded as the parent of heresy. If any person, who had attained a degree of illumination amidst the general darkness, began to hint dissatisfaction with the conduct of churchmen and to propose the corrections of abuses, he was immediately stigmatised as a heretic, and, if he did not secure his safety by flight, was immured in a dungeon, or committed to the flames. And when at last, in spite of all their precautions, the light which was shining around did break in and spread through the nation, the clergy prepared to adopt the most desperate and bloody measures for its extinction.”

It will now be unnecessary to trace the origin and progress of popery in other lands. The above sketch of the condition of things in Scotland, from the thirteenth till the sixteenth century, may be sufficient to illustrate the state of all Europe, and for the purpose of history. As a system it is the same in all ages and in all countries. Its **grand dogma** has ever been — the Unity of the Roman Catholic Church. Whether it be in the immediate vicinity of Rome or

---

<sup>197</sup> The *corpse-present* was the vicar's perquisite in the case of death. In country parishes it consisted of the best cow which belonged to the deceased, and the uppermost covering of his bed, or the finest of his body-clothes. And this demand, which was exacted with great rigour in Scotland and in other places, was distinct from the ordinary dues exacted for the interment of the body, and the deliverance of the soul from purgatory.

“And als the vicar, as I trow,  
He will nocht fail to tak ane kow,  
And upmaist claith, thocht babis hae nane,  
From ane pure deid husbandman.”

in the far distant regions of the north, its spirit is the same, and must be so until it comes to its end by the direct judgment of the Lord Himself from heaven. "How much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her, for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: *for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.*" (Rev. 18:7, 8)

## THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

From the time of Innocent III Roman Catholic writers boast of the missionary zeal of the mendicant orders. They are spoken of as most assiduous in visiting prisons, hospitals, and places of imminent peril, in caring for the spiritual wants of the poor, and that they were also the most active servants of the church in the propagation of Christianity among remote and savage nations. So far this appears to have been the case in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; but as all history goes to prove, that these mendicants were the most zealous agents of the Holy See in all its ambitious schemes and worst practices throughout Christendom, it is difficult to give them credit for pure christian zeal. From the methods they pursued and the results of their missions, it is more than obvious that they had chiefly in view their own advancement or the extension of the papal sovereignty. Still, there may have been pious men amongst them, who were animated by higher motives, and laboured with disinterested devotion; and as the vices of the mendicants in general are notorious, we should be glad to record all the good of them we can.

From the time of the religious wars of Charlemagne to the exterminating wars in Languedoc, the **Roman missionaries** usually preached the gospel of peace at the head of an army headed by bishops, and laid the pathway for its reception open by the sword; but in the thirteenth century, pious missionary bands of Dominicans and Franciscans were sent by the Roman pontiffs to the Chinese, the Tartars, and the adjacent countries. Large numbers among these nations professed the christian faith. John of Monte Corvino, a Franciscan, was distinguished by the success of his labours; and in 1307 Clement V erected an archiepiscopal see at Cambalu, that is, Pekin, the modern capital of China. The same pontiff sent seven other bishops, also Franciscans, into those regions; and this distant branch of the hierarchy was carefully nourished by succeeding pontiffs. "So long as the Tartar empire in China continued, not only the Latins, but the Nestorians also had liberty to profess their religion freely all over northern Asia, and to propagate it far and wide. But that most potent emperor of the **Tartars**, *Timur-Bec*, having embraced Mahometanism, persecuted with violence and the sword all who adhered to the Christian religion. The nation of the Tartars, in which such numbers once professed Christianity, universally submitted to the Koran. Thus the christian religion was overthrown in those parts of Asia inhabited by the Chinese, the Tartars, the Moguls, and other nations, whose history is yet imperfectly known. At least no mention-has been found of any Latin Christians resident in those

countries, subsequent to the year 1370. But of the Nestorians living in China, some traces can be found, though not very clear, as late as the sixteenth century.”

Among the European princes, Jagello, duke of Lithuania, **Poland**, was nearly the only one that still adhered to the idolatry of his ancestors. And he, in the year 1386, embraced the christian rites, was baptized, and persuaded his subjects to do the same thing. What remains there were of the old religions in Prussia and Livonia, were extirpated by the Teutonic knights and crusaders with war and massacres. In Spain the Saracens still held the sovereignty of Granada, Andalucia, and Murcia; and against them the christian kings of Castile, Arragon, and Navarre, waged perpetual war; and, though with difficulty, triumphed, and became sole masters of Spain in the fifteenth century under the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella.<sup>198</sup>

### **REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF POPERY**

We have traced, however briefly, the origin, progress, and loftiest height of the papal system. This was reached by the great abilities of Innocent III. But how varied and full of all contrarieties and contradictions is that marvellous and mysterious history! We pause for a moment to reflect on the hypocrisies and tyrannies, the assumed piety and positive cruelty, of that woman Jezebel. It was she who sent the choicest of her children in early times to dwell in the lonely mountain cave or the secret cloister, under the pretence of there peacefully contemplating the glory of God and being transformed to His image. But again we hear her with altered voice rallying the myriad hosts of Europe to go forth and rescue the Holy Land from the foul grasp of the uncircumcised Philistines, and defend the banner of the cross on the holy sepulchre. Now she becomes callous to the common feelings of nature, insensible to the miseries of mankind, and stained with the blood of millions. For two hundred years she employed all her power in promoting the destruction of human life by the ruinous expeditions to the Holy Land. And as each successive Crusade proved more hopeless and disastrous than the former, she redoubled her exertions to renew and perpetuate those scenes of unequalled folly, suffering, and bloodshed.

But turn again and behold the double aspect of her character at the same moment. When the Crusaders came in sight of Jerusalem they alighted from their horses, and uncovered their feet, that they might approach the sacred walls as true pilgrims. Loud shouts were raised, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! as if holy fear were moving their hearts. But when the governor offered to admit them as peaceful pilgrims, they refused. No, they were determined to open their way with their swords, and to wrest by military ardour the holy city from the hands of the unbelievers. Hardly had they scaled the walls when they rushed forth to the indiscriminate massacre of Mahometans and Jews, and

---

<sup>198</sup> Waddington, vol. 3, p. 358; Mosheim, vol. 2, p. 592.

filled the holy places with blood. And then, for a little while, the work of carnage and plunder was suspended, that the pious pilgrims might perform their devotions; but the places on which they came to kneel in adoration were covered with slaughtered heaps. This is a true picture of the spirit and character of Jezebel as manifested in all ages and countries. When Dominic himself grew ashamed of the bloodstained missionaries of Innocent in Languedoc, having seen thousands of the peaceful peasantry murdered in cold blood, he retired to a church and prayed for the success of the good cause, and the victories of Montfort and his ruffians were attributed to the prayers of the saintly-minded Spaniard. This was a crusade, not against Turks and Infidels, but against the saints of the Lord because they dared to speak of certain abuses in holy mother church. And, the more effectually to chastise her children she invented the *Inquisition*, that engine of domestic persecution, torture, and death.

And, strange as it may seem now-a-days, and cruel beyond all compare, wholesale destruction of human life and property was **the very life-blood of popery**. She grew rich by appropriating the contributions that were raised for the purposes of the Crusades; and she grew strong through weakening the monarchs of Europe by exhausting their treasures and depopulating their countries. Thus was the papal zeal inflamed to a burning passion for the Crusaders and thus it passed from Urban II and the Council of Clermont down to his successors. Every thought of the papal mind, every feeling of the papal heart, every mandate that issued from the Vatican, had but one object in view — the enriching and strengthening of the Roman See. No matter how subversive of all peace, how baneful to all society she pursued her own interests with a callous uncompromising obduracy. *Excommunications* were used for the same purposes of papal aggrandisement. “The heretic forfeited not only all dignities, rights, privileges, immunities, even all property, all protection of law; he was to be pursued, taken despoiled, put to death, either by the ordinary course of justice — the temporal authority was bound to execute, even to blood, the sentence of the ecclesiastical court — or if he dared to resist by any means whatever, however peaceful, he was an insurgent, against whom the whole of Christendom might, or rather was bound, at the summons of the spiritual power, to declare war; his estates even his dominions if a sovereign, were not merely liable to forfeiture, but the church assumed the power of awarding the forfeiture, as it might seem best to her wisdom.

“The army which should execute the mandate of the pope was the army of the church, and the banner of that army was the cross of Christ. So began crusades, not on the contested borders of Christendom, not in Mahometan or heathen lands in Palestine, on the shores of the Nile, among the Livonian forests or the sands of the Baltic, but in the very bosom of Christendom; not among the implacable partisans of an antagonistic creed, but on the soil of

catholic France, among those who still called themselves by the name of Christian.”<sup>199</sup>

Such was, and is, and ever must be, the spirit and character of the church of Rome. How dark the picture! How sad the reflection, that she who calls herself the true church of God, the holy mother of His children, and the representative of Christ on earth, should have been transformed, by Satanic agencies, into a monster of the most sickening hypocrisies, and “abominable idolatries!” She became the foster-mother of the most open, unbounded, saint, relic, picture, and image worship — of the theory of transubstantiation, and the practice of the confessional. Outwardly her unscrupulous ambition for secular glory, her intolerance in persecuting to extermination all who ventured to dispute her authority, her insatiable thirst for human blood, have no parallel in the most barbarous ages of heathenism.

And is this the church, thou mayest well exclaim in thy reflections — is this the church that so many are joining in the present day? Yes, alas, alas; and so many of the upper and intelligent classes! Such conversions, surely, can only be the fruit of the blinding power of Satan, the god of this world. (2 Cor. 4:3, 4) Many young ladies from the best families in England have submitted, in blind devotion, to be shorn of their natural covering, and imprisoned in a nunnery for life; and many of the aristocracy, both lay and clerical, have joined the communion of the Romish church. But she is not changed: the change is with those whose light has become darkness, according to the word of the prophet: “Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.” (Jer. 13:16) As she was in the days of Gregory VII, Innocent III, Cardinal Pole, and bloody Mary, **so is she today** as to her spirit, had she only the power. But what must be the guilt of the English converts, with the New Testament before them and seeing the contrast between the blessed Lord and His apostles, and the pope and his clergy; between the grace and mercy of the gospel, and the intolerance and cruelty of popery! Rather let my reader remember the exhortation, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues... for by her sorceries were all nations deceived; And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” (Rev. 18)

---

<sup>199</sup> Milman, vol. 4, p. 168; Waddington, vol. 2, p. 270.



# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 28

### THE DECLINE OF PAPAL POWER

From the time of Innocent III down to the age of the Reformation, the Lord was preparing the way for that great event by weakening the power of the popes over human governments, and over the minds of men generally. The decline was slow, at least for about a hundred years, for the whole power of Satan was put forth to support the “mystery of iniquity;” but it pleased God to weaken her power by raising up men of ability and integrity to expose her many evils. These witnesses we propose to examine in our next chapter. In the meantime we may add that the whole mind of Europe had become so familiarised with the assertion of the papal claims, that they were accepted as an essential part of Christianity. The ruling idea of this great theocratic scheme was the absolute supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal power, “as of the soul over the body, as of eternity over time as of Christ over Caesar, as of God over man — that all earthly power is subordinate to the spiritual power in every respect either mediately or immediately touching on or affecting religion or its chief.” This principle, first asserted in all its fulness by Hildebrand, acquired its “firmest establishment and greatest expansion” in the able hands of Innocent. He stood on the summit of pontifical power and glory. What had been the day-dream of many of his predecessors was fully realized during his pontificate; but from this pinnacle the crowned priest begins to descend.

Details of the long and ruinous wars between the papacy and the empire which immediately followed, especially between Gregory IX, Innocent IV, and Frederick II, would be unsuited to our pages and unnecessary for the purpose of our history. We will therefore content ourselves with a rapid sketch of the leading pontiffs during this period of papal decline.

In the year 1216, **Honorius III** succeeded Innocent. The whole attention of the new pontiff was devoted to the promotion of the holy war. The Crusades had become so established an article in the papal creed, and so necessary to the maintenance of the papal power, that no cardinal who was not in heart and soul a Crusader would have been raised to the chair of St. Peter. This was the highest qualification of the chief priest of the christian religion. Hence the first act of Honorius after his installation was to send a circular letter to all Christendom, urging Christians in the most exciting terms to contribute either in money or in person to the new campaign. Frederick II, the Emperor-elect, in his youthful ardour had made a solemn vow to Innocent to engage without loss of time in a new crusade; not against the now crushed Albigenses, whose ashes were still smouldering, but for the destruction of the Mahometans, and

the liberation of the holy sepulchre from infidel desecration. And no one in those times who had taken the vow was allowed to excuse himself. If unable to undertake the expedition in person, he must find substitutes or money. Letters were instantly dispatched to Frederick, reminding him of his late crusading vow, and pressing his immediate departure for the Holy Land. But Frederick was yet a youth, his rival Otho was still alive, his realm in the most unsettled state, so that he could not possibly leave for some time. Neither menace nor persuasion could move Frederick, though in him the papal hopes were chiefly centered.

### THE CONQUEST AND LOSS OF DAMIETTA

The call was now fiercely sounded and the hymn of battle sung by the emissaries of the pope throughout France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Hungary, and the whole of the West: the kings, princes, and nobles, were besieged and harassed to collect without delay, ships, men, money, arms, and all needed supplies. But the pope found to his mortification that the enthusiasm of former ages had passed away — that Honorius had no longer the magic power of Urban. Neither papal legates nor preaching friars could kindle in the hearts of the people a zeal for the holy war. Only one king obeyed the summons, Andrew of Hungary. Princes and prelates, dukes, archbishops and bishops, joined the Hungarian king. A large force was collected. The first object of attack was **Damietta**, which, after a siege of sixteen months, fell into the hands of the crusaders. But the destruction of human life for this papal folly was fearful. “The inhabitants had been so much reduced by famine, pestilence, and the sword, that out of eighty thousand only three thousand are said to have remained alive; the air was tainted by the smell of corpses; yet even in the midst of these horrors the captors could not restrain their cruelty and rapacity.”<sup>200</sup>

The report of this splendid victory was received by the pope with exultation. His hopes of ultimate success were stimulated to the highest pitch. But these hopes were soon to be disappointed. It was besieged the following year by an overwhelming force of infidels under the active and able leadership of Malek al Kamul, Sultan of Egypt and Syria. Damietta was surrendered.

The deep mortification of the pope vented itself on the Emperor. The failure of the expedition, the calamities of the Christians, were ascribed to his wilful procrastination. It is supposed that thirty-five thousand Christians, and about seventy thousand Mussulmans, had perished at Damietta. But defeat and disaster only stimulated the zeal of the pontiff for fresh crusades. During a reign of eleven years, Honorius had been chiefly engaged in promoting crusades against the Albigenses in the south of France and against the Saracens in Palestine. In 1227 he died, still pressing the departure of Frederick, and, we are not sorry to add, still pressing it in vain.

---

<sup>200</sup> J.C. Robertson, vol. 3, p. 383.

## **GREGORY IX AND FREDERICK II.**

**Gregory IX**, a near relation of Innocent III, and a staunch disciple of his school, was immediately raised to the pontifical throne with loud and unanimous acclamations. His coronation was of the most gorgeous character. "He returned from St. Peter's, wearing two crowns, mounted on a horse richly caparisoned, and surrounded by cardinals, clothed in purple, and a numerous clergy. The streets were spread with tapestry, inlaid with gold and silver, the noblest productions of Egypt, and the most brilliant colours of India, and perfumed with various aromatic odours."<sup>201</sup> He had reached his eighty-first year when he ascended the throne of St. Peter. But at that extreme age his mental faculties were unimpaired. He is spoken of as having the ambition, the vigour, almost the activity, of youth; in purpose and action, inflexible, in temper, warm and vehement.

**Frederick**, it will be remembered, was a ward of Innocent III. The adventures, perils, and successes of the youthful king, as he struggled upward to his hereditary throne in Sicily, and to the imperial crown of Germany, are almost unparalleled in history. During the pontificate of Honorius his character was expanding into the prime of manhood; he was thirty-three when that pontiff died. At this time he was in undisputed possession of the empire, with all its rights in northern Italy, king of Apulia, Sicily, and Jerusalem. Historians vie with each other in their descriptions of his character, and the enumeration of his virtues and vices. Milman, in his usual poetical style, describes him as at once the magnificent sovereign, the gallant knight, the poet, the lawgiver, the patron of arts, letters, and science, whose farseeing wisdom seemed to anticipate some of those views of equal justice, of the advantages of commerce, of the cultivation of the arts of peace, and the toleration of adverse religions, which even in a more dutiful son of the church would doubtless have seemed godless indifference. Others describe him as at once selfish and generous, placable and cruel, courageous and faithless; and not forbidding himself the most licentious indulgences. His personal accomplishments were remarkable; he could speak fluently the languages of all the nations which were reckoned among his subjects Greek, Latin, Italian, German, French, and Arabic.

Both the papacy and the empire were now represented by able and resolute champions of their respective claims. Frederick would bear no superior, Gregory no equal. The Emperor was determined to maintain his monarchical rights; the pope was equally determined to maintain the papal dignity as above the imperial. The mortal strife began; it was the last contest between the empire and the papacy; but the Crusaders were indispensable to papal victory.

The aged canonist addressed himself to his work. His first and immediate act after his coronation was to urge the renewal of the Crusades at the various

---

<sup>201</sup> Waddington, vol. 2, p. 281.

courts of Europe. But his appeals were addressed to deaf ears. Lombardy, France, England, and Germany, persisted in their hostility to the Crusades and to their promoters. The fall of Damietta was fresh in their minds. Nothing, therefore, remained to the obdurate old man but to push on Frederick. Although, for political reasons, he was unwilling to leave his dominions, yet, to please the pope, he collected a considerable armament of men and ships, and embarked from Brindisi. But a pestilence broke out, which carried off many of his soldiers; and among them the Landgrave of Thuringia and two bishops. The Emperor himself, after being three days at sea, was overtaken by the malady, and returned to land for the benefit of the baths. This caused the dispersion of the army, and the temporary abandonment of the expedition.

### **FREDERICK DISREGARDS THE PAPAL EXCOMMUNICATION**

The pope was infuriated; he treated the story of his illness as an empty pretence, and, without waiting or asking for explanation, he launched the sentence of excommunication against the perjured outcast, Frederick of Swabia. This took place within six months from his elevation to the See, and from that day Frederick found but little rest in this world till he found it in his grave. In vain did he send bishops to plead his cause, and witnesses to the reality of his sickness: the pope's only answer was, "You fraudulently pretended sickness, and returned to your palaces to enjoy the delights of leisure and luxury;" and he renewed the excommunication again and again, requiring all bishops to publish it.

But in place of Frederick being humbled, and brought before Gregory IX, as Henry IV was brought before Gregory VII at Canosa, he boldly denounces the whole system of popery. "Your predecessors," he wrote to Gregory, "have never ceased to encroach upon the rights of kings and princes; they have disposed of their lands and territories, and distributed them among the minions and favourites of their court; they have dared to absolve subjects from their oaths of allegiance; they have even introduced confusion into the administration of justice, by binding and loosing, and persisting, without regard to the laws of the land. Religion was the pretext for all those trespasses upon the civil government; but the real motive was a desire to subjugate governors and subjects alike to an intolerable tyranny — to extort money, and so long as that was to be got, to care little if the whole structure of society were shaken to its foundations." And many other things of a like nature did Frederick dare to say, which shows the weakened state of the papal power. At the same time he was a good Catholic king in many respects, enacting severe laws against the heretics; but he wanted the pope to keep his own place and rule the church, and leave him to rule the empire. He was willing that the pope should be the *clerical*, but he must be the *lay*, chief.<sup>202</sup>

---

<sup>202</sup> See a long letter to Henry III of England, by the Emperor, in which he justly and severely reproaches the Roman church. Waddington's *History*, vol. 2, p. 281.

Frederick's great crime, in the mind of the fanatical pontiff, was his reluctance to go to the Holy Land. He had preferred the interests of his empire to the orders of the Holy See. This prudential calculation was his unpardonable sin. He did not see the sense of sacrificing men, money, and ships, without a reasonable prospect of success. He was resolved, however, to fulfil his vow and prove his sincerity as a soldier of the cross.

In the end of June, 1228, he again sailed from Brindisi. Much of the deadly animosity against the Mahometans which had animated the older Crusaders had passed away. Frederick was on friendly terms with the sultan; so that, instead of seeking by fire and sword the extermination of the followers of Mahomet, the Emperor proposed a peaceful treaty. This was agreed to by the generous Kamul, and a treaty was concluded on the 18th of February, 1229, by which **Jerusalem was to be made over to the Christians**, with the exception of the temple, which, although open to them, was to remain under the care of the Moslem. Nazareth, Bethlehem, Sidon, and other places, were to be given up. By this treaty the Crusaders had gained more than they had for many years ventured to expect as possible.<sup>203</sup>

But this bloodless victory, gained by an excommunicated monarch, exasperated the hoary pontiff to frenzy. He denounced, in terms of furious resentment, the unheard-of presumption of one under the ban of the church daring to set his unhallowed foot on the sacred soil of the Saviour's passion and resurrection; and bewailed the pollution which the city and the holy places had contracted from the Emperor's presence. But God overruled this remarkable event, in His providence, to lay bare to all mankind the hollowness of Gregory's professed enthusiasm for the liberation of the Holy Land. His own papal and personal dignity were a thousand times dearer to him than the birth-place of Christ. He resorted to every device which his own inventive malice, and that of his advisers, could suggest to accomplish the failure of the expedition and the ruin of Frederick. His minorite friars were dispatched to the patriarch and the military orders of Jerusalem, to throw every impediment in the way, with the expressed intent that Frederick might find either a grave or a dungeon in Palestine. A plot was laid by some Templars for surprising Frederick on an expedition to bathe in the Jordan; but, the plot being discovered, the Templars were disappointed. The revengeful old man, however, had not yet done plotting. He collected a considerable force, and, headed by John of Brienne, invaded the Apulian dominions of the Emperor. Tidings of these movements brought Frederick with all speed from the East. The papal armies fled at his approach, and the whole country was rapidly recovered by the influence of his presence.

But the papal sword was now drawn — the sword of implacable strife and discord. During the course of a long reign, Frederick, the greatest of the Swabian house, “was excommunicated for not taking the cross,

---

<sup>203</sup> J.C. Robertson, vol. 3, p. 393.

excommunicated for not setting out to the Holy Land, excommunicated for setting out, excommunicated in the Holy Land, excommunicated for returning, after having made an advantageous peace with the Mahometans," was deposed from his throne, and his subjects absolved from their oath of allegiance. But without attempting further to describe the military adventures of the empire, or to trace the faithless politics of the papacy, we will only add, that the wretched old pontiff died in his ninety-ninth year, in the midst of hostilities, and from a fit of wrathful agitation. He was succeeded by Innocent IV, who followed in the footsteps of Innocent III and Gregory IX. The cause of Frederick gained nothing by the change of pontiffs. He lived till the year 1250, when, in the fifty-sixth year of his age and the twenty-seventh of his reign, he died in the arms of his son, Manfred, having confessed, and received absolution from the faithful archbishop of Palermo.

With the death of Frederick we might suppose that papal hostilities would have at least paused for a little; but it was far otherwise. The hatred that followed him to his grave, and far beyond it, pursued his sons, until it was extinguished in the blood of the last scion of his house, on the scaffold, at Naples. The war was carried on between what was called the Guelphic and the Ghibelline armies, or the papal and the imperial factions. Pope Clement IV invited the cruel Count Charles of Anjou, the brother of Louis IX, to hasten to the help of the Guelphic army, with the promise of the crown of Sicily. "He accepted," says Greenwood, "the papal commission with the eagerness of an adventurer, and in the reckless spirit of a crusader. He was one of the most accomplished of the tyrants that figure in the world's history: cruelty, rapacity, lust, and corruption, wrought their perfect work under his command." With a large army, which had been raised for the rescue of the Holy Land, he entered Italy. Some of the bravest of the chivalry and gentry of France were in this "army of the cross." But in place of going to assist their brethren in Palestine against the Mahometans, the pope absolved them from their vow, promised them the forgiveness of sins and eternal blessedness, to turn their arms against their brethren of the house and followers of the late Emperor. This was papal zeal and honesty for the deliverance of the holy sepulchre.

**Charles of Anjou** being crowned king of Sicily, the pilgrims received a licence to slay and plunder in the quarters pointed out by the pope; and under his direction they invaded the fairest portions of the Emperor's dominions. But he was in his grave, and the magic of his name was gone. His sons hastened to collect such adventurers as their finances enabled them to assemble, the contest for a time was doubtful, but the well-disciplined chivalry of France at length overcame the ill-trained bands of the young princes. Manfred fell in battle, Conrad was cut off suddenly by death, and the younger Conradin, with his youthful cousin, prince Frederick of Bavaria, were taken prisoners, and beheaded by Charles in the public square at Naples.



Christendom heard with a shudder the news of this unparalleled atrocity. For no other crime than fighting for his hereditary throne against the pope's pretender, Conradin, the last heir of the Swabian house, was executed as a felon and a rebel on a public scaffold. The pope was charged with participation in the murder of a son and heir of kings; he had put the sword into the tyrant's hands, and must stand before the tribunal of divine and human judgment, as stained with the blood of Conradin. In the end of the following month the detested pope followed his victim to the grave, beyond which it is not our province to go, but sure we are that the Judge of all the earth will do right, and that from the throne of divine righteousness he will hear the sentence of eternal justice, which admits of no succeeding change for ever. The fire is everlasting, the worm never dies, the chain can never be broken, the walls can never be scaled, the gates can never be opened, the past can never be forgotten, the upbraidings of conscience can never be silenced — everything combines to fill the soul with the agonies of despair, and that for ever and ever. Who would not desire, above all things, to be pardoned and saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died to save the chief of sinners? (Mark 9: 44-50)

### **THE OVERRULING HAND OF GOD**

In the providence of God this odious crime, which could never be forgotten by the monarchs and people of Europe, must have tended greatly to discredit and weaken the papal power, and to strengthen the hands of the civil ruler against the usurpations and encroachments of the church of Rome. The change becomes more apparent from this date. The tragic death of Conradin of Hohenstaufen, and of Frederick of Bavaria, took place in 1268, and the famous "**Pragmatic Sanction**" became the "Magna Charta" of the Gallican church in 1269. This document was issued by the most pious king, Louis IX of France, who is commonly called St. Louis. The whole tone of this edict is antipapal. It limits the interference of the court of Rome in the elections of the clergy, and directly denies its right of ecclesiastical taxation, except with the sanction of the king and the church of France. Nothing could be more just and liberal, but nothing could more directly oppose the pretensions of the See of Rome. Under the fostering care of the civil lawyers, who were now establishing in the minds of men a rival authority to that of the hierarchy and canon law, the Pragmatic Sanction became a great charter of independence to the Gallican church.

This anti-papal edict, coming from the most religious of kings — a canonized saint — awoke no opposition on the part of the Roman See. Had such a law been promulgated by Frederick II, or any of his race, the effect would have been very different. But it is more than probable that neither Louis nor the pope foresaw what would be made of this pious decree — originally intended for the benefit and reformation of the clergy. But in the hands of Parliaments, lawyers, and ambitious monarchs, it became the barrier against which the

encroachments and lofty pretensions of Rome were destined to be broken to pieces.

Before concluding our already rather long chapter, we must briefly glance at the pontificate of Boniface VIII, as it is the crowning evidence of the papal decline, and the hinge on which its future history turns.

## **BONIFACE VIII AND PHILIP THE FAIR**

**A.D. 1295 TO 1303**

In less than forty years from the promulgation of this famous edict, since known in history as the “Pragmatic Sanction,” the proud and imperious pontiff, **Boniface VIII**, was openly defied by the king of France. He was the first to teach the nations of Europe that the Roman bishops could be vanquished, and be trampled under the feet of the sovereign, as they had trampled for ages the sovereigns of Europe under their feet. Philip the Fair — so called from his personal appearance, certainly not from his actions — was as high-minded as strong-handed, as arrogant, as jealous, as violent, as unrelenting as Boniface, and even surpassed him in craft and subtlety. The pride of Boniface was his ruin; it acknowledged no limits, and disdained to bend to circumstances, and no considerations of religion, policy, or humanity could repress his violence and cruelty. But the high looks and the haughty pride of the prelate were soon to be brought low. He was deeply involved in many quarrels with many nations, sovereigns, and noble families; but the crafty and powerful king of France proved more than his match. When Boniface sent an extravagant demand to Philip, he sent back a contemptuous reply. And when bull after bull, in burning wrath, issued from the Vatican against the king, he caused them to be publicly burned at Paris, and sent back a message to his holiness that it was the office of a pope to exhort, not to command, and that he would suffer no dictator in his affairs.

But matters could not stop here; Philip determined on humbling his adversary. In strengthening his position against the proceedings of Rome, he had recourse to the most constitutional means. While Boniface was offending the population of France by his intemperate attacks on the king the politic king was attracting the admiration of his people by standing up for the dignity of his crown and the welfare of the nation against the encroachments of the pope. He assembled the nobles and prelates of France, and with them summoned the representatives of the third estate, the burgesses of France — said to be the first convocation of the States General. This plan was soon followed by other kings which deeply affected the future history of the papacy. The king had the satisfaction of obtaining a strong protest against the papal demands, and the assertion of the independence of the crown.

Boniface, not perceiving this crisis in his own history and in that of the papacy, blindly pursued with an ill-timed arrogance his former course. Addressing Philip in a letter he says, “God has set me over the nations and the

kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy, to build, to plant in His name and by His doctrine. Let no one persuade you, my son, that you have no superior, or that you are not subject to the chief of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. He who holds that opinion is senseless, and he who obstinately maintains it is an infidel, separate from the flock of the good shepherd. Wherefore we declare, define, and pronounce, that it is absolutely essential to the salvation of every human being that he be subject to the Roman pontiff.” The king’s answer was moderate, but firm and defiant. Perplexities increased. Not content with these assertions, the pope laid an interdict upon France, excommunicated the king, and offered his crown to another. But Philip, in no wise troubled with these censures, which were now powerless, published an ordinance which prohibited the exportation of all gold, silver, jewels, arms, horses, or other munitions of war from the realm. By this ordinance the pope himself was deprived of his revenues from France.

### **THE HUMILIATION OF THE PONTIFF**

Burning with rage, Boniface repeated and redoubled his menaces. But Philip now determined on a shorter path to settle the contest. He dispatched a trustworthy officer, **Nogaret**, with Sciarra Colonna, a member of a noble Italian house which Boniface had ruined and desolated, and who was, of course, the sworn enemy of the pope. These, with other adventurers, and three hundred armed horsemen, had strict orders to arrest the pope wherever he might be found, and bring him a prisoner to Paris. The perplexed old man now in his eighty-sixth year — had retired to his palace at Anagni, his native place, to compose another bull, in which he maintained, “that as vicar of Christ, he had the power to govern kings with a rod of iron, and to dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.” But his blasphemous assumption of omnipotence was soon turned into a spectacle of human weakness and death.

A shout was heard; the pope, and the cardinals, who were all assembled around him, were startled with the trampling of armed horse, and the terrible cry, “Death to pope Boniface! Long live the king of France!” The soldiers were immediately masters of the pontifical palace. Nearly all the cardinals, and even the personal attendants of the pope fled. He was left alone, but he lost not his self-command. Like the English Thomas a Becket, he awaited the final blow with courage and resolution. He hurriedly threw the mantle of St. Peter over his shoulders, placed the crown of Constantine on his head, grasped the keys in one hand and the cross in the other, and seated himself on the papal throne. His age, intrepidity, and religious majesty, struck the conspirators with awe. When Nogaret and Colonna saw the venerable form and dignified composure of their enemy, they refrained from their sanguinary purpose, and satisfied themselves with heaping vulgar abuse on the wretched old pontiff. The wrongs inflicted on the families and friends of these officers by the cruel pope had extinguished every feeling towards him but revenge. But in the providence of God they were restrained from shedding the blood of a helpless old man in his eighty-sixth year.

While the leaders were thus employed, the body of the conspirators had dispersed themselves throughout the splendid apartments in eager pursuit of plunder. “The palaces of the pope,” says Milman, “and of his nephew were plundered, so vast was the wealth, that the annual revenues of all the kings in the world would not have been equal to the treasures found and carried off by Sciarra’s freebooting soldiers. His very private chamber was ransacked; nothing was left but bare walls.”

At length the people of **Anagni** were aroused to insurrection. They assaulted the soldiers by whom they had been overawed. But as they were now in possession of the plunder, and the pope imprisoned, they were not unwilling to withdraw. The pope was restored to his freedom; infuriated by the disgrace of his captivity, he hurried to Rome burning with revenge. But the violence of his passion overpowered his reason; he refused nourishment; he cried for revenge; but he was now impotent as other men. He removed all his attendants, shut himself up in a room lest any one might see him die — but he died; and he died alone; and will stand before the judgment-seat of God alone; and have to answer alone for the deeds done in the body, and under a responsibility entirely his own. We cross not the line, but what, oh what! must the eternal portion be of one, of whom impartial history says, “of all the Roman pontiffs, Boniface has left the darkest name for craft, arrogance, ambition, even for avarice and cruelty.”<sup>204</sup>

### **REFLECTIONS ON THE DEATH OF BONIFACE**

Five hundred and seventy-two years have rolled heavily and drearily over the dark regions of hell since Boniface died by his own suicidal course. What time for reflection, reproach, remorse, despair! Why, oh why, will men, intelligent men, risk an eternity of misery for a few short years of earthly glory, or sensual gratification, or the love of self in any way? But alas, the most solemn warnings are disregarded; the most gracious invitations of mercy are rejected, in the eager chase after their own selfish object. And when they have reached it, what is it? How much do they enjoy it? How long do they possess it? Only nine years did Boniface reign as supreme pontiff, and in order to secure that shadowy gleam of glory, he accomplished privately the murder of his predecessor Celestine, whom he had supplanted. But as a man sows, so must he also reap. Celestine has the compassions and sympathies of posterity; but over **the tomb of Boniface** all posterity has written, “He mounted the chair like a fox, he reigned like a lion, he died like a dog.” And so it was, without the consolations of the mercy of God and without the tender ministries of man, he died. When his bedroom door was burst open, he was found cold and stiff. His white locks were stained with blood, the top of his staff bore the marks of his teeth, and was covered with foam.

---

<sup>204</sup> See Dean Milman, vol. 5, p. 143; Dean Waddington, vol. 2, p. 319; Greenwood, vol. 6, p. 277.

How happy they, we are ready to exclaim, who have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for all whose faith and hope are firmly fixed on Christ alone. They are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; they belong to the royal family of heaven; they need not seek after earthly glory; they are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. They have a throne that can never be shaken, a crown that can never be cast to the ground, a sceptre that can never be plucked from their hands, an inheritance that can never be alienated. Still they can afford to linger over the melancholy end of a fellow-sinner with profound pity, and seek to turn that scene of darkest and deepest sorrow into an occasion of spiritual profit for others. One look of faith to the Saviour would have been life to his soul, chief of sinners though he was, and the first look of faith is eternal life to the chief of sinners today. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:22)

But we must now return to our history.

### **THE POPES OF AVIGNON**

We have been at some pains to present to our readers, as fully as our space would admit, the quarrel between Boniface and Philip, as it is one of the great epochs in the papal history. From this moment it sank rapidly and never rose again to the same commanding height. But the degradation of the papal chair was not yet complete according to the hard and unrelenting spirit of Philip. His next object was to have the pope under his own eye, and as his abject slave. This he accomplished in Clement V, who was raised to the chair in the year 1305. His election led to the most debasing period in the history of the Romish church. Clement, who was a native of France, and the king's obedient servant, immediately transferred the papal residence from Rome to Avignon. The pope was now a French prelate, Rome was no longer the metropolis of Christendom. This period of banishment lasted about seventy years, and is spoken of in history as the Babylonian captivity of the popes in Avignon. The great line of mediaeval pontiffs, the Gregorys, the Alexanders, and the Innocents, expired with Boniface VIII. After seventy years of exile they emerged from their state of slavery to the kings of France, but only to resume a modified supremacy.

**Philip** survived his adversary eleven years; he died A.D. 1314. History speaks of him as one of the most unprincipled, evil-hearted kings that ever reigned. But nothing so blackens his memory as his cruel assault on the order of the Templars. His avarice was excited by their wealth, and he resolved on the dissolution of the order, the destruction of the leaders, and the appropriation of their wealth. He knew that thousands of the best manors in France belonged to the institution, and that the spoils of such a company would make him the richest king in Christendom. In order to lay his hand on such treasures, he first sought to discredit the knights because of their defeat at Courtrai — the battle of the Spurs; then he exacted the consent of his

creature, Pope Clement V, and summoned a council of the realm to sanction the suppression of the order. Having now these authorities to support him — the sacred and the civil — his covetous and cruel ends were gained. Numbers of these gallant Christian knights — for such they were, though they had greatly degenerated from their original vows — were seized and thrown into prison, on a charge of having dishonoured the cross, and trampled on the sign of salvation. The severest tortures were applied to crush out confessions of guilt, numbers were condemned and burned alive, sixty-eight were burned alive at Paris in 1310. The grand master, James de Molay, was also burned at Paris in 1314. Letters were sent to all other kings and princes, under the sanction of the pope and Philip, to pursue the same course; but the European sovereigns in general were satisfied with the spoils, and adopted gentler methods in dissolving the order.

The reader may here note for further examination what we may call a new division in the history of Europe. The *papacy*, *feudalism*, and *knighthood*, which had risen and flourished together since about the time of Charlemagne, **fell together** during the reign of Philip the Fair.

But a heavy cloud was gathering over the house of the cruellest and worst of kings. The darkest shades of immorality covered with shame and disgrace his whole family. The deep dishonour of **the royal house of France** through the infidelity of his queen and his three daughters-in-law sank into his heart, and hastened his end. The people now said, it is the vengeance of heaven for the outrage on Boniface, others said, it is for the iniquitous persecution and extinction of the Templars. But he was now before a tribunal without the shelter of a pope, or the sanction of a national assembly, and must answer to God for every deed done in the body, and for every word uttered by his lips; for even the thoughts and counsels of the heart must be brought into judgment. And neither the people nor the ermine can shelter a sinner there; nothing but the blood of Christ, sprinkled as it were on the door-posts of the heart before we leave this world, can be of any avail in the waters of death. Those who neglect to apply the blood of Christ by faith now, must be engulfed for ever in the cold, deep, dark waters of eternal judgment. But the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us who believe from all sin.

We now leave this fresh division of our history, and take up the line of witnesses, and the forerunners of the Reformation.



# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 29

### THE FORERUNNERS OF THE REFORMATION

In a former chapter we brought down the line of witnesses for the truth of God and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to the great Albigensian war, during which so many of them were slain. We have also brought down the history of the papacy to its humiliation and fall in Boniface VIII and to its banishment from the throne of St. Peter with all its traditional majesty and glory in Clement V. We will now return to the chain of witnesses which we believe has been maintained unbroken since the earliest times; though the *silver line* of God's grace has often been so overlaid and obscured that it became difficult to trace its path. Still, it was ever bright to the eye of God, and the mirror on which His own grace and glory were reflected.

### THE FIRST GREAT SCHOOLS OF LEARNING

The rise of public schools or academies in the twelfth century, and the increase of intellectual activity, no doubt contributed greatly to the weakening of the papacy and the feudal aristocracy. This led the way to the rise and the establishment of the third estate in the realm — the middle classes — and to commercial enterprise. The enlightenment and the liberties of Europe from this period steadily advanced. Schools were erected almost everywhere, the thirst for knowledge increased. “The kings and princes of Europe seeing what advantages a nation may derive from the cultivation of literature and the useful arts, invited learned men to their territories, encouraged a taste for information and rewarded them with honours and emoluments.” But with such an increase of mental activity, many wild and dangerous doctrines and opinions were taught. Scholastic theology, Aristotelian philosophy, sacred and civil law, had their place and reputation by turns. It was about this time the middle of the twelfth century — that the great universities of **Oxford, Cambridge, and Paris** were founded; with many others on the continent. Greek and Hebrew were studied and lectures given in the way of expositions and commentaries on the holy scriptures, which the Lord could use in blessing to the students, and through them to others.

“To impose some restraint,” says Dean Waddington, “on this great intellectual licentiousness — to revive some respect for ancient authorities — to erect some barrier, or at least some landmark, for the guidance of his contemporaries, **Peter the Lombard** published his celebrated “Book of the Sentences.” Having studied for some time in the famous school at Bologna, he proceeded to Paris for the purpose of prosecuting his studies in divinity. The Book of the Sentences is a collection of passages from the Fathers, especially

from St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine — a sad mixture, no doubt, of truth and error; but the Lord is above all and could use His own word, though intermixed with fashionable subtleties, for the conversion and blessing of souls. It long retained an undisputed supremacy in the theological schools, and its author was raised to great honours.

## **THE REAL WORTHIES OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY**

The true pioneers of the Reformation, and the real worthies of ecclesiastical history, are difficult to discover. In humility of mind, and not seeking the praise of men, they walked before the Lord, quietly doing His will. Their ministrations of sympathy, their deeds of charity, their desire to lead souls to the Saviour, their endeavours to spread the knowledge of His word, are features of character but little observed by the eye of the historian. And the deeper their piety, the greater their obscurity. But they have their reward; their record is on high. Multitudes of God's saints during the long dark night of the middle ages thus fulfilled their mission, and passed off the scene without leaving a trace of their usefulness in the annals of time. Not so the pompous prelate, the wonder-working saint, the intriguing rapacious cardinal, the noisy polemic, and the whole host of proud ambitious enthusiasts; the pages of the annalist are principally consecrated to such.<sup>205</sup>

After a careful examination of the **prominent characters** which appear on the page of history from the twelfth century to the Reformation, they seem to fall into three distinct classes: 1, Literary men; 2, Theologians; 3, Reformers, or protestants. By noticing these in order we shall have the forerunners of the Reformation fairly before us.

## **LITERARY MEN**

The chief of this class were such men as Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and our English Chaucer. Soon after the founding of colleges, and the great uprising of the human mind, these four “stars of literature” arose almost simultaneously. It pleased God, in His infinite wisdom, to use the writings of these men, and many others, for the exposure of the evils of the Romish system, and for the weakening of its power. And while many of lesser note, and for smaller crimes, suffered bonds, imprisonment, and death, these writers were allowed, not only to escape the vengeance of the church, but to pursue their own course. Their attractive literary productions gave them such favour generally, that the priests were afraid to molest them. Thus, in the providence of God, the hitherto half-concealed corruption of morals which prevailed among the clergy, monks, and every order of the system, was brought out into broad daylight; under the veil of popular poems, pleasant tales, and satires, the corrupt state of the whole ecclesiastical system was exposed. The unbridled passions and the unblushing immoralities of the court of Avignon, and the vices of the clergy generally, became the chief subject of

---

<sup>205</sup> Waddington, vol. 3, p. 363.

song and jest in almost every country in Europe. But neither the poetry nor the prose of such writers is fit to be repeated in the pages of our "Short Papers."

**Dante**, who is considered the father of Italian poetry, and celebrated chiefly for his imaginative description of purgatory, hell, and heaven, died A.D. 1321. Petrarch, who was some years younger, had even a greater reputation for prose; less is said of Boccaccio, his writings being of a grosser character. Chaucer is well known in this country as the author of "Canterbury Tales." He was born in 1328, and died in 1400. But enough of this class, we now turn to

## **THE THEOLOGIAN**

**Robert Grostete**, or Greathead, an English prelate of the twelfth century, will illustrate what we mean by a theologian, and protester, though not, strictly speaking, a reformer. Like many others in all ages, his views of reformation extended only to the discipline and administration of the church, not to the uprooting and the pulling down of the incurably false thing as in the sixteenth century. He strongly held a high view of the papacy, though he might speak of individual popes as antichrist, because of their immorality or rebellion against Christ. But the anti-christian character of the papacy was not yet known, and the grand fundamental truths of Christianity but indistinctly apprehended. Grostete was born at Stradbroke, in Suffolk, about the year 1175. After having studied at Oxford, he went to Paris, which was then the fashion, as the Paris University was the most renowned in Europe. There he studied both Greek and Hebrew, and completely mastered the French language. According to the ideas of the age, he was considered a consummate theologian and philosopher.

In the year 1235, when he was sixty years of age, he became bishop of Lincoln, and laboured with an almost intolerant zeal and earnestness for the reformation of his diocese, which was one of the largest in England. He is said to have been much occupied in the study of the holy scriptures in their original languages, and owned their sovereign authority. This was a great advance on the past, and in the right direction; still, there were glaring inconsistencies as we now contemplate them. He was at first greatly captivated with the new orders — the Dominicans and Franciscans — because of their apparent sanctity; but he lived to discover their hypocrisy, and to denounce them as the deceivers of mankind. True reform denounced the *existence*, not merely the abuses, of the orders to be entirely opposed to the word of God. At the same time he was a bold, pious, and energetic man. He lifted up his voice against the blasphemous assumption of Innocent III, when he proclaimed himself to be the vicar, not merely of St. Peter, but of God. "To follow a pope," he said, "who rebels against the will of Christ, is to separate from Christ and His body; and if ever the time should come when all men follow an erring pontiff, then will be the great apostasy." The rapacity of the Roman court, the abuse of indulgences, the bestowal of patronage on unfit and

undeserving persons, were amongst the evils against which he contended. A bishop so active, so zealous, and so fearless, was sure to create many enemies. He was accused of magic by his contemporaries, and of daring presumption by the pope. He barely escaped martyrdom. Through the Lord's tender mercy and care of His servant, he died in peace, in the year 1253.<sup>206</sup>

**Roger Bacon**, a man of superior genius and penetration, who had a clear perception of the state of things, both in the schools and in the church, deserves a brief notice, though there is not much evidence of his genuine piety and love of evangelical truth. He is said to have been the greatest of English philosophers before the time of his celebrated namesake. About the year 1214, he was born near Ilchester, in Somersetshire.

After studying at Oxford and Paris, he became a Franciscan friar at the age of thirty-four. His knowledge of physical science — astronomy, optics, mechanics, chemistry — as well as of Greek and oriental learning, exposed him to the popular but dangerous reputation of a magician. His researches placed him immensely in advance of his monastic superiors, who found a convenient refuge for their ignorance in charging the friar with dealings in magic. He was greatly persecuted, and was many years confined in a loathsome dungeon.

Though he speaks with great respect of the holy scriptures, he strangely contends for an alliance between philosophy and Christianity, reason and faith. He denounces the sophistry of the fashionable learning of his time, and complains that the original languages of the Old and New Testament were neglected; that children got the knowledge of scripture, not from the Bible itself, but from versified abridgements; that lectures on the "Sentences" were preferred to lectures on scripture. In this way he exposed the ignorance, the superstition, and the idleness of the religious orders, and so brought down upon himself the charge of heresy and the censures of the church, though he lived and died a strict Roman Catholic, probably about the year 1292. His last work was a compendium of theology.

**Thomas Aquinas**, the "angelic doctor," was the most renowned of the schoolmen in the thirteenth century, and the truest type of a theologian. He was descended from an illustrious family, and born in the neighbourhood of Naples about the year 1225. He entered very young into the Dominican order, greatly against the will of his nearest relations, and studied at Cologne and Paris. In 1257 he was professor of theology in Paris; but died at the early age of fifty and was canonized by the pope. When his collected writings were published at Rome, in the year 1570, they extended to seventeen folio volumes.

The ecclesiastical doctors of our own day tell us — for we are wholly unacquainted with the writings of such authors — that among the best known

---

<sup>206</sup> Milner, vol. 3, p. 188. J.C. Robertson, vol. 3, p. 431. d'Aubigné, vol. 1, p. 99.

of his works are, the “Sum of Theology,” a commentary on the four Gospels, and on other books of the Old and New Testament; an elaborate commentary on the “Sentences” of Peter Lombard, the great textbook of the schools; his expositions of Aristotle; and a treatise in favour of the Catholic faith, and against the Greek church. But notwithstanding the greatness of his learning and the number of his books, it is to be feared that he was a stranger to the saving doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law; though, when on his death-bed, he showed great signs of piety, similar to that of Augustine. So that we may hope he belonged to the saved remnant of the schoolmen in those days. We rejoice in the conviction that there will be a saved remnant in heaven from all classes — emperors, kings, popes, and philosophers, which will manifest the sovereignty and the power of the grace of God in all ages, and to all classes of men. The riches and the glory of the grace will be to His praise for ever.

**Bonaventura**, a native of Tuscany, entered into the order of the Franciscans in the year 1243 at the age of twenty-one. He completed his studies at Paris, and with such success, as to acquire the title of the “seraphic doctor.” He died in 1274, as cardinal-bishop of Albano. His works were less voluminous than his contemporary, Thomas Aquinas, and less intellectual, but more devotional. “His works,” it is said, “surpass in usefulness all those of his age, in regard to the spirit of the love of God and christian devotion which speaks in him, that he is profound without being prolix, subtle without being curious, eloquent without vanity, ardent without inflation; his devotion is instructive, and his doctrine inspires devotion.” On being asked, when dying, from what books he had derived his learning, he answered by pointing to the crucifix, and he was in the habit of referring to the scriptures rather than to St. Francis, the founder of his order. But we must wait a little longer before we find the all-important doctrine of justification through simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ taught by the learned. Bonaventura as a theologian represents the *mystics*. He might have been the author of the “Imitation of Christ,” said to be written about this time by Thomas a Kempis. But never was book so misnamed. It begins with self, and ends with self. The internal emotions of the soul absorb the mystic. It is monastic Christianity. The love of Christ is purely unselfish: He laid down His life to save His enemies. “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” And faith can say, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” (Rom. 5; Gal. 2)

**Duns Scotus** was a doctor of great celebrity; but his birthplace and early life are enveloped in obscurity. Dean Waddington says, without question, “This doctor died in the year 1308. He was a native of Dunse, in Scotland, and a Franciscan.” He was a dialectician and styled the “subtle doctor.” He boldly ventured to impugn some of the positions of the great St. Thomas, which gave rise to a controversy between the Dominicans and the Franciscans that lasted hundreds of years, engaged the attention of popes and councils, as it even still divides the schools of the Latins. The principal points of theological difference between these great doctors were, “the nature of divine co-

operation, and the measure of divine grace necessary to a man's salvation," with what is called the *immaculate conception* of the Virgin Mary. The Dominicans maintained that the holy virgin was not exempt from the taint of original sin; the Franciscans supported the immaculate conception.<sup>207</sup>

**William of Ockham**, so called from his native place in the county of Surrey, had studied at Paris, under Duns Scotus and became a famous doctor of the Franciscans. According to the custom of the schools, he was distinguished by high sounding titles, such as the "singular and invincible doctor." But he was more of a metaphysician than a theologian. He boldly attacked the papal pretensions on many points, but especially as to temporal dominion and "the plenitude of power." He denied the infallibility of the pope and the general councils; and maintained that the Emperor was not dependent on the pope, but that the Emperor has the right of choosing him. These anti-papal opinions soon spread in all directions, and made their way to all classes through the agency of the mendicant friars. When threatened with the highest censures of the church, he found a shelter at the court of St. Louis, who greatly favoured the Franciscans. "Defend me with your sword," said William to the king, "and I will defend you with the word of God." He died under the sentence of excommunication at Munich, in 1347.<sup>208</sup>

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE SCHOOLMEN**

Enough — yes, we say enough — of the scholastic doctors and the philosophical divines for our present purpose. To wade through a number, and select a few as genuine specimens, is dry and wearisome work. But they form a certain link in the chain of events between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries which has its importance; and the reader will see what is meant by the general term of "the schoolmen" at that period of our history. One salutary lesson we may at least learn from the examples before us, and that is, the utter darkness and perplexity of the mind, however great the learning and study, when the word of God, in its divine simplicity, is not known and believed. One single text, "The just shall live by faith," when used of God in the hands of **Luther**, was sufficient to clear away the darkness of the middle ages, while the seventeen volumes folio of Thomas Aquinas, and all the other folios of all the great schoolmen, only deepened the gloom of ignorance and perplexity as to the knowledge of God and the way of salvation. The greatest development of the natural powers of the human mind leads no guilty sinner to the cross of Christ — to the precious blood which alone cleanseth from all sin. The enemy of souls, taking advantage of the growing celebrity of the Aristotelian philosophy, seduced the best of the doctors to believe that the most important work they could be engaged in, was the reconciling of the teaching of Christ with the decrees of the Greek philosopher, lest the scholars should think more highly of the latter than the former. Such was the

---

<sup>207</sup> Mosheim, cent. 4, chap. 3.

<sup>208</sup> J.C. Robertson, vol. 4, p. 77. For lengthy accounts of such men and their writings, see Knight's *Biographical Dictionary*.



miserable work of the best of the schoolmen at that time; but no doubt many of simpler minds, who were not blinded by the subtleties of logic, found the way of truth and salvation amidst the darkness, though much perplexed and bewildered.

The church of Christ was scarcely visible in Europe about this time, with the exception of the churches of the valleys; there the true light continued to burn, and thousands found "the more excellent way," notwithstanding the union of the powers of earth, both secular and ecclesiastical, to extinguish it. But there was the true building of God, and the gates of hell could never prevail against the works of His hands. We now turn to renew our acquaintance with the Waldenses and other Protestants of that time.

### **THE WALDENSES**

Our history naturally reverts to the fatal crusade against the Albigenses in the thirteenth century. That once beautiful region, in some respects the richest and most civilized province in the spiritual empire of St. Peter, we have seen depopulated and desolated. The peaceful inhabitants had presumed to question the dogmas of the Vatican and the authority of the priesthood, which was sin unpardonable against the majesty of Rome. The edicts of Innocent, the sword of De Montfort, the fires of Arnold, the treachery of Fouquet, and the Inquisition of Dominic, did their terrible work. But the combined powers of Europe, with fire and sword and suffocating dungeons, failed to touch the root of that which Innocent called heresy. The divine, vital principle of Christianity was far, far beyond his reach. The sword may hew down the branches, and the fire may consume them; but the living root is in the truth and grace of God, which can never fail. The spirit of Christianity is stronger than the sword of the persecutor, and the arm on which faith leans is more powerful than the combined forces of earth and hell. The weakness of the papacy was manifested in its apparent triumphs in Languedoc. The heretics, as Jezebel thought, had been drowned in blood, but a bleeding remnant was spared, in the good providence of our God, to bear testimony in every part of Europe to the injustice, the cruelties, and the spiritual despotism of papal Rome.

The exiles from the south of France who had escaped the sword went forth to the utmost limits of Christendom preaching the doctrines of the cross, and testifying with holy indignation against the falsehoods and corruptions of the dominant church. In different parts of France, in Germany, Hungary, and the neighbouring regions, the sectaries appeared in great numbers. And the popes found many of the kings little inclined to exert themselves for the suppression of the **Cathari**, as they were called, or the various religious sects. It is also more than probable that many of the persecuted about this time sought a place of rest in the quiet valleys of Piedmont. The more secluded of these regions appear to have been a secure asylum for the witnesses of God until the fourteenth century. Though known to Claudius, bishop of Turin, in the ninth

century, they seem to have escaped notoriety and conflict till about the thirteenth, if not later. But as the darkness of popery thickened around them, the brightness of their example became more seen and felt. Calumnies were invented, and the godly Waldenses were singled out as reprobate schismatics. They were spread over the valleys on both sides of the Cottian Alps — Dauphiny on the French side, and Piedmont on the Italian side, of the mountains.

From time immemorial these **Alpine regions** had been inhabited by a race of Christians who continued the same from age to age; who never acknowledged the jurisdiction of the Roman pontiff, and who had been through all periods of ecclesiastical history, a pure branch of the apostolic church. But their peaceful retreats, their happy homes, their simple worship, and their industrial habits were soon to be invaded and desolated by the Roman inquisitors. The tragedy begins. From the fifteenth to the present century, their history is a narrative of sanguinary struggles for existence, with few intervals of repose. They were often driven to desperation, yet the church of the valleys lived through it all. Like the flaming bush, it has burned but has not been consumed. Its stronghold was not merely the Alpine mountains, but the truth of the living God.

### **WALDENSIAN PERSECUTIONS**

In the year 1380, a monk inquisitor, named Francis Borelli, was appointed by Clement VII to search out the heretics in the valleys of **Piedmont**. Armed with this papal bull, the communes of Fraissiniere and Argentiere were ransacked for heretics. In the space of thirteen years, one hundred and fifty Waldenses were burned at Grenoble, and eighty around Fraissiniere. There was now a double motive for persecution a law was made that half the goods of the condemned should go to the inquisitors' court, and the other half to their temporal lords. Thus avarice, malice, and superstition were united against the unoffending peasants. But these burnings were too few and too far between to satisfy Rome's thirst for the blood of God's saints.

In the winter of 1400, the massacre extended from Dauphiny to the Italian valley of **Pragela**. The poor people, seeing their mountain caves possessed by their enemies, fled over the Alps. But the severity of the season and the coldness of the heights proved fatal to nearly all who had escaped from the hand of slaughter. Many of the mothers were carrying their infants and leading by the hand the little children who were able to walk. But cold and hunger speedily brought relief. One hundred and eighty babes are said to have died in the arms of their mothers, and were soon followed, with other children, by their broken-hearted mothers. No estimate can be formed of the numbers that perished by the tyrannies and cruelties of Rome. But heaven guesses not at their number, or even at their names. The martyred parents and the children have their record and reward eternal in the heavens; while their persecutors have had time to gauge their guilt and feel their punishment these

four hundred years in the place of hopeless woe. In allusion to such scenes, the noblest of our poets composed the following sonnet:

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;  
Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,  
Forget not; in Thy book record their groans,  
Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold,  
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow  
O’er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway  
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow  
A hundredfold, who, having learned Thy way,  
Early may flee the Babylonish woe.” — MILTON.

The fires of persecution were again kindled in the valley of **Fraissinière**, in the year 1460, by a monk of the order of Friars Minor, armed with the authority of the Archbishop of Embrun. Debarred from social intercourse, driven from their places of worship, beset with enemies, they had no resource, no refuge, but, in a good conscience and the living God. The inquisitors did their cruel work.

In Piedmont, the Archbishop of Turin laboured much to promote the persecutions of the Waldenses. Their charge against them was that they made no offerings for the dead, valued not masses and absolutions, and took no care to redeem their relations from the pains of purgatory. But the princes of Piedmont, who were the dukes of Savoy, were unwilling to disturb their subjects, of whose loyalty, peaceableness, and industry, they had received such good accounts. Yet every method which fraud and calumny could invent was practised against them. The priests at length prevailed, and the civil power permitted the dragon host to indulge its thirst for blood.

About the year 1486 the memorable **Bull of Innocent VIII** gave unlimited powers to Albert de Capitaneis, archdeacon of Cremona, to carry confiscation and death into the infected valleys. An army of eighteen thousand was raised, and precipitated into the mountain retreats of the Waldenses. Driven to despair, and availing themselves of the natural advantages of their situation, they defended themselves with wooden clubs and crossbows — the women and children praying — and turned into confusion this great military force.

**The house of Savoy** — which was established in supreme authority in Piedmont about the middle of the thirteenth century — had acted in a mild and tolerant way towards the proscribed people; but, sad to say, the regent-mother, like Theodora and Irene, during the minority of her son, is the first

to sign a state-paper for their persecution. She called upon the authorities of Pignerol to assist the inquisitors to compel the heretics to return to the bosom of the church — a worthy daughter of her mother Jezebel! But not a single one of the inhabitants could be forced to return to the arms of Rome. The sword was now let loose upon them; and soon were the streams of the valleys tinged with the blood of the saints. Subsequent edicts of the sons were more tolerant. They began to speak of their Waldensian subjects, not under the obnoxious appellation of heretics, but as *religionists*, men of the valleys, and faithful vassals; whom they recognized as privileged subjects because of ancient stipulations.

So far Rome had utterly failed to accomplish her cruel and fiend-like object. She had determined to exterminate these obstinate opponents of popery, but faithful witnesses of the truth; and to eradicate their very name from the valleys. But, wonderful to say, neither the individual executions nor the indiscriminate slaughters, the secret treachery nor the open violence, could prevail for their extinction. But Jezebel still plots; and the tiara and the mitre generally proved too strong for the crown.

### WALDENSIAN MISSIONARIES

With the twofold object of spreading the pure truth of the gospel, and of finding new and more peaceful settlements, many of them about the close of the fourteenth century left their native valleys and settled in Switzerland, Moravia Bohemia, various parts of Germany, and probably in England. But the most extensive of these colonies was formed in **Calabria** in the year 1370. Being peaceable in their manners, industrious in their habits, and strictly moral in all their ways, they soon gained the confidence of their landlords, and the affections of their neighbours. The lords of the country saw their lands enriched and fertilized by the superior husbandry of the new colonists, and granted them many privileges.

They were allowed to invite pastors from the parent church in the Alps, and to introduce schoolmasters for their children. But such temporal and spiritual prosperity, with so much social comfort, was an intolerable grievance to the evil eye of popery. The priests growled and murmured exceedingly. They complained to the landlords that the strangers did not conform to the rites of the Romish church; that they had no masses said for the repose of their dead, that they were heretics. The lords, however, were not disposed to listen to the priests. “They are a very just and honest people,” said they, “all know them to be temperate, industrious, and in their words peculiarly decent. Who has ever heard them utter a blasphemous expression? And as they enrich our lands and pay their rents punctually, we see no reason to condemn them.”

In every country and in every age the priests of Rome have been the greatest enemies to the pure, simple, religion of the Bible; to education, toleration, light, liberty, and every social improvement. Their power, their interests,

their sensuality, and every evil passion, are necessarily exposed and undermined by the introduction of light or the toleration of liberty. But the temporal interests of the lords led them to protect their tenants, and maintain them in their privileges. We have here one of the mysterious passages in divine providence, over which the mind loves to dwell a little. For nearly two hundred years these Nonconformists were allowed to remain and multiply in the districts of Calabria, in the very neighbourhood of Rome itself. But at length the pope listened to the complaints of the priests, and the dark cloud, which had long been gathering over the peaceful plains of Calabria and Apulia, burst upon them with all its fury.

### **THE DARK YEAR OF 1560**

About the year 1560, Pope Pius IV was seized with a fit of great zeal against the spread of heresy. It was reported to have taken deep root in several parts of Italy, besides the valleys of Piedmont. The subalpine communities and all infected districts were placed under papal interdicts. Another crusade was preached, and great preparations made for the complete **extermination of the heretics**. The Spanish Viceroy of Naples, commanding the troops in person, and assisted by an inquisitor and a number of monks, entered the Waldensian settlements in Calabria. Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, marched with an armed force on Piedmont; and the French King on Dauphiny. "The poor men of the valleys," with their wives and children, now saw themselves exposed to the hostile power of the French King on the one side of the Alps, and to that of the Duke of Savoy on the other. The industrious tillers of the ground in Calabria, with their ministers, schoolmasters, and families, were surrounded by the troops of the Spanish Viceroy.

Thus prepared for the slaughter of the saints, the Waldenses were commanded to banish their ministers and schoolmasters, to abstain from the exercise of their own forms of worship, and to attend the services of the Romish church. They nobly refused. Orders were now given for confiscation, imprisonment, and death. The merciless sword of persecution was openly unsheathed and did not return to its scabbard for more than a hundred years. The awful work of blood and carnage began. Two companies of soldiers, headed by the pope's agents, went on slaying, burning, ravaging the defenceless peasantry in Calabria, until the work of extermination was nearly completed. A remnant cried for mercy, for their wives and children, promising to leave the country and never to return; but the inquisitors and monks knew not how to show mercy. The most barbarous cruelties were inflicted on many, the whole apparatus of pagan persecutions was revived, until the Protestants were exterminated in the south of Italy. One of their chief ministers, **Lewis Paschal**, who affirmed that the pope was antichrist, was conveyed to Rome, where he was burned alive, in the presence of Pius IV, that he might feast his eyes with the sight of a heretic in the flames. But the piety and the sufferings of Paschal excited the pity and the admiration of the spectators.

Hundreds of Waldenses in the valleys perished on the scaffold, or at the stake, the villages swarmed with ruffians who, in the name of officers of justice, plundered the helpless inhabitants, and haled them to prison, until the dungeons were choked with victims. The plains were deserted; the women, children, feeble, and aged, were sent for refuge to the heights of the mountains, to the rocks and the forests. The men, taking advantage of the nature of the country, determined on resistance. Every man and boy that could handle a weapon were formed into small brigades, and so planted as to defend themselves against the troops. The duke was not much inclined to carry on such a guerrilla warfare and shortly withdrew his soldiers; but only for a little while. According to ancient treaties, the men of the valleys had certain rights and privileges, which their sovereigns were reluctant to violate, but too often yielded to the importunity and the misrepresentations of the Romish hierarchy. From the following dates the reader will see how brief were their periods of rest: — “The years 1565, 1573, 1581, 1583, and the period between 1591 and 1594, are memorable as dates of religious and civil conflict. But never did the majesty of truth and innocence stand out more brightly to view than during the tempests of persecution which raged at intervals for the next hundred years and more.”<sup>209</sup>

The testimony of Dr. Beattie, who visited the Protestant valleys of Piedmont, Dauphiny, and the Ban de la Roche, about forty years ago, is to the same effect. “But the fierceness of the persecution seemed only to increase the measure of their fortitude... Although marked as the victims of indiscriminate massacre, of lawless plunder, of torture, extortion, and famine; their resolution to persevere in the truth remained unshaken. Every punishment that cruelty could invent, or the sword inflict, had expended its fury in vain; nothing could subvert their faith or subdue their courage. In defence of their natural rights as men — in support of their insulted creed as members of the primitive church in resistance of those exterminating edicts which made their homes desolate, and deluged their altars with blood — the Waldenses exhibited a spectacle of fortitude and endurance that has no parallel in history.”<sup>210</sup>

Having brought down the history of the witnesses to the sixteenth century, we will now leave them, in the hope of meeting them again, when we reach that period in our general history.

---

<sup>209</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 21, p. 543.

<sup>210</sup> *Scenery of the Waldenses*, William Beattie M.D. See also a lengthy account of the Waldenses in Milner’s *Church History*, vol. 3.



# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 30

### JOHN WYCLIFFE

Every attentive reader of history must be frequently reminded of that weighty word of warning, given by the apostle: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The most solemn and practical illustrations of this divine law in the affairs of men may be seen on every page of history. He who sows tares in spring cannot expect to reap wheat in autumn; and he who sows wheat in spring shall not be required to reap tares in autumn. We may see the truth of this principle of the divine government around us daily. How often the habits of youth determine the condition of old age! Even the riches of divine grace arrests not the course of this law. The King of Israel had to hear from the mouth of the prophet the solemn sentence, "The sword shall never depart from thine house;" but this did not hinder the flow of God's tender mercy to the royal penitent: "And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." (2 Sam. 12) Such is the boundless, measureless grace of God to the truly penitent; but such too the immutable law of His government.

Although we cannot speak with the same confidence as to the general system of human society, yet we may reverently trace the hand of the Lord in the wisdom of His ways and in the accomplishment of His purposes. For example

---

The sanguinary triumphs of the papacy in **Languedoc** proved to be the means of its rapid decline and fall. In crushing the Count of Toulouse and the other great feudatory lords in the south of France, the dominions of the French Crown were greatly enlarged, and the kings of France from that moment became the irresistible adversaries of the pope. Louis IX immediately published the Pragmatic Sanction, which established the liberties of the Gallican Church, and Philip the Fair compelled the haughty Boniface to drink the cup of humiliation which the popes had often mixed for the secular powers of Europe. From 1305 to 1377, the popes at Avignon were little better than the vassals of Philip and his successors. And from 1377 to 1417, the papacy itself was rent asunder by the great schism. Thus, by an equitable retribution in the providence of God, they who sought the destruction of others were their own destroyers.<sup>211</sup> We see the same thing in England.

---

<sup>211</sup> Sir James Stephen's *History of France*, vol. 1, p. 240.

## ENGLAND AND THE PAPACY

The submission of John to Innocent III was the turning-point in the history of the papacy in this country. In the humiliation of the sovereign the whole nation felt itself to be degraded. Innocent went too far, it was an abuse of assumed power, but it recoiled upon himself in due time. England never could forget such abject prostration on the part of its king at the feet of a foreign priest. From that hour a spirit of disaffection towards Rome grew up in the minds of the English people. The usurpations, the exorbitant claims, of the papacy, their interference with the disposal of English bishoprics, frequently brought the government and the church into collision and widened the breach. But just when men's patience was almost exhausted by the many practical grievances of popery, it pleased God to raise up a powerful adversary to the whole hierarchical system — the first man who shook the papal dominion in England to its foundation, and withal a man who sincerely loved the truth, and preached it both to the learned and to the lower classes. This man was John Wycliffe, justly styled the harbinger, or Morning Star of the Reformation.

The early part of Wycliffe's life is involved in much obscurity; but the general opinion is, that he was born of humble parentage in the neighbourhood of Richmond in Yorkshire, about the year 1324. His destination was that of a scholar, to which, we are informed, the humblest in those days could aspire. England was almost a land of schools, every cathedral, almost every monastery, having its own; but youths of more ambition, self-confidence, supposed capacity, and of better opportunities, thronged to Oxford and Cambridge. In England, as throughout Christendom, that wonderful rush of a vast part of the population towards knowledge, thronged the universities with thousands of students, instead of the few hundreds who have now the privilege of entering those seats of learning.<sup>212</sup>

**John Wycliffe** found his way to Oxford. He was admitted a student of Queen's College, but soon removed to Merton College, the oldest, the wealthiest, and most famous of the Oxford foundations. It is supposed that he was privileged to attend the lectures of the very pious and profound Thomas Bradwardine, and that from his works he derived his first views of the freeness of grace, and the utter worthlessness of all human merit, in the matter of salvation. From Grostete's writings he first caught the idea of the pope being antichrist.

Wycliffe, according to his biographers, soon became master of the civil, the canon, and the municipal law; but his greatest efforts were diverted to the study of theology, not merely that barren art which was taught in the schools, but that divine science which is derived from the spirit as well as from the letter of scripture. In the prosecution of such inquiries, he had numerous and formidable difficulties to contend against. It was a study which the church had

---

<sup>212</sup> Milman, vol. 6, p. 100.

not sanctioned, and had not provided for. The sacred text was neglected, scholastic divinity had taken the place of the authority of scripture; the original language of the New, as well as of the Old Testament, was almost unknown in the kingdom. But, in spite of all these disadvantages and discouragements, Wycliffe pursued his way with great perseverance. “His logic,” says one, “his scholastic subtlety, his rhetorical art, his power of reading the Latin scriptures, his varied erudition, may be due to Oxford; but the vigour and energy of his genius, the force of his language, his mastery over the vernacular English, the high supremacy which he vindicated for the scriptures, which by immense toil he promulgated in the vulgar tongue — *these were his own*, — to be learned in no school, to be attained by none of the ordinary courses of study.”<sup>213</sup>

### WYCLIFFE AND THE FRIARS

About the year 1349, when Wycliffe had reached his twenty-fourth year, and was rising to some renown in the college, this country was visited by a terrible pestilence, called the “**black plague.**” It is supposed to have made its appearance first in Tartary, and after ravaging various countries in Asia, proceeded by the shores of the Nile to the islands of Greece, carrying devastation to almost every nation of Europe. So prodigious was the waste of human life that some say a fourth part of the inhabitants were cut off others, that the half of the human race, besides cattle, were carried off in certain parts. This alarming visitation filled the pious mind of Wycliffe with the most gloomy apprehensions, and fearful forebodings as to the future. It was like the sound of the last trumpet in his heart. He concluded that the day of judgment was at hand. Solemnized with the thoughts of eternity, he spent days and nights in his cell, and no doubt in earnest prayer for divine guidance. He came forth a champion for the truth; he found his armour in the word of God.

By his zeal and faithfulness in preaching the gospel, especially to the common people on Sundays, he acquired and deserved the title of the “**evangelic doctor.**” But that which brought him such fame and popularity at Oxford, was his defence of the university against the encroachments of the mendicant friars. He fearlessly and unsparingly attacked these orders, which he declared to be the great evil of Christendom. They were now four in number — Dominicans, Minorites or Franciscans, Augustinians, Carmelites — and swarmed in all the best parts of Europe. They strove hard in Oxford, as heretofore in Paris, to obtain the ascendancy. They took every opportunity of enticing the students into their convents, who, without the consent of their parents, were enlisted into the mendicant orders. To such an extent was this system of trepanning carried on, that parents ceased to send their children to the universities. Thirty thousand youths had at one time studied at Oxford, but from this cause the number was reduced to six thousand. Bishops, priests, and theologians, in almost every country and university in Europe were

---

<sup>213</sup> *Latin Christianity*, vol. 6, p. 103.

contending against those arch-deceivers, but it was all to little effect, for the pontiffs vigorously defended them as their best friends, and conferred on them great privileges.

Wycliffe struck boldly, and we believe fatally, at the root of this great and universal evil. Next to the decline of the papal power, which we have already noticed, we may begin to mark that of the mendicant orders. He published some spiritual papers entitled, “Against able Beggary,” “Against idle Beggary,” and on “The poverty of Christ.” “He denounced mendicancy in itself, and all the others as able-bodied beggars, who ought not to be permitted to infest the land. He charged them with fifty errors of doctrine and practice. He denounced them for intercepting the alms which ought to belong to the poor; for their unscrupulous system of proselytizing; for their invasion of parochial rights; their habit of deluding the common people by fables and legends; their hypocritical pretensions to sanctity; their flattery of the great and wealthy, whom it would rather have been their duty to reprove for their sins; their grasping at money by all sorts of means, the needless splendour of their buildings, whereas parish churches were left to decay.”<sup>214</sup>

Wycliffe was now the acknowledged champion of a great party in the university and in the church; and dignities and honours were conferred upon him. But if he had gained many friends, he had many enemies whose wrath it was dangerous to provoke. His troubles and changes now began. The friars supplied the pope with information as to all that was going on. In 1361 he was advanced to the mastership of **Balliol college** and rectory of Fillingham. Four years after he was chosen warder of Canterbury hall. His knowledge of scripture, the purity of his life, his unbending courage, his eloquence as a preacher, his mastery of the language of the common people, rendered him the object of general admiration. He maintained that salvation was by faith, through grace, without human merit in any way. This was striking, not at the outward evils merely, but at the very foundations of the whole system of popery. Led by divine wisdom he commenced his great work at the right place and in the right way. He preached the gospel and explained the word of God to the people in vernacular English. In this way, he planted deep in the popular mind those great truths and principles which eventually led to the emancipation of England from the yoke and tyranny of Rome.

### **WYCLIFFE AND THE GOVERNMENT**

The fame of Wycliffe, as a defender of truth and liberty was no longer confined to the university of Oxford. The pope and the cardinals feared him, and minutely watched his proceedings. But on the other hand, the king and the parliament entertained so high an opinion of his integrity and judgment as to consult him on a matter of grave importance to both church and state.

---

<sup>214</sup> J.C. Robertson, vol. 4, p. 201.

About the year 1366 a controversy had arisen between **Urban V and Edward** m. in consequence of the renewed demand of an annual tribute of one thousand marks, which King John had bound himself to pay to the Roman See, as an acknowledgement of the feudal superiority of the Roman pontiff over the kingdoms of England and Ireland. The payment of this ignominious tribute had never been regular, but it had been entirely discontinued for thirty-three years. Urban demanded payment in full of the arrears. Edward refused, declaring himself resolved to hold his kingdom in freedom and independence. The parliament and the people sympathized with the king. The arrogance of the pope had created great excitement in England; both houses of parliament were consulted; the settlement of the question interested all classes, even all Christendom. Wycliffe, who was already one of the king's chaplains, was appointed to answer the papal arguments; and so effectually did he prove that canon, or papal law, has no force when it is opposed to the word of God, that the papacy from that day to this ceased to lay claim to the sovereignty of England. The arguments of Wycliffe were used by the lords in parliament, who unanimously resolved to maintain the independence of the crown against the pretensions of Rome. The short, pithy, plain speeches of the barons on this occasion are curious and characteristic of the times.

In the year 1372 Wycliffe was raised to the theological chair. This was an important step in the cause of truth, and used by the Lord. Being a Doctor of Divinity, he had the right of delivering lectures on theology. He spoke as a master to the young theologians at Oxford; and having such authority in the schools, whatever he said was received as an oracle. It would be impossible to estimate the wholesome influence which he exercised over the minds of the students, who attended in great numbers at that time. The invention of printing had not yet supplied the student with books, so that the voice, the living energy, of the public teacher, was nearly all he had to depend upon. Hundreds who listened to him were in their turn to go forth as public teachers bearing the same precious seed.

### **WYCLIFFE AT AVIGNON**

Although it was now well known that Wycliffe held many anti-papal opinions, he was not yet committed to direct opposition to Rome. But in the year 1374 he was employed in an embassy to the pope, Gregory XI, whose residence was at Avignon. The object of this mission was to represent and have removed the flagrant abuses of the papal reservation of benefices in the English church. But we doubt not the Lord allowed this, that Wycliffe might see, what strangers were slow to believe, namely, that the papal court was the fountainhead of all iniquity. On his return from that mission he became the open, direct, and dreaded antagonist of Rome. The experience of Avignon and Bruges added to the results of his previous thought and inquiry, and satisfied his mind that the pretensions of the papacy were without foundation in truth. He published indefatigably the deep convictions of his soul, in learned lectures and disputations at Oxford, in pastoral addresses in his parish, and in spirited



tracts written in clear English prose, which reached the humbler and less educated classes. He denounced with a burning and long-treasured indignation the whole papal system. “The gospel of Jesus Christ,” he said, “is the only source of true religion. The pope is Antichrist, the proud worldly priest of Rome, and the most cursed of clippers and purse-carvers.” The pride, the pomp, the luxury, the loose morals of the prelates, fell under his withering rebuke. And being a man of unimpeachable morals himself, of profound devotion, undoubted sincerity, and original eloquence, numbers gathered around the dauntless professor.<sup>215</sup>

### WYCLIFFE A HERESIARCH

Wycliffe had now risen to high distinction, and had received many marks of the royal favour. In the end of the year 1375, he was presented by the crown to the rectory of **Lutterworth** in Leicestershire, which was his home throughout the remainder of his life, although he frequently visited Oxford. But dangers were gathering around him from other quarters: he had incurred the displeasure of the pope, and the prelates. At Lutterworth and in the villages around, he was the plain, bold, vernacular preacher; at Oxford, he was the great master. But whether in town or country, he raised his voice against the discipline of the church, the scandalous lives of churchmen, their ignorance, their neglect of preaching and the abuse of their privileges as ecclesiastics to shelter notorious criminals. It was only natural that such plain speaking should give offence. The professor was accused of heresy, and summoned to appear before the convocation which commenced its sittings in February, 1377.

Wycliffe answered to the citation and proceeded to **St. Paul’s Cathedral**, but not alone. He was accompanied by John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, and Lord Percy, marshal of England. The motives of these great personages were no doubt political, and added no real honour to the name or to the cause of Wycliffe. But we find a strange collision and confusion of religion and politics in the history of all the reformers. William Courtenay, son of the Earl of Devon, was then bishop of London, and appointed president of the assembly by Archbishop Sudbury. The proud and haughty bishop was moved to great displeasure when he beheld the heretic supported by the two most powerful nobles in England. So great was the concourse of people to witness this exciting trial, that the Earl-marshal assumed the authority of his office to make a way to the presence of the judges. The indignant bishop resented this exercise of the marshal’s power inside the cathedral.

“If I had known, my lord,” said Courtenay to Percy sharply, “that you claimed to be master in this church, I would have taken measures to prevent your entrance.” Lancaster, who at that time administered the kingdom, coldly replied, “that the marshal would use the authority necessary to maintain order

---

<sup>215</sup> J.C. Robertson, vol. 4, p. 203; *Latin Christianity*, vol. 4, p. 94; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article, WYCLIFFE.



in spite of the bishops.” When they reached the court in the Lady Chapel, Percy demanded a seat for Wycliffe. Courtenay now gave way to his anger, and exclaimed in a loud voice, “He must not sit down, criminals stand before their judges.” Fierce words followed on both sides. The duke threatened to humble the pride, not only of Courtenay, but of all the prelaty of England. The bishop replied with a provoking, specious humility, that his trust was in God alone. A scene of great violence followed; and, instead of the proposed inquiry, the assembly broke up in confusion. The partisans of the bishop would have fallen upon the duke and the marshal; but they had force enough for their protection. Wycliffe, who had remained silent, escaped under their shelter.

Although the people were then all Roman Catholics, there were many who favoured reform; these were called **Wycliffites**, and they prudently remained in their own houses during this excitement. The clerical party that had thronged St. Paul’s filled the streets with their clamour. The populace arose — a wild tumult began. The rioters first attacked the house of Percy; but after bursting open every door, and searching every chamber, without finding him, they imagined that he must be concealed in Lancaster’s palace. They rushed to the Savoy, at that time the most magnificent building in the kingdom. A clergyman who had the misfortune of being taken for Lord Percy was put to death. The ducal arms were reversed like those of a traitor; the palace was plundered, and further outrages might have been committed but for the interposition of the bishop, who had cause to fear the consequences of such lawless proceedings.

### **WYCLIFFE AND THE PAPAL BULLS**

Wycliffe was again at liberty. The severities which his persecutors had intended for him were not inflicted, and he continued to preach and instruct the people with unabated zeal and courage. Just about this time there were **two popes** or anti-popes; one in Rome, and one in Avignon. This fact is spoken of in history as “*The schism*,” and caricatured by some writers as the *cloven*, or *two-headed* Antichrist. Through which head apostolic succession flows, the reader must judge for himself. Wycliffe denounced both popes alike as antichrist, and found strong sympathy in the hearts and minds of the people. The most disgraceful scenes followed. The pontiff of Rome proclaims war against the pontiff of Avignon. A crusade is preached in favour of the former. The same indulgences are granted as to the crusaders of old who went to the Holy Land. Public prayers are offered up, by order of the primate, in every church of the realm, for the success of the pontiff of Rome against the pontiff of Avignon. The bishops and clergy are called on to enforce upon their flocks the duty of contributing to this sacred purpose. Under the mitred captain, Spencer, the young and martial bishop of Norwich, the crusaders moved forward. They took Gravelines and Dunkirk, in France; but alas! this army of the pope, headed by an English bishop, surpassed the ordinary inhumanity of the times. Men, women, and children, were hewn to pieces in

one vast massacre. The bishop carried a huge two-handed sword, with which he seems to have hewn down with hearty goodwill the unoffending flock of the rival pope at Avignon.

Such an expedition could only end in shame and disaster. It shook the papacy to its foundation, and greatly strengthened the cause of the reformer. From 1305 to 1377, the popes were little more than the vassals of the French monarchs at Avignon; and from that till 1417, the papacy itself was rent asunder by the great schism. But the myrmidons of the pope continued eager and constant in their pursuit after the heresiarch. Nineteen articles of accusation against him were submitted to Gregory XI. In answer to these accusations, five bulls were despatched to England, three to the archbishop, one to the king, and one to Oxford; commanding inquiry into the erroneous doctrines of Wycliffe. The opinions charged against him, were not against the creed of the church, but against the power of the clergy. He was charged with reviving the errors of Marselius of Padua, and John Gaudun, the defenders of the temporal monarch against the pope.

Wycliffe was cited a second time to appear before the same papal delegates, but on this occasion it was not at St. Paul's but at Lambeth. He had no longer the duke of Lancaster and the Earl-marshal at his side. He trusted in the living God. "The people thought he would be devoured, being brought into the lion's den," and many of the citizens of London forced themselves into the chapel. The prelates seeing their menacing looks and gestures became alarmed. But scarcely had the proceedings been opened, when a message was received from the young king's mother — the widow of the Black Prince — prohibiting them from proceeding to any definite sentence respecting the doctrine or conduct of Wycliffe. "The bishops," says Walsingham the papal advocate, "who had professed themselves determined to do their duty in spite of threats or promises, and even at the hazard of their lives, were as reeds shaken by the wind, and became so intimidated during the examination of the apostate, that their speeches were as soft as oil, to the public loss of their dignity, and the damage of the whole church. And when Clifford pompously delivered his message, they were so overcome with fear, that you would have thought them to be as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. Thus this false teacher, this complete hypocrite, evaded the hand of justice, and could no more be called before the same prelates, because their commission expired by the death of the pope Gregory XI."<sup>216</sup>

The **death of Gregory** and the great schism in the papacy combined, in the good providence of God, to deliver Wycliffe from the cruel hand of persecution, which no doubt had marked him as its victim. He therefore returned to his former occupations, and by his pulpit discourses, his academic lectures, and his various writings, laboured to promote the cause of truth and liberty. He also organized about this time an itinerant band of preachers, who

---

<sup>216</sup> Milner, vol. 3, p. 251.

were to travel through the land, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, accepting hospitality by the way, and trusting in the Lord to meet all their need. They were called "*poor priests*," and not infrequently met with persecution from the clergy; but the simplicity and earnestness of these missionaries drew crowds of the common people around them.

### WYCLIFFE AND THE BIBLE

Without following more minutely the general labours of Wycliffe, or the plottings of his enemies to interrupt him, we will now notice that which was the great work of his useful life — the complete **English Version** of the Holy Scriptures. We have seen him boldly and fearlessly assailing and exposing the countless abuses of popery, unfolding the truth to the students, and zealously preaching the gospel to the poor; but he is now engaged in a work which will a thousand times more enrich his own soul. He is yet more exclusively engaged with the Sacred Writings. It was not until he became more fully acquainted with the Bible, that he rejected the false doctrines of the church of Rome. It is one thing to see the outward abuses of the hierarchy, it is quite another to see the mind of God in the doctrines of His word.

As soon as the translation of a portion was finished, the labour of the copyists began, and the Bible was ere long widely circulated either wholly or in parts. The effect of thus bringing home the word of God to the unlearned — to citizens soldiers, and the lower classes — is beyond human power to estimate. Minds were enlightened, souls were saved, and God was glorified. "Wycliffe," said one of his adversaries, "has made the gospel common, and more open to laymen and to women who can read than it is wont to be to clerks well learned and of good understanding; so that the pearl of the gospel is scattered and is trodden under foot of swine." In the year 1330 the English Bible was complete. In 1390 the bishops attempted to get the version condemned by Parliament, lest it should become an occasion of heresies; but John of Gaunt declared that the English would not submit to the degradation of being denied a vernacular Bible. "The word of God is the faith of His people," it was said, "and though the pope and all his clerks should disappear from the face of the earth, our faith would not fail, for it is founded on Jesus alone, our Master and Our God." The attempt at prohibition having failed, the English Bible spread far and wide, being diffused chiefly through the exertions of the "poor priests," like "the poor men of Lyon" at an earlier period.

The christian reader will not fail to trace the hand of the Lord in this great work. The grand, the divine, instrument was now ready and in the hands of the people, by means of which the Reformation in the sixteenth century was to be accomplished. The word of God which liveth and abideth for ever is rescued from the dark mysteries of scholasticism, from the dust-covered shelves of the cloister, from the obscurity of ages, and given to the English people in their own mother-tongue. Who can estimate the blessing? Let the ten thousand times ten thousand tongues which shall praise the Lord for ever,

give the answer. But oh! the wickedness the soul-murdering wickedness — of the Romish priesthood in keeping the word of life from the laity! Is the glorious truth of God's love to the world in the gift of His Son — of the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin — to be concealed from the perishing multitude, and seen only by a privileged few? There is no refinement in cruelty on the face of the whole earth to compare with this. It is the ruin of both soul and body in hell for ever.

## **PARTIAL TRANSLATIONS**

The first attempt at anything like a vernacular translation of a portion of the holy scriptures appears to have been in the seventh century. Down to this period they were only in the Latin tongue in this country, and being chiefly in the hands of the clergy, the people in general received what they knew of the revelation of God from their instructions. But, as most of the priests knew nothing more than what they were obliged to repeat in the church service, the people were left in gross darkness.

The **Venerable Bede** mentions a poem in the Anglo-Saxon tongue, bearing the name of Caedmon, which gives with tolerable fidelity some of the historical parts of the Bible, but owing to its epic character, it has not been ranked with the versions of the sacred writings. Still it was a commencement in this blessed work, for which we can be truly thankful. It may have given the idea to others more competent, and been the precursor of real translations.

In the eighth century, Bede translated the apostles' creed and the Lord's prayer into Anglo-Saxon, which he frequently presented to illiterate priests: and one of his last efforts was a translation of the Gospel of St. John; which is supposed to be the first portion of the New Testament which was translated into the vernacular language of the country. He died in 735.

**King Alfred**, in his zeal for the improvement of his realm, did not overlook the importance of vernacular scripture. With the assistance of the learned men in his court he had the four Gospels translated. And Elfric, towards the close of the tenth century, had translated some books of the Old Testament. About the beginning of the reign of Edward III William of Shoreham rendered the Psalter into Anglo-Norman; and he was soon after followed by Richard Rolle, chantry priest at Hampole. He not only translated the text of the Psalms, but added an English commentary. He died in 1347. The Psalter appears to be the only book of scripture which had been entirely rendered into our language before the time of Wycliffe. But the moment was come in the providence of God for the publication of the whole Bible, and for its circulation among the people. Every circumstance, in spite of the enemy, was overruled of God to favour the noble design of His servant.

Having received many warnings, many threatenings, and experienced some narrow escapes from the loathsome dungeon and the burning pile, Wycliffe was allowed to close his days in peace, in the midst of his flock and his

pastoral labours at Lutterworth. After a forty-eight hours' illness from a stroke of paralysis, he died on the last day of the year 1384.<sup>217</sup>

## REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF WYCLIFFE

The humble Christian, the bold witness, the faithful preacher, the able professor, and the great reformer, has passed off the scene. He has gone to his rest and his reward is on high. But the doctrines which he propagated with so much zeal can never die. His name in his followers continued formidable to the false priests of Rome. "Every second man you meet in the way," said a bitter adversary, "is a Wycliffite." He was used of God to give an impulse to christian inquiry which was felt in the most distant corners of Europe, and which rolled on through future ages. No person has expressed a juster sense of the influence of Wycliffe's Biblical labours than Dr. Lingard, the Roman Catholic historian. Thus he writes, "He made a new translation, multiplied copies with the aid of transcribers, and by his poor *priests* recommended it to the perusal of his hearers. In their hands it became an engine of wonderful power. Men were flattered with the appeal to their private judgment; the new doctrines insensibly acquired partizans and protectors in the higher classes, who alone were acquainted with the use of letters; a spirit of inquiry was generated; and the seeds were sown of that religious revolution, which, in little more than a century, astonished and convulsed the nations of Europe." Many of Wycliffe's doctrines were far in advance of the age in which he lived. He anticipated the principles of a more enlightened generation. "The scripture alone is truth," he said; and his doctrine was formed on that foundation alone. But it was the translation and circulation of the Bible that gave lasting efficacy to the holy truths which he taught, and was the imperishable crown of all his other labours — the treasure which he bequeathed to future and to better ages.<sup>218</sup>

So long as Wycliffe confined his vehement denunciations to the anti-christian spirit of the court of Rome, the wealth of the clergy, and the peculiar tenets of the papacy, so long he could count on many powerful protectors. He might sweep away one by one the many abuses of the system; but no sooner did he rise into the higher region of the positive truth and free grace of God, than the number and enthusiasm of his followers rapidly declined. His doctrinal controversy secured his banishment from Oxford about two years before his death. But this, in the providence of God, was overruled to give him a period of repose at the end of a laborious and stormy life. For many years he had preached the most distinguishing doctrines of the reformers of the sixteenth century, especially those held by Calvin. But his opposition to the Romish

---

<sup>217</sup> For full details of the earliest English translations, see preface to Wycliffe's Bible, edited by the Rev. Josiah Forshall and Sir Frederick Madden, both of the British Museum. It is a noble book, four volumes folio, printed at the University Press, Oxford, and a noble monument of christian zeal and devotedness, under the sheltering hand of God. See also preface to Bagster's *English Hexapla*.

<sup>218</sup> Waddington, vol. 3, p. 175.



doctrine of salvation by works would naturally lead him to speak strongly. “To believe in the power of man in the work of regeneration,” he would say, “is the great heresy of Rome, and from that error has come the ruin of the church. Conversion proceeds from the grace of God alone, and the system which ascribes it partly to man and partly to God is worse than Pelagianism. Christ is everything in Christianity; whosoever abandons that fountain which is ever ready to impart life, and turns to muddy and stagnant waters, is a madman. Faith is a gift of God, it puts aside all human merit, and should banish all fear from the mind. Let Christians submit not to the word of a priest, but to the word of God. In the primitive church there were but two orders, bishops and deacons: the presbyter and the bishop, or overseer, were one. The sublimest calling which man can attain on the earth is that of preaching the word of God. The true church is the assembly of the righteous for whom Christ shed His blood.”

Such were the essential points of Wycliffe’s preaching and pamphlets for nearly forty years, proclaimed with great fervour and ability in the midst of papal darkness, superstition and the worst forms of worldliness. To write the words which hand down to posterity so great, so glorious, a work of God’s Spirit in our land, causes the heart to expand and arise to the throne of grace in praise and thanksgiving unfeigned, unmingled, unending. The popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, abbots, and doctors, who thirsted for his blood, have either perished from the page of history, or they are associated in our minds with the demon of persecution, while the name and the memory of John Wycliffe continue to be held with unimpaired and increasing veneration.<sup>219</sup>

### **THE LOLLARDS**

Wycliffe had organized no sect during his life, but the power of his teaching was manifested in the number and zeal of his disciples after his death. From the hut of the peasant to the palace of royalty, they were to be found everywhere under the vague name of “**Lollards.**” Crowds gathered round their preachers. They denied the authority of Rome and maintained the absolute supremacy of the word of God alone. They maintained that the ministers of Christ should be poor, simple, and lead a spiritual life; and they publicly preached against the vices of the clergy. For a time they met with so much sympathy and success, that they no doubt thought the Reformation was about to triumph in England.

In the year 1395 the followers of Wycliffe boldly petitioned Parliament to “abolish celibacy, transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, offerings to images, auricular confession,” and many other popish abuses, and then nailed their petition to the gates of St. Paul’s and Westminster Abbey. But these murmurs of a burdened and oppressed people were lost sight of for the

---

<sup>219</sup> See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 21, p. 949; d’Aubigné, vol. 5, p. 137.



moment in the dethronement and death of King Richard II, son of the favourite Black Prince, and the accession of **Henry IV**, the first of the Lancastrian dynasty.

When Henry, son of the famous Duke of Lancaster, the friend and patron of Wycliffe, ascended the throne, the Lollards naturally expected a warm supporter of their principles in the new king. But in this they were bitterly disappointed. Archbishop Arundel, the implacable enemy of the Lollards, had great influence with Henry. He had contributed more than all other adherents to the overthrow of Richard and to the usurpation of Henry. Arundel had great influence, was high-born, haughty, unscrupulous as a partisan, skilful as a politician, and withal, practised in the cunning and cruelty peculiar to the priesthood. He had made up his mind, through the influence of the king, to sacrifice the Lollards. Almost the first act of Henry IV was to declare himself the champion of the clergy, the monks, and the friars, against their dangerous enemies.

### **THE STATUTE FOR THE BURNING OF HERETICS**

Down to the beginning of the fifteenth century there had been no statute law in England for the burning of heretics. In all other parts of Christendom the magistrate, as under the old Roman imperial law, had obeyed the mandate of the bishops. England stood alone: without a legal warrant no officer would have executed the ecclesiastical criminal. "In all other countries," says Milman, "the secular arm received the delinquent against the law of the church. The judgment was passed in the ecclesiastical court or that of the Inquisition; but the church, with a kind of evasion which it is difficult to clear from hypocrisy, would not be stained with blood. The clergy commanded, and that under the most awful threats, the fire to be lighted and the victim tied to the stake by others, and acquitted themselves of the cruelty of burning their fellow-creatures." But the end of this honourable distinction for England was come. The obsequious Henry, to gratify the archbishop, issued a royal edict, ordering every incorrigible heretic to be burnt alive. The lying tongues of the priests and friars had so industriously circulated reports of the wild and revolutionary purposes of the Lollards, that Parliament became alarmed and sanctioned the King's decree.

In the year 1400 "the burning of heretics" became a statute law in England. "On a high place in public, before the face of the people, the incorrigible heretic is to be burnt alive." The primate and the bishops hastened to their work.

**William Sautree** is the first victim under this terrible edict. He is the proto-martyr of Wycliffism. He was a preacher at St. Osyth's in London. Through natural fear of suffering he had recanted and again relapsed at Norwich; but afterwards, coming to London, and gaining more strength of mind through faith, he openly preached the gospel, and testified against transubstantiation.

He was now doomed to the flames as a relapsed heretic. “The ceremony of his degradation,” says the historian, “took place at St. Paul’s, with all its minute, harassing, impressive formalities. He was then delivered over to the secular arm, and for the first time the air of London was darkened by the smoke of this kind of human sacrifice.”

The second victim of this sanguinary edict was a plain working man. His crime was a common one among the Lollards — the denial of transubstantiation. This poor man, **John Badby**, was brought from Worcester to London to stand his trial. But what must the plain country-man have thought when he found himself before the dignified tribunal of the archbishops of Canterbury and York, the bishops of London Winchester, Oxford, Norwich, Salisbury, Bath, Bangor, St. David’s, Edmund Duke of York, the Chancellor, and the Master of the Rolls? Arundel took great pains to persuade him that the consecrated bread was really and properly the body of Christ. Badby’s answers were given with courage and firmness, and in words of simplicity and plain sense. He said that he would believe “the omnipotent God in Trinity,” and said, moreover, “if every host being consecrated at the altar were the Lord’s body, that then there be twenty thousand gods in England. But he believed in one God omnipotent.” This incorrigible heretic was condemned to be burnt alive by these wolves, or rather fiends, in sheep’s clothing. The Prince of Wales chanced to be passing through Smithfield just as the fire was kindling, or he came on purpose to witness the *auto-da-fe*. He looked on the calm inflexible martyr; but on the first sensation of the fire, he heard the word, “Mercy” fall from his lips. The prince, supposing that he was entreating the mercy of his judges, ordered him to be pulled out of the fire. “Will you forsake heresy?” said young Henry; “will you conform to the faith of holy mother church? If you will, you shall have a yearly maintenance out of the King’s treasury.” The martyr was unmoved. It was to the mercy of God, not of man, that he was appealing. Henry, in a rage, ordered him to be thrust back into the blazing faggots, and he gloriously finished his course in the flames.

## **THE CONSTITUTIONS OF ARUNDEL**

Encouraged by the royal countenance, the clergy drew up the well-known Constitutions of Arundel, which forbade the reading of the Bible and the books of Wycliffe, asserting the pope to be “not of pure man, but of true God, here on the earth.” Persecution now raged in England; a prison in the archiepiscopal palace at Lambeth, which received the name of the Lollards’ tower, was crowded with the followers of Wycliffe. But there was a prisoner in the royal chamber as well as in the Lollards’ tower. Death, the messenger of divine judgment to the unpardoned, had come. In the year 1413 Henry IV died. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” These two dark and heavy clouds — death and judgment — were now ready to burst in all their fury on the unsheltered soul of the persecuting monarch. His last years were darkened by a loathsome disease — eruptions in his face. But oh!

what must his future be! Darkened not merely by a temporal disease, which divine mercy restrains within certain limits, but with the full vengeance of eternal woe; and darkened and deepened still more by the fearful shadows of the burning piles in Smithfield. Oh death, oh judgment, oh eternity, great, terrible and certain! How is it, why is it, that man, in whose very nature this solemn truth is deeply planted, should be so forgetful, and so regardless?

One thing is certain with regard to future judgment and retribution, that even where such doctrines are not expressly denied, they are not made to occupy in the pulpit and in the press, the place which they hold in the New Testament. There is a very general disinclination to press, in the plain way of scripture, these most awful subjects. Yet it cannot be denied that the discourses of our blessed Lord — whose mission was love, the tenderest compassion, the richest grace — abound with the most solemn statements of future judgment. Some may say, that the fear of punishment is a comparatively low motive: be it so, but how many there are who have immortal souls, whose intelligence is such that they are not raised above such motives! God is wiser than man, and we so find with the fullest revelations of divine love, and the freest proclamations of salvation, the most solemn warnings are given. Listen to one: “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.” (Ps. 2; Matt. 11: 20-30)

We now return to our history.

The witness of the execution of John Badby is now on the throne under the title of **Henry V**. But it is to be feared that the triumphs of divine grace in that simple artisan made no salutary impression on his mind. Few princes have had a worse character before they reached the throne and it was hoped that, having no religion, he would not be the slave of the hierarchy. But in this the Lollards were again bitterly disappointed. When he became king, he became religious according to the ideas of the time; and that was, to signalise his orthodoxy by suppressing heresy. Thomas Netter, a Carmelite, one of the bitterest opponents of Wycliffism, was his confessor. Under his influence the laws against heretics were now rigorously executed.

### **THE TRIAL OF LORD COBHAM**

The victims, under this fresh outbreak of persecution, were of all classes; but the most distinguished for character and for rank was **Sir John Oldcastle**, who, in right of his wife, sat in parliament as Lord Cobham. He is spoken of as a knight of the highest military reputation, and who had served with great distinction in the French wars. The whole ardour of his soul was now thrown into his religion. He was a Wycliffite — a believer in the word of God, a reader of Wycliffe’s books, and a violent opposer of popery. He had caused numerous copies of the reformer’s writings to be made, and encouraged the *poor priests* to circulate them, and to preach the gospel throughout the country. And so long as Henry IV lived he was unmolested, the King would

not permit the clergy to lay hands on his old favourite. But the young King had not the same appreciation of Sir John, though he knew something of his value as a brave soldier and a skilful general, and wished to save him.

The primate Arundel had been watching narrowly the movements of his antagonist, and resolved to crush him. He was accused of holding many heretical opinions, and on the ground of these crimes he was denounced to the King. He was summoned to appear and answer before Henry. Cobham protested the most submissive loyalty. "You I am most prompt and willing to obey: you are a christian king, the minister of God that bears not the sword in vain, for the punishment of wicked doers, and the reward of the righteous. To you, under God, I owe my whole obedience. Whatsoever you command me in the name of the Lord that I am ready to fulfil. To the pope I owe neither suit nor service, he is the great antichrist, the son of perdition, the abomination of desolation in the holy place." Henry thrust aside Cobham's hand as he presented his confession of faith: "I will not receive this paper: lay it before your judges." Lord Cobham retired to his strong castle of Cowling, near Rochester. The summonses and the excommunications of the archbishop he treated with utter contempt. The King was influenced to send one of his officers to apprehend him. The loyalty of the old baron bowed to the royal officer. Had it been any of the pope's agents, he would have settled the question with his sword according to the military spirit of the age, rather than have obeyed. He was led to the Tower. Ill-omened journey for nearly all who ever went that way!

The ecclesiastical tribunal such as John Badby stood before, was sitting at St. Paul's. The prisoner appeared. "We must believe," said Arundel, "what the holy church of Rome teaches, without demanding Christ's authority." He was called upon to confess his errors. "Believe!" shouted the priests, "believe!" "I am willing to believe all that God desires," said Sir John; "but that the pope should have authority to teach what is contrary to scripture, I never will believe." He was led back to the Tower. Two days after he was tried again in the Dominican convent. A crowd of priests, canons, friars, clerks, and indulgence-sellers, thronged the large hall of the convent, and attacked the prisoner with abusive language. The suppressed indignation of the old veteran at length burst out into a wild prophetic denunciation of the pope and the prelates. "Your wealth is the venom of the church," he cried with a loud voice. "What meanest thou," said Arundel, "by venom?" "Your possessions and your lordships... Consider ye this, all men. Christ was meek and merciful; the pope haughty and a tyrant. Rome is the nest of anti-christ; out of that nest come his disciples." He was now adjudged a heretic and condemned.

Resuming his calm courage, he fell on his knees, and lifting up his hands unto heaven, exclaimed: "I confess to thee, O God! and acknowledge that in my frail youth I seriously offended Thee by my pride, anger, intemperance, and impurity: for these offences I implore Thy mercy!" With mild language, but with a stern and inflexible purpose, the wily priest endeavoured to reduce the

high spirit of the baron, but in vain. "I will none otherwise believe than what I have told you. Do with me what you will. For breaking God's commandments man has never cursed me, but for breaking your traditions I and others are thus cruelly entreated." He was reminded that the day was passing, that he must either submit to the church or the law must take its course. "I ask not your absolution: it is God's only that I need." said the honest knight, his face still wet with tears. The sentence of death was then read by Arundel with a clear and loud voice, all the priests and people standing with their heads uncovered. "It is well," replied the intrepid Cobham, "though you condemn my body, you have no power over my soul." He again knelt down and prayed for his enemies. He was led back to the Tower; but before the day appointed for his execution he made his escape.

Rumours of conspiracies, of a general rising of the Lollards, were now circulated by the priests and friars. The King became alarmed; about forty persons were instantly put on trial and executed; a new and violent statute was passed for the suppression of the Lollards; the government was afraid of such a man as Cobham heading the insurrection; a thousand marks was offered for his arrest. It does not appear that there was any ground for these alarms, except in the lies of the priests — their false rumours. For about three years Lord Cobham was concealed in Wales. He was retaken in December 1417, and suffered without delay.

### **THE MARTYRDOM OF LORD COBHAM**

The once valiant knight, the man whom the King honoured, was now ignominiously dragged on a hurdle to St. Gile's-in-the-Fields, and there suffered a double execution. He was suspended on a gallows over a slow fire, and then burned to death. Many persons of rank and distinction were present. Before his execution he fell on his knees and implored forgiveness for his enemies. He then addressed the multitude, exhorting them to follow the instructions which God had given them in His holy word; and to disclaim those false teachers, whose lives and conversation were so contrary to Christ and His example. He refused the services of a priest: "To God only, now as ever present, I confess and entreat His pardon," was his ready answer. The people wept and prayed with him and for him. In vain did the priests affirm that he was suffering as a heretic, and as an enemy to God. The people believed in him. His last words, drowned by the crackling of flames, were "Praise God;" and, in his chariot of fire, surrounded by the angels of God, he joined on high the noble army of martyrs.

How sweet the song of victory  
That ends the battle's roar;  
And sweet the weary warrior's rest  
When all his toils are o'er.

The London prisons at this time were filled with Wycliffites, awaiting the vengeance of the persecuting clergy. “They should be hanged on the King’s account, and burned on God’s account,” was the cry of the false priests of Rome. From this time until the Reformation their sufferings were severe. Those who escaped prison and death, were compelled to hold their religious meetings in secret. But the papal influence gradually decreased and prepared the way for the Reformation in the next century.

**Henry Chicheley**, who succeeded Arundel as Archbishop of Canterbury, not only followed in his footsteps, but exceeded him in his exterminating wars against the Lollards. He is called by Milner “the firebrand of his age.” He urged on Henry in his contest with France, which caused an enormous loss of human life and the most dreadful miseries to both kingdoms. Arundel seems to have died by the hand of the Lord. Soon after he read the sentence of death on Lord Cobham, he was seized with a malady in the throat, of which he died. But here we leave them, and follow the Spirit of God who is working in other lands and preparing the way for a glorious Reformation in Europe.<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>220</sup> D’Aubigné, vol. 5, p. 147; Milner, vol. 3, p. 242, Milman, vol. 6, p 154; Fox’s *Acts and Monuments*.



# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 31

### THE REFORMATION MOVEMENT IN BOHEMIA

It is truly satisfactory to know, that the blessed soul-saving truths of the gospel, which had been taught by Wycliffe and his followers, were already producing results of a wide and lasting importance: that in spite of all the burnings and slayings of Rome, they were sinking deep into the hearts of thousands and hundreds of thousands, and spreading in nearly all parts of Europe. The **Bishop of Lodi** in the council of Constance, A.D. 1416 — a year before the martyrdom of Cobham, and thirty-six years after the translation of the Bible — declared that the heresies of Wycliffe and Huss were spread over England, France, Italy, Hungary, Russia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, and through all Bohemia. Thus a bitter enemy is unconsciously, or unintentionally, the witness of the influence and the inextinguishable vitality of the good seed of the word of God.

But here it will be necessary to clear our way by saying a few words on the great papal schism, before tracing the broad *silver line* of God's grace in the testimony and martyrdom of Huss and Jerome.

### THE COUNCIL OF PISA

At the commencement of the fifteenth century, the Roman Catholic church had two heads — **two rival popes**, Benedict XIII at Avignon, and Gregory XII at Rome. Each claimed to be the representative of Christ on earth, and each accused the other before the world of falsehood, perjury, and the most nefarious secret designs. So scandalous was the conduct of these two old gray-headed prelates each above seventy years of age, that all Europe beheld with shame and indignation the obstinacy and wickedness of the contending pontiffs. What was to be done, that the wounds of the divided church might be healed? Kings and cardinals began to use both force and entreaty to induce both popes to resign their claims that one might be unanimously chosen in their stead. They promised, under oath, that they would voluntarily resign if the interests of the church should require it; but they had no sooner promised than they dissembled, deceived their cardinals, and violated their pledges. Finding that no dependence could be placed on their word, that they were men without truth, honour, or religion, the cardinals of Benedict revolted and joined the cardinals of Gregory, and the two colleges assembled at Leghorn to consider what could be done to put an end to this long and disgraceful schism. They came to the conclusion that, under the circumstances, they had an undoubted right to convoke a council which might judge between the two competitors for the popedom, and restore the church to its unity.

**Pisa**, a walled city in central Italy, was selected as the most suitable place for the proposed council. This was an entirely new thing in Christendom. About a dozen cardinals, without the sanction of pope or emperor, called together the famous Council of Pisa. His infallibility was now made amenable to a new tribunal, and the highest prerogative of his throne usurped; but he had so lost the respect of mankind that the whole church justified the cardinals in assuming power over him.

The council was opened on the 25th of March, 1409. The assembly was one of the most august and numerous ever seen in the history of Christendom. We will give a few details to show the youthful reader what an Ecumenical Council was in those days when Roman Catholicism was the religion of Europe. There were present twenty-two cardinals; the Latin patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Grade; twelve archbishops were present in person, and fourteen by their proctors; eighty bishops, and the proctors of one hundred and two; eighty-seven abbots, and the proctors of two hundred others; besides priors; generals of orders; the grand master of Rhodes, with sixteen commanders; the prior-general of the knights of the holy sepulchre; the deputy of the grand master and knight of the Teutonic Order; the deputies to the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Florence, Cracow, Vienna, Prague, and many others; more than three hundred doctors of theology; and ambassadors from the Kings of England, France, Portugal, Bohemia, Sicily, Poland, and Cyprus; from the Dukes of Burgundy Brabant, etc. Roads and rivers in all directions were covered for weeks with the pomp and splendour of these dignitaries. Some of them entered Pisa with two hundred horses in their train.<sup>221</sup>

The assembly continued its sittings from March till August. After much deliberation in due form, the contesting popes were unanimously condemned. On the 5th of June sentence was passed. Both were declared to be heretical, perjured, contumacious, prohibited from assuming any longer the sovereign pontificate, and unworthy of any honour: the papacy was declared vacant. The next step was to elect a new pope. This was a more difficult matter. Where is the man, possessing such qualities, as will win back the reverence of mankind for the supreme pontiff? was now the grave question. Twenty-four cardinals, after being shut up for ten days, decided upon Peter of Candia, Cardinal of Milan, seventy years of age, who took the name of Alexander V. But the two old pontiffs despised the decrees of the council, and continued to perform their functions as legitimate popes. Benedict fulminated his anathemas against the council and against his rivals; Gregory did the same, having entered into an alliance with the ambitious Ladislaus, King of Naples, Alexander, who was still without the chair and the patrimony of St. Peter, issued his anathemas and excommunications against Benedict, Gregory, and Ladislaus, who had taken possession of the dominions of the Roman See.

---

<sup>221</sup> Landon's *Manual of Councils*.

Murmurs were now heard in all quarters that the council, instead of extinguishing the schism, had but added a **third pope**. Where is now the boasted unity of the Roman Catholic church? we may inquire; and through which pope does apostolic succession flow? The three popes, of whom Christendom was ashamed and weary, fiercely assailed each other with reciprocal excommunications, reproaches, and anathemas. Alexander V lived only about a year, and his place was filled by John XXIII, a man, says Mosheim, destitute of principle and piety. The difficulties were greater than ever; the papal kingdom thus divided against itself could not stand, it was on the eve of total ruin. Some advised that the European powers should unite and sweep away the name and power of the pontiff, or at least limit his autocracy. It was now manifest that the popes themselves would make no personal sacrifice for the peace of the church; so what next could be done to arrest the disgraceful war of the pontiffs and heal the wounds of the divided church, was now the perplexing question. Had the church been left to itself, Ladislaus might then have taken complete possession of Rome and all the papal provinces, and left the chair of St. Peter a throne in name only. But the princes of the earth were not yet prepared for such a sacrilegious overthrow. It awaited the days of Victor Emmanuel.

**Sigismund**, Emperor of Germany, the King of France, and other kings and princes of Europe, who showed more concern for the credit and welfare of the church than the selfish popes, prevailed on John XXIII to assemble a general council of the whole church, for the purpose of bringing to a close this great controversy.

### **THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE**

**Constance**, an imperial city on the German side of the Alps, was agreed upon as a suitable place for the gathering of such an assembly. It was accessible from all parts of the world, and provisions could be more easily obtained by means of its spacious lake. So great was the influx of persons, that it was reckoned that not less than thirty thousand horses were brought to Constance, which may give us some idea of the enormous concourse of people; and the ship-loads of provisions that would be required. Besides ecclesiastical dignitaries of every name innumerable, there were more than a hundred princes; one hundred and eight counts; two hundred barons; and twenty-seven knights. Tournaments, feasts, and various amusements were arranged by way of relief from their spiritual occupations; five hundred minstrels were in attendance to beguile the vacant hours of these holy priests and noblemen, and to soothe their anxious minds; they had come together for the avowed purpose of healing the almost deadly wound of antichrist; but what are the facts of history? For the space of three years and a half — commencing November 5th, 1414 — these dissolute men filled the quiet ancient city of Constance with their unblushing wickedness. To write that which was then open as day would defile the pages of our history. The heart shudders as we think of the pollution, the daring impiety and hypocrisy, of

these so-called holy fathers, to say nothing of their remorseless cruelty in the burning of Huss and Jerome.

The object of this great council was twofold. 1, To put an end to the schism which had afflicted the church for so many years. 2, For the suppression of the heresies of Wycliffe and Huss. The first of these objects was so far satisfactorily accomplished. Having established that a pontiff is subject to a council of the whole church, John XXIII was deposed on account of the irregularities of his life, and the violation of his oath to the Emperor. Gregory and Benedict were again deposed, and Otho de Colonna was elected pontiff, and assumed the name of **Martin V**.

The doctrines of Wycliffe, which John Huss and his followers were accused of propagating in the cities and villages of Bohemia, even in the University of Prague, were most offensive to the members of the council, and now engaged their attention.

### **THE SPREAD OF THE TRUTH**

The marriage of Anne of Bohemia to Richard II of England had brought the two countries into close connection, just at the moment when the doctrines of Wycliffe were making their most rapid progress. "**Bohemian scholars,**" says Milman, "sat at the feet of the bold professor of theology at Oxford; English students were found at Prague. The writings of Wycliffe were thus brought into Germany in great numbers, some in Latin, some translated into Bohemian, and disseminated by admiring partizans." The princess, whose pious exercises and study of the scriptures have been commemorated by preachers and historians, had been first affected by the reforming movement in her own land. She brought with her to England versions of the Gospels in the German and Bohemian tongues as well as in Latin. These were then precious treasures to one of her piety and love for the pure word of God; but they also show us, though indirectly, the progress which the new doctrines were making in Germany at that early period.

One of her first acts in this country shows the power of the grace of Christ in her heart, and presents a striking contrast to the persecuting spirit of Jezebel. "Some days after the marriage of the royal pair," says Miss Strickland, "they returned to London, and the coronation of the Queen was performed most magnificently. At the young Queen's earnest request a general pardon was granted by the King at her consecration. The afflicted people stood in need of this respite, as the executions, since Wat Tyler's insurrection, had been bloody and barbarous beyond all precedent. The land was reeking with the blood of the unhappy peasantry, when the humane intercession of the gentle Anne of Bohemia put a stop to the executions. This mediation obtained for Richard's bride the title of '**The good Queen Anne;**' and years, instead of impairing the popularity, usually so evanescent in England, only increased the esteem felt by her subjects for this beneficent princess."

How truly refreshing to meet with such an instance of consistent piety at such a period, and in such a station of life! But there were many such at that time in Bohemia and other lands. After the death of Anne, her Bohemian attendants returned to their own country, and carried with them the valuable writings of John Wycliffe. These had been studied by many foreigners at Oxford, and they were now diligently read by the members of the university of Prague.

The most famous of these doctors was **John Huss**, or John of Hassinetz, a village near the Bavarian frontier. He was born about the year 1369, so that he must have been about fifteen years of age when his admired and acknowledged teacher, the venerable Wycliffe, died. It is interesting to look back and contemplate the ways of our God in His care for the maintenance and spread of the truth. Who then could have thought, that in an obscure village in Bohemia, He was raising up and qualifying a noble witness, who was to bear, in his turn, “the torch of truth, and to transmit it with a martyr’s hand to a long succession of witnesses — and he was worthy of the heavenly office?”<sup>222</sup> He was early distinguished, we are informed, by the force and acuteness of his understanding, the modesty and gravity of his demeanour, and the irreproachable austerity of his life. He was tall, slender, with a thoughtful countenance; gentle, friendly, and accessible to all. His talents being of a high order, he was sent to the university of Prague, with the view of studying for the church. Here he distinguished himself by his extensive attainments as a scholar. He advanced rapidly in church and university preferments, and was made confessor to the Queen Sophia. He was also appointed preacher in the university chapel, called Bethlehem — the house of bread — on account of the spiritual food which was there to be distributed in the vernacular tongue.

This gave the bold and eloquent preacher an excellent opportunity for unfolding the word of God to the people in their mother-tongue; and we doubt not that he did so, for he was a sincere Christian and a true witness for Christ. But like most, if not all reformers, he may have been more anxious at first to preach against prevailing abuses than to instruct the people in the pure truth of God. We are convinced that this has generally been the case, and in all kinds of reform, and must account for many scenes of violence in the best of causes. If the people were led, first of all, through the blessing of God, to receive the truth, especially the truth as it is in Jesus, the end would be gained without the mind being inflamed by hearing denounced in strong language the vices of their priestly oppressors. The pride, luxury, and licentiousness of the whole clerical system had become intolerable to mankind; so that to condemn the abuses without touching the doctrines of the church was the high road to popularity.

God is wiser than men; and if we are guided by His word, we shall seek to lead the ignorant to love the truth and follow it, rather than create in their minds a hatred for error which, without the knowledge of Christ, is sure to

---

<sup>222</sup> Waddington, vol. 3, p. 175.



end in revolutionary excitement and disaster. This divine principle is applicable to the smallest disputes as well as the greatest among men. It is always better to enlighten than to agitate. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. 2: 24-26)

## **CIVIL COMMOTIONS**

Good man as John Huss was, he had overlooked the wholesome advice of the apostle. He first became involved in a university quarrel as to the privileges of the students; and again his opposition to Gregory XII gave great offence to the archbishop of Bohemia, who sided with the anti-pope. Prohibitory decrees were issued against Huss, but, being a great favourite at court and with the people, nothing was done. He was allowed to continue his preaching in the vernacular language. But in a few short months circumstances arose which kindled anew the flames of religious contention in Bohemia.

Among the first acts of John XXIII was to send forth his emissaries to preach a crusade against Ladislaus, King of Naples, and to offer the usual indulgences. The vendors of these indulgences, while haranguing the people about the value of their wares, were interrupted and exposed to insult and outrage. The magistrates interfered; some of the rioters were seized and privately executed; but the blood which flowed from the prison into the street betrayed the fate of the prisoners. Women dipped their handkerchiefs in the blood to treasure it as a precious relic; the passions of the multitude were stirred to the uttermost; the town-house was stormed, the headless bodies of these young men were carried off by the people, and borne in solemn procession to the various churches, chanting holy anthems. They were at length buried in the chapel of Bethlehem, with the aromatic offerings usually deposited on the tombs of martyrs. The three young men were now spoken of in sermons and writings as saints and martyrs, and the fermentation increased.

John Huss, knowing that he was suspected and accused of being the prime mover in the whole affair, wisely withdrew for a time from the city. He was summoned, but without effect, to appear before the tribunal of the Vatican. Huss was now declared to be under the ban of excommunication, and the place of his residence to be under the papal interdict. Regardless of these church censures, he continued preaching all over the country. The minds of the people being already greatly excited were easily aroused to the greatest indignation against the clergy. Nearly the whole of the kingdom was on his side, at least as against the abuses of the hierarchy.



## THE IMPRISONMENT OF JOHN HUSS

The agitation which these events had produced was not allayed when the Council of Constance assembled. The emperor Sigismund, who had convened the council, requested his brother the king, **Wenceslaus**, to send Huss to Constance, and promised him a safe-conduct. The terms of this passport were very explicit; it required all the emperor's subjects to allow the doctor to pass and repass in full security. Huss readily obeyed the emperor's summons, as he had always desired the opportunity of appealing to a general council. He arrived in Constance earlier than the emperor, and was immediately brought before the pope, John XXIII, for examination. His doctrines were well known, a long list of charges was brought against him; and as he refused to retract them, he was thrown into prison on a charge of heresy, notwithstanding the safe-conduct of the emperor. And in order to justify their flagrant breach of honour and pacify Sigismund, they passed a decree that no faith ought to be kept with a heretic.

Loud complaints were sent to the emperor from Bohemia. He received the first intimation of the imprisonment of Huss with indignation, and threatened to break open the prison. But on reaching Constance he was plied with arguments from the canon law, urging that the civil power did not extend to the protection of a heretic, and the treacherous priests absolved him from all responsibility. He now allowed the enemies of Huss to take their course. In the gloom of a loathsome dungeon, without a breath of fresh air, and harassed by priests and monks, the reformer became very ill. But the deluded emperor cared for none of these things. Historians, however, have not been wanting who utterly condemn the faithless conduct of the emperor, and charge him with having violated truth, honour, and humanity, in surrendering Huss to the will of the priests. "Breach of faith," says Milman, "admits of no excuse; and perfidy is twice perfidious in an emperor." Others affirm that in thus sacrificing Huss, he heaped up for himself many troubles which came upon him during the remainder of his reign. But what shall we say of the future — of the dark future under the fearful shadow of that heartless abandonment of a true servant of Christ to the merciless priests of Rome? The Master will not forget to own in that day His identification with His servant, and that in the most touching way "Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." But if such be the guilt of the emperor, what must be the guilt of the pope and the prelates? We must leave the answer to the great white throne.

Already the most gloomy forebodings were gathering around the pope. In the first session of the council, it was proposed that the **three popes should resign**, prior to the election of a new pontiff. John, the only one of the three present, promised to resign for the peace of the church, and to read his own abdication the following day. But promises, or oaths, or honour, were nothing to John. By the assistance of some friends he escaped from Constance in the disguise of a postillion. The emperor was betrayed and indignant. There was a

hot pursuit after John; he was caught in Switzerland and brought back a prisoner; but unlike his victim, Huss, he was conscience-stricken, without honour, without dignity, without courage. He was now compelled to give up the insignia of universal spiritual power, the papal seal, and the fisherman's ring. Robert Hallam, bishop of Salisbury, at the head of the English, in a burst of righteous indignation, declared that a pope so covered with crime deserved to be burned at the stake. He was taken to the castle of Goleben, where the good John Huss had been pining in irons for some months. There pope John languished till the close of the session, which was nearly four years; but, after humbling himself at the feet of the reigning pontiff, he was raised to the rank of a cardinal, and permitted to close his days in peace. But no such leniency was exercised towards the righteous and blameless Reformer, whose examination and execution we will now briefly trace.

### **THE EXAMINATION OF JOHN HUSS**

In the first movement against Huss, the archbishop of Prague instituted a vigilant search for the translations of Wycliffe's writings; and having collected about two hundred volumes, many of them richly bound and decorated with precious ornaments, he caused them to be publicly burnt in the market-place at Prague. Much was said as to the identity of the doctrines of Huss with those of Wycliffe, which the council condemned as heretical under forty-five propositions; and decreed that his bones should be taken out of their grave and burned. Huss was also charged with being "infected with the leprosy of the Waldenses." Under these two general heads, Wycliffism and Waldensianism, a vast number of special charges, grossly offensive to the hierarchy, were contained.

The council, although bent on the destruction of Huss, would willingly have avoided the scandal of a public examination. Certain passages which his enemies had extracted from his writings were thought sufficient for his condemnation without a public hearing. Accordingly, he was continually harassed and persecuted in his cell by private visits, urging him to retract or confess; and not infrequently taunted and insulted. He remonstrated against this inquisitorial secrecy, and demanded for his defence an audience of the whole council. His faithful friend, John of Chlum, with other Bohemian noblemen, requested the emperor to interfere, and with his assistance the object of the fathers was defeated, and a public trial was obtained.

On the 5th of June, 1415, John Huss was brought in chains into the great senate of Christendom. The charges against him were read. But when he proposed to maintain his doctrines by the authority of the scriptures and the testimony of the Fathers, his voice was drowned in a tumult of contempt and derision. The assembly was compelled to adjourn its proceedings. Two days after he was brought up again, and Sigismund himself attended to preserve order.

The accusers of Huss were numerous, though less clamorous than the previous day. With the exception of two or three Bohemian noblemen, the reformer stood alone. He was greatly exhausted by illness, and enfeebled by long confinement, but his noble spirit refused to bend before the violence of his persecutors. He answered with great calmness and dignity, "I will not retract unless you can prove what I have said to be contrary to the word of God," was his usual reply. When charged with having preached Wycliffite doctrines, he admitted that he had said, "Wycliffe was a true believer, that his soul was now in heaven, that he could not wish his own soul more safe than Wycliffe's." This confession drew forth a burst of contemptuous laughter from the reverend fathers; and, after some hours of turbulent discussion, Huss was removed, and the assembly broke up; he went to his prison, and they, at least many of them, to their scenes of grossest dissipation.

### THE COUNCIL EMBARRASSED

The following day Huss stood a third time before the council. Thirty-nine propositions were produced and read, alleging errors which he had advanced in his writings, his preachings, and his private conversations. Huss, like most reformers, held the doctrine of salvation by grace without works of law. He affirmed that none were members of the true church of Christ whatever their dignity, whether popes or cardinals, if they were ungodly. "True faith in the word of God," he said, "is the foundation of all virtues." He appealed to the honoured name of **Augustine** on these points; and maintained that the only title of churchman, prelate, or pope to apostolic succession was to possess the virtues of the apostles. "The pontiff who lives not the life of St. Peter is no vicar of Christ, but the forerunner of antichrist." He quoted a sentence from **St. Bernard** which gave great weight to this solemn saying: "The slave of avarice is the successor not of St. Peter, but of Judas Iscariot." The council was embarrassed, as no churchman would venture to turn into ridicule the sayings of such honoured Fathers.

The propositions treated chiefly of two things: — 1, The false theology of Rome — Huss had denounced the popish doctrine of salvation by works, in the many ways which the church prescribes; 2, The false ecclesiastical system of popery with its glaring abuses — these he exposed and condemned in the most unsparing terms. But his condemnation seems to have hinged on his boldly maintaining that no office, king or priest, availed in God's sight, if the king or the priest lived in mortal sin. When interrogated on this point by the cardinal of Cambray, who saw his perilous position in the presence of the emperor, Huss repeated his words aloud — "A king in mortal sin is no king before God." These words sealed his fate. "There never lived," said Sigismund, "a more pernicious heretic." "What!" exclaimed the cardinal, "art thou not content with degrading the ecclesiastical power? wouldst thou thrust kings from their thrones?" "A man," argued another cardinal, "may be a true pope, prelate, or king, though not a true Christian." "Why, then," said Huss, "have you deposed John XXIII?" The emperor answered, "For his notorious

misdeeds.” Huss was now guilty of another sin — discomfiting and perplexing his adversaries.

It would be tedious and uninteresting to notice all the false charges and calumnies which were heaped upon him, and the firm answers which he gave; but the following may be considered as the substance of his long trial. He was vehemently pressed to retract his errors, to own the justice of the accusations, to make unqualified submission to the decrees of the council, to abjure all his opinions. But neither promises nor menaces moved him. “To abjure,” he said, “is to renounce an error that has been held. As to the opinions imputed to me which I have never held, those I cannot retract, as to those which I do indeed profess, I am ready to retract them — to renounce them with all my heart — when I shall be better instructed by the council.” The fathers replied to the conscientious integrity of their victim, “The province of the council is not to instruct but to decide, to command obedience to its decisions or to enforce the penalty.” The tender shepherds of Constance now loudly demanded a universal retraction, or to burn alive the atrocious heretic. The emperor condescended to argue with him, the most able and subtle of the doctors, both in philosophy and theology, reasoned with him; but Huss replied with firm humility that he sought instruction; that he could not abjure errors of which he was not convinced. He was carried back to prison; the faithful Bohemian knight — **John of Chlum** — a true Onesiphorus — followed to console his worn and weary friend. “Oh, what a comfort to me,” said Huss, “to see that this nobleman did not disdain to stretch out his arm to a poor heretic in irons, whom all the world, as it were, had forsaken.”

### **THE JUDGMENT OF SIGISMUND**

The court being cleared of the prisoner, the emperor rose and said, “You have heard the charges against Huss, some confessed by himself, some proved by trustworthy witnesses. In my judgment each of these crimes is deserving of death. If he does not forswear all his errors, he must be burned... the evil must be extirpated root and branch, if any of his partizans are in Constance, they must be proceeded against with the utmost severity, especially his disciple Jerome of Prague.” When Huss was informed of the emperor’s judgment, he merely replied, “I was warned not to trust to his safe-conduct. I have been under a sad delusion; he has condemned me even before mine enemies.”

After this mockery of a trial and final audience he was left in prison for nearly a month. During this time persons of the highest rank visited him and entreated him to abjure the errors which were imputed to him. It was hoped that, through increasing bodily infirmity and private importunity he might be overcome. But not so. He who enabled him to stand firm before public threatenings and insults was with him still. “If I abjure errors,” he said, “that were falsely laid to my charge, that would be nothing less than perjury.” He regarded his fate as sealed, although all through his trial and imprisonment he professed himself willing to renounce any opinion that could be proved untrue

from scripture. The real object of these private solicitations on the part of the prelates was to shake his constancy, and induce him to retract. With the view so beautifully expressed by Waddington we entirely agree: “Many individuals of various characters, but alike anxious to save him from the last infliction, visited his prison, and pressed him with a variety of motives and arguments; but they were all blunted by the rectitude of his conscience and the singleness of his purpose. One of his bitterest enemies, named Paletz, was among the number; but though his counsels had been successful in degrading the person of the reformer, they failed when they would have seduced him to infamy.”

On the eve of the day destined for his execution, he was visited by his true and faithful friend, John of Chlum — a name which is worthy to be everywhere recorded with all honour — a name that stands almost alone for christian feeling and virtue in that vast assembly of professedly christian teachers, and that redeems our common humanity from treachery and cruelty. “My dear master,” said the noble disciple, “I am unlettered, and consequently unfit to counsel one so enlightened as you. Nevertheless, if you are secretly conscious of any one of those errors which have been publicly imputed to you, I do entreat you not to feel any shame in retracting it; but if, on the contrary, you are convinced of your innocence, I am so far from advising you to say anything against your conscience, that I exhort you rather to endure every form of torture than to renounce anything which you hold to be true.” Huss was greatly overcome by the wise and affectionate counsel of his faithful friend, and replied with tears, “That God was his witness how ready he had ever been, and still was, to retract an oath, and with his whole heart, from the moment he should be convinced of any error by evidence *from holy scripture*.”

It is perfectly evident from all history, that in the sufferings and the fortitude of Huss there is no trace of pride or stubbornness. He was firm, but he was humble; he expected death, he prepared to meet it, but never planned or schemed to escape it. “I have appealed,” he said, “to Jesus Christ, the One all-powerful and all-just Judge; to Him I commit my cause, who will judge every man, not according to false witnesses and erring councils, but according to truth and man’s desert.” This was the crowning act of his wickedness; the fatal hour was now come.

### **THE CONDEMNATION OF HUSS**

On the morning of July 6th, 1415, the council met in the cathedral. Huss, as a heretic, was detained in the porch while Mass was celebrated. The bishop of Lodi preached from the text, “That the body of sin might be destroyed.” (Rom. 6:6) It would be difficult to say, whether from gross ignorance or malice he perverted the word of God to the purpose of the council. It was a fierce declamation against heresies and errors, but chiefly against Huss, who was pronounced to be as bad as Arius, and worse than Sabellius. He closed with adulatory praise to the Emperor. “It is thy glorious office to destroy



heresies and schisms, especially **this obstinate heretic,**” pointing to the prisoner, who was kneeling in an elevated place and in fervent prayer. About thirty articles of accusation were read. Huss frequently attempted to speak but was not allowed. The sentence was then passed: — “That for several years John Huss has seduced and scandalized the people by the dissemination of many doctrines manifestly heretical, and condemned by the church, especially those of John Wycliffe. That he has obstinately trampled upon the keys of the church and the ecclesiastical censures, that he has appealed to Jesus Christ as sovereign judge, to the contempt of the ordinary judges of the church; and that such an appeal was injurious, scandalous, and made in derision of ecclesiastical authority. That he has persisted to the last in his errors, and even maintained them in full council. It is therefore ordained that he be publicly deposed and degraded from holy orders as an obstinate and incorrigible heretic.” Huss prayed for the forgiveness of his enemies, which called forth derision from some members of the council; but in the midst of it all he lifted up his hands, and exclaimed, “Behold, most gracious Saviour, how the council condemns as an error what thou hast prescribed and practised, when, overborne by enemies, thou committedst thy cause to God thy Father, leaving us this example, that when we are oppressed we may have recourse to the judgment of God.” In his closing remarks he turned and looked steadily at Sigismund, and said, “I came to this council under the public faith of the Emperor.” A deep blush passed over his face at this sudden and unexpected rebuke.

### **THE DEGRADATION AND EXECUTION OF JOHN HUSS**

The archbishop of Milan and six assisting bishops performed the inglorious ceremony of degradation. Huss was clothed in priestly garments, the sacramental cup was put into his hand, and he was led to the high altar as if about to celebrate Mass. The devoted martyr calmly observed, “that his Redeemer had been arrayed with royal robes in mockery.” The bishops appointed then proceeded to the office of degradation. He was stripped, one by one, of his sacred vestments, the cup was taken from his hand, the tonsure was obliterated by the scissors, a paper crown, daubed over with demons, was placed on his head, and with the superscription, **Heresiarch**. The prelates then piously devoted his soul to the regions of eternal woe. “Accursed Judas, who, having forsaken the counsel of peace, art entered into that of the Jews, we take this holy cup from thee, in which is the blood of Jesus Christ.” But God stood by His faithful servant in a remarkable way, and enabled him to cry aloud, “I trust, in the mercy of God, I shall drink of it this day in His kingdom.” “We devote thy soul to the infernal demons,” said the prelates. “But I,” said Huss, “commit my spirit into Thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ; unto Thee I commend my soul which Thou hast redeemed.”

In the most awfully solemn mockery and daring hypocrisy, the false church thought to rid itself of the stain of blood by declaring Huss to be cut off from the ecclesiastical body, released from the grasp of the church, and consigned



as a layman to the vengeance of the secular arm. The Emperor now took charge of the outcast, and commanded his immediate execution. The Elector Palatine, with eight hundred horse, and a great multitude from the city, conducted the martyr to the stake. They stopped before the bishop's palace, where a heap of his books which had been condemned by the council were burning. He only smiled at this feeble act of vengeance. He endeavoured to speak to the people and the imperial guards in German, but the Elector prevented him and ordered him to be burned. But nothing could disturb the peace of his mind: God was with him. He chanted the psalms as he went along, and prayed with such fervour, that the people of the town said, "What this man has done, we know not, but we hear him offer up most excellent prayers to God." On reaching the place of execution, he kneeled down, prayed for the forgiveness of his enemies, and commended his soul into the hands of Christ.

Even after Huss was tied to the stake, and the wood piled around him, the Elector asked him if he would not now recant and save his life. He nobly replied, "What I have written and taught was in order to rescue souls from the power of the devil, and to deliver them from the tyranny of sin, and I do gladly seal what I have written and taught with my blood." The faggots were then lighted; he remained firm and suffered with unshaken constancy, but his sufferings were brief. The Lord permitted a rising volume of smoke to suffocate his faithful martyr before the fire had scorched him. With the last feeble accents of his voice he was heard singing the praise of Jesus who died to save him. His ashes were carefully collected, and thrown into the lake, but his happy soul was now with Jesus in the paradise of God. The faithful piety of his affectionate followers tore up the earth from the spot of his martyrdom, carried it to Bohemia, moistened it with their tears, and preserved it as a relic of one whose name is never to be forgotten, but ever to be loved.

Thus died, thus slept in Jesus, one of the **true harbingers of the Reformation**. It is admitted by historians generally that he was one of the most blameless and virtuous of men, that the records of his constancy are not infected by a single stain of mere philosophical stoicism, or tainted by vanity, in anticipating a martyr's crown. But his death has affixed the brand of eternal infamy on the council that condemned him and on the Emperor that betrayed him. His beloved friend and brother in Christ, Jerome of Prague, soon followed him to his home and rest on high.

### **THE ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT OF JEROME**

The news of the imprisonment of Huss greatly affected his friend and fellow-labourer, Jerome of Prague. He followed him to the council; but being warned by Huss of his danger, and finding that a safe-conduct could not be obtained, he left for Bohemia; but he was arrested, and brought back to Constance in chains. Immediately after his arrest, and laden with many chains, he was examined before a general congregation of the council. There were

many to accuse and taunt him; among them was the far-famed Gerson of Paris. But the prisoner firmly declared that he was willing to lay down his life in defence of the gospel he had preached. At the close of the day he was remanded till the case of Huss was settled and committed to the care of the archbishop of Rigo. This cruel monster of a priest treated him with great barbarity. Jerome was a master in theology, though a layman, and a man of acknowledged piety, learning, and eloquence. The body of this catholic christian gentleman, who held a high place in the highest circles in Bohemia, was fastened to a tall upright beam, his head left to hang down his arms and his feet bound. Several months of weary confinement, in chains in darkness on low diet, and none to comfort or strengthen him! — his mind and spirit failed under his sufferings. He was persuaded to make a full retraction of all errors against the Catholic faith, especially those of Wycliffe and John Huss.

**Poor Jerome!** having abjured the opinions which had been imputed to him, he was entitled to liberty, but there was neither feeling, faith, honour, nor justice in the assembly. He was thrown back into prison under alleged suspicions as to the sincerity of his recantations. This opened the eyes of Jerome. God used it to the restoring of his soul. He bitterly repented his recantation; communion with God was again enjoyed: he rejoiced once more in the light of His countenance. Fresh charges were brought against him, that he might be seduced to a deeper humiliation. But the locks of the Nazarite had grown in his loathsome prison. At his final examination, being allowed to speak for himself, he surprised his enemies by asserting that his condemnation of Wycliffe and Huss was a sin which he deeply repented. He began by calling upon God to govern his heart by His grace, that his lips might advance nothing but what should conduce to the blessing of his soul. “I am not ignorant,” he exclaimed, “that many excellent men have been borne down by false witnesses, and unjustly condemned.” He then ran down the long list of scripture, noticing such cases as Joseph, Isaiah, Daniel, the prophets, John the Baptist, the blessed Lord Himself, His apostles, and Stephen. He then dwelt on all the great men of antiquity who had been the victims of false accusation, and who had laid down their lives for the truth.

The glowing eloquence of Jerome excited the wonder and admiration of his enemies, especially when they considered that for three hundred and forty days he had been immured in a dungeon. All his calm intrepidity had returned, or rather, he now spoke in the power of the Holy Spirit. He declared that no act of his life had caused him such remorse as his cowardly abjuration. “This sinful retraction,” he exclaimed, “I now fully retract, and am resolved to maintain the tenets of Wycliffe and Huss to death, believing them to be the true and pure doctrines of the gospel, even as their lives were blameless and holy.” No further proof of his heresy was required — he was condemned as a relapsed heretic. The bishop of Lodi was again called upon to preach the funeral sermon. His text was, “He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart,” applying it especially to the incorrigible heretic before him. (Mark 16:14) In reply Jerome addressed the council, and

said, "You have condemned me without having convicted me of any crime; a sting will be left on your consciences, a worm that shall never die. I appeal to the Supreme Judge, before whom you must appear with me to answer for this day." Poggius, a Roman Catholic writer then present, declares, "Every ear was captivated, and every heart touched; but the assembly was very unruly and indecent." Like Paul before Agrippa, Jerome was no doubt the happiest man in that vast assembly. He was enjoying the promised presence of His blessed Lord and Master.

### **THE EXECUTION OF JEROME**

On the 30th of May 1416, Jerome was delivered to the secular arm. The council vainly thought that, by making the civil magistrate the executioner of its unrighteous decrees, it would avoid the enduring stain of blood; but God is not mocked. He hath said of the mother of harlots, "And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." (Rev. 18:24) There the God of judgment will find the blood of Huss and of Jerome. Aeneas Sylvius, afterwards pope, in writing to a friend says, "Jerome went to the stake as to a joyful festival, and when the executioner would have kindled the faggots behind his back, 'Place the fire before me,' he exclaimed; 'if I had dreaded it, I would have escaped it.' Such was the end of a man incredibly excellent. I was an eye-witness to that catastrophe, and beheld every act." Such is the testimony of two Roman Catholic writers — Poggius and Sylvius — and members of the council. They bear witness to the indecent conduct of the council, and to the moral heroism of the two martyrs. Jerome continued to sing hymns, with a "deep untrembling voice," after he was bound to the stake. He raised his voice and sang a paschal hymn, then very popular in the church.

Hail! happy day, and ever be adored  
When hell was conquered by heaven's great Lord.

He continued to live in the flames a quarter of an hour. "Thou knowest, Lord, how I have loved Thy truth," were amongst the last words of Jerome of Prague. Not a word fell from his lips that discovered the least timidity. Both he and Huss sang in the flames to their last breath. And bright angels in waiting carried their happy souls to heaven, where they would be present with the Lord.

### **REFLECTIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF THE COUNCIL**

The reader can be at no loss to judge of the principles which govern Roman Catholics in their treatment of Protestants, or heretics, so-called, with the **Council of Constance** before him. The character of Jezebel never changes, as it then was, so is it today, and so it shall ever be. The only question is the opportunity for its display. And we must bear in mind that the burning of those two venerable heralds of the Reformation was not under a papal edict,

or a decree of the court of Rome, but by an ecclesiastical council, representing the whole church of Rome — indeed all the powers of the Roman world, civil and ecclesiastical.

The utter contempt for the retraction of the enfeebled Jerome, and the unblushing violation of the safe-conduct of the Emperor to Huss, are alike iniquitous and perfidious. What dependence can be placed on the word, the promise, or the most sacred oath, even of a mitred head, holding such principles? We must leave the reader to judge for himself; but what language could adequately express the base cowardly, traitor-like character of such principles and actions? Truth, righteousness, honour, justice, humanity, are all publicly sacrificed on the altar of ecclesiastical dominion.

The heresy of Huss and Jerome has never been clearly defined. They seem to have retained to the last their early impressions of transubstantiation, the worship of the saints and the Virgin Mary. They testified against the power of the clergy, which had so long ruled and enslaved the minds of men, and exposed their avarice and corruptions. By these public appeals they struck at the very foundations of the whole papal system, for which also they were honoured with the crown of martyrdom. But God, who is above all, was overruling these events for the spreading forth of the long-hidden gospel, and for the ripening of Europe for the approaching changes in almost all the relations of both Church and State which were accomplished in the sixteenth century. We must now glance for a moment at the *fearful effects* of the decrees of this general council.

### **THE BOHEMIAN WAR**

The martyrdom of the Bohemian doctors had aroused a general feeling of national as well as religious indignation. The Emperor, the pope, and the prelates had very soon to pay bitterly for their flagrant injustice and the fires of Constance. Retribution swiftly followed. Four hundred and fifty-two nobles and knights of Bohemia and Moravia attached their seals to a letter addressed to the council, protesting against the proceedings of the assembly, and the imputations which had been cast on the orthodoxy of Bohemia, by burning the most illustrious of their teachers. But the council refused to listen to these reasonable remonstrances, and resolved to make no concessions. The holy fathers, as they are profanely called, cared much more for their own sinful pleasures than for the welfare of the people. Although professedly assembled for the reformation of the church, the real effect of their four years' sojourn in Constance was the demoralization of the whole city and its suburbs. The licentiousness and profligacy of this council has never been equalled.

In the year 1418, just before the council was dissolved, **Martin V**, now sole and undisputed pope, sent forth a bull of crusade against the contumacious heretics, requiring all authorities, ecclesiastical and civil, to labour for the

suppression of the heresies of Wycliffe, Huss, and Jerome. The question was now fairly committed to the decision of the sword. Cardinal John, of Ragusa, was sent as legate to Bohemia. He was a violent man, and talked of reducing the country by fire and sword. In his character as legate he burned several persons who opposed his authority. The Bohemians, by such atrocities, were roused to fury. The followers of Huss united and became a strong party. They bound themselves in the most solemn manner to carry out the reformation principles of their martyred chief. Huss had strongly condemned the practice of the church in withholding the *cup* from the laity: this they adopted as the symbol of their community, and displayed the eucharistic cup on their banners. Headed by **Ziska**, the one-eyed, a knight of great military genius, they moved about the country, everywhere enforcing the administration of the sacrament in *both* kinds — the wine as well as the bread.

The churches of Prague having been refused to the clergy who followed the doctrines of Huss, they began to look for places where they could enjoy freedom of worship. A great meeting of Hussites was convened in the month of July, 1419, on a high hill, south of Prague, where they were formally united by the celebration of the communion in the open air. It must have been an imposing sight, but alas! the sequel of their history draws a dark shadow over it. On the spacious summit of that hill three hundred tables were spread, and forty-two thousand, consisting of men, women, and children partook of the sacrament in both kinds. A love-feast followed the communion, at which the rich shared with the poor, but no drinking, dancing, gaming, or music, was allowed. There the people encamped in tents, and, being fond of the use of scripture names, called it *Mount Tabor*, whence they obtained the name of Taborites. They spoke of themselves as *the chosen people of God*, and stigmatized their enemies, the Roman Catholics, as Amalekites, Moabites, and Philistines.

The luxury, pride, avarice, simony, and other vices of the clergy, were denounced on the hill of Tabor, and Ziska and his followers exhorted the communicants to engage in the work of church reformation. This great assembly, under Ziska, first marched to Prague, where they arrived at night. The following day, a Hussite clergyman, walking at the head of a procession, with a cup in his hand, was struck with a stone as he passed the town hall, where the magistrates were sitting. Thus insulted, many of them rushed furiously into the hall; a fierce struggle ensued: the magistrates were overpowered, some were killed, some fled, and some were thrown from the windows. The alarm spread, the people of the old religion rose to arms, the reformers fought against them as the enemies of the true faith. Ziska and his followers proclaimed themselves to be the servants of God, and their mission the reformation of His church. But alas! they commenced with the work of destruction rather than of reformation. Convents were attacked and plundered, monks were slaughtered, churches and monasteries were reduced to ruins; images, organs, pictures, and all the instruments of idolatry, as they

were called, were broken to pieces. The movement spread to other places, and the most desolating war followed, which continued for many, many years.

### **THE VICTORIES OF THE TABORITES**

Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia, died just at this time from a fit of apoplexy; and as he left no heir, Bohemia fell by inheritance to his brother Sigismund. This change was the signal for open war on the part of the reformers. Sigismund was execrated as a traitor, he had lured Huss to Constance; he had abandoned him to his merciless foes, the enemies of the true faith. With the fury of religious fanaticism they demolished and defaced everything that bore the stamp of the Romish religion. The Emperor, as soon as possible, turned his special attention to his newly-inherited kingdom, but in place of a loyal welcome, his sovereignty was repudiated everywhere. The first crusading army was defeated by the victorious Ziska, and Sigismund was obliged to flee from the walls of Prague.

The followers of Ziska, being chiefly peasantry, had at first no other weapons of warfare but their agricultural implements, such as flails, clubs, pitchforks, and scythes; so that Sigismund tauntingly designated them *threshers*; but he was soon made to feel their irresistible power, and the deadly wounds which they inflicted. Ziska taught them to load their implements with iron, and to range their rough carts in the battle-field in such a manner as to serve the purpose of a fortress, and of the ancient war-chariots. Martin V, now safe in Rome, heard from a distance of Ziska carrying fire and sword in all directions — massacring clergy and monks, burning and demolishing churches and convents, wreaking vengeance on the enemies of the true faith, and rooting out idolatry, as his divine mission. A bull was issued at the Emperor's request, summoning the faithful to rise for the extirpation of Wycliffism, Hussism, and other heresies, and promising full indulgences to those who should take part in the enterprise either personally or by substitute. An army was collected from nearly all European countries; which is variously estimated from one hundred thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand.

The spirit of the Hussites was strengthened on all such occasions by following the example of the hill of Tabor. They celebrated the communion, swearing to spend their property and their blood to the utmost in defence of the Reformation so-called. The eucharistic chalice was not only represented on the banners of the Taborites, but it was carried by their clergy at the head of their armies. Sigismund entered Bohemia at the head of the crusading hosts; and determined to over-awe the rebellious into obedience, he burned without scruple the heretical teachers, and dragged others at the tails of his horses. But the hour of vengeance was near. Burning with indignation and religious enthusiasm, Ziska and his exasperated followers surprised the crusaders, and defeated them with great slaughter on a hill near Prague, which still bears his name. A second campaign saw the imperial army break up and, panic-stricken, flee before the renowned Ziska. A third and a fourth time the



Emperor invaded the country at the head of vast forces — in one case, it is said, two hundred thousand men, but each time the armies of the church fled in confusion and disgrace before the invincible Taborites. In some instances they pursued and massacred, rather than routed, the enemies of God and of the true faith. The cruelty on both sides became excessive. The Taborites who chanced to fall into their enemies' hands were burned alive or sold as slaves. It was a war of revenge, of extermination, and considered to be the holiest of duties to seize the property and spill the blood of God's enemies.

### **THE TOTAL DEFEAT OF THE PAPAL ARMY**

The broken-hearted Emperor was now accused of personal cowardice. A fifth crusade was resolved upon; it was to be conducted by a cardinal. Preparations were made on a very great scale. Four large armies, amounting to about two hundred thousand men, crossed the Bohemian frontier. The force which the Taborites were able to muster amounted to thirty-one thousand. But the great papal enterprise ended in the most disgraceful failure. The Germans, on coming in sight of Ziska with his wild war-chariots, were seized with a panic; the Cardinal Julian alone conducted himself with courage. As he was advancing, he met his troops fleeing in abject terror. With crucifix in hand, he entreated them by the most solemn considerations of religion to rally, but in vain. He himself was constrained to fly; he hardly escaped in the disguise of a common soldier, and left behind him the papal bull, his cardinal's hat, and his pontifical robes. These trophies were preserved for two centuries in the church of Taas, and the captured banners were hung in the Tron church in Prague. The Germans lost ten thousand men in this scandalous flight, besides many more who, in their retreat, were pursued and slain by the peasantry.

After carrying on the war for **thirteen years**, Ziska died. So greatly was he lamented by the Taborites, that they changed their name to Orphans. He was succeeded by **Procopius**, a name almost equally famous in the history of the Bohemian war. But the Emperor was not disposed to continue so ruinous a contest. The retributive sword of Ziska had shorn him of his glory in the field, and frustrated his intentions of strengthening the church. At the battle, or rather the slaughter, of Aussig in 1426, the estimated loss of the Germans varies from nine to fifteen thousand men, while the Bohemians lost only fifty. And almost every outward vestige of the Romish religion had been swept away by the overwhelming flood. Churches were burnt with those who had taken refuge in them. Sylvius, the Roman historian, describes the churches and convents of Bohemia as more numerous, more magnificent, more highly adorned, than those of any other European country; but, with few exceptions, all were demolished by the irresistible Taborites. More than five hundred churches and monasteries, with all their symbols of idolatry, were utterly destroyed. Such was the terrible retributive providence of God in His righteous dealings with the murderers of Huss and Jerome. The fearful visitation fell and with the most withering severity, on both the empire and the church of Rome.

## INTERNAL DIVISIONS

The Hussites were not all of one mind as to a proposed treaty; so they divided and formed two parties. The Calixtines — from Calix, a cup — the more moderate party, were disposed to waive all other subjects of complaint, provided the cup was restored to the laity, with permission to read the word of God. The Taborites went much farther, they adhered to the doctrines of Huss. Besides the celebration of the Lord's supper in both kinds, they contended for a complete reformation of the church — the abolition of all popish errors and ceremonies, and the establishment of a scriptural system of doctrine and discipline.

Treachery, the unfailing resource of Rome, now saw her way clear to encompass the ruin of the Taborites. At the **council of Basle**, Rokyzan, a bishop of the moderates and an eloquent man, was raised to the archbishopric of Prague, that through his influence their ends might be gained. Four articles were agreed upon, called the Compact; the obedient Calixtines were received back to the bosom of the church but the privileges thus granted were soon afterwards annulled by the pope. The Taborites, refusing to sign the Compact, were persecuted both by their old friends the Calixtines and the Catholics. But, in place of resisting by means of the carnal sword as in the days of Ziska and Procopius; they were led to see that faith in God, patience, perseverance in well-doing, believing prayer, were the proper arms of a christian soldier. Rokyzan, who had still some kindly feeling for his old friends, obtained permission from the sovereign for the persecuted Taborites to withdraw to the lordship of Lititz, on the confines of Moravia and Silesia, and there to establish a colony and regulate their own worship and discipline.

## THE UNITED BRETHREN

The first migration to Moravia was in 1451. Many of the citizens of Prague, with some of the nobility and learned men, and even some of the most pious of the Calixtines, joined them. They now assumed the name of *Unitas Fratrum*, or the *United Brethren*. This was the origin of a community which has continued to our own day. For the space of three years they enjoyed peace and liberty of conscience. The missionary spirit, by which the **Moravians** have always been so distinguished, displayed itself at that early period of their history. Now the *silver line* of the Saviour's love and their christian zeal shines brightly. We could not see a trace of it when they were using carnal weapons for the defence of the truth of God. But no sooner did grace shine and their numbers increase, than the Romish priests eyed them with suspicion. Many souls were converted through their preaching, and congregations were formed in different parts of the country.

False accusations were circulated by the monks and friars evil work which always suited their lying tongues. Sedition! was the cry. The Moravians are gathering numbers, said the monks, that they may renew the Taborite wars

and seize the government. The King was alarmed; the unprincipled Rokyzan, afraid of losing his dignity in the church, sided with the Catholics and influenced the Calixtines to turn against their brethren. They were denounced as incorrigible heretics. A bitter persecution broke out in all its fury on the missionary brethren. But the tares seem to have been separated from the wheat, for, unlike the days of Ziska, the new generation of the old Hussites determined to use no carnal weapon in defence of themselves or their religion. But the undaunted courage, which characterized their forefathers in the battle-field, was now displayed in their patient endurance of suffering for Christ's sake. Under their heaviest afflictions their energy never failed them. They were declared to have forfeited the common rights of subjects; their property was confiscated; they were even driven from their homes in the depth of winter, and compelled to wander in the open fields, where many perished with cold and hunger. All the prisons in Bohemia, especially in Prague, were crowded with the brethren. Various sorts of tortures were inflicted on the prisoners: some had their hands and feet cut off; others were torn on the rack, burned alive, or barbarously murdered. These outrages continued for nearly twenty years with little abatement, but the death of the King in 1471, and the remorse of Rokyzan, the archbishop, brought a measure of relief. They were no longer exposed to torture, but were driven out of the country.

The United Brethren, thus compelled to leave their homes in Lititz and other towns and villages, were obliged to live in forests and under the shelter of rocks, kindling their fires at night. And, singular as it may seem, they not only employed themselves in comforting each other, but in perfecting, what they called, *the constitution of the church*; forgetting, as many others have done, that God had perfected the constitution of the church at Pentecost, and revealed it to us in His holy word. About seventy persons held a synod in the woods. Two resolutions were adopted which marked the future character of the Moravians: — 1, That it was necessary to provide fit men for the ministerial office; 2, That they were to be chosen by lot like Matthias in Acts 1: 24-26. As a fundamental principle, the Brethren held, “that the holy scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice.” At the same time a distinction was made between essentials and non-essentials which leaves ample room for both the human will and the imagination. Essentials belong to the question of man's salvation; non-essentials, to the externals of Christianity such as rites, ceremonies, customs, and ecclesiastical regulations. And, further, these may be altered according to the best of human judgment, so that the great work of the gospel may be promoted. This is human, not exclusively Moravian. It is, practically, the common saying, “The end justifies the means.” But surely what God has revealed can never be nonessential, and what He has not revealed should never be introduced into His assembly.

The Brethren who had been banished from Moravia were kindly received in Hungary and Moldavia; and were greatly distinguished by their missionary and other religious labours. About the year 1470, they published in the

**Bohemian language** a translation of the whole Bible. This is the second translation upon record of the Bible into one of the European tongues. It passed through several editions rapidly, and in this way these interesting and devoted people prepared the way for Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin.

### **THE CONNECTION OF THE WITNESSES**

Before leaving the Moravians, we may recall to the reader's mind the interesting fact of an early connection between them and the Waldenses, if not the Paulicians. Bohemia and Moravia continued in heathenism as late as the ninth century when they received the gospel from Eastern missionaries; probably also from the Paulicians. Peter Waldo, in the twelfth century, driven from Lyon by persecution, found a refuge in Bohemia, where he laboured for twenty years with great success. In the fourteenth century his followers in Bohemia and Passau are said to have amounted to eighty thousand, and throughout Europe to about eight hundred thousand. The court of Rome, irritated by the zeal and offended by the practices of the united Paulician, Waldensian, Bohemian, and Moravian Christians, resolved on their subjugation to the Roman yoke. Celibacy was enjoined, the cup forbidden to the laity, and the church service performed in Latin. A struggle commenced, the Bohemians protested, Rome persecuted, and though many continued firm, others gradually declined, and lost much of their original purity of doctrine and simplicity of worship. So things continued for about three hundred years, when John Huss and Jerome of Prague again raised the standard of truth, witnessed against the corruptions of Rome, and kindled by the flames of their martyrdom a light which soon spread throughout Europe, and which continues to shine in our day, through the good providence of God. The mysterious way by which the light travelled, we must now trace.<sup>223</sup>

---

<sup>223</sup> See Marsden's *Dictionary of Sects*, "Moravians;" Waddington, vol. 3, p. 196; *Latin Christianity*, vol. 6, p. 200; Milner, vol. 3, p. 336; J.C. Robertson, vol. 3, p. 284; Mosheim, vol. 3, p. 17; Edgar's *Variations of Popery*, pp. 202, 533.