

“CATHOLIC OR PROTESTANT?—THE CONFLICT OF IDEALS.”

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PROFESSOR BURY'S recent volumes on *The Later Roman Empire* cover that fatal epoch, the fifth century after Christ, when all the leading nations of modern Europe were born. For it was the German invasions, not the Roman Empire, that made Europe; it was the Gothic tribes, not the Latin race; it was the barbarian chieftains, not the Western emperors. It was the codified customs of the new conquerors that partly assimilated and gradually transformed the old Roman law. Roman law, indeed, provided the framework of the legislation codified by Theodosius and Justinian. But it was Gothic local custom growing up alongside that gave that legislation new life. By this means the great change from Cæsar's Rome to medieval Rome was masked. The forms alone remained. The spirit was new. The old Roman Empire in its old titles and prescriptive privileges survived its downfall under the new name of the Holy Roman Empire.

The old Roman Empire may be said to have closed with the coming of Constantine, when the Capital was shifted to Constantinople, when the barbarians of Germany were officially admitted into the army and given posts of command, and when the Church was imperialized and became a factor in Constantine's policy of ruling the West from the East. This transfer of the Capital (while it saved the Eastern empire from the barbarian invasions) gave the bishops of the West an undue importance, and as early as A.D. 343, played into the hands of the Popes. The bishops became *defensores civitatis*, and the Popes by an inevitable evolution became heirs of the great Cæsarian tradition. The division of the empire into East and West inevitably divided the theology of the Churches into eastern and western. It invited dual control. “Secular” power became gradually severed from “spiritual.” And while the Emperors till 1204 buttressed the tottering power of the Cæsars in the East, the West became the prey of the papacy. This divided hegemony of State *v.* Church and Emperor *v.* Pope lasted till the Reformation. And the Reformation was a return,

both in politics and religion, to the Church before Constantine. Let us examine for a moment the nature of that early Church.

I

The ante-Nicene Church was based on a democratic principle. It was a loose confederation of churches. There was unity of a kind but no pretence to uniformity. There was episcopacy of one kind in Asia, which began with Ignatius (A.D. 110), and of a more monarchical kind at Rome which begins historically in the collision between Hippolytus and Pope Calixtus and between Irenæus and Pope Victor. There is episcopacy of a more republican kind in Egypt, where (in some cases at least), the Bishop is co-opted by his presbyters. Not till A.D. 314—the date of the Council of Arles—does episcopacy become universal throughout the Church of the Empire.¹ We have now reached the times of Constantine.

As we look back we see that the Church of the first three centuries (to which Protestantism appeals) was fundamentally democratic, largely adapting itself to the forms of civic life. One has only to read the Ordination rites of the *Διδαχὴ* (first century) or Sarapion's Prayer Book (fourth century), to see how Protestant that Church was. The modern theory of Apostolic Succession was then unknown.² The phrase was there, but it had a different application. Tertullian uses it to vindicate against the perversions of the Gnostics the true interpretation of Scripture. Irenæus uses it to safeguard the original apostolic doctrine. Clement first speaks of it as a *διαδοχή*, by which faithful men were publicly authorized to carry on the Apostle's work. With Cyprian it safeguards the orderliness of ecclesiastical usage against schismatic perversion. Even after Constantine's time, Augustine (in spite of one rhetorical flourish to the seeming contrary) uses it to justify the visible Church in its conflict with the sectarianism of Donatists, of Pelagians, and of Manicheans. The idea of a transmission of grace to a privileged order, which is thereby empowered to act as God's priestly caste, is foreign to his mind. It is the same with the Eucharist. The nature of the elements—so Chrysostom, Facundus, Theodoret, even Pope Gelasius, expressly assert—do not change their properties. What constitutes the change (*μεταβολή, μεταρρυθμός*) is the light in which after sanctification they are regarded. The common

¹ Dr. J. Wordsworth, *Ministry of Grace*, p. 139.

² Dr. Headlam's *Reunion* (Bampton Lectures). Preface to second edition.

bread is to the recipient no longer "common" but a "figure" and "likeness" (*figura* is the language of the Latins even at the time of the primitive Roman mass, *ὁμολογια* is the corresponding phrase of the Greeks from the time of Sarapion) of the Body and Blood of Christ Who once lived among us. By metonymy the elements are called by the names of those things for which they stand. They do not in themselves (as Hooker says) convey grace, but mystically or symbolically they become the outward occasions of conferring the grace which they signify. Those who do not so understand the language of the Fathers misunderstand it. Waterland has, by his illustrations from the investiture of magistrates and the rites of granting bequests or public charters, admirably summarized their meaning. All, says Augustine, are partakers of the sacraments of His grace who may not all be partakers of the grace of His sacraments. St. Jerome has declared himself in the same vein when he speaks of Christians who have been baptized indeed with water, but not with the Spirit Whom the water represents. Any layman whatever (*πᾶς ἰδιωτῆς τις*), adds the too rhetorical Chrysostom, may celebrate the Communion as well as a St. Peter or a St. Paul. This is not the language of Catholicism as we now understand it, that is, of imperial orthodoxy. It is the language of that freer Church, which used few creeds in her public worship, till she was "commandeered" for reasons of *haute politique* by the administrative genius of the Emperor Constantine.

II

Constantine brought in a new factor—politics. He imperialized the Church. Cæsar was to become the head of the new Church as well as of the old State. This meant that the Church was to be no longer democratic, but a factor of Empire, as it had been in old days when the Roman religion was heathen. There was nothing new in all this. Rome, even when republican, had in it from the first the tendency to autocracy. Early Rome had been governed by kings. The Senate, which was the only permanent legislative body in the State, was early likened to, "an assembly of kings." The long conflict with Hannibal called for a sole dictator as head of the army. The collisions in the city between the reactionary and progressive forces brought to light political dictators, whose chief instrument was the army—Marius and Sulla, Pompey and

Cæsar. All republicanism leads indirectly to the tyranny of the single man. It did so in the unique instances of Cæsar, Cromwell, Napoleon. It did so in the case of all the Roman emperors from Augustus to Constantine. The country-side was deserted for the more artificial life of the town (*municipium*). The mob was amused with free games and placated with free doles of food. The army became a body of hired mercenaries. Marriage ceased to be regarded as a religious rite (*confarreatio*). Divorce became rampant. Big farms swallowed up the little farms (*latifundia*). The middle-classes bore the chief incidence of the imperial taxation. Suicide and infanticide had become common. Slavery was the basis of that pyramid of Society which gradually mounted to its apex in the emperor, who held absolutely in his hands the rights of his subjects, even in matters of peace or war, of life and death.

The emperor was also the incarnate genius of the Roman religion, their *praesens divus* or State Providence. And that religion was little more than a State almanac for official notification of holidays and holy days (*dies fasti et nefasti*), a contract (*religio*) binding them to certain observances punctiliously required to feed the watchful vanity of their home-gods.

In Constantine's day the Roman religion, like all other religions, was breaking up. The Emperor left Rome for Constantinople. And the Popes of Rome succeeded to the Latin inheritance. The Pope became the *pontifex maximus*. With very little variation the religion of old Rome—with its Vestal virgins and the Mother of gods and men and the sacerdotal office, even to the "liquefying" miracle at Naples¹—was carried bodily over into the religion of the Popes. Paganism represented not truth but order, not life but antiquity, not liberty but tradition. It was not the worship of God but of political expediency. *Nullum numen abest si sit Prudentia*. And that was the religion of the Popes of the Middle Ages. It was the relic of Roman imperialism, the last bequest of Julius Cæsar who, though an avowed sceptic, was *Pontifex Maximus* in his day. The Pope is still, like the Cæsars of the West, a temporal sovereign claiming more than Cæsar ever claimed, namely, the spiritual and territorial submission of the world!

¹ Horace, S. I. V. 99. Cp. Warde Fowler's *Religious Experience of the Roman People*.

III

The downfall of Rome brought about the rule of the barbarians. It was a blessing in disguise. It brought new conceptions of religion and of politics. The Romans had no sense of individuality, except as members of a corporation. The Goths had an overweening sense of personal freedom, of family life, of individual responsibility. The Roman in marrying a woman married her whole family. The *patria-potestas* placed in the hands of the father absolute power over all the members of the family. On this strange principle the modern Roman Catholic notions of the sacredness of the family and marriage-tie are based. The Goths were more chivalrous. They believed in the soul. They were strict monogamists. They were free men who hated the invasion of family life by State interference. They believed in private property, in selecting as well as electing their kings, in equal rights between man and man. This was the origin of feudalism—a crude arrangement which never worked really well, but it insured chivalry by its securing tenure of land on the rendering of military service. It only required the frame-work of the old Roman law and the teaching of the newly organized Christian Church to tame and tune this barbaric freedom into the gentlemanly instincts of modern Europe.

And this was done by the clergy of the Imperial Church. Her missionaries swarmed over Europe; Boniface went to Germany, St. Martin to France, Augustine to England. The Goths had all been Arians since the fourth century. Under their Romanized kings, especially Clovis of the Franks and Charlemagne of Germany, they all became (nominally) orthodox. Bishops became their chief political advisers. They codified their laws. Thus Alaric's laws were known as the *breviarium Aniani*—the digest of Anianus, bishop of Orleans. The clergy codified the national laws of the Visigoths of Spain. They became also a spiritual nobility. As survivors from old days they carried on the manners and the dress and the language of the old Roman nobles. The imperial description of them was *defensores civitatis*. This included all the duties of educated men in a new country, from the surveying of roads and the building of bridges and the collecting of tithe or toll to the education of the barbarian races in the elements of learning and piety.

Thus the new Gothic races grew up under the nurture of their

old foster-mother, the Church. She represented the static, they the dynamic, force in the new state. Side by side with the old inflexible Roman Law grew up, with all their many local variations, the customs of the barbarians; till first Theodosius, and then Justinian had to codify afresh the whole Roman law transformed in spirit by adaptation to the new requirements. Gradually suicide, infanticide, crucifixion, the gladiatorial games were banished and Sunday observed as the Lord's day. Slowly, by appeals to the mother-city and *Church* of Rome, the barbarians learnt how to govern for themselves. It was this independent Gothic spirit which in time grew to maturity. It made its own laws and, in defiance of popes and emperors, asserted its national rights. It empowered its kings and parliaments to fight the Papacy.' By the sixteenth century it had grown up. In Luther it found a spokesman. He appealed from the Pope to the Councils of Constance and Basle. He appealed to Augustine and to the earlier Church before Constantine. He appealed to the Mass as it was before Gregory the Great had Romanized it and before Charlemagne had Byzantinised it.¹ He appealed to the Bible of Jerome and Ulphilas and Chrysostom, when it was translated into the mother-tongue of every nation. This appeal created the crisis of the Reformation—a political as well as a religious crisis. National kings were now once more to take the place of the universal Emperor and national Prayer Books and universities the place of the autocratic Pope. The Reformation was with Luther as with Augustine—situated as they were in a precisely similar crisis—a trumpet-call of the Church reformed to the Church unreformed, an appeal from the collective witness of tradition to the witness of the individual soul. And the appeal was heard. It is Harnack who says that Augustine and Luther are the two axes round which revolve, as round two poles of opposite but complementary thought, the theological system of Christendom. Constantine and Elizabeth are the true founders of the Catholic-Protestant Church.

To-day that crisis seems about to be repeated. The papacy was an international force asking, like Cæsarism, for sole domination. The national Churches are once more on the eve of a conflict

¹ The Roman Mass seems to have been primitive and Protestant in the fifth century, gorgeous and imperial in the ninth century, Papal and eccentric from all other rites and uses by the thirteenth century (Edmund Bishop, *Paper on the Genius of the Roman rite*, 1899, republished by Provost Staley).

with the central power. The papacy is an imperial force and therefore collectivist in theory, static in principle. The Gothic Churches are fundamentally national and therefore in theory individualist, in principle dynamic. There can be no truce, no compromise between these two conflicting ideals. With the papacy centralization is its one aim. Tradition, authority, order are its watchwords. With the nations of Europe toleration is their aim and liberty, equality, unity (without uniformity) their watchwords.

We can trace these "notes" in the successive revisions of the English Prayer Book, which partakes of Roman order diluted by Gothic liberty. The Prayer Book is fundamentally Catholic, but at the same time vigorously Protestant. Order cannot be separated from life. The international principle must be fitted to the national, if it is to be typically English. We see all this in the very first Prayer Book of 1549. It is for the first time in English. For the first time the Latin term for the Holy Communion, the Mass, occurs only once in a subordinate position in the title. Adoration of the elements, as Bishop Tunstal complained, "is not there." To the fact that 1549 was not a final version but a half-way house to 1552, a hundred contemporaneous facts bear witness. The 1549 Service Book was Catholic in sound but patient of a Protestant interpretation. We can easily test this. The very year it was issued Ridley champions it in public, and Bucer in private; while next year Cranmer expressly refutes Bishop Gardiner's "plain untruth" in finding in it a local Presence. The elements are "not absolutely," but only *to us* who receive them (explains Cranmer), the Body and Blood of Christ. The same year follows an official reprint of Tyndale's New Testament with its provokingly Calvinistic foot-notes; while all over England, by order of the Council or the Bishops, altars, vestments, roods, stoups, rosaries and similar "ornaments" are destroyed. These facts, as Cardinal Gasquet and Mr. W. P. M. Kennedy on the Roman side, and as Mr. Dimock on the Protestant side, truly assert, mark the official interpretation of the 1549 Book.

Yet to this unrevised Prayer Book the Catholic party to-day, *under the name of Revision*, propose to return! And from the Cranmer of 1552 to the Cranmer of 1549—notwithstanding his Book against Gardiner published the next year—they now propose to appeal as the champion of their peculiar doctrines! To

what strangely perverted methods is the new Catholic party now driven, if it so little believes in the ultimate triumph of "that force not ourselves making for righteousness" that, reversing the ordinary processes of reason, it actually proposes to appeal from Philip sober to Philip drunk, from the Church better informed to the Church ill-informed, from Cranmer's finished sketch to his first rough draft! *Solvuntur risu tabulae.*

The situation is a grave one and the conflict of ideals involved cannot much longer be postponed. Dr. Wordsworth in his *Ordination Problems* proved that for a thousand years after Christ till the days of Hildebrand ordinations were of the most irregular kind. Dr. Headlam has since proved that till Augustine's and Chrysostom's day—that is, till the downfall of the Roman civilization—there was no Apostolic Succession in the sense now held by the Tractarians. Ranke has shown that from the earliest beginnings of the Church Protestantism and Catholicism have run in double harness. Harnack has shown that in the first four centuries the Bible and the Bible only was the final arbiter and standard of the teaching authority of the Church. If this be so then the Reformation was, as it professed to be, a republication of the original Christianity as preached by the Apostles and a return to the true Catholic theology as compounded by the Fathers. It was to these first four centuries (including the great names of Augustine and Chrysostom) that the English Church at the Reformation made specific appeal. The Anglo-Roman-Catholic party of to-day shifts the ground of that appeal to include the next two centuries, when the Roman civilization was tottering and the Barbarians were triumphant—a time when the Church of the West took advantage of the general ignorance to assume the prerogatives of the State and to trample on the rights of independent Churches and of national kings. St. Peter and St. Paul teach that Church and State are both in equal degree divine agencies for asserting God's Sovereignty over the conscience of man. Medieval Christianity put asunder that which God had joined together. The Reformation restored the harmony. In the Anglo-Catholic programme (with its appeals to the Pope) original Christianity is once more in jeopardy.