Enthusiasm

A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGION

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A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGION

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE XVII AND XVIII CENTURIES

R. A. KNOX

Honorary Fellow of Trinity College
Oxford



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To

EVELYN WAUGH

THERE is a kind of book about which you may say, almost without exaggeration, that it is the whole of a man's literary life, the unique child of his thought. Other writings he may have published, on this or that occasion; please God, the work was not scamped, nor was he indifferent to the praise and the blame of his critics. But it was all beside the mark. The Book was what mattered—he had lived with it all these years, fondled it in his waking thoughts, used it as an escape from anxiety, a solace in long journeys, in tedious conversations. Did he find himself in a library, he made straight for the shelves which promised light on one cherished subject; did he hit upon a telling quotation, a just metaphor, an adroit phrase, it was treasured up, in miser's fashion, for the Book. The Book haunted his day-dreams like a guilty romance.

Such a thing, for better or worse, is this book which follows. I have been writing it for thirty years and a little more; no year has passed but I have added to it, patched it, rewritten it, in the time that could be spared from other occupations. Those friends who have asked 'what I was doing' all this time need ask no longer; the secret is out. Those who have expressed surprise at my possessing odd fragments of historical information will understand now how they got there—it all came into the Book. Those who cherished the belief that I was writing a refutation of all the heresies must be prepared for a disappointment; I have only dealt with certain selected points of view, they were not exactly heresies, and I have not refuted them.

To be sure, when the plan of the Book was first conceived, all those years ago, it was to have been a broadside, a trumpet-blast, an end of controversy. It was to fill up the picture outlined in Bossuet's *Variations*, in Moehler's *Symbolik*; here, I would say, is what happens inevitably, if once the principle of Catholic unity is lost! All this confusion, this priggishness, this pedantry, this eccentricity and worse, follows directly from the rash step that takes you outside the fold of Peter! All my historical figures, Wesley himself included,

were to be a kind of rogues' gallery, an awful warning against illuminism. But somehow, in the writing, my whole treatment of the subject became different; the more you got to know the men, the more human did they become, for better or worse; you were more concerned to find out why they thought as they did than to prove it was wrong. The result, I am afraid, is a hotch-potch; I shall be blamed for not defending Pascal more, or Nayler less. But I could not go on for ever revising my estimates; as it is, I have completely rewritten five out of the first six chapters, so instinctively does the mind quarrel with its own judgements of ten or fifteen years back.

A hotch-potch, put together as best I could, between tasks—mastering my authorities in trains, or over solitary meals, taking notes on rough pieces of paper and losing them, reading chapters aloud to patient critics, talking over the implications of this or that movement with my friends. It is not to be supposed that this haphazard process of composition will have justified my selection of material, or produced a literary unity; but how it endears the pages to their author! What varied memories he can use for bookmarkers! Of hours spent in private libraries—the library at Beaufort, burnt down since, where I quarried in Fleury; the library at Keir, where I ran across Hepworth Dixon's *Spiritual Wives*; the library at Aldenham, with those six volumes of Grégoire, and the old copy of Lady Huntingdon's Life, uncut by Acton! Of books that have passed through my hands, bought, taken out, or borrowed, from the eleven volumes of Bremond down to the more modest ambit of Noake's *Worcester Sects*! Of evenings with undergraduate societies, where I have tried out a chapter here and there, under the guise of a lecture! Do not doubt that one in my position feels, once again, the delicious tremors of first authorship; forgets his bibliography, and ranks in his own mind as *homo unius libri*.

Strange, that a thing which is so much part of oneself should go out into the world, and lie in shop-windows, and be handled by reviewers! Yet this venture of paternity must be made, in the hope that there is some truth here worth the telling; or, if not that, tinder at least to catch the sparks of another man's fire.

R. A. K.

MELLS, 1949

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I

THE NATURE OF ENTHUSIASM

I HAVE called this book 'Enthusiasm', not meaning thereby to name (for name it has none) the elusive thing that is its subject. I have only used a cant term, pejorative, and commonly misapplied, as a label for a tendency. And, lest I should be accused of setting out to mystify the reader, I must proceed to map out, as best I may, the course of this inquiry. There is, I would say, a recurrent situation in Church history—using the word 'church' in the widest sense—where an excess of charity threatens unity. You have a clique, an *élite*, of Christian men and (more importantly) women, who are trying to live a less worldly life than their neighbours; to be more attentive to the guidance (directly felt, they would tell you) of the Holy Spirit. More and more, by a kind of fatality, you see them draw apart from their co-religionists, a hive ready to swarm. There is provocation on both sides; on the one part, cheap jokes at the expense of over-godliness, acts of stupid repression by unsympathetic authorities; on the other, contempt of the half-Christian, ominous references to old wine and new bottles, to the kernel and the husk. Then, while you hold your breath and turn away your eyes in fear, the break comes; condemnation or secession, what difference does it make? A fresh name has been added to the list of Christianities.

The pattern is always repeating itself, not in outline merely but in detail. Almost always the enthusiastic movement is denounced as an innovation, yet claims to be preserving, or to be restoring, the primitive discipline of the Church. Almost always the opposition is twofold; good Christian people who do not relish an eccentric spirituality find themselves in unwelcome alliance with worldlings who do not relish any spirituality at all. Almost always schism begets schism; once the instinct of discipline is lost, the movement breeds rival prophets and rival coteries, at the peril of its internal unity. Always the first fervours evaporate; prophecy dies out, and the charismatic is merged in the institutional. 'The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard'—it is a fugal melody that runs through the centuries.

If I could have been certain of the reader's goodwill, I would have called my tendency 'ultrasupernaturalism'. For that is the real character of the enthusiast; he expects more evident results from the grace of God than we others. He sees what effects religion can have, does sometimes have, in transforming a man's whole life and outlook; these exceptional cases (so we are content to think them) are for him the average standard of religious achievement. He will have no 'almost-Christians', no weaker brethren who plod and stumble, who (if the truth must be told) would like to have a foot in either world, whose ambition is to qualify, not to excel. He has before his eyes a picture of the early Church, visibly penetrated with supernatural influences; and nothing less will serve him for a model. Extenuate, accommodate, interpret, and he will part company with you.

Quoting a hundred texts—we also use them, but with more of embarrassment—he insists that the members of his society, saved members of a perishing world, should live a life of angelic purity, of apostolic simplicity; worldly amusements, the artifices of a polite society, are not for them. Poor human nature! Every lapse that follows is marked by pitiless watchers outside the fold, creates a harvest of scandal within. Worse still, if the devout circle has cultivated a legend of its own impeccability; we shall be told, in that case, that actions which bring damnation to the worldling may be inculpable in the children of light. We must be prepared for strange alternations of rigorism and antinomianism as our history unfolds itself.

Meanwhile, it must not be supposed that the new birth which the enthusiast preaches can be limited to a mere reformation of manners. It involves a new approach to religion; hitherto this has been a matter of outward forms and ordinances, now it is an affair of the heart. Sacraments are not necessarily dispensed with; but the emphasis lies on a direct personal access to the Author of our salvation, with little of intellectual background or of liturgical expression. The appeal of art and music, hitherto conceived as a ladder which carried human thought upwards, is frowned upon as a barrier which interferes with the simplicity of true heart-worship. An inward experience of peace and joy is both the assurance which the soul craves for and its characteristic prayer-attitude. The strength of this personal approach is that it dominates the imagination, and presents a future

world in all the colours of reality. Its weakness—but we are not concerned here to criticize—is an anthropocentric bias; not God's glory but your own salvation preoccupies the mind, with some risk of scruples, and even of despair.

But the implications of enthusiasm go deeper than this; at the root of it lies a different theology of grace. Our traditional doctrine is that grace perfects nature, elevates it to a higher pitch, so that it can bear its part in the music of eternity, but leaves it nature still. The assumption of the enthusiast is bolder and simpler; for him, grace has destroyed nature, and replaced it. The saved man has come out into a new order of being, with a new set of faculties which are proper to his state; David must not wear the panoply of Saul. Especially, he decries the use of human reason as a guide to any sort of religious truth. A direct indication of the Divine will is communicated to him at every turn, if only he will consent to abandon the 'arm of flesh'—Man's miserable intellect, fatally obscured by the Fall. If no oracle from heaven is forthcoming, he will take refuge in sortilege; anything, to make sure that he is leaving the decision in God's hands. That God speaks to us through the intellect is a notion which he may accept on paper, but fears, in practice, to apply.

A new set of faculties, and also a new status; man saved becomes, at last, fully man. It follows that 'the seed of grace', God's elect people, although they must perforce live cheek by jowl with the sons of perdition, claim another citizenship and own another allegiance. For the sake of peace and charity, they will submit themselves to every ordinance of man, but always under protest; worldly governments, being of purely human institution, have no real mandate to exercise authority, and sinful folk have no real rights, although, out of courtesy, their fancied rights must be respected. Always the enthusiast hankers after a theocracy, in which the anomalies of the present situation will be done away, and the righteous bear rule openly. Disappointed of this hope, a group of sectaries will sometimes go out into the wilderness, and set up a little theocracy of their own, like Cato's senate at Utica. The American continent has more than once been the scene of such an adventure; in these days, it is the last refuge of the enthusiast.

I have sketched him in his essence; all that we have said so far is a matter of definition. Other symptoms we shall come across, more arresting and perhaps more intriguing, which do not belong to the

essence of this revivalism, but are not seldom its concomitants. One of these is a conviction that the Second Coming of our Lord is shortly to be expected. Another is ecstasy; under which heading I include a mass of abnormal phenomena, the by-products, it would seem, of prophecy, or sometimes of 'convincement'. We read of people breaking out into unintelligible utterance, or utterance identified by expert evidence as a language unknown to themselves; of people remaining destitute of their senses in a holy trance, or, more often, shaken by convulsive movements from head to foot, for hours at a time. The unbeliever hesitates whether to explain all this as hysteria or as diabolism; the faithful are puzzled, some inclined to welcome and some to reprobate it. But, whatever the explanation, beyond doubt the phenomena occur; we should throw over all belief in human evidence if we denied it.

I have said that the pattern is one which recurs in Church history; and indeed, the circumstance has been noticed; cross-references are frequent. When the French Prophets came to London, a History of Montanism was published to confound them; De Soyres, on the other hand, is inclined to vindicate the reputation of the Montanists by pointing out that they were not altogether unlike the Wesleyans. It has even been suggested that Protestantism, no less than Catholicism, can boast of continuity through the ages; that a torch was handed down by way of the medieval heretics to the pioneers of the Reformation. But closer study of history gives the facts a different colouring. The main stream of medieval heresy flowed from the East, and the inspiration which fed it was something alien to the genius of Europe. The lesser movements which might seem to foreshadow the Reformation were sporadic and unimportant, freaks of religious history. Enthusiasm did not really begin to take shape until the moment when Luther shook up the whole pattern of European theology; did not (in that age of repression) come out into the open till more than a century later. Not until the days of the Commonwealth can it be studied in its full context.

Then, for a hundred and fifty years, it becomes the major preoccupation of religious minds, obscuring from contemporary view the rise of atheism. The Quakers are first in the field, with their rude challenge to all the institutional churches, all the dogmatic theologies. Some twenty years later the same demand for doctrinal simplification is raised by the Pietists. To be sure, Spener was a gentler

creature than George Fox, and would not press the issue in Lutheran Germany. Yet Pietism, cross-fertilized from the Middle Ages by the eccentric genius of Count Zinzendorf, gave birth to Moravianism, a movement not less vigorous than Quakerism itself. Meanwhile, the bloodthirsty enthusiasm of the Camisards had broken out among the French Huguenots; and this, more fruitful in defeat than in victory, filled England with the nine days' wonder of the French Prophets; then, in the form of Shakerism, made its way across the Atlantic. But by the middle of the eighteenth century both Quakers and French Prophets were thrown into the shade. Moravianism had produced something greater than itself; or rather—*novas frondes et non sua poma*—had played the midwife to something greater than itself. The Methodism of Whitefield and the Wesleys had set England aflame, from Newcastle to Penzance, and when men spoke of enthusiasm, those great names were the target of their attack.

All these movements were cradled in Reformation Protestantism. After all, the leaders of the Reformation had the defects of their qualities; they were scholars, not seldom pedants; they had divided Europe into a patchwork of sects, and deafened the public with their theologizing. The reform of manners, by common consent, was still an unrealized ambition; there was too much of head, too little of heart, in the religiosity of the period. Protestantism had created a demand for simplicity, but done little to satisfy it. Enthusiasm had but to lift its voice, and it was certain of a hearing.

More curiously, there were analogous undercurrents at work even where men had accepted the Tridentine reform, and remained true to the Catholic allegiance. Both Jansenism and Quietism belong, effectively, to the same segment of history, the hundred years that elapsed between 1650 and 1750; both Jansenism and Quietism reproduce some features of the tendency we have been discussing. This needs to be said with caution, for neither movement will fit into the canvas of enthusiasm as we have delineated it. Augustinian in its theology, Puritan in its moral tendency, Jansenism remains obstinately institutional, abridging neither forms nor sacraments, nor does it ever cease to theologize. Yet it contained a strange germ of revivalism, which bore fruit abundantly in the cemetery of St. Médard. Quietism in one of its main principles is the exact antithesis of revivalism; instead of being morbidly preoccupied with the hope of salvation, it incurred censure by treating the salvation of the

individual soul as a matter of indifference. Yet in its dislike of formal prayer, in its determination to establish direct contact with the Divine influence, no image even of the mind intervening, it might pass for a satire on Reformation spirituality. There is no need to make much of coincidences, but Molinos's *Spiritual Guide* was published in the same year (1675) as the *Pia Desideria* of Spener, and the disturbances at St. Médard began in 1728, the year before Wesley founded his Holy Club. Neither Catholics nor Protestants were to have a monopoly of embarrassment.

I am the more emboldened to treat this period of history in isolation, because language itself corroborates my instinct. Words are born and die; they live only so long as they have an important errand to fulfil, by expressing what needs expression. And 'enthusiasm' in the religious sense belongs to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; it hardly reappears without inverted commas after 1823. In the meantime, it had had a literature all to itself; and what a literature! Good men as well as bad took part in the hue and cry, but one and all lost stature in doing so, wrote themselves down as dull dogs. I fancy good Bishop Hickes, the Nonjuror, started the vogue of the word with his sermon—I hope he did not preach all the seventy-eight pages of it—on *The Spirit of Enthusiasm exorcised.* That was in 1680, when he had nothing but Fifth Monarchy Men, Muggletonians, and Quakers to complain of; but he published it as topical stuff in 1709, to confound the French Prophets. Shaftesbury followed in 1711, with his mincing, inconclusive *Essay on Enthusiasm,* calculated and perhaps designed to injure the credit of revealed religion in general. Wesleyanism brought a fresh set of champions into the field, of whom the best remembered is Bishop Lavington; the laborious imbecilities of his *Enthusiasm of the Methodists and Papists compared* will amuse us in a later chapter. But my favourite, I confess, among these authors is John Langhorne, better remembered as an adequate translator of Plutarch. His *Letters on Religious Retirement, Melancholy, and Enthusiasm* are intended to dissuade the fair Cleora from indulging such propensities; 'Will my amiable friend become a recluse? Shall we no longer be delighted with the graces of her elegant understanding, nor instructed by her refined and digested knowledge?'—it reads like a satire on its genre. And so on, up to the year 1823, when Isaac Taylor scored an instantaneous success with *The Natural History of Enthusiasm*; probably the most

uniformly dull book ever written. You may read through 275 pages, in the inflated style of the period, without coming across one arresting sentiment, or one important consideration.

Fourteen, then, of the chapters which follow deal with an interval of history arbitrarily selected; the interval, roughly, between the Civil War and the loss of the American Colonies, between the Fronde and the French Revolution. Six introductory chapters remain to be mentioned, in which I have tried to seize the characteristics of earlier, more elusive, less documented happenings. The first three of these are for purposes of comparison only; isolated from one another and from what follows.[1] Nobody seriously pretends that there was any filiation between Montanism and Donatism, or between Donatism and the medieval sects. But with these, and with the Anabaptists who followed them, it is possible to guess, though not to be certain, that there is a real continuity; did half-remembered fragments of the Manichean teaching help to form the strange theology of the Anabaptists? Was an Anabaptist remnant the touchwood that George Fox quickened into flame?

At the same time, I have not aimed at illustrating all the vagaries of Christian thought, from Marcion to Moral Rearmament. John Wesley's death is my *terminus ad quem*; I have only added a few vignettes from the early nineteenth century to show that enthusiasm outlived him. Then, in a final chapter, I have made some attempt to dot the *i*'s and cross the *t*'s. I do not mean that I have observed, all through my narrative, the impartiality of the perfect historian; such detachment is hardly possible, where eternal issues are at stake. But I have tried, in telling the story, to avoid exclamation-marks, to see things in the light of the age in which they happened, and with the eyes of the men who were affected by them. I have reserved full and final comment till the end; and even then I have made it with hesitation—there is so much right on both sides. I have only been concerned to trace my pattern anew, to consider what philosophy underlies this secular conflict between the charismatic and the institutional, and the part which authority must needs play in finding a tolerable adjustment.

Against one misunderstanding the reader's mind should be armed,

[1] It has been suggested, however, that the Montanists may have influenced the Messalians, and through them the Manichean sects of the Balkans (Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, pp. 90, 174).

thus early. If I have classed together in one category a whole variety of sects and sectaries, let him not imagine for a moment that I hold all in the same estimation. John of Leyden appears in this book side by side with George Fox, and St. Cyran with Wesley; a madman (probably) with a mystic, a cloudy dreamer with a great organizer. The reason is, that Fox no less than John of Leyden trusted blindly in the light that was in him; that Wesley no less than St. Cyran formed a church within a church, to the ultimate peril of unity. Two are forgotten, two have a secure place among the great names of history. But all, in my sense of the word, were enthusiasts.

I call them so without prejudice, not using the word (in the manner of their own contemporaries) as a term of abuse. Shaftesbury tells us that 'inspiration is a real feeling of the Divine Presence, and enthusiasm a false one'; but this easy habit of labelling and docketing is everywhere the enemy of truth. What right have we to assume that the man who lays credit to heavenly illumination must be either a saint or a fraud? Even where a canonized saint is concerned, we know that his revelations are binding on himself alone; we others are free to doubt them. We shall hesitate still more about the *ipse dixit* of some religious leader, inside or outside the Church, whose credentials we must needs assess on their own merits. But (if we are wise) we shall not therefore put down the whole of his message to diabolic possession, or to hysteria. George Fox may yet have something to tell us about religious toleration, Wesley about slavery. What praise such men will have in eternity, it is not ours to judge; to their own Master they stand or fall. They were at least great men, and deserve, beyond controversy, the brief homage of their fellows.

II

THE CORINTHIANS' LETTER TO ST. PAUL

It is a common assumption, bred in our minds by pious literature and frequent pulpit denunciations, that the first age of the Church was in every respect a golden age. So it has appeared, especially, to the leaders of later enthusiastic movements. Your prophet who passes for an innovator in the eyes of his contemporaries does not admit the charge; he claims, rather, to be restoring the godly discipline which flourished in apostolic times, now overgrown with neglect. We shall find abundant instances of this claim being made in the chapters which follow; we shall see religious types so antipathetic to one another as the medieval Lollard and the seventeenth-century Jansenist agreed on one point, that antiquity is the mirror of Christian perfection. It may be worth our while, then, to consider, on the very threshold of this inquiry, whether the actual records which have come down to us, even from the apostolic age itself, justify this rose-coloured estimate. Do we really find perfect harmony, severe moral standards, unquestioned loyalty to the apostolic teaching, evinced everywhere among the rank and file of Christendom? Is there not rather reason to suspect that in those early days error followed hard on the heels of truth, and liberty would not have been slow, but for incessant vigilance, to degenerate into licence?

Among all the New Testament documents, none gives me more strongly this impression of perilous currents flowing in early Christianity than St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. And at the same time, none is more germane to our present subject. For they are the same currents, if I have not altogether misunderstood their nature, which have brought several of the enthusiastic movements in later history close to the verge of shipwreck. It is not always easy to reconstruct the lost side of a correspondence, especially when the surviving half of it expresses a mind so full of afterthoughts and half-expressed qualifications as St. Paul's was. But in this one instance he has been at pains to docket his subject-headings in orderly fashion, telling us where he is replying to a direct question sent to him from

Corinth, where he is deriving his information from hearsay evidence. Nor do we often complain, as we do in reading the other epistles, that the scent of his argument has got crossed. You picture him, for once, not in a hurry.

What are the lessons he finds it necessary to read to his friends at Corinth? He tells them (i) that they ought to be ashamed of being divided up into parties, as holding by Apollos, or Paul, or Peter (chs. i–iv). (ii) That when a member of their congregation contracts an incestuous alliance, they ought to excommunicate him instead of manifesting pride over what has happened (ch. v). (iii) That they must live uncontaminated by the heathen society around them, instead of having quarrels which they fight out at law, and relapsing into habits of fornication (ch. vi). (iv) That virginity is not a precept, but a counsel of perfection, with other advice about marriage and widowhood (ch. vii). (v) That, for fear of scandal and of relapse into heathenism, it is wrong to join in the sacrificial feasts of their heathen neighbours (chs. viii–xi). (vi) That women should have their heads veiled in church; that the love-feast which precedes the celebration of the Divine Mysteries ought to be a real manifestation of unity (ch. xi). (vii) That the use of preternatural spiritual gifts ought to be regulated and rationed, and that charity is the greatest gift of all (chs. xii–xiv). The fifteenth chapter, which deals with a denial, by some converts, of the Resurrection, and the concluding chapter, which reminds his readers of the collection to be made for the church at Jerusalem, and adds a series of personal messages, do not belong to our subject.

Now, who in the world were the people who needed to be told all this? Our New Testament commentators, faithful followers in one another's footsteps, will tell you that St. Paul's influence at Corinth was in danger of being undermined by 'Judaizing' teachers.[1] For this statement they adduce no kind of proof; meanwhile, the evidence is all the other way. Would Judaizers encourage incest? Would they discountenance marriage, or the use of marriage? Would they tolerate the eating of meat offered to idols? Would they welcome the sight of women prophesying in public? Surely, if anything, it is a 'Gentilizing' influence that St. Paul here sets out to combat. Some of the rival teachers may have been Jews by birth;[2] it does not follow that they made propaganda for Judaism. To judge

[1] For the opposite view, see Prat, *Saint Paul*, i. 183. [2] 2 Cor. xi. 22.

it by its external manifestations, the spirit which had got abroad at Corinth betrays, not a Judaistic, but a Marcionite tendency. It foreshadowed the Marcionite heresy that was to arise two generations afterwards, very much as the angel-worship which threatened the faith of Christians at Colossae foreshadowed the coming of Gnosticism.

Marcionism, however, lies outside our orbit. What I would call attention to here is the appearance, in first-century Corinth, of a set of symptoms which we have decided to group under the title of enthusiasm. The supernatural germ of life planted in them so recently is in danger of running to seed, and producing a harvest of ultrasupernaturalism. The thing strikes us, at first hearing, as incredible; was it possible so to misinterpret the mind of Paul, when he had been but a few years absent? Yet it is to be remembered that the mind of Paul has been misunderstood all down the centuries; there is no aberration of Christianity which does not point to him as the source of its inspiration, found, as a rule, in his epistle to the Romans. Corinth, after all, was a city well known in a world of sufficiently lax standards as the paradise of the prostitute. The sudden conversion, accompanied by violent emotional experiences, of souls hitherto sunk in debilitating vice might give rise, without difficulty, to a kind of enthusiasm which would need regulation by an expert in the discerning of spirits. In Corinth, perhaps more than elsewhere, St. Paul's preaching stood out against a background of unconverted Judaism;[1] it appeared, therefore, as a gospel of revolt. It would not be surprising if, when his presence was withdrawn, the more indiscreet among his converts should exaggerate the spirit of revolt into sheer antinomianism. We shall find these exaggerations among the immediate disciples of Fox, of Wesley, and of many other teachers. There is no ground, in tradition or in common sense, for supposing that the inerrancy of the apostles in their teaching was at once communicated to all who heard them.

By way of justifying this reconstruction of the Corinthian picture, it will be well to consider, more in detail, the seven main divisions of the letter as I have outlined them above. When we have contemplated the difficulties of the Church in her cradle years, we shall be better fortified against the shock which might be caused to our notions of probability by later developments in her history.

[1] Acts xviii. 6.

(i) *The Birth of Sectarianism*

St. Augustine, commenting on the expulsion of the traders from the Temple, enlivens the story by identifying them with the leaders of those various factions into which Donatism had broken up since its foundation. 'There is Primianus at Carthage, he has one stall; Maximian, he has another; Rogatus in Mauretania another; there is another in Numidia, sect after sect, now past our powers even to name.'[1] In the same way, Jansenism in its eighteenth-century phase has already produced a crop of Vaillantistes, Augustinistes, Margouillistes, and so on, all disowned by the official party itself.[2] Schism breeds; for a time the influence of one dominating personality may hold it together, but death or failing powers will diminish that influence, and rival disciples will become the eponymous heroes of fresh disunion. In the first days of Christianity, when the needs of a world waiting to be evangelized made discipline precarious, and encouraged the activities of doubtfully qualified teachers, the Church herself was at the mercy of similar perils. 'Each one of you has a cry of his own, I am for Paul, I am for Apollos, I am for Cephas, I am for Christ' (i. 12).

The commentators are at odds, whether we should understand this phrase as referring to the existence of four different factions, or only three. For myself, on the principle that *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*, I have never felt certain there were more than two. St. Paul had preached at Corinth; after he left, Apollos, who had been in contact with his friends but not with the apostle himself, visited the city, and must have made a great impression by the eloquence of his preaching.[3] If Apollos, whose instruction in the faith had been recent, and perhaps a little hurried, left on the minds of these immature converts an impression slightly different from that made by the founder of their organization, was it wonderful that this should lead to controversy, when the teaching given by the two missionaries was compared in retrospect? Apollos, it must be confessed, is an enigmatic figure in history; we hear no more of him, after his refusal to revisit Corinth (xvi. 12); he has found no niche, I think, in any of the martyrologies. It seems quite possible, in spite of the charity which forbids any personal attack on him, that St. Paul regarded him as responsible for the divisions of opinion which

[1] *Homilies on St. John*, no. x. 6. [2] Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes*, ii. 133.
[3] Acts xviii. 24–8.

reigned at Corinth. The tribute which St. Luke pays to the eloquence of the Alexandrian may, perhaps, explain the apostle's eager protest that *he* was not sent to preach the Gospel with an orator's cleverness; and even his following it up with the quotation 'I will abolish (ἀπολῶ) the wisdom of wise men' (i. 17, 19). But if he did intend to give that impression, he quickly found means to efface it. 'All this, brethren, I have applied to myself and Apollos, but it is meant for you' (iv. 6). All we know is that there were rival schools of thought at Corinth, one of which used the name of Apollos as its rallying-cry.

One was for Paul, one was for Apollos; did no appeal lie beyond those names? It is surely probable that the adherents of St. Paul, who had visited the city when fresh from his triumph over the Judaizing party at Jerusalem, alleged in defence of his orthodoxy the fact that he was in full agreement with, and in some sense commissioned by, the Apostolic College. Hence 'I am for Cephas'; if you held with Paul, you held with that apostle who was the most representative figure in Christendom. What reply was the faction of Apollos to make? It devised an expedient which has been imitated by sectaries more than once in later times; appealed behind the Apostolic College itself to him from whom the Apostolic College derived its dignity; 'I am for Christ'. There is no mistaking the importance of this first, blundering effort to drive a wedge between the Christianity of Christ and the Christianity of the Church. It meant that you were appealing away from ecclesiastical authority to the validity of a private revelation; and later chapters abundantly prove that private revelations were no rarity in Corinth. And, once you have done that, you have set your feet on the perilous slopes of disunion. Nobody can fail to be struck by the insistence with which St. Paul, in both his epistles to the Corinthians, dwells on his own personal authority. The reason is not far to seek. He was arguing with men to whom the maxim 'quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus', made no appeal. Only a superior revelation would convince them that they were on the wrong tack.[1]

(ii) *Liberty and Licence*

For the sake of clearness, I have distinguished above between the argument of chapter v and that of chapter vi; it will be simpler, here, to consider them together. The first eleven verses of chapter vi are

[1] Cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 37; 2 Cor. xii. 1.

probably a digression; St. Paul has been pointing out that the jurisdiction of the Church does not extend to unbelievers, and he takes a sudden look, as his habit was, at the other side of the picture. If only Christians really believed in their solidarity as Christians, no occasion would arise on which it was necessary for unbelievers to have jurisdiction over the Church. In this parenthesis, it must be admitted, St. Paul is not rebuking his converts for drawing too sharp a line between the natural and the supernatural; it is the other way about; they are not drawing the line sharply enough. At the same time, he is probably thinking of the scandal which lawsuits between Christians give to their watching neighbours. And the fear of scandal, in all this early part of his epistle, is never far from his mind.

He had good reason for his apprehensions. 'There are reports of incontinence among you, and such incontinence as is not practised even among the heathen; a man taking to himself his father's wife. And you, it seems, have been proud of it, instead of deploring it, and shutting out the man who has been guilty of such a deed from your company.' To do the Corinthians tardy justice, we may remark that the verb which is always rendered 'you have been puffed up' has, in Pauline usage, the sense 'you have been contumacious'; they had defied the warnings of authority. It was not that they actually boasted of the enormity. Even so, we rub our eyes at the intimation that Christians of the golden age could defend, even if they did not applaud, such a neglect of primary decencies. To put the offence at its lowest (we hear nothing of the details) marriage with a widowed stepmother was forbidden alike by Jewish and by Roman law. And it is difficult to conjecture what ground can have been alleged for condoning the offence, unless it were that on St. Paul's own principles the Mosaic law must be held to have been abolished, and therefore a breach of the law of affinity was no crime; rather, it was a splendid assertion of gospel liberty. So narrow is the border-line between the supernatural and the ultrasupernatural way of looking at things.

It is unlikely, however, that the urgent warning against fornication at the end of chapter vi (reiterated in 2 Cor. xii. 21) had reference only to a single incident. Relapse into the habits of low life would seem to have been common among the believers at Corinth; and there was worse behind it than mere weakness of frail human wills. It seems clear that there were those at Corinth who adopted the

antinomian attitude; who claimed that sexual purity was a Mosaic scruple which had disappeared with the other Mosaic scruples. Christian life was a life of the spirit, not of the body; the Christian, therefore, should be above these materialistic taboos. That the apostles had to use their influence to combat such notions, in a world pagan till yesterday, is clear from the decree promulgated at Jerusalem,[1] which included 'abstaining from fornication' among the precepts of the Mosaic law that were to remain in vigour. And the argument on which those notions were based is fully illustrated by the passage which lies before us (vi. 12–20). St. Paul explicitly repeats, what was perhaps a favourite maxim of his own, 'all things are lawful to me', in inverted commas, it is clear, as an argument used by his opponents. It did not apply here; it only applied to ceremonial ordinances, like that of abstaining from certain kinds of meat, no longer binding under the new dispensation. But (he continues in v. 13) the law of purity is not to be reckoned among these transitory regulations; it has another and a deeper meaning. The body, no less than the spirit, has to be dedicated to Christ. Such reasoning could only be necessary, where there was an antinomian doctrine to be crushed. And the need for it reappears, as we shall see, at frequent intervals in the history of enthusiasm, down to the beginning of last century, if not beyond.

(iii) *A Hint of Rigorism*

The seventh chapter, on marriage and virginity, is what we like to make of it. With the loss of the Corinthians' letter, we have lost the clue to St. Paul's reply. I do not mean merely that some of the situations envisaged are defined in vague terms. I mean that the whole emphasis of the chapter varies, according as you understand it to be answering the question, Is marriage ever allowable? or the question, Is celibacy a Christian ideal at all? The commentators are mostly agreed, and on the whole the tone of the chapter justifies them in assuming, that the Corinthians had expressed the former of these doubts. As later at Ephesus,[2] there were those who forbade marriage, or the use of marriage at any rate. We need feel no surprise at finding traces of such a tendency in a Church prone to the errors we have just been considering; indeed, a reading of later history will make it appear quite possible that the libertines of chapter vi were actually

[1] Acts xv. 29. [2] 1 Tim. iv. 3.

the rigorists of chapter vii. The same ultrasupernaturalist point of view which looks upon bodily impurity as a mere imperfection among the elect, because it is only something carnal, will, in other moods, condemn the whole institution of marriage as a carnal institution. Some of the Corinthians may have held the doctrine attributed to Molinos, that sins committed in the body could not defile those who were living in the spirit; others, with Ann Lee, may have tried to make celibacy a condition of Church membership.

It would be out of place here to consider all the intricate theology of this chapter, and the debates that have arisen over it. What concerns us is only to point out that this mention of 'forbidding to marry' need not imply a tendency towards Gnosticism. There is no reason to detect, here, those adumbrations of it which clouded the dawn of Christianity at Colossae. For the Gnostic, and for the Manichean, the functions of sex are something which belongs to matter, and is consequently evil. For the enthusiast, they are something which belongs to nature, and is consequently, for better or worse, irrelevant. Gnosticism is an Asiatic phenomenon, obscurely allied with the non-Christian thought of the East. Enthusiasm is a recurring Christian phenomenon, and might easily make a home for itself in first-century Corinth.

(iv) *The Antinomian as Idolater*

The chapters on meat sacrificed to idols call for close reading; the argument does not lie on the surface. The apostolic injunction, reported in Acts xv. 29, was plain in its condemnation of any such *communicatio in sacris*. But that injunction was addressed, specifically, to the Christians of Syria and Cilicia; the Corinthians, naturally, had been taught the same doctrine when St. Paul visited them, but in the absence of any local controversy they may have followed his teaching about such points with languid interest. After all, you bought a piece of meat in the market; who was to know whether it had done duty in temple worship or not (x. 25)? At any rate, some of them were attempting to solve the difficulty on highly ingenious reflex principles, which St. Paul admits as principles, while he denies their application. It is convenient to speak of false gods as if they were something that exist in competition (so to speak) with the true God; but *we* know that such false gods have no existence outside men's minds. What has been sacrificed to Venus of the Isthmus has been

sacrificed only to an imagination, sacrificed, therefore, only in imagination; it is common meat like any other. *We* know that, and therefore we can sit in a pagan temple and eat what we will. It is the heathen who *does not know*, who thinks the gods of his false worship really exist, that sins mortally in eating.

St. Paul's reply is based, in the first instance, on the consideration of scandal. This superior knowledge of which the Corinthians boast is leading to a defiance of authority; if they would only learn to boast about charity instead! Charity edifies; recognizes that it has a duty to the souls of others. They are not sinning against their own consciences; but, by their co-operation, they are leading their half-converted or unconverted friends into demonstrable sin. In the first twenty-two verses of chapter ix he develops this point, referring to his own carefulness to avoid the imputation of scandal, even Pharisaical scandal. He is at liberty to take alms from the faithful, to support his own needs, and, for that matter, the needs of some faithful woman attendant; other apostles have no scruple about doing this. He prefers to work with his own hands, leaving no room for the enemies of the Gospel to accuse him of feathering his own nest. Is it too much to expect, from the Corinthians, respect for the consciences of other people?

It may be worth while drawing attention here to a curious philological point. The word scandal, in the sense we have just been giving it, belongs to our Catholic vocabulary; the ordinary Englishman is unfamiliar with it; to him, 'scandal' means uncharitable gossip. Nor has he any equivalent for the word in his own vocabulary. In point of fact, he realizes the duty of 'setting a good example' to other people, and he is careful to avoid 'shocking' them, so that his practise is often beyond reproof. But it is as a moralist, not precisely as a Christian, that he makes these allowances for the spiritual existence of his neighbour; as a Christian, he is apt to mistrust the idea of edifying your neighbour, as perilously akin to hypocrisy. How are we to explain this abandonment, by the post-Reformation world, of a theological notion which St. Paul valued so highly? (Like the two chapters we are considering here, Romans xiv is full of it.) The answer, as I see it, is a curious one. Enthusiasm never managed to take over the direction of the Reformation movement; but the theology of enthusiasm influenced profoundly the Reformation attitude towards life. And for the enthusiast the vocabulary of

scandal does not exist. He is so sure of being in the right, that he would hold it an infidelity to countenance the scruples of those who disagree with him. If they are shocked by what he does, he can reply 'Honi soit qui mal y pense'; he is acting under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and to criticize him is to betray a 'carnal' mind. Anabaptist and early Quaker might 'go naked for a sign'; the Convulsionist might gesticulate, head over heels, and the Perfectionist throw down the gauntlet, even more decidedly, to common standards of decency—you were not to interfere; it was God's work.

The argument used by the Corinthians was probably much the same. 'We know'—it was a claim, not to worldly wisdom, but to direct spiritual enlightenment. (That is the sense in which St. Paul regularly uses the word 'gnosis'; one which, later, the Gnostics borrowed from him.) That the gospel liberty, the gospel wisdom which he had preached to them should be thus distorted by his converts and pressed into the service of idolatry, was already an ominous development. But he seems to have detected the currency of a still more dangerous error, which is fatally entwined with the history of enthusiasm. The Corinthians, if they have not already asserted, are already in danger of asserting the indefectibility of grace. It cannot be with any other error in view that St. Paul, at the end of chapter ix, compares the position of Christians with that of competitors in a race, some of whom will be baulked of their prize; adding that he himself, with all that hope of final perseverance which he elsewhere expresses so confidently, is at pains to buffet his own body, and make it his slave, is fearful that he, who has preached to others, may himself be rejected as worthless. At the beginning of chapter x he resumes the same point, even more forcibly; drawing out a characteristically Pauline parallel between the Christian pilgrimage and the journey of Israel through the wilderness. We Christians have said good-bye to the world, by common consent, just as Israel went out of Egypt, to all appearances a single people with a single common destiny. We have all been mystically enlightened, mystically buried in the tomb of Christ, when we were baptized; just as the Israelites were all 'baptized' in the cloud that illumined them, the sea which engulfed them. We are made one people through the Body and Blood of Christ, as the Israelites were made one people, mystically houselled with the manna from heaven, the water from the riven Rock. Yet so many Israelites fell away, through idolatry, through

impurity, through love of faction; might not the same thing happen at Corinth? Was grace indefectible? No; 'anyone who thinks he stands firmly, should beware of a fall'.

If anyone is inclined to ask how the Corinthians, raw novices though they might be in the study of theology, could reconcile this antinomian, perfectionist attitude with the teaching of St. Paul, let him reflect that St. Paul himself was accused by his enemies of teaching it.[1] Let him reflect that all the many enthusiasts down the ages who have fallen into this error have quoted St. Paul, and especially his epistle to the Romans, in their defence. How easily his contrast, in the seventh chapter of that epistle, between the law of the flesh and the law of the mind lends itself to the purposes of a John of Leyden, a Molinos, a Henry Prince! They hear in it the echoes of that madman's logic which seems to them incontrovertible. Trust in God means believing we are predestined to heaven; the predestined cannot sin; but we do perform actions which, in a heathen, would be described as sinful; therefore 'sinful' actions on the part of the predestined are not sin. Somehow or other, they are not true actions; it is the lower self that is responsible for them, and the lower self does not count. . . . So they argue, never thinking to check the data of Romans by the data of Corinthians; if they would do that, their argument would be arrested in mid-course by the picture of those innumerable bones, bleaching in the wilderness of Arabia.

(v) *The Decencies of Public Worship*

The eleventh chapter begins with a word of congratulation to the Corinthians on the loyalty with which they adhere to the traditions handed on to them. This is St. Paul's characteristic intimation that he is going to find fault with them for their neglect of tradition. Enthusiasts in the making, they are out of sympathy with all the institutionalist side of religion; rules are meant for the herd, not for the elect. St. Paul selects two instances of this exaggerated free-and-easiness; he may have had others, too, in mind.

The section which insists on women keeping their heads veiled in church is full of exegetical difficulties. Perhaps the most obvious question that presents itself to the reader's mind is the question why, in this context, the apostle objects to women prophesying with their

[1] Rom. iii. 8.

heads uncovered, whereas at the end of chapter xiv he objects to women prophesying in church at all. No solution really meets the difficulty except the obvious solution—that if women wore thick veils over their faces they had the choice of a strict alternative, to remove their veils or not to prophesy. That devout women, in this as in every other age, were sometimes granted revelations in the course of their private devotions, cannot be doubted; we have the evidence of Acts xxi. 9. It was a different matter, whether they were free to communicate these revelations to others at times of public worship. From the Montanist movement onwards, the history of enthusiasm is largely a history of female emancipation, and it is not a reassuring one. Martha Simmonds escorting Nayler into Bristol with cries of Hosanna, Madame Guyon training up her director in the way he should go, the convulsionary priestesses going through the motions of saying Mass at St. Médard—the sturdiest champion of women's rights will hardly deny that the unfettered exercise of the prophetic ministry by the more devout sex can threaten the ordinary decencies of ecclesiastical order. With the arguments which St. Paul adduces we are not here concerned; they are a problem for the exegete. What more concerns us is the appeal with which he closures the discussion, in xi. 16 and again in xiv. 36. It is an appeal from local to universal custom, from the liberty of the spirit to ecclesiastical authority. Not even the qualified enthusiasm of a Donatist or a Port-Royalist should have been able to contemplate that appeal without searchings of heart.

The second half of chapter xi deals with a very different type of religious disorders. Our notions of the primitive *Agape* are derived, in the main, from the passage before us; we have little in the way of collateral evidence. In Corinth, whatever may have happened elsewhere, it seems clear that the love-feast for which the Christians met before the celebration of the Divine Mysteries took the form of an *eranos*; everyone who came contributed to the meal, no doubt with the implied intention that the rich should supplement the needs of the poor. For whatever reason, the rich Corinthians had formed the habit of coming as early as possible, and eating the food they themselves had brought without waiting for the beneficiaries of the scheme to arrive. Thus the *Agape*, no longer a bond of unity, had become a source of scandal. By the time the Eucharist was celebrated, 'one man goes hungry, while another has drunk deep'.

It is probable that this was only one of the complaints which had reached the apostle's ears about the celebration of the Divine Mysteries at Corinth. The well-known passage about unworthy reception (verses 27 and 28), with the recommendation that a man should examine himself first, and then eat of that bread and drink of that cup, may well hint at more serious and more secret misdemeanours, which would need personal attention (verse 34). Whatever be the truth about this, it is interesting to notice that St. Paul is once again rebuking the Corinthians for preferring their private lights to the authority of tradition. 'The tradition I received from the Lord, and handed on to you'—that is what the Corinthians are treating with disrespect. And, in view of the tendencies we shall be examining in the next two chapters, it does not seem altogether rash to attribute this disrespect to a habit of mind common among enthusiasts. Spiritual manifestations—prophesying, speaking with tongues, and so on—may come to dominate the imagination of the devotee to such an extent, as to bring the sacraments into disrepute. The use of any exterior symbols, however high be the authority which sanctions them—is it not a kind of idolatry, unworthy of men who are called to worship the Father in spirit and in truth? The Quakers are the only considerable body of Christians who have ventured to discard the sacramental system altogether. But the tendency to rest more weight on spiritual manifestations does involve, often enough, the tendency to lean less on the sacraments. St. Paul will have been informed of such developments at Corinth only by hearsay; he does not care to tax his converts with it until he knows more of the details. Meantime, he unburdens his mind on one subject of open scandal, and takes this opportunity to assert, in a passage of supreme importance for theology, the unique dignity which belongs to the Supper of the Lord.

(vi) *Greediness over the Gifts of the Spirit*

At the same time, there is no question that St. Paul recognizes the existence of the charismatic ministry. For him, as for every other Christian of his age, prophecy and speaking with tongues were a normal (though supernatural) privilege granted to a multitude of the faithful. The *gratiae gratis datae*, in that dawn of the new dispensation, were lavished in a profusion scarcely credible to the modern reader; he is bewildered to find Christian worship in the first century so

unlike what we mean by Christian worship nowadays—so much more what we should expect (if the whole truth must be told) from some country-side Bethel at the height of a Welsh revival. Corinth may have been more highly blessed in this respect than other churches; we can hardly suspect irony, but we can perhaps trace a faint note of surprise, in the congratulation which St. Paul expresses in his opening salutation at the full measure of the spiritual endowments it had received (i. 7). But at the best it will only have been a difference of degree; it was not (as we shall see) till the second century that such manifestations grew rare, and were viewed with misgiving by those in authority.

At the same time, a second reading of chapters xii–xv does raise a faint doubt in our minds whether all was well, and whether St. Paul felt all was well, with the Corinthian Church. The whole tendency of these three chapters is to limit the scope, and to regularize the use, of supernatural faculties. There is to be no quarrelling over the relative importance of this or that type of manifestation; it is the same Spirit who grants them all (xii. 4–11). The prophet, the healer, the speaker with tongues are contributing, severally, to the edification of the Church as a whole; we must not lose sight of unity in diversity (xii. 12–27). There is, to be sure, a hierarchy in such matters, but it is not altogether the hierarchy which the Corinthians would have expected; the apostles come first, then the prophets, then (without any claim to miraculous powers) those engaged in teaching. Gifts of healing and speaking with tongues are mentioned in the same breath, to our minds somewhat incongruously, with works of mercy and the management of church finance (xii. 28–30). In a word, the Church is one body, expressing itself in a variety of organs, and it is not necessarily the most interesting of them that are the most significant.

Then follows the great chapter on charity, so familiar to us in isolation that we are apt to forget its relevance to the context. Highest in all the scale of gifts comes charity, greater than any other, indispensable to the right use of any other. We are not to think of it here as meaning the love of God, or as meaning the love of man, exclusively; Catholics are too ready to identify it with the possession of sanctifying grace, while other Christians associate it too closely with acts of kindness towards our fellow men. The main point here is surely that charity is the bond which unifies the organic body of

Christendom, as St. Paul has defined it in his preceding chapter. Useless to ask whether we are speaking of a supernatural quality or of a moral virtue, for it is both. What St. Paul evidently fears, is that an unwholesome preoccupation with the *charismata* in their more startling forms is creating an atmosphere uncongenial to the exercise of charity; it fosters pride, jealousy, backbiting, and other uncharitable emotions. History has vindicated his fears; the spiritual endowments of a Donatus or a St. Cyran will contribute directly to the Africanism of the Donatist, the *aigreur* of the Jansenist.

With this danger in view, the apostle proceeds to a series of injunctions (chapter xiv) which will introduce, it may be hoped, some kind of discipline into the behaviour of the Corinthians at prayer. Speaking with tongues merely for the sake of theatrical effect is to be discouraged; it is childishness (verses 1–20). A babel of conflicting voices will only confirm the unbeliever in his incredulity, as Isaias prophesied; whereas the gift of prophecy may arouse compunction in him (verses 21–25). There must be no speaking with tongues, unless they can be interpreted (verses 26–28). The prophets are to speak one at a time, giving place to one another; women are not to prophesy in public at all; the congregation must sit in judgement on the prophetic utterances (verses 29–35). Evidently it is the curb, not the spur, that is needed in first-century Corinth. Let these exuberances go unrepressed, and the state of the Church there may anticipate, before long, the scenes enacted in eighteenth-century Paris; scenes which the older and staider element in Jansenism was powerless to control.

'If it goes so hard with the tree that is still green, what will become of the tree that is already dried up?' If such formidable clouds could gather on the horizon of Christendom, when preachers were still living who retained vivid memories of our Lord's sojourn on earth, when apostles were still endued with mysterious powers of coercing the refractory, when (above all) no schism had loosened as yet the fabric of Church unity, what would be the experience of later and more degenerate times? The same tendencies which had appeared at Corinth would reappear in varying forms under other skies; and the too-ardent souls who favoured them would forget the warning tone of the apostle's tender remonstrances, would see, in that *chiaroscuro* of primitive Christian life, only a tradition to regret, and a

model to imitate. Nor has such wistful admiration of past things depended, entirely, on the illusion created by long retrospect. A bare century was to elapse before the vagaries of unregulated prophecy called for serious attention, and the Church, not without disaster to one of her most gifted sons, had to try her strength against the solvent forces of enthusiasm.

III

THE MONTANIST CHALLENGE

SOME of those half-dormant symptoms, whose presence we have diagnosed in the early Corinthian Church, come to light, rather more than a century later, in an acute form. The first heresies, mostly of a Gnostic complexion, had offered to outbid the Christian message by subtleties, by over-refinements of theology; it is the chief burden of St. Paul's later epistles that the man of God has nothing to do with empty philosophizings. Then followed Montanism. The Church is always finding herself attacked from a new quarter just when she thinks her victory is assured. In the Middle Ages she raised a splendid fabric of argued belief to bar the way against the Arabian philosophers; only to find herself cut off from the rear by the infiltration of Lollard simpletons, crying shame on her intellectualism. So, in the latter half of the second century, her precarious peace was disturbed by Montanus and his prophesyings. 'As Gnosticism is Christianity perverted by learning and speculation, Montanism is Christianity perverted by fear of learning and speculation. While the one refines away the gospel into a philosophy, the other debases it into a coarse revivalism, equally opposed to the intellectual pride of the Gnostics and to the dignified traditionalism of the sub-Apostolic Church.' This candid estimate of Professor Gwatkin's[1] may well put us on our guard against taking the Montanists too seriously; we shall find that other Church historians have exaggerated their importance. The sect would have made but a small ripple on the surface of Christendom, if the wayward genius of Tertullian had not lent energy to its propaganda. But we must needs give some account of it here, for its passing has influenced even the vocabulary of enthusiasm. That contrast between the carnal and the spiritual, which sectaries in all ages have derived from St. Paul, and written large on their prospectuses, was borrowed from Montanus in the first instance. It was he who first offered the world a 'pneumatic', as contra-distinguished from a 'psychic' Church.

[1] *Early Church History*, ch. xvi.

(i) *The Setting of Montanism*

It was not at Corinth, not in any centre of ordered Greco-Roman civilization, that enthusiasm took its birth. Those who are anxious to persuade us that the Montanists were simply a set of primitive Christians, trying to save a legitimate tradition of prophecy from falling into decay, would do well to observe that the movement had a barbaric cradling. Its centre was Phrygia; the prophet who gave it its name came originally from Ardabau, over the Mysian border, not far from Mount Ida. 'The influence of the native Asianic religions', writes Mr. Cary,[1] 'may be traced in the various heresies, and especially that of Montanus (himself a Phrygian), that arose in Phrygia after the spread of Christianity.' What that influence was, every reader of the classics will remember. Here you had the recognized centre, in the pagan world, of ecstatic religion; Cybele, the Great Mother of the gods, held her court on Mount Dindymus, venerated by those mutilated priests, the Galli, the atmosphere of whose orgiastic cult has come down to us, with all its stir and recklessness, in the *Attis* of Catullus.

> Mora tarda mente cedat; simul ite, sequimini
> Phrygiam ad domum Cybelles, Phrygia ad nemora deae;
> Ubi cymbalum sonat vox, ubi tympana reboant,
> Tibicen ubi canit Phryx curvo grave calamo,
> Ubi capita Maenades vi quatiunt hederigerae,
> Ubi sacra sancta acutis ululatibus agitant,
> Ubi suevit illa divae volitare vaga cohors;
> Quo nos decet citatis celerare tripudiis.[2]

A vivid, though unfriendly portrait of these Galli, and their mode of ecstasy, has been preserved for us by two authors who were both, in all probability, alive when Montanus first appeared in public.

[1] Art. 'Phrygia' in *Ency. Brit.*

[2] Catullus, lxiii. 18 sqq. If I may be permitted to transplant the weird Galliambic metre into our own language, I would render the lines as follows:

> Then away with dull reluctance, my companions, following me
> To the Phrygian home of godhead, to the woods where Cybele is;
> Where the cymbals clash their music, with the timbrels echoing them,
> And the Phrygian piper playing deep, deep on his clarinet;
> Where the Maenads shake their elf-locks, that are ivy-coroneted,
> As they haunt with shrieks of wailing the mysterious ceremony,
> As they hither fly and thither in the goddess's retinue—
> It is there the dance must lead us, tempestuous revellers.

Both Lucian in the *Asinus* and Apuleius in the *Metamorphoses* describe the object of their worship as 'the Syrian goddess'; she was variously identified by mythographers, but there can be little doubt that Cybele was her proper appellation here. Apuleius' account is slightly the fuller:

> They went forth with their arms naked to the shoulders, bearing with them great swords and mighty axes, and dancing like mad persons. . . . They made a thousand gestures with their feet and their hands; they would bite themselves; finally, every one took his weapon and wounded his arms in divers places. Amongst whom there was one more mad than the rest, that fetched many deep sighs from the bottom of his heart, as though he had been ravished in spirit, or replenished with divine power. And after that, he (somewhat returning to himself) invented and forged a great lie, saying that he had displeased the divine majesty of the goddess . . . wherefore he would take vengeance of himself; and therewithal he took a whip, and scourged his own body, that the blood issued out abundantly.[1]

It is a bold statement of Milman's,[2] that 'the land of heathen orgies was the natural birthplace of that wild Christian mysticism; it was the Phrygian fanaticism speaking a new language'. But indeed, there is nothing inherently improbable in the idea that the mystery religions, then at the height of their influence, had something to say to the development of second-century Christianity. It only seems strange when we are invited, by a more modern school of historians, to believe that this infiltration of ideas had a catholicizing effect. They infer, by a precarious argument from silence, that the primitive Church was a simple, charismatic affair, with only the rudiments, at best, of a hierarchy or a sacramental system. It was by taking colour from the mystery religions, and perhaps to some extent in the effort to outbid them, that Christendom evolved its elaborate system of liturgy and ceremonial. The thesis looks well enough, until you begin to consider what the mystery religions were really like. All we hear of them seems to suggest that their votaries would have felt far more at home in a Methodist 'Camp Meeting' than in a Spanish cathedral. The wild rush of the Eleusinian mystics to the sea, the cries of ὗης ἄττης, ἄττης ὗης which greeted the rites of Sabazius, Demosthenes' picture of the young Aeschines purifying the initiated, and boasting that he could shout 'I have escaped the

[1] *Metamorphoses*, viii. 27 (Adlington's translation).
[2] *History of Latin Christianity*, ch. i, p. 47.

evil, I have found the good' louder than anyone had shouted it before[1]—these and a hundred other features of the Greek mysteries find their counterpart, surely, in something other than ecclesiasticism. They have much more in common, these old mystagogues, with modern revivalist movements, such as ever hold priesthood and sacrament in little esteem. It was not the Catholic Church, it was the Salvation Army that Huxley nicknamed 'Corybantic Christianity'.

Was there really filiation; did anything of the Cybele cult pass into the enthusiasm of Montanus? Pepuza, the holy city of his revelation, looks across its river-valley at the southern slopes of Mount Dindymus. As for the mountain-man himself, we know little of his antecedents. St. Jerome refers to him as *abscisum et semivirum*, which seems to hint at the startling possibility—but it is a possibility—that he was a converted priest of the Great Goddess. A still more curious hint, though admittedly it hangs by a tenuous thread, is supplied by a reading in a single manuscript of Tertullian's *De exhortatione castitatis*.[2] 'Those who purify their hearts', it says, 'both see visions and also, placing their heads downwards, hear manifest voices, as saving as they are secret.' The extraordinary thing is, that this odd detail appears both in Lucian and Apuleius. In the *Asinus*, 'the crowd of flute-players blew like men inspired, and they (the Galli) shook off their caps and rolled their heads downward from the neck'.[3] The description is a baffling one, but light is thrown upon it by the *Metamorphoses*, where they are described as 'hanging down their heads a long while, moving their necks about with supple motions, and whirling their loose hair round and round'.[4]

We might easily develop the thesis by adducing further considerations, but it will not do. Nothing is easier, in a discussion of religious movements, than to enliven your pages by making facts fit theories; but there has been too much of it; Mr. Cary may 'trace the influence' of Cybele-worship in the Asiatic heresies, and Dean Milman may describe Montanism as 'the Phrygian fanaticism speaking a new language', but there is no *proof* of a connexion. It is a subject of more legitimate inquiry, whether the natural surroundings of Phrygia,

[1] *De corona*, 313.

[2] Chapter x, quoted by Abbot Chapman in *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, s.v. Montanists.

[3] Section 37.

[4] 'Diuque capite demisso, cervices lubricis intorquentes motibus, crinesque pendulos in circulum rotantes.' *Metam.* viii, ch. xxvii (p. 734 in Hildebrand's edition).

and the temper of its inhabitants, were such as to breed, in Christian as in pagan minds, an atmosphere of ecstaticism. Robinson Ellis, commenting on the *Attis*,[1] quotes Sir Charles Fellows thus: 'At the distance of twenty miles from Kootayd we entered a valley, also filled with the singularly formed pointed rocks of the pumice-earth, and for eight miles passed through a continuous cemetery, the rocks and the ground being perforated by thousands of caves.' Such must be the effects of scenery Père Prat has in mind when he writes:[2]

> The new Judaism (he is speaking of the New Testament heresies) was bound to find favour among the Phrygians, a people famous at all times for their tendency to illuminism. Their natural surroundings, rugged, tortuous, convulsed at intervals by terrible earth-quakes, rent by crevices which breathe out, even now, sulphurous fumes, seemed as if this must have been the scene of age-long warfare between supernatural powers. At Hierapolis, not far from Colossae, you were shewn an entrance to hell called the Plutonium. . . . The rites practised in honour of Cybele, of Diana, of Sabazius, prove how far the mystic exaltation of these peoples could go. Phrygia was always the nursery of the most extravagant Gnostic sects. You passed easily, there, from the most abandoned licence to the most rigid Puritanism. *C'était la patrie de tous les fanatismes et de tous les excès.*

If such an estimate (by a careful writer) is justly conceived, we can hardly doubt that the prophet of second-century enthusiasm was, to some extent, the child of his surroundings.

(ii) *The Beginnings of Montanism*

For the early history of the sect, we depend on scanty information, mostly provided by Eusebius. It seems probable, harmonizing his account with that of Epiphanius, that the new prophecy appeared quite soon after the middle of the second century, but did not attract general attention until after A.D. 175. Montanus himself was a convert, 'with an unbounded craving for leadership. He allowed the Enemy of souls to enter into him, and so began to be carried away by inspiration; there would be a sudden seizure, he would fall into a trance, and start raving in his speech. He would speak with strange tongues, too, and prophesy (or so it was called) in a manner quite contrary to that which has come down to us, by continuous tradition, from earlier times.'[3] It is unfortunately impossible to be

[1] Catullus, lxiii, line 71.
[2] *Théologie de Saint Paul*, i. 342.
[3] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, v. 16.

certain about some of the phrases here used. Dr. Kirsopp Lake, in his translation, gives 'convulsions' for παρεκστάσει, which would be an interesting feature, but I cannot believe that it was intended by Eusebius, or rather by the documents from which he is quoting. On the other hand, I think ξενοφωνεῖν, 'to talk strange, or foreign', probably refers to some kind of glossolaly. Our author does not make it clear whether it was the matter or the manner of these prophecies that was contrary to tradition.

Distrusted by many, the new prophet gained a following. In particular, he could boast of two female converts, Priscilla and Maximilla. Names one would more easily devise for the heroines of a Victorian novel than for the votaries of an eccentric heresy, referred to by orthodox writers as 'madwomen'. But, if St. Jerome is to be trusted[1], they were both of them 'noble and rich women'. They were not only the forerunners of those numerous *voyantes* we shall meet in later chapters; Wilhelmina of Milan, Antoinette Bourignon, Martha Simmonds, and Ann Lee. They were the forerunners also of those influential patronesses who, in every age, have facilitated the diffusion of the sects; Lucilla of Carthage, the Duchess de Longueville, Selina Countess of Huntingdon. We may even guess that they somewhat overshadowed the author of their own inspiration, as Isabella Bellinzaga overshadowed Gagliardi, as Madame Guyon emphatically overshadowed the unfortunate Père Lacombe. At least, the three names are usually repeated together, as if they had been those of a syndicate. An untrustworthy tradition represents all three as having hanged themselves.[2]

The movement was at first local in its influence, and called forth a local reaction. 'The holy bishops of the time tried to expose the (false) spirit that was in Maximilla, but were not allowed to do so by others, who openly abetted the spirit in question.' We also read of two bishops, Zoticus of Cumana and Julian of Apamea, who 'came to test the spirit and engage it in debate', but 'Themiso and his friends silenced them, and would not allow the false spirit by which they deluded the multitude to be exposed'.[3] It is interesting to notice the words in which Harnack[4] retells the story, giving

[1] Ep. xliii (col. 477 in Maurist edition).

[2] Eusebius, op. cit. v. 16; cf. Jerome, *Catalogue of Church Writers*, s.v. 'Apollonius' (col. 113).

[3] Eusebius, ibid.

[4] Art. in *Ency. Brit.* (this passage has been cut out of the 14th edition).

Eusebius as his authority. 'The disputation which Bishop Zoticus of Cumana and Julian of Apamea arranged with Maximilla and her followers turned out disastrously for its promoters. The spirit of Maximilla gained a signal victory, a certain Themiso in particular having reduced the bishops to silence. . . . In after times the only way in which the discomfiture of the bishops could be explained was by asserting that they had been silenced by fraud or violence.' This is certainly an extraordinary way to write history. Eusebius' authority had himself taken part in one of these interviews. He tells us explicitly that certain bishops came to 'try the spirit' of the new prophetess, but that her own partisans would not allow them to do so. Harnack produces an account of the proceedings which has no authority at all outside his own imagination, and then, still without any authority, accuses the contemporary historian of having 'in after times' misrepresented the facts.

Whatever the methods by which the Montanist successes were assured, the movement was evidently to be reckoned with. The Christian world, scattered then and ill informed, was perhaps disposed at first to distrust the attitude of the Asian bishops, who had met in council to condemn the new heresy. As Tillemont points out,[1] the summoning of a council was in itself a novelty; there had been none since apostolic times. And it may have seemed as if condemnation was being passed, not on a particular, very eccentric form of prophecy, but on prophecy as a whole, which still held its own, though probably as a rare phenomenon, in the system of the Church. It must have been such misgivings as these which led the faithful in southern France to write, in a spirit of appeasement, both to Asia itself and to Pope Eleutherius. This was in 177; that the tenor of the letters was not such as to encourage the extravagances of Montanism is clear from Eusebius' own account of the incident. He calls the letters pious (or possibly careful) and highly orthodox;[2] nor was Eusebius a man to waste compliments, where doctrine was concerned. Maximilla's complaint that she was hounded away from the faithful as if she were a wolf no doubt indicates that there was, quite early, a definite cleavage between Montanists and Catholics, but the date is difficult to establish.

For a time, the position of the Montanists must have been

[1] Tillemont, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique* (Venice, 1732), vol. ii, 'Les Montanistes', art. II.

[2] Op. cit. v. 3.

ambiguous, like that of the Waldenses after them. In the end, they developed a ministry of their own; there was a patriarch at Pepuza, with officials under him called Cenones; the word *episcopus* was evidently used as the title of the ordinary parish priest.[1] It is clear that in the third century they had churches of their own even in Africa.[2] Did they go into schism of their own accord? Their attitude, at least, was from the first schismatic. As Tillemont points out, to call their fellow Christians 'psychic' or 'animal' because they followed the ordinary discipline of the Church was 'une assez grande marque de schisme'.[3] It is interesting to picture Tillemont committing those words to paper at Port Royal des Champs, of all places; forgetting, in the great innocence of his heart, the language held about the decadence of the Church by his master, St. Cyran.... However, he is probably right in inferring from Maximilla's complaint, alluded to above, that the adverse verdict of the Phrygian bishops carried with it a sentence of excommunication. Nothing else mattered; it is doubtful whether at any time the movement attained formidable proportions outside Phrygia itself. Indeed, the very name 'Cataphrygian', by which it is frequently described, is probably not a term of contempt but a geographical identification, 'the heresy you get in Phrygia'. It was the first heresy to derive a label from its country of origin.

But every heresy, as a matter of common form, attempted to retrieve its fortunes at Rome. And if we may believe Tertullian, Montanism very nearly achieved, in doing so, a momentary success. In matters of this kind, as Père Dudon reminds us, *Rome a ses lenteurs*, and Tillemont is probably right in identifying the Pope then reigning not as Eleutherius, but as Victor, who succeeded him in 189.[4] The Pope, whoever he was, had evidently been primed by the Montanists with their version of the story, and he was, according to Tertullian, 'in the act of recognizing (*jam agnoscentem*) the prophecies of Montanus, Prisca and Maximilla, a recognition which would have brought peace to the churches of Asia and Phrygia'. But Praxeas, himself a heretic (he was a Monarchian) 'made false assertions about the prophets and their assemblies (or possibly, their churches), and quoted expressions of opinion given by the Pope's predecessors; thus forcing him to withdraw the conciliatory letter,

[1] Jerome, Ep. xxvii (to Marcella).
[2] Tertullian, *De anima*, 9.
[3] Op. cit. iv, art. 'Montanistes', IV.
[4] Note, ibid.

which had already been sent out, and to give up his purpose of sanctioning the prophecies'.[1] This story is generally received, and it must be admitted that, if the incident happened before 195, Tertullian himself was in Rome at the time. But it reads very much like one of those Vatican rumours which in all ages have been so plentiful, and so untrustworthy. It depends on no other authority. If it is true, there is a curious analogy between Victor's position and that of his successor fifteen hundred years afterwards. We shall find Innocent XI much inclined to recognize the prophesyings of Molinos, and at last giving up his defence with the admission, *Veramente siamo ingannati.*

To date the death of Montanus, or of Maximilla, would involve us in a wearisome discussion of chronological details. And indeed, both ancient and modern authorities on Montanism seem oddly incurious about the life-story of its founders. We hear little of them but what is to their discredit; their fondness for taking up collections, with insinuations about dyed hair, pencilled eyebrows, and gaming-tables.[2] It is a pity, perhaps, that Tertullian did not let us have the other side of the picture; but to him, Montanus is simply the vehicle of the Paraclete, and his human personality passes unnoticed. And indeed, it may be questioned whether the prophet was not, in general estimation, overshadowed by his prophecies. In the famous debate at Rome between Gaius and Proclus, the whole point at issue was evidently whether these could or could not be ranked with the inspired Scriptures.[3] Those were days when sub-apostolic writings like the Pastor of Hermas were still sometimes included in the New Testament canon.

Baronius suggested that it was this Proclus who won for Montanism its most illustrious convert.[4] It is difficult for us to imagine what a shock must have been given to the tender frame of second-century Christianity by the lapse of Tertullian, its great apologist, into Montanism. It was as if Newman had joined the Salvation Army. Africa, as we shall see in the next chapter, was a soil congenial to rigorism, and it would not have been surprising if, under the influence of such a leader, it had espoused the cause of Montanus

[1] Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean*, 1.
[2] Apollonius, quoted in Eusebius, op. cit. v. 18.
[3] Jerome, *Catalogue of Church Writers*, s.v. 'Caius'.
[4] Tillemont, op. cit., art. 'Tertullian', VIII.

as vigorously as it espoused, afterwards, the cause of Donatus. But there is nothing to suggest that anything of the kind happened; and at the end of his life Tertullian founded a fresh schism of his own, bequeathing his own name to it. Its survivors, a single congregation, were reconciled to the Church by St. Augustine.[1] Only in Phrygia and its neighbourhood had the new prophecy taken deep root. In 250 there were no Catholic Christians at all in the city of Thyatira,[2] and Constantine's laws were not enforced against Montanism in Phrygia itself, where it had still many adherents as late as the middle of the fifth century.[3] Whatever they were, Montanus and his prophetesses were not easily forgotten.

(iii) *The Character of the Prophesyings*

Curiously, their prophecy seemed at the moment to have died with them. Fourteen years after Maximilla's death, they could be challenged to produce the name of anyone to whom she had bequeathed the gift.[4] Nor, for that matter, have we any clear evidence that it revived. Tertullian's prophetess at Carthage was a tame enough specimen; when Tertullian had been preaching the materiality of the soul (a favourite speculation of his) she came up to him after Mass and told him she had had a vision of the soul as corporeal and palpable and of the colour of air.[5] None of the references made to Montanism after Montanus suggest that it was a revivalist cult, or had peculiar ceremonies—unless we are prepared to believe, with St. Cyril of Jerusalem, that they had mysterious rites in which they cut the throats of little children.[6] They seem to have maintained the Catholic discipline, in an uncomfortably rigid form. They would have been no more disconcerted to hear that prophecy had died with Maximilla than the ordinary Christian would be to hear that it had died with St. John the Evangelist.

But they stood or fell by the assertion that the Holy Spirit had been specially revealed in Montanus. Or perhaps a distinction should be made; Tertullian, while still a Catholic, credited them with the belief that the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles at Pentecost, but the gift of the Paraclete was reserved for a later age.[7] In fact, it was

[1] Tillemont, op. cit., art. 'Tertullian,' XIII.
[2] Tillemont, op. cit., art. 'Montanistes', XIII.
[3] Sozomen's *Church History*, ii. 30. [4] Eusebius, op. cit. v. 17. [5] *De anima*, 9.
[6] *Catecheses*, xvi. 8. St. Jerome, Ep. xxvii (ad Marcellam), refuses to credit the story.
[7] *De praescr. haeret.* 52.

a new type of prophecy altogether that the sectaries claimed, not some casual variation of the prophetic *charisma* which still persisted, at that date, in Christendom proper. As to its exterior manifestations, our information is disappointingly meagre. Possibly, if Tertullian's seven books on Ecstasy had come down to us, we should have better material for passing judgement on it. All we know (apart from the reference in Eusebius already quoted) is contained in a single sentence which he has preserved elsewhere.[1] 'The false prophet speaks in a trance (*παρέκστασις*), which induces irresponsibility and freedom from restraint (*ἄδεια καὶ ἀφοβία*); he begins by deliberate suppression of conscious thought (*ἑκουσίος ἀμαθία*), and ends in a delirium over which he has no control (*ἀκουσίος μανία ψυχῆς*).' The writer adds, to make his distinction clear, that a prophet must not be expected to speak in ecstasy—it is not quite clear whether he means 'ought not to', or 'does not mean to'. People like Ammia and Quadratus did not, nor did Agabus and the other prophets mentioned by name in the New Testament.

Almost every shade of meaning which I have tried to bring out in the rendering just given might be contested; I have done what I could with my original. But it seems quite clear that the orthodox of the second century, to whom prophecy was still a living though perhaps a rare gift, distinguished sharply between prophecy and alienation of the senses. St. Jerome, in explicit refutation of the Montanists, is for ever assuring us that the Old Testament prophets had all their wits about them.[2] This, in spite of 2 Peter i. 21, where we are told that these saintly men, when they spoke, were carried away (*φερόμενοι*) by the Holy Spirit. In Montanus' time, and apparently in St. Jerome's, to be 'carried away in spirit' (*πνευματοφορεῖσθαι*) was enough to bring a prophet under grave suspicion. The question naturally suggests itself, What would St. Jerome have thought of St. Gertrude, or of St. Theresa?

What makes the question specially interesting is that, as we shall see in a much later chapter, the Church was called upon to decide a very similar question in the seventeenth century. Though the Quietist controversy has many ramifications, the point primarily at issue was simply this: Can we—legitimately at any rate—prepare ourselves for the gift of passive contemplation by the exercise of something called active contemplation? This actual point, it is true,

[1] Op. cit. v. 17. [2] e.g. in his introduction to the Prophecy of Naum.

was never pushed to a conclusion. But it was evidently the thought of a man like Segneri that passive contemplation, in which you were suddenly carried out of yourself, was well enough—had not the Saints experienced it? It was more questionable whether you were justified in dismissing from your mind all affections, resolutions, and images by a voluntary act, as if to invite the approaches of the supernatural. The mystic tradition was that you were justified in thus abandoning yourself to the breath of the Holy Spirit; and one of the best expositions of the view is that famous medieval brochure, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Voluntary ignorance, which Eusebius' authority alludes to so disapprovingly, is exactly what *The Cloud* recommends. And that supernatural suspension of the faculties, which the seventeenth century regarded as irreproachable, is, for Montanus' contemporary, a sort of nemesis which may fall upon the devotee of active contemplation if he is not careful!

Are we to say that the Church has changed her mind? That she condemned as a diabolical illusion, in the time of Commodus, that ecstatic condition which men's minds connected with sanctity in the days of the Grand Monarque? The contrast, on both sides, is too sharply drawn. No writers have insisted more strongly than the mystics themselves on the fact that ecstasy can be counterfeited by diabolic influence, or even by hysteria. One of the privileges of sanctity, it is not necessarily a mark of sanctity. And on the other side, it does not appear that the Church of the second century ever made up her mind about extraordinary states of prayer, or was ever invited to. It was a time (we must suppose) when ecstasy was not one of those high graces accorded even to the saintliest of her children. And the spokesmen of orthodoxy, not without excuse, were inclined to view with suspicion any kind of enthusiasm which was accompanied by alienation of the senses. It might be all well enough, but it was not part of the Christian tradition. The spirits of the prophets, as St. Paul had taught, should be subject to the prophets themselves; they should not be carried away, out of their true wits, into utterances which they could afterwards neither remember nor defend.

It seems clear that the Montanist prophecies were of this peculiar character; they 'did not know what they had said'.[1] Tertullian himself regards the deep sleep which fell upon Adam when Eve was

[1] Jerome on Eph. i. 5.

created as *amentia, qua constat prophetia*—an unconscious state, such as is the very condition of prophecy.[1] So far as their psychology is concerned, we must regard the Montanists as the predecessors, not of the Quaker who speaks by the inner light, but of the Jansenist convulsionary who comes to himself after a trance lasting several hours, observing 'Il me semble que je chante'. The ecstatics communicate their revelations to us by way of memory; Montanus and his prophetesses, evidently, were overheard, and taken down by dictation. It does not appear whether the volume of their output was considerable; what remains of it has come down to us in the form of short sentences, perhaps the only recognizable fragments of trance-utterances which were for the most part *ξενοφωνία*. But probably they indulged in conscious utterances as well; according to Theodoret, they even left a literature behind them.[2]

We shall see that the permanent importance of what Montanus said lies in the rigorist tradition which he established. What chiefly aroused attention (and opposition) at the moment was his claim to be inaugurating a new era. Maximilla said 'I am the word, and spirit, and power';[3] Montanus declared 'I am the Father, the Word, and the Paraclete'.[4] They even went so far as to announce that there were three separate dispensations, corresponding with the three Persons of the Trinity. 'Hardness of heart reigned till Christ came, weakness of the flesh reigned till the Paraclete came', writes Tertullian,[5] in a context which clearly shows that he identifies the coming of the Paraclete, not with Pentecost but with the appearance of Montanus; and St. Jerome is probably justified in the explicit statement that, according to Montanist doctrine, 'God, having failed to save the world by the two first degrees (of his revelation) came down through the Holy Spirit into Montanus, Priscilla and Maximilla'.[6] As de Soyres points out, the heresy of the second century was here anticipating that of the thirteenth; the Abbot Joachim, as interpreted by the Fraticelli, made just the same division into three epochs.[7] It is not at all certain that Montanus' type of prophesying would have been condemned by the Church, if the claims which emerged from it had been less startling.

[1] *De anima*, 21. [2] Tillemont, op. cit., art. 'Les Montanistes', V.
[3] Eusebius, op. cit., v. 16. [4] Didymus, *De trinitate*, iii. 41.
[5] *De monogamia*, 14. [6] Ep. xxvii (ad Marcellam).
[7] *Montanism and the Primitive Church* (London, 1878), p. 121.

We hear curiously little of any apocalyptic element in the Montanist doctrine. It appears, however, that Maximilla believed she would be the last of the prophets, creating the impression thereby that the Second Coming must be imminent; unfortunately (after the manner of such visionaries) she foretold a period of wars and fierce persecutions immediately after her death, which was in fact followed by thirteen years of complete calm.[1] It was in the same spirit that Montanus himself announced the descent of the New Jerusalem as something which had already happened, identifying its site with the town of Pepuza, in Phrygia. According to St. Cyril of Jerusalem (who perhaps writes with a shade of professional jealousy on the point) this was 'a most insignificant hamlet'.[2] But doubtless, when it had become the centre of a sect, the wilderness blossomed at Pepuza no less than at Salt Lake City. One suspects that in the first instance this holy spot was meant to be a city of refuge in the world's last tribulations, like Munster when John of Leyden made his headquarters there, but of this there is no direct evidence.

The orthodox writers of the period, as might have been expected, put down all the symptoms of Montanist prophecy to diabolical possession. But we have seen that the bishops who would have tried conclusions with its spokesmen were forcibly prevented from doing so, and we have little information about any effort, successful or unsuccessful, to deal with them by way of exorcism. We are in no position, therefore, to rule out the possibility of hysteria, or even of deliberate fraud. At first sight, it would be tempting to suppose that Montanus and his prophetesses were conscious frauds, lending themselves to the propaganda of that party within the Church which called for stricter discipline. It seems clear from numerous references in Tertullian that the Montanists regarded their own rigorist attitude as something dictated to them by prophecy. But here a parallel from later history, already alluded to, may help us. The Jansenist convulsionaries, like the Montanists, were concerned to defend a rigorist attitude, in defending Quesnel against the strictures of the bull *Unigenitus*. And it seems fairly clear that these convulsionaries spoke and acted under the influence of a hysterical state. Men, women, and children, apparently in a state of trance, expounded and argued the Jansenist theology with zest. It seems fair, then, in the absence of any accurate contemporary picture, to assign hysteria

[1] Eusebius, op. cit. v. 16. [2] *Catecheses*, xvi. 8.

rather than deliberate fraud as the explanation of those transports in which the prophet sticks so loyally to his brief, whether in Phrygia or at the cemetery of St. Médard.

(iv) *The Montanists—Innovators or Reactionaries?*

There was formerly a fashion among Church historians—it began with Ritschl—of treating Montanism not as a new departure in theology, but as an obstinate survival of really primitive Christianity. As often happens with such theories, it has become embedded in works of reference. Harnack's article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, once the last word on the subject, still appears in the latest edition, abridged but not substantially modified, like a fossilized organism. In Montanus' time, he assures us, 'there was no fixed, divinely-instituted congregational organization, no canon of the New Testament Scriptures, no anti-Gnostic theology, no Catholic Church. There were simply certain communities of believers, bound together by a common hope, and by a free organization.' Even if the probability of this picture could be admitted on other grounds, the objection immediately suggests itself, 'If the Catholic Church, in the middle of the second century, was only just beginning to pass out of the charismatic into the institutional stage, why did not Tertullian say so?' He was born just at that time, is it conceivable that the memory of the transition should have altogether disappeared by the time he became a Montanist? Harnack found no difficulty in making such an admission, and indeed in going beyond it. By the beginning of the third century, 'at Rome and Carthage, and in all other places where sincere Montanists were found, they were confronted by the imposing edifice of the Catholic Church, and they had neither the courage nor the inclination to undermine her sacred foundations. This explains how the later Montanism never attained a position of influence. In accepting, with slight reservations, the results of the development which the Church had undergone during the fifty years from 160 to 210 it reduced itself to the level of a sect.'

This is to pile miracle on miracle. We are not merely invited to believe that Christendom as a whole boxed the compass, turned institutional instead of charismatic, in the course of half a century, with no protest whatever except on the part of a fanatical coterie in Phrygia. It seems this mushroom growth of theology and of ecclesiastical organization had come so much to be taken for granted,

that the sectaries themselves meekly sat down and imitated it. Can anybody who has read a line of Tertullian believe that he lacked either the courage or the inclination to call the whole edifice of Christendom a house built on the sand, if he had had any excuse for saying that it was? But no, Tertullian's Montanism is a system, if anything more highly organized than the Catholic system itself; it had sold (if we may trust Harnack) its peculiar birth-right, and we have no means of being certain that Montanus himself was dead! Sects, not uncommonly, emerge from the charismatic into the institutional; but they do not change in a night.

The suggestion that Phrygian Montanism is simply primitive Christianity seen against a background of ecclesiasticism flies in the face of all probability. But may we not allow that in certain points of detail, which specially interested them, these sectaries, instead of being innovators, were the preservers of a pure tradition—country folk, who did not move with the times, and found themselves described as heretics because they could not talk the new language of the age? This more moderate position was adopted by de Soyres, author of the only monograph on Montanism in our language. It is a book rarely seen and rarely quoted; less interesting perhaps when it discusses the history of the movement itself, than when it throws out hints about the permanent tendencies in Christian thought of which Montanism was the first expression.

There is a curious similarity between de Soyres's treatment of Montanism and the Abbé Bremond's treatment—we shall meet it in a later chapter—of Quietism. For Bremond, Quietism is simply mysticism being given bad names by those who dislike it. There was nothing in Malaval, he would have us believe, nothing even in Madame Guyon, if you allow for a few extravagances of expression, which had not passed without question earlier in the seventeenth century. The theology of Disinterested Love, which Fénélon was condemned for preaching, had been common doctrine with men like Camus and Bérulle. As for acquired contemplation, Segneri's real complaint against Molinos, it was the mainspring of seventeenth-century spirituality; not least with Fathers of the Society like Lallemand and Surin. Eleven golden volumes the Abbé has left us, and death interrupted him before he could ever reach his climax, but no one can mistake his intention. De Soyres was more fortunate, in that the records of the early Church are only fragments. It was possible

for him to assume, without proving it, that primitive Christianity was as rigorous as Montanism, that the prophecy which it encouraged was prophecy of the same kind as Montanus used. The same poverty of material which made documentation unnecessary made refutation impossible.

'Regardless of branding Justin and Athenagoras as heretics, the Church erected into a new dogma the assertion that a prophet must be conscious, and in full command of his faculties.'[1] That is his summing-up of the Patristic evidence; a deeper acquaintance with ecclesiastical theory would have taught him that condemnations are not retrospective, and the Church does not brand people as heretics unless they have taught views contrary to what is already defined. And it would be interesting to know what his authority is for telling us that the Church did erect this assertion into a dogma, or that she ever made any pronouncement on the subject at all. It is true, as we have seen, that St. Jerome, explicitly quarrelling with Montanus, does warn us against thinking of the prophets as ecstatics. But St. Jerome in controversy with Montanus is no more 'the Church' than Bossuet quarrelling with Fénelon. The truth is that if you consult Denzinger's *Enchiridion* you will find no condemnation of Montanism there at all.

Meanwhile, what *does* Justin tell us?[2] He is commenting on Zach. iii. 1–2; the prophet, he points out, did not see Josue and the devil by actual sight (αὐτοψίᾳ); a revelation was given to him, and he saw them in a trance (ἐν ἐκστάσει). He does not, evidently, think of Zacharias as being in a trance throughout; only when he describes himself as 'seeing' those mysterious dealings of God which underlie history. Now, Justin is full of the Old Testament prophets from beginning to end; they were his capital argument against the Jews. Yet nowhere else does he speculate on the manner in which their revelations were made to them, either by way of boast or of apology. And of prophecy under the New Dispensation, which we are here concerned with, he says nothing at all. Is it not a trifle unscrupulous to quote him, on the strength of a reference to one particular passage in one particular prophet of the Old Testament, as holding a different Christianity from St. Jerome's?

Athenagoras is more interesting. The prophets, he says,[3] 'lifted in ecstasy above the natural operation of their minds by the impulses

[1] Op. cit., p. 114. [2] *Dialogue with Trypho*, 115. [3] *Apology*, ch. ix.

of the Divine Spirit, were inspired to utterance, the Spirit making use of them as a flute-player breathes into a flute'. It would be possible, indeed, to suggest that he is using the language of exaggeration. But we must not be in too much of a hurry to defend him. As we shall see, his works provide the most formidable quotation that can be adduced, before Tertullian, in condemnation of widows who remarry. His *floruit* is probably about A.D. 177, the time when the Montanist controversy was at its height, and it does not appear that the Church has ever canonized him. We may be pardoned for speculating with Tillemont 'si l'expression dont il se sert touchant les prophètes, en un temps où les extases de Montan commençaient à troubler l'Église, ne peut point donner lieu de craindre qu'il n'ait été engagé dans ce parti, aussi bien que la manière dont il parle des secondes noces'.[1] We may be surprised, indeed, that the Phrygian enthusiasm should have invaded, and so early, the breast of an Athenian philosopher. But was he an Athenian philosopher? There is no mention of it in the usual lists of Christian authors, and it is only the preamble to his own *Apology* which gives us this biographical detail. Are we sure that we are not dealing with an anonymous pamphleteer, creating for himself a fictitious identity? It is curious that he tells us about alleged heathen miracles at Parion, on the Hellespont, and about a certain Nerullinus, elsewhere unheard of, who had erected an oracular statue at Troas; does not internal evidence point to the north of Asia Minor as his country of origin?

Justin Martyr, then, is only subpoenaed with difficulty in de Soyres's interest; Athenagoras comes forward with an alacrity which renders his evidence highly suspicious. Meanwhile, what was the impression made by Montanus' prophesyings on the spokesmen of orthodoxy? The writers quoted by Eusebius do not try to hush up the fact that prophecy has been known in the Christian Church. On the contrary, one of them[2] drew up, it seems, a long list of Christian prophets, among which only two names have been preserved to us, those of Ammia and Quadratus. They admitted the existence of prophecy as a living force, falling foul of the Montanists only because they prophesied in an untraditional way. And, indeed, it can hardly be doubted that when they describe the Montanist method as 'new', they are only echoing a boast made by its supporters. 'This new prophecy—or rather, as I shall demonstrate, new false

[1] Tillemont, *Persecution under Marcus Aurelius*, ix. [2] Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* v. 17.

prophecy'[1] is a phrase in point; and Serapion of Antioch refers even more definitely to the 'so-called new prophecy' with the air of a man who pays a reluctant tribute.[2] Doubtless the Montanists had the trick of labelling their method 'prophecy' *sans phrase*, just as the Jansenist labelled his own doctrine of grace *la grâce*, and the Quietist labelled his own technique of prayer *l'oraison*. But when they were forced to specify, they talked about 'the new prophecy'. And nobody who has read Tertullian can doubt that the claim was, in their eyes, a proud one.

De Soyres himself is curiously conscious of this innovating strain about Tertullian's language. 'Never did culprit plead guilty with more triumphant confidence than does Tertullian when he accepts the charges of his opponents on the subject of fasting, of marriage, and of penance. Here the Paraclete had ordained new rules, and had authoritatively abrogated the old; in fact, his principal title is *Novae Legis Institutor*.'[3] If Tertullian maintained that a new epoch of Church discipline had set in with the appearance of Montanus, surely it was because A.D. 150, or soon after, was the date at which the Paraclete *really* came to earth, signalizing his coming by phenomena far more interesting than the stale old phenomena of Christian prophecy. The first three chapters of the *De monogamia*, as Tillemont points out,[4] are a long paean of innovation. And never once does Tertullian suggest that any prophet between St. Paul and Montanus has made, or could have made, any contribution to Christian thought. Pepuza is not the late flowering of a tradition that began with Pentecost. It is a new theophany.

To suppose, then, that early Christian prophecy was of the Montanist type, is to sin against the evidence. The prophets of those first days may have had ecstasies, like St. Theresa; but if so, they did not *speak* in ecstasy; like St. Theresa, they described their experiences afterwards—not so Montanus. But there is more plausibility in de Soyres's notion (frequently to be found in other writers) that prophecy flourished up to the time of Montanus, and fell into discredit only as the result of his movement. The difficulty is to be certain of the facts. That the prophets enjoyed a recognized position at the time when the *Didache* was written is unquestionable; but when was the *Didache* written? If, with most modern critics, we date it before rather than after the turn of the first century, it does

[1] Ibid. v. 16.
[2] Ibid. v. 19.
[3] Op. cit., p. 79.
[4] Op. cit., art. 'Les Montanistes', VII.

not carry us very far. It is a singular fact that the best authority for the persistence of prophecy is the anti-Montanist writer already quoted. He seems to admit that the gift of prophecy is to remain with the Church till the end, since the apostle says so—an allusion which is difficult to trace, unless it be an inference from St. Paul's language in 1 Cor. xiii. But he challenges his opponents to show that any prophet has appeared since the death of Maximilla, fourteen years before he wrote.[1]

If the *Didache* is hard to date, so is the *Te Deum*. When the *Te Deum* was written, the tradition that prophets had their distinct place in the Christian community would seem to have lingered on; or why do they appear after the apostles, not before them (as in the Litany of the Saints)? It has been suggested[2] that these early verses of the hymn may be quoting from a passage in St. Cyprian, or even that the passage in St. Cyprian was quoting from them. What remains certain is that St. Cyprian, writing while the plague was devastating Carthage in A.D. 252, thus begins his picture of heaven: 'Illic Apostolorum gloriosus chorus; illic Prophetarum exultantium numerus.'[3] It may, conceivably, be a mere echo of Pauline language; but it strongly suggests that Montanism had not discredited the prophetic status altogether, even as late as the middle of the third century.

It would have been no matter for surprise, if a dangerous outbreak of false prophecy had left all prophecy under a cloud. *Abusus non tollit usum* is good law but bad history. There can be little doubt that the condemnation of Quietism, carefully as its terms were fought out and drafted, had a discouraging effect on the whole mystical tradition. In France, at any rate, the rich efflorescence of spirituality which lasts all through the seventeenth century has dried up into a wizened garland by the eighteenth. There is no reason why the same thing should not have happened in the early Church; why the second century should not have seen a galaxy of prophets, and the third looked upon the very name of prophet with distrust. Only there seems to be no good evidence that this was the fact.

(v) *Tertullian and the Rigorist Movement*

It is often the fate of the mystagogue to be made famous by his own spiritual descendants. We should have heard little about the

[1] Eusebius, op. cit. v. 17. [2] *Catholic Encylopaedia*, s.v. 'Te Deum'.
[3] *De mortalitate*, concluding paragraph.

curious speculations of Abbot Joachim but for the Spiritual Franciscans who exploited him, and the cloudy genius of St. Cyran would have been forgotten if it had not given birth to the vehemence of Arnauld, the splendid piety of Pascal. So, for us, Montanus is little more than the eponym of a sect; Montanism, for us, means Tertullian. You could hereticate the man; you could not blot out his name from the library of Christian thought. He remains curiously vivid; not so much because of his life—we know very little of it—as because of his writings; he is an individual genius. I confess that the picture of him commonly drawn by Church historians does little credit to their finer perceptions. He is usually presented to us as a morose Puritan, self-exiled from the genial warmth of the Christian fire-side by the fierce intolerance of his African temper; if only (we are taught to say) he had been more human! For myself (if I may venture on the rash step of offering a personal appreciation), I find the secret of his attitude in something quite other. To me he is the born arguer, who talks himself, rather than thinks himself, into extreme positions, and is too dazzled by his own eloquence to recede from them. That he ever practised as an orator is in doubt;[1] but his nagging logic stamps every line of him as the work of a man bred to the forum. It is typical of him (for instance), that when he is apologizing for the faith he should tax Trajan with inconsistency, because he laid it down (as in his famous letter to Pliny) that the Christian should be punished if caught, but should not be hunted out. 'Si damnas, cur non et inquiris; si non inquiris, cur non absolvis?'[2]—the sentiment has a kind of exasperating slickness about it which he learned from Cicero, but was there not a good deal to be said, from Trajan's point of view, for discouraging the odious activities of the *delator*, even while he took the official view about the menace of Christianity?

Tertullian is racy; alone, perhaps, among the Fathers, he has the makings of a journalist; but he is always nagging. Bremond, in a penetrating phrase, complains that the Jansenists are always writing *against* somebody; and the *aigreur* which distinguished them is the salient quality of this African rigorist. He is often cheap; to accuse the *psychici* (that is, the members of the Church universal) of 'marrying oftener than they fast',[3] because they only keep one Lent, and

[1] Tillemont, op. cit., art. 'Tertullien', I.
[2] *Apology*, ii.
[3] *Adversus Psychicos*, i.

allow widows to remarry, is obviously cheap. Sometimes he comes refreshingly near the border-line of blasphemy, as when he says 'Let us leave the Holy Spirit out of the discussion, because after all he is a witness on our side'.[1] He is never profound, never opens a new window on some aspect of theology; he will stick to his brief. Though he was no longer a young man when he turned Montanist, there is something of undergraduate irresponsibility about him; he reminds you of the half-converted Pascal, Pascal of the *Provincials*, without sharing his lucidity or his humour. He has a certain kinship with Hurrell Froude.

If we ask why such a man lapsed into heresy, the psychological answer, for what it is worth, lies on the surface. He was incurably a logician, his whole temper was impatient of compromises, of half-way houses. And in the debate which probably went on in his age, as it does in most ages of the Church, between the people who want to screw up the standard of Church discipline and the people who would adjust it to the weakness of human nature, he inevitably found his true home among the extremists. Not because he was a saintly idealist, with Wesley's distrust of the 'almost Christian', but because his intellectual bias impelled him towards the party of consistency; he preferred rigorism, not because it was a harder rule to live by, but because it was an easier principle to defend. Where was the sense in belauding martyrdom, yet allowing Christians to take refuge in flight when persecution threatened? Why should absolution be refused to the man who had denied his faith under torture, and then granted to the adulterer, who could make no plea of duress? We do not know what personal or accidental motives may have contributed to his false decision; but it is not difficult, I think, to see that decision as congenial to the bent of his mind.

It is in the nature of things that Christian thought should always divide itself into a party of mildness and a party of sternness. To cite (not for the last time) the admirable remark of St. Francis de Sales to Mère Angélique, there will always be those who want to draw the meshes tight, so as to bring the little fishes in too, and those who want to leave the meshes wide, so that every catch shall be really worth catching. The Church of the later second century was no stranger to such hesitations. St. Denys of Corinth, who was in the habit of writing epistles to other people's dioceses, suggested once to

[1] *De monogamia*, iv.

Pinytus, Bishop of Cnossos, 'that he should not put too heavy a yoke on the brethren in the matter of chastity'; and Pinytus replied with a letter in which, politely but not obscurely, he complained that the saint was trying to feed his people on sops when they were old enough for adult food.[1] Montanism, it is true, had already begun its career, but it is not likely that its direct influence had yet reached as far as Crete. Rather, there was a microbe of rigorism in the air, and St. Denys, prescient (like St. Francis) of its influence, would take the disease in good time, but to a bishop of the stricter school his interference was hardly welcome. Tillemont, anxious to keep the peace as usual, points out that both men were canonized: 'L'Église semble avoir voulu canoniser la vigueur et le zèle de ce Saint, qui demandait aux fidèles les vertus les plus éminentes . . . aussi bien que la douceur et la prudence de Saint Denys.'[2] When such debates divided the sympathies of the orthodox, it was not difficult to foresee which party would commend itself to Montanus. Your energumen does not compromise his claim to inspiration by advocating soft options. Wherever the sense of the Church was doubtful in such matters, his 'Paraclete' was quick to legislate in favour of the severe view.

The issue which became most notorious was, Might widows remarry? We are all familiar with the New Testament attitude of 1 Cor. vii and 1 Tim. v, which seem to indicate that widows in the early Church formed a quasi-religious body maintained at the public expense, remarriage being allowed, but as something of a second best. Nor has the position much changed by the end of the fourth century, when the principle is laid down—it is true, by a Jerome—that second marriages are not encouraged, and even the toleration of them is dictated by the authority of Scripture, rather than by our natural feelings.[3] It is likely enough that the amount of pressure which would be exerted against second marriages would vary considerably at different periods and in different milieux. That they were ever actually forbidden to Catholics is an inference that can only be drawn (as we have already noticed) from the suspect witness of Athenagoras. 'He who deprives himself of his first wife, even though she be dead, is a cloaked adulterer'[4]—it is just possible to

[1] Eusebius, op. cit. iv. 23.

[2] Tillemont, op. cit., vol. ii, art. 'Saint Denys de Corinthe'.

[3] 'Nos secundas nuptias non tam appetimus quam concedimus, Paulo iubente.' Jerome, Ep. xxvii (ad Marcellam).

[4] *Apol.* 33.

explain the words as meaning that a man who has put away his wife is an adulterer in intention, and the fact of her subsequent death does not excuse him. But it is more natural to regard them as the expression of a genuine Montanist sentiment. On the other hand, the passage in Justin Martyr which describes second marriages as sinful[1] is expressly based on Matt. v. 32, and must therefore be read as implying that the first husband is still living; Irenaeus[2] and Theophilus[3] are most naturally understood in the same sense. If certain local councils prescribe penance for those who contract second marriages, it does not appear that they enjoin separation.[4] The bias of early Christian thought is probably towards rigorism, but there remained a freedom of choice.

Such hesitation is foreign to the temperament of the enthusiast. For him, a thing must be right or wrong; there are no half-shades, no distinctions between counsel and precept. Montanus condemned all second marriages as adulterous; but he did so as a man who has received a fresh revelation, not as one who reasserts a traditional principle. You can trace the difference in Tertullian himself. As a Catholic, he wrote two short treatises *Ad uxorem*, in the first of which he urges his wife not to marry again if he should predecease her; the second is an alternative plea that if she does marry again, the new husband shall be a Christian. There is not much to be said for the performance, except that he cuts a better figure than Sir Willoughby Patterne. But there is no suggestion in either treatise of any Christian tradition which would invalidate second marriages. From the moment when he changes his allegiance, he identifies remarriage with adultery. St. Paul, he argues, only allowed freedom of choice to widows who had been married as pagans, not 'in the Lord'.[5] You wonder how much he really believed in his own exegesis; would St. Paul ever have used the word 'fall asleep' in describing the death of a pagan?[6] But Tertullian did not really much mind whether he carried his readers with him or not; in the alternative, he was quite prepared to argue that St. Paul had left the question open and the Paraclete (speaking through Montanus) had closed it.[7]

It is the same with the Montanist peculiarities in the matter of Church discipline. In his day, the Church did not (normally at least) offer absolution to murderers, or to those who had denied their

[1] *Apol.* i. 15. [2] *Haer.* iii. 17. ii. [3] *Ad Autolycum*, iii. 15. [4] Hefele, *Conc.* i. 339.
[5] *De monogamia*, xi. [6] 1 Cor. vii. 39. [7] *De monogamia*, xiv.

faith. Montanism extended the principle, by refusing absolution to adulterers, and to fornicators. Here, it would seem, the sectaries were not altogether breaking new ground; there were Catholic bishops who refused absolution to adulterers.[1] But Tertullian does not accuse the Popes of throwing over tradition; he accuses them of inconsistency—if they granted absolution to the adulterer, why should they refuse it to the murderer, as long as he had repented? (Did he foresee that Christians of a later age would echo his question with, 'Why, indeed?') He does not regard grave sexual irregularities as unforgivable in themselves; on the contrary, he quotes the Paraclete as saying through Montanus: 'The Church has power to remit a given fault, but I am not going to do so, for fear they should commit other faults.'[2] Behind all the fireworks there is no real substance in Tertullian's grievance against the Church about its laxity of discipline. Secretly, you feel, he was grateful to the Church for being lax, because Montanism was thereby enabled to go one better, and achieve a reputation for severity.

It is the same all through; Montanists will flaunt their Christianity in the face of the persecutor, so as to show up the cowardice of the Psychici; Montanists will fast three times in the year, so that they can reproach the Psychici with greed. There is no theory about it all; it is a policy of pin-pricks. To justify itself, the new prophecy must find something to forbid which the Church tolerates. That is the impression, I think, which Tertullian's propaganda leaves on you; there is no genuine moral enthusiasm about it, only a perpetual manœuvring for position. And to that extent, let it be said at once, Montanism is less worthy of respect than most of the enthusiastic sects which have followed its example, and borrowed its language. The medieval heretics, the Jansenists, were in reaction against a Christendom which gave a handle to their complaints by its worldliness; it is difficult to believe that the Church of St. Irenaeus' day stood in need of any such protest. The history of Montanism is not to be read as that of a great spiritual revival, maligned by its enemies. It is that of a naked fanaticism, which tried to stampede the Church into greater severity, when she had not forgotten how to be severe. And its chief importance for our present subject is that it helped her to make up her mind, thus early in her experience, about the recurrent problem of human weakness and her own commission to forgive.

[1] Tillemont, op. cit., vol. iii, art. 'Tertullien', IX. [2] *De pudicitia*, xxi.

IV

DONATIST AND CIRCUMCELLION

MONTANISM foreshadowed future aberrations of the Christian genius by preaching, in the second century, a gospel of enthusiasm. Like most enthusiastic movements, it had its rigorist side. The sectary who finds himself, by his own act, separated from the unity of Christendom is apt to pick a quarrel with the Church, almost deliberately, over some minor point of discipline, thenceforth declaring that his is the only true Church because it is the only pure Church. Catholic it evidently is not; its claim to Apostolicity is only supported by a paradox, and it knows that it will not long remain One. But the mark of holiness is a thing which any sect can plausibly claim for itself, if, though on a pin-point of morals, it contrives to go one better than the Church from which it has broken away. 'You allow widows to re-marry? Very well, you have ceased to be a Church.'[1] The rigorism of the Montanists, I say, has something of the air of an afterthought. The Donatists of the fourth century are their complement. With them, a single point of Church discipline was *casus belli* enough for a schism which flourished until the time of St. Gregory, and perhaps only disappeared with the disappearance of Christianity in that part of the world; meanwhile, as we shall see, what enthusiasm went to inspire them was fantastic in its manifestations, and unessential to their system.

(i) *The Rigorist Controversy*

If Montanism found an appropriate home in the romantic mountain scenery of Phrygia, Donatism, with its bitter fanaticism, its obstinate exclusiveness, was no less native, it may be thought, to the burning suns of North Africa. Since the days when Battus led his colonists from Thera to Cyrene, it has always seemed as if the Mediterranean were destined to become a lake fringed with homo-

[1] 'Parménianus définirait le schismatique le chrétien qui est sorti de l'Église du fait qu'il est devenu un pécheur . . . le schisme est là en fonction de la sainteté de l'Église.' Batiffol, *Le Catholicisme de St. Augustin*, ii. 2.

geneous human culture. But always the effort to unite its northern with its southern sea-board has led to fierce wars and difficult conquests, bitter revolts and harsh repressions. Whether it be this accident of history, or the neighbourhood of desert suns and desert sands, or something native to the genius of its inhabitants that is to be held responsible, northern Africa has been, at all times, an unaccommodating country. It has bred a type, and encouraged a spirit, which detests compromise, carries out fearlessly the logic of its premisses, dies without a murmur in the last ditch. Even its wedding with the grace of Christianity leaves a mark of the indomitable strain; the African Fathers do not mince their words, Tertullian with his jeremiads against worldliness, Cyprian with his determined opposition to the policy of the Rome which he hailed as a divinely appointed focus of unity, Augustine with his grim emphasis on the Fall, his relentless hammering of theological opponents. And as it has been the nurse, so it has been the scene, of staggering heroisms; Cato's solitary gesture on behalf of freedom, and the supreme world-renunciation of Charles Foucauld. There could be no more congenial setting for a schism which lasted from century to century over the disputed election to a single bishopric.

So to describe it is to give a narrow definition of the issues; there was, there must have been, more fuel for antagonism than that. In the last analysis it should perhaps be said that Donatism, like Montanism, was an archaistic protest against the waning of something which had become so familiar that it seemed an integral part of the Church's life. The Montanist seceded from a Church which no longer had room, it seemed, for prophecy; the Donatist from a Church which no longer had room for martyrdom. Neither genuine prophecy nor genuine martyrdom can be produced at call; the one depends for its continuance upon the action of that Spirit who breathes where he will, the other upon a regular supply of persecutors. Hence the appearance of synthetic prophecy in Phrygia, of synthetic martyrdom in North Africa. Nor was it only, perhaps, opportunities for martyrdom which were lacking to the Church of the fourth century; there may well have been some falling-off in the spirit of martyrdom, the spirit which asserts fearlessly, sometimes noisily, the claims of the Gospel. It is to be remembered that Diocletian had revived the weapon of persecution after a long period of comparative immunity for the Church. Apart from short intervals,

under Decius and Valerian, there had been nearly a century of respite. God permitted the renewal of it, Tillemont suggests, to awaken men's consciences, 'le relâchement et la paresse, qui sont les suites ordinaires de la paix, commençant à affaiblir les mœurs des chrétiens dans le repos dont ils avaient joui'.[1] A slackening of faith or charity among the general body of Christians is apt, as we shall find again and again in the course of this inquiry, to produce a reaction in the contrary sense; an outbreak of rigorism which exaggerates the severity of Church discipline. And it seems as if there were those among the faithful who, as a result of this reaction, set too high a value (if that be possible) on martyrdom itself.

Such a controversy had already broken out at the time of the Decian persecution, in the middle of the third century. Many of the weaker brethren had lapsed, that is, denied their faith, when threatened with death; what was to be done with them, if they expressed a desire to return to it? A very severe interval of penance was, not unnaturally, imposed before they were readmitted to the privileges they had cast aside. Felicissimus, one of the Carthaginian clergy, founded an unimportant schism which offered restoration to the lapsed on easier terms than they could have secured from the Catholic authorities. One Novatus, who had at first apparently been his ally, now reacted to the opposite extreme; going off to Rome, he made common cause with Novatian, and between them they founded the sect of the Novatianists, which refused absolution to the lapsed altogether. The schism lasted for two centuries; and it is interesting to observe that they took to themselves the name of Cathari, the *pure* Christians, anticipating the claims of those medieval heretics whom we shall meet in the next chapter. Once more, as with the Montanists, the Catholic Church was concerned to preserve a policy of indulgence towards the sinner.

Tillemont quotes St. Epiphanius as attributing identity of views to the Novatianists and the Donatists; and it seems certain that the Novatianists rebaptized their converts. But the Donatists, as Tillemont points out, never held the cardinal doctrine of Novatian, that apostasy from the faith was an unforgivable sin.[2] Heresies do not repeat themselves in exactly the same form; your heresiarch always

[1] Tillemont, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles*, vol. vi, 'Donatism', art. I.

[2] Tillemont, op. cit., art. XXXV.

professes to support the primitive tradition of the Church, and must needs, therefore, take note of the signposts which have been set up by her censures in past ages. It is possible, too, that the less rigid standards of Diocletian's persecution had left loopholes by which the weaker brethren could save themselves without formal apostasy. The suspicions of the new rigorism were directed, not against the *lapsi* but against the *traditores*. Diocletian attempted to extirpate the Christian faith, and succeeded in lightening the labours of textual criticism, by ordering that all Bibles should be given up and burned in public. Those who conformed to this edict were known as *traditores*; and it does not appear that the Church was guilty of any laxity in their regard. St. Optatus, the great opponent of Donatism, writes of them with horror.[1] The schism took its point of departure, if we may adopt the terminology of that Jansenism which slightly resembles it, not in a question of right but in a question of fact. The Catholics did not condone the handing over of the Scriptures, they merely denied that John Doe and Richard Roe had, in fact, been guilty of it, where the Donatists claimed that they had.

Our own less heroic age will perhaps question whether the practice itself was so unpardonable; one can imagine a very pretty *casus* being devised by a moral theologian on the subject. But it is to be remembered that when books had to be written out by hand, the very work that had gone to their fashioning enhanced their sacredness; and besides, if all Christians had conspired to take the laxer point of view, the result would evidently have been deplorable. Certainly the conscience of the fourth century did not tolerate pleas of *force majeure*, or of material co-operation. But there was a refinement upon the question. The Imperial pursuivants who had the business of hunting out the sacred books were not great scholars; many of them, besides, were kindly disposed towards the Christians, and were prepared to connive at a subterfuge. If a Christian, priest or layman, handed over a copy of Livy or even some volume of heretical theology, pretending that it was the Bible, was he a *traditor* or not? Was he to be congratulated on his ingenuity, or was he to be judged by the standard of Eleazar (2 Mach. vi. 24), who died rather than eat the flesh set before him, although he had been privately assured that it was not really swine's flesh?

It is not difficult to see that such hesitations must have divided the

[1] Ibid., art. I.

consciences of Christians; there will have been a laxer and a stricter interpretation of the difficulty. It is always so with persecutions, unless they are conducted *à l'outrance*. There is so much to be said, on one side, for taking your stand on the very outermost ramparts of principle; if you refuse to grant him an inch, the persecutor will respect you all the more for it, will understand that you really do mean business. There is so much to be said, on the other side, for avoiding if possible, at least not precipitating, a conflict; resist, by all means, but distinguish in doing so between what is essential and what is merely accessory, between the concessions that can be made with reluctance and the concessions that cannot be made at all; do not provoke stern measures by unnecessary fanaticism. . . . Anybody who has read the history of our Catholic forefathers at the time of Emancipation will know what differences can exist at such times between really holy men on both sides, between the Butlers and the Milners. We have witnessed similar embarrassments in our own time on the continent of Europe. There was enough broadmindedness in the Roman world at the dawn of the fourth century to induce, in some quarters, a spirit of live-and-let-live where the differences between pagan and Christian were concerned. There was enough intransigence left, at least in Africa, to denounce such casuistry with all the contempt of the *Lettres Provinciales*.

(ii) *History of the Donatist Schism*

But we must return from the question of right to the question of fact. The most plausible accusation which the Numidian bishops had to bring against Mensurius, Bishop of Carthage, was that he had allowed the Imperial officers to carry off, without protest, certain books which they affected to regard as Christian scriptures, though they had nothing to do with religion. There is no suggestion that he encouraged them, or that they needed encouragement, in their charitable or ignorant interpretation of the matter. But already, in the first years after the persecution ceased, the bishops of Numidia were deeply concerned over the question of *traditio*. In a local council held at Cirta, in 305, they proceeded for some reason to a joint examination of their consciences on the subject. The acts of this council were produced at the Council of Carthage, a century later, and have been preserved for us in part by St. Augustine.[1] It

[1] *Contra Cresconium*, iii. 27.

would appear that very few could clear themselves of the imputation that they were *traditores* in some degree. They prudently decided to leave their own conduct to the judgement of God; they were less tender with that of their neighbours. It seems certain that already, during Mensurius' lifetime, there was a schismatic agitation on foot against him, fostered by the Numidian bishops, or at any rate by one of them, Donatus of Casae Nigrae.[1]

The formal schism, however, takes its date from the death of Mensurius, probably in the year 311. The election of his successor was carried through in something of a hurry, before the Numidian bishops could be present. To suggest, however, that this was due to the fears of Caecilian's supporters,[2] is to neglect the evidence of St. Optatus, who attributes the manœuvre to the ambition of two rival candidates.[3] In any case, Caecilian, who had been archdeacon under Mensurius, was elected, and consecrated by Felix, bishop of the neighbouring see of Aptunga. The Numidians retorted by descending on Carthage, to the number of seventy, and electing a rival bishop, Maiorinus. He died soon afterwards, and his successor, Donatus, became the eponymous hero of the schism.

Two points emerge, even at this early stage in the history of the movement, which claim our attention. One is, that the rallying-point of the schismatics in Carthage itself was the house of a woman; a rich and devout woman called Lucilla. It was with her money, we are told, that the Numidian bishops defrayed their considerable expenses in bribery. If Maximilla was the Madame Guyon of Montanism, Lucilla no less surely played Countess of Huntingdon to the Donatists. 'Lucilla's Connexion'; so it must have seemed at first. Thus early in the history of enthusiasm do we come across that familiar figure, the great lady who patronizes and finances an 'ism' of her own. They repaid her, no doubt, with suave clerical flattery, with the thrilling bustle of their intrigues, with devout attention to her scruples of conscience, for the considerable drain they made on her resources. May the earth lie light on her; she was not the last of her kind.

The other interesting point is the nature of the charge brought against Caecilian. He had really done nothing except allow himself to be consecrated when the Numidian bishops were not there; and

[1] Tillemont, op. cit., art. II.
[2] e.g. *Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Donatists'.
[3] Tillemont, op. cit., art. VI.

it appears that he offered, if they doubted the validity of his consecration, to let them reconsecrate him, though St. Augustine warns us against supposing that the offer was made in earnest.[1] Perhaps he had a specially good persecution record; evidently they would have liked to denounce him as a *traditor* and evidently they did not. Instead, they fixed their imputations on Felix of Aptunga, his consecrator; though even here they seem to have profited by a manifest forgery. And this accident, in all probability, determined the whole course of their movement. For, in order to quash Caecilian's election, it became necessary for them to hold, not merely that the man who had shrunk in time of persecution was unworthy to be a bishop, but that *being a validly consecrated bishop, he had lost his power of consecrating others.* And that principle could only be maintained if they adopted a frankly charismatic view of the ministry, claiming, like the medieval heretics and the Anabaptists, that the validity of a Sacrament depends on the worthiness of the minister.

The schism was condemned by a commission of bishops which met at Rome, and by the Council of Arles in 314; a canon of that council asserted Catholic principles on the subject just mentioned, by confirming the position of bishops who had been consecrated by *traditores*, although it ordered the degradation of the *traditores* themselves.[2] Constantine, after frequent attempts to sift the truth of the whole matter, declared against the Donatists, and passed laws which threatened them with confiscation and exile; it does not appear, however, that these were very strictly enforced. Constans, on his accession, consented to take the matter up afresh; his position as emperor in the West, where Arianism was weak, made him the ready ally of the Catholic party.[3] He tried the method which used to be known in Ireland as 'souperism', sending two legates, Paul and Macarius, in 347 to bestow generous alms upon the Catholics of Africa. The Donatists were invited to reunion, as a condition of ranking among the beneficiaries; and it was announced that a great 'sacrifice of unity' would be held to celebrate the event; clearly it was to be a kind of general Communion, though the schismatics put the story about that sacrifice was to be made to the Emperor.[4] The

[1] F. Martroye, 'Une Tentative de révolution sociale en Afrique', *Revue des questions historiques*, 1904, pp. 353–416, and 1905, pp. 1–53. (P. 361.)

[2] Tillemont, op. cit., art. XXI.

[3] F. Martroye, op. cit., p. 394.

[4] St. Optatus, bk. iii, ch. 12.

appeal, so far at least as the convinced Donatists were concerned, fell on deaf ears. Donatus of Carthage proudly asked what emperors had to do with the Church,[1] foreshadowing by his question a long line of sectaries in all ages, who have repudiated the connexion between Church and State as soon as it became clear that the State was taking the wrong side. In Numidia, the focus of the schism, opposition took the form of violence; a third Donatus, Bishop of Bagai, incited the rank and file of the sect to attack the Roman troops and even the legates themselves, who were thus reduced to the undignified position of the school-master who comes into the room with a bag of sweets held forward in one hand, and a stick concealed in the other. Stern repressive measures followed, which numbered Donatus of Bagai and another bishop, Marculus, among their victims.

From the odium with which their names are remembered, it seems probable that Paul and Macarius were unnecessarily brutal in their reprisals. But men who are courting martyrdom do not lend themselves to gentle handling, and men who have an exaggerated cult for martyrs are not likely to under-estimate, when the time comes to exchange stories of atrocities. Nor is it necessarily special pleading when St. Optatus acquits the Catholic body of having egged on the persecution.[2] An attack had been made on Roman troops by the dervishes of the schism—those Circumcellions whose position and habits must be more fully discussed below; it was a direct affront to the Imperial power in a province not always distinguished by loyalty. Donatus of Carthage and the heads of the sect were banished, and from 348 to 362, the year after Julian's accession, the African Church enjoyed comparative peace. It is possible that St. Optatus has exaggerated its significance,[3] but at least the years mentioned contain no important landmarks in Donatist history.

With the accession of Julian, the exiles seem to have abandoned the principle that an emperor has nothing to do with the Church, and addressed him in terms of flattery which St. Augustine did not allow them to forget.[4] They returned from exile, and lost no time in securing the churches wherever they were in strength, and often massacring the Catholic congregations they dispossessed.[5] The

[1] Tillemont, op. cit., art. XLV. [2] Ibid., art. XLVIII. [3] P. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*, vol. iv, p. 39. [4] St. Augustine, *Contra Litteras Petilliani*, II. 97. 224. *PL.* XLIII, col. 354. [5] Tillemont, op. cit., art. LV.

enactments of the Catholic emperors who followed seem to have had little effect in reducing the influence of the schism. St. Optatus, writing about 385, regards the Catholics of Africa as a feeble minority; 'they are found here only in a few places', he admits, basing his argument from numbers on the diffusion of Catholics throughout the world.[1] Three hundred and ten Donatist bishops attended a council at Bagai in 394,[2] and Tillemont calculates that there must have been 400 Donatist bishops altogether at this date.[3] No less than 280 of the bishops who actually presented themselves at the Council of Carthage in 411 were Donatists. But by the end of the fourth century, when St. Augustine was only beginning to take up the cudgels against the sect, its fortunes had probably passed their zenith. For one thing, as we shall see, the Donatist body itself was already rent by schisms. And, moreover, the definite alliance formed between Optatus of Thamugadi and the short-lived tyranny of Count Gildo had done much to discredit the movement.[4]

At any rate, it seems that the triumph of Catholic apologetic at the Council of Carthage, the decision of Count Marcellinus on that occasion, and the severe measures afterwards passed against the Donatists (they were denied civil rights, and forbidden to hold assemblies), brought back a large number of the sectaries to the Catholic allegiance.[5] Religious denominations die hard, as all history testifies; and we find from St. Gregory's letters that Donatism was still important enough to claim the attention of that vigilant Pontiff at the time when he was securing the evangelization of our own country.[6] It had survived as many years, by that time, as the Society of Friends has to-day.

(iii) *The Lust for Martyrdom*

What, then, was the inner life of this sect, so pertinacious and so unattractive? Constantly it throws its shadow forward into the future, and invites comparison with later movements which have something of the same character; but the comparison always breaks down, and the break-down of it is always to the disadvantage of the Donatists. Their obvious parallel in subsequent history is the Anabaptist movement at the time of the Reformation. Here, too, you

[1] Bk. vii, ch. 1.
[2] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 263.
[3] Tillemont, op. cit., art. LXI.
[4] Ibid., art. LXXIII.
[5] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 87.
[6] Bk. i, ep. 72; Bk. ii, ep. 33.

have a sect which rebaptizes those who have already received Catholic baptism; here, too, you have a revolt of the common people, half religious, half political, reminiscent in some ways of the Circumcellions; and the uneasy alliance between the Donatists and the Circumcellions, who alternately pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them and fill them with alarm for their own safety, is not altogether unlike the hesitation felt at first by Luther and Melanchthon, whether to recognize the prophets from Zwickau as part of their following. But the Donatists never had scruples, as far as we know, about the validity of infant baptism; and if they doubted, like the Anabaptists and the medieval heretics, whether the unworthiness of the minister did not hinder the effect of a sacrament, it was only the exigencies of their own propaganda which drove them into such an attitude. And the Circumcellions did not, as far as we know, aim at a theocracy, a kingdom of God on earth, like the Anabaptists; nor does it appear that they conducted a rival agitation, or sought any ground of theological disagreement with the Donatists proper. Again, the Donatists' affectation of finding the Church too worldly, of regretting the purer Christianity which marked earlier times, and perhaps something of their address in exploiting political situations, find an echo in the Jansenists; but there is no evidence among the Donatists of a deep spirituality, such as undoubtedly existed at Port Royal. In their fiercer manifestations, they may easily claim kinship with the Camisards at the end of the seventeenth century; but they had no eschatology, nor do they evince the simplicity and the willingness to fight against odds which go to redeem that record of Huguenot fanaticism. They never rose to the height of their possibilities.

The practice of the Donatists in rebaptizing their converts, which figures so prominently in the controversial literature of the time, was neither the nerve of their contention, nor the forefront of their offence. To rebaptize those who had already received baptism, though it were with a valid formula, from the ministers of a heretical sect was an African tradition, on behalf of which St. Cyprian had crossed swords with the Papacy. The African Catholics themselves did not abandon it explicitly until the Council of Arles in 314, by which time the Donatists had already brought it into disrepute.[1] St. Augustine, who at one time supposed that the rule was introduced by Donatus of Carthage, afterwards realized that he had been in

[1] Monceaux, op. cit., pp. 23, 153.

error. Doubtless the propaganda of the sect represented it as a godly, primitive custom which the Catholics had wantonly abandoned. In the early stages of any schism, its promoters find themselves obliged to hold by outworn traditions, because they have no central authority which can initiate, and sanction, disciplinary developments. Hence they seldom fail to reproach the Catholic Church with a spirit of innovation. 'It is a common trait among the heretics and schismatics of all ages; schism and heresy have almost always, for their point of departure, a regret for the past, the claim or the dream of going back to the fountain-source of a religious idea, to the discipline or the faith of an apostolic age.'[1]

But what imposed on the Donatists the necessity of rebaptizing was, as we have seen, an historical accident. Caecilian, the origin of all the trouble, had been consecrated by a *traditor*; therefore it was a point of honour, if you were to be a good party man, to hold that sacraments conferred by *traditores*, or by those who held communion with them, were null and void.[2] By those who held communion with them—that was the difficulty. You could not be at pains to examine the ecclesiastical pedigree of every bishop in Christendom, to see whether there was a taint of treason in it; much simpler to excommunicate the whole world, for taking part with Caecilian. Unfortunately, the Donatists do not seem to have been thoroughly consistent in their practice. Tychonius, the *enfant terrible* of the movement, reminded them of one of their own councils, which had decided not to insist on rebaptism if would-be converts made difficulties about it.[3] Rebaptism, in fact, was rather a gesture than an *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae*.

What fixed the Donatist *ethos*, and distinguished it from that of Catholics, was in the last resort nothing else than an exaggerated veneration for martyrdom. Lucilla's quarrel with Caecilian was that he forbade her to indulge in what he considered the superstitious habit of kissing a supposed martyr's relic every time she went to Communion.[4] One sees her as a *dévote* who would have been a trial, in any age, to ecclesiastical authorities: 'The archdeacon, I am afraid, is

[1] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 133.

[2] It appears that the Donatists did not rebaptize converts from other denominations than the Catholic; from the schismatics who had split off from their own body, for example. Tillemont, op. cit., art. LXXII.

[3] St. Augustine, Ep. 93, 43.

[4] Monceaux, op. cit., pp. 15, 16.

not a very spiritual man.' And although Mensurius might think to clear himself of the charge that he was a *traditor*, had he not forbidden the faithful to honour as martyrs those who brought persecution upon themselves by advertising, to a pagan magistrate, their possession of sacred books?[1] His action was in harmony with the Church legislation which denied the title of martyrs to those who were punished for breaking heathen statues; but such distinctions were unwelcome to the African temper in religion. The Donatists made much of their own partisans who had been put to death by the order of Macarius, with little discrimination. The Catholics always insisted that Marculus perished by suicide,[2] but so popular was his cult at Nova Petra, where he was buried, that the local bishop could boast, sixty years later, there was not a Catholic in the town.[3] The Donatists proudly claimed to be the Church of the martyrs, as if the title were a distinctive one,[4] and St. Optatus alleges that an oath taken in the name of the martyrs was the only kind of oath they held sacred, *unica religio communionis vestrae*.[5] The Circumcellions, it is well known, used to commit suicide, often by throwing themselves down from rocks, with the intention of being honoured as martyrs after their death; and Theodoret assures us that they were fêted, on the eve of this eccentric act of self-immolation, by sympathizers who provided them with lavish meals—in something, one supposes, of a Cup-tie spirit.[6] In all ages, the tendency of the heretic has been to single out one aspect of Christian life or doctrine, and treat it as if it were the whole; bodily healing, if you are a Christian Scientist, survival after death, if you are a Spiritualist. The Donatists chose martyrdom for their special devotion; and enriched the annals of Christian abnormality with a unique record of misguided heroisms.

(iv) *The Shock Troops*

These Circumcellions belong to a different world, not of Europe nor of to-day, and it is hard to reconstruct any picture of them. An outline sketch can be put together without difficulty from the allusions in St. Optatus and those scattered about in the works of St. Augustine—the *locus classicus*, especially for their atrocities, is *Contra Gaudentium*, i. 28. Roving fanatics, with wooden clubs which

[1] Tillemont, op. cit., art. I.
[2] St. Optatus, iii. 4; St. Augustine, *Homilies on St. John*, xi. 15.
[3] *Gesta Collationis*, I. 187.
[4] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 150.
[5] St. Optatus, iii. 6
[6] Martroye, op. cit., p. 407.

they called Israels—perhaps they had the same reason as the Anabaptists for not carrying swords—who swooped down on cultivated neighbourhoods and terrified all, Catholics especially, with their war-cry of *Laus Deo*; pillagers of churches, murdering their theological opponents or blinding them with a mixture of lime and vinegar; lunatics who would stop the traveller and demand martyrdom at his hands, under pain of death for himself; can we imagine them, even as natives of that Africa whose remote descendants still furnish the most grotesque examples of American revivalism?

No doubt the severities of Macarius in the middle of the fourth century helped to exasperate them. Martroye claims that there is no evidence of their shedding blood until after this persecution.[1] But there is evidence, at least, of brutal violence at an earlier period, not only in St. Augustine but in St. Optatus, who wrote a bare quarter of a century after the event.[2] Donatus of Bagai, he tells us, called in the Circumcellions or Agonistici (their favourite name for themselves) to resist the proceedings of Macarius; there is no suggestion that they were a body of men recruited *ad hoc*. He describes them as conducting, some years before this, a kind of communist crusade under the leadership of Axido and Fasir, 'the captains of the saints', with the especial object of forcing creditors to cancel all debts.

There is a natural temptation to suggest, here, either that the whole Donatist movement only provided an ecclesiastical façade for some social or nationalist agitation; or else that the Circumcellions began life as a set of political agitators, and were only absorbed later into the Donatist scheme. It seems likely enough that there was a large disinherited element in the population of Africa at the time.[3] And the title of Martroye's two articles, 'An attempt at Social Revolution', suggests that he set out with the intention of doing what Belfort Bax did for the Anabaptists—apologizing for their eccentricities by claiming that their political significance has been overlaid or misunderstood. 'A social movement', he writes, 'was concealed under the surface of religious controversy.'[4] But nothing is to be read in the rest of his account which goes to justify such a claim. No doubt here, as in many other religious agitations—Lollardy, for example—there was a background of social discontent; nothing more. There was a moment, indeed, at which Donatism

[1] Op. cit., p. 398.
[2] St. Optatus, Bk. iii, ch. 4.
[3] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 8.
[4] Martroye, op. cit., p. 387.

was implicated in a revolt of the native Africans against Rome. The Donatist Bishop of Rusubiccari opened the gates of the town to the rebel Firmus in 372, and for a while it may have looked as if a kingdom of the saints was to be set up in Mauretania; but the campaign of Count Theodosius succeeded in putting an end to the disturbances.[1] And this seems to have been only an isolated incident. M. Bertrand has probably seized on the just view of the situation. He points out that the partisans of Donatism were largely recruited from African natives who did not know Latin; that the cry of *traditor* was raised chiefly by Numidian bishops against those of Carthage and pro-consular Africa. 'Au fond, c'était la vieille rivalité entre les deux Afriques.' But he adds, 'Peut-on voir en le donatisme un mouvement nationaliste ou séparatiste dirigé contre la domination romaine? Ce serait transporter dans l'antiquité des idées toutes modernes. Pas plus à l'époque d'Augustin que de nos jours, il n'existait de nationalité africaine.'[2] In a word, nationalism plays its part in the history of Donatism, but for the most part as an unconscious undercurrent. Such undercurrents are by no means rare in theological controversy; who shall say whether the Scots disliked the Book of Common Prayer because it was Episcopalian, or because it was English?

One unanswerable consideration should suffice to assure us that the Donatists as a body were not committed to any political or social programme; if they had been, it is quite certain that St. Augustine would have said so, and pitilessly repeated it. No advocate has ever got up his brief better than St. Augustine did, in his efforts to restore unity to the Church of Africa. It is conceivable that there may have been redeeming points about the men or the system he attacked which he did not feel bound to put on record; the spokesmen of Donatism were quite capable of looking after themselves. But it is unthinkable that he should have failed to paint in, on his crowded canvas, any disastrous consequences which could be detected as arising out of the sin of schism. And if one of those consequences was disloyalty to the Emperor and to the Roman order of life, that above all would have been mercilessly exposed, at a time when Church and State were working hand in hand to destroy the influence of the sectaries.

It would still be possible, indeed, to suggest that while the Donatists had no political colour, the Circumcellions were exploiting

[1] Ibid., pp. 8, 9. [2] Bertrand, *St. Augustin*, v. 4.

their patronage in the interests of a revolutionary agitation. Montroye insinuates something of the kind when he counts among the embarrassments of the Donatists the fact that they were 'confused by their adversaries with the Circumcellions, those bands of Punic peasants that understood no Latin, and united, in their attitude towards the Catholics, religious hatred with hatred of Rome'.[1] But there is little material in history to justify such a distinction. There was a moment, it is true, at which the Donatist bishops themselves appealed to be protected against the violence of the Circumcellions, in those early days when we find them tearing up creditors' bonds and liberating slaves by threatening to kill their masters.[2] But this Frankenstein attitude does not reappear after the death of Constantine. The Donatist bishops claimed to have fulminated (though ineffectually) against suicide-martyrdoms;[3] but they boasted of the Circumcellions as their *agonistici*, their storm-troops, and paid the honours of sanctity to those of them who had been executed by Macarius. Compelled sometimes, by the necessities of controversy, to disown them, they never ceased to depend on them for support.[4] So close was their connexion with the Donatist Church that St. Augustine regards them as the monks of Donatism, in a passage which seems to imply that his comparison will be generally admitted.[5] If it may be said without offence, the attitude of the ordinary, respectable Donatist towards his brethren of the right wing will probably have been much the same as the attitude of the ordinary, respectable Presbyterian towards the Protestant mob-leaders who emerge, from time to time, in the slums of Edinburgh and Glasgow. He would dissociate himself from their activities, without being in a position to separate himself from their Communion; he would be a little frightened of earning their ill will—especially if he were in a public position—yet at the same time embarrassed by his involuntary alliance with them. And, through it all, he would reflect that in some ways the Catholics had brought it on themselves.

(v) *The Donatists Puritans, rather than Enthusiasts*

Were the Circumcellions, were the Donatists, enthusiasts in the sense defined in the preceding chapters? Have they anything in com-

[1] Martroye, op. cit., p. 7.
[2] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 31.
[3] Tillemont, op. cit., art. XXXVII.
[4] Ibid., art. XXXIX.
[5] *Homily on Ps. cxxxii* ('Ecce quam bonum'). Tillemont does not seem to be justified in suggesting that the comparison was made by the Donatists themselves (art. XXXVII).

mon with the Montanists? They certainly claimed miracles,[1] but only, it would seem, by way of competing on equal terms with the Catholics, not by way of eclipsing them; St. Augustine points out, in a penetrating phrase, that sanctity is not to be regarded as the differential mark of the Church—we believe that miracles happen in the true Church because we believe it to be the true Church, not the other way round.[2] What is perhaps more significant is their special devotion towards the Holy Spirit, to whom they attributed, incidentally, the ardours of the Circumcellions. Donatus of Carthage had composed a treatise on the Holy Spirit, and the exaggerated language of his followers would speak of him as having been an incarnation of the Holy Spirit himself.[3] St. Optatus's picture, which no doubt does him less than justice, attributes to him some of the tricks of the hierophant, such as shutting himself up and rarely letting himself be seen.[4] But, in the vast quantity of anti-Donatist propaganda which is preserved for us in St. Augustine's works, we do not find enough emphasis laid on these tendencies to suggest the conclusion that they were in any way characteristic of the sect. The Circumcellions, as we know, had their own distinctive form of enthusiasm, and no doubt claimed inspiration to justify them when they resolved on suicide. But they do not exhibit the common traits of the energumen.

There is better reason for accusing the Circumcellions, if it may be assumed that their inspiration was genuinely religious, of antinomian leanings. Not precisely because of their savage cruelty; *that* is, unfortunately, almost a normal accompaniment of a certain type of religious fervour; you find it in the Camisards. But it appears that, while commonly professing continence,[5] they used to take unmarried women about with them as camp-followers in their wanderings; and, unless St. Augustine's second book against the Letter of Parmenianus is a complete libel, the scandal to which this habit gave rise was well founded.[6] We shall see that some of the medieval heretics who denounced marriage as sinful weakened the value of their protest in precisely the same way. And some colour is lent to the suspicion that the Circumcellions, too, combined hypocrisy with

[1] St. Augustine, *Hom. in Joh.*, xiii, section 17.
[2] St. Augustine, *De unitate*, xix (or xlix).
[3] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 156.
[4] St. Optatus, iii. 3.
[5] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 183.
[6] Tillemont, op. cit., art. XXXIX.

incontinence, by the third canon passed at the great Council of Carthage. It forbids those who have renounced marriage to go about accompanied by persons of the opposite sex.[1] No doubt the prohibition is meant for clerics; but, when we consider that the purpose of the Council was to liquidate the Donatist schism, and that the first two canons deal with rebaptism and with suicide-martyrdom, it seems likely enough that the Circumcellion practice is obliquely alluded to.

This was all the more embarrassing for the spokesmen of Donatism, because they were bound by the exigencies of their own propaganda, not indeed to perfectionism, but at least to some advanced type of rigorism. The whole of their case rested on the doctrine that the unworthiness of the minister hinders the effect of a sacrament; they were the church of the martyrs, in competition with the church of the *traditores*; and it would be putting too much strain on the public credulity, if they maintained that a bishop or priest, so long as he was not a *traditor*, could lie, murder, and steal to his heart's content. 'The strictness of the divine law', wrote their apologist Parmenianus, 'will not allow it to come to pass, that one who is dead should raise men to life, one who is wounded, should heal them, one who is blinded, should enlighten them, one who is naked, should clothe them, one who is defiled, should make them clean.'[2] Mgr Batiffol draws attention to this rigorist attitude on the Donatists' part which the apologetic of their adversaries continually implies.[3] If St. Augustine can reproach them with inconsistency because they do not rebaptize persons who have been baptized by a bishop afterwards deposed for incontinence, it is evident that, in Donatist theory, incontinence was sufficient to invalidate ministerial acts; if St. Augustine is at pains to admit, and to explain, the moral imperfections of Catholics, it can only be because his opponents admitted few or none on their own side; and so on. St. Optatus's polemic is equally illuminating. He compares the Donatists to the whitened wall of Ezechiel; they are men who 'judge only themselves to be saints';[4] and is content to claim for the Catholic Church that her members are in process of becoming sanctified, not necessarily sanctified already.[5]

[1] Tillemont, op. cit., art. LI. [2] St. Augustine, *Against the Letter of Parmenian*, ii. 32.
[3] *Le Catholicisme de St. Augustin*, ii. 3, iii. 1, 4.
[4] St. Optatus, iii. 10. [5] Ibid. ii. 20.

The apologists of the schism do appear, sometimes, to have toned down the rigours of their doctrine, recoiling from its logical implications. Both St. Optatus and St. Augustine find it necessary to criticize their contention that the Church supplies (as we should say) in the case of those who are baptized by secret sinners.[1] But they evidently preferred to meet charges of worldliness or immorality against their own members by denying the fact rather than by defending the principle. And, after all, we know very little about the private life of the normal Donatist household. If we hear little about the sect that is not scandalous in the literature of the time, that is because the literature of the time was concerned to emphasize the scandal; not out of common malice, but precisely in order to meet Donatist apologetic on its own ground. Some of the schismatic parishes may have been, for all we know, models of that simple piety which the African native has shown in other ages and other settings. If the piety was not there, at least the affectation of it was there; it had to be. Monceau perhaps gives too definite a twist to the claims of the Donatist church when he writes 'en face des trahisons et des corruptions de l'autre église, elle prétendait offrir au monde le merveilleux spectacle d'une église des saints'.[2] But M. Bertrand is surely justified in saying of its members: 'Ils affectaient un respect de la tradition, une austérité dans les mœurs et la discipline, qui en faisaient de véritables puritains.'[3]

Evidently they shared, with some Protestants of a later age, that unlovely manifestation of Evangelical zeal which consists in a horror of all personal contact with Catholics. They were forbidden by their clergy, St. Optatus assures us, to greet Catholics in the street or to sit in the same room with them;[4] and Tillemont gives us a long list of the social disabilities incurred, where Donatism flourished, by any Christian who was in communion with the Church of other countries;[5] a list which chiefly surprises us by causing, after all these centuries, so little surprise. There are some Donatist tricks, too, which have a flavour of latter-day Puritanism. They claimed to have the 'evangelical' faith;[6] and bishops would address letters to their clergy as fellow presbyters 'who have been appointed ministers with us in the gospel', to the laity as 'the people that shares our

[1] Tillemont, op. cit., art. XXXIII.
[2] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 167.
[3] Bertrand, *St. Augustin*, v. 4.
[4] St. Optatus, iv. 3.
[5] Tillemont, op. cit., art. XXX.
[6] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 156.

warfare in the truth of the gospel' without using the word 'church' at all.[1] Donatist neighbours would shout catchwords after Catholics in the street. 'Bonus homo esses, si non esses traditor; consule animae tuae; esto Christianus' they would say, using 'Christian' in its Irish sense of 'non-Catholic'.[2] Or, in a slightly different formula, 'Attendite post vos. Redimite animas vestras. Estote Christiani.'[3] They would address them by name, 'Gaius Seius', or 'Gaia Seia'—'Mr. Smith' or 'Mrs. Smith', in fact—'how long are you staying where you are?'[4] Was it insult or genuine love of souls? The latter, I fancy. Turned into human beings for once, these revivalists of ancient Africa melt into the picture of the kind ladies who used to ask us 'Are you saved?' in omnibuses. I can imagine this propaganda being carried on by the great ladies of Carthage. They were a formidable body; Lucilla had a successor who supported the schism of Maximian against his rival Primian out of her own pocket[5] at the turn of the century.

(vi) *Persistence of the Movement*

To the last, the inexplicable thing about Donatism is that differences which seem so trivial should have given rise to a sect so durable and so embittered. It was never officially heretical, although some of the laws passed against it affect to treat it so.[6] St. Augustine, indeed, complains that some of those who profess it deny the equality of the Son with the Father; but he admits that this is not true of the majority;[7] and it seems probable that the African schismatics only coquetted with Arianism at a time when the rise of the Goths made it politically expedient.[8] In matters of discipline, in the order of their ceremonial, there was no difference between Donatist and Catholic. Yet the schism went on; and, as is the way of schisms, propagated itself by fission. The rival breeds, each excommunicated by the others, competed for the patronage of the public in a way which reminded St. Augustine of the pigeon-sellers in the temple;[9] Roga-

[1] Batiffol, op. cit. iii. 4, iv. 1.

[2] 'There'd be no harm in you if you weren't a traitor; think of your soul, man, and turn Christian.' St. Augustine, *On Baptism*, ii. 7.

[3] 'Look out for yourselves. Save your souls. Become Christians.' St. Optatus, iii. 11.

[4] Ibid. vi. 8; cf. also iv. 3.

[5] Tillemont, op. cit., art. LXVI (misprinted XLI in the edition of 1732).

[6] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 73; Batiffol, op. cit. ii. 3.

[7] *Homilies on the Gospels*, cxxxiii. 5.

[8] Monceaux, 33.

[9] St. Augustine, *Homilies on St. John*, x. 6.

tists in Mauretania, Primianists, Claudianists, Maximianists. These subdivisions do not begin to appear until the second half of the fourth century; a circumstance which was probably due to the dominating influence of the Carthaginian Donatus, who lived at least till 355.[1] But when they do appear, their minor feuds are conducted with all the acrimony hitherto reserved for the war against Catholics. And it is noteworthy that each sect is named after its leader; persons, not principles, were in dispute. Tillemont is not slow to point the moral: 'Il était juste que les Donatistes fussent mesurés de la même mesure dont ils avaient mesuré les autres; qu'ils périssaient par l'épée même qu'ils avaient tirée contre l'Église.'[2]

The obstinacy of their survival has been attributed, at least in part, to the African temperament. 'Ces dissensions religieuses flattaient le vieil esprit de division, qui à toutes les époques a été le mauvais génie de l'Afrique. . . . Au fond, voilà tout le Donatisme; c'est un accès suraigu d'individualisme africain'—so M. Bertrand writes;[3] and Monceau quotes a historian who describes Africa as a place where 'les âmes paraissaient montées à un ton plus haut qu'ailleurs'.[4] It is certain that the schism never gained a footing outside Africa; the Donatists had their chaplaincies in Gaul or Spain, and their shadow-bishop flitted about Rome, but it was only to their fellow Africans that these emissaries ministered.[5] Having once advertised the world that they regarded the consecration of Caecilian as invalid, they concluded that the Church had unchurched itself by continuing to recognize him.[6] That the promises of Christ had been made to a world, not to a sub-continent, embarrassed Donatist thought, but did not rob it of its illusion: the more blame to Caecilian for thus localizing their efficacy.[7] Tychonius, that most candid of schismatics, whose writings were always selling the pass to the enemies of his own sect, recognized the force of the argument from universality, but the word *traditor* still stuck in his throat. He had under his eyes the history which, fourteen centuries later, drove Newman out into the wilderness, but remained powerless to draw the conclusion. Mgr Batiffol comments, and without malice, 'Tyconius fait penser

[1] Tillemont, op. cit., art. XXVII.
[2] Ibid. LXI.
[3] Bertrand, *St. Augustin*, v. 4.
[4] Monceaux, op. cit., p. 393.
[5] Tillemont, op. cit., art. XXXVI; Monceaux, op. cit., p. 103.
[6] St. Augustine, *Contra Cresconium*, iii. 32, 36.
[7] Id., *On the Christian Conflict*, 31; *Homilies on the Gospels*, xxxviii. 22.

à ces théologiens anglicans qui découvrent le Catholicisme, et restent anglicans'.[1]

The enthusiastic movements we propose to examine form a separate group of phenomena which can be distinguished from ordinary heresy (which springs from doctrinal disagreement) and from ordinary schism (which is the defection of a nation or of a *local* Church from the general body of Christendom). It may be asked, here, whether Donatism should not have found its place among the schisms properly so-called, as a local defection of the African province. But, whatever part national sentiment may have played in crystallizing its character, Donatism is not the child of an administrative disagreement, or of an historical accident; it is a protest of the rigorist against a supposed betrayal of the Christian conscience, and as such it has been allowed to figure in these pages. It might have been designed by Providence to show future ages as in a mirror, and a magnifying mirror, the dangers that were to beset Christendom. It arose from inconsiderable beginnings, from the disappointed fervour of a devout female, and the Pharisaism of the factious clerics who frequented her *salon*. It grew into a national apostasy, with rebaptism for its shibboleth, with martyr-worship for its characteristic atmosphere, but with no vital principle to justify its separate existence. 'Un schisme qui dure depuis plus de quatre-vingts ans', writes Mgr Batiffol, 'tire sa force de sa durée même.'[2] If so little was needed to rend the unity of the Church, what dark possibilities the future must hold in store! What dangers there were of irremediable disruption, when men of real spirituality should rise in protest against real abuses and relaxations; when there should be a real case for rigorism, and when a world more removed from the fervour of apostolic times should greet it with impatient rebuke! Whatever else it was, Donatism was a portent, and a portent that went unheeded.

[1] Batiffol, op. cit. ii. 3.

[2] Ibid. iii. 1.

V

THE UNDERWORLD OF THE MIDDLE AGES

(i) *A Multiplicity of Sects*

A READABLE history of the medieval sects is still to be written. Those who deal with the subject are intent on blackening, or extenuating, the Inquisition, and treat the heretics themselves as so much fuel; or they have ingenious ideas about the relation between the medieval world and the world of the Dark Ages, and have no time to give any picture of what a medieval conventicle was really like. Yet, is not the chief interest of these people—so crude, after all, in their affirmations and denials, so uninfluential to the history of their age—the fact that they existed at all? For theirs was a furtive existence, most of the time, in most parts of Europe; the men and women who so pertinaciously detested the Catholic system went to Church, made the sign of the Cross, lived outwardly as normal subjects of that Christendom which produced Anselm, and Francis, and Dante, and Richard Hilton. Weavers, many of them,[1] in the Low Countries at least, teaching strange doctrines and saying strange prayers over their looms; picking up shreds of old-world heterodoxy from Bosnian *colporteurs*, and passing them on, much distorted by repetition, till they laid the foundations of Protestant pre-history in our own eastern counties. The works of Miss Emily Holt, and other religious classics of my youth, took liberties (it is to be feared) with history, but at least they tried to re-create for us a world of real men and women.

Authorities for the period are not lacking; hostile, but none the less graphic for that. Where they chiefly fail us is that they cannot pick their way with certainty, as we cannot pick ours, through the labyrinth of names under which medieval heresy passes. Albigenses, Waldenses, Manicheans, Cathars, Paterini, Humiliati, Poor Men of Lyons, Bogomiles, Piphles, Jovinians, Publicans, Turlupins, Stadingues, Petrobrussians, Henricians, Boni Homines, Leonists,

[1] See Beuzart, *Les Hérésies pendant le moyen âge et la Réforme* (Le Puy, 1912), p. 11.

Speronists, Garatenses, Albanenses, Romanuli, Commissi, Communelli, Varini, Ortuleni, Passagins, Josephins, Arnaldists, Gundulfians, Brethren of the Free Spirit, Lollards, Beghards, Picards, Fraticelli, Amaurists—all these names we meet, and many others, in the period between the Norman Conquest and the Reformation. Are we to think of them as so many separate entities? Or have we to reckon with two, at the outside three, religious movements which overran the greater part of Europe, picking up local nicknames as they went? Already in 1183 Pope Lucius III mentions Cathars, Patarins, Poor or Humble Men of Lyons, Passagins, Josephins, and Arnaldists, apparently as sects which held false views about the Sacraments;[1] was he envisaging six heresies, or two heresies, either of which you might meet under an alias? Is Beuzart right when he quarrels with Bossuet (*grand simplificateur*, as Bremond calls him) for trying to include the whole of medieval heresy under a Manichean formula?[2] Yet Bossuet himself writes of 'tant de sectes obscures et artificieuses', and tells us elsewhere 'il est constant que ces hérétiques changeaient beaucoup'.[3] Mr. Turberville refers to 'the different anti-sacerdotal heresies, of which Waldensianism and Catharism were the chief';[4] is he justified in treating the rest as movements wholly distinct, or should he not rather have treated them as sub-species?

Without professing myself competent to decide on such questions, I would offer this as a tentative solution. There were two streams, flowing underground, of opposition to the medieval hierarchy. One, the Waldensian, began at Lyons, but found its most coherent expression in northern Italy, where the Waldenses, after many vicissitudes, survive to this day. It was a movement towards simplicity, based on dissatisfaction with the worldliness of many in high places, and tended constantly to sit loose to authority, to exalt the position of the layman. It was of the Evangelical type, not concerned to criticize the general structure of Christian theology; did not (when uncontaminated) quarrel much with the sacramental doctrines of its day. The other, Catharist, achieved its epic in the south of France, where it acquired the alternative title of Albigensian. It was influenced, at least in part, by Manichean doctrines which seem to have been imported from the Near East; by a Dualist

[1] Text in Beuzart, op. cit., p. 465.
[2] Ibid., p. 18.
[3] *Variations of Protestantism*, xi. 54, 51.
[4] A. S. Turberville, *Medieval Heresy and the Inquisition* (London, 1920), p. 32.

account of the Creation, and of man's nature, by a Docetic theory of the Incarnation. It derided all the Catholic sacraments, and substituted for them a liturgy and a disciplinary system of its own. Both movements were propagandist, and where their preachers went, little groups of converts would form; these, precariously affiliated to the parent body, would soon begin to develop their own heterodoxies. If one of them threw up a leader of any real originality, he would bequeath to them an odd doctrine here and there and the shadow of his name. Was such a body still to be identified, or not, as a Waldensian, a Catharist body? Either view could be argued.

Likely enough, there would be little pockets, here and there, of self-sown discontent; a township, for example, which had been put under ecclesiastical discipline over some quarrel in which the citizens felt that right was on their side. A week's chance visit from some journeyman apostle would fire the imaginations of such people, and they would describe themselves thenceforward as belonging to the pure, the Cathar Church, or as owing their allegiance to the Humble Men of Lyons, without any clear idea of the doctrines contained in either system. Once more, were they Waldensians, were they Cathars? You have to allow, surely, for a great deal of cross-fertilization between these isolated sub-sects, a further headache for the Inquisitor. The furtive group of *petits bourgeois* that had been delated to him, only yesterday, as Henrician, might have blossomed out into the open-work shoes of the Humiliati overnight. You get traces of these uncertainties actually in process of development. There is a letter on record from the Waldenses of Lombardy to the Waldenses (or 'Leonists') of Germany, pointing out to them where their doctrine differed from that of the Waldenses in France. They are as yet but nascent difficulties, chiefly concerned with the subject that was for ever exercising them, the relation of the minister to the sacrament; but it is easy to see how such rifts could widen.[1] Five hundred years later, in an England much better provided with communications, you find Wesley wrestling with congregations which did not quite know whether they owed allegiance to him, or to the Moravian apostolate of a John Cennick, a Benjamin Ingham; congregations which were torn between Arminianism and Calvinism; congregations, too, infected with the Antinomianism of Relly.

It is not, of course, in the least impossible that labels like Catharist

[1] *The Albigensian Heresy*, by H. J. Warner (S.P.C.K., 1922), p. 62.

or Waldensian should have been fitted, by popular usage, where they did not properly apply. The abuse of terms like 'Bolshevist' and 'Fascist' in our own day provides an obvious parallel. Inquisitors, too, are apt to make their own work more difficult; they ask leading questions, extract hasty admissions, and the effect is to tar widely different heresies with the same brush. I have suggested elsewhere[1] that bungling of this sort has been responsible for our very confused picture of the seventeenth-century Illuminati. But neither explanation, it seems to me, need be invoked here. There is a family resemblance about all the outbreaks of heresy in the Middle Ages which clamours for a common origin to explain it. Quite apart from the ubiquitous background of anticlericalism, there are specific traits which meet us all the time, meet us everywhere; the Waldensian objection to taking oaths, for example, or the Cathar Docetism which would not admit that our Lord took real flesh of his Blessed Mother. Register, if you will, these local movements, with their local names, as independent entries in the long catalogue of the Christianities; but you will not have covered the facts. St. Bernard's allegory of the foxes still holds—their faces may differ, but they are tied together, like Samson's foxes, by the tail.[2]

What was the total number of people affected? John Holmes, in his *History of the United Brethren*,[3] tells us that in 1315 there were 80,000 'Waldensians' in Bohemia and Passau; it was computed that you had to multiply that figure by ten to arrive at the full muster of 'Waldensians' in Europe. It is fairly clear, I think, that Holmes included under that name heretics of every sort, as indeed his authorities often did. (On the same page he quotes Thuanus as recording that 'complete armies were raised' to crush the Waldenses, obviously referring to the Albigeois.) Under stress of persecution, heresy always tended to travel through Germany eastwards or southwards, away from the administrative centre of things; Bohemia and Poland were the countries chiefly concerned. Thus the figure of 80,000 may be accurate enough; 800,000 is more likely to be an over-estimate. Both friends and foes tend to exaggerate in such

[1] See below, p. 242.

[2] 'Condemnantes universos haereticos, quibuscumque nominibus censeantur, facies quidem diversas habentes, sed caudas ad invicem colligatas'; quoted by Beuzart, op. cit., p. 464.

[3] London, 1825, p. 7. Limborch (*History of the Inquisition*, English ed., London, 1731, p. 102) represents these heretics as followers, at least remotely, of Dolcino.

matters. I like Holmes's picture of the medieval heretic travelling from Cologne to Milan, and lodging each night with sympathizers whom he had identified by secret marks painted on their doors.[1] But a Methodist could have found the same kind of hospitality, walking from Penzance to Newcastle, at a time when the Society's membership was only reckoned in thousands.

(ii) *The Waldenses*

The question naturally suggests itself, What were the relations between Waldensians and Catharists? Two propagandist sects must, from time to time, meet in a common mission-field; what will be their attitude to one another? Will they fight or will they fuse? The probability is that they fused; certainly there is no record of their fighting. And if this fusion was taking place most of the time, we can understand more easily why our authors seem now to identify the two movements, now to distinguish them with patient erudition. Ermengard's tract, for instance, *Contra Waldenses*, is clearly envisaging the Catharists throughout;[2] whereas Alanus gives the Waldensian errors a whole book to themselves, by way of keeping them distinct; and Peter de Vaucernai is equally clear about the difference.[3] The fact was, presumably, that if you directed your attention to a particular set of men, you were often at a loss which name to apply; if you directed your attention to a set of doctrines, you could say without difficulty which tendency they represented. The heretics changed colour 'cum aliis se miscentes et eorum errores imbibentes';[4] and Dr. Bussell is probably right in claiming that 'all sects in the end were driven to borrow something from the Cathars'.[5] The heresies remained, as do the things of the mind; Bossuet was not far out when he claimed that they had nothing at all in common,[6] and the Inquisitors themselves could find no resemblance, beyond the repugnance felt by both sects for the taking of oaths, for the confessional, and for the Catholic Church in general.[7] Even under this last head Mr. Warner has acutely remarked on a difference of attitude; the Catharists, he tells us, regarded the Church as irremediably corrupt, whereas the Waldenses cherished the ambition of

[1] J. Holmes, op. cit. i. 8.
[2] Warner, op. cit., p. 50.
[3] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 50.
[4] Carcassonne Inquisitors, cited by Warner, op. cit., p. 58.
[5] *Religious Thought and Heresy in the Middle Ages* (1918), p. 733.
[6] Op. cit. xi. 96.
[7] Warner, op. cit., p. 56.

reforming it.[1] But the two tendencies differ in character as well as in aim, 'l'un philosophique et spéculatif, et n'ayant pas complètement oublié le gnosticisme, l'autre plus évangélique et plus moral, . . . et revenant volontiers à l'Écriture Sainte'.[2] It is time that we should resume their history.

Peter Waldo, founder of the Waldenses, is generally accepted as an historical personality, though it would have been easy to represent him as a legendary, eponymous figure, and derive the name Waldenses (Vaudois) from the canton of Vaud. He dates from the sixties of the twelfth century, and Bossuet is justly impatient with the inconsistency of their claim, at a later time, to ante-date their foundation by a whole century.[3] It may be, indeed, that Waldo derived some of his inspiration from Peter de Bruys, whom we shall meet later; but then, so did Wesley from the Moravians. Waldo is said to have been a rich merchant of Lyons, who gave up his goods and preached voluntary poverty. The best-known badge of the movement was a kind of shoe left open at the top, to suggest apostolic manners; the general principle of it seems to have been that of the Mendicant Friars on a large scale. His followers (it is to be presumed) are the people already described as 'Poor Men of Lyons' in a decree made by Lucius III in 1181. The decree is one of condemnation, but the Waldenses were hoping for Papal recognition as late as 1179, and indeed it was granted them on condition that they did not go about preaching except at the request of the local clergy.[4] It is evident that their separation from the Church was a gradual one, like that of the Wesleyans, and that the main point at issue was the same; could lay preaching, organized from an independent centre, be tolerated within the framework of an institutional Church?

History has supplied the answer—it could. Thirty years later Innocent III, with hesitations for which the Waldensian precedent was probably responsible, granted just such recognition to the nascent order of St. Francis. If the Church welcomed the Poor Man of Assisi, while she rejected the Poor Men of Lyons, it must be supposed that the latter had given the world an early taste of their quality. The most obvious fault to find with the Waldenses was that there was too much Third Order about them. They were so very

[1] Warner, op. cit., p. 79.
[2] Beuzart, op. cit., p. 22.
[3] Op. cit. xi. 2.
[4] Warner, op. cit., p. 48.

much laymen. Their own founder had nothing, probably, of Wesley's academic background;[1] Alanus calls him 'sine ratione philosophus, sine visione propheta, sine missione apostolus, sine instructione didascalus'.[2] As they brooded over the contrast between their own apostolic way of living on one side, and the pictures they loved to draw of ecclesiastical worldliness on the other, they gravitated more and more towards the idea of a charismatic ministry. Was it possible that a priest living in sin could consecrate, could absolve validly, while a layman who walked the world in sandals could not? Peter de Vaucernai accused them of receiving the sacraments from unordained ministers,[3] and Alanus implies as much by the doctrines he undertakes to prove to them.[4] Beyond this, few erroneous opinions are alleged against them; Anabaptist misgivings about the exercise of civil authority, Anabaptist scruples about binding themselves by oath, little else.[5] 'Anti-sacerdotalism', writes Mr. Turberville, is 'the sum and substance of the teaching. There was no explicit doctrinal, intellectual error of the first magnitude.'[6] The movement stood for a protest rather than a denial.

Such was the genuine tradition of the Vaudois, however much it may have been deformed and contaminated by their less reputable offshoots. The fate of the Albigenses, their neighbours, perhaps helped to keep them, in the south of France at any rate, distrustful of eccentricities; they played for safety, like the Mennonite branch of the Anabaptists after the fires of Munster. They could look back on 350 years of history, when they exchanged views with the Swiss Reformation leaders; and Bossuet has no difficulty in showing that, apart from their common hostility towards the Church, the two theologies had little in common. Most of the Waldensian tenets were frankly Catholic; the rest (and none the better for that) Anabaptist. Under the plea of duress, these sectaries continued to frequent Catholic sacraments. It was plain that they had a good deal to unlearn before they could be turned into good Reformation Protestants.[7] Poor and uninfluential, they might have been lost to view but for the Piedmontese massacre of 1650, when one sonnet from Milton brought them back into the limelight; and after the Napoleonic

[1] 'Aliquantulum litteratus', according to Reineri (Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 74).
[2] *De fide catholica contra haereticos sui temporis* (Antwerp, 1654), ii. 1.
[3] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 82.
[4] Op. cit., lib. ii, *passim*.
[5] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 94.
[6] Op. cit., p. 20.
[7] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 118, 119.

wars British liberality relieved their attenuated fortunes, not without some idea of making them a permanent bridgehead against Popery.

(iii) *The Catharists*

Other currents of contemporary thought ran deeper. It is still the south of France which claims our attention, a country which seemed designed, then as five centuries later, to foster the growth of heresy. It was still the Languedoc, cut off even by a barrier of speech from France of Paris and of the court; its Mediterranean trade exposed it to Eastern influence; the remote fastnesses of its hill-country offered a ready asylum to the persecuted. Catharism first appears, indeed, elsewhere; its tenets can be clearly identified among the heretics discovered in the neighbourhood of Orleans,[1] and in that of Cologne,[2] as early as the eleventh century. But these were sporadic outbreaks; nobody was concerned to give the thing a name, nobody was inclined to fear it as a conspiracy, until it localized itself in Languedoc. Nor, even there, did it challenge the public attention of the Church until the later years of the twelfth century, marked by the strong Pontificate of Innocent III;[3] the fulminations of Calixtus II at the Council of Toulouse (1119) were sufficiently general, and may have been partly directed at Peter de Bruys.[4] But Radulfus Ardens had watched the infiltration of the new doctrines into the neighbourhood of Agen, in the first years of the century,[5] and when it had half run its course, the Catharists claimed to have no less than five bishoprics of their own in the south of France.[6] Those were the days of the troubadours, when Languedoc was distinguished by 'a free and easy society, rich, cultured, independent in spirit, impatient of authority, tolerant of foreign ideas, beliefs and practices, tolerant and even friendly to the despised and persecuted Jews'.[7] Such is the kindly estimate of an author who nevertheless admits that the tolerance was carried so far 'as to be scarcely distinguishable from free-thinking',[8] and qualifies our admiration for Raymond VI of Toulouse by telling us that he repeatedly perjured himself, and maintained an army of soldiers who were 'little better than brigands'.[9] When it boasted of such patronage, Catharism must be reckoned

[1] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 42. [2] Ibid. xi. 27. [3] Bussell, op. cit., p. 5.
[4] Warner, op. cit., p. 36. [5] Ibid., p. 40.
[6] E. Holmes, *The Albigensian or Catharist Heresy* (London, 1925), p. 63.
[7] Ibid., p. 56. [8] Ibid., p. 60. [9] Ibid., p. 71.

with. The Lateran Council of 1159 was at pains to condemn the heretics of Albi by name.[1] Local action, however, was slow and fumbling; the Council of Lombez, to judge by its findings, rounded up a set of Waldensians and tried to incriminate them as Catharists.[2] Philip Augustus, repeatedly urged to interfere, was full of evasions; 'in effect King only of a part of Northern France',[3] he hesitated to embroil himself with the Counts of Toulouse. In 1209 Pope Innocent, exasperated by the murder of one of his own commissioners, launched the Albigensian Crusade.

To relate the history of the wars which followed during the next twenty years, and the subsequent measures (notably the appointment of Inquisitors) by which heresy in Languedoc was suppressed, or at least driven underground, would be impossible within the limits of this chapter. We are concerned here with what the heretics believed, not with what happened to them. In order to understand the apprehensions they aroused, we have to remember that they boasted of an elaborate organization, were prepared to set up Church against Church. It is true they only claimed to have sixteen dioceses in the world,[4] but they did ordain their own bishops and deacons (not priests, apparently)[5] in opposition to the Catholic hierarchy. They denied the efficacy of all the Christian Sacraments, for which they substituted rites of their own. And the theology they preached was not, in any recognizable sense, Christian; it was a dualistic creed, such as the early Church had anathematized in the Gnostics, and St. Augustine had castigated in the Manichees.

That matter, as such, is evil; that the world was created by a fallen spirit, who acquires in consequence a stature little less than divinity; that our Lord was not really born of his Blessed Mother, did not really die on the Cross, but wore through life a phantom body in which matter had no part; that procreation is evil, and that the perfect believer will neither use marriage, nor eat any food which is of animal origin; that sacraments, in which grace is conveyed through material channels, can only be a blasphemy; that the body does not rise again, and indeed that the soul's whole effort must be directed towards its own disimprisonment from the body—such doctrines as these form something like a coherent theology; but it is not Christian. Disguise it in Christian formulas if you will; but it

[1] Warner, op. cit., p. 47. [2] Ibid., pp. 43, 44. [3] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 75.
[4] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 56. [5] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 38.

is no casual heterodoxy, like the Puritanism of the Waldenses. It undermines the whole mystery of the Incarnation. To assert that mystery against its new-found opponents, to insist on, and glory in, that wedding of things human with things divine which it involves, the Church forged a weapon whose primary significance familiarity has obscured—the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin.

Is it possible to believe that a system, so nearly allied to all those old discarded models of heresy, could have bloomed self-sown in the garden of Languedoc? We do not need to account for the Waldenses. There had been Priscillianists in the south of France, an overflow from Spain, some centuries earlier,[1] but Puritanism did not begin or end with the followers of Priscillian.[2] That the unworthiness of the minister hinders the effect of a sacrament was doctrine common to the Waldenses and the Donatists; but it does not need a very acute mind—rather the contrary—to hit upon such a notion.[3] But the Catharist heresy is more strongly marked, less native to the genius of the West. Its contemporaries would sometimes give merely abusive names to those who embraced it, even calling them Cataphrygians[4]—quite inappropriately, for this was a sobriquet of the Montanists. But they knew how to designate the error more correctly; before the middle of the eleventh century, Adhemar is already describing the heretics of Aquitaine as 'Manichees',[5] and this characterization became, later, universal.

If a bridge is to be found between the Manicheans of St. Augustine's day and the Catharists of the Middle Ages, we must undoubtedly look for it in the Near East. The simplest account of the matter is that Catharism was a direct importation from Bulgaria and Bosnia, where the traditions of a seventh-century sect, the Paulicians, who largely held by Manichean views, had obstinately rooted themselves. Armenia was their place of origin; in the Near East their ideas were caught up and perpetuated by a later sect, the Bogomils. We have evidence of their continued activity in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries.[6] They only disappeared in Bosnia at the time of

[1] Bussell, op. cit., p. 707. [2] Warner, op. cit., p. 10.

[3] Ibid., p. 11. It would be more plausible to trace Donatist influence in the view held by the heretics of Arras (Beuzart, op. cit., pp. 4, 459) that there were no such people as confessors—only apostles and martyrs could rank as saints. But it would not be difficult to account for this as a theological 'sport'.

[4] Beuzart, op. cit., pp. 14, 466. [5] Warner, op. cit., p. 35.

[6] Cf. Bussell, op. cit., pp. 705–11; E. Holmes, op. cit., pp. 44, 45.

the Turkish conquest,[1] and their vitality was still more remarkable farther east, since they reappeared in Russian Armenia in 1828.[2] But it has to be confessed that the beliefs and practices of Paulician and Catharist do not always tally; the former held an Adoptionist, the latter (as we have seen) a Docetic Christology, and the Bogomils appear to have discouraged fasting, whereas the Cathari (that is, the perfect) kept three fasts in the week.[3] Mr. Warner finds himself convinced that 'the imports from the East fail in quantity and quality to account for the Albigensian heresies as we find them in full vigour and variety'.[4] Perhaps we may be allowed to interpret him thus: there was, scattered over the West, a fairly strong anti-clerical movement to which scandals in the Church had given rise, and of which the Waldensian protest was one expression. The Bogomil heresy, propagated we know not how, took root where it found the soil prepared for it, and gave a new direction to this underworld theology.

It is doubtful whether Mr. Warner would admit so much. He puts us on our guard against the inference that 'doctrinal similarity with previous heresies involves organic succession'; often, to be sure, a rash inference, but what, here, is the alternative? 'While the Catholic Church had expelled those ancient heresies from her doors, their odour remained.'[5] Remained—among whom? Among the burgesses of medieval Europe? Was their reading of Church history, then, so wide? Mr. Warner regards it as undeniable that 'a Gnostic element, undefined and indefinable, underlay and mingled with the Catholicism of the working classes';[6] but how did it get there? Did they dream these Oriental nightmares for themselves? That Gerbert, the newly appointed Archbishop of Rheims, should have taken an anti-Manichean oath in 991 proves, no doubt, that the Church in France was apprehensive of such dangers; but may there not already have been infiltration from the East? It was less than a generation before Adhemar. Meanwhile, the suggestion that their enemies invented the label of 'Manichean' to excite odium[7] is unproved. According to Enervin, the Catharists themselves claimed

[1] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 52. But the Catharism of fifteenth-century Bosnia may not have been altogether native to the soil; we are told (Fleury's *Church History*, III. 159) that when Podebrad began the persecution of heretical sects in Bohemia in 1460, 400,000 Manicheans (an improbable figure) took refuge in Bosnia.

[2] Bussell, op. cit., p. 706. [3] Ibid., pp. 703, 712. [4] Op. cit., p. 17.

[5] Warner, op. cit., p. 88. [6] Ibid., p. 16. [7] Ibid., p. 9.

that 'their doctrine has lasted right up to our own time, only hidden, ever since the days of the martyrs; it has continued in Greece, and in other countries'.[1] According to the same author, they boasted of continually moving from town to town,[2] and Dr. Bussell has suggested that when the Paulicians described their ministers as *συνέκδημοι*, a wandering apostolate is probably indicated.[3]

The pre-history of the whole movement has been admirably written by Mr. Stephen Runciman in *The Medieval Manichee*.[4] He traces two streams that went to the making of it, the Paulician and the Messalian. The Paulicians were an offshoot of the Manichees, with a dualist tradition, and gave trouble to the Eastern emperors as late as the ninth century. The Messalians seem to have been equally Gnostic in origin, but their characteristic notions are more easily associated with a kind of revivalist Christianity; indeed, alone among the sects we shall come across in this book, they were actually labelled 'The Enthusiasts', and it is possible that they inherited Montanist traditions.[5] The two streams met in the Bogomils, formidable heretics who first appear in the tenth century, and held their own (reinforced by Bosnian nationalism) against East and West alike, till they were finally swallowed up by the advance of Islam. All through this account the characteristic tenets of the medieval heretics keep on reappearing, although it is difficult to decide how and when the division into grades (of Perfect and Hearers) came into the scheme of Bogomilism.

Mr. Runciman gives no new evidence to prove the infiltration of Manichean ideas from the Balkans into the West. But he accepts the fact of this infiltration; 'The close connection between the Cathars of France and the Bogomils of the Balkan Peninsula is a fact that no one need doubt. Both the Cathars themselves and their contemporary opponents bear full witness to it.'[6] In spite then of Mr. Warner's scepticism, we may be pardoned for attributing the rise of Catharism, not to random historical memories, but to the influence of living evangelists. It appears in Lombardy about the year 1030,[7] and no doubt it had been at work there before its effect showed; it was an Italian woman who was said to have introduced it into Aquitaine in 1022,[8] and from Italy came those 'Gundulfians' who

[1] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 33.
[2] Ibid., p. 58.
[3] Op. cit., p. 703.
[4] Cambridge Press, 1947.
[5] Op. cit., p. 21.
[6] Ibid., p. 163.
[7] Turberville, op. cit., p. 22.
[8] Ibid., p. 33.

stood their trial at Arras in 1025.[1] Perhaps, at the same time, it spread into Germany by way of Hungary.[2] Bulgaria had planted, did Bulgaria water it? We read of a Catharist council at Toulouse, attended by an 'Archbishop of Constantinople' and a 'bishop' from Lombardy;[3] the former is said to have instituted 'dioceses' at Carcassonne and elsewhere.[4] It was presumably this incident which gave rise to the story that the Catharists of the West owned allegiance to a Bulgarian Pope; a story preserved in Matthew Paris,[5] and worked up afterwards into a legend which imposed on the credulity of Gibbon.[6] It has been pointed out that the Slav countries themselves knew nothing of any such official.[7] But there was, no doubt, spasmodic intercourse; Rainier Sacchoni (a converted Catharist) claimed to have listened to one Nazarius, who had received his instruction in the East[8]—the same Nazarius, presumably, who brought from Bulgaria to Corcorezio a secret document, which scandalized the Inquisition of Carcassonne.[9] But it is difficult to believe that the Catharism of the West was permanently regulated by foreign overseers; it is too plainly 'the result of composite influences'.[10] In the rest of this chapter, we shall come across evidence that the Western Catharists derived some of their beliefs from the old Manichean tradition; evidence, too, that these were overlaid with other doctrines, some, perhaps, borrowed from the Waldenses.

(iv) *Heresy after 1300*

The two streams, Waldensian and Catharist, flow side by side for a century and a half, contaminating each other perhaps, but never wholly intermingled. Limborch assures us that in the records of the Toulouse Inquisition you can clearly distinguish their tenets, as late as 1320.[11] What happened then? Was the Inquisition successful in its object; did heresy die out, or at least take refuge in the outlying districts of Europe? Such an impression may easily be derived from the chroniclers of the period. The names Catharist, Paterene, and Manichean disappear; and though the word Waldenses is still used, it is often obviously misapplied, as in the Arras witch-trial of 1460. And most of our authors accept that conclusion. 'In the early part

[1] Beuzart, op. cit., p. 4.
[2] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 47.
[3] Ibid., p. 65.
[4] Warner, op. cit., p. 15.
[5] In. ann. 1223.
[6] See Appendix to this chapter.
[7] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 39.
[8] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 55.
[9] Warner, op. cit., p. 12.
[10] Bussell, op. cit., p. 706.
[11] Op. cit., p. 56.

of the 14th century', writes Mr. Holmes, 'Catharism was on its death-bed.'[1] Dr. Bussell notes that the Inquisition seems to have dealt successfully with the fresh outburst of heresy in Languedoc just before 1300, and its records thenceforward have few references to the Catharists; between 1308 and 1323 Bernard Guy only handed over to the secular power 40 out of 930 prisoners whom he examined. By 1350, Dr. Bussell concludes, the Catharist heresy was practically extinct, and he is content to believe that the Waldenses had already, more than a century earlier, migrated to Bohemia.[2] As far as the Low Countries are concerned, Beuzart points out that whereas heresy persisted almost uninterruptedly between 1025 and 1235, we meet a gap of nearly two centuries before it challenges our attention again.[3] He notes, further, that whereas traces of Manichean dualism still linger in the heresy records of 1235, our documents thenceforward have nothing to say about it.[4]

Against this, you have to set estimates like those quoted above, of 800,000 Waldenses in Europe (only a tenth of them having betaken themselves to Bohemia) as late as 1315;[5] of 400,000 Manicheans still left (in Bohemia, it is true) as late as 1460.[6] Were they really distinct from the heretics we hear of as existing in Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries? And if not, are we to suppose that the names of 'Waldenses' and 'Manicheans' were bestowed on them erroneously by our chroniclers? Or that they were really the spiritual descendants of the twelfth-century Vaudois and Albigenses, with their doctrines so far developed, so much distorted by new influences, that they now commonly passed by other names? In a word, did the Inquisition abolish the heretics, or only the heresy? Rainier Sacchoni, as early as 1254, warned his contemporaries that the Albigenses (to whom he had himself belonged) had picked up 'many new opinions' since 1230.[7] Whether there is really any filiation between the later sects we now have to consider, and those we have considered in the two foregoing sections, and if so, how real, is a question which perhaps will never be decided. But I hope to give reasons below for thinking that there was a certain continuity of tradition. Meanwhile, it will be as well to take a rapid review of

[1] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 50.
[2] Op. cit., pp. 738, 744, 747, 749.
[3] Op. cit., p. 35.
[4] Ibid., p. 37.
[5] J. Holmes, op. cit., p. 7.
[6] Fleury, *Church History*, III. 159.
[7] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 51.

European heresy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, under the headings of the countries principally affected.

A. *France*. The chief preoccupation of the fourteenth-century Inquisition in France seems to have been with the Fraticelli, who arose in Sicily soon after 1220. They hardly belong to our subject. Franciscans, who were determined to oppose any mitigation (as they conceived it) of the spirit bequeathed to their order, they incurred the charge of heresy by refusing to submit to papal rulings on the subject—a refusal none the less reprehensible, because the issues concerned appear, to the profane eye, no more than a family quarrel. In France, they are mostly called not Fraticelli, but Béguins. Their importance for the heresiology of the period is that the wilder spirits among them preached the doctrine known as Joachimism. The Abbot Joachim, a prophet mystic who founded an order meant to be an improvement on the Cistercians, and expounded the meaning of the Apocalypse to Richard Cœur-de-Lion, had died in the odour of sanctity in 1201. The evil done even by a *Beatus* may outlive him; and certain rash speculations of his gave credit to the notion that the Christian dispensation was now coming to an end, to be replaced by a new dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The circumstance that Joachim had prophesied the rise of a new great order in the Church naturally appealed to the Franciscan mind; and the schismatic Franciscans indulged in a riot of Apocalyptic fancies—it is needless to add, for what role the Papacy was cast.[1] We shall return to these speculations in the next chapter; for the time being it is enough to observe that, although the Béguins 'were exceedingly small in numbers, their influence restricted, and their extinction was brought about without very much difficulty',[2] their thought did something to colour the world-picture of the later medieval heretics.

B. *Italy*. In Italy, certainly, the Fraticelli had their repercussions. We need not, perhaps, attach very great importance to the mysterious Wilhelmina of Milan, whose followers, after her death in 1284, acclaimed her as an Incarnation of the Holy Spirit.[3] But the Apostolics, founded by Gerard Segarelli and organized after 1300 by Fra Dolcino, presented a more serious problem, and a crusade had to be started on a small scale before they were rounded up

[1] See the article 'Joachim' by M. Jordan in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*.
[2] Turberville, op. cit., p. 44.
[3] Ibid., p. 46.

among the hills of Lombardy. This sect combined a fantastically literal following of the gospels with a sensational reading of the Apocalypse. Dolcino seems to have been impressed by the fact that Segarelli appeared in the exact year—1260—which was marked down as the beginning of a new era in *The Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel*, a Béguin prophecy attributed to Abbot Joachim.[1] Thus, the Fraticellian inspiration of the Apostolics can hardly be doubted; meanwhile, Limborch tells us that 'they seem to have been the offspring of the Albigenses'.[2] *A la bonne heure!* Segarelli was almost certainly a lunatic; with a strange foreshadowing of Madame Guyon,[3] he dressed himself up in swaddling-clothes to honour our Lord's Infancy. How, asks Mr. Turberville, did such a man find followers? Limborch supplies the answer; the Apostolics will have risen from the embers of Catharism, the same yet not the same.

C. *Germany and Austria.* It was, according to some, Dolcino who inspired the heretics burnt in Austria about 1315.[4] Certain of their peculiarities lend colour to the idea; they had twelve apostles, two of whom went, each year, to Paradise, to receive from Henoch and Elias the power to bind and loose—a reference to the Apocalypse (ch. xi) which smacks strongly of Joachimism. At the same time, their rejection of marriage as authorized fornication points to Catharist leanings, and their habit of making their confessions to laymen is surely Waldensian. It may be added that these are the heretics who were supposed to number 80,000 in Austria and Bohemia,[5] described by the historian of the Moravian Church as 'Waldenses'.[6] Once more, it is impossible to avoid the suspicion that there has been a cross-fertilization of sects; that a nest of existing heretics, already not quite sure whether they are Vaudois or Catharists, have been caught by a new enthusiasm, and are now scarcely distinguishable from the Apostolics.

In Germany, the most interesting group which challenges our attention is the Brotherhood of the Free Spirit. One Ortlieb, of Strassburg, is named as their founder, but their precise origins are difficult to establish. They have been identified, on somewhat doubtful grounds, with the Luciferians, whom we shall meet in the

[1] Turberville, op. cit., p. 47.
[2] Op. cit., p. 97.
[3] See p. 235 below.
[4] Limborch, op. cit., p. 102.
[5] Art. 'Luciférians' in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, col. 1053.
[6] See above, p. 74.

next chapter. But it seems fairly clear that they are often described as 'Beghards'; apparently because they found converts (or, it may be, took refuge) among the fraternities of wandering mendicants who bore that name. (Confusingly, it was also applied to the Fraticelli.) A highly coloured account of them, based largely on Mosheim, is to be found in a curious book called *Spiritual Wives*, the work of a forgotten Victorian littérateur, Hepworth Dixon.[1]

> The Brethren of the free Spirit assumed that . . . man can become free in spirit from the bonds of the law; that he can rise by divine help into a region of grace, and that for one who has attained to this higher liberty of the spirit it is impossible to commit sin. . . . They refused to join in prayer, to attend the sacrifice of the Mass, to confess their sins and seek absolution from a priest; they repudiated all forms of external worship. . . . Dressed in a poor garb, they wandered from town to town begging their bread. . . . For nigh two hundred years Popes, Cardinals, Electors made war on them. . . . The more they were persecuted, the more they spread. The very convents of Germany could not be protected from their presence. In Suabia, many of the monks and nuns left their religious houses for the world.

It is disconcerting, after this paean, to read Mr. Turberville's account of the same movement. While admitting that they 'appear to have existed right up to the days of Lutheranism', he assures us that they were never numerous, and are chiefly important for their influence on theological thought, notably that of Eckhart.[2] Is it not possible that we are once more in the presence of a confusion? That Mr. Turberville confines himself to what is known about the group which actually claimed the title, 'Brethren of the Free Spirit', while Mosheim and Hepworth Dixon give them credit for all the exploits of numerous heretics who were classed together by their contemporaries as 'Beghards'? The movement, in any case, was not confined to Germany. Soon after 1300 they found their way into France,[3] and it need hardly be added that their influence was traced in Bohemia.[4]

D. *Flanders.* The long discontinuation, not necessarily of heretical views, but of prosecution for heretical views, comes to an end in 1411, and men and women are sent to the stake at intervals between that year and the year 1465. The name by which these people are stigmatized is that of 'Turlupins', which Beuzart takes to have been

[1] London, 1868, pp. 147–151. See Mosheim, xii, ch. 5, sections ix and following.
[2] Op. cit., p. 49. [3] Bussell, op. cit., p. 744. [4] Ibid., p. 749.

a contemptuous equivalent of 'Vaudois'.[1] But the Turlupins, according to our authors, were a 'savage and brutal sect' extirpated thirty years before in Savoy, where they had taken refuge after being expelled from France;[2] they were credited with gross indecencies.[3] It is rather the name of 'Waldenses' which seems inappropriate. The fifteenth-century heretics in Flanders were called Turlupins, because they were suspected of Satanism; the burnings of 1460 and 1465 may almost be said to represent the transition from heresy-hunting to witch-hunting—witch-hunting that throve obstinately, in Protestant as well as in Catholic countries, for nearly two centuries after the Reformation. Dr. Bussell is actually prepared to regard the thing as a survival from old, pre-Christian cults.[4] But there seems to be a simpler explanation. Beuzart, as usual, discredits every allegation against the morality of the Flanders heretics. They were Vaudois, or perhaps Lollards.[5] But is it not significant that the persons arrested at Douay in 1420 were credited with 'the heresy of Prague'?[6] It was in 1421 that Zizka, the Hussite general, found it necessary to liquidate his over-ardent followers, the Adamites. And the Turlupins were accused, exactly as the Adamites were accused, of going naked and of advocating complete promiscuity. It is doubtful whether the Adamites were native to Bohemia, any more than the Vaudois were, or the Brethren of the Free Spirit; they are said to have taken their origin in Picardy. Whatever may have been the truth, there was nothing inherently improbable in the suggestion that their teaching had spread to Flanders.

E. *England and Scotland.* Modern criticism has reacted against the suggestion that there were Lollards before Wycliffe. It does not seem so certain that Wycliffe's own ideas sprang, ready armed, from his brain. Apart from his Eucharistic doctrine, which does not concern us here, the most influential of his views was that all validity of status, whether ecclesiastical or temporal, depended on being in a state of grace. A priest in mortal sin could not validly consecrate the Holy Eucharist. The Waldenses had been preaching this on the Continent for a hundred years before Wycliffe taught; were we really so self-contained that no echo of that preaching had ever reached our shores? Be that as it may, it is clear that the heterodoxy of the Lollards developed after Wycliffe's death, and it seems prob-

[1] Op. cit., p. 63. [2] Limborch, op. cit., p. 113. [3] Fleury, op. cit., 97. 27.
[4] Op. cit., p. 475 note. [5] Op. cit., p. 48. [6] Ibid., p. 47.

able that this development was due to continental influences. We shall have to consider this point further in the chapters which follow; for the present, it is enough to note that prosecutions for heresy went on, in England and Scotland, up to the early years of the sixteenth century.

F. *Bohemia.* Bohemia, from the early years of the fifteenth century, was in a different position from the rest of Europe. A strong national party, resentful of foreign, that is, of German influence, demanded the restoration of the chalice to the laity. This quarrel in no sense concerns us. The issue really was, whether the Catholics of Bohemia should be regarded as an offshoot of German religious culture, or should be allowed to remember that Christianity had been brought to them from the (still Catholic) East. Huss, although he was strongly influenced by Wycliffe's doctrine of the 'dominion of grace', has more claim to be regarded as a national than as a Protestant hero; and in the Utraquist controversy which followed his death the Calixtines, officially the successors of his protest, had no quarrel with the Church beyond what their name implied. But the left wing of the party, the Taborites, were of a different spirit; and probably we shall not be far out if we see in them the deposit of more than two centuries of European heresy. The Waldenses are said to have made their way there even in the lifetime of their founder,[1] and by 1315 the Bishop of Prague is being reprimanded for harbouring in his diocese 'a great quantity of heretics', whose views are defined in terms which show that Catharists, as well as Waldenses, were of their number.[2] Later you hear of Luciferians, Brethren of the Free Spirit, Adamites taking refuge in a country so favoured.[3] Out of this artificially fertilized soil one native growth sprang, which we shall find ourselves studying in a much later chapter—the Unity of the Brethren. But its hardiest admirers do not claim that its foundation, in 1457, represents an original religious experiment. Its principles were plainly a compost of heterogeneous notions such as only Bohemia, Galilee of the churches, could produce.

[1] J. Holmes, op. cit., p. 6.
[2] *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, s.v. 'Luciférіens'.
[3] Bussell, op. cit., p. 749; *Catholic Dictionary*, s.v. 'Adamites'.

NOTE ON CHAPTER V

On the Descent of the Albigenses from the Paulicians

GIBBON (ch. liv) assures us that 'under the Byzantine standard, the Paulicians were often transported to the Greek provinces of Italy and Sicily; in peace and war they freely conversed with strangers and natives, and their opinions were silently propagated in Rome, Milan, and the kingdoms beyond the Alps'. He also tells us that 'in the beginning of the thirteenth century, their pope or primate (a manifest corruption) resided on the confines of Bulgaria, Croatia, and Dalmatia, and governed, by his vicars, the filial congregations of Italy and France'. He quotes Matthew Paris, *Hist. Major*, p. 267; but his facts and inferences so far as the Albigenses are concerned are derived, as usual, from Mosheim. He does not quote Mosheim's qualifying sentiment, 'The opinions for which they (the Albigenses) were punished differ widely from the Manichean system. As far as we can see into the case, these pretended Manicheans of Orleans were mystics, who looked with contempt on all external worship.' (Saecl. xi, part 2, ch. 5, iii.)

The medieval account of this interconnexion is, however, far from lucid. Ralph of Coggeshall (*Chronicum Anglorum*, p. 195 in Rolls Series) mentions a heresiarch who arose in Bulgaria-Dalmatia: 'ad hunc confluebant Albigenses haeretici, quasi ad Papam suum, ut ad eorum consulta respondeat, eius inhiantes doctrinis; qui misit ad eos quendam suae perversitatis sectatorem, nomine Bartholomaeum'; Bartholomew is said to have consecrated bishops. This document clearly regards the Albigenses as an independent movement which sought to strengthen itself by getting support from the old Paulicians of Bulgaria; not as a sect sprung from the Paulicians.

Matthew Paris, under the date 1223, appears to put a different colour on the matter. 'Circa istos dies haeretici Albigenses constituerunt sibi antipapam in finibus Bugarorum, Croatiae, et Dalmatiae, nomine Bartholomaeum. Cuius partibus (? artibus) error illorum adeo invaluit, ut etiam episcopos et alios multos regionum illarum ad suam allexerit pravitatem.' He adds that Conrad, the papal legate in 'those parts' (presumably France), wrote to the Archbishop of Rouen about them; and concludes the episode by telling us that 'hunc tandem tumultum mors praedicti antipapae celeriter terminavit'. Reading this passage in its natural sense, we should suppose that, so far from the Albigenses being derived from the Paulicians, it was the other way about; the Albigenses set up an antipope of their own on the Adriatic seaboard, who tried to pervert the Catholics there, until death put an end to his activities.

Conrad's letter is preserved in Martène (*Thesaur. Nov. Anecd.*, i, col. 901).

The Man of Sin, he writes 'jam habet perfidiae suae praeaemulam (? praeambulum) haeresiarcham, quem haeretici Albigenses Papam suum appellant, habitantem . . . juxta Hungariam nationem. Ad eum confluunt haeretici Albigenses, ut ad eorum consulta respondeat. Etenim de Carcasona oriundus, vices illius antipapae gerens, Bartholomaeus haereticorum episcopus . . . in partes transtulit Tolosanas. Iste Bartholomaeus . . . se . . . intitulat in hunc modum, *Bartholomaeus, servus servorum sanctae fidei, tali salutem.* Ipse etiam inter alias enormitates creat episcopos.' It will be seen that Ralph of Coggeshall is right, according to the letter, in making Bartholomew an emissary of the anti-Pope, not the anti-Pope himself (as in Matthew Paris). Yet Bartholomew styles himself in an evidently Papal way. A further point emerges—Bartholomew is not a Paulician, sent to look after the Albigenses, but a native of Carcassonne, and therefore presumably an Albigensian, who has gone to Bulgaria for his consecration. It will be observed that Conrad says nothing about the Albigenses being an offshoot of the Paulicians; he only tells us that they flock to him and ask for his advice.

While the whole episode remains obscure, it looks as if the Albigenses may have been, in the first instance, a sect, native to France, perhaps converts of Peter de Bruys; that, possibly because they were taunted with having neither authority for their acts, nor validity of ordination, they tried to make good their deficiencies by appealing to the leader of the surviving Paulicians, in the Adriatic countries. (Very much as the Old Catholics in Germany went for their ordinations to the Jansenist bishops of Holland.) Their habit of consulting him over difficult points of doctrine will then be the cause of the strong tinge of Manicheism to be found in the Albigensian system—the Gnostic view they took, for example, about our Lord's birth. In a word, the Albigenses borrowed from the Paulicians, and buttressed themselves against their undoubted antiquity; but that they sprang from them in the first instance our evidence does not allow us to conclude.

Those who are interested in the value of Gibbon as an historian are invited to re-read the passages quoted at the beginning of this note.

VI

THE PATTERN OF MEDIEVAL HERESY

(i) *Dualism and Docetism*

We have been trying to restore some kind of three-dimensional reality to a world of vocables. Such, in outline, were the heretics; it is time we tried to form a more exact picture of their heresy. Let it be confessed at once that the cruder Manichean elements of belief and cultus tend to disappear within 200 years of their appearance. At the very beginning of the twelfth century, Radulfus Ardens taxes the heretics of Agen with teaching that God is the Creator only of the invisible world, and that the devil is the author of things visible; he adds, that they worship the devil for this reason, as controlling their bodies. They rejected the whole of the Old Testament, like Marcion long long before them, and some parts of the New.[1] The Patriarchs could elicit no devotion from them, not even St. John the Baptist.[2] The Mosaic law was throughout an invention of the devil.[3] Our material bodies were only 'coats of skin' (an allusion to Gen. iii. 21); Resurrection meant sloughing them off altogether.[4] Only those souls would be ultimately lost which had been created (it is difficult to see how) by the Evil Spirit.[5] All this seems to have been the official teaching of the Albigensian leaders; and it was not confined to the south of France; the Flanders heretics burnt in 1183 ascribed the creation of the world to a malicious influence called Luciabel.[6] But it does not follow that the rank and file of the party were interested in these Gnostic speculations; it appears that aspirants to membership were not catechized on the subject of Dualism.[7] Alanus' elaborate refutations of the Manichean doctrine strike the reader, I think, as a trifle academic, when you consider the kind of people who commonly embraced it.

Such views were evidently current as late as the fourteenth century; Stephana de Proavdo maintained before the Toulouse Inquisi-

[1] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 42. [2] Alanus, op. cit. xv, xxxvii. [3] Ibid. xxxv.
[4] Bussell, op. cit., p. 711. [5] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 16.
[6] Beuzart, op. cit., p. 466. [7] Warner, op. cit., p. 88.

tion in 1307 that the creation of visible things came from the devil, 'whom thou assertest to be the prince of this world'.[1] And if, as time goes on, they cease to appear on the surface, it does not follow that they were without effect on the mentality of the medieval heretics generally. I am not referring to the accusation of devil-worship, which we shall have to consider later on. I mean rather that the forced antithesis between spirit and matter upon which Manicheism reposes may have given rise to some of those heretical traits which we meet with long after the fires of Toulouse have been extinguished. 'The Brethren of the Free Spirit'—it is an ominous name. Your traditional enthusiast over-emphasizes the distinction between 'the spirit' and 'the flesh'; but the flesh is not matter, it is human nature, whether material or immaterial, still unredeemed. Human wisdom, for example, belongs to 'the flesh' quite as much as our bodily functions do. But this Oriental antithesis between spirit as entirely good and matter as entirely evil is something quite different; it brings with it grave dangers, speculative and moral; it leads away from Christianity to Pantheism. And it was precisely Pantheism that gave the Beghard movement its character.

A Dualistic account of the Creation involves, as its inevitable corollary, a Docetic account of the Incarnation; if matter is intrinsically evil, God can never have clothed himself in it; the human body of Jesus Christ was only a phantom. You may express this error in terms of Bethlehem or of Calvary, as you will; but the commonest way of stating it, and one which seems to have imprinted itself deeply on the heretical mind, was that 'Christ did not take true flesh of the Virgin Mary'. This was definitely the Paulician belief.[2] It was certainly held at Toulouse; was it universal among the Catharists? Curiously, Alanus gives it as the belief of *quidam haeretici*, though it is true that elsewhere he alludes to it without any such limitation.[3] Rainier Sacchoni expressly classes it as one of the beliefs distinctive of the Toulouse group.[4] But it is doubtful whether the distinction can be maintained. Eymeric's *Directorium Inquisitorum* has no suggestion of it;[5] the Orleans heretics in the early eleventh century,[6] and the Soissons heretics in the twelfth century,[7] are as good Docetists as

[1] Limborch, op. cit., p. 46.
[2] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 14.
[3] Op. cit. xix, xxxii.
[4] Warner, op. cit., p. 55.
[5] Ibid., p. 32.
[6] See their process in Beuzart, op. cit., p. 457.
[7] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 41.

their brethren of the south. The fact is, no doubt, that these admissions did not come out except where leading questions were put. And this, if it be true, is important, because it means that the disappearance of a given doctrine or practice from the heretical programme does not prove that it had, in course of time, been abandoned. It may only mean that the Inquisitors, in course of time, had grown interested in other questions, and concentrated on those. A fourteenth-century Inquisitor would be more likely to examine a suspect about his views (say) on apostolic poverty, which the Béguin movement had put 'in the news', than on snatches of Paulician theology which were by now *vieux jeu*.

I have laboured this point, because we shall see that the denial of our Lord's true birth was a common tenet of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists, and we shall find Cranmer handing a woman over to the flames for professing it, as if he had been Conrad of Marburg.[1] It seems to me more likely that this doctrine went underground, without ever being abandoned, for a couple of centuries, and reappeared after the Reformation, than that the Anabaptists should have invented it, *in vacuo*, for themselves. I suspect that another Docetic catchword has an even longer history of occultation. Peter of Vaucernai, in reporting to Innocent III on the tenets of the Albigenses, gives it as their view that there were two Christs, one born at Bethlehem and crucified at Jerusalem, and another who never took human flesh.[2] Bossuet observes that this is in line with Paulician language about the 'invisible Jerusalem'.[3] I do not know that this precise formula recurs in the later Middle Ages, or even among the doctrines of the Anabaptists. But we shall find that the Seekers of the seventeenth century, with their strong Anabaptist tinge, refuse to 'put their faith in a Christ who died at Jerusalem', and that the early Quakers echo the sentiment.[4]

(ii) *The Manichean Discipline*

As early as 1144 we find complaints made at Liége of certain heretics, French by inspiration, who 'have their *auditores*, still uninitiated, have their *credentes*, already deluded, have their own *Christiani*'.[5] Evidently the *Christiani* are the same people who are called 'the Perfect' in Rainier Sacchoni's account; he also gives three

[1] See below, p. 126.
[2] Warner, op. cit., p. 51.
[3] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 51.
[4] See below, p. 174.
[5] Beuzart, op. cit., p. 461.

grades, to the surprise of Bossuet, who points out that the Manicheans of St. Augustine's time had no third order, only the Hearers and the Elect.[1] The same appears to be true of the Paulicians.[2] But, wherever they got the notion, it is evident that the Catharists of the West were at one time divided into a threefold hierarchy; nor is it safe to assume, as Mr. Holmes does,[3] that this was only a transitory phase. Once more, the cloven hoof of Manicheism is destined to appear in unlikely soil. The Bohemian brethren, who claimed 1457 as their date of origin, divided their congregations into three classes of 'Beginners', 'More advanced', and 'Perfect'. It is Moehler's opinion[4] that they picked up this threefold division from the Waldenses; but it does not appear anywhere that the Waldenses proper were so organized. After two centuries of silence, the old grading is still intact.

For practical purposes, however, we are only concerned with the very marked distinction, within the Manichean body, between the Perfect and the Believers. The Perfect, who seem to have included the officials of the sect,[5] were at no time a numerous body; in the middle of the thirteenth century there were said to be only about 4,000 of them in the whole of Europe.[6] That they were the picked troops of the movement is easily understandable; not only because they acquired their position by receiving the unrepeatable sacrament of the *Consolamentum* (to be described below), but because they alone undertook the full rigours of the Manichean life.[7] They alone bore the name of Cathari; the rank and file should only be described as Catharists.[8] They were forbidden to eat, not meat only, but eggs and all else that owed its origin to generation; secular work was forbidden them; they might not touch a woman.[9] It may be conjectured that they were the sole repositories of the tradition; 'the *credentes*', writes Dr. Bussell,[10] 'were probably ignorant of the Gnostic dualism which underlay Catharist theology'.

Nor were the believers grudging in the respect they accorded to them. Among the Paulicians, it seems, the Perfect were called 'Christs',[11] and evidently the Inquisitors were anxious to suggest that

[1] Op. cit. xi. 55. [2] Bussell, op. cit., p. 712. [3] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 27.
[4] *Symbolism*, by J. A. Moehler, tr. Robertson (London, 1906), p. 424.
[5] Warner, op. cit., p. 74. [6] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 27.
[7] Turberville, op. cit., p. 30. [8] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 10 note.
[9] e.g. Eymerick, quoted in Warner, op. cit., pp. 30–2.
[10] Op. cit., p. 708. [11] Ibid., p. 704.

the Catharists of the West imitated their attitude. 'Thou hast confessed before the said Inquisitor that thou hast adored the said James after an heretical manner'.[1] Are we to suspect, here, the same theological confusion which, 350 years later, caused Martha Simmonds to cry Hosanna before James Nayler, as he rode into Bristol? More probably the genuflexion used (*melioramentum*) was a general testimony to the sacred character of the Perfecti; it seems they used it to one another.[2]

The *consolamentum*, a rite uninteresting in itself, to judge by the records of it which have come down to us, was a feature of capital importance in the system. You may say that it took the form of a confirmation, was credited with the effects of baptism, and replaced extreme unction. We are told that some Christians in early times (Constantine is supposed to be of their number) delayed to ask for baptism till they were on their death-beds, precisely in order to avoid the major obligations of their religion; one hopes they were few. But it seems that among the Catharists it was common form to delay the *consolamentum* till your last moments; only a handful—the Perfect—made the exacting promises about not killing, not marrying, perpetual abstinence, and fasting three times in the week at an earlier stage in their conversion. The rite could not be repeated, and the sinlessness it conveyed was your only passport to heaven. Stephana de Proavdo is accused of having denied the value of extreme unction, 'preferring to it the execrable imposition of hands, which they call spiritual baptism, or the *consolamentum*, or reception, and good end'.[3] Alanus makes it clear that any sin of whatever magnitude (*omne peccatum quantumcumque fuerit*) was supposed to obtain remission through this rite;[4] on the other hand, after this 'baptism' no place is left for repentance—if anyone sinned after he had been 'consoled', he was ejected from the Catharist communion.[5]

Mr. Turberville has called Catharism 'the apotheosis of the deathbed repentance.'[6] So definitely was this the theory of the *consolamentum*, that it might be refused on the ground that the patient was not ill enough, exactly like extreme unction under present Catholic discipline. 'It is reported of Petrus Sancii, that being called to hereticate (this was the Catholic word in use) a certain sick woman, she was not then hereticated, because he did not think it proper on

[1] Process of Stephana de Proavdo, in Limborch, op. cit., p. 46. [2] Ibid., p. 55.
[3] Ibid., p. 46. [4] Op. cit. xlv. [5] Ibid. xlvii. [6] Op. cit., p. 30.

account of her not being weak enough. And afterwards, though the distemper grew more violent, Petrus Sancii did not hereticate her, because she recovered.'[1] Nor was this all; to make the effect of the *consolamentum* certain, it was not uncommon for the Catharists to commit suicide by fasting, a ceremony they described as the *endura*.[2] Mr. Warner points to the existence of the practice as early as 1028, when a small community near Turin 'taught that death by illness or senile decay only shewed Satan was still master of the situation, and could send the soul into another body'. He adds: 'Here probably we have the clue to the reasons for encouraging the practice of the Endura.'[3] But surely he is wrong; surely that particular nest of Cathari, or the author who chronicled their doings, had confused the issues? A violent death had no virtue of its own, to rescue a soul from transmigration and seal it for heaven; it was only useful because it enabled you to die fresh from the influence of the *consolamentum*. 'There should be neither meat nor drink given her, lest she should lose the good she had received'; that was the point.[4]

Direct suicide was of course impossible, because (being now perfect) you were forbidden to take life of any kind. But fasting did not count; nor (for your enthusiast can be the worst of legalists) did swallowing glass, or opening your veins in a bath.[5] The sturdy Protestantism of Limborch is embarrassed for once by the eccentricities of his protégés. 'And as to their recommending to those they received into their Communion, what they called the Endura, i.e. fasting themselves to death, that was certainly an error in practice, so that we need not be ashamed to own that they sometimes erred in matters of faith. 'Tis rather to be wondered at, that in so barbarous an age they should throw off so many errors, than that they should retain some.'[6] 'Retain' is good.

There is some evidence that the Catharists, for all their (theoretical) quarrel with material things, had a kind of sacramental system of their own; had even a kind of Communion service, though it was only celebrated on Easter Day. But it is certain that they condemned all the sacraments of the Catholic Church as wholly wanting in efficacy.[7] The Waldenses, left to themselves, tended to discourage the sacramentals as unnecessary; the seven Sacraments, though with

[1] Limborch, op. cit., p. 54. [2] Turberville, op. cit., p. 26. [3] Op. cit., p. 85.
[4] Limborch, op. cit., p. 54. Cf. E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 29.
[5] Limborch, op. cit., p. 54. [6] Op. cit., p. 44. [7] See e.g. Warner, op. cit., p. 31.

their own theories about the use of them, they retained.[1] But the Catharists consistently rejected them; and although they may have appealed to Scripture in support of their views—rather rashly, as Alanus shows[2]—their real objection will have been something other. In the first place, the visible creation came from an evil Power; how, then, could matter be the vehicle of grace? In the second place, the sacramental system treats the life of grace as a slow growth, with its ups and downs; whereas for the Catharist, as we have seen, it was something bestowed once for all, and commonly on your death-bed. It is to be observed that this anti-sacramental attitude lasts on in the history of medieval heresy, when *consolamentum* and Endura have long ceased to be heard of. John Swallow, a Norfolk farmer, mentions a rejection of all sacraments as one of his errors (he abjured in 1439);[3] he may have been a Lollard, but if so he was a Lollard with a difference. You get it among the 'Luciferians' condemned in Austria in 1315;[4] you get it among the heretical Flagellants a whole century later;[5] and we have seen that the Brethren of the Free Spirit rejected the whole idea of external worship.[6]

(iii) *The Denial of Infant Baptism*

Mr. Warner tells us, on the authority of Rainier Sacchoni, that the Waldenses rejected infant baptism.[7] He also tells us, on the authority of Peter de Vaucernai, that converts to the Waldensian creed 'renounced their Roman baptism'.[8] It is fairly clear that he is wrong on both heads. In the latter case, indeed, he has refuted himself by detailing the initiation in question. The candidate renounces his chrism, renounces his baptismal veil, and declares his belief that water works salvation for him. He is then reconciled by imposition of hands. Is it not perfectly clear that it was the non-essential ceremonies of baptism the Waldenses objected to, and treated the baptism itself as valid? As for Rainier Sacchoni, Bossuet points out that his phrase is 'the ablution given to infants does not profit them'; and he conjectures, with great plausibility, that Rainier is referring to the wine-cup which was often given after baptism at that period, just as it is given to this day after ordination.[9] Mr. Warner himself

[1] See Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 104–12. [2] Op. cit. lxvi–lxviii.
[3] *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, s.v. 'Lollard', col. 920.
[4] Op. cit., s.v. 'Luciférien', col. 1053. [5] Turberville, op. cit., p. 53.
[6] See above, p. 87. [7] Op. cit., p. 53. [8] Ibid., p. 67. [9] Op. cit. xi. 109.

has chronicled elsewhere a *dubium* raised among the Waldenses as to whether baptism was or was not necessary to salvation;[1] surely the inference is that those who maintained the affirmative opinion must have urged infant baptism, while there is no sort of evidence that their opponents reprobated it.

On the other hand, it may reasonably be asked how the Catharists can have introduced into Europe a false view about the value of *infant* baptism, since they rejected baptism itself and the sacramental theory altogether. Yet it seems clear that infant baptism became the subject of special reprobation among the heretics who derived their inspiration, no doubt in varying degrees, from the East. Alanus himself now seems to be defending infant baptism against the Albigenses,[2] now baptism itself.[3] And, in the same way, the records we have of the errors taught in different local centres allude now to infant baptism, now to baptism as such. Thus, it is only infant baptism, apparently, that is denied by the Petrobrussians at the beginning of the twelfth century,[4] by the 'Apostolic Brethren' at Châlons and elsewhere in 1145,[5] and by the heretics who stood their trial at Arras in 1182.[6] The 'Boni Homines' who were examined at Lombez in 1176 refused to give any answer on the subject of infant baptism[7]—but this may simply have been due to the form in which the question was put to them. It is, of course, conceivable that none of these groups, except the last-named, were connected with the Catharists at all. That elusive figure, Peter de Bruys,[8] is chiefly Catharist in his objection to the Cross as a symbol, and if he had lived a hundred years later we might have suspected that he was under Waldensian influence. But the testimony of Alanus remains, and it is further worth noticing that the Paulicians themselves, who rejected all outward rites, were credited with a special aversion to the baptism of children.[9]

Perhaps our fragmentary information may best be put together thus. While all sacraments are repulsive to the Catharist, because of his Dualist views on matter, infant baptism is, from his point of view, the head and front of the Catholic offence. In any other sacrament the *opus operantis*, the conscious assent of the recipient, may mitigate

[1] Op. cit., p. 62. [2] Op. cit. xxxix. [3] Ibid. xliii.
[4] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 65. [5] Turberville, op. cit., p. 15.
[6] Beuzart, op. cit., p. 466. [7] Warner, op. cit., p. 43.
[8] See Turberville, op. cit., p. 17. [9] Bussell, op. cit., p. 708.

the charge of materialism; here there is no pleading it. Moreover, the notion of heaven won in the cradle was particularly at variance with the Catharist notion of heaven won on the deathbed. Consequently, Catharist preaching would hold up infant baptism to especial scorn, as the *reductio ad absurdum* of sacramentalism. Catchwords devised at its expense would linger on, even in heretical milieux which had only a bowing acquaintance with the full principles of Catharism. Here was an agitation which was ready to break loose, once the Catholic allegiance of Germany was shaken by the Reformation.

(iv) *The Morals of the Heretics*

Alanus seems to be the only author who criticizes the morals of the Waldenses; they gave themselves up, he says, to gluttony and incontinence at their gatherings, according to the testimony of those who had been converted from the sect.[1] There is little doubt Mr. Turberville is right in suggesting that such stories are due to confusion between Waldenses and Catharists.[2] The Inquisitors themselves can be quoted in this sense, and Bossuet does not quarrel with them.[3] It appears, indeed, that they allowed men and women preachers to travel about in company, not without scandal.[4] History repeats itself; it was in the home country of the Vaudois—southern France, Switzerland, northern Italy—that Madame Guyon caused scandal by travelling about with her director, Père Lacombe. It is fair to put the best construction on either story.

The Catharists have a different record. Adhemar, the first author (as we have seen) to mention the 'Manicheans' as such, introduces them to us as people who feign chastity as a cloak for their wantonness,[5] and that is the character they bear, steadily, in the eyes of their opponents all through the history. The same character is attached to the later sects, whose debt to the Albigensian teaching remains doubtful, the followers of Dolcino, for example,[6] the Turlupins,[7] the Brethren of the Free Spirit.[8] It is easy to say, as Mr. Warner does, that the same charges were made against the early Christians.[9] But this is to argue that an accusation must be untrue because it would

[1] Excursus on the Waldenses, i (in op. cit.).
[2] Op. cit., p. 22.
[3] Op. cit. xi. 143.
[4] Warner, op. cit., p. 48.
[5] Ibid., p. 33.
[6] Limborch, op. cit., p. 98.
[7] Fleury, op. cit., 97. 27.
[8] Turberville, op. cit., p. 49.
[9] Op. cit., p. 28.

have been made whether it was true or not. Mr. Turberville seems better inspired when he tells us that it would be equally uncritical to accept all the stories told against the Catharists, or to reject them altogether.[1] We have seen that such charges were not brought against the Waldenses; is not some explanation demanded of the fact that they are spared, and the Catharists singled out for attack?

It must be admitted that certain chroniclers, certain Inquisitors have strained our credulity by attributing to these heretics all the familiar indecencies and horrors of the witches' sabbat. M. Amann, writing under the word 'Luciférians' in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, has carefully traced the progress of this story. Adhemar and Radulfus Ardens, both in the tenth century, accuse the 'Manichean' heretics of worshipping the devil. Ralph of Coggeshall, under the year 1200, repeats this, with vague allusions to *nefanda sacrificia* and *sacrilegae turpitudines*. But it seems to have been Conrad of Marburg, that indefatigable inquisitor of the early thirteenth century, who branded all the heretics he encountered with the title of 'Luciferians', and endeavoured to extract admissions of Satanism from them. It is to his influence that we owe a rescript of Gregory IX in 1233, which evidently supposes the Rhine country to be a nest of witchcraft, and repeats all the familiar allegations about the sabbat, though without stating that the Catharists are the heretics envisaged. In the fourteenth century the same reports come to hand from Austria and from Bohemia. M. Amann's conclusion is that the Luciferians were never a real sect; that the Manichean dualism of the Catharists gave rise to fantastic speculations, among certain of their followers, about the position of Lucifer as lord of the visible creation; and that popular report credited them, in consequence, with all the perverted depravities of the witches' coven. This seems a reasonable account of the matter; the more so, because it was easy to confuse the Catharists with the Stedingers, an obscure German-Flemish sect of the period whose practices, as they are described by the chroniclers, were those of full-blooded Satanism.[2] It is worth noticing that these particular suspicions do not enter into the picture of medieval heresy during the brief period when it emerges into the daylight, and almost becomes the religion of Languedoc.

But, although we may acquit the Manicheans of devil-worship,

[1] Turberville, op. cit., p. 31.

[2] Fleury, op. cit. 80. 24; cf. Beuzart, op. cit., p. 29.

it does not follow that their system was free from the perils of antinomianism. The authors who defend them will usually be found concentrating their attention on the habits of the Cathari proper, the *Perfecti*; but these, as we have seen, formed only a tiny minority of the sect. Mr. Turberville points out, with considerable force, that the system of death-bed repentance must have been, for the *credentes*, an incentive to careless living; 'the distinction between Perfected and Believers was an antinomian arrangement'.[1] And Holmes, although in general he dismisses the allegations made against them as hostile *canards*, has to admit that the Albigeois derived considerable comfort from a theology which left no place for hell.[2] The maxim apparently instilled into the Believers that 'marriage was worse than fornication' is two-edged, and the names of their mistresses are freely cited during the heyday of the movement in southern France.[3] How much they deserved the charges of sex-perversion which have left their mark on the vocabulary of Europe must remain in the region of conjecture. But the charge that the Catharist teachers maintained their protest against marriage at the cost of encouraging self-indulgence among their followers, clearly stated by Eymeric,[4] and hinted at by Alanus,[5] is not sufficiently met by saying that no such view appears as part of their teaching in the official records of the Inquisition.[6] Such maxims may be taught in private without being enshrined in the formularies of a religious movement.

The Cathari themselves, the Perfect Ones, are in a different category. Their defenders usually dismiss the charges against them on one of two grounds—that a libertine does not undergo martyrdom for his beliefs, or that men who undertake to lead an ascetic life as rigorous as that of the Cathari would not be likely to indulge their baser passions, at the cost of gross inconsistency. But the former plea does less than justice to the cross-grainedness of human nature, and the latter is based on something of a misconception. The life of the *Perfecti* seems to have been regulated, not so much by any exalted moral principle as by a series of taboos, inspired by the conviction that all matter is evil. Now, the doctrine that all matter is evil may lead to a severe repression of carnal instincts, or it may lead to a dangerous contempt of those instincts as belonging to matter, and

[1] Op. cit., p. 31. [2] Op. cit., p. 62.
[3] Guiraud, *The Medieval Inquisition* (tr. Messenger, London, 1929), p. 26.
[4] Turberville, op. cit., p. 32 note. [5] Op. cit. lxiii. [6] Limborch, op. cit., p. 51.

therefore possessing only a material significance. Mr. Warner, who is very much a defender of the heretics, tells us that among the Perfect 'while strict celibacy was aimed at, facts modified the ideal'.[1] I do not know what we are expected to make of this curious admission. But it is perhaps not unreasonable to suspect that the Cathari may have come to think of themselves as superior to all temptations of the flesh, and neglected, with unfortunate results, the conventions by which less hardy souls fortify their modesty. We are assured that men and women shared the same lodgings by day and by night;[2] and, if the imputation was ill-founded, it would be difficult to see the force of St. Bernard's challenge, 'If you would not scandalize the Church, send this woman away; if you refuse, the facts which are plain to view will make us suspect what is not plain to view.'[3] In a word, the *Perfecti* were anticipating, by nearly seven centuries, the behaviour of the Perfectionists.

Certainly it can be inferred, from stray indications, that something like a Perfectionist doctrine corrupted, if only by degrees, the heresy of the Middle Ages. Amalric of Bena, towards the end of the twelfth century, was teaching that no one filled with the Holy Ghost was capable of committing sin; and his doctrine is said to have been influential with the Beghards.[4] According to the records of the Toulouse Inquisition, the French Béguins held that 'To kiss women and embrace them, provided they did not consummate the carnal sin, was greatly meritorious, and an argument of fortitude and abstinence, and of a strong and acceptable love of God, and the truest proof that each party was resolutely virtuous'; a notion which gave rise to the same startling indecencies for which clergymen were tarred and feathered at Brimfield in 1834.[5] The same is reported of the Josephists, an obscure sect probably to be identified as Catharist; these 'contrahunt matrimonium spirituale et praeter coitum omnes delectationes exercent'.[6] As for the Brethren of the Free Spirit, Hepworth Dixon assures us[7] that they 'invented the seraphic kiss, the kiss of love, of innocence, of peace. They did not marry . . . they had entered on a new being. A seraphic kiss conveys no taint. Their yearning towards each other brought no shame. In the overflowing fullness of their joy, the sting of human passions found no place; for

[1] Op. cit., p. 74. [2] Fleury, op. cit. 69. 26. [3] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 69.
[4] Turberville, op. cit., p. 49. [5] Limborch, op. cit., p. 108 note.
[6] *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, s.v. [7] Op. cit., p. 150.

they lived on earth as the angels live in heaven.' One may pardon St. Bernard for feeling that it was all a little too good to be true. 'Ne croyez jamais de bon', writes Bossuet, 'de ceux qui outrent la vertu.'[1]

If those others, the *credentes*, lived irregular lives because they hoped to receive the *consolamentum* at the hour of death, they did but follow a regrettable instinct of procrastination; they did but exaggerate a tendency you get amongst Catholics, a tendency you get in almost any Christian sect. If there is pardon to be hoped for, there will always be some weaker brethren who presume, half-consciously at any rate, on that hope. But this deliberate flirting with the occasions of sin, in the belief that you are too holy to apprehend any danger from them, is a trick of the enthusiast. We shall meet it later among the Quietists, and more noticeably among the Perfectionists. Just so, we shall find the exhibitionism of the Adamites and Turlupins reproducing itself among the Anabaptists, and even among the early Quakers. Psychological complications, all too frequently, go hand in hand with a simplified theology.

(v) *The Cult of Simplicity*

Whatever judgement we pass on the medieval heretics, it is bad philosophy not to recognize that they must have had some honourable excuse for their existence. A religious movement which has no such excuse will look in vain for a popular appeal. Viewed at its best, the movement we are considering was a protest on behalf of simplicity in an age which had begun to feel the oppression of worldliness. The Middle Ages suffered from a growing nostalgia for the Sermon on the Mount. Indeed, it is permissible to suggest that if St. Francis had lived a century earlier, there would have been no Waldenses, and the Catharists would have lost their market. But St. Francis came too late to immunize society against the anti-clerical germ that had now found a lodgement in its organism. To be sure, the set-up of the twelfth century was not as worldly as that of the Renaissance; but already there was sharp disproportion. It was not so much, perhaps, the private lives of the clergy that gave scandal, though complaints of this kind are frequent even in the best period of the Middle Ages. It was rather the aggressively prominent figure which Churchmen cut in the secular world, the terrific powers

[1] Op. cit. xi. 60.

which they wielded, not always wisely, in defence of their temporal rights, the magnificent style they often adopted, that gave the impetus to revolt. Enthusiasm is a disease, not of the starved, but of the full-fed organism, and takes on its character from the nature of the protest it desires to register. Because the age, compared with those which had gone before it, seemed an artificial one, the medieval heretics struck, everywhere, the note of simplicity.

The Vaudois, indeed, had little quarrel with the Church on any other ground. Of the Albigenses, Mr. Warner says with some reason that they 'deliberately repudiated and left the Church because it had forfeited its status by quenching the Holy Spirit'.[1] It was not so with the Waldenses; they would fain have regarded themselves as a movement of reform within the Church, and they broke with it (as the Wesleyans broke with the Church of England) in the first instance over the question of orders. Their ambition was to live the Sermon on the Mount; they would have no treasure on earth, they contested the right of the secular power to inflict capital punishment, they would take no oaths. This tendency of theirs was no doubt reinforced later by the propaganda of the 'spiritual' Franciscans, who found themselves involved in a charge of heresy by the strictness with which they interpreted the notion of poverty. The Apostolic Brethren of Lombardy, whose first founder, Segarelli, had vainly applied for admission to the Franciscan order, are probably typical of a Vaudois agitation fanned into new flame by the influence of the Spirituals.

It is difficult not to see, in this Waldensian, then Beghard, then Lollard mentality, the culture from which, at the Reformation, the Anabaptists sprang. The objection to capital punishment, sometimes logically pressed so as to be a denial of all human right to judge, appears to have been a distinctively Waldensian trait.[2] The objection to oaths, equally marked in the Anabaptists, was perhaps common to Waldensian and Catharist. It appears, for example, in the process of John Chaouat, a Waldensian condemned at Toulouse, side by side with the objection mentioned above;[3] and there is no trace, in his process, of Catharist views. But equally you find it set down among the errors of the Liége heretics, who were probably early Catharists, in 1144, before Waldo's movement had started.[4] It survived among

[1] Op. cit., p. 65.
[2] Cf. Warner, op. cit., p. 56.
[3] Limborch, op. cit., p. 49.
[4] Beuzart, op. cit., p. 462.

the later sects which (I have suggested) derived a mixed inspiration from these models. Peter Lucensis, an 'Apostolic', told the Inquisitors that it would be a sin if he made his statements on oath.[1] The Bohemian Brethren were non-jurors, as they were passive resisters.[2] And it is interesting to note, as an example of foreign infiltration into the beliefs of Lollardy, that Pecock credits *certain* Lollards with scruples against oaths and capital punishment, although no such charge is brought against them by Courtenay in 1382, or by the *Fasciculus Zizaniorum* in 1395.[3] It is true that the sectaries who denounced swearing could quote the Sermon on the Mount, and St. James. But, when the Reformation flooded the world with open Bibles, it was only the Anabaptists and (we shall see under what influence) the Quakers that kept the protest alive.

The literal imitation of our Lord seems to have led the Vaudois to the observance of one interesting ceremony. On Good Friday, as by Catholic custom on Maundy Thursday, the senior official used to wash the feet of the other persons present.[4] It may be doubted whether this was the only occasion on which the ceremony took place; Bishop Gerard asked the heretics of Arras why they affected to despise sacraments, and yet washed one another's feet—as if it were a common occurrence.[5] Certainly among the Bohemian Brethren, who had probably picked up the idea either from Catharist or from Vaudois tradition, a visiting brother had his feet washed by the 'acolytes' immediately on arrival.[6] If the same custom obtained among the Mennonites, legitimate descendants of the Anabaptists,[7] can we doubt that the underworld tradition contrived, somehow, to outlive the Reformation?

(vi) *The Unworthiness of the Minister*

If the Vaudois had been content with the effort to simplify the standards of contemporary life, they would have had the goodwill of many, the applause of all. But their preoccupation with morals led them to go farther, as we have seen, and attempt a simplification of ecclesiastical theory. It seemed intolerable to them that a priest should be supposed to consecrate, or a bishop to ordain, validly,

[1] Limborch, op. cit., p. 100. [2] Hutton, *History of the Moravian Church*, p. 55.
[3] See *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, s.v. 'Lollards'. [4] Warner, op. cit., p. 80.
[5] Beuzart, op. cit., p. 6. [6] J. Holmes, op. cit., i. 78 note.
[7] Preface to Stinstra's *Essay on Fanaticism*, p. cxlii. The practice persisted in modern times among the Free-Will Baptists of America (Blunt, *Dictionary of Sects*, p. 168).

when he was himself cut off from sanctifying grace by mortal sin. And no doubt behind this speculative difficulty lay a moral prejudice; they found it hard to believe that a worldly priest, even if his life was not, in the technical sense, irregular, was qualified to carry on ministrations which had been founded, in great poverty, by the apostles. Indeed, Peter de Vaucernai represents it as their common teaching that no priest celebrates validly unless he lives in Waldensian poverty.[1] It is not difficult to expose the logical flaw in this doctrine, which neglects, not without stupidity, the distinction between the man and his office. And the Articles of the Church of England still bear witness that the Anabaptist notion—for this notion, too, the Anabaptists inherited—was not acceptable in orthodox Reformation circles. But there was a plausibility about the Waldensian attitude; and Grosseteste showed his usual common sense when he represented to Innocent IV that the true source of heresy was the corruptness of the clergy.[2]

I have attributed this error to the Waldenses; Alanus seems to regard it as particularly theirs,[3] and indeed it was the main pivot of their system. What is more puzzling is that it should equally have been quoted against the Catharists, long before they had any opportunity of learning it from their neighbours at Lyons. As early as 1025 the Arras heretics knew all about the unworthiness of the minister,[4] and one Ramihard, in the second half of the eleventh century, went to the stake because he refused to communicate, on the pretext of clerical avarice.[5] Ecbert[6] and St. Bernard[7] deal with the same allegations. Yet the Catharists rejected *all* Christian sacraments as useless; what interest, then, had they in speculating about the conditions needed for their validity? It appears that they applied the principle to their own sacraments; the efficacy of the *consolamentum* depended on the moral state of the minister who conferred it;[8] nay, they even made it retrospective—if one of the Perfect sinned (by eating flesh food, for example), all the believers he had ever 'consoled' lost, *ipso facto*, the consolation they had supposedly enjoyed.[9] Is it possible that the Manichean tradition had preserved a fragment of Donatism, picked up when the two heresies disputed,

[1] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 88. [2] Turberville, op. cit., p. 9.
[3] Appendix on the Waldenses, iv, viii, xii. [4] Beuzart, op. cit., p. 5.
[5] Ibid., p. 89. [6] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 28. [7] *Serm. in Cant.* 65.
[8] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 32. [9] Warner, op. cit., p. 52.

with St. Augustine, the faith of Africa? If so, we have a curious instance of a theological perversion which held its own for eleven centuries.

Before long, a further and quite illogical inference was drawn—if no bad men were really priests, then all good men were really priests. The Arras heretics, whose minds had rather been confused than influenced by some stray infiltration of Catharism, had already taught that anyone can act as a minister of religion.[1] But it remained for the Vaudois to adopt this idea as a system, and to act upon it. Already in the twelfth century they had reached the position that confession to a layman is best, if there is no good priest to be had.[2] But it was only by degrees that they developed the idea of lay consecration.[3] 'Underlying the whole Waldensian propaganda', writes Mr. Turberville, 'lay a heretical principle; that which bestows authority to exercise priestly functions is not ordination at all, but merit and the individual's consciousness of vocation.'[4] The history of Methodism provides an obvious parallel.

From the Vaudois, the doctrine that the unworthiness of the minister hinders the effect of a sacrament diffused itself among the tangled sub-sects of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was held by Dolcino and his Apostolic Brethren; they disqualified the Popes in general, with the significant exception of St. Peter Celestine, who resigned the triple tiara.[5] It was held by the alleged Turlupins who were examined at Lille in 1465.[6] Most importantly, it was held by Wycliffe. That troubled thinker, with his genius for accepting unwelcome corollaries, would not be content to unfrock bad priests, to dismitre worldly bishops. He would discrown kings, he would release vassals from obedience to their feudal lords, on the same ground. That was the meaning of his doctrine that 'dominion is founded on grace', which made such a large contribution to the thought, and to the disrepute, of Lollardy. 'This doctrine as set forth by him implied that there was no real dominion, no real authority, and no real ownership of property without the grace of God. A man in mortal sin had no right to anything at all, but a man in a state of grace really possessed all things.'[7]

It was this emphasis on the function of grace, borrowed (at least

[1] Beuzart, op. cit., p. 6.
[2] Alanus, Appendix on the Waldenses, ix.
[3] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 86.
[4] Op. cit., p. 20.
[5] Fleury, op. cit. 91. 23.
[6] Beuzart, op. cit., p. 59.
[7] Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation*, i. 11.

in considerable part) from Wycliffe, that brought Huss to the stake. Could the clergy possess temporal goods? Had Christianity survived the Donation of Constantine? In what sense could a priest in mortal sin confer a sacrament? He seems to have attempted an explanation, in admitting that sinful priests conveyed sacramental grace but did so unworthily; the distinction did not avail him. In Wycliffe and Huss the popular anti-clericalism of the Middle Ages had found, at last, a rationalized expression; and it had taken on a colouring which made it no less obnoxious to the civil than to the ecclesiastical authorities. Ultrasupernaturalism had begun to question the value of all institutions, secular as well as ecclesiastical; and, when the Reformation set Christendom ablaze, it found all over Europe pockets of combustible material such as it had never reckoned with, difficult even for a Luther to control.

(vii) *The Invisible Church*

The question obviously suggests itself, What was the ecclesiastical theory of these heretical groups, so far as they had one? The Albigenses, indeed, in the palmy days of Catharism, could point to a shadowy connexion with the Bogomils of the East, who had an alleged episcopate of their own. They could set up their own body as an institutional Church, disputing the claim of the Catholic hierarchy to represent the true Church of Christ. But this façade of institutionalism soon disappears; probably because Bogomilism itself went underground. What were the scattered remnants of Catharism to say; how were they to justify their existence, when they were in open revolt against the rest of Christendom? The same difficulty confronted the Waldenses. It had never been their intention to set up a separate Church, any more than it was Wesley's intention, during his lifetime, to secede from Anglicanism. To be a leaven within the lump, to be an enclave of holiness within the corrupt body of Christendom, was the aim of either movement. But the logic of facts was against them. The enthusiast always begins by trying to form a church within the Church, always ends by finding himself committed to sectarian opposition. Was this congeries of scattered Christianities to denounce Christendom, and set itself up as the one true Church of Christ?

Leaders were not wanting who put forward, with the hardihood of the Donatists in an earlier century, the momentous claim involved.

The disciples of Amalric, in 1210, claimed to be the church of the Holy Spirit, destined to succeed an outworn dispensation.[1] Dolcino similarly held that the power of Christ had been made over to himself and his fellow sectaries, as the true heirs of the apostles.[2] The Fraticelli in Sicily would have it that the Gospel of Christ had been wholly extinguished, to be revived in their own order. The Church of Rome, they added, instinctively falling back on a Montanist habit of speech, was the carnal Church, theirs the spiritual.[3] The Flagellant heretics at Sangerhusen, who called themselves Brethren of the Cross, asserted that the true revelation had been handed down to them, having been lost in Christendom generally since A.D. 343, the year of Constantine's Donation.[4]

This notion that the Church had failed, and the Divine revelation had been entrusted to a faithful remnant, was fostered, beyond doubt, by the millenarian speculations of the time. It is not necessary, for our purposes, to decide the question how much Abbot Joachim, how much his editors, were responsible for this apprehension of impending Judgement; he was an author singularly rich in pseudepigrapha. But he had certainly commented on the Apocalypse; and every commentator on the Apocalypse is liable to stir up a hornets' nest. But for Jurieu, there would probably have been no Camisard outbreak in the Cévennes; but for Étémare, there would have been no convulsions at the tomb of M. Pâris. And Joachim's reputation was such, both for holiness and for learning, that he seems to have infected the age with an eschatological atmosphere which it would be difficult to account for on any other ground. Even St. Bonaventure identified the coming of St. Francis with the breaking of the Sixth Seal;[5] and a bull of Gregory IX began with the words, *Since the evening of the world is now declining*.[6] Joachimism contrived to leave the world in suspense; the Abbot died in 1201, but, less impatient for quick results than most prophets of doom, he only announced the coming of Antichrist for the year 1260. It can hardly be a coincidence that that was the year in which Dolcino refounded the Apostolic Brethren, and that 1259 saw the beginning of the Flagellant outburst.[7]

[1] Fleury, op. cit. 76. 69. [2] Ibid. 91. 23.
[3] Ibid. 92. 42;the Apostolic Brethren also described the Catholic Church as 'carnal' (Limborch, op. cit., p. 100). [4] Fleury, op. cit. 102. 99.
[5] Jordan, art. 'Joachimisme' in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, col. 1439.
[6] Limborch, op. cit., p. 78. [7] Jordan, art. cit., col. 1446.

But, much more significantly, Joachim seems to have been the patentee of those speculations about world-history which are for dividing it not into two periods, pre-Christian and Christian, but into three separate Dispensations, that of the Father, that of the Son, and that of the Holy Ghost. His own system was a complicated one, and involved three overlapping periods—from Adam to Christ, from Eliseus to Joachim himself, and from St. Benedict to the final catastrophe.[1] The notion that the Christian Dispensation could come to an end was actually dignified by a disproof from the pen of St. Thomas.[2] But it appealed to the discontented minorities of the day; the followers of Amalric de Bena were already preaching it in 1210.[3] And to the heretic, Cathar or Waldensian, who felt the loneliness of his insignificant protest against the religious solidarity of Europe, it was a timely comfort to feel that his movement was the coming thing, whereas the Catholic Church was only the corpse of a great tradition. But, if the Church Christ founded had come to an end, when did it come to an end? The rage for apostolic poverty prompted the convenient answer: 'In the fourth century, when the Donation of Western Europe by Constantine to St. Sylvester made the Church a property-owning body.' The Spiritual Franciscans, and those whom their teaching influenced, fell back on the belief that the Church had unchurched herself when she turned her back on poverty, exactly as the Donatists, all those centuries earlier, believed she had unchurched herself by turning her back on martyrdom.

Such were the beliefs abjured by Peter Lucensis, a Spaniard who belonged to Dolcino's Apostolic Brethren.

> That when poverty was changed from the Church by St Sylvester, then sanctity of life was taken from the Church, and the Devil entered into the companions of St Sylvester in this world. . . . That there is a double Church, the Spiritual and the Carnal; that the Spiritual Church is in those men who live in perfect poverty . . . that the Carnal Church is of those who live . . . in riches and honours . . . such as are the bishops and prelates of the Church of Rome. . . . This Church he says is that carnal Church of which John speaks in the Revelation, which he calls Babylon.[4]

Peter Dominicus, a Béguin examined by the same tribunal, adds that 'the Roman Church, under the name of Babylon, is to be

[1] Jordan, art. cit., col. 1433. [2] Ibid., col. 1449 (cf. *Summa*, II, IIae, Q. cvi. a. 4).
[3] Ibid., col. 1438. [4] Limborch, op. cit., pp. 99, 100.

damned, rejected, and exterminated by Christ, in that sixth state of the Church which now is; and . . . that the Spiritual Church is to be begun and restored by the rejection of the Carnal Church, even as the old synagogue of the Jews was rejected by Christ'.[1] Always the Donation of Constantine is to the fore; belief in, and disapproval of, this legendary instrument was, for John Huss, an *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae*.[2] And the tradition survived him; that very independent thinker, Peter of Chelcic, who quarrelled with the anti-sacramentalism of the Taborites, and denounced Zizka for taking up arms even in defence of the truth, equally refused to have any dealings with the heir of St. Sylvester.[3] The early Catharists had pronounced the Church corrupt because it harboured libertines;[4] the Franciscan schism altered the emphasis of the protest, and later heresy was more shocked to find her consorting with publicans than with sinners.

The protest, in any case, was really a protest against the whole notion of an institutional, that is, a 'visible' Church. That there could be tares in the wheat, that worthless fish as well as eatable ones could be found in the net, was a doctrine incomprehensible to Wycliffe and Huss, for all their insistence on the Gospel. For the enthusiast, there is only one Church, a Church 'invisible'. Its membership consists of the names which are written in the book of life, whatever their sectarian affiliations. 'The true Church, in Wycliffe's opinion, was the whole community of those persons, whether clergymen or laymen, who were ultimately to be saved, and these men were predestined. The Pope himself, if not predestined, was not a member of the Church.'[5] So it was with Huss; he was condemned not least for holding (i) that a predestined soul now in mortal sin is a living member of the Church, (ii) that a reprobate soul not now in mortal sin is not a member of the Church, (iii) that Judas Iscariot was never a member of the Church.[6] It was only by way of antiquarian affectation that the Vaudois claimed to have been founded by one Leo, who quarrelled with the Church (it need hardly be said) over the Donation of Constantine.[7] Their real belief, like that of all enthusiasts, was that it did not matter who had

[1] Limborch, op. cit., p. 108.
[2] Fleury, op. cit. 103. 61.
[3] See Hutton, op. cit., ch. iv.
[4] E. Holmes, op. cit., p. 29.
[5] Gairdner, op. cit. i. 12.
[6] Fleury, op. cit. 103. 74.
[7] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 124.

founded your particular religious group, or when. What mattered was that you should follow Christ; if you did that, you were *ipso facto* inside the only Church that counted.

(viii) *The Revolt against Intellect*

There was a moment in the history of Catharism at which it threatened, though only in a comparatively small area, to revolutionize the culture of the day. From Bordeaux to Marseilles, from the Pyrenees to Auvergne, was (as we have seen) an enclave in France, something of an enclave in Europe. There, about the year 1215, if you were the guest of some noble family, you were liable to find a Catharist minister installed as domestic chaplain, the Catharist theology being extolled as superior to the Catholic. Even the clergy, even some of the religious houses, were affected by the movement.[1] Among a string of noble names that gave themselves to it we may pause to comment on one, that of Bernard de la Mothe.[2] We shall meet that surname again; it was the family name of the Arnaulds, Madame Guyon bore it until her marriage, and it enters into the full style of François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénélon. It must have seemed possible, until the Crusade began to make headway, that this strip of Europe, Languedoc, would become as alien to the life of Europe as, at that time, was southern Spain. Catharism might have bequeathed to us a literature, a philosophy of its own. Already, Alanus de Insulis had dignified it with a formal refutation. But this triumph was short-lived. By the year 1229 the Catholic authorities were digging out the rebels from their hiding-places.

Elsewhere, and in Languedoc itself thenceforward, we must think of heresy as a subterranean cult, rarely attracting the attention of the fashionable world. It is neither among the richest nor among the poorest that enthusiasm recruits its most faithful converts; the lower middle class, by instinct the natural seed-ground of Puritanism, gives it the most promising welcome. To be a weaver in Languedoc, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, was almost synonymous with being a Catharist;[3] and we have seen that in the Low Countries, too, it was the *tisserands* who were constantly under suspicion. The Vaudois atmosphere is the same; you do not feel you are moving among the disinherited, yet neither rank nor learning has much to

[1] Guiraud, op. cit., pp. 31–4, 49–51. [2] Ibid., p. 42. [3] Ibid., p. 67.

do with their formation. And it is characteristic of such middle-class movements that they tend to make a virtue of necessity; not blessed with great riches, the *petit bourgeois* is ready to wring his hands over the goings-on of the rich; not greatly intellectual, he takes comfort in the thought that intellect is not everything. 'Not many wise, not many mighty'—the familiar words of St. Paul greet his ears with something, it must be confessed, of a fox-and-grapes satisfaction. And in the later Middle Ages heresy is not only a revolt of poverty against the suspected luxury of a wealthy Church; it is a reaction of the plain man against the relentless philosophizing of the Schools.

'When driven into a corner they (the Waldenses) would plead that they were unlearned, simple folk, and did not understand the question.'[1] Very likely they did not; the Carcassonne Inquisitors probably did them less than justice when they suspected them of duplicity. But I think they gloried in not understanding. Certainly when you reach the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the revolt against the intellect becomes explicit. The great scholastic age was passing or had passed; acute minds were too ready to lose themselves in quibbles and quiddities. Mysticism was on the rise, with its appeal to a surer, more direct means of knowledge than the reason could offer. 'Quid curae nobis de generibus et speciebus?'[2] Berthold of Spires, the first Quietist, said and was condemned for saying that an ignorant layman, when enlightened by prayer, can instruct better than the most learned of doctors.[3] The germ of irrationalism was abroad.

I have written 'abroad'; but it is perhaps characteristic that this revolt against learning should have taken its most definite shape in our own island. Lollardy always gave itself out as the religion of the plain man, appealing to the Englishman's native distrust of the expert. Wycliffe himself, a Balliol man, maintained 'that Universities and College degrees were instituted by pagan vanity, and that they serve the devil's purposes quite as much as God's'.[4] So Wesley wrote of his old Oxford pupils: 'How many of them now think either of their tutor or of their God? But, blessed be God, I have some pupils since, who well reward me for my labour.'[5] This was the very charter of the Lollards, in Wycliffe's mind; 'a single un-

[1] Warner, op. cit., p. 58.
[2] *Imitation of Christ*, I. iii.
[3] Fleury, op. cit. 96. 32.
[4] Ibid. 103. 38.
[5] Journal, 8 Dec. 1764.

lettered preacher does more, by God's grace, for the profit of the Church than a whole number of classmen'.[1] True to this spirit, they represented St. Paul as teaching 'that one must be ignorant to be saved, and that God does not admit the wise to eternal life'.[2] The unfortunate controversialist who undertook to show them the error of their ways, Reginald Pecock, so exalted the province of reason in his *Repressor* that he was involved in a heresy charge and a retractation.[3]

This religion of the plain man went with a close study of the Scriptures. You must have a rule of faith, if your plain men are not going to distort theology beyond recognition with their private fancies. It appears that the Vaudois circulated, and read aloud, a vernacular translation of the New Testament and, in part, of the Old.[4] The Lollards studied Wycliffe's Bible, and interpreted it each for himself. Let it not be said that in this they were forerunners of the Reformation. The whole Reformation movement was the apotheosis of the learned clerk; you might not read *your* Bible, you must read Luther's Bible, or Cranmer's, as the case might be. If you insisted that the Sermon on the Mount forbade war, or that a text in St. James made all swearing sinful, the Reformers wrote you down a heretic no less confidently than the Catholics. Pre-Reformation heresy was not condemned to sit at the feet of the pundit; each man adorned the sacred text with his own footnotes, and it may be presumed that the elusive quality of the old heterodoxies, both in England and abroad, was due in great measure to this complete freedom of interpretation. This chapter has been devoted to giving a pattern, in outline, of those heterodoxies; it has not attempted to discuss a tithe of their peculiarities.

In that confused pattern, one or two strands are clearly distinguishable which seem to indicate a continuity, in thought rather than in organization, between the medieval heretics and the Anabaptists. How much significance ought to be attached to them the reader must decide for himself. But it is thought-provoking, the way in which some odd tenet of this underworld theology will suddenly come to light in the pages of an inquisitorial record, and then go to ground for perhaps a couple of centuries. The Abbé Bremond, in

[1] Art. 'Lollards' in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, col. 915.
[2] Ibid., col. 921. [3] Gairdner, op. cit. i. 102 sqq.
[4] Warner, op. cit., p. 22; cf. Beuzart, op. cit., p. 20.

discussing the condemnation of the Alumbrados by the Edict of Seville in 1623, comments on the strange farrago of errors attributed to them. Among others, he notices that they had a practice of holding their hands over their eyes when the sacred Host was elevated at Mass. This, he suggests, was due to the influence of Erasmus, who declaimed against the late medieval superstition of looking up at the Host by way of obtaining a cure for defective eyesight. The Alumbrados, then, will have been cultivated people; good Catholics, no doubt, but influenced by some casual breath of Humanism.[1] It may be so. But there is a tract, probably of the early thirteenth century,[2] directed against a sect of German heretics who are not named, but are credited with Luciferian notions, and were perhaps Catharists. Among other, more weighty allegations, one concerns us; *pollice oculos tempore elevationis obstruunt.* What an intriguing echo they wake in the imagination, these long silences of history!

[1] Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux*, xi. 2.
[2] *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, s.v. 'Luciférians', col. 1047.

VII

THE ANABAPTISTS AND THE REFORMATION

In the previous chapter I have attempted to disentangle certain threads in the obscure pattern of medieval heresy, and to show that they are of the same make as other threads of heresy discernible in other centuries. One or two of them look, certainly, as if they had an actual historical connexion, through the Bogomils and the Paulicians, with the old doctrine of the Manichees. And now, what of the other end? Were all these threads cut short by the vigilance of the Inquisition, and of the secular powers? Was nothing left to witness that there had been heresy in Europe during the Middle Ages, except a handful of Waldenses in Italy, and the formidable but strictly self-contained protest of the Hussites in Bohemia? Or were there still, up and down Europe, little pockets of undetected or half-detected Protestant influence, which survived till the time of the Reformation and helped to bring about the Reformation—helped, especially, to bring about that odd deflection of the Reformation doctrines which was persecuted relentlessly, by Protestants no less than by Catholics, under the name of Anabaptism?

(i) *The Pre-history of Anabaptism*

It is the fashion of historians either to neglect this possibility, or to relegate it to a parenthesis which draws no undue attention to it. On the one hand, they do not care to trace the ancestry of the Reformation, even in its more violent manifestations, to origins so little respectable. On the other hand, they are anxious to maintain Luther's credit by perpetuating the notion that Protestantism sprang, ready armed, from his brain. I am not here attempting to discredit the Reformation leaders, even the Anabaptist leaders, by connecting them with the medieval heretics; for I think it is evident that the medieval heretics, whatever common inspiration they may have derived from Manichean influence, have been unduly tarred with the same brush; not all were revolutionaries, not all were antinomians.

Nor yet am I attempting to rob Luther of whatever credit or discredit belongs to him for breaking up the solidarity of Europe. Even if he let loose forces which existed independently of him, and profited by their aid while he disowned their alliance, he was still the *causa removens prohibens* which unchained their activities, and for that friend and foe alike will hold him responsible. I am uniquely concerned to discover whether there was not in fact a seed-ground of Protestant ideas already existing before his time, which would make the rapid growth of his doctrines, in an externally Catholic Europe, less remarkable.

Here and there, though with little documentation, you will find the continuity of the Anabaptists with earlier heresies explicitly maintained. Thus Belfort Bax in his *Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists*[1] tells us that their 'theory and practice . . . was in the last resort a recrudescence over a wider area and on an extended scale of tendencies, and even of doctrines, that we meet with springing up in different places and at different times throughout the Middle Ages, and which were increasing in intensity and in frequency from the beginning of the 15th century onwards'. A similar estimate, though less friendly in tone, is given by Alban Butler:[2]

> Before the Reformation there lay concealed in almost every part of Europe, particularly in Bohemia, Moravia, Switzerland and Germany, many persons who adhered tenaciously to the following doctrines, which the Waldenses, Wycliffites and Hussites had maintained . . . , that the Kingdom of Christ was an assembly of true and real saints, and ought therefore to be inaccessible to the wicked; and also exempt from all those institutions which human prudence suggests, to oppose the progress of iniquity, or to correct and reform transgressions.

We have seen that the Brethren of the Free Spirit, at any rate, are credited with a vitality which carried their movement on up to Reformation times.

If this view is well founded, it may reasonably be asked why the ecclesiastical annals of the time are so free from stories of persecution, when compared with those of the Middle Ages? Why the Inquisition enjoys so little prominence, and the whole effort of Catholic orthodoxy seems to be directed against the open menace of the

[1] p. 42.

[2] *Historical Memoirs of Catholics*, vol. i, ch. 10, quoted under a wrong reference as from Mosheim.

Hussites? It might be replied, of course, that the absence of police prosecutions does not always betoken an absence of crime. Why should we assume that persecution languished because there was no heresy? May it not be that heresy flourished precisely because persecution languished? But on the whole it seems better to suppose that heretical ideas do not come to the front in the fifteenth century because persecution had driven them underground. In doing so, it may be added, it had probably driven the active propagandists of such ideas to take refuge in the confines of Christendom, where the arm of central authority was less easily felt. Westwards, possibly, as well as eastwards; which might account for the rise of heresy-trials in England at the beginning of the fifteenth century. It is not certain, after all, that Lollardy was a completely home-grown product; Holland was one of the chief strongholds of the Beghards, their nearest counterpart on the continent of Europe,[1] and the exigencies of trade must have involved much coming and going between the Netherlands and the eastern counties.

That the religious notions we have been discussing had found a footing in England at the beginning of the fifteenth century may be easily gathered from the examination of William Thorpe in 1407.[2] He was required by Archbishop Arundell to abjure all the opinions which the sect of the Lollards 'holds and is slandered with'. Whether he was technically a Lollard remains uncertain; he has the Lollard trick of decrying the use of the human reason: 'Transubstantiation is school matter about which I busied me never for to know it, and therefore I commit this term, *accidens sine subjecto*, to those clerks which delight them in curious and subtle sophistry.' At least he was of that camp; and it appears from his accusation that, although he held no preacher's licence from his own bishop, he had 'this twenty summers and more travelled about busily in the North country and in divers other counties of England, sowing about false doctrine'. The account given of his trial is written by himself, and it is possible that he may have yielded to the temptation of thinking he had said some of the good things which occurred to him almost immediately afterwards; but his alleged defence, cleverly as it attempts to be non-committal, is fair evidence of the views he must have held.

[1] Belfort Bax, op. cit., p. 110. So Conybeare (art. 'Anabaptists' in *Ency. Brit.*), who calls them 'Waldenses'.

[2] *State Trials*, ii.

What is abundantly clear is that he believed in the 'Spiritual Church', like the heretics of the Continent. He defines the Church as consisting of all those who 'endeavour them to know and to keep the commandments of God' and consequently 'have their names written in the book of life'. He submits himself to 'this holy Church of Christ, to be ever buxom and obedient to the order of it', but adds that he will submit 'only to the rule and governance of them whom after my knowledge I may perceive, by the having and using of the beforesaid virtues, to be members of the holy Church'.

He shows curious traces of the notion, common amongst medieval and later enthusiasts, that a period of a thousand years has elapsed, and a new dispensation is to be expected in consequence. To him, this period of a thousand years dates from the Incarnation, so that the new era must be well advanced. Speaking of Transubstantiation, he gives an obviously Wycliffite account of the matter, and adds: 'A thousand years after the Incarnation of Christ the doctrine which I have here before you rehearsed was (still) accepted of Holy Church; but, Sir, the determination of the matter which was brought in since the Fiend was loosed, by Friar Thomas . . . I dare not grant.' He denies that he preached at St. Chad's, Shrewsbury, against all swearing, and is prepared himself to swear, though not on a book. One curious phrase seems to anticipate the semi-Quietist language of a later period, when he speaks of his father and mother 'on whose souls may God have mercy, if it be his will'.

True, Lollardy had still a hundred years to run its course before Lutheranism came to reinforce it. But there is clear evidence that it survived, at least sporadically. Gairdner[1] claims that by the middle of Henry VII's reign, owing to the strict measures of Cardinal Morton, 'neither heresies nor immoralities remained unchecked'. But the success of these measures can only have been partial; we read in Fabyan's Chronicle: '1496. This year stood many heretics at Paul's Cross. 1499. On July 15 stood twelve heretics at Paul's Cross. 1500. In July was an old heretic brent at Smithfield. 1506. On the second Sunday of Lent the prior of St. Osyth's and five other heretics carried faggots.' Nor did these trials come to an end with Henry VII; Lollardy was still punished in the early years of his successor, and in the famous case of Richard Hunne there is a significant statement that he 'had haunted heretics' lectures by night long before, which

[1] *Lollardy and the Reformation*, i. 275.

we declared unto the King's highness as he had confessed'.[1] The cult may have survived chiefly in secluded districts, like the Chilterns,[2] but it survived.

Nor was it only in London, or only in England, that 'heretics' lectures' were available. Paul Crawer, who was burned at St. Andrews in 1433, is described as having been sent over to propagate Huss's doctrines in Scotland; and some of the charges brought against his adherents (as, having their goods in common, and living licentiously) suggest an Adamite rather than a strictly Hussite influence.[3] In 1494 there were still complaints of Lollardy in Kyle and Cunningham; besides the usual protests against Transubstantiation, celibacy, &c., these propagandists were accused of teaching that it is not lawful to fight for the faith, that Christ at his coming did abrogate the power of secular princes, that every faithful man and woman is a priest, and that it is in no case lawful to swear. The accused were brought before Archbishop Blackadder of Glasgow, and 'answered all with such confidence, as it was thought safest to dimit them'.[4] If the Reformation thus has its prehistory not only in England but in Scotland, it is fair to assume that there must have been septic foci lurking here and there in the apparently healthy body of Continental Christendom, in Germany especially. The only question is, how far these septic foci were responsible for actively disseminating the virus of Protestantism, when the blow struck by Luther at the heart of Christendom had weakened, all in a moment, its normal powers of resistance.

(ii) *Doctrinal Legacy of the Medieval Heretics*

What makes it difficult to disbelieve in the continuous descent of the Anabaptists from the medieval heretics is the striking similarity of their doctrines. It is true—indeed, it is largely the thesis of the present work—that the enthusiastic tendency is one which recurs, as it were by spontaneous generation, throughout the history of the Church; so that we need not, commonly, look about to find its parentage. But here you have a very close similarity of ideas apparently connecting certain movements which lasted on into the

[1] More's *Dialogue*, iii. 15.

[2] Turberville, op. cit., p. 94.

[3] Bellesheim's *History of the Catholic Church in Scotland*, ii. 56, quoting from *Scoti-chronicon*, l. xvi, c. 20.

[4] Spottiswoode, *History of the Church of Scotland*, p. 61; Bellesheim, op. cit. ii. 108.

fifteenth century with a movement which springs suddenly into being at the very outset of the sixteenth, and mainly in the same centres. The hypothesis of a genuine connexion is almost irresistible. It is time that we traced out more in detail the resemblances which are here in question.

By definition, an Anabaptist is one who denies the efficacy of infant baptism, and therefore receives or administers the sacrament afresh when years of discretion have been reached. The efficacy of infant baptism was denied by the Albigenses,[1] and although this accusation does not seem to figure in the doctrines alleged against the Lollards and Beghards, it is one that may be easily inferred from their notion of a 'spiritual Church'. For, if the Church consists simply and solely of those who are actually predestined to eternal life, the sacrament which attests admission to the Church cannot reasonably be conferred on any but those who are conscious, or at least show signs, of election. And the doctrine of a spiritual Church was a cardinal tenet of the Anabaptists, as of their predecessors. Indeed, it is characteristic of some Reformers who sympathized with them without formally belonging to them, like Sebastian Franck and Caspar Schwenkfeld.[2] And it is from this same principle that the other leading doctrines of the Anabaptists (as of their predecessors) are mainly derived. As we have seen in the last chapter, the denial of an institutional Church leads, if it is pressed by ardent thinkers, to a denial of all validity in human institutions. 'The Anabaptists', writes Belfort Bax (who is by no means concerned to emphasize the spiritual character of the movement), 'recognized no relation to the state as such. The State, in their opinion, belonged to the realm of darkness with which the brethren had nothing in common.'[3] Dominion—the old doctrine of Wycliffe—was founded on grace; and a ruler who was not in a state of grace dethroned himself as surely as a bishop, under the same conditions, unfrocked himself. From some principle of non-resistance they might obey the ordinance of man, but they could not regard it as binding on the consciences of the elect. Hence their characteristic views, as summed up in the clause which exempted them from the general amnesty of 1550: 'That it is not lawful for a Christian man to bear office or rule

[1] Bossuet's *Variations*, xi. 35. Also by the Petrobrussians and the Henricians (Mosheim, xii, c. 5, section 7).

[2] Rufus Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, pp. 49, 79.

[3] Op. cit., p. 50.

in the Commonwealth; that no man's laws ought to be obeyed . . . that all things be, or ought to be, common, and nothing several.'[1] The principle underlying such notions is admirably summed up in the view alleged against the Anabaptists who were examined before the House of Lords in 1640: 'That the King could not make a perfect law, because the King is not a perfect man.'[2] The true enthusiast can only be at home under a theocracy, with an accredited prophet as its visible head; any other form of government, because its sanctions depend on the natural order, is not merely inadequate, but evil.

It seems possible that this refusal to acknowledge the power of the secular government underlay another curious resemblance, which survives to this day in the Society of Friends—I mean the conscientious objection to taking any oath in a court of law. No doubt it can be defended on scriptural grounds (Matt. v. 34, James v. 12); and this will have contributed to the vitality of the tradition. But a tradition, nevertheless, the doctrine in question is, and comes down from times when the Bible was less read and less quoted. The Vaudois continued to hold it until their theology was contaminated by fusion with that of other sects.[3] We have seen in the last chapter that the Albigenses and the schismatic Franciscans held it too; it was among the Wycliffite propositions condemned at Constance, and Thorpe's interrogation, given above, shows that a Lollard was expected to refuse the oath. It appears again in the exemptions of 1550; and it was one of the recantations demanded from the Anabaptists who were tried in 1575.[4] The Brownists who were condemned in 1586, although they disclaimed the main tenets of the Anabaptists, would not swear on the Book, nor indeed take any oath *beforehand* about the evidence they intended to give.[5] The Mennonites, in spite of their disagreement with the official representatives of Anabaptism, were at one with them over the oath.[6] It seems difficult to believe that George Fox did not inherit the principle from some one of the tangled sects which flourished in the England of his day.

Those authors (and they are numerous) who have tried to make capital out of the resemblance between the medieval heretics, the

[1] *Lollardy and the Reformation*, iii. 311.
[2] Nalson's *Impartial Collection of Great Affairs of State*, p. 727.
[3] Bossuet's *Variations*, xi. 118.
[4] Neal's *Puritanism*, Supplement.
[5] *Harleian Miscellany*, ii. 18.
[6] *Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Menno Simons'.

Anabaptists, and the enthusiasts of a later period have naturally concentrated most of their attention on stories of eccentricity, hardly distinguishable from mania, and stories of antinomian excesses in the matter of morals.[1] There can be little doubt that sectaries, whether before or after the Reformation, cultivated eccentricities of behaviour and identified them with the action of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Beghards 'ran from place to place in most singular and fantastic apparel, and begged their bread with wild shouts and clamours, rejecting with horror every kind of industry and labour as an obstacle to divine contemplation'.[2] A sect of dancers who appeared in Flanders in 1373 used 'to fall a dancing all of a sudden ... till, being almost suffocated, they fell down breathless together; and they affirmed that during these intervals of vehement agitation they were favoured with wonderful visions'.[3] It is easy to parallel these phenomena among the Anabaptists; for example, the 'ecstatic' variety of them 'claimed to see visions and to dream dreams, and generally to be the recipients of divine revelations. When under the influence of the Spirit, their countenances were contorted, they made deprecatory gestures, fell on the ground as if in a fit, and finally lay stretched out as if they were dead.'[4] Richard Blome compares the story of a Quaker who 'was thrown on the ground in the midst of the company, where he lay all night' and 'was turned from back to belly, making crosses continually with his legs'; and another of a Quaker who 'drove needles through his thumbs, and lay as if dead for three quarters of an hour in public'.[5] But such manifestations occur wherever enthusiastic movements occur. We have seen them among the Montanists; we can see them to-day. 'The negroes, you know, pass out of the body and mind when they sing, till they fall unconscious to the ground. They foregather on the plantations once a week to sing and *gid happy*, and invoke a spiritual experience.'[6] There is no guarantee of continuity here.

Again, no enthusiastic movement is proof against the dangers which spring from the doctrine of Perfectionism—i.e. that it is

[1] Cf. *On the Three Conversions of England*, by N. D. (really Robert Persons, S.J.); Richard Blome's tract against the Quakers in 1660; and '*Semper Iidem*, a Parallel between the Ancient and Modern Fanatics', in *Harl. Misc.* vii. 252–64.

[2] Mosheim, xiii. 5. lx.

[3] Ibid. xiv. 5. viii.

[4] Bullinger on the variations of the Anabaptists, quoted by Belfort Bax, ch. 2.

[5] Quoted by Belfort Bax, pp. 374 sqq.

[6] Miss Kirby, a revivalist singer, interviewed in the *Daily Express* of 17 May 1933.

possible for man on earth to attain a condition of sinlessness. This may lead to a contempt for the decencies; nay, to a cultivation of indecency, as proving how far it is possible for the perfect to neglect all the usual safeguards of modesty, without having their passions evoked thereby. Thus the Beghards 'looked upon decency and modesty as marks of inward corruption, as the characters of a soul that was still under the dominion of the sensual, animal, and lascivious spirit, and that was not reunited to the divine nature'. This was the account they themselves gave of their promiscuous lodging, and the nudism practised in their assemblies.[1] The Beghards were certainly perfectionists.[2] It would appear that some at least of them were antinomians, extending the principle of perfectionism so as to hold that actions normally regarded as sinful are not sinful in the perfect. This is explicitly stated in a formula quoted from the 'Book of the Nine Rocks': 'If therefore it be the will of God that I should commit sin, my will must be the same, and I must not desire even to abstain from sin.'[3] Perfectionism, evidently, could go no farther. And we shall see that some of the Anabaptists, though not all, held perfectionist doctrines;[4] nor can they reasonably be acquitted, here and there, of antinomianism. But, once more, this is no evidence of continuity. It does not appear, for example, that the Anabaptists generally held any Manichean views about marriage, though a passing reference to one Jorg Zaunring who 'holds the married state for sin' may represent the view of a few isolated teachers.[5]

There remains, however, one link in the chain of resemblance which seems to put the charge of continuity beyond all dispute. We have seen in the foregoing chapter that the medieval heretics, almost everywhere, denied the proposition that our Lord took Flesh of his blessed Mother. This is evidently Manichean doctrine; the Paulicians seem to have maintained, like Valentinus, that our Lord had a celestial Body which passed through that of our Lady as 'water through a pipe'.[6] So widespread was this heresy in the Middle Ages that even the Lollards were accused of holding it.[7] And the same tenet appears to be continually alleged against the Anabaptists. Michael Tombe, a butcher, was made to abjure it in 1549—Gairdner

[1] Mosheim, xiii. 5. ix and xi. [2] Fleury, xci. 58. [3] Mosheim, xiii. 5. ix.
[4] Heath, *Anabaptism*, p. 44; cf. Bullinger *ap.* Belfort Bax, ch. 2.
[5] Heath, p. 59. [6] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, c. 54.
[7] Trithemius, quoted in *Three Conversions of England*, ed. 1688, p. 173.

suggests he may have been the husband of the well-known Joan Bocher, who was burned by Cranmer for holding it.[1] In 1535 twenty-five heretics admitted it under examination in St. Paul's.[2] In 1575 it was one of the four errors which a similar number of Anabaptists were expected to recant.[3] That the same view was common among the continental Anabaptists is generally recognized,[4] and Heath, who represents it as a private eccentricity of Melchior Hofmann's, does not explain where he can have learned it.[5] Hofmann's saying that 'the Saviour passed through the Virgin Mary as sunshine through a pane of glass' is evidently doctrine that goes back to Valentinus.

It is impossible to connect this strange piece of theology with the general tenets of the Anabaptists; it is not rooted in their system. It does not reappear, as most of their eccentricities appear, in the later history of Protestantism. It does not look like the product of an age whose controversial interest was centred in quite different matters. It remains an excrescence on Reformation Protestantism, indicative of its remote origins, as some rudimentary organ in an animal species may attest its development from an earlier type. Filiation, of some sort, must be traced between Albigensian and Anabaptist; and Conybeare is certainly justified in writing: 'It would appear from the way in which Anabaptism sprang up everywhere independently as if more than one ancient sect took on, in it and through it, a new lease of life'.[6] Might he not even have said that Anabaptism was itself derived from these sects, without further ado?

(iii) *Luther and the Anabaptists*

The annals of the Anabaptist movement, as an effective movement, fall within a singularly short compass of fifteen years.[7] It begins with the appearance of Munzer and Storch, the prophets of Zwickau, in 1520 (only three years after the nailing up of Luther's theses), and with their visit to Wittenberg at the end of 1521.

[1] *Lollardy and the Reformation*, iii. 317.
[2] *Semper Iidem* as quoted above.
[3] Ibid., and Neal's *History of the Puritans*, Supplement.
[4] e.g. art. on 'Anabaptists' in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.
[5] p. 105; there is no foundation for the idea (p. 103) that he had it from Schwenkfeld.
[6] Art. on 'Anabaptists' in *Ency. Brit.*
[7] They are yet to be written in English. Richard Heath's history of the movement is of the Sunday School order; and Belfort Bax, with far greater critical ability, is only interested in the Anabaptists as the forerunners of modern social democracy.

Zwickau is a weaving centre, and Storch was a weaver by trade; it is all in the Beghard tradition. Luther was still shut up in the Wartburg for his own safety, and Melanchthon seems to have been impressed with the sincerity of the new movement. Carlstadt made common cause with it, and the result was the well-known iconoclastic outburst in Wittenberg and elsewhere. Luther, returning early the next year, disowned the new prophets and had their adherents expelled wherever his influence was strong enough. Munzer thereupon threw in his lot with the revolt of the peasants, which was stamped out in blood, with no lack of encouragement from Luther, after the battle of Frankenhausen (1525). A similar insurrection in the Tyrol met with the same fate, in the same year. Meanwhile, as a non-political creed (and one which for the most part preached a doctrine of non-resistance) Anabaptism was gaining recruits all over southern Germany, and in Switzerland was seriously embarrassing the influence of Zwingli, who persecuted it without mercy. Gradually, the pressure of official opposition drove it more and more into the Catholic countries of the south, where its influence was eventually extinguished. In the Rhine country it was at once more aggressive and more successful, partly through the influence of Melchior Hofmann, its most notable apostle—he had travelled to Sweden as early as 1524, and induced the people to break the images. But its very success in these districts drove it into a fatal policy of concentration. The city of Munster, which had been untouched by the Reformation, passed into the hands of the Anabaptists, and drew them in from every side as to a sacred centre, like the Pepuza of the Montanists. (At the very end of the siege some 3,000 people, thirty ship-loads in all, left the neighbourhood of Amsterdam for Munster.) How Munster was besieged by the Bishop, how one of the insurgent leaders, Matthiesen, died in a feat of fanatical heroism, and the other, the famous John of Leyden, revised the ten commandments for the benefit of the garrison, is a matter of well-known history. The town fell in 1535; and from that time forward the doctrines of Anabaptism survive only sporadically, while the name itself is shunned even by those who trace their spiritual origins from its influence.

Among the fascinating If's of history, surely this deserves to take an important place—What would have been the result if Luther had made common cause from the first with the prophets of

Zwickau, instead of disowning their propaganda and driving them into an attitude of isolated protest? The hypothesis is not, after all, as extravagant as it sounds. A gentler nature, like Melanchthon's, did not rush into the blustering challenge, 'Let them prove their mission either by authority from the Church or by miracles.'[1]

> I have given them a hearing [Melanchthon writes], and it is astonishing what they tell of themselves; namely that they are positively sent by God to teach; that they have familiar conferences with God, that they can foretell events; and, to be brief, that they are on a footing with prophets and apostles. I cannot describe how I am moved by these lofty pretensions. I see strong reasons for not despising the men; for it is clear to me that there is in them something more than a mere human spirit; but whether the spirit be of God or not none, except Martin, can easily judge.[2]

I cannot forbear to append the exquisite comment of an author who lived in times when 'enthusiasm' was not the fashion in high places. 'How absurdly', writes Milner, 'do sceptics conclude from the disgraceful conduct of such men as Stork, Strubner and their companions, that enthusiasm marked the whole progress of Lutheranism, when perhaps no man was more removed from that dangerous spirit than Luther himself.'

With infinitely better reason Dr. Rufus Jones attacks Luther for betraying, in this emergency, the mystical creed on which, ultimately, his own theology was based. Luther had derived his first inspiration from the mysticism of Tauler,[3] as Munzer had.[4] And Luther's conception of faith, as Dr. Rufus Jones rightly points out, cannot really be dissociated from personal 'experience'. It was not a younger or an older Luther but the Luther of that actual period who wrote, in his preface to the Magnificat, that 'No one can understand God or God's word unless he has it revealed immediately by the Holy Ghost; but nobody can receive anything from the Holy Ghost unless he experiences it.'[5] If this was the confidence in which Luther had challenged the immemorial theology of Christendom, little sympathy can be felt for him when he challenges Munzer to justify by appeal to 'the Church' a personal revelation to which he had as much right as Luther had to Luther's. It is in this sense that Dr. Rufus Jones criticizes 'the Luther who wanders far afield from experience, draws curious analogies from unverified concepts, piles

[1] Heath, p. 5. [2] Spalatinus, quoted in Milner's *Church History*, v. viii.
[3] *Spiritual Reformers*, p. 6. [4] Ibid., p. 19. [5] Ibid., p. 6.

text on text as though heaven could be scaled by another Pelion on Ossa, and once more turns religion back to the cooled lava-beds of theology'.[1] Munzer, in fact, appealed to Luther the fellow mystic, and was answered, quite irrationally, by Luther the scriptural pundit. This was, indeed, the whole point at issue; Anabaptism had enough logic in its Protestantism to claim that the Bible might and should be interpreted by the individual Christian according to the light given him, while official Protestantism, recoiling from such a vista of confusion, reposed its confidence in the comparative certitude of scholarship. 'My dear brethren', Munzer wrote, 'do your best to become prophets, men of the Spirit; otherwise, your theology will not avail you one groat. Contemplate your God from close to, not from far off.'[2]

Luther's personal temperament did not leave the issue in doubt. Chateaubriand has defined his attitude accurately, though perhaps unkindly: 'Ainsi il condamna les paysans de la Souabe et les anabaptistes de Munster, beaucoup moins à cause des désordres dont ils s'étaient rendus coupables, que parce qu'ils ne voulaient pas se renfermer dans le cercle par lui tracé . . . Luther fut le premier obstacle à la réformation de Luther.'[3] No historian has failed to observe that the causes of the success with which the Reformation movement met in Germany were partly social; there had been revolts among the peasantry all through the nineties of the preceding century, and again in 1502, 1513, 1514, and 1517. No historian has been hardy enough to claim that the Reformation, as Luther guided its destinies, did anything substantial to improve the position of the malcontents. If we ask why, the plain answer is that social readjustment did not enter into the circle of ideas traced by Luther and his fellow reformers. 'All the literary supporters of the new learning', Gairdner reminds us, 'supported despotism through thick and thin.'[4]

It is impossible now to gauge—for its records are the records of a defeated party—how much service Anabaptism did in pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for the Reformers. The breaking of images, the looting of churches, the sacking of abbeys for which it made itself responsible helped to break down the old landmarks which connected northern Europe with its Catholic past. Its activities, even where the old Church retained its hold, in Austria and the

[1] Ibid., p. 10. [2] As quoted by Nicole in *Les Visionnaires*, no. 1.
[3] *Sur la littérature anglaise*, époque 5ième. [4] *Lollardy and the Reformation*, iii. 393.

Netherlands, distracted and paralysed the Catholic effort. It is difficult not to believe that in their travels—for the Anabaptist prophets were indefatigable missionaries—men like Melchior Hofmann did a great deal of spade-work by which the Reformers afterwards profited. 'It was the Word', says Luther, 'whilst I slept quietly, and drank my beer with my dear Melanchthon at Arnsdorf, that gave the papacy such a shock as was never given by prince or emperor'.[1] Doubtless—but was not 'the Word' represented by human agents; by the men whom Luther condemned wholesale to the whip and the arquebus, piously adding 'Such wonderful times are these, that one prince can merit heaven better with bloodshed than another with prayer'?[2]

Luther, in fact, when he came out of the Wartburg was in a situation analogous to that of Kerensky at the time of the first Russian revolution. He was on the top; but there were lawless elements supporting him, which he must either undertake to lead and control, at the risk of being thrown over as Kerensky was, or else denounce from the first as having neither part nor lot with him. He decided at once that he would do without the aid of these visionary hot-heads. The decision does credit to his courage, a quality which he never lacked. Whether in doing so he was really true to his commission as the leader of a Protestant Reformation is, as Chateaubriand points out, more questionable.

It must be admitted that, apart from all political and social questions, the teaching of Zwickau was not likely to commend itself to Luther's sympathy. Luther had begun his quarrel with the Papacy as a defender of unorthodox views about indulgences. The logic of the position he thus adopted, combined with the influence of his own Augustinian training, focused his mind thenceforward on the theology of grace and good works; a by-path, and some would say a blind alley, of theology into which all the great figures of the Reformation followed him; so that to us this controversy appears integral to the very nature of Protestantism, whereas in fact it is a side-issue. The Anabaptists, who had drunk in their ideas from an independent, and almost certainly an earlier source, were not interested in predestination. To say, as Dr. McGlothlin says,[3] that 'the Anabaptists were violently Arminian a century before Arminius' is as if a man should say that the younger Pitt was a strong Protection-

[1] Sermons, vol. vii, f. 273. [2] Heath, p. 20.
[3] Art. 'Anabaptists' in *Ency. of Religion and Ethics.*

ist a century before Joseph Chamberlain. It would have been a pure coincidence if the inspiration they derived from their mystical approach to theology had in this respect entered into the circle of ideas traced at Wittenberg. If they had not been at issue, Luther and Munzer would still have been at cross-purposes. Munzer would have swept away indulgences, with the rest of Catholic observances, simply as belonging to 'external' religion; whether and in what sense man could merit was no concern of his. If another voice than Luther's had given the signal for the breaking loose of the discontents which agitated Germany, we might have had a Protestant reformation in which the distinction between supralapsarian and infralapsarian would have remained unheard of.

Whatever were his real grounds of distrust, Luther repudiated the new prophets; and his action was fruitful of results in more directions than one. It left the Anabaptists free to attempt the realization of their theocratic state by violent means; it hardened them in their distrust of learning, their reliance on the inner light. Correspondingly, it cemented from the first that alliance between Church and State which so long governed the outlook of official Protestantism; and it deepened in official Protestantism a contempt for those enthusiastic movements towards which, if it had consulted its own genius, it should have been sympathetic.

It is easy to mistake the Anabaptist attitude towards the State for a kind of Tolstoyan anarchy. Their objections to capital punishment, to tithes, and to all the institutions of property must appear to the modern mind as an anticipation of many disruptive tendencies in our own day; their rigid community life, wherever their little centres flourished, with its strict code of morals, its exercise of discipline over the young, even in the arrangement of marriages, seems to foreshadow nineteenth-century experiments in applied socialism.[1] But such identifications misconceive the whole nature of the Anabaptist protest. Their objection to capital punishment, for example, as Dr. McGlothlin points out,[2] was not based on the ground that it is unlawful to kill men, but on the ground that it is unlawful to kill Christians. 'The Brothers ascribed to the state no Christian character, but regarded it as belonging, with the whole unbelieving world, to the kingdom of darkness. For true Christians magistrates were

[1] For some account of these Anabaptist communities, consult Heath, pp. 68–70, 75

[2] *Ency. of Religion and Ethics.*

unnecessary. . . . The two kingdoms were already in opposition; there could be no doubt which would conquer.'[1] Your true ultra-supernaturalist has no quarrel, properly speaking, with the State as a pagan institution; it may exist, for all he cares, and legislate for its own pagan subjects; meanwhile, he will conform to its laws scrupulously, though under protest. What he cannot understand or pardon is the supposedly Christian State which nevertheless makes a compromise with human nature; enforces only natural rights, appeals to natural sanctions. Such a Christian commonwealth, for example, as that of Zürich in the days of Zwingli's ascendancy was, to the Anabaptists, not a Christian commonwealth at all. It was simply doing its best in an imperfect world; the Anabaptist, believing himself to be already in some sense perfect, could not find himself at home in an imperfect world or in an imperfect State. He fell back on non-resistance, and on a kind of passive citizenship; but all the time his dreams were of a theocracy.

Critics of the movement point to the non-resistance doctrine preached by many of the Anabaptists as inconsistent with the bloodthirsty history of the Peasants' Revolt, or with the butcheries committed by John of Leyden; and their defenders are usually content to reply that a system which grants liberty of prophecy all round will necessarily be at the mercy of contrary 'revelations'.[2] This answer is both true and important; but the real explanation of the inconsistency lies deeper. So long as he is living within the confines of a State governed by worldly men according to the dictates of carnal wisdom—and which of our States is not?—the ultrasupernaturalist outlaws himself, morally, from its constitution. When once a theocratic State is set up, under a 'perfect' ruler, or an army is in the field marshalled by 'perfect' generals, there is danger that he will be not less but more bloodthirsty than is the common wont of 'psychic' men.

When Luther refused to make a common front with the prophets, when Zwingli adopted a similarly intolerant attitude towards the harmless visionaries at Zürich—there was nothing against them except their rejection of Infant Baptism, and had not Zwingli rejected the Real Presence?—the alliance between official Protestantism and the worldly State was, once for all, consolidated. The dream of a theocracy, of putting the Sermon on the Mount into the statute-

[1] Heath, p. 99. [2] Belfort Bax, p. 14.

book, as Geismayr had proposed in the Tyrol,[1] vanished from the horizon of the Reformation. Protestantism everywhere, no less than Catholicism, recognized the right of the imperfect State to rule, appealed to it to put down heresy by violence.

A pale shadow of the theocratic principle survived, indeed, in Knox's Edinburgh and in Calvin's Geneva. Here, and in the Puritan colonies of America, the left wing of the Reformation signalized its ascendancy by enforcing the rigorism of its morals with every available machinery of discipline; by excommunication, or, if that failed, by secular punishment. Under such discipline sin became a crime, to be punished by the elect with an intolerable self-righteousness. And the Presbytery, grim in its dealing with its own subjects, could cultivate an attitude of bloodthirsty ferocity when it went to battle, and had the enemies of the Lord at its mercy. I say, '*cultivate* an attitude'; for the barbarities of the Presbytery did not proceed from human weakness, were not carried out in hot blood. The old Lollard doctrine about dominion being founded on grace still had influence with these reformers of the left wing; their enemies, being unsaved, had lost in their eyes the common rights of humanity.

I have called this rigorist attitude a pale shadow of the theocratic principle, because a full-blooded theocracy demands the presence of a divinely inspired leader or leaders, to whom government belongs by right of mystical illumination. The great Reformers were not, it must be insisted, men of this calibre; they were pundits, men of the new learning; they could appeal to no authority but what might have been claimed, equally well, by Westcott and Hort. Calvin's Geneva, Knox's Scotland, have no touch of that mystical quality which belongs, despite all its outrages and absurdities, to the last agony of Munster. A fanaticism negative in its inspiration looks curiously unlovely outside its own circle of devotees.

The Protestantism of the Reformers had not enough of the prophetic quality about it to carry the day for theocracy. They made friends with the imperfect State, and silenced enthusiasm with arquebuses. They were not, however, hardy enough to justify their attitude by an appeal to the infallibility of the State, as candour demanded that they should. Such thorough-going Gallicanism would have involved awkward corollaries, at a time when so many reigning princes still adhered to the old religion. They appealed, instead, to

[1] Heath, pp. 55 sqq.

the Bible—the Bible interpreted by scholarship; that is, by their own scholarship. To the enthusiast, the Bible is infallible when interpreted by an inspired person. To the Reformers, it possessed an inherent infallibility, and needed only clarification, which was a matter for the learned. This issue, too, was raised and settled when Luther and Munzer faced one another at Wittenberg. Luther was confronted by men drunk with the spirit of prophecy; he wanted them to prove their thesis after the manner of the schools, with *Nego*, *Concedo*, and *Et primo videtur quod non*. Dr. Rufus Jones's comment is admirable:

> As, in his contests with Zwickau prophets, Anabaptists and Spiritualists, he found himself forced to produce a fixed touchstone of faith and a solid authority to take the place left by the old Church, he swung naturally to the dogma of the absolute authority of Scripture; and he laid, without wishing to do so, the foundation for the view of the second generation of Protestantism, that the infallible Scripture is God's final communication to helpless man, and is the ultimate and only basis of authority in religion.[1]

Had the characteristic doctrine after which Anabaptism is named been in question, Luther's ground was ill-chosen. It is not by any means easy to prove the doctrine of Infant Baptism if you are basing your argument on the Bible only, without any appeal to tradition. Luther himself no doubt felt this when he wrote 'This universal agreement of the whole Church about infant baptism is a special miracle; even the heretics acknowledge it. To deny it is to deny the Church itself.'[2] On the brazen effrontery of this appeal to 'the Church' there is no need to comment. The real issue was not infant versus adult baptism, but something which cut much deeper. It was the question whether there should or should not be 'liberty of prophesying'. When the Bible was thrown open to the survey of the ordinary lay Christian, the Protestant assumption was that everybody would be guided by the Holy Spirit to interpret it for himself in the right sense; all God's people would be taught of God. It must have been an awkward moment for Luther when he discovered that men who attracted a large public following in Germany were deriving their inspiration from the Bible, and reading a great deal more into it than he did. There was only one course left to him, that which Dr. Jones indicates; he must appeal from the claim to a living inspiration

[1] *Spiritual Reformers*, p. 12. [2] Heath, p. 5.

to the dead letter of the Bible as it stood. Thenceforward, simple folk might read the Bible for themselves if they could derive any spiritual profit from the exercise; but their rule of faith was not, in fact, to be any private inspiration of their own. They were to be guided by the Scripture as interpreted by Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingli, and Beza, and Knox—by the pundits. To describe this as 'the second generation' of Protestantism is to admit that Protestantism dates back behind Luther; Luther's Protestantism, for the purposes of the enthusiast, was stillborn.

(iv) *Eccentricities of the Sect*

While the Reformers were thus driven back on pure Scripturalism, the Anabaptists (no less careful students of the Bible in their own way) continued to believe that prophetic inspiration was granted them to understand the Word of God aright. 'The Anabaptists', says Belfort Bax, 'in perfectly consistent accordance with their Biblical-Christian theory of things, would admit no break in the conditions of revelation between Biblical and primitive times and the year of grace in which they found themselves. Prophets were as possible in the third and fourth decades of the sixteenth century as they had been in the first century of the Christian era.'[1] Revelation, to them, was progressive, not static; and Joan Bocher laid her finger on a vital difference when she reminded Cranmer at her trial that it was not so many years since they burned Anne Askew 'for a piece of bread'; adding that in the course of time men would come to believe in her own doctrines equally.

It would have been surprising if such general claims to the prophetic gift had not resulted in some irregularities of conduct. While there can be little doubt that the ordinary run of Anabaptists were people of simple and somewhat rigid morality, we can hardly conclude, as Dr. McGlothlin does,[2] that the scandals which attached to the memory of the sect date entirely from the last days in Munster. History abounds with warnings that the mystic who follows his own 'guidance' without any 'check' from outside may easily mistake the stirrings of his own unconscious self, even the baser of them, for inspirations from on high. All the more so, when a doctrine of Perfectionism is popular, as it seems to have been with some of the

[1] Op. cit., p. 165. [2] Art. in *Ency. of Religion and Ethics.*

Anabaptists, and men come to believe themselves actually incapable of sinning. There is nothing inherently improbable (although he gives no statistical details) about Bullinger's assertion that there was a sect of 'Holy and Sinless Baptists', who claimed that the soul was not responsible (in given circumstances) for the sins of the body, and omitted 'Forgive us our trespasses' when they recited the Pater Noster; or that some of the 'Free Brothers', pushing ultrasupernaturalism to its full lengths, would have it that 'women did sin in having intercourse with their husbands who were still heathens, but they did not sin in having intercourse with the brethren'.[1] In isolated cases the convenient hypothesis of lunacy may be invoked, as Heath does over an incident at St. Gall: 'We may safely affirm that Thomas Schugger, who thought himself called upon to cut off his brother's head, was an unfortunate madman, who only needed some exciting cause to make his state of mind apparent.'[2] But psychological impulses outside the province of the strict alienist did, surely, come to the surface under the disguise of inspirations. It is hard for the modern reader not to murmur something about 'exhibitionism' over a recital like the following: 'On February the 11th . . . some Anabaptists having met at a house in Amsterdam, at the call of one named Richard they stripped themselves of their clothes and ran through the streets crying, Woe, woe, woe, the wrath of God, the wrath of God! Brought before the magistrates, they refused to dress. *We*, they said, *are the naked truth.*'[3] We shall find the early Quakers, in a subsequent chapter, 'going naked for a sign'; and the modern Doukhobors have given trouble in the same way to the Canadian police. How widely eccentricities or immoralities prevailed can only be a matter of conjecture; it is not likely that the enemies of the movement (who are our informants) let the tale lose in the telling.

One influence which has often bemused the wits of such enthusiasts, and led to strange irregularities of conduct, was absent (it appears) in Switzerland and southern Germany, whereas it played a great part in the Anabaptism of Holland and of the Rhine countries. This was chiliasm—the conviction that the existing world-order was about to come to an end, and that an earthly millennium, during which the 'saints' would reign, was to succeed it. The impulse to this conviction seems to have been given entirely by that remarkable

[1] Quoted by Belfort Bax, ch. 2. [2] Op. cit., p. 42. [3] Ibid., p. 124.

missionary spirit, Melchior Hofmann. He announced the second coming for the year 1533, and suspended baptisms for two years in order to prepare for it.[1] The choice of date was an obvious one; it is probable that such views have had their vogue at and around each centenary of the Crucifixion. Nicholas of Cusa, giving his readers some three centuries' grace, held that the world would not outlast 1734;[2] and in recent years apocalyptic warnings have not been wanting. (Arthur E. Ware, interviewed in the *Daily Express* of 4 May 1933, foretold that 12 June of that year would be the beginning of a great tribulation, ushering in the millennium.) Hofmann, more fortunate than other prophets in the opportunity of his death, ended his life in prison at Strassburg before the day to which he looked forward. But the apocalyptic spirit survived him; the Munsterite Anabaptists 'predicted a terrible vengeance on the godless before Easter (1534), and that the tenth man should not remain alive except in Munster itself, which, they said, was the city of the Lord and the new Jerusalem'.[3] All chiliastic movements outlive the non-fulfilment of their prophecies; Archdeacon Ebel maintained his credit after the fiasco of the 'marriage feast' at Easter, 1823, and the Adventists were quick to discover a fault in their own calculations after the successive disappointments of 1843 and 1844.[4] Not less obstinately did the garrison of Munster lift up their eyes in expectation to heavens which should have been rent, and remained dumb.

It is difficult to see that the Anabaptist movement had, at any time, an organization to govern it or a unifying principle to hold it together. After John of Leyden it disappears beneath the surface of history; but, as we shall see, it had handed on the torch (in Protestant countries) to other sects which disowned its name, and, as far as conscience would allow, watered down its principles. Its chief historical importance surely lies, as this chapter has tried to suggest, in the recoil of official Protestantism from the very notion or mention of enthusiasm. The idea of a prophetic ministry, native to the Protestant genius, disappears everywhere, and ordained ministries spring up to replace it, no less institutional in character than is the

[1] McGlothlin in *Ency. of Religion and Ethics.*

[2] *Ency. Brit.*, art. 'Cusanus'.

[3] Belfort Bax, p. 258.

[4] Dixon's *Spiritual Wives*, i. 187 sqq.; Mrs. White's *Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, chs. 16 and 17.

Catholic priesthood. The distrust of mysticism which fell upon the Church after the Montanist controversy, and again after the condemnation of Quietism, fell on the Protestant body throughout Europe in 1535; and all the enthusiastic movements which have followed have had to face the same attitude of suspicion which greeted the appearance of the Waldenses and the Beghards.

VIII

GEORGE FOX AND SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PROTESTANTISM

THE Anabaptists were still being persecuted, as we have seen, long after the fall of Munster; or, at least, men and women were persecuted under that name. The early Congregationalists, Barrow, Penry, and Greenwood, were convicted of 'Brownism, Donatism, Anabaptistry, schism, heresy etc.', although they all denied that they were of the proscribed sect, and Greenwood acknowledged infant baptism explicitly when he was examined. They did, indeed, assert clearly the doctrine of the invisible Church. 'I cannot come to your church', says Greenwood, 'because all the profane and wicked of the land are received into the body of your church', and although he does not doubt that God will 'call forth many members of the parish assemblies', he cannot account them faithful while they stand by that membership. But it looks as if Archbishop Whitgift and the commissioners were not too scrupulous about rooting up the wheat with the cockle; and perhaps the author of their Acta[1]—they were hanged in 1593—is justified in the suggestion that the Archbishop might have gone into their case more thoroughly; 'neither yet did the late prelates, in Queen Mary's days, use altogether such severity; for Bonner himself, with the other tyrants of that time, had often conferences and disputes with the martyrs'.

(i) *The Sects under the Commonwealth*

Meanwhile, a host of obscure sects grew up, in England and in Holland, which seem to have derived their inspiration from the Anabaptists, although they were careful to disclaim any tenderness for their more revolutionary sentiments. It was the Mennonites who carried on the main protest, and are claimed as predecessors by the Baptists of our own day. The Collegiants of Amsterdam expounded the notion of the invisible Church very fully in their articles.[2]

[1] *Harl. Misc.*, vol. ii, pp. 10–41. [2] Rufus Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, p. 123.

An external church, they maintain, is a corruption which came in after the death of the apostles: 'Through all the apostasy of the visible church, however, an invisible Church has survived, and preserved the eternal idea. It consists of all those, in whatever ages and lands, who ... have steadily believed that their names were written in heaven.' It is significant that the Reformers, including Menno Simons, are accused of having 'ambitiously undertaken to set up again an authoritative visible church, even though they lacked the gifts of the Spirit for it, and were without the necessary Apostolic commission'.

The Familists or Family of Love, founded by Henry Nicholas, a native of Munster, have definite affinities with the Anabaptists, although they do not appear to have rebaptized. They carried staves but not weapons; they had their marriages arranged for them by the elders—unfriendly rumour, probably taking its starting-point from their name,[1] accused them of sexual communism. When they meet, their meals and lodging are paid for by the master of the house, who is called ⊿ Raab—a mysterious term, which suggests a remote mystical origin. In view of certain tendencies which will reappear later in this chapter, it is interesting to note that Nicholas said the elders of his sect possessed divinity, inasmuch as in them God had again become Man.[2] This is clearly an exaggerated form of the Inward Light doctrine; a doctrine which is implied in all the history of the Anabaptists, although perhaps it only found its formal expression with George Fox. It was no doubt in the same sense that Nicholas, if he has not been misrepresented, claimed to be infallible. It is the position into which the hierophants of enthusiasm are for ever being forced by their own logic; if it is every man's duty to obey the promptings of the Spirit, the ultimate appeal can only be made to the leader of the sect, who thus becomes a Pope *malgré lui*. But it must be confessed that the evidence we have about the tenets of this body are hopelessly contradictory. Nicholas is credited with claiming that his Family superseded the imperfect Church of Christ. Yet Fuller accuses his followers of indulging in the gravest excesses, and pleading that they were not responsible, since they had prayed for grace to resist temptation, and it had been refused them.[3]

[1] Cf. Barclay, *Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth*, p. 26.
[2] Belfort Bax, *Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists*, ch. x.
[3] Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes religieuses* (1829), v. 45, 46.

Nicholas's ideas were imported into the American continent by Samuel Gorton, but for a wonder did not survive there.

A sect equally obscure, which enjoyed the same unenviable reputation, was that of the Ranters. They are frequently mentioned in Fox's Journal, but always as his opponents. In one way, their point of departure was not unlike his. Baxter says they 'made it their business . . . to set up the Light of Nature, under the name of *Christ in Men*, and dishonour and cry down the Church, the Scripture, the present Ministry, and our Worship and Ordinances; and called men to hearken to Christ within them'. So far, Fox could have no grievance against them, except that they had anticipated him. 'But withal, they conjoined a Cursed Doctrine of *Libertinism*, which brought them to all abominable filthiness of life. They taught as the *Familists*, that God regardeth not the Actions of the Outward Man, but of the Heart; and that to the pure all things are pure (even things forbidden). And so, as allowed by God, they spake most hideous Words of Blasphemy', and more to the same effect.[1] The Ranters have left no literature to defend themselves, and they must perforce remain under the imputations which their contemporaries freely make against them—that their meetings were a kind of witches' sabbat, in which (it was said) they danced naked together; that they were openly immoral and obstinately blasphemous; one of them said in a public discourse that he knew of no difference between God and the devil.[2] Christ, they said, had fulfilled the moral law, and it was no longer binding.[3] Baxter certainly regards the irregularities of their behaviour as due to antinomian conviction, not to mere hypocrisy; he describes them as a warning 'whither the spiritual pride of ungrounded Novices in Religion tendeth; and whither Professors of Strictness in Religion may be carried in the Stream of Sects and Factions'.[4]

Bickley, in his biography of Fox, gives a list of the principal sects which flourished in the middle of the seventeenth century, and after mentioning the Baptists says: 'The Ranters or Seekers, among whom Fox found his readiest followers, were an offshoot of this body.'[5] It would be hard to write a sentence more misleading. It is natural, as we shall see, to trace the ancestry of the Seekers and

[1] Baxter's *Narrative of his Life* (1696), i. 76. [2] Belfort Bax, op. cit., pp. 368 sqq.
[3] Bickley, *George Fox and the Early Quakers* (1884), p. 39.
[4] Op. cit., p. 77. [5] Bickley, op. cit., p. 39.

Ranters from the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. But the Baptists of Fox's time were not a direct continuation, they were themselves an 'offshoot' of the Anabaptists, by way of Menno Simons, and their relation to the other sects we have been considering was hardly more than one of cousinship. And, moreover, all the evidence we have is against identifying the Seekers with the Ranters. Baxter gives them an entirely different *dossier*. They taught, he says, 'that our Scripture was uncertain; that present miracles are necessary to faith; that our Ministry is null and without authority, and our Worship and Ordinances unnecessary or vain; the true Church, Ministry, Scripture and Ordinances lost; for which they are now seeking'.[1] This gives a perfectly reasonable account of their attitude; they were simply waif and stray Anabaptists, looking for light; the sun of their faith had set, blood-red, at Munster, and they were waiting for the portent which should tell them that it had risen again. That Fox found his readiest followers among these is intelligible enough; wherever he goes he finds people half-prepared to listen to him; not the Ranters assuredly, who were for ever trying to shout him down. This was the religion, if we may trust Fuller's *Church History*, of Bartholomew Legat and Edward Wightman, who were burnt for heresy in 1612. Wightman was accused of a long string of heresies, including Manicheism and Anabaptism,[2] and claimed to be himself the Holy Spirit promised in the Scriptures.[3] Both denied the Trinity; but this does not seem to have been uncommon among the partisans of the Inner Light.

(ii) *Fox and his Background*

Into this underworld of discredited sects, with the air of a liberator, strides in the giant figure of George Fox. These muddy pools of forlorn controversy shall be the culture from which new life is to be infused into the religion of England. It is a hundred years, almost, since England began to be Protestant in the full sense; and still these obscure sects have lived on; they are ready to come out of their lurking-places, now that the stern hand of Stuart repression has been withdrawn, and the victory of the parliament-men promises—perhaps—freedom of conscience. Optimist Seeker and pessimist Ranter, Fox has a message for them both. Of all this Baxter gives

[1] Baxter, op. cit., p. 76.
[2] Collier's *Ecclesiastical History*, part ii, book viii.
[3] Lingard, vol. ix, ch. iii.

you no hint; for him the Quakers are just one sect among the others. They are 'but the Ranters turned from horrid Prophaneness and Blasphemy, to a Life of extreme Austerity on the other side'—as if the difference implied were some subtle nuance of theology. 'Their doctrines were mostly the same with the Ranters; they make the Light which every Man hath within him to be a sufficient Rule, and consequently the Scripture and Ministry are set light by; they speak much of the dwelling and working of the Spirit in us; but little of Justification, and the Pardon of Sin, and our Reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ', and so on.[1] To Baxter the Quakers are just one more sect when there are enough already.

But you cannot dispose of George Fox like that. His stature is somehow heroic. Allow, if you will, for a certain amount of exaggeration when he tells you, in the *Journal*, how instantaneous were the effects of his preaching, how easily he put his adversaries to silence; discount the egotism, if you can call it egotism, of a man wholly absorbed in his mission. Remember only that this is a man, full of scruples and questionings in his youth, who without (it seems) any agonies of conversion has emerged into a state of complete spiritual equilibrium, is sure of himself in all companies and upon all occasions. Watch him walking barefoot through the streets of a cathedral town, ingeminating 'Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield', interrupting the sermons of the ministers—priests, he uniformly calls them—in their steeple-houses, and preaching at them from the floor of the Church, allowing street-boys to pelt him and roll him in the mud, lecturing the magistrates when he appears before them, refusing to eat meat with the Lord Protector after his interview. Call him Don Quixote if you will, but remember St. Ignatius. . . . And his companions, how they multiply, how they develop into lesser replicas of himself! They go everywhere; they try to convert the Pope, they try to convert the Sultan. In a fury of disagreement with all they see around them they carry the stout protest of their covered heads before magistrates and councils, before kings and princes of the earth.

It is all a different world-picture, not fitting in with ours; not fitting in, outwardly at least, with the world-picture of those other Quakers of a later age whom we admire in their turn, but for different reasons. The devil seems to be let loose; principalities and powers

[1] Baxter, op. cit., p. 77.

not of this world dispute, with Fox, his empire over souls. His editors have been accused of toning down this effect; where he claims, in one or two passages, to have unmasked a witch, they have substituted 'a wicked woman' in the edition of 1765, when Glanvil and Aubrey no longer had credit.[1] But you cannot get rid of the impression by altering a word here and there; he moves in a world of cloudy ideals, dressed in cloudy language, as in a dream. And yet his dream has hard edges of reality; he founds a great sect, points the way to social reforms which were to make its name for ever honourable.

How much he was an original genius, how much the product of his own milieu, is a question which presents no common difficulty. Miss Rachel Knight, in a gallant attempt at posthumous psycho-analysis,[2] gives him credit for abnormal sensitivity; but who shall tell us how many mute inglorious Foxes may have shared it, or what the chances were that it would be deflected in some frivolous, perhaps mischievous, direction? His original contribution to mysticism, she tells us,[3] was that inspiration may be the property not of an individual but of an assembled group, so that each speaker 'expresses the combined spirit of the gathering'. But the discovery, for whatever it is worth, is more likely to have been made by gradual experiment than by a sudden revelation, nor is there any evidence that Fox himself claimed to have had a revelation of the kind. If the truth must be told, the thoughts which sprang unbidden to his mind, though they impressed him profoundly, were commonly of a quite uninformative character. It is even doubtful how far, in these very earliest days, we should regard Fox as the leader of the new movement. It was not, perhaps, until Nayler challenged his position that he became, consciously, a hierophant. His instinct was to roam the country-side, cross-fertilizing hearts here and there with the pollen of a doctrine which was not his so much as everybody's. And nothing is more remarkable than the stout individuality of the early Friends. If Fox had died young, he would have been less irreplaceable, you feel, than Wesley.

Fox, then, is of his world; but how are we to reconstruct a picture of that world with the data at our disposal? Both he and the other early Quakers are terribly slipshod when they take to authorship;

[1] *Retrospective Review* (1825), vol. i, first article.

[2] Rachel Knight, *The Founder of Quakerism* (London, 1922).

[3] p. 37.

theirs is an apocalyptic style in which sense and grammar go by the board. You will hardly get a plain story out of them; still less will you persuade them to describe what England under the Commonwealth felt like to live in. They were not journalists. What emerges is a strange underworld of religiosity, a *petite bourgeoisie* that has gone mad on its own orthodoxies, and crowds to a theological discussion as eagerly as men yesterday crowded to a bear-fight. The strong controls of the Laudian government had been withdrawn, and England was revelling in a new-found freedom of debate; so, I have been told, in the months that immediately followed the Russian revolution, citizens of Petrograd would stand about the streets making interminable political speeches—you could not stop them talking. It must have seemed as if the Puritan divines, after a century of repression, had come into their own. But they reckoned without one thing, the Englishman's incurable dislike of dogma.

Whether Christ died for all, whether his merits were imparted or imputed, whether the decrees which fixed man's destiny were conditional or unconditional—what did it all matter, so long as a man in a leather apron stood beside you with the offer of Light, to be had for the asking, that made you deiform? I think Fox's easy triumph over the priests in their steeple-houses, over the 'professors' who stood up for the sects in which they had been nurtured, was partly due to the fact that he had his audience with him beforehand; they did not love the Reformed clergy, and were glad to see them put down, even with bludgeon-arguments. Quakerism here, like Anabaptism on the Continent, offered you an Evangelical standard of living, and at the same time by-passed theology; the simple Englishman asked for nothing better. I do not mean stupid people, who shrank from intellectual effort; I mean good souls, who felt instinctively that religion was running to dogma. The Cambridge Platonists were of the same way of thinking, and they were not stupid.

(iii) *Fox and Religious Toleration*

Meanwhile, we must not read subsequent history into Fox's own life. 'No grander thing', wrote Carlyle, 'was ever done than when George Fox, stitching himself a suit of leather, went forth determined to find truth for himself, and to do battle for it against all superstition, bigotry, and intolerance.'[1] He did not go out to find truth;

[1] Quoted on the front page of Bickley, op. cit.

he had found, or thought he had found it. He did not go out with the intention of fighting superstition; you might almost say that he went out to fight against the absence of it—the people whom he most antagonized, who most antagonized him, were those who were comfortably wrapped up in a materialist outlook. And as for tolerance, it is difficult to see how any historian can mention the word in the same breath with him. True, he protested against the persecution which he and his fellow Quakers had to undergo; all persecuted sects do as much. But it is not at all clear that if Cromwell had resigned the Protectorship in his favour George Fox would have tolerated the steeple-houses; certainly not the tithe. Roger Williams claimed to have pinned him down on this question. Asked 'If the magistrate be in the light and discern the mind of Christ and discern his law, is he to compel all the nation and Commonwealth to the practice of his light?' Fox was compelled to answer: 'If he is in the light and power of Christ, he is to subject all under the power of Christ into his light.'[1] And, whatever we may think of these imaginary suppositions, it is quite certain that Fox did not *tolerate*, in the sense of allowing other people to go their own way, to follow the light which was in them if it conflicted with the light which was in him. 'There is scarce a scold heard among us in seven years' time', Baxter complains 'that useth so many railing words . . . as these people will use familiarly in their religious exercises against the faithful servants of Christ.'[2] Quakerism, from the first, had no sympathy with coercion. But it did not tolerate; agitation, of its very nature, is intolerant.

There remains, of Carlyle's analysis, the leather suit; actually it was a pair of breeches. We may take it for a symbol of that rigorism which was essential to the Quaker system; Quakerism was a protest, throughout, against worldliness, and as such it has been interpreted, rather crudely, in the English literary tradition; one thinks of Quakerism as a kind of exaggerated Puritanism. Well, in a sense it was; it had shibboleths of behaviour which were all its own, marked it out among the sects. It does no harm to a new sect to have one or two such peculiarities; they intrigue the inquirer, test the novice, save the initiated from living too much up in the clouds. And mere strictness of moral code would not, at that date, have

[1] Waddington, *Congregational History, 1567–1700*, p. 649.
[2] *One Sheet against the Quakers*, p. 4.

singled out Quakerism from rival denominations. Puritanism had just come to its own, after its long protest against the cakes and ale of the Stuart régime; it pervaded the sects, a not over-lovely, somewhat negative spirit, which partly reflected the prejudices of a bourgeois class. To dance at the maypole, to watch bear-baiting, was not only something wicked, it was something vulgar. Fox, or the inner light which guided him, could not easily have invented a rigorist framework for his Society which would have been more than a mirror of contemporary moral ideals, except by grafting on one or two oddities of behaviour. Which is what he did; we all know that Quakers did not swear oaths, called each other 'thee' instead of 'you', kept their hats on when their hats should have been removed, and so forth. There was to be a rigorism about the Society of Friends, but it should be an eccentric rigorism. As such, I cannot resist the impression that it goes back to the Anabaptists; to the spirit, if not the letter, of their strange doctrine.

Where the oath is concerned, the point hardly needs making. We have seen that some, at least, of the medieval heretics refused to take oaths, and that the Anabaptists in general revived, or inherited, the tradition. It may be argued, of course, that Fox knew nothing of all this; that he derived his principles from the Sermon on the Mount, and from St. James (v. 12). But it must be remembered that the taboo in question was a very embarrassing one, for sectaries who were constantly being put on their trial. And Fox, though he knew his Bible and knew how to use it in controversy, was not a man to be tied down to the letter of a text while he had the inner light to interpret it by. Yet it seems to have been an understood thing from the first that Quakers did not take oaths; an understood thing, not a revelation or a discovery. It was not that Fox revived, deliberately, one of the medieval taboos. He had grown up in a world which unconsciously retained the Anabaptist culture; in that world, if you turned religious, you gave up taking oaths; it was a matter of course, as it is a matter of course, in the modern Puritan culture, that if you turn religious you give up the use of strong drink.

The Quaker principle of non-resistance (which condemns religious intolerance, and equally the bearing of arms) is on a quite different footing. It was not part of the original deposit; many of the early Friends fought with the Roundhead armies, and cheerfully;

they were weeded out, not because they were suspected of soft-heartedness, but because they were identified with the Levellers. It was upon this occasion, in the year 1657, that Fox published a manifesto which can only be described as a protest against toleration in religion. If the army of the Commonwealth had been faithful to the power of the Lord which first carried it on, it would have forced the Pope to give up the Inquisition, and the Mahometans to abandon their 'idolatry'.[1] Yet in 1660 he writes: 'All bloody principles and practices we (as to our own particular) do utterly deny, with all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever.'[2] The case was altered.

Miss Brailsford is content to explain this change of front by the bitter experience of persecution which the Friends had undergone in the meantime, and no doubt there is truth in her judgement.[3] But perhaps the inconsistency is not so grave as it appears, if we study the Anabaptist background of the Quaker movement. We saw in the last chapter that the Anabaptists did not really hold modern views about non-resistance. Their doctrine was, not that nobody has a right to take the sword, but that no worldly person has a right to take the sword. Dominion is founded on grace; if you are not in a state of grace you have, strictly speaking, no rights, and therefore no authority either to govern or to make war—least of all on the saints. But what if the saints contrive to set up the theocratic kingdom which is, always, the subject of their dreams? Is it so clear that they have no right to enforce their own superior enlightenment on the world? The Peasants' Revolt and the defence of Munster give the answer to your question.

The victory of Cromwell's arms, at home and abroad, must have seemed to the depressed underworld of seventeenth-century England a fulfilment of prophecy; the theocratic kingdom was in being. A crusade against the Antichrist of Rome and the False Prophet would be, to the apocalyptically-minded, the obvious next step. And Fox, in his early period, was beyond doubt apocalyptically-minded; he did not know yet what manner of spirit he was of. But the dream of theocracy faded; persecution of the Friends under the Commonwealth was good proof that the millennium had not come yet; you were still back in the old, unregenerate world,

[1] Brailsford, *A Quaker from Cromwell's Army*, p. 24.
[2] Ibid., p. 28. [3] Ibid., p. 25.

with its vain appeal to the arm of flesh. No attitude was possible, in this unsupernatural state of society, but to preach and to practise the doctrine of non-resistance. I do not mean to suggest that Fox himself, or his spiritual descendants, accepted that doctrine with any mental reservation. But it was Fox's second thought, not his first; his first thought was that not he only but mankind about him had 'come up into the Paradise of God'; the millennium was round the corner.

(iv) *Quaker Eccentricities*

Something else of Anabaptism clings to the atmosphere of the early Friends, only it is hard to define. I mean a note of simplicity, almost of boorishness. The use of 'thee' and 'thou' seems to have been dictated by a revelation, and it is no doubt true that Fox disliked the singular 'you' as being ungrammatical, and therefore untruthful.[1] The Quakers, as Lamb has pointed out,[2] had to be more careful about truth than other men, because their word had to do instead of their bond. But he disliked it more because it was a polite usage, which emphasized class differences. So was the custom of taking off your hat in the presence of a superior. Fox had the Evangelical-democratic instinct of the Anabaptists, a thing Luther never understood.

It is a spirit which has some kinship with the Franciscan. And it is interesting to note that Baxter thought the Franciscans were at the bottom of it. Of the Seekers he writes, 'I quickly found that the Papists principally hatched and actuated this Sect', but his information about the Quakers is more precise. 'Many Franciscan Friars and other Papists have been proved to be disguised Speakers in their Assemblies, and to be among them; and it's like they are the very Soul of all these horrible Delusions.'[3] To be sure, there was proof. 'A man in Bristol laid information in January, 1654, that he had been told by one Coppinger, an Irishman, that while in Rome he had been a Franciscan friar, and that the Quakers of the Quakers in London were friars';[4] it would be hard to imagine evidence more conclusive. Samuel Butler (of *Hudibras*) makes Prynne responsible for the same charge; he is represented as calling John Audland a 'Quaking Quack, Jesuitical Romish Franciscan Frog, see my *Quaker*

[1] Bickley, op. cit., p. 29.
[2] Essay on *Imperfect Sympathies*.
[3] Baxter, *Life*, pp. 76, 77.
[4] Bickley, op. cit., p. 115 note.

Unmasked, p. 1'.[1] We shall find Jesuits, later, among the disciples of John Wesley.

Whether or no the Quakers derived any of their rigorism from the Anabaptists, they certainly resemble them in their enthusiasm, and in the effects it produces—warnings, exorcisms, judgements, miraculous healings, and so on. 'There is no doubt Fox was perfectly earnest in believing that he had power both to work miracles and to discern spirits. . . . As the discerning of spirits was a gift claimed by many of the Anabaptists, Fox's pretensions excited no surprise'—Bickley is well inspired in thus calling attention to the milieu in which Fox moved, and its habits of thought.[2] It was only to be expected that, in such a milieu, religious 'convincements' would be accompanied and attested by strange spiritual manifestations. 'I was taken with the Power', Aldam writes to Fox, 'in a great trembling in my head and all of the one side while I was speaking to them.'[3] And the Lancashire Petition, uncontradicted by Nayler and Fox, claims against the Quakers that 'Men, women and little children at their meetings are strangely wrought upon in their bodies, and brought to fall, foam at the mouth, roar and swell in their bellies.'[4] It must be repeated once more that such similarities are no *guarantee* of historic continuity; they seem to be almost normal concomitants of enthusiasm. But a world which produced and welcomed such portents was probably one which Fox found ready-made for him, under the influence of those lesser sects which have perished. It should be added that these more violent symptoms of convincement only belong to the very early days. Baxter, writing in 1664, admits that 'At first they did use to fall into violent Tremblings and sometimes Vomitings in their meetings, and pretended to be violently acted by the Spirit; but now that is ceased, they only meet, and he that pretendeth to be moved by the Spirit speaketh; and sometimes they say nothing, but sit an hour or more in silence, and then depart.'[5]

It must be confessed, too, that the early Quakers reproduce some of the more disconcerting characteristics of Anabaptist prophesying. Not that they were millenarians, although James Milner, in 1652, to Fox's annoyance, prophesied that the world was to come to an

[1] *The Independents against the Quakers.* [2] Bickley, op. cit., p. 104.
[3] Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 73.
[4] Ibid., p. 108. [5] Baxter, op. cit., p. 77.

end in December.[1] But the great unsettlement of the times in which they lived, their persecutions, and the occurrence of the Plague and Fire in London, produced an atmosphere of catastrophe; and they were very free in the denunciations and woes which they uttered against persons or places. Their most startling, and not their most edifying method of foretelling judgements was to run through the streets completely naked; which was, as we have seen, an Anabaptist trick.[2] Fox is already defending this practice in 1652; in 1661, an official report to the Government seems to regard it as a common sight in Yorkshire; at least two instances are known in which such demonstrations were made by women, though one of these was not officially a member of the Society.[3] Roger Williams complained, from the New World, that a woman named Deborah Wilson was 'constrained', apparently by her fellow members of the Society, to walk naked through the streets of Salem.[4] That 'going naked for a sign' went unreproved by Fox and the other leaders is good proof of their loyalty to the inner light, but is not calculated to reassure posterity.

A curious feature of the Quaker enthusiasm is the practice of fasting for long periods, apparently at moments of difficulty or decision. It cannot be shown, I think, to have an Anabaptist origin; but it belongs to Quaker pre-history, for Fox, when he was only just beginning his mission, made an expedition to Lancashire to see a woman who had fasted for twenty-two days; he told her she was under a temptation.[5] Fox himself disapproved of public fasts, as they were then enjoined by the Government at times of national emergency.[6] But, at least in the early days, it seems to have been common, even children being capable of a twenty days' fast;[7] and Fox himself 'was in a fast of ten days' when troubled over Milner's eccentricities.[8] Nayler, at his trial, was asked 'How long hast thou lived without any corporal sustenance, having perfect health?', and replied 'Some fifteen or sixteen days, sustained without any other food than the word of God.'[9] It is strange that they never hit upon the modern expedient of fasting by way of protest in times of persecution.

[1] Braithwaite, op. cit., p. 147. [2] See above, p. 136.
[3] Bickley, op. cit., p. 100 and note; also pp. 184, 204.
[4] Waddington, op. cit., p. 648. [5] Bickley, op. cit., p. 22. [6] Ibid., p. 154.
[7] Braithwaite, op. cit., p. 372; Bickley, op. cit., p. 154 note.
[8] Ibid., p. 102. [9] *Harl. Misc.* vi. 424 sqq.

(v) *The Inner Light*

There are traces, in those early days, of the Lollard contempt for human wisdom and learning. The title of a tract by Fisher, *Rusticus ad Academicos*, sufficiently defines the attitude; it is the old German notion of Karsthans, the typical peasant, who demolishes the clever arguments of the priesthood by native wit.[1] At Durham, Fox tells us, 'there was a man come down from London, to set up a College there to make ministers for Christ, as they said. I went with some others to reason with the man and let him see, That to teach men Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and the seven arts, which was all but the teachings of the natural man, was not the way to make them ministers of Christ.'[2] Rest assured that Fox did not really reason, did not really let them see; he just told them. The natural man, the 'psychic' man of the Montanists, could always be put down by the 'pneumatic' man, with the inner light which prayer afforded him. And this seems to have been, in general, Fox's quarrel with the clergy of his day, with their steeple-houses and their tithe; they had no right to teach religion publicly unless they could claim the inner light; they were frauds who must be exposed. Not that, evidently, Fox had any use for a visible Church; he repudiated it as firmly as the Anabaptists, and went beyond them in dispensing with visible sacraments. One is tempted to feel that in this he was logical, beyond the wont of the sectaries.

It is, indeed, difficult to dispense with the sacraments if you accept the plain words of Scripture as your rule of faith. But Fox's attitude towards Scripture was that of the Anabaptists, not that of the Reformers.[3] It is true that he was always ready, and fully competent, to chop texts with the higgling controversialists of his time; he could higgle with the best of them. If you questioned his repudiation of baptism, he referred you to 1 Corinthians i. 14, 'I thank God that I baptized none of you', in flat defiance of the context, and went away satisfied.[4] The truth is that if you adopt the inner light as your rule of faith, it necessarily supersedes and (if need be) overrides the authority of Scripture. Fox could not look upon the Bible as a collection of title-deeds, from which you derive your warrant for

[1] Cf. Braithwaite, op. cit., p. 294. [2] Ibid., p. 261.

[3] Thus he interrupts a preacher at Nottingham by saying 'It is not the Scripture, it is the Holy Spirit by which holy men of old gave forth the Scripture, by which religions . . . are to be tried'. Barclay, op. cit., p. 210. [4] Bickley, op. cit., p. 151.

this or that; he was living *in* the Bible, his prophecies, his convincements, his power of reading hearts, were simply the continuation of what had been going on sixteen centuries before. Nayler's words, used by him in a letter to a friend and quoted against him at his trial, hardly went beyond Quaker orthodoxy, 'He that expecteth to be saved by Jesus Christ that died at Jerusalem shall be deceived';[1] the Christ to whom you must pin your faith was a Christ still working at Lancaster as at Jerusalem; a living Christ, not a Testator. So Howgill complains that the Seekers were 'missing Christ the substance, and teaching a religion which was all at a distance, grounded on the report of Christ dying at Jerusalem'.[2] The early Quakers were saturated in the Bible; but they did not treat it as a hieratic document, because they felt they were part of it.[3]

Illuminist doctrines agree well with perfectionism—with the doctrine, that is, that the genuine Christian either can become, or has *ex hypothesi* become, above sin-level. Fox's own experience when he was 'made over again' is well known: 'Now was I come up in spirit, through the flaming sword, into the paradise of God. All things were new, and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness, innocency, and righteousness, being renewed up into the image of God by Christ Jesus, so that I was come up into the state of Adam, which he was in before he fell.'[4] And he definitely taught that perfection was attainable on earth.[5] As we shall see, to live by the inner light is in some sense to be divinized, to *realize* the dwelling of God's Spirit in us; and a theology untrammelled by the traditions of orthodox Christianity will naturally interpret this as meaning that sin has become impossible to us.

How are we to understand this doctrine of the inner light, which is so characteristic of Quakerism; and where did Fox get it from? The second part of the question hardly admits of an answer; notions so far-reaching as this float about like thistledown, and germinate none knows how. It has been conjectured that Fox may have been indebted, like Muggleton, to the influence of Jacob Boehme,[6] and it is true that there was a small sect of Behmenists, as

[1] *Harl. Misc.* vi. 436. [2] Braithwaite, op. cit., p. 97.
[3] Cf. Dr. Rufus Jones, quoted above, p. 134.
[4] *Journal*, p. 17 (edition of 1694).
[5] Bickley, op. cit., pp. 22, 42.
[6] Williamson, *Lodowick Muggleton* (privately printed), p. 27.

Baxter calls them, to be found in England at the time.[1] But it was a very small sect; and it is not likely to have attracted Fox; he was not a theologizer, like Muggleton. It seems more likely that the doctrine, so far as it had a parentage, evolved from that legacy of ideas which Anabaptism had left behind it. We have seen that the Anabaptists, like the Montanists, refused to regard the history of prophecy as a closed chapter.[2] To Fox himself, his teaching was not a legacy but an inspiration. It was revealed to him 'that there was a mystical, but Divine, light in the hearts of men; a light which would, if followed honestly and steadily, infallibly lead to God: and that without the aid of either the Bible or any ordinances'.[3] He saw it 'in the pure openings of the light, without the help of any man'; too good a mystic to recoil from a vicious circle in logic, he held on the authority of the inner light the doctrine of the inner light's authority.

How, then, does this light manifest itself? It is not, evidently, for the profane to describe such things. I will only put down here what I suppose will be accepted as a rough explanation of what interior illumination means.

Most of us, before now, have had the experience of being determined for or against a course of action by a kind of impulse which we can only describe negatively, by saying that it did not proceed from any conscious calculation on our part. Everything was to be said, and had been said, for Course A, but we took Course B; we had an intuition (a hunch, if we are talking American) that it was the right course. It is a rare experience with most of us, and generally determines us against, rather than for, action. Socrates, who according to Plato had frequent experience of this feeling, which he called 'the preternatural thing', said that it always forbade, never commanded.[4] Perhaps the psychologist would tell us that it is an uprush from the unconscious, or it may be the pre-conscious, but that cannot be helped—the thing is there, and we are not concerned, for the moment, to assign any validity to it, only to characterize it.

Some of us, still more rarely, have perhaps had the experience of making a sudden departure in the course of conversation, which, looking back on it, we could not account for. Somebody asked for advice, in circumstances which gave us no leisure for thought, and the answer that seemed to 'come into our heads' was neither the

[1] Baxter, op. cit., p. 77.
[2] See p. 128, above.
[3] Bickley, op. cit., p. 27.
[4] Plato, *Phaedrus* 242 and elsewhere.

answer which, two minutes later, reason framed for us, nor the answer we should have expected ourselves to give. Or, carried away in the heat of an argument, we stated our own point of view, hit at the roots of the other man's case, with a suddenness that took ourselves by surprise; the tongue seemed to speak before the brain had had time to work. Looking back on it, we call it (with our modern habit of using words in an emasculated sense) an 'inspiration' It just came to us; we cannot account for it.

So far, I hope we all have the good sense to class it vaguely as an odd experience, and not to weary our friends with the recital of it. But now, suppose that a man (or, God knows, a woman) has rather frequent experiences of this sort; evidently we are not all alike in our make-up, where the abnormal is concerned. Suppose that such a man is one who has been trying to live very close to God; that his temper is such as to prefer, in his prayer, a vague approach which owes little to discursive meditation. It is easy to see that such a man will be inclined, rightly or wrongly, to give a religious explanation of his experiences. The choice here which seemed, not made, but dictated to him; the word spoken there which sprang from some prompting not consciously his own—is it not to be supposed that they came from a direct action of the Holy Spirit on his mind? No doubt they came in by the same door as much else that is too trivial to demand such an explanation; but may not a divine impulse enter by the same door of the mind as is used by less welcome intruders? The protests of the psychologist do not shake him.

And now, having discovered that these uncharted voyages of the mind have begun to affect, even to regulate, his course of daily action, he will tend to attach considerable importance to them; especially since, here and there, his promptings have led to good results, for himself or others. He will begin to contrast the actions which he has taken under this mysterious guidance with the actions which have been merely the fruit of human wisdom or worldly considerations, to the disadvantage of the latter. If he is a Catholic, he will at this point discuss his symptoms with a spiritual director, to be met (at least at first) with veiled incredulity and gentle dissuasion. If he owns no such allegiance, he is more likely to keep his own counsel, or resort to sympathetic advisers. He begins to contrast the natural with the supernatural, the psychic with the pneumatic; his natural gifts of wisdom and prudence are despised,

and their deliveries suspected. They in their turn must dress themselves up in the trappings of the unconscious, disguise themselves as heavenly visitants before they can be heeded. Long silences are preferred to speech, sudden decisions to deliberation. The light that shines from within has become, or seems to have become, the sole arbiter of action. . . . I have been told before now of a young man, the devotee of a later illuminist movement, who protested that he would never so much as cross the street unless he had a guidance about it. That is, perhaps, an exaggerated attitude, but I do not know why the logic of faith should not demand it.

(vi) *Quaker Neglect of Theology*

This doctrine of the inner light was the only positive assertion the Friends were prepared to make. That is the extraordinary thing about Barclay's *Apology*.[1] Here you have a large quarto volume of 500 pages, setting out fifteen propositions and defending them, a formidable corpus of polemic. But upon closer analysis you find that it is wholly negative, you might almost say wholly destructive, in intention. The whole gist of the matter lies in the second proposition, 'Concerning immediate revelation', which boldly asserts the superiority of the inner light to tradition, Scripture, and reason itself. In the following article the Scriptures are allowed to take rank as a 'secondary rule', but only in the sense that they never contradict the inner light—if they appear to, you must suspect a faulty translation. In point of fact, Barclay is always proving the existence of the inner light from the Scriptures themselves; a man of his age could not get away from the habit of text-chopping. But in theory, since the Scriptures depended upon revelation for their authority, revelation must needs claim the primacy; between the revelation which gave us the Bible, and the revelation granted to seventeenth-century children of the light, Barclay could see no difference at all.

We expect after this to be given an exposé of Quaker beliefs, as guaranteed by the evidence of the inner light, together with proof that these do not conflict with the secondary rule of scriptural orthodoxy. But the hope remains unrealized; what follows is a criticism of current Reformation theology, supported by such

[1] *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, Being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrines of the People called Quakers*, 8th ed. (Baskerville), 1765.

arguments as would occur, and would appeal, to a reverent Unitarian. The old Anabaptist preoccupations are everywhere discernible, as when you read in the summary (though not in the body) of the fourth proposition about the errors 'of the Papists, and most Protestants, who affirm that man without the true grace of God may be a true minister of the Gospel'. And when the Sacraments have been disposed of, our author descends all at once from the general to the particular. His fourteenth proposition is directed against religious persecution, his fifteenth defends the Quaker attitude about social usages and worldly enjoyments—you are reminded that this is, after all, no *Summa Theologiae*, but a polemical treatise with its own background of controversy.

Barclay's treatment is courageously scholastic. He does not even shirk the obvious difficulty, What can guarantee to us the validity of these intuitions by which the Quaker lives? 'The Divine revelation', he says,[1] 'and inward illumination, is that which is evident and clear of itself; forcing, by its own evidence and clearness, the well-disposed understanding to assent, irresistibly moving the same thereunto, even as the common principles of natural truths do move and incline the mind to a natural assent; as, *That the whole is greater than its part, That two contradictories can neither be both true, nor both false.*' Excellent; but what are, precisely, the theological tenets which all well-disposed persons agree in holding as self-evident? Have we, in fact, that kind of certainty even about the existence of God? Admirable in form, the Quaker revelation will remain (on this showing) almost wholly lacking in content; at the best, we shall be able to point to a few principles of pagan morality and claim, for these, the authority of a Divine light. To escape this inconvenience, you can only narrow down the list of 'well-disposed' persons until it includes a mere handful of your own fellow sectaries. In spite of appearances, Richard Baxter cannot really be well disposed.

Fox did not theorize about the inner light; he walked in it, and was not satisfied until he saw others walking in it. Perhaps it is partly responsible for the barbarous difficulties of his style; he spoke or wrote down his message as it came to him—as it came to him through that narrow door of the unconscious, which blows away the niceties of grammar. It brought him inspiration rather than revelation; he did not pry into the other world, like Swedenborg.

[1] Summary of Proposition II.

When you read of a voice which seemed to say to him, 'All things come by nature', followed, after an interval of heart-searching, by another voice which said 'There is a living God, who made all things',[1] you do not feel that he has penetrated very deep into the mysteries; he has only taken the step which theologians expect of the Hottentot. For the mystic, the value of his experience is rather the depth with which he realizes what is made known to him than the communication itself, which is all he can hand on to us.

Occasionally, Fox's inspirations puzzled himself. It was so on the famous occasion of his visit to Lichfield. The sight of its three spires 'struck at his life', which is Fox's idiom where modern slang would say that it 'got right in amongst him'. He ran, it appears, for several miles; left his shoes in charge of a party of shepherds, and walked into the town barefoot, crying: 'Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield.' When he got back to the shepherds 'the fire of the Lord was so in my feet and all over me, that I did not matter to put my shoes on again, and was at a stand whether I should do so or no, till I felt a freedom of the Lord to do so'. He wondered afterwards why he should have been impelled to make this demonstration at Lichfield of all places, and was greatly comforted by the discovery that a thousand Christians were martyred there in the time of Diocletian.[2] If the field where he met the shepherds was Christianfield, the story is certainly an intriguing one. But one is inclined to ask whether Fox was never told, as a boy, how one of the last executions for heresy took place at Lichfield only a dozen years before he was born; that of Edward Wightman, mentioned above as an 'Anabaptist', and probably a Seeker.[3] Such a possibility at least attracts the attention of the psychologist.

But, whatever base metal such inspirations may be alloyed with, men can live by them. They were, it would seem, the staple food of the early Quaker community. The silence observed at meetings of the Friends, which has seemed to their successors a gracious exercise of prayer, was to them only a waiting for prayer. We hear of an occasion when Fox faced a large congregation for several hours without opening his mouth, because he was 'commanded to

[1] Bickley, op. cit., p. 26. [2] Ibid., pp. 53, 54.

[3] See above, p. 142. Lingard puts the scene of the execution at Norwich, but presumably by an error: cf. Collier's *Ecclesiastical History*, book ii, ch. viii.

famish them from words'.[1] There was no ministry; all the Lord's people were prophets, women as well as men, but they must speak when and as the light enabled them to speak. Such a religious system has one obvious disadvantage; who is to judge whether the prophesyings come from God, or have some unworthier source? On what principle is the leader of the sect to claim a higher degree of inspiration than his followers, and consequently the right to control them?

This danger is all the more real because of a peculiar fantasy to which the illuminist temper is liable. The prophet may come to think that he (or she) is Jesus Christ. Nor should we pronounce, without further consideration, a verdict of blasphemy. For, after all, it is the experience of some mystics that their own personality seems more and more to disappear, more and more to be replaced by the divine presence dwelling in them, identifying themselves with it. How far can this process go, before the mystic claims that his own personality has disappeared entirely, to give place to a fresh Incarnation of the Divine Being? And if the prophet has become an Incarnation of the Divine Being, why hesitate to bestow divine titles upon him? We have seen that this difficulty beset the Montanists; 'I am the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost', said Montanus,[2] and according to another account, 'Neither an angel, nor an ambassador, but I, the Lord, the Father, am come.'[3]

Catholic mysticism is protected from such delusions, because we know that the union of the Divine and the Human in our Lord was a hypostatic union, a union of two Natures under a single Person; whereas the most highly privileged of the saints can only enjoy a mystical union with God, the human personality remaining unabridged. But Quakerism had no formal theology; repudiated the distinctions of the schoolmen. Hence the suspicions aroused by the language they used, and their difficulties in disposing of them. The magistrates at Derby asked Fox 'If any of us were Christ?', and his answer 'Nay, we were nothing, Christ was all' probably avoided the dilemma without allaying the suspicion.[4] 'He that hath the same Spirit that raised up Jesus', Fox wrote, 'is equal with God';[5] a

[1] Bickley, op. cit., p. 60.

[2] Didymus, *De trinitate*, III. xli.

[3] Epiphanius, *Haereses*, XLVIII. xi.

[4] Bickley, op. cit., p. 34.

[5] Braithwaite, op. cit., p. 109, quoting from *Saul's Errand to Damascus*. It is fair to observe that the language used is not so significant as it would be in a more careful author; Fox never wrote coherent English.

startling doctrine, and likely to produce strange results in a company of potential energumens. Margaret Fell, one of Fox's earliest converts, who afterwards married him, writes to him in these terms: 'Our dear father in the Lord . . . our souls doth thirst and languish after thee . . . O thou bread of life, without which our souls will starve . . . O our life, we hope to see thee again, that our joy may be full . . . O thou fountain of life . . . O thou father of eternal felicity.'[1] Was it a very long step from such language to complete apotheosis? We are told that the wife of John Williamson, when she went to visit some of the Friends in Appleby jail, professed herself to be the eternal Son of God, untroubled, as Jemima Wilkinson was later, by any consideration of her sex. We might have foreseen, before it happened, the poignant and illuminating story of James Nayler.

(vii) *James Nayler*

That story has been retold, not unsympathetically, in Mr. Ronald Matthews's book, *English Messiahs*.[2] It is set out more fully by Miss Brailsford in *A Quaker from Cromwell's Army*.[3] The proceedings at Nayler's trial are to be found in the *Harleian Miscellany*.[4]

James Nayler was a cavalry quartermaster who had retired from service, still quite young, as an invalid. His personal appearance was fine rather than handsome; his contemporaries were struck by a resemblance to that picture we have all seen before now, in lodging-house bedrooms, which is labelled 'The authentic portrait of Jesus Christ.'[5] This resemblance was to be his undoing; the allegation that he cultivated it is one which we may probably discount. In 1651 he was converted by Fox's preaching, sold his farm, left his wife and family, and became a roving evangelist. Evidently he had the Power, and he quickly made for himself a prominent position in the Society. Baxter, without mentioning George Fox, describes Nayler as the 'chief leader' of the sect.[6]

This overshadowing of the founder by one of his own disciples must be kept well in mind if we are to understand the development of the story. It is usually told as that of a muddle-headed Quaker

[1] Braithwaite, op. cit., p. 105.
[2] Methuen, 1936.
[3] Swarthmore Press, 1927.
[4] Vol. vi, pp. 424–36.
[5] Reproduced as frontispiece by Mr. Matthews and Miss Brailsford.
[6] Op. cit., p. 77.

who underwent a brief apotheosis at the hands of a few crazed women; whereupon the good sense of Fox asserted itself, and he did his best to dissuade the erring disciple from his blasphemous pretensions. Thus, when Nayler is said to have raised Dorcas Erbury to life, Bickley hastens to explain that 'with this nonsense Fox had no species of sympathy'.[1] Is that really an accurate judgement? The early Friends were not slow to believe in miraculous happenings; and Baxter tells us that some of them took a dead man out of his coffin at Claines, near Worcester, and 'commanded him to arise and live, but to their shame'. The Messianic legend which grew up around the figure of Nayler did so only by degrees, and the language used by his adherents was not, at first, such as need have shocked Quaker susceptibilities. We have seen how Margaret Fell wrote to George Fox; she herself was addressed by one of her co-religionists in equally startling language, 'O thou daughter of God, thou art comely in thy beauty, clothed with the sun and the moon under thy feet; thou art in thy life and glory to be above all things desired after.' Was it beyond the limits of prophetic courtesy if Thomas Simmonds called Nayler 'King of Israel and Son of the most High'?[2] Yet it is clear that as early as March 1656, more than six months before the tragic denouement of the story, Fox and his friends were shaking their heads over Nayler and something, not clearly expressed, which Nayler stood for.

The charge which lay against Nayler, so far at any rate, was not of heresy but of schism. It was not that he was attempting to make himself equal with the Saviour of the world, but that he was attempting to make himself equal with George Fox. That emerges from the language used throughout: 'There is an evil thing begot amongst Friends in that city (London), the same as was amongst the Church at Corinth divisions and contentions; one saying *I am of James*, and another *I am of Francis* (Howgill) *and Edward* (Burrough), and so it's like the truth will suffer by them.'[3] And Fox's own complaint runs, much later, 'Many did not expect that thou wouldst have been an encourager of such as do cry against the Power and Life of Truth, but wouldst have been a nourisher of Truth and not have trained up a company against it.'[4] Nayler is rebuked, not as an erring brother, but as a false shepherd.

[1] Op. cit., p. 143.
[2] Brailsford, op. cit., p. 109.
[3] Ibid., p. 96.
[4] Ibid., p. 113.

It was the old story of London against the provinces. Newman himself, when he sent Faber and Dalgairns to King William Street, did not fully realize what independence the new Oratory was destined to enjoy. Fox was a Midlander; his gospel was cradled in the Midlands and spread, at first, chiefly northwards. That a man of Nayler's prominence should undertake the thankless task of evangelizing London must have seemed natural enough; so faithful a disciple could be trusted not to foment disunion. Fox himself had no regularized position, and mutiny is hardly to be anticipated in a society where there is nobody to mutiny against. But, here as often in the course of our story, you had to reckon with the influence of the *dévote*. Martha Simmonds was only the ringleader among a group of women who were determined that *their* prophet should be *the* prophet. 'A higher thing was come out';[1] no new doctrine, apparently, but a fuller incarnation of the Quaker spirit. It must have seemed possible that Fox would be dethroned from his still unregularized position as the leader of the movement, just as Irving, two centuries later, found himself taking a secondary place in the councils of Irvingism.

Poor Nayler was visibly embarrassed by these attentions, though loyalty to his own principles forbade him to despise them. It was, apparently, in an effort to escape that he made his way into the west country, where Fox was imprisoned in Launceston jail. He had the same dog-like affection for his master as Whitefield had for Wesley, but when they had an interview he was rudely rebuffed. He claimed the kiss of fellowship, and Fox offered his foot to be kissed; 'so the Lord moved me to slight him, and to set the power of God over him'. Impossible not to wish that Fox had resisted the inner light for once! Nayler was left in Exeter jail, where he had fasted for a month, and had raised a young girl, Dorcas Erbury, to life; such, at least, was the evidence given at his trial.[2] His devotees began to address him as the 'dear and precious Son of Zion, whose mother is a virgin and whose birth is immortal', as 'the fairest of ten thousand and only-begotten Son of God', telling him that his name should no more be called James Nayler, but Jesus. And now Nayler, too, was discharged from prison, only to fall into the hands of his admirers, who staged for him the astonishing welcome that has sent his name down to history.

[1] Brailsford, op. cit., p. 97. [2] *Harl. Misc.* vi. 434; *State Papers*, no. 52, p. 267.

On October the 24rth [writes Mr. Matthews] a curious calvacade was seen passing along the Somersetshire roads. . . . Its centre was a man seated on a horse, his hat, streaming with water, pulled down over his eyes. Two women, walking knee-deep in the mud, led his horse by the bridle on either side. Before them walked another man, hatless. . . . After followed two other horses, ridden by two men, one with a third woman behind him in the saddle. The man on the led horse was silent, but his companions, undaunted by the weather, kept up a continuous ecstatic chant of *Holy, Holy, Holy.* At Wells and Glastonbury, at little village greens along their way, they halted to cast their cloaks into the mire before him. . . . We see them again passing through Bedminster, about a mile from Bristol.

A solitary observer spoke to them, but they went on their way 'making a humming noise. Arrived at the gates of the city, the third woman dismounted, and the little band traversed the streets to the High Cross, still singing *Holy, Holy,* and *Hosanna.*' As soon as they had reached their inn they were taken into custody and brought before the magistrates; the appointed end of theophanies.

Nayler stood his trial before a Committee of the House of Commons. His condemnation was inevitable; whatever you make of what he said, or of what the women said, the whole nature of their demonstration left no doubt of what they meant; and one of the women had on her person, when she was arrested, a copy of that likeness of Christ which has been mentioned above.[1] In the debate which followed, strong pleas were put forward for the infliction of the death penalty; the speech of Lord Commissioner Whitlock in the contrary sense is fully given in *State Trials.* (What a House of Commons it was! How often, since then, have honourable members been expected to assess the precise value of Hebrew verbs?) In the end, Nayler was pilloried, whipped through the streets, and branded on the forehead; his tongue was bored through, and he was kept in prison at the discretion of the House. The extraordinary thing is that no suggestion was made, even, of punishing the other actors in the story; and yet it is impossible to read any account of it which does not leave the impression that Nayler himself, more than any other, took a passive part—was hardly more than an accessory. In the last analysis, Puritan England was concerned not so much to exact punishment, as to make a gesture; the world must be assured that English religion had not gone into the melting-pot. Catholics were

[1] Matthews, op. cit., p. 5.

twitting Anglicans with the existence of Puritanism; Anglicans were twitting Puritans with the existence of Quakerism; Puritans were twitting Quakers with the existence of Naylerism. And Nayler must be the scapegoat. He suffered as the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Reformation experiment, with every man's hand against him; John of Leyden had had the same experience.

There was some affectation, to be sure, of treating Naylerism as an independent sect. His followers were accused of denying that the Scriptures are the word of God, and esteeming their own speakings to be of as great authority; of holding that the holy letter (of Scripture) is carnal, that Jesus Christ inhabits their flesh as Man, that to pray for the pardon of their sins is needless—they cannot sin, being already perfect.[1] All that is only, at worst, an unfriendly interpretation of early Quaker language, unchecked as it was by any tradition of authority, any system of theology. The nerve of the accusation against Nayler—and probably some other member of the Society would have had to face it, if Nayler had not precipitated the issue—was the charge that he believed Jesus Christ to inhabit his flesh, and therefore allowed his flesh to be worshipped. What the House of Commons was really debating was the supreme crux of mysticism—whether the contemplative becomes wholly and literally identified with the Object of his contemplation, or whether his personality persists, in such fashion that he can say without hesitation, No, I am not Christ.

Whether it were as God or as Man that Christ was to be conceived as inhabiting the earthly shell of his votary, was not greatly to the point. Whitlock observes, with some acuteness, in his speech: 'The Lutherans do hold the ubiquity of Christ in such sort, that the news of Nayler's being put to death for these offences would not be pleasing to them.'[2] Luther explained, or explained away the mystery of the Real Presence by claiming that wherever Christ is present as God (that is, everywhere), he is present as Man; and accordingly, if he was present in James Nayler as God, he was present in James Nayler as Man. No, the charge which Nayler's accusers wanted to fix on him was that he regarded himself as indwelt by the divine presence in some unique manner, quite other than the manner in which that same presence dwelt (say) in George Fox. They browbeat a man weak with long fasting and half-crazed with brooding

[1] *Harl. Misc.* vi. 437. [2] *State Trials*, no. 52, p. 275.

over his own spiritual difficulties, so as to make it appear that he had lent himself to the purposes of his followers, acquiesced guiltily in the Palm Sunday pageant, if he had not actually devised it. Whereas I think any candid reader of the evidence will be led to the conviction that Nayler was a tool in the hands of his admirers, who all held, and continued to hold, that their actions were inspired by the inner light.[1] They kept on telling him that in worshipping him they worshipped the God who was in him, just as the apostles did on Palm Sunday, and he knitted his furrowed brows over the problem without being able to see where they were wrong. It is a singular thought, that if James Nayler had been grounded in a Catechism which had the phrase 'hypostatic union' in it, those brows need never have carried the stigma of blasphemy.

Whitlock summed up Nayler's attitude, fairly enough, as 'permitting and not reproving those who did adore him; which he would evade by the distinction, That as he is a poor creature, and visible, no Adoration is due to him; but, as to that Power which is invisible (that Christ within him) he is to be worshipped'.[2] Poor Nayler, trained in the barracks and hag-ridden with scruples, could not put his thoughts together so clearly; but that is what he is trying to say all the time. He is asked whether any person has called him by the name of Jesus, and all he can say is, 'As I am visible here before you, I believe they have not, but that the word of the Lord is in me, that I dare not deny . . . if they have given it to any other than to the Son of God that is in me, I do deny what they have said.'[3] They press him further: 'Is there that worship due to you which was to Christ?' 'If they did it to the visible, they were to blame, but if to the invisible, that worship is due to me, according to my measure, as was due to Christ.'[4] And so the unequal conflict goes on. Nayler is no Circumcellion; he does not wish to involve himself in martyrdom. But he dare not contradict what Martha Simmonds and the others have said; that would be denying the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Mr. Matthews believes that there was one, and only one of his answers which really gave away the position. He was asked outright, 'Are you the only-begotten Son of God?', and to that 'Nayler's answer stands out clear and unequivocal: *I am the Son of*

[1] *Harl. Misc.* vi. 431–3.
[2] *State Trials*, no. 52, p. 273.
[3] Ibid., p. 269.
[4] Matthews, op. cit., p. 23.

God, and the Son of God is but one.'[1] I think Mr. Matthews has mixed up two questions, and has not given us the reply in its full form. Nayler was asked, 'Art thou the everlasting Son of God?', and replied in this form: 'Where God is manifest in the flesh, there is the everlasting Son, and I do witness God in the flesh; I am the Son of God, and the Son of God is but one.'[2] I do not read, there, a claim to unique Sonship. Nayler, it seems to me, with a kind of woolly Nestorianism, holds that the Son of God, though he is but one, is present in Jesus of Nazareth and in James Nayler and in all other persons (let us say Montanus by way of example) of whom it can be said, 'Here is God manifest in the flesh.'

(viii) *Difficulties of the Quaker Organization*

Nayler made his peace with the Society afterwards, but he had deeply injured it. On the one side it was accused by the Ranters of wanting its early fervour; we hear of meetings being interrupted by two women called Mildred and Judy, who shouted 'You have lost the power, you have lost the power'; they cried out against Fox, and said a higher thing was come, and in standing against it the Quakers were as bad as the priests.[3] On the other side, public confidence in the movement was severely shaken. Miss Brailsford has summed up for us the consequences of Nayler's fall, and of the unforgiving attitude which Fox maintained for four years after it.

> The whole episode of his breach with Fox had brought an atmosphere into the Quaker Society which it was not easy to disperse. A Church founded on democratic principles, which acknowledged no superior in the ranks of its ministers, was hard put to it to reconcile Fox's stiff and autocratic attitude with his professed ideals. Many of Nayler's followers never returned to their allegiance. . . . The precedent of rebellion was a tempting one, and heresy and schism became a commonplace in the Quaker ranks, not only during Fox's life-time but through part of the following century. . . . The step which he took . . . to enforce discipline by the establishment of Monthly Meetings, while it was devised to heal one schism, gave rise to another yet more dangerous and wide-spreading—the notorious Wilkinson-Story Separation. In the eyes of these two influential Quakers this new departure in Church Government was a betrayal of the doctrine of the Inner Light. . . . Quakerism stood revealed as a unity rent by disunion. The validity of its cardinal doctrine was called in question; for while two opposing sides laid

[1] Matthews, op. cit., p. 17.
[2] *Harl. Misc.* vi. 429.
[3] Braithwaite, op. cit., p. 253.

claim to the guidance of the Spirit, it was patent that one at least was deceived, and deceiving others.[1]

Inevitably the shades of institutionalism had begun to close round the growing Society when it had only enjoyed seven years of full existence.

By now, it was beginning to extend its branches to the New World. If they thought to be safe there from the prelates' rage, the Quakers had not reckoned with the temper of the New England settlers, who were already beginning to build up the Land of Freedom. In England, the Restoration had brought persecution with it, and hundreds of Friends died in prison; but it was left for the spiritual descendants of Barrow, Penry, and Greenwood, hanged as Brownists sixty years earlier, to devise the death penalty for Quakerism. Four men and one woman suffered it.[2] But indeed the American soil is an over-generous mother to the faiths which are transplanted there, and they are in danger of running to seed. Quakerism had too little of formal theology to be trusted safely in that land of exaggerations. Already in 1699 George Keith, who afterwards returned to Anglicanism, found that his fellow Quakers in the New World had become infected with deistic doctrine, and were allegorizing away the death and Resurrection of Christ,[3] and this tendency led, rather more than a century later, to formal schism between the innovators and the traditionalists.[4] Nor, it hardly needs to be said, was James Nayler without his Transatlantic counterpart. A woman named Jemima Wilkinson claimed to have died in 1776, and come to life again with a new body, in which she was an incarnation of Christ. She dressed in semi-masculine attire, gave out that she could do miracles, and, with the instinct of her compatriots, founded a small colony of her devotees, which was not a success. She must, nevertheless, have possessed the technique of the born hierophant. She collected her followers on one occasion to see her walk on the water; before attempting the feat, however, she asked whether they all believed she had power to do so, and, being rapturously assured of

[1] Op. cit., pp. 190, 191.

[2] Bickley, op. cit., p. 223. Waddington (op. cit., ch. xvi) only reckons a total of four.

[3] Burnet's *History of his Own Time*, s.a. 1700. Keith's attack on the Quakers is to be found in *The Deism of William Penn and his Brethren destructive to the Christian Religion*, printed for Brab. Aylmer at the Three Pigeons, 1699.

[4] Grégoire, op. cit., pp. 245 sqq.

their faith, replied that in that case they would not need any further grounds of conviction.[1]

In England, the promise of the Society seems to have been either blighted by the winter of deism, or robbed of its buds by the rude blasts of the Wesleyan spring. In Worcestershire, for example, by the middle of the eighteenth century 'frequent complaints were made of the thin attendances at meetings, and in the tenth month, 1776, an epistle was circulated to the Worcestershire Friends . . . stimulating them to an increased vigilance and attention to the light within them'.[2] What survived, as we know, was a religious coterie rather than a sect; a band of well-to-do reformers, distinguished by their wide influence and active benevolence, but numbering only a handful of adherents among the multitudes on whom they had compassion. Among all the daydreams which flitted through the mind of George Fox, as he travelled about the roads of England, none, surely, was stranger than this.

NOTE ON CHAPTER VIII

On the Pre-history of Quakerism

ANY attempt to determine the filiation of the lesser sects in seventeenth-century England must be content to reach uncertain and provisional results. The accounts we have of them are often conflicting, and come, for the most part, from their enemies and critics, who were prepared to bracket Anabaptists and Brownists, Familists and Libertines, Ranters and Seekers, as part of the same evil thing—unofficial religion. The sects themselves, having as yet little organization or power of cohesion, were liable to break up into small rival groups, under the influence of new leaders; and of these leaders, the general itch for theology guaranteed a surplus. Herded together in the by-ways of Amsterdam, which in those days had become a clearing-house of all the heterodoxies, they insensibly exchanged ideas, and picked up new notions without abandoning old labels. The Mennonite Baptists were perhaps particularly susceptible to this flux of ideas. Their founder, Menno Simons, only left the Church to join the Anabaptists in 1536, and broke loose from the main body of these in the following year, distrusting the theocratic ambitions which were to be their downfall. Hence the theology of the sect was still fluid; the modern Baptists claim it as their parent stock, but would hardly be concerned to maintain that at the beginning of the

[1] Grégoire, op. cit., p. 253. [2] Noake's *Worcester Sects*, p. 293.

sixteenth century it had achieved fullness of life or discovered its true direction.

Can we maintain that there were two nations in the womb of Anabaptism, and that it was the parent, equally, of Quakerism? That is the general conclusion of Robert Barclay the younger, in his admirable work, posthumously published in 1876, on *The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth*. Certainly the Mennonites anticipated George Fox in his condemnation of war, and of taking the oath; it was part of the old Anabaptist protest against the rights of an un-Christian state. Nor need it surprise us that the Society of Friends should have abandoned the rite of baptism, which was such a focus of sixteenth-century controversy. The nerve of the old Anabaptist contention was that it was useless to confer a sacrament upon an infant; and it is doubtful whether their immediate successors were of one mind about the significance of the rite; some were immersionists, some baptized by affusion; John Smith introduced a new dubium into moral theology by administering baptism to himself.[1] It was not beyond the speculative fecundity of that age to produce a sect of Baptists who did not baptize at all. Moreover, there were traits of simplicity in the habits of the Mennonites which prefigure Quakerism; they would not, for example, wear buckles on their shoes.[2] Silent prayer was early used at their meetings; and when they spoke, full liberty of prophesying was observed up to 1663.[3]

But we have still to mention the cardinal tenet of Quakerism—the Inner Light. Can any direct traces of this be found among the Mennonites? Robert Barclay points us to the controversy between two Dutch Baptists, Nittert Obbes and Hans de Ries, in 1624 (doubtless remembered by many Englishmen who had only returned from exile at the beginning of the Commonwealth). Obbes wrote a tract called the Spider-hunter, warning the brethren against 'Swenkfeldian' tendencies which, he said, were growing up amongst them. He maintained that it is 'only by way of the Holy Scriptures that God, Christ, or the Holy Ghost reveals and imparts to us everything which we ought to know', and that 'no one receives an inspiration or a revelation concerning the will of God in Christ, as far as concerns his salvation'. De Ries replied by contrasting the written Word of God, corruptible, a dead letter, with the Word which speaks in the Christian heart, which is the seed of regeneration in us; he defends inspirations given to the individual Christian as 'vivid, energetic, and all-sufficient'. He even refers in one place to the Eternal Word of the Father as 'an inward Light to blind souls'. Fox, then, will have taken up, a quarter of a century later, de Ries's exact position, against Baxter and the official representatives of Puritanism.[4]

This account of the matter enables us, it will be seen, to rise a step higher

[1] Barclay, op. cit., p. 70.
[2] Ibid., p. 84.
[3] Ibid., pp. 85, 86.
[4] Ibid., pp. 223 sqq.

in the pedigree of the inner-light doctrine. Obbes had stigmatized de Ries as a Schwenkfeldian; and Caspar Schwenkfeld is a writer whose views are fully known to us—indeed, in the United States, mausoleum of the theologies, he has still nearly 2,000 followers. He left the Church in 1525; after Luther, indeed, but he seems to have drawn his inspiration from other sources, from Bohemia partly, where the old Hussite influences, and perhaps other, more obscure medieval influences, still lingered. He quarrelled with Luther precisely on the point we have been considering; he regarded Scripture, no less than the Sacraments (which he discarded), as an 'outward' institution, incapable of affording that guidance which must be looked for from the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus we can establish a direct line of filiation, Schwenkfeld—de Ries—Fox, and perhaps make further guesses at the spiritual parentage of Schwenkfeld himself.[1]

Yet it must surely remain doubtful whether, in that world of quick intellectual change and astonishing ease of inter-communication, the heredity of any given religious tenet can be so nicely or so accurately identified. The controversy between Schwenkfeld and Luther, the controversy between de Ries and Obbes, the controversy between Fox and Baxter, was necessarily raised wherever the Reformed doctrines took root. We have seen already how Dr. Rufus Jones defines the issue.[2] Having abandoned the authority of the Church, you were bound to fall back on some other rule of faith; two only were forthcoming—the inspired word of Scripture, or the word of God conceived as instilled directly into the depths of the human heart. If you took your stand on Scripture, it meant Scripture as interpreted by the learned, by Luther, by Calvin, by Zwingli—you could take your choice, but you must read Scripture through some other man's eyes, or the result would be a chaos of Christianities. If you did this, you almost necessarily took sides in those controversies over grace which were then fashionable among the learned. But if you took your stand on direct inspiration, your mind ran rather in the stream of mystical tradition; the Scripture, no less than the Sacraments, was at best but an adminicle to faith; the precise workings of predestination or justification had no absorbing interest for you. Such was Schwenkfeld's attitude, such was de Ries's—but it was an attitude which they shared with the Anabaptists, and with all those minor sects which survived the collapse of Anabaptism. Hans Denck, for example, the Pope of the Anabaptists as he was sometimes called, with his doctrine of the Inner Voice which is itself nothing other than the Word of God, would serve as well for Fox's spiritual ancestor as Schwenkfeld himself.[3]

It remains, therefore, a possibility that Fox's ideas came to him through a more devious process, the result of that continual cross-fertilization of

[1] Barclay, op. cit., pp. 232 sqq.
[2] See above, p. 128.
[3] Heath, *Anabaptism*, p. 87.

theologies which had its matrix in the Low Countries. In view of this possibility, it will not be out of place to supply a few more details about the obscure sects referred to at the beginning of the last chapter. They are derived from Barclay himself, and in part from Strype's writings on ecclesiastical history.

The presence of Familists in England is suspected as early as 1552, when Cranmer examined the tenets of a new heresy which had sprung up in Kent; Strype conjectures that it was either the Family of Love or 'David George his sect, who made himself sometime Christ, and sometime the Holy Ghost'.[1] In 1574 they were certainly spreading their doctrines in Cambridgeshire, going round the country as travelling basket-makers, musicians, &c.[2] The following year, disturbed by the unfriendly reports which were already circulating about their theology and morals, they published an apology, in which they represented themselves as strangely orthodox and innocuous; five of them, however, were made to recant various errors which had been attributed to them.[3] In 1579 the Bishop of Norwich was active in sending them to prison, owing to the prevalence of their views in Norfolk and Suffolk.[4] The sect then disappears for a time from history; but it was perhaps not difficult for emissaries from Holland to keep alive a connexion so localized in the eastern counties. In 1645 one Randall was preaching its doctrines publicly in Bishopsgate, 'and many people flocking after him'.[5]

It would appear that Henry Nicholas, the founder of the sect, was brought up as a Catholic in Holland, but was early troubled by the defects he found in members of the visible Church. His own story is that he had a vision at the age of nine which laid the foundations of his system. This was an odd, undefined sort of perfectionism; he allowed his followers to go to Catholic or to Protestant services, and indeed showed considerable tenderness for the claims of the Church as against rival denominations; but he was possessed, like some of the medieval heretics, with the idea that he was sent to preach a new reign of love, which superseded the dispensation inaugurated by Christ. He disclaimed Anabaptist influence, but admitted that he had been much in the company of the eccentric David Joris, who afterwards proclaimed himself as the Messiah at Basel. He, Nicholas, was understood to say that 'God raised him up (which lay altogether without breath or life), anointed him with his godly being, named himself with him, godded him with himself.'[6] Vitell, his English apostle, was credited with the assertion that the godly do not sin, and ought not to use a prayer in which they describe themselves as miserable sinners. What is more important to our present

[1] Strype's *Life of Cranmer*, ii. ch. xxxiii. [2] Strype's *Annals*, II. i. 31.
[3] Ibid. 35. [4] Ibid. ii. 17. [5] Ibid. 18.
[6] See Barclay, op. cit., pp. 25–32; Strype, loc. cit.

purpose, we read among the opinions attributed to them in 1579, 'That those that be doctors or learned, cannot preach the word truly'; 'That the Bible is not the Word of God, but a signification thereof, and the Bible is but ink and paper, but the word of God is spirit and life.' It will be seen that, in the controversy between Obbes and de Ries, the Familists would be committed to the support of the latter. It may be that Nicholas's own doctrines, which as explained by himself are little better than cloudy nonsense, had been contaminated by Anabaptist additions. But it is clear that the meetings of the Family must have been a seed-ground from which inner-light theologies might have been expected to spring.

The Ranters are regarded by Strype, who calls them 'Libertines', as an outgrowth of the Familist movement, and he attributes to them, rather than to the Familists proper, those sentiments which we have just quoted about the preaching of the learned, and the Bible as the Word of God.[1] In the same list of errors some phrases occur which savour strongly of perfectionism; that no man who is faulty himself can preach the truth to others; that they which have the spirit of God know all things; that we ought not to give our alms to beggars; that the martyrs in Queen Mary's days ought not so to have died, for in dying they destroyed the temple of God; that whosoever had God's spirit could not sin; that a man ought not to weary his body in travel and labour, and so on. Beliefs of this kind seem to prefigure the comfortable doctrines of the Agapemone; the perfect need not trouble themselves even to do good works. It is a pity that the tract on which Strype depended for his information did not particularize more clearly, whether it was the Familists or the Ranters proper who put forward these sentiments.

Elsewhere,[2] Strype mentions the Libertines as a subdivision of the heretics, clearly Anabaptist, who were delated from the Ely diocese to Parker in 1573. These heretics forbade oaths, disapproved of capital punishment, taught the community of goods and complete freedom of prophesying, and held Arian views about our Lord's divinity. 'The most part of them', say their accusers, 'are degenerate into the filthy and brutish sect of the libertines.' Another list given of Libertine errors[3] in 1581 is far less damaging and more trivial; 'that faith was the light of the soul' is the most interesting entry. From such indications we should be led to suppose that the Ranters were merely a wing or section of the old Anabaptists (as distinct from the Mennonite connexion). And indeed, Robert Barclay the elder, in his *Anarchy of the Ranters*, regards them as holding, though more temperately, the views of the Anabaptists of Munster.[4]

Robert Barclay the younger, in his *Inner Life of the Religious Societies*, prefers to trace their origins back beyond the Reformation period, deriving

[1] Strype, *Annals*, II. ii. 18. [2] *Life of Parker*, IV. xviii. [3] *Annals*, III. i. 4.
[4] See the other Robert Barclay's op. cit., p. 416 note.

them immediately from the 'Brethren of the Free Spirit', whom Calvin met in Paris as late as 1534. But it seems unlikely that, even at this early date, the remnants of the old medieval heresies had not been taken up into the ill-defined body of Anabaptism; the difference will be only a difference of nomenclature. The doctrine of the Brethren seems to have been complete perfectionism. 'The external law is abolished. Our acts are no longer our own, but those of God. The principle of evil has, therefore, no real existence. If we fall into sin, great good may result, and we rise from our fall animated by a greater horror of evil.'[1] The Ranters, according to a carefully written tract of 1650, held much the same doctrine. 'That there is no occasion for them to read the Scriptures, nor to hear sermons, because Father, Son and Spirit are all in them, therefore they are above all commandments whatsoever. That there is no such thing as what men call sin. That sin and holiness are all one to God.' This perfectionism was combined with an almost exaggerated form of the inner-light theology. The Scripture was 'a tale, a history, a letter, and a dead letter'. One of them said, 'Have not I the Spirit, and why may not I write the Scripture as well as Paul, and what I write be as binding and infallible as that which Paul writ?'[2]

No less elusive than the Familists, the Ranters disappear from sight between Queen Elizabeth's time and that of Cromwell. The Seekers are a body still more elusive in their origins, but with a history, it seems, more continuous. Barclay is inclined, once more, to go back behind the Reformation, and identify the Seekers with the 'Friends of God', scattered communities which date from Tauler, Suso, and the mystics of the fourteenth century. Ubbo Phillips, he tells us, a friend of Menno Simons, has preserved the memory of people who 'served God in quiet simplicity . . . without preachers, teachers, or an outward gathering', and represents the early Anabaptists, Munzer, Hubmaier, Rinck, Hut, Denck, and Hetzer as *seceders* from their body. But, once again, it seems to be a question of nomenclature; the remains of earlier movements fade out into Anabaptism at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and some become militant while others remain quiescent. In any case, the *name* of the Seekers first appears in connexion with the Arian, Bartholomew Legat. Six years later, in 1617, they are referred to as a distinct body in the records of the Mennonite Baptists.[3] A foreign observer credits them with belief in a return of St. John to earth.[4] With Fox's *Journal*, and the foundation of his Society, allusion to them becomes frequent; a tract of 1652 talks of the Quakers as 'a new branch of an old

[1] Ibid., p. 416.

[2] Ibid., pp. 417, 418.

[3] Ibid., pp. 174, 175.

[4] St. John the Evangelist apparently. Some believed him to be residing in Transylvania, others in Suffolk. Honori Reggi, *De statu ecclesiae Britannicae* (1647), quoted by Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes*, ii. 87. Cf. de Brueys, *Histoire du fanatisme de notre temps*, i. 27.

root', tracing their origin to 'the old Seeker who goes about seeking whom he may devour'.

Their tenets have already been described; they were 'as sheep unfolded, and as soldiers unrallied, waiting for a time of gathering'. They 'find no attainment yet in any churches, or church ways, or administrations of ordinances, according to the pattern of the New Testament. Therefore they wait in this time of the apostasy of the church.'[1] Since they had no ministry and no sacraments, we must suppose that they were a somewhat disorganized body, yet they remain distinct. Penn is certainly wrong in confusing them with the Familists.[2] At certain times they lost some of their number to the Ranters.[3] At others they themselves gained in numbers at the expense of the Baptists.[4] Waiting is meagre diet; and it is little wonder that many of them recognized, in the rousing personality of George Fox, the sign to which they had looked forward.

May we not assess the situation somewhat as follows? The old Anabaptist movement (taken in its widest sense, and not identified with its militant wing) had produced four separate branches, had flowed into four separate channels, represented in Holland and in the eastern counties of England. Two were organized bodies: the Mennonite Baptists, and the Familists with their eccentric mystagogy. Two were residuary deposits; reservoirs which filled and emptied according to the spirit of the times; lacking in leadership yet obstinately persisting; the Seekers, who were somewhat akin to the Mennonites, and the Ranters, who were easily confused with the Familists. The coming of George Fox at the time of the Commonwealth first taught these communities to rally and to realize themselves. The Mennonites, who clung to ancient forms and had retained something of the apparatus of sacramentalism, drew away from Fox and settled down into a sect destined to survive. The others fell to pieces, yielding to Quakerism, probably, all that was best in their membership. All alike were sharply distinguished from the Christianities which surrounded them, because they remained religions of the Spirit, on the old pre-Luther model, not religions of the Scripture.

The use of one catchword, I think, points very strongly to the connexion of Quakerism with the obscurer sects that went before it. It is worth while comparing the following quotations.

Edwards, among a series of 'errors, heresies, and blasphemies of the time, which appear to be closely connected with the spread of the Seeker congregations' includes the proposition 'That we did look for great matters from One crucified at Jerusalem sixteen hundred years ago; but that does no good, it must be a Christ formed *in* us, the Deity united to our humanity.'[5]

[1] Barclay, op. cit., pp. 176, 177.
[2] Ibid., p. 177.
[3] Ibid., p. 412.
[4] Ibid., pp. 173, 175.
[5] Ibid., p. 178.

From a 'fair and candid account' of what the Ranters held: 'We are no longer to eye or mind Christ that died at Jerusalem, but we are to mind Christ in ourselves.'[1]

Howgill, the Quaker preacher, accuses the Seekers of 'missing Christ the substance and teaching a religion which was all at a distance, grounded on the report of Christ dying at Jerusalem'.[2]

Nayler was accused of having said, 'He that expecteth to be saved by Jesus Christ that died at Jerusalem shall be deceived.'[3]

Perhaps the leading characteristic of seventeenth-century English enthusiasm was the distinction, thus early made, between the Christ of history and the Christ of experience.

[1] Ibid., p. 418.
[2] Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 97.
[3] *Harl. Misc.* vi. 436.

IX

JANSENISM: THE SETTING

(i) *The History of Port Royal*

THE leap from Quakerism to Jansenism is something of a violent transition, for many reasons. They are worlds apart in their social background; George Fox is a man of the people, valuing the inner light above all the learning which he lacked, whereas Arnauld and Quesnel are the petted theologians of a smart society that has gone mad over theology. Their emphasis is quite different; Quakerism talks little of grace, Jansenism talks about nothing else. And, if the history of the two be compared, you might be tempted to say that they vary inversely. A crowd of ranting fanatics, falling down in public and wallowing on the ground under the inspiration of their gospel—is not this how an unfriendly critic would have described the earlier Quakers, the later Jansenists? A set of well-to-do people, who, without taking any vows, separate themselves from the wickedness of the world, in an aristocratic and not altogether uncomfortable seclusion—is not this how he would have described the earlier Jansenists, the later Quakers? Yet, behind all these real differences, there is solid reason for comparing the two movements. In very different surroundings, by very different methods, either movement made a heroic frontal attack upon the forces of worldliness; either was content to rally a small following as the cost of maintaining a high standard. You could not be worldly and a Quaker; you could not be worldly and belong to the inner ring of Port Royal. Such heroic protest, whether in Catholic or in Reformation surroundings, is rare; and it has the authentic quality of enthusiasm.

The history of the movement, with its intricate developments, the odd ups and downs of its fortunes, is to be represented here (for the refreshing of weak memories) as if it were the synopsis of a drama in five acts. Strange that Sainte-Beuve, with all his rage for the theatre, should not have adopted this artifice! I have said, a drama in five acts; I had almost said, a film in five reels. For indeed,

the place of Jansenism in literature is due partly to the splendid period-setting which surrounds it; you are reading Church history in the warm atmosphere of the *grand siècle*, comfortable memories of Dumas are your book-markers. A haze of unreality surrounds, fight against it as we may, the personality of the central figures. And what partly contributes to this is the fact, obscured for us by the generous rhetoric of Port Royal and its defenders, that the persecution of Jansenism was something of a drawing-room persecution. No drop of blood, I think, was shed. You read of one or two imprisonments, Arnauld and others live in hiding, go into exile for fear of worse consequences; a convent of nuns, disobeying their lawful superior on a point of conscience, is broken up, and the religious are sent to live in other houses; that is all. Even the disinterment of the dead at Port Royal des Champs, which is made to read like an atrocity, was simply a measure of decency and precaution; the bodies were reburied, and in consecrated ground. Subsequent experience amply proved that it was not safe to trust a Jansenist near a grave-yard. Injustice there may have been; cruelty no doubt there was; but if you compare the treatment of Arnauld with the treatment of George Fox, rolled by street-boys in the mud, if you compare the treatment of the Jansenists in general with that of the Huguenots who were their contemporaries, you are inclined to discount a little the *saeva indignatio* of Sainte-Beuve. Meanwhile, there is the irresistible atmosphere of make-believe about it all. Louis XIV having a friendly interview with Arnauld, 'que sa police cherchait par terre et par mer pour l'incarcérer';[1] the gardener of Port Royal, who turns out to be an exiled English gentleman named Jenkins,[2] can you match the occurrence of these gracious details in the history of any other sect?

The first act may be entitled, *The Growth of Port Royal*. It is the story of a venerable convent of nuns some seventeen miles from Paris, which like many other convents had fallen into general relaxation, and like many other convents was reformed, brought back to its first (Cistercian) simplicity by the influence of a young abbess. Bremond finds no difficulty in reeling off the names of seventeen such abbesses, and they are only a selection out of a multitude. He comments on the extreme youth of these reformers; they were 'at

[1] Gazier, *Histoire générale du jansénisme*, i. 184.

[2] Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal* (edition of 1867), iv. 211.

the outset of their undertaking one and all girls, almost children'.[1] Angélique Arnauld, who with her sister Agnes was responsible for the reform of Port Royal, was not yet eleven when she became abbess, and was sixteen or seventeen when she began her career as a reformer.[2] Her spiritual affiliations were with St. Francis of Sales and with the Fathers of the French Oratory; from 1625 to 1634 she was under the direction of the pious but eccentric Bishop of Langres, Sebastian Zamet, towards whom she expressed the greatest possible devotion.[3] Then she transferred her allegiance to a friend of his, whom she had known slightly ever since 1621,[4] the famous, the enigmatic Abbé de St. Cyran. He was well known as a director, and, as we shall see, was highly thought of by the greatest men of his time. The most important of his friendships, for our present purposes, was with the Dutch theologian, Cornelius Jansen, who afterwards became Bishop of Ypres. As young men, they had met and corresponded, and thought out between them cloudy schemes, as young men will, for the reformation of the Universal Church. In her Zamet period, Mother Angélique had already founded a daughter house in Paris itself, which remains Port Royal *par excellence* (as opposed to Port Royal des Champs) until 1669. But it was at Port Royal des Champs that St. Cyran's most characteristic foundation, that of the solitaries, really took shape. A rigorist and an antiquarian, he had encouraged a few of his more devout male penitents to lodge close to the nuns, and live a life of almost complete solitude, in imitation of the Fathers of the Desert. After his arrest they settled down at Port Royal des Champs to make a garden of its wilderness.

In 1638 St. Cyran was arrested by Richelieu, and imprisoned at Vincennes. No definite charge was brought against him, and the careful examination of his papers does not appear to have disclosed anything to compromise him. But he remained a prisoner till Richelieu's death in 1642 and died himself, of an apoplexy, the year after. Jansen had died in 1641, after finishing, but not publishing, the great treatise on Grace which is known as the *Augustinus*. Thus, by a curious coincidence, the year 1643 looks like a clean sweep of the board. In reality the story was only just beginning.

[1] Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux*, &c., ii. 6.
[2] *Angélique Arnauld*, by Frances Martin, pp. 22, 31.
[3] *Sébastien Zamet*, by Louis Prunel, p. 203.
[4] Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism*, p. 168.

The second act opens here, *The Battle of Port Royal.* The posthumous publication of Jansen's *Augustinus* was bitterly resented by the Jesuits. It reacted so strongly against their teaching about Grace as to seem, in their eyes, a near approach to Calvinism; and its publication violated the spirit, if not the letter, of the silence imposed on them and on the Dominicans by Paul V, in 1607, after the famous controversy *De Auxiliis.* A condemnation in general terms was secured at Rome; and two courses of sermons were preached against the *Augustinus* in Paris. These brought Port Royal into the field in defence of their dead friend's dead hero. The champion who took up the gauntlet was the great Arnauld, a doctor of the Sorbonne, and Angélique's younger brother. In his apologies for Jansen he both recognized and defended all the points of doctrine which were afterwards stigmatized under the Five Propositions.[1] This was in 1644; the Five Propositions were submitted to the Sorbonne by Cornet in 1649, and to Rome by Habert, Bishop of Vabres, in 1650. In 1653 a more definite censure of the *Augustinus* appeared in the bull *Cum occasione.* This condemned as heretical the views that: (i) Some commandments of God are impossible to just men; (ii) In the state of fallen nature, no resistance is ever made to interior grace; (iii) For merit and demerit man does not need freedom from necessity, but only freedom from compulsion; (iv) The Semipelagians were heretical because they held that the human will could resist grace or correspond to it. The further proposition that 'It is Semipelagian to say that Christ died for all men together' was stigmatized as false and rash.

The bull, however, protested that it had no intention of impugning the doctrine of St. Augustine; and the friends of Port Royal, who regarded themselves as the best authorities upon the subject of that doctrine, raised no protest against it at the time.[2] Meanwhile, they had been carrying the war into the enemy's country. An unpublished document had come into Arnauld's hands, containing a Jesuit's advice to a lady who shrank from the idea of frequent Communion on the ground of her unworthiness. It proclaimed the doctrine laid down in our time by Pope Pius X, but with a hardiness and want of qualification which make even a modern reader open his eyes. To Arnauld, steeped in the thought of the first Christian centuries, it read like a deliberate blasphemy; he wrote a vast rejoinder, full of

[1] Abercrombie, op. cit., p. 218. [2] Gazier, op. cit., pp. 87, 90.

patristic quotations, in which he set forth all the ideas of the early Church about delayed absolution, and strongly recommended the practice of abstaining, temporarily, from Communion as part of the penance which absolution demands. This was the famous treatise *De la fréquente communion*; it appeared in 1643, possibly[1] by way of diverting the public attention, at this delicate moment, from the field of dogma to that of morals. Thus Jansenism came to be identified with what might more aptly be labelled Saint-Cyranism, a pronounced rigorism in morals which contrasted sharply with the Jesuit tendency to make things easier for the infirmities of human nature.

The theological issue, however, was pressed home, and by 1655 it had become clear that the nuns of Port Royal, with the rest of the diocese of Paris, would be called upon to disclaim the doctrine of the Five Propositions. It was in that year that Arnauld put out his *Letter to a Person of Quality*, a tract for the times which had two important results. In the first place the successful movement, which arose out of it, to deprive Arnauld of his doctorate was the signal for the publication of Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, a fresh and a formidable attack upon Jesuit moral theology. In the second place Arnauld enunciated in this tract the famous distinction between *fait* and *droit*. Authority might demand that the beliefs in question should be repudiated; but could it demand the admission that those beliefs were actually contained in Jansen's *Augustinus*? No, that was a matter of fact, not of theology; and your act of submission did not imply that you believed Jansen was guilty of maintaining the condemned views. With this proviso, the nuns were induced to sign the Formulary of submission in 1661. But the expedient did not avail them. With the appointment of a new archbishop, their troubles broke out again, and in 1665 it was demanded of them that they should sign the Formulary without reservation. Nearly all refused, and the Community was first broken up, then banished from Paris to Port Royal des Champs, where they remained for four years in virtual imprisonment, deprived of the Sacraments. During those four years a handful of the French bishops held out against the joint persuasions of the Crown and of the Holy See. At last, with the advent of a new Pope, Clement IX, a peace was patched up in 1669; and French society had a rest from soteriology.

[1] Abercrombie, op. cit., p. 201.

Thus begins the third act, which is *The Peace of Port Royal.* For Sainte-Beuve it is a period of autumnal splendour.[1] This Gazier indignantly denies; unlike Sainte-Beuve, he refuses to recognize the peace as a surrender of principle on the part of the Jansenists, and hails these ten years of interrupted hostilities as a period of vigorous life.[2] This, although Port Royal in Paris had now been given over to the small body of nuns who had accepted the principle of signature throughout, and the majority, who had remained faithful to the memory of St. Cyran, had to be content with their establishment in the country.[3] Mr. Abercrombie on the whole supports Gazier,[4] although he admits that we are mostly conscious of 'social and worldly' prosperity in the affairs of Port Royal. This is, indeed, what Sainte-Beuve chiefly complains of. The coming and going of great ladies in their carriages shocks his fastidious standards of spirituality, as it disturbed the quiet-loving nature of Nicole.[5] Possibly it was the social success of Port Royal that reawakened alarm in the breast of the Grand Monarque, and determined him to eradicate the cause of so much anxiety. The Jansenists, on their side, did nothing overtly to break the truce, though Gazier is compelled to admit that they were responsible for a series of volumes which were printed at Cologne, between 1669 and 1694, on *The Moral Practice of the Jesuits.*[6] Port Royal was never more dangerous than when it was anonymous, and it is not to be wondered at if the Society remained unsatisfied with the Peace of the Church.

The fourth act is *The Death of Port Royal.* The Duchess de Longueville, who was Jansenism's most powerful protector, died in 1679; and almost immediately Harlay, the Archbishop of Paris, made a personal visit to the convent, to inform them that they would not be allowed to receive any novices in future. At the same time he dismissed de Saci and the other priests who acted as chaplains there. The friends of Port Royal took alarm; Arnauld left France for the Low Countries, as Nicole had already done two years before; Quesnel joined him in 1685. Quesnel's papers, which were seized at Malines, discredited the Jansenists by revealing something of the intricacy and secrecy of their intrigues. This was in 1703; in the same year, most injudiciously, the Jansenists themselves raised afresh the whole question of subscription to the Formulary by the publication

[1] Op. cit. iv. 409. [2] Op. cit. ii. 189. [3] Ibid., p. 186.
[4] Op. cit., p. 279. [5] Op. cit. v. 139. [6] Op. cit. i. 204.

of the famous tract entitled *Un Cas de conscience*. The result was a fresh bull from Rome, *Vineam Domini*, which insisted that Catholics were bound to give full assent to the *fact* (that the Five Propositions represented Jansen's doctrine). By now death had taken a heavy toll of the second generation of Port-Royalists. Arnauld had gone to join Nicole and Pascal; many other great names had disappeared, including Lancelot, de Saci, Tillemont, and Racine. And in 1709, although only fifteen nuns were left out of the seventy-three who had been in the convent at the end of the peace, this miserable remnant was dispersed, and Port Royal razed to the ground. For good or evil, a symbol had passed from the world.

The fifth act may be called *The Aftermath of Port Royal*. Gazier, who maintains throughout that Jansenism never really existed as a movement, that it was a mere imaginary thrown up by the Jesuits to mask their inveterate dislike of the Arnauld family, is hard put to it to find a reason why 'Jansenism' should have any further history. But the plain fact is that the spirit of Jansenism had spread far beyond the immediate entourage of Port Royal, that the Five Propositions, obscured by refinements of controversy, were no longer sufficient to isolate it, and that a new definition was called for if the Church's proscription of it was to be effective. Whether the means chosen were well chosen is perhaps a matter of legitimate doubt. The bull *Unigenitus*, published in 1713, censured 101 propositions quoted verbally from a book called *Moral Reflexions on the New Testament*, by the Oratorian, Quesnel. Distinctions between *fait* and *droit* were no longer possible. But the work was one of undoubted piety, and in an earlier form had received weighty approbations; many of the passages quoted had to be censured, not as heretical, but as offensive to pious ears, &c., and it was easy to organize resistance against the bull in a country where many were jealous for the supposed independent rights of the French Church. The controversy which followed turned really on a point of Gallicanism, rather than on a point of Jansenism. The Appellant bishops, with their followers, explicitly appealed to a future council against the judgement of the Holy See. Noailles, the Archbishop of Paris, who had been much implicated in the revolt, made his submission in 1728; but it was not till 1743 that the last of the Appellant bishops died. Meanwhile, in Holland, schismatic action had been taken by a few of the Jansenist clergy, and their successors remain, an inconsiderable sect, to this day.

(ii) *The Enemies of Port Royal*

This brief sketch, in the course of which a hundred arresting details have necessarily been omitted, must suffice for a survey of Jansenist history. Nobody, I think, who reads the record impartially can fail to be struck by one reflection—namely, that the persecution of Port Royal (if we may use the term without prejudice) is one of persons rather than ideas, of the heretic rather than of his heresy. Its apologists, in the mass of controversial literature which they poured out, were for ever insisting that they subscribed to orthodox formulas about grace, that their rigorist views were such as could be paralleled in every period of Church history. Their enemies remained unconvinced. Rightly or wrongly they felt that mischief was brewing at Port Royal, and if their net of definitions and formularies did not catch the fish, it must be made finer in order to secure the elusive prey. What was the origin of the distrust inspired, in the minds of so many of their contemporaries, by a set of men and women whose piety was undoubted, whose abhorrence of schism was constantly asserted, whose lives were above reproach?

That no love was lost, on either side, between Jansenists and Jesuits goes without saying. But the first blow was not struck by Jesuits, nor, as far as can be ascertained, under Jesuit influence. Richelieu, who sent St. Cyran to Vincennes, was no catspaw of the Society; the most damaging evidence against the accused was produced by Zamet, a friend, as we have seen, of the Oratory, and by Dom Jouaud, a Cistercian. Either of these, it is true, had cause to be angry with St. Cyran; Dom Jouaud could not forgive Port Royal for having thrown over its Cistercian allegiance,[1] and Zamet was naturally indignant about the intrigue by which St. Cyran and Mère Angélique, his friend and his penitent, had ousted him from his position as director to the convent.[2] But Richelieu was enough of a realist to make allowance for these antipathies. The Jansenists themselves were prepared to adduce forty separate reasons for Richelieu's displeasure, but none has gone far to satisfy the historians. Nicole, for example, is positive that St. Cyran was imprisoned owing to the 'glorious suspicion' that he was the author of *Petrus Aurelius*.[3] But even if he had been, it is difficult to see why Richelieu

[1] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 90.

[2] The history of this is set out in full by Prunel, op. cit., bk. ii, ch. iv.

[3] *Imaginaires*, no. iii.

should have resented the tendencies of a book which supported the rights of bishops against religious; an echo (*quae regio in terris . . .?*) of the arch-priest controversy in our own country. The more you read of this tangled controversy, the more you are driven to Mr. Abercrombie's conclusion, that Richelieu bore St. Cyran no personal ill will but regarded him as a dangerous man.[1]

The immediate ground for this suspicion was that alleged at the time. St. Cyran had openly questioned the Tridentine doctrine of attrition; that is, the doctrine that a penitent may be absolved in the confessional even when he has conceived sorrow for his sins from comparatively self-regarding motives. But it is difficult to believe that pique over a single point of theology (Richelieu had made a special study of attrition) was the cause, in the full sense, of St. Cyran's imprisonment. Even if he was accused, in Zamet's deposition, of having denied that the Council of Trent was a true council, this was only what Zamet said the nuns said St. Cyran said, and Richelieu could assess the value of such hearsay evidence as well as another man. No, the dispute over attrition was a symbol of the issue, not the issue itself. Surely the underlying motive of Richelieu's action should rather be represented thus. St. Cyran adopted —it was part of his pose—an air of mystery; he went round saying rather ordinary things about the decadence of the Church and then imploring you not to repeat them; if you did, he would deny having said them. He would give his correspondents strict injunctions to burn his letters.[2] Even after his arrest, and before his papers could be seized, one volume of a book he was writing against the Protestants was hastily burnt by his nephew, Barcos.[3] You either took such a man seriously, or you did not. Bremond does not, and discusses elaborately the reasons why the Government should have taken proceedings against 'this maniac'.[4] But Richelieu believed in St. Cyran; he had embarrassed him with repeated offers of preferment, and described him publicly as the most learned man in Europe.[5] He could not persuade himself that these airs of mystery covered nothing more than the dreams of an egotist. Already, he had tried to secure a Papal condemnation of Mother Agnes Arnauld's *Chapelet secret*,[6] a harmless, if eccentric, devotion which had pro-

[1] Op. cit., pp. 188, 189.
[2] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 98, 99.
[3] Abercrombie, op. cit., p. 189.
[4] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 88.
[5] Prunel, op. cit., p. 247.
[6] Abercrombie, op. cit., p. 177.

duced a storm in a tea-cup a few years since. Now the cumulative evidence (as it seemed to him) that Port Royal was becoming a focus of strange doctrine determined him to strike. This was a man, he said, who was 'more dangerous than six armies'.[1] He smelt the heresiarch.

The curious thing is that Richelieu was right; only, he struck too late. 'If Luther and Calvin had been locked up when they began to dogmatize,' he said, 'the State would have been spared a great deal of trouble.'[2] And if Richelieu had imprisoned St. Cyran when controversy arose over the *Chapelet secret*, there would have been no Jansenism. Zamet would have continued to direct Port Royal, and Angélique would have continued to recognize him as a man of God; Condren, Olier would have been her oracles. The Sorbonne might have hummed and hawed over subscription to *Cum occasione*, but there would have been no focus of organized resistance. As it was, the thing came too late. His two years at Vincennes, which he only survived by a few months, canonized St. Cyran in the eyes of his followers, and made it a point of honour with them to be Catholics, somehow, with a difference. Jansen must be defended at all costs because he was a friend of *feu M. l'Aumônier*. If heresy was discovered in his works, you might disclaim the heresy, but you must disclaim it for his works as well as for yourself.

Richelieu died, and St. Cyran died; but the fortunate consent of their stars could not undo the evil. Louis XIV inherited as part of his policy a rooted fear of Jansenism. It was he who insisted, against the plea of Clement XI, that they should be allowed to die out in peace, on the dispersal of the last poor survivors; he would not be outlived, as Richelieu had been outlived, by his enemy.[3] No doubt his Jesuit confessors did nothing to discourage this fixation; but it seems to have been part of his personal make-up. Port Royal dogged him with uncomfortable memories of the Fronde; its leaders, Arnauld, Pascal, might be monarchists *à l'outrance*, but others, Saint-Gilles for example, had been on the wrong side.[4] Even the supporters who, from time to time, came between the convent and its fate were tarred with the same brush, Cardinal de Retz, the Parlement, the Duchess de Longueville.[5] Racine, who knew his way about Courts, testified that Louis always thought of the Jansenists

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 23. [2] Ibid. i. 336. [3] Gazier, op. cit. i. 228.
[4] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iii. 159. [5] Abercrombie, op. cit., p. 234.

as not only heretics but rebels.[1] And as Richelieu probably found that the mysterious airs of St. Cyran got on his nerves, Louis certainly found that the incessant buzzing of Port Royal got on his. They were perpetually explaining things, justifying things, issuing (at great length) Answers to Monsieur So-and-so's Answer to Monsieur Somebody-else; their friends at Court were never out of his antechamber. There was an air of conspiracy, he complained, about the whole thing.[2] He found nothing but Jansenists wherever he went; 'ces Messieurs de Port-Royal, toujours ces Messieurs'.[3] It is a common failing of good people, not to be able to leave well alone.

Of the Jesuits who engaged in controversy against early Jansenism it must be freely admitted that they do not always show up well. It takes all sorts to make a Society. Père Coton died in 1626; if only he had lived to weather this, as he weathered so many other storms in the history of his order! His successors were too credulous of gossip, too crude in their satire, too tenacious of untenable positions; they were continually being put in the wrong by the devastating accuracy of their opponents. What we tend to forget is that they were fighting for their lives. Because they exercised a powerful influence at Court, because they won in the end, it has been easy for Sainte-Beuve and the other friends of Port Royal to represent them as the aggressors. But you have to consider that when St. Cyran died it was only forty years since they had been excluded from France as carefully as they were excluded from England. The grandfather of Angélique and Antoine Arnauld, a Huguenot who had been converted by the massacre of St. Bartholomew,[4] was the author of a famous speech demanding the expulsion of the Jesuits, in which he talked of their 'conjurations plus horribles que celle des Bacchanales, plus dangereuses que celle de Catilina'.[5] This outburst, wittily described as the 'original sin of the Arnaulds', is treated by authors like Gazier as the sole explanation of all that followed. The Jesuits (if I may be permitted the use of an expressive phrase) 'had it in' for the family, and the long agonies of Port Royal were their revenge.[6] Yet Gazier has spoiled his own case by adopting, on the very threshold of his work, Cardinal Bona's definition of the Jansenists

[1] Gazier, op. cit. i. 148.
[2] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. v. 161.
[3] Ibid. 154.
[4] Martin, op. cit., p. 12.
[5] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. i. 70.
[6] Gazier, op. cit. i. 25.

as 'des Catholiques fervents qui n'aiment pas les Jésuites'[1]—he did not say, 'que les Jésuites n'aiment pas'. In fact, the Jesuits had enemies who had no direct connexion with Port Royal; the Parlement, with its obstinate Gallicanism, and a great part of the Sorbonne. And the Jansenists were repudiated by spiritual giants of the period who held no special brief for the Society, St. Vincent de Paul, St. John Eudes, M. Olier, de Rancé. You cannot subsume the whole history under the theory of a family vendetta. You might as well say that Pascal only wrote the *Provincials* to work off his grudge against Père Noël over the vacuum.

Were the Jesuits the attackers, or the attacked? For five years during which they lived together after 1611, and for seven years after that during which they corresponded, Jansen and St. Cyran were evidently playing with some programme for the reformation of the Church. In their cipher, they allude to it as 'Pilmot', a word (no doubt constructed out of initial letters) whose exact significance has never been traced. Gazier, indeed, regards it as a symbol for the *Augustinus*,[2] but Bremond points out that when Pilmot first appears the *Augustinus* was not even in contemplation.[3] It is not easy to trace which was the inspiring influence in these interchanges of thought; the patient scholar or the bombastic dreamer. Probably, as is the way with such friendships among young men (they were thirty-six and thirty-two at the time, but the undergraduate is still lively in them), either talked more than he listened. According to Bremond, the main plank in the programme of reformation emerges with increasing clearness; it is war on the regulars in general, on the Jesuits in particular.[4] (No less than six cipher names are used of the Jesuits; one of them is *Satan romaniste*.) Jansen waged war by the means we already know. Are we to believe that St. Cyran went away and forgot all about it?

Were the Jesuits the attackers, or the attacked? The whole attitude of Port Royal towards the regular clergy is a morbid exaggeration of that jealousy on behalf of the secular clergy which you will find, sometimes, among exemplary Catholics. It is fair to remember that Mother Angélique's experiences had been unfortunate; the religious who was responsible for her interior conversion turned out to be a

[1] Ibid., Preface, p. 7. [2] Ibid. i. 42. [3] Op. cit. iv. 121.

[4] Ibid. 112, 117. Bremond's analysis of the whole correspondence is at once admirable reading and a monument of temperate criticism.

scoundrel, and afterwards apostatized. From this and a few other instances she seems to have made a generalization that the religious were worldly and miserly, if not worse.[1] When Marie des Anges went to Maubuisson in 1626 Angélique gave her four rules for the guidance of her conduct, the third of which was that she was to have nothing to do with the Jesuits or with the Capuchins of Pontoise.[2] (By this time she was already under St. Cyran's influence.) At no time in the long history of their varying fortunes do we find any evidence that the Port-Royalists made any gesture of politeness towards the Jesuits, any effort to understand them. On their side, at least, it was war to the knife. The Jesuits were something unclean that had crept into the Church later than the first six centuries. It is not surprising, writes Bremond, himself a decidedly critical friend to the Society, that the Jesuits reacted against Jansenism: 'Ils étaient visés. Les diminuer par tous les moyens, c'est encore l'article le plus clair du programme janséniste.'[3]

There is no need, then, to speculate why the Jansenists were unpopular with the religious; they had ranged themselves from the first in the opposite camp. It is more pertinent to examine how it was that so many devout souls outside the area of Jesuit influence came to suspect not merely the theology, always elusive, but the whole atmosphere of Port Royal. In particular, men like M. Olier and St. John Eudes, who by force of circumstances were the Society's professional rivals. The piety, the unworldliness, and (in most connexions) the orthodoxy of the place was beyond suspicion. I think it is possible to distinguish five main weaknesses about the whole Jansenist approach, which were perhaps as much responsible as the Five Propositions themselves for the isolation of Port Royal from the stream of contemporary piety. And I think it is possible, without being unduly fanciful, to couple these (as the toast-masters say) with the names of the five great Jansenist heroes, Mother Angélique, St. Cyran, Arnauld, Nicole, and Pascal.

(iii) *Mother Angélique and the Self-consciousness of Port Royal*

I have referred to the air of drama which meets you everywhere in the pages of Sainte-Beuve. He sometimes gets the credit for having dramatized the situation. I wonder, was it he who dramatized the situation or was it the people who were actors in the story?

[1] Martin, op. cit., p. 72. [2] Ibid., p. 141. [3] Op. cit. iv. 31.

And in particular, was it not Mother Angélique? That great woman was not without her faults; Bremond (who compares her unfavourably throughout with her sister Agnes) writes of her imperiousness, her prodigious freedom in passing judgements on her neighbour; there was no dealing with a woman who was at once up in the clouds and scrupulous.[1] But it is not of her faults that I would write here; they were personal to herself. What is more important, it seems to me, is a single weakness which she contrived to hand on to her spiritual children. She was incurably self-conscious; she was always dramatizing situations. She herself said that the object of humiliations was to destroy self and my own will, and the *I* and the *my*; St. Cyran, Pascal, Nicole did the same.[2] Of their supernatural achievements it is not for us to judge; but as a matter of plain earthly fact it seems clear that no one of the four ever got rid of that self-consciousness which makes you see yourself out of the corner of your eye at every turn in life.

No scene has been made more famous by Sainte-Beuve than the Journée des Guichets, when Angélique, aged eighteen, spoke to her father and mother through a newly constructed grille, telling them that they would no longer be allowed to enter the convent, as hitherto.[3] The father storms, the mother is in tears, Agnes, aged sixteen, points out that it is all in accordance with the Canons of Trent; and Sainte-Beuve quotes Corneille. Angélique in the end faints; a compromise is arranged by which Angélique allows her mother full right of entry, and her father the freedom of the outer buildings and the grounds. It makes an excellent story; but could not the same point have been gained, one asks, with fewer tears? Was it really necessary to lock every door of the convent, and treat her eminently pious parents as if they were brigands? Or you will read of her bringing back thirty fresh nuns from Maubuisson, and sending them on ahead under a vow of silence with their names marked on their sleeves.[4] She will always be spectacular, always making gestures. It is a quality which comes out (among others) in an excellent story recounted by the still unconverted Racine. Two Capuchins arrive one evening and ask for hospitality; they are received 'assez froidement, comme tous les religieux y étoient reçus',

[1] Ibid. 182, 183, 187.
[2] Martin, op. cit., p. 168; cf. Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 402, iv. 469.
[3] Ibid. i, ch. v.
[4] Ibid., ch. viii.

but are regaled on the white bread and wine 'des Messieurs'. Then a rumour goes round that one of the two is a Père Maillard, who was active for the condemnation of the *Augustinus*. The white bread and wine are at once, by the Abbess's orders, removed in the middle of their meal; cider and the bread 'of the valets' are put before them instead.[1] This love of gesture comes of having the picture of yourself as a reforming abbess fatally ever-present to your mind. You see the same tendency in all her recorded conversation. She would prefer to live in an ill-regulated convent because 'there will be more merit in it; I shall meet with strong opposition, and have few good examples'.[2] And, referring to the great discretion of St. Cyran's successor, she declares that she would rather be canonized by M. Singlin than by the Pope;[3] unconsciously, you see, she takes the canonization for granted.

If we may put it unkindly by saying that Angélique saw herself too much in the part of St. Theresa, we shall find a good match for her in St. Cyran, who saw himself, equally, in the part of the ideal director. That he should thank God when he is imprisoned is well enough; that he should then publicly give directions for the bestowing of some alms is surely courting the limelight.[4] Perhaps the saddest incident in his career was when he came out of prison, and went back to Port Royal to receive the plaudits due to a Confessor of the Church. The whole community was assembled to greet him, when, over a trifling distraction, one of the nuns was overcome by *fou rire*. At such moments there is no resisting the contagion, and it was not long before everyone except St. Cyran himself was helpless with laughter. How St. Philip Neri would have enjoyed such an occasion, with himself as the centre of it; how he would have roared! St. Cyran dismissed the company, and postponed the celebration of the event till the octave. Then, after High Mass, he asked to be left alone in the Church while he sang, by himself, a psalm chosen for him by opening a psalter at random. But you were never left alone at Port Royal, while there was a chance of edification; Lancelot, his biographer, and Singlin watched him from a place of hiding, saw his tears and prostrations as he sang.[5] If only they would have been a little more natural!

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. vi. 111.
[2] Martin, op. cit., p. 35.
[3] Nicole, *Visionnaires*, no. iv.
[4] Martin, op. cit., p. 243.
[5] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 28 sqq.

Trained by these examples to dramatize their emotions, the nuns reacted to persecution with a self-consciousness which does not escape the austere criticism of Sainte-Beuve. The idea of martyrdom, he says, began to have an attraction, to be a temptation for the daughters of Port Royal. 'On arrive à cette disposition périlleuse où l'on désire l'excès du mal pour en tirer un sujet de mérite et de gloire et un nouvel éclat.'[1] At the interrogatory before the Archbishop in 1664, no sooner had any of them left his presence than she hurried to her cell to put a full relation of the interview in writing. 'Elles avaient soif du martyre, et elles commençaient d'en dresser les actes incontinent.'[2] The Archbishop burned his own records of the interviews, the nuns preserved theirs, for the information of the historian. Their successors, early in the next century, deluged Cardinal de Noailles with anonymous letters, taunting him with the impenitent death of his brother, and threatening him with the condemnation of posterity.[3] Posterity, as we shall see, was for the Jansenist the last court of appeal.

Sympathize as we may with their misfortunes, it is impossible not to feel that there were intervals, at least, during which the nuns rather enjoyed being persecuted. They had taken precautions beforehand to see that all went smoothly.[4] Did they suffer from want of exhortation when they were being held as prisoners? M. de St. Marthe climbed into a tree, just over the garden wall, and preached to them, invisible among the leaves.[5] An accommodating chaplain, de Boisbusson, carried away hundreds of letters with him to the post[6] and heard the nuns' confessions, although they were supposed to be deprived of the Sacraments.[7] If you were not prepared to accept the want of Holy Communion, *en janséniste*, as a mortification, you dressed up as a lay sister and nobody knew.[8] Sainte-Beuve's description of this curious siege reads exactly like a chapter of Dumas.[9] It was not easy to imprison a set of nuns who calmly listened at the keyhole in the intervals of their interrogation to know what was being said about their depositions.[10] Such was the lighter side of the persecution.

I must not be understood to suggest that the Port-Royalists were in

[1] Ibid. iv. 150.
[2] Ibid. 187.
[3] Ibid. vi. 205.
[4] Ibid. iv. 152.
[5] Ibid. 347.
[6] Gazier, op. cit. i. 174.
[7] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iv. 218.
[8] Ibid. 283.
[9] Ibid. 217.
[10] Gazier, op. cit. i. 144.

the habit of taking things lightly. If anyone wants to see how far it is possible for a human being to take himself seriously, let him read the letter which the young Lemaître sent to his father when he decided to become a solitary; the letter which begins 'Monsieur mon père, Dieu s'étant servi de vous pour me mettre au monde'.[1] Bremond, his native tongue failing him in his need, is reduced to commenting, 'La vie sectaire tue l'*humour*'.[2]

(iv) *St. Cyran and the Self-centredness of Port Royal*

'Ces nonnes malades et ces grandes dames ne cherchent qu'à parler d'elles-mêmes.'[3] Such was the judgement of Sainte-Beuve's friend after reading through a mass of Port Royal correspondence. If he was justified in his criticism of the nuns, there can be no doubt where the habit came from. It came from St. Cyran.

The man himself will always be a mystery; perhaps he would have wished it. He first attracted attention as the author of two *jeux d'esprit* in casuistry, lax in their tendency and sycophantic in their occasion. As Bremond says, they might have been written by Père Bauny.[4] Then, without any further performance to account for it, he appears before the world as a man of prodigious learning, a director of souls possessed of superhuman insight; the friend of Bérulle and Condren, admired almost as a saint by Sainte Chantal. He himself told Angélique that he had known many reforming abbesses, but few who had reformed themselves.[5] Had he, who reformed so many lives, ever reformed his own? There is no record of it. Are we to regard him as a sham saint, or are we to think of him as a real saint, with some extraordinary weaknesses of character? Sainte-Beuve, after speaking frankly of his early failings, declares the intention of canonizing him; 'maintenant, il est temps de l'admirer sans plus de réserve'.[6] Hitherto St. Cyran has been fooling; it is time he stopped.[7] To which Bremond mildly interposes the objection, 'il ne s'arrêtera pas'.[8] For Bremond St. Cyran is always two men in one; the mystic, representing the French school of piety at its best, and the psychopath, tortured by a constant effort to assert himself.[9] He suffers from a 'mégalomanie morbide, ataxie

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 389.
[2] Op. cit. iv. 252.
[3] Op. cit. v. 57.
[4] Op. cit. iv. 132.
[5] Martin, op. cit., p. 182.
[6] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 341.
[7] Ibid. i. 279.
[8] Op. cit.. iv. 51.
[9] Ibid. 50.

intellectuelle et morale',[1] but only, it seems, by fits and starts. As for his vast patristic reading, Bremond is content to believe that it was all done for the edification of his penitents; there was nothing of the scholar in him.[2] Mr. Abercrombie is even more severe; nothing, he tells us, could cure St. Cyran's 'mental processes of a disastrous indecision, or his practical judgements of a stultifying dimness'.[3] And as for his sanctity, 'His most enthusiastic annalists have been unable to find instances of a piety which should be uncommon as well as unostentatious.'[4]

St. Cyran would perhaps have been more fortunate if he had lacked biographers. His reputation has been spoiled, not by his accusers, Jouaud or Zamet, but by Lancelot and those other Jansenists who have written in praise of him; they have given us, somehow, a confused and unattractive portrait of the man. One failing he certainly had, which was admitted by so loyal a Jansenist as Besoigne; 'une facilité qu'il avait de parler beaucoup de lui-même et de sa personne . . . ce que ses ennemis attribuaient à une secrète vanité'.[5] Watch him in his dealings with Marie Claire, the younger Arnauld sister, who was the last of the nuns to yield to his influence, abandoning that of Zamet. For six months he refuses to hear her confession at all; then he lets her off with the seven penitential psalms, and a long, stiff allocution in which he treats her as a brand saved from the burning.[6] He was a rigorist, perhaps, by conviction; need he have been such an egoist? Watch him on his first visit to Port Royal des Champs after his release. A peasant comes up to him lamenting that his wife has just given birth to a stillborn child. He treats his biographer to some pious considerations on the fact that the infant is in hell, since it has died unbaptized, and then goes on to explain what an interest he, St. Cyran, has always taken in the education of children, and how he has sometimes paid for the education of children although they were not related to him; 'J'aime extrêmement toute sorte d'enfants.'[7] Children were a favourite topic of his; 'je voudrois que vous pussiez lire dans mon cœur quelle est l'affection que je leur porte'.[8] No note can be struck in conversation or in correspondence which does not bring him back to the enthralling topic of himself. 'I have often told you that I am very slow

[1] Ibid. 66. [2] Ibid. 156. [3] Abercrombie, op. cit., p. 164.
[4] Ibid., p. 171. [5] Prunel, op. cit., p. 251.
[6] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. i. 347 sqq. [7] Ibid. ii. 39. [8] Ibid. iii. 468.

over great and important affairs, but, when the time has come, it is impossible for me to change, or to lose a moment; I must work unceasingly to the full extent of my light and my power.'[1] 'Believe me, I have never deceived anybody.'[2] When he is being interrogated at Vincennes he explains that if he sometimes does not say Mass, it is because he is too weak through excessive fasting.[3] 'St. Cyran,' writes Bremond, 'qui n'était pas homme à perdre une pouce de sa sainteté, aura sans doute et plus d'une fois, sincèrement, pieusement joué à l'homme de Dieu.'[4]

Bremond has collected many instances of this *charlatanisme dévot*; it would be easy to multiply them out of Sainte-Beuve. St. Cyran affects, often irritatingly, the airs of the hierophant. When Lancelot's friend Ferrand went to Paris to see him, 'he sometimes said nothing, and did not even answer the questions put to him; but we were as much edified by his silence as by his talk'.[5] He would stop short in the middle of a discourse, and then explain that this was not because he was at a loss for something to say; too many thoughts were presenting themselves to his mind all at once, 'et je regarde Dieu pour voir ce qui est plus à propos que je vous dise'.[6] When Lancelot himself first tried to obtain an interview, through a friend, St. Cyran's reply was, 'Oui, faites-le venir; je me sens disposé à le voir.'[7] This trick of making himself rare was a trick which he shared, the reader may remember, with the heresiarch Donatus.[8] It is easily excused by those who write of him as a saint; for us others it has an unwelcome savour of self-importance.

You find touches of her director's self-importance in Mother Angélique. She saw St. Francis of Sales two or three times in 1619 and a few of his letters are addressed to her—others she claimed to have burned as a mortification.[9] But even if it had been true to say that M. de Genève honoured her with his affection and confidence as much as Madame de Chantal, she ought not to have said it.[10] Nor ought she to have described how the population of Maubuisson, 'qui nous aimait à cause des charités que nous leur faisions', ran after them shouting 'Voilà les filles de la bonne Madame de Port Royal'; some things ought to be left to the imagination.[11] What I would here

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 21.
[2] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 135.
[3] Abercrombie, op. cit., p. 190.
[4] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 42.
[5] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. i. 422.
[6] Ibid. 481.
[7] Ibid. 423.
[8] St. Optatus, *De schismate Donatistarum*, iii. 3.
[9] Martin, op. cit., p. 123.
[10] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. i. 210.
[11] Ibid. 199.

emphasize, however, is a quality much more pardonable in Angélique, yet in its effects much more dangerous, because it communicated itself to her nuns—a kind of corporate self-satisfaction over the glories of Port Royal.

It is, no doubt, the tendency, or at least the temptation, of all foundresses. But at Port Royal worship of the Institute seems to grow into a kind of mania; the more its inmates find themselves cut off, by the peculiarity of their views, from the rest of Christendom, the more freely their tears flow that the rest of Christendom should be so wrong. When Sister Euphemia was unable to get her dowry, because her brother Pascal, still unconverted, resented this decrease in the family revenues, Mother Angélique made her write out a long *relation* of the trials she, Sister Euphemia, went through, and the comfort she, Mother Angélique, administered to her.[1] I may be misjudging her, but it seems to me the whole purpose of the *relation* is to proclaim to the world the disinterestedness of Port Royal, as compared with the other convents of the period. 'N'êtes-vous pas donc bien heureuse d'être tombée entre les mains de personnes qui vous conduisent par les pures règles de la charité, comme si elles n'y avaient aucun intérêt?'[2] In this doctrine that Port Royal was the only real convent in Christendom the nuns were fatally well drilled. You see it in the insufferable air of patronage they adopt towards the Filles de Sainte Marie among whom they were 'exiled' before the Peace of the Church.[3] You see it in the equally patronizing attitude their *relations* show towards Péréfixe, the Archbishop of Paris, who tried to treat them *en bonhomme*. He did not realize, says Sainte-Beuve, that he had to do with 'des esprits infatués tout bas d'une excellence et d'une aristocratie de dévotion'.[4] 'Aristocrat' was perhaps the nearest French word he could get to express the idea; in English, we have one of four letters which would have been even nearer the mark.

It is fair to remember, in extenuation of this clannishness among the religious, that they were, very largely, a clan. When Madame Arnauld died in 1641, herself an inmate of Port Royal, six of her daughters were nuns there. One of these was a widow, Madame Lemaître, and she also had six daughters who were nuns there.

[1] Printed in full in *Jacqueline Pascal*, by Victor Cousin (Paris, 1862), pp. 177 sqq.
[2] Cousin, op. cit., p. 209.
[3] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 240.
[4] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iv. 181.

Madame Arnauld's son, the great Doctor, was in constant touch with the community; her courtier son, Arnauld d'Andilly, retired there at intervals and cultivated the garden. Three of Madame Lemaître's sons were solitaries, also living under the shadow of the convent. It was Little Gidding reduced *ad absurdum*. And the Arnaulds were a family who did not go in for modesty about themselves. 'Il a la langue de la maison' was d'Andilly's explanation of how Antoine Arnauld wrote so well,[1] and Antoine himself observed that 'C'est quasi confesser le nom de Dieu que de confesser le nôtre'.[2] A kind of intellectual inbreeding was the inevitable result of shutting up so many like-minded people in the same enclosure. An indefinable spirit of 'Here's tae us, and wha's like us?' dominates their interminable biographies of one another.

To the modern reader, there is a kind of patriarchal smugness about the atmosphere of Jansenism, even when it flourished among secular persons living, as far as Jansenists could ever live, in the world. We must beware how we challenge comparisons with the past; but it is reminiscent, now and again, of Evangelical society in our own country a hundred years back. When servants break things, Euphemia points out to her married sister, Madame Périer, you should first of all tell them that you do not mind what they break, as long as they do not break the commandments; and then, that it is a pity there are so few employers like that; and then, that we should feel far happier in their condition of life than in ours.[3] It is all, no doubt, admirable Catholic doctrine; but you have caught, for a moment, the remembered atmosphere of *The Fairchild Family*.

(v) *Arnauld and the Combativeness of Port Royal*

It was the fashion among the Jansenists to represent Antoine Arnauld as a great theologian; he should be remembered, rather, as a great controversialist. He argued with everybody; not only with the Jesuits about grace, but with the Huguenot Jurieu about the claims of the Church, with William of Orange about legitimism, with Malebranche about innate ideas; you could not stop him arguing. As Bremond says, to be a Jansenist you must always be writing *against* somebody. A theologian by trade, Arnauld was a barrister by instinct, like his father and his grandfather before him. Like his fellow Jansenists he must always be talking about 'the

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 61. [2] Ibid. iv. 231. [3] Cousin, op. cit., p. 260.

Truth'; but what really mattered to him was his brief. As we have seen, he began by defending the Five Propositions as being the doctrine of Jansen; then, when it seemed doubtful whether this would go down with the jury, he abandoned the Five Propositions and said they were not in Jansen at all. In Sainte-Beuve's view, it was he who sold the pass; he made feverish attempts to explain away all he had said in his 'Letter to a Person of Quality', when it became clear that the Sorbonne was going to take away his doctorate.[1] (The proceedings of the Sorbonne during the controversy transport us into a fresh world, no longer that of *The Three Musketeers* or that of *The Fairchild Family*, but that of Newman's *Apologia*. The bickerings and the jealousies, the interference of the religious doctors resented by the permanent staff, as the interference of the 'country clergy' was resented in nineteenth-century Oxford—the whole academic setting is true to type.) It was Arnauld, too, who popularized the distinction between *fait* and *droit*, a lawyer's, not a theologian's, distinction. We must not think of Arnauld as a fanatic who would never budge from a position once he had adopted it. 'Il faut se baisser un peu', he said over the signing of the Formulary, 'pourvu que ce soit sans préjudice à la vérité.'[2] And he leaves Sainte-Beuve groaning, 'Saint Cyran, où es-tu?'

On the other hand, he was not a good party man, in the sense of promoting, cleverly, the interests of his own group. Bremond accuses him roundly of having 'sacrifié à sa vaniteuse querelle les filles de Port-Royal'.[3] It seems clear, at least, that the Peace of the Church could have been achieved in 1662, instead of 1668, but for his intransigence.[4] A theologian should have been stiffer, a politician more pliant; Arnauld behaved like a lawyer and stuck to his brief. His brief was against the Jesuits. If, by trimming his sails a little, he could bring in the Dominicans on his side against their traditional rivals, that was worth doing. But peace, peace with the Jesuits, was something he never desired. He spent some thirty out of the last fifty years of his life either in hiding or in exile, arguing all the time; that did not matter, he could bear anything except to be silenced.

Like most violent controversialists, he believed himself to be the pattern of meekness and good temper. 'For these last five years', says the preface to the *Fréquente Communion*, 'we have not even been

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iii. 37.
[2] Gazier, op. cit. i. 128.
[3] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 287.
[4] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iv. 165.

at pains to defend ourselves in our own cause';[1] and the *Avertissement*, upon the mention of the Jesuits, breaks out into the astonishing phrase, 'Si j'eusse eu la moindre animosité contre cet ordre . . .',[2] obviously in all sincerity. So strange are we, so delicately fashioned. The pity of it is that his example poisoned the very roots of charity at Port Royal. Bremond, in an interesting passage, suggests that if Luther had never lived some other influence might have been found to produce the Reformation; but Arnauld is 'Cleopatra's nose'—without him there would have been no Jansenism.[3] That *aigreur*, which seemed to Bourdaloue and to Voltaire the leading characteristic of the movement, is his; that obstinacy, which prevented the nuns from accepting the *fait de Jansenius*, was formed under his leadership.

(vi) *Nicole and the Legalism of Port Royal*

I have said that Arnauld's instincts were those of a barrister; if we ask, who was the solicitor that briefed him, the answer is surely Pierre Nicole. The friendship between these two men is one of the most curious incidents in ecclesiastical history. Bremond, in a brilliant passage, describes the pair as a knock-about turn; either of them constitutionally incapable of agreeing with the other upon the ideals of their common party, and both, it seemed, incapable of realizing that there was any disagreement.[4] Sainte-Beuve compares it with the friendship of Melanchthon and Luther,[5] but Bremond points out that Nicole was far more effective than Melanchthon in moderating the extreme counsels of his leader.[6] Nicole was constitutionally a man who liked a quiet life; he complained pathetically enough that there was nothing of the Cato about him;[7] the extremists regarded him as a traitor to the party when, after the end of the peace, he engaged himself not to indulge in any more controversy, and he was hard put to it to make his defence. The truth is, perhaps, that he was something less than the Melanchthon—he was the Tychonius of his party.[8] His *Traité de la grâce générale* maintains a doctrine which only an expert could distinguish from ordinary Thomism. Yet, all through the years of stress that occupied the middle of the century he, with Arnauld, guided the fortunes of the party; and although it

[1] Sheet S in the edition of 1643; the preface, however, may have been written by Barcos. [2] Ibid., sheet Z. [3] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 422. [4] Ibid. 450.
[5] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iv. 421. [6] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 465.
[7] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iv. 487. [8] See above, p. 69.

is only a tradition, it is a tradition generally accepted that he first instituted the distinction between *fait* and *droit*. To him, according to Mr. Abercrombie, the Peace of the Church is entirely due.[1] Bremond would even have us believe that he is responsible for the persistence of the whole Jansenist cause, which must have made ship-wreck without his prudent counsels; it was a dove that hatched that brood of sulky owls.[2]

The Church had a right to bind you to the abstract statement that the Five Propositions were a heresy. Had she a right to bind you to the concrete statement that the Five Propositions were to be found in the *Augustinus*? This distinction once drawn, and Arnauld once persuaded to adopt it, Nicole (who had a lawyer's mind, though he was no lawyer) realized the tactical advantage you had gained. You could represent your opponents as unreasonable fellows, who were determined to fix a quarrel on you even when you entirely agreed with them. That is the burden of Nicole's own 'Letters on the Imaginary Heresy', in which he persistently writes of 'la grâce efficace par elle-même', thus distinguishing the Jansenist notion of grace from the Jesuit, *but not from the Dominican*, notion of it.[3] He took his cue from St. Paul, dividing the Pharisees from the Sadducees. This claim that the whole thing is a storm in a tea-cup is equally to be found in the later of Pascal's *Provincials*. It has often been pointed out that this involves a gross contradiction; in Letter XVII Pascal is insisting on the identity of Jansenist with Dominican doctrine over the question raised, whereas in Letter II he has mercilessly satirized the Dominicans for their characteristic view of sufficient grace—even condescending to the cheap observation that it is what most of us would call insufficient grace. Here you have Nicole's influence; later, Pascal went back to the strict Jansenist view that the grace which we refuse is refused because it was, genuinely, insufficient to capture our wills; if the Pope thought otherwise, the Pope was wrong.[4] Bremond does well to call him the *enfant terrible* of the movement.[5] But it was Nicole who had gained, through Arnauld, the ear of the party. Lancelot might wring his hands over the defection from St. Cyran's principles,[6] but Port Royal would concentrate hence-forward on defending, not Jansen's theology, but Jansen's reputation.

[1] Op. cit., p. 273. [2] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 454. [3] e.g. *Imaginaires*, iii.
[4] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iii. 82; Bremond, op. cit. iv. 324. [5] Ibid. 413.
[6] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 128.

The issue, so defined, was perfectly intelligible, and the attitude which the nuns took up was in itself perfectly natural. Jansen was the friend of St. Cyran; St. Cyran was the founder of Port Royal; *ergo*. They needed no more elaborate syllogism. Sainte-Beuve accuses the Jesuits of an extravagant respect for their founder;[1] he does ill to raise the point, for in saying this he condemns the Jansenists also. Never was a convent eaten up, as Port Royal was, with the tendency to canonize the late chaplain. Run your eye over Mother Angélique's interview with Sister Euphemia about her dowry, and you will find *feu M. de St Cyran* on page 202, *feu M. de St Cyran* on page 203, *feu M. de St Cyran* on page 205.[2] The friends of Port Royal debate eagerly whether the nuns knew the theology of grace or not, and if so whether it was right or wrong for them to know it, and whether they could have been expected to submit their judgements to the judgement of the Church if they did not know it. All these questions are academic; the point about the nuns was that they felt their founder was being indirectly attacked, and they hardened their hearts (all but twelve of them) in nun-like opposition. They compared themselves, with a pleasant *naïveté*, to Balaam's ass. Theological stiffening was unnecessary.

At the same time, the interminable disputes over the *fait* and the *droit* had a bad effect, it is to be feared, on their minds. Whether they became theologians or not, they certainly became lawyers. With ingenious friends all around them devising loopholes by which they could escape from the penalty of their convictions, they developed an unhealthy love of legal evasions. Sister Euphemia, who died soon afterwards of a broken heart, protested against the equivocal wording of the *Mandement* which the nuns were induced to accept in 1661; she compares their attitude with that of the Christian who offers incense apparently to an idol, but really (in his own mind) to a crucifix which he carries in his sleeve.[3] A worthy sister for the author of the fifth Provincial Letter; unfortunately, as Sainte-Beuve points out,[4] it is fairly certain that the author of the Fifth Provincial Letter was himself the deviser of the *Mandement*. In general, the religious were less suspicious of legal subtleties. As time

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iii. 135. [2] Cousin, op. cit.

[3] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iii. 349; a long extract from Sister Euphemia's letter is given by Cousin, op. cit., pp. 319 sqq.

[4] Sainte-Beuve, loc. cit.

went on they became more and more versed in the arts of defence; just before the final dissolution the whole community passed a vote disclaiming beforehand any submission which any of them might afterwards make;[1] and those who signed their submission to the bull *Vineam Domini* insisted on adding the words 'without prejudice to what happened in their regard at the peace of the Church under Clement IX'.[2] A stream of appeals, petitions, protests accompanied every act of persecution; so that even Sainte-Beuve is compelled to admit, 'Elles sont des raisonneuses, des plaidoyeuses, en même temps que des martyres',[3] and Gazier, critical for once, adds: 'Il peut même sembler qu'il y ait eu trop de procédure; car les martyrs n'ont jamais cité leurs bourreaux devant les tribunaux.'[1] Nor were they content with appealing to human justice; their petitions for redress from heaven were made with full forms of law. In 1664 no less than seven protests, one addressed to our Lord crowned with thorns, were left about on various altars in the Church.[4] In 1679 a nun was buried with an *appel* to the Risen Saviour between her hands; and forty days later, since that was the proper legal interval, a *relief d'appel* was lowered into her tomb.[5] This atmosphere of legalism which hung about Port Royal was in part responsible for the distrust with which all their assurances were accepted, for the determination to tie them down, with whatever exercise of cruelty, to explicit declarations of their faith. There was no getting a plain answer out of these nuns; they shuffled, they quibbled. How were you to deal with opponents who were at once obstinate and shifty, at once scrupulous and unscrupulous?

(vii) *Pascal and the Pessimism of Port Royal*

Admiring Pascal as a genius, edified by Pascal as a Christian, we forget to pity Pascal as an invalid. Yet an invalid he undoubtedly was; Madame Périer, in her sketch of his life, tells us that the illness which overshadowed his last four years was only 'a redoubling of the great disorders he was subject to from the time of his youth'. He was constitutionally bilious, and in consequence somewhat atrabilious by temperament. The satirist of the *Provincial Letters* was a man, I think, who was hard put to it all his life to restrain his fidgets. 'The extraordinary vivacity of his temper', says Madame Périer, 'made

[1] Gazier, op. cit. i. 227.
[2] Ibid. 126.
[3] Op. cit. vi. 192.
[4] Gazier, op. cit. i. 165.
[5] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. v. 177.

him sometimes so impatient that it was difficult to please him'; the 'spark of the lion' which Sainte-Beuve notes in his attitude was partly native to him. He was predisposed to take the jaundiced view; his lovableness, we may add, is by that all the more remarkable. A little time before his conversion, it seems (I mean his complete conversion in 1654), this jaundiced outlook had begun to colour his whole mind. 'Although' (writes Sister Euphemia) 'for more than a year he has had a great contempt for the world, and an almost intolerable disgust for all the people in it—a state of mind which might well carry him to great excesses, with the heated temperament (*humeur bouillante*) he has, he nevertheless displays a moderation over it which gives me quite high hopes of him.'[1] Observe that she appears to regard his discontent with the world as something belonging, in itself, to nature; it is in the *moderating* of these transports that the promise of grace is to be seen. He might have tears of joy at his conversion, but he did not emerge into that serenity which would enable him to say, with Mother Julian, 'All thing shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well'. He had the makings of an embittered atheist; grace caught him and turned him into a Christian pessimist.

Hence the characteristic note of the *Pensées*. Bremond hardly exaggerates when he describes Pascal as *obsessed* by the idea of original sin.[2] 'La foi chrétienne ne va principalement qu'à établir ces deux choses, la corruption de la nature et la rédemption de Jésus Christ.'[3] This is the foundation of his edifice, and he will not let us leave out of sight for a moment the depravity of man or the misery which is its punishment and counterpart. (It was easier for him than for us to treat sin and suffering as obverse and reverse of the same medal, because, like Port Royal generally, he accepted Descartes's notion that animals are automata, without feeling.[4]) 'It is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own misery, and to know his own misery without knowing the Redeemer.'[5] 'There is nothing in the world which does not betray either man's misery, or God's mercy, or man's impotence without God, or man's power with God's help.'[6] Original sin is the only key which fits the whole puzzle of existence. And so he leads up to the terrific twenty-fifth Thought, on the Feebleness of Man, and twenty-sixth Thought,

[1] Cousin, op. cit., p. 242.
[2] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 437.
[3] Op. cit. iv. 382.
[4] *Pensées*, no. ii.
[5] *Pensées*, no. i.
[6] Ibid., no. xviii.

on the Misery of Man. For Sainte-Beuve the *Pensées* are consciously, or almost consciously, an answer to Montaigne.[1] It may be so, but I do not think Pascal needed Montaigne to give him any depressing information about human existence. He could read it himself, all too clearly, in his own sickly body, and his restless mind, impatient of that clogging companionship.

I am not suggesting that it was Pascal who taught the Jansenists to be gloomy; they had the art of it long before his time. But I think he helped to fix in them that mood of despair which took it for granted that nearly everybody was damned. St. Cyran (a neuropath, if Bremond is right) certainly had it, especially about the rich.[2] And I think Prunel is right in suggesting that there is a humanness, a lightness of touch about Mother Angélique while she is still under Zamet's direction which she loses afterwards.[3] Of all the Jansenist tricks none is more clearly un-Catholic than the readiness with which they assume their neighbour's damnation. St. Cyran, for example, giving the *petites écoles* a lesson on Virgil, 'ce grand auteur qui s'était damné, disait-il, en faisant de si beaux vers, parce qu'il ne les faisait pas pour Dieu'.[4] How infinitely more gracious was the legend, current in an earlier Christendom, of St. Paul reaching Naples, and weeping over Virgil's tomb:

> Quem te (inquit) reddidissem,
> Si te vivum invenissem,
> Poetarum maxime!

What is least forgivable in the Jansenists is that seeing the world as a *massa damnationis*, rushing on to its ruin, they could find no other remedy for its unhappiness but to make war on the Jesuits.

[1] Op. cit. ii. 439.
[2] Ibid. iii. 366.
[3] Op. cit., p. 215.
[4] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. i. 479.

X

JANSENISM: ITS GENIUS

(i) *The Sectarian Tendency*

WHAT *had* St. Cyran done? He had created, says Bremond, a milieu in which his ideas and those of his friend could take root;[1] that he did so on any plan is hardly to be credited of him; it seems to have been the accident of Lemaître's eagerness to retire from the world that first suggested to him the idea of a Thebaid.[2] I feel that there was a little more of method in St. Cyran's madness than Bremond will allow him. Did he not, at least indistinctly, conceive the idea of beating the Jesuits *with their own weapons*? The Jesuits went in for higher education—then we will have the *petites écoles*, to match them. The Jesuits began their conversion with a month's retreat—we will have a *renouvellement* of six months, and if people are really converted there is no reason why they should ever come out of it. They will be solitaries, like those Egyptian monks who had so much to say in the days of the early Councils. St. Cyran died young, and unexpectedly; he was a slow mover; is it certain that he did not contemplate, for Port Royal, a usefulness in the cause of his own propaganda not unlike the usefulness which it actually achieved? In point of fact, it was not the solitaries who did the controversial writing of Port Royal; that is presumably the sense in which Pascal, bringing out his *Provincial Letters* anonymously, had the audacity to insist that he did not belong to Port Royal. But this may be a deviation from the founder's original plan. I think the idea was to produce, from his school, a generation of Jansenists who would live like Lemaître, and write like Arnauld.

That the *petites écoles* were meant to be an alumnate for an anti-Jesuit militia, is strongly suggested by the fact that they were in no sense charity schools. The richer pupils, at least, paid a pension of 500 livres,[3] and all were at least of upper middle-class extraction.[4] There was no question of educating poor children; 'c'était l'affaire

[1] Op. cit. iv. 174.
[2] Ibid. 61.
[3] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iii. 475.
[4] Ibid., p. 497.

des curés de paroisse', says Gazier[1]—it was fortunate that no such idea occurred to St. John Bosco. The schools only lasted, and with interruptions, for fifteen years, and it does not appear that there were ever more than fifty pupils at a time;[2] thus they cannot have produced any wide effect, but they had a remarkable list of pupils, including Racine and the Duke of Monmouth.[3] The boys were admirably taught, and admirably looked after, perhaps too much so; it was probably St. Cyran's view of human nature which made him lay down the principle that no boy must be out of sight of his instructors for a single moment.[4]

What were the numbers of Port Royal? At its most flourishing, it could count 200 nuns, divided between the two houses, fifty boys, with a small staff of masters, and about the same number of girls in the convent school; perhaps, at any given time, a dozen solitaries. It was not a large number of souls to leaven the Catholic Church with. But Port Royal exercised its influence over a wide penumbra of semi-adherents. There were fashionable ladies like the Duchess de Longueville, and the Princess de Guémené, and the Duchess de Liancourt; with others, less whole-hearted, like Madame de Sablé, the lady who harboured Jesuits and suspected the nuns of harbouring germs. It was these, with the indefatigable Arnauld D'Andilly, the Puss-in-boots of the party, that continually intervened to hold up the sword of persecution. They had friends, too, in literary circles, sympathizing or half-sympathizing, like Boileau and Madame de Sévigné. Above all, they commanded an ever-varying but not negligible support among the secular clergy who resented the power of the religious orders. Not all of these external adherents, by any means, lived up to strict Jansenist principles in their private lives; it seems possible that Cardinal de Retz made a good end, but in life he was one of those who (as Port Royal used to say, with a touch of complacency) *ne passeraient pas devant Dieu*. Such was the milieu which St. Cyran had created. In the following century, when Gallican opposition to the bull *Unigenitus* had swelled the ranks of the movement, it was to have its own bank, its own newspaper. But in the days of Port Royal its organization was less complete, its frontiers more shadowy.

[1] Op. cit. i. 76. [2] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iii. 478. [3] Ibid., p. 580.
[4] Martin, op. cit., p. 253. The Jansenist St. Marthe criticized the Jesuits for not keeping their pupils sufficiently under supervision (Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iii. 483).

Yet it was always a party. It was not actually a sect, but it had all the self-consciousness and, under its skin, all the exclusiveness of a sect. Formed on the same model, pursuing the same ideals, the Jansenists sought to isolate themselves from the world, and in that laudable ambition contrived to isolate themselves from every exchange of thought with the rest of the world. There was even a time, it appears, when they contemplated the idea of emigrating to America to avoid persecution;[1] one's mind dallies irreverently with the thought of the hot gospel Jansenism would have become. What most clearly defined their indefinable body was the necrology they kept, the list of dead people who had been 'of' them. Remember that they were intensely antiquarian; this necrology had the same purpose as the triptychs of the early Church, lists of the people you were in Communion with, and therefore were at liberty to pray for. The Jansenist necrology included only the names of those who were thought, somehow or other, to have supported their own side of the quarrel. As time went on, Sainte-Beuve frankly admits, the only qualification for admission to it was to have been an enemy of the Jesuits.[2] I am not raising here the question whether the Jansenists really left much room for that charity of which they claimed to have a monopoly; I am only pointing out the dangerous tendency of such a development; you are building up a church within the Church. It is not a long step from an *ecclesiola* to a *petite église*.

(ii) *Port Royal as the True Church*

A church within the Church—by an odd coincidence this is what was actually being done within the Lutheran body at that very moment. Philip Spener, the founder of German Pietism, a movement to which we shall refer later, was very much the contemporary of Jansenism; he was born in 1635, just before the Solitaries began, and died in 1705, the year of *Vineam Domini*. With very different inspiration—for he complained that there was too much theology about Lutheranism, whereas the Jansenists complained of insufficient theology among their contemporaries—he conceived the idea of setting up *ecclesiolae*, as he called them, little churches which would not split themselves off from Lutheranism but would live a deeper spiritual life of their own within that body. This, however, with complete tolerance for those who differed from

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iv. 374. [2] Ibid. iii. 211 note.

them; they might have taught a salutary lesson to Arnauld. The danger of the Jansenist *ecclesiola* was that it inevitably tended to identify itself with that 'invisible Church' of which (as we have seen) the medieval heretics were the patentees. To appear in the Jansenist necrology, and to have your name written in the Book of Life—it was all one. So in the preface to the *Fréquente Communion*,[1] whether it was written by Arnauld himself, or by Barcos, or another, you find ominous references to Gedeon, and the value of 300 souls living in 'the ardour of faith', as compared with the 30,000 who were rejected. The disciples of Port Royal are encouraged to approach God with confidence as being 'de ceux qui, par un heureux sort, se trouvent du petit nombre de vos élus'.[2] I do not mean that they consciously denied the hope of salvation to all those who were not penitents of M. Singlin. But the feeling that you form a very small nucleus within the Church, coupled with the firm belief that only a very small nucleus within the Church is destined for heaven, easily leads to the unconscious assumption that the two 'remnants' are one and the same.

St. Cyran himself was much of an illuminist, and has been credited, both by his friends and by his critics, with a real indifference to the institutional side of religion.[3] But this hardly concerns us; Port Royal was never illuminist; whatever mystical tendencies it had were early overlaid, as we shall see, by Nicole. What is more important is that St. Cyran was an obstinate antiquarian, and bequeathed a double portion of his antiquarianism to those who came after him. It seems clear that he actually said, in an unguarded moment, 'il n'y a plus d'église, et cela depuis cinq ou six cents ans'; explaining that nothing was left now but mud, stagnating between the banks where the river used to run, and that this mud is 'what seems, to us, the Church'.[4] It might be argued that he was only insisting, in rather exaggerated language, on those corruptions of which Christendom has always been conscious. But it looks dangerously like a reversion to the language of those medieval heretics who, as we have seen, maintained that the true Church had come to an end with the donation of Constantine, or in A.D. 1000, or whenever else you will. In the old days at Bayonne St. Cyran and Jansen had exchanged their ideas on the subject of Antichrist;[5] there may have been a belief,

[1] Preface, Sheet E. [2] *Exercices de piété*, quoted by Bremond, op. cit. iv. 327.
[3] Ibid. 149, 152. [4] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. i. 315. [5] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 126.

or a half-belief, lurking in that troubled mind that the Great Apostasy had already taken place.

And here, although there is no rash talk to echo his hasty utterances, I think you can see that the orthodoxy of Port Royal was subject to a constant temptation of despair—despair of the Church. The preface to the *Fréquente Communion* assures us that the Church 'dégénérera toujours peu à peu de sa première pureté, à mesure qu'elle avancera vers la fin du monde';[1] a statement as difficult, one would have thought, to justify by history as by theology. And it must be observed that the remark, taken in its context, does not merely refer to the wickedness of individual Christians; it insinuates that the official standards of morality in the Church are the subject of constant erosion. Nicole, indeed, bravely asserted his belief in a living Church.[2] But Nicole, as we have seen, was a Jansenist with a difference; he does not go far to reassure us. We are not surprised to find, among the propositions of Quesnel censured by the bull *Unigenitus*, words like these: '(Religious) truths have come to such a pass, that to most Christians they sound like a foreign language. . . . People do not realize that this falling-off is one of the most noticeable signs of the Church's senility, and of God's anger against his children.'[3] It is not a long step from these misgivings about the Church's supernatural youth to those convictions of despair which brought in the Reformation. And, if the Catholic Church has ceased to exist, what inference remains to be drawn, except that the Jansenist body has taken its place as the one Church of Christ? Sainte-Beuve points out that the Abbé Étémare, in the days of the Convulsions, practically does reach that conclusion.[4]

(iii) *The Difficulty of Salvation*

The controversy on grace (which I do not intend to study in itself, since it falls outside the scope of this book) provided a weapon for the Jansenists in their war upon the Jesuits, whom they held responsible for the decadence of the Church. But it may be doubted whether the weapon did not turn in their hands. If Jansen had been content to say, in the *Augustinus*, that the Catholic theology of grace had gone all to pieces in the course of the last century, he would have found many to agree with him. The Dominicans would have

[1] Preface, Sheet P.
[2] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 443.
[3] Proposition 95.
[4] Op. cit. vi. 73.

been delighted; the Fathers of the French Oratory, who followed the Thomist opinion, would have taken it quietly. But the antiquarianism of Jansen would not stop there. He was convinced that St. Augustine had said the last word upon the theology of grace, and St. Thomas was therefore an innovator to him, no less than Molina. St. Augustine's doctrine had been unknown, not only in that century, but 'for several centuries past'; and he, Jansen, had discovered on irrefutable grounds that if both schools, the Jesuits and the Dominicans, disputed to the end of time, 'they would only lose their way worse than ever'. So he tells St. Cyran, in the famous letter which announces to him the birth of the *Augustinus*.[1] He had thus given Saint Cyran and his followers a difficult hand to play. As we know, they decided to finesse. But the result was not to increase their reputation for candour; the impression was naturally suggested that they made their heresy worse by bad faith. Meanwhile, their constant concern with the theology of predestination made them talk too much about grace, interlard their conversation and their letters with the mention of it. And always as if it were their own discovery and they were the only people who believed in it. Anne of Austria's impatient comment, 'Fi, fi, fi de la grâce',[2] unexpected as it may sound, was not without its excuse.

Thus the Saint-Cyranist campaign for a return to more primitive Church discipline was probably embarrassed, rather than assisted, by this intrusion of the dialectics of Louvain. What would have happened if the *Augustinus* had never been published? Would there have been a heresy, and a persecution, of Port Royal? It is probable, I think, that there would. The air of Port Royal was congenial to such exaggerations of the Augustinian theology. At first sight there appears to be no reason why belief in a doctrine of grace which approaches towards Calvinism should go hand in hand with very strict moral standards; you could argue the other way. But the secret of it is surely this. If you believe in the Fall as a shattering blow that unmade man to his very essence, then in the first place you are surprised that man should be in a condition to attain salvation at all —it must be mere grace; there can be no response in that wrecked creature to second its action. And in the second place you begin to suspect common human virtues; you trace ulterior motives in them, and write them down as 'natural', useless in God's sight. Thus you

[1] Quoted by Bremond, op. cit. iv. 122.

[2] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iii. 160.

conceive that some level of conduct and of prayer very much above the ordinary must be needed, as the passport to heaven.

That very few people go to heaven, and those only by a catastrophic exercise of God's mercy; that the *honnêtes gens* we come across are mostly reprobate, their apparent virtues being only the result of casual good nature, or of selfishness in disguise; that the chances are against your being one of the few elect, unless your life is heroically given to God as few people's lives are; that you must therefore give the world, and worldly people, a wide berth, for fear of acquiescing in their standards; that you must scrutinize all your motives carefully, to make sure that even your generous actions are dictated by the love of God, not by 'commodity', friendship, or human respect; that in cases of doubt you must never give yourself the benefit of the doubt, but choose the course which is certainly inculpable; that if you fall into sin, you should make satisfaction for it by abstaining for a time from Communion, even when absolution has been granted; that such abstinence from Communion is sometimes a useful discipline, to be practised with the advice of an enlightened director—that is the teaching of Port Royal; such is its genius.

The last word was said about Jansenism before Jansenism ever came to exist; it was a stray word of St. Francis of Sales, who had Virgil's gift of coining a phrase with a meaning far beyond its immediate application. He was speaking at the moment of the hard life Mother Angélique's nuns lived, at Port Royal and at Maubuisson. 'Ma fille', he said, 'ne vaudrait-il pas mieux ne pas prendre de si grands poissons, et en prendre davantage?'[1] A standard of sanctification which appealed to a few choice souls, but left so many others, full of good dispositions, out of the running—could she not be less exacting, and cast her nets wider? It was as if he foresaw what Port Royal was to become, and what it was to stand for. Whatever your prejudices against it, it is impossible to read the story of Port Royal without admiration:

the high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard—

it was fighting, and valorously, against what is the common enemy of all supernatural religion, worldliness. There were holy men, there were saints, among its critics; Condren, St. Vincent de Paul, St. John Eudes, Olier, Bourdaloue, Fénelon, fought against its

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. i. 209.

influence. But the tragedy was that behind all the well-meaning and well-meant opposition to it there was another force that helped to bring it to the ground, the *vis inertiae* of what we call 'the world'. Bremond has done well to underline the tragic significance of Père Rapin's comment on the conversion of Le Maître: 'cette retraite . . . fut généralement désapprouvée de tous les honnêtes gens.' A young advocate with the world at his feet turns his back on the world and goes out to live in a desert and make his soul there; what a tragic effect of controversy, that it should be left for a son of St. Ignatius to record the world's comment![1]

(iv) *Rigorism at Port Royal*

The protest, however, which Port Royal showed to the world was not an asceticism merely, it was a Puritanism. Asceticism I take to mean the mortifying of our senses, and of our instincts generally, in indifferent matters, as a sacrifice made to God; Puritanism is abstinence from acute pleasures and from careless behaviour on the ground that such things are sinful, or so closely bound up with sin that you must avoid them for fear of giving scandal to your neighbour. In the matter of *asceticism*, Port Royal had all the Catholic instincts; Pascal wore a girdle with spikes on it. And indeed, the solitaries retired from the world to do (perhaps it would not be unkind if we said to advertise) penance. Very few of them appear to have lived vicious lives in the world, but the atmosphere which surrounded them was always that of reclaimed sinners. Just as Donatism had to produce synthetic martyrs, Port Royal had to produce synthetic penitents; the world must be shown what being contrite for your sins really meant, and how you must set about it. The worst you can say about Port Royal's asceticism was, that it was a little too pointed. The visitor was meant to go away, not so much reflecting on the high place these people would take in heaven, as wondering whether he himself would find any place in heaven at all.

The *Puritanism* of Port Royal is a more questionable feature. It was nearly allied, in some ways, to the Puritanism of several English sects; and with it, as with them, Puritanism outlasted the first fervours of devotion, so as to become a thing negative at the best, at the worst hypocritical. Disapproval of dancing, for instance, or of

[1] Op. cit. iv. 314.

the theatre, was a mark of Jansenism long after Jansenism had ceased to be a genuine religious inspiration. And such disapproval is so far removed from our present Catholic attitude that we are tempted to ask whether, here, Port Royal had not been taking lessons from Geneva. The question would have moved Arnauld, it is to be presumed, to write another five books of controversy in our refutation. To him, the strictness of Jansenism is an attempt to carry out the work of the Council of Trent, which on its own admission only reformed the morals of the laity up to a point, 'quantum in nobis fuit, pro temporum horum ratione'. It was, on the contrary, the 'sensual' heresy of Luther, with its contempt for good works, which had infected Catholic society by its example.[1]

And indeed, as Bremond has reminded us,[2] Port Royal had, in its own time, no monopoly of Rigorism. It is nonsense when Sainte-Beuve writes of the Jansenists as 're-opening the channels' of the doctrine of penitence.[3] The writers of the 'French School', the Fathers of the Oratory, for example, preached an unworldliness which would cause alarm and despondency nowadays; and even St. Francis of Sales, with his well-known gentleness, is not always a soft director to follow. Bossuet disapproved of the theatre quite as heartily as Quesnel. The first tendency of French religion under the influence of the Renaissance had been what Bremond calls 'devout Humanism'. A suddenly acquired perception of the world's manifold beauties, and of man's greatness as their discoverer, had led religious writers to forget, or to minimize, the doctrine of the Fall. The sharp cleavage between the natural and the supernatural was no longer underlined as the Middle Ages had underlined it. A reaction followed, led by the school of Bérulle and Condren; Man must be put in his place, reminded of what he had forfeited; and the reaction went hand in hand with a moral protest against the growing luxuries of that astonishing age.

What Jansenism did was to exaggerate this protest; out of all proportion, most of us will think, and rendering a disservice to Christendom. A Counter-renaissance was needed, but not so violent a swing in the other direction. Overlooked in its cradle by the mournful faces of St. Cyran and Mother Angélique, Jansenism never learned to smile. Its adherents forget, after all, to believe in

[1] Preface to the *Fréquente Communion*, Sheet H.
[2] Op. cit. iv. 29, 131. [3] Op. cit. ii. 191.

grace, so hag-ridden are they by their sense of the need for it. *Everything* in the world is wicked. Mother Angélique (I had almost called her Mother Évangélique by inadvertence) 'believed in the goodness of women. . . . Her opinion of the male sex, more especially of monks and priests, was not so favourable; she believed in the goodness of certain individuals among them, and in the depravity of the sex.'[1] Royal families 'are doubly the children of God's wrath, and there is scarcely any princess in whom the spirit and grace of God are to be found'.[2] She announces that someone whose father kept a gambling-hell will be lost if he does not repent of it; it is true that children are not to bear the iniquities of their parents, 'mais c'est pourvu qu'ils en aient l'aversion . . . C'est une chose terrible que les jugements de Dieu.'[3] And even Mother Agnes, writing to Le Maître while he is still in the world and refusing to believe that he can really be contemplating marriage[4]—has she got her tongue in her cheek, as Sainte-Beuve seems to suggest? According to Jansen, St. Augustine taught as a matter of faith that concupiscence was handed down in the human race by the very circumstances of its propagation. The use of marriage is itself sinful, so far as it involves taking any pleasure in creatures.[5] When servants commit faults against God, writes Sister Euphemia, we must be severe to the point of being terrible, 'parce qu'après avoir réglé par ce moyen l'extérieur, on attire la miséricorde de Dieu pour leur donner l'esprit intérieur'[6]—could *The Fairchild Family* do better than that? There is no *epikeia* (as the theologians call it) among these people, no margin of clemency.

(v) *The Provincial Letters*

It is against this background of wholesale pessimism about human nature that you must read the *Provincial Letters* of Pascal. Not otherwise can you gauge either the measure of contempt which the author felt for those whom he attacked so pitilessly, or the monstrous insincerity which allowed him to pose as a man of the world when he did it. Much has been written about the unfairness of the book in detail, about its actual mis-statements; the defenders of Port Royal do not attempt to palliate them. There is a far deeper disingenuousness about the whole plan of the attack. Having a quarrel with the

[1] Martin, op. cit., p. 220.
[2] Ibid., p. 284.
[3] Cousin, op. cit., p. 229.
[4] Martin, op. cit., p. 283.
[5] Abercrombie, op. cit., pp. 139, 140.
[6] Cousin, op. cit., p. 261.

Jesuits (on a quite different subject), Pascal singled out a few scandalous or scandalous-seeming propositions from the works of the less responsible Jesuit authors, and held these up to ridicule, as if it had been only this kind of thing he minded; whereas the truth was, as a good Port Royal Christian he must needs disapprove of all schools of casuistry, Probabilist, Equiprobabilist, or Tutiorist. What need for casuistry if grace and sin present, at every conjuncture of our lives, a strict alternative? And this was Pascal; Pascal fresh from his conversion, with the words 'oubli du monde et de tout hormis Dieu' hanging round his neck. I would give worlds to believe that Nicole's Latin version (published afterwards as by 'Wendrock') was the original, and Pascal only turned it into French for him, contributing nothing but his inimitable prose.

The Humanism which came to us with the Renaissance meant, above all else, a turning in of man's mind upon himself. No longer content with objects outside himself, he became Epimetheus, absorbed in the fugitive contents of Pandora's box. He grew more conscious of his own mental processes; how motives intertwine in his actions, how ignorance and inadvertence modify the quality of them, how thoughts can pass through his mind unbidden, hang about his mind against his will. No wonder if the theologians decided that the proper study of mankind was man. The old medieval quodlibetics were becoming fine-drawn; philosophy suffered from a kind of inbreeding; they gave themselves to the study, hitherto much neglected, of human actions. In all this the Jesuits naturally played a leading part; and because they were a new order, with no venerable traditions to hamper them with precedents, they trod, it must be confessed, unwarily. Just as the keen rapier-debates of the old *scholae* had produced a thousand heresies about matters of dogma, heresies which did no harm, because they died in thinking, so the new theologians would approach, with all too open mind, the ethics of assassination, or the culpability of breaking God's law when you do not believe in God. Only, by now, printing had come in, and the art of reading had become tolerably common. These immature speculations, dignified with the name of probable opinions, were on record now for the eye of every envious Jansenist to pry into. And they were destined to give a good deal of scandal, mostly of the Pharisaical sort, before they were duly delated to Rome, and censured, and heard no more.

It was on this puppet-show of dummy speculations that Pascal, the Quixotic moralist, drew his devastating sword. Because he wrote incomparably, because the passions of controversy were strongly engaged, he achieved a moral, and perhaps an immoral, triumph. But this is the man who would not have a beautiful woman mentioned, for fear of putting thoughts into the heads of the children; who did not like to see his sister's children embrace her, and (despite St. Augustine's example) reproved her for showing distress when their other sister died.[1] Whether we are to call such behaviour scrupulous, whether we are to call it morbid, I am not considering here. I only ask whether a man who lived in that rarefied atmosphere of remoteness from moral conflict was not false to his own convictions when he attacked, for his own ends, a particular school of moral theologians, instead of telling all moral theologians (as he must have believed) that they were doing the devil's work.

(vi) *The* Fréquente Communion

If we have thus complained that Pascal's *Provincial Letters* are not like Pascal, it is certain that no similar criticism can be made of the *Fréquente Communion*. It is Arnauld all over—one is tempted to invert the proposition and say that Arnauld is the *Fréquente Communion*, so much is the man swallowed up by the student. We are sometimes told that it was the most popular book of devotion in its day;[2] if so, it offers dreadful proof that this was an age morbidly interested in theology. It is a long book, portentously dull and cogent; it contains, I believe, no touch of unction. Père Sesmaisons, the author of that injudicious and fugitive sheet which occasioned it, is made to look thoroughly foolish; but this was to break a butterfly on the wheel; he did not need such a ponderous refutation. No, all these interminable quotations from antiquity have been worked up into a manifesto, the argument of which can be quite simply put. In the early days of Christendom, sinners were frequently denied restoration to the unity of the Church for a year, or for a period of years. Therefore, in the first place, it is not merely the confessor's right, but the confessor's duty, to delay absolution until he feels assured, from the patience shown by the penitent, that his regret for his sins is genuine. And in the second place it is a pious practice, not to be stigmatized as eccentric, when devout souls, in attestation of

[1] *Pascal's Life*, by his sister, Madame Périer. [2] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 168.

penitence for their old sins, withdraw themselves for a time from Communion, as a kind of supernatural fast.

Nobody questions Arnauld's facts; nor *on paper* is it easy to get away from his arguments. *Sancta sanctis*; Holy Communion being what it is, how dare we run the risk of its being profaned, even once, by an unworthy reception? The trouble about Arnauld is the old trouble which St. Francis had pointed out to his sister; he was content to catch only a few fish in the net of salvation—a Le Maître here, a Pascal there, and the small fry did not matter. The *avertissement* of the book tells us that the bishops who have approved it regard it as 'un excellent moyen pour imprimer aux pécheurs l'horreur de leurs fautes'.[1] If it was really intended to do that, it is to be feared that the book has not often fallen into the right hands; not many obdurate sinners are prepared to read through a stout quarto of patristic quotations, out of curiosity to know why they have been refused absolution. No, the book was meant to be read on the other side of the grille. Priests were to be encouraged to think with the mind of the early Church, and defer the absolution of every penitent until he should attest, by repeated applications for pardon,[2] the genuineness of his sorrow. The French Oratory was all wrong about this; St. Philip Neri had not understood the doctrine of penance.[3] And it is no use to object that St. Philip understood something better than the doctrine; he understood sinners, whom Arnauld had not met. Isolated in his study from the world of common living, Arnauld saw sinners only as a class; and as a class they were unsaveable. Your rigorist does not understand the maxim *sacramenta propter homines*; he will let the generality of men perish in a dry wilderness, while an *élite* of souls, 'pure as angels, proud as Lucifer', forms the bodyguard of the Holy Eucharist.

St. Vincent of Paul wondered how, after writing the *Fréquente Communion*, Arnauld had the courage to say Mass daily himself.[4] He had cited[5] St. Francis of Sales for the view that weekly Communion was only meant for those who were without affection for their venial sins; which of us is certain of that? Evidence is abundant

[1] p. 7.

[2] 'Si les pénitents ne parlent plus d'une fois en suppliants, il ne faut pas les écouter. St. Cyran, quoted by Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 458.

[3] Letter of Arnauld, quoted ibid. i. 175 note.

[4] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 291.

[5] *Fréquente Communion*, I. xxii, quoting *Introduction to the Devout Life*, I. xxi.

that in early days frequent Communion was the rule at Port Royal.[1] It does not appear that unimaginative people, as Arnauld certainly was unimaginative, felt any difficulty about this; the enthusiast who thinks very few people will go to heaven ordinarily assumes that he is one of them. But it was otherwise with more scrupulous souls. Lancelot, the biographer of St. Cyran, who had been a frequent communicant, began his career at Port Royal by going without Communion from Candlemas to Easter, and wanted to extend the period by a year.[2] Singlin, when he took over the direction of the convent, would only say Mass on Sundays and great feasts, leaving the nuns to find, often with difficulty, a 'supply'.[3] De Saci, who was ordained in the autumn, did not say Mass until the end of January, and abstained for a whole month after his release from the Bastille.[4] Two priest-solitaries, M. Giroust and M. de Chemin, gave up exercising their priestly functions altogether, *par pénitence*.[5] This habit of voluntary abstention is proudly cited in the *Fréquente Communion* as being 'une image vivante de la pénitence ancienne'.[6] In later times it was actually treated as a mark of sanctity, and M. Pâris, the deacon who achieved so much posthumous fame, was said to have passed two years without even making his Easter duties.[7] But the origin of the thing, even if they did not know it, lay in scruples about their own interior dispositions. Port Royal was a nest of scruples; Mother Angélique was notoriously scrupulous; Singlin was scrupulous; Sister Euphemia was scrupulous; Pascal was scrupulous; Tillemont was scrupulous. Not in the technical sense, perhaps; but there is not one of them that knows how to say, with a shrug of the shoulders, 'Well, after all, God is merciful'.

(vii) *Ultrasupernatural Morality*

Their conscious motive, as we have abundantly seen, was antiquarianism. The boys at the *petites écoles* used to play a card game which illustrated the history of the first six centuries.[8] From the Jansenist point of view, the Church had been taking a wrong direction ever since the twelfth century.[9] They would have endorsed

[1] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 141, 142, 220; Gazier, op. cit. i. 142.
[2] Abercrombie, op. cit., p. 186. [3] Ibid., p. 183.
[4] Mrs. Balfour, in *Dublin Review* of July 1910.
[5] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. v. 168; iii. 170. [6] Preface, Sheet R.
[7] *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique . . .* &c. (Bruges, 1825), ii. 30.
[8] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iv. 8. [9] Preface to *Fréquente Communion*, Sheet G.

William Thorpe's distrust of the doctrines 'brought in by Frere Thomas, at the time the fiend was loosed'. But in reality they looked back to more ancient race-memories of Christendom. As Sainte-Beuve points out, the great Renaissance rediscoveries of pagan literature had interrupted the old tradition of patristic study, and the Jansenists might claim in their turn, with some plausibility, to have rediscovered the Fathers.[1] In their heart of hearts they had given up the idea of a Christian *tradition*, properly so called, and approached Christianity *de novo*, like the Reformers—replacing, however, the uninterpreted Bible by an uninterpreted St. Augustine. How they would have shuddered to hear Bremond refer to the early Fathers as 'livres excellents, mais dont le texte inerte prête à des contre-sens fanatiques, lorsqu'on les sépare de la tradition vivante qui les éclaire'![2] The spirit of Jansenism, writes Gazier, is above all unfriendly to development.[3] For that reason it is the heir, not of the early Church, but of the early heresies which were unfriendly to development; the Montanists who could not do without their prophecies, the Donatists who could not do without their martyrdoms. With this difference, that those earlier sects were protesting against changes *which were beginning to come in*, not against changes which had a thousand years' prescription. Tertullian could argue, 'The Pope is relaxing Church discipline; I must be right, and he wrong, since the Church cannot change her mind.' St. Cyran was in a different position; he had to admit that the Church had changed her mind, while inviting her to change it again. It was all the difference between an Englishman who defends the monarchy and an Englishman who wants to restore the heptarchy.

But behind the antiquarianism lies, always, that quality which has been the object of our study throughout these chapters—what we have called ultrasupernaturalism. The Augustinian theology of grace has this distinguishing characteristic; it represents the method by which grace is brought to bear upon our actions as the introduction of a superior *motive* into our calculations. The moral struggle in us is portrayed as a conflict between two rival *pleasures*, the pleasure of sense on the one hand, the delight we take in God and in heavenly things on the other. Now if this notion be understood as a literal account of what happens (and not as a mere illustration), it follows

[1] Op. cit. ii. 417. [2] Op. cit. iv. 254. [3] Op. cit., Preface, p. vii.

that every action whose conscious motive is something other than love of God, and desire for his glory, is an action not inspired by grace, and therefore worthless or worse. If I give a birthday present to a child out of love for the child, and not explicitly out of love for God, then my motive is not charity (in the theological sense), and it must therefore be put down to some form of *cupidity*. 'There is no mean, for the rational creature, between charity and sinful concupiscence.'[1]

It was not only St. Augustine's influence which had imposed this terminology on the school of Port Royal. Mother Angélique, as we have seen, had been under the influence of St. Francis of Sales; and he, in his *Treatise of the Love of God*, draws frequent distinctions between charity and cupidity as the motives of our actions. But whereas he evidently uses the terms without prejudice, Mother Angélique understood them in the light of that dreadful alternative which has been stated above. Listen to her once more as she consoles Sister Euphemia over the ungenerous attitude of her brother, Blaise Pascal: 'Voyez-vous, ma fille, il faut être ferme dans les principes. Nous savons que tout ce qui n'est pas fait par l'esprit de Dieu et par la charité est fait par la cupidité, et tout ce qui est fait par la cupidité est péché.'[2] Accordingly, *feu M. de St Cyran* had forbidden the nuns to receive any gift which was not made *par l'esprit d'aumône*; any gift, that is, which proceeded from any human consideration whatever.[3] And indeed, when she wrote asking her mother to provide carriages, to take the nuns from Maubuisson to Port Royal, Angélique was careful to add that she must not do so unless God inclined her heart to bestow this alms freely.[4] When they were bidden to scrutinize thus carefully even the motives of their benefactors, it may easily be imagined what heart-searchings were aroused by the contemplation of their own. Mother Agnes (even Mother Agnes) has to put Sister Euphemia on her guard; she must observe 'tout ce qu'il y avait d'humain dans mon procédé'.[5] Looking back on his or her life, how many actions in it can the reader remember which were certainly performed under the influence of a hundred per cent. supernatural motives? All the others, on good Jansenist principles, are matter for the confessional.

It is no wonder, if such questionings led to scruple. Sainte-Beuve

[1] Abercrombie, op cit., p. 141.
[2] Cousin, op. cit., p. 222.
[3] Ibid., p. 224.
[4] Martin, op. cit., p. 132.
[5] Cousin, op. cit., p. 220.

himself has preserved for us a touching picture of Madame d'Albert, and the difficulties Bossuet had in calming the anxieties of a soul which had retained too much memory of Port Royal. 'Elle questionne, elle raffine; elle s'inquiète et s'accuse', and Bossuet has to tell her, 'Vous êtes ingénieuse à vous chercher des embarras; vous repliez trop sur vous-même.'[1] Bremond, with all his admiration for them, finds the same tendency in such heroes of Port Royal as Le Maître, Hamon, and Tillemont. 'Ce sont des timides, des scrupuleux. Le Sinaï leur cache la colline des béatitudes.'[2] To these partisans of predestination, the thought of predestination brought no comfort, no largeness of spiritual outlook. You were pledged to the feverish pursuit of good works, not so much because you hoped to co-operate in your salvation, as because the absence of good works would prove you a reprobate. Thus Nicole, even the moderate, the tranquil Nicole, tells us that our belief in grace must not make us idle in good works; it is impossible for us to tell whether they are in fact the fruit of charity, or of mere *amour-propre*; but if we find we persevere for a long time in them, it begins to look as if grace were responsible for them—such is his attenuated version of 'the comfortable doctrine of assurance'.[3] According to Port Royal, writes Mrs. Balfour, 'the human heart was wholly corrupt, and unless it broke away from every human tie or affection it was impossible for it to place itself in the channel of the grace which alone could save it—not that, even then, they could be sure that sufficient grace would be given for salvation'.[4] If their adversaries were sometimes accused of making the best of both worlds, you are tempted to feel that the Jansenists were making the worst of both churches, Catholic and Protestant.

(viii) *Pascal and the Intellect*

Thus obstinately ultrasupernatural in its approach to morals, has Jansenism a corresponding attitude towards the intellect? We have seen that some enthusiastic movements—that of the Lollards, for example—are characterized by a distrust of human learning, and of human reasoning, as something 'carnal' for which the children of light have no further use. The intuition which comes from the direct *afflatus* of the Holy Spirit shall replace, for them, all their natural

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iv. 124.
[2] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 279.
[3] *Visionnaires*, no. vii.
[4] *Dublin Review*, July 1910.

powers of discernment or of speculation. It must be freely confessed that the sectaries who use this language with most confidence are not, as a rule, men remarkable in any case for intellectual gifts; there is a suggestion of sour grapes about the Lollard protest against the learned clerks of their day. And the Jansenists, evidently, were in a different position; Port Royal quite certainly had brains, and knew how to use them. Learning was encouraged there, and not only learning but reasoning; the Logic written for and taught in its *petites écoles* was famous. Only in two directions does it express hesitation. The love of learning for its own sake, 'curiosity' as they call it, is censured as likely to puff up the soul with pride.[1] And 'reasoning' about the faith is sometimes alluded to with disapproval; thus St. Cyran observed of St. Thomas, 'Nul saint n'a tant raisonné sur les choses de Dieu';[2] and the *Augustinus* itself contrasts the method of the schoolmen unfavourably with that of the Fathers.[3] If it be objected that St. Augustine never stopped arguing, and that his Jansenist followers were more than worthy of him in this respect, we shall be told that the Truth is sometimes compelled to meet subtlety with subtlety, but that this is no excuse for *recherches trop curieuses* and a *trop grand désir de savoir*.[4] Such sentiments, however, reflect little more than the Jansenist grudge against St. Thomas, who had substituted Aristotle for St. Augustine as the *maestro di color che sanno*. Port Royal distrusts the human reason as an appetite, but not as an instrument.

It may be questioned, however, whether Pascal does not go farther. His supernaturalism was more far-reaching than that of his colleagues; Arnauld and Nicole had to tone it down when they bowdlerized the *Pensées*.[5] And the apologetic method of the *Pensées*, even as we have them, is highly characteristic. Pascal recognizes the classical proofs of God's existence and admits the force of them, but he dislikes them. You may almost say that if he had been in a position to do it he would have hushed them up. He *wanted* our fallen nature, left without grace, to be as weak and miserable as possible; 'l'homme n'est donc qu'un sujet plein d'*erreurs* ineffaçables sans la grâce'[6]; his

[1] So Jansen (Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 479); St. Cyran (ibid., p. 432); Tillemont (Bremond, op. cit. iv. 267).

[2] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 38.

[3] Abercrombie, op. cit., p. 134.

[4] *Fréquente Communion*, Preface, Sheet H.

[5] He appears to have maintained that there was no such thing as a natural foundation of human rights; cf. Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iii. 383.

[6] *Pensées*, no. xxv.

picture of man's misery remained incomplete, lop-sided, if you could think of man unredeemed as possessing any sky-light, even, that gave on the supernatural. A purely speculative knowledge of God, such as the Five Proofs offer to us, is (in Pascal's view) worse than no knowledge at all; it is *nuisible*. The only saving knowledge of God is that which approaches him with and through the knowledge of our own misery, so that we are looking for him as our Redeemer. Speculative knowledge, instead of bringing us to our knees, puffs us up with pride, and we are worse off than the atheist.[1] Deism, he says, and atheism are two things which the Christian religion equally abhors. Even a cursory reading of the *Pensées* makes it clear that it was written against the former, rather than the latter; and its criticisms, as against the deist, obviously have weight. But how could Pascal be so certain that a proof of God's existence by way of natural philosophy could not be at least the remote preparation for a true conversion of the heart to God? Evidently because he believed that such conversion must be a *simultaneous* discovery of God's existence and our Redemption. The Fall, instead of being a doctrine revealed to us as part of a general revelation, must be an axiom grasped intuitively in the experience of conversion. You must not make two bites of the apple.

The fact is that his thought approximates to Marcionism. The figure of the Redeemer so fills the canvas, as to obscure all thought of God in his eternal attributes. 'Pascal', says Bremond, 'exalte le médiateur, mais il cache, il exile Dieu'.[2] So Joubert complained that the Jansenists 'ôtent au Père pour donner au Fils'.[3] This habit of Christocentricity does not desert Pascal even when he is writing as a prophet new-inspired. In his *Memorial*, those burning lines which he wrote, as if stupefied with some drug, after his conversion on the 23rd of November 1654—even in his *Memorial* he is sufficiently master of his own thoughts to repudiate, carefully, the imputation of Deism. 'Dieu d'Abraham, Dieu d'Isaac, Dieu de Jacob'; and, having got so far, he must needs add 'non des philosophes et savants'. It is as if two Gods existed, and he, Pascal, were determined that his petition should go to the right address; lest there should still be any doubt, he goes on 'Dieu de Jésus Christ'.[4] This

[1] *Pensées*, no. xx. [2] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 390.
[3] Quoted by Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 114.
[4] Facsimile in Bremond, op. cit. iv. 368.

last phrase, so foreign to the vocabulary of the Church, is wrung out of him by the necessity of explaining to himself, even at such a moment, that he writes as Pascal the Christian, not as Pascal the geometer. All things have been made new.

(ix) *Pascal and the Doctrine of Assurance*

I have described St. Cyran as an illuminist; can we trace, in the movement which owes its origin to him, any cousinship to those enthusiastic sects which claim for every Christian a kind of prophetic endowment, an inner light which lends certainty to his beliefs? It recalls the rigorism of the Donatist; does it recall, equally, the ecstasies of the Montanist? It is interesting to observe that in early days those who knew St. Cyran expected something of the kind. In a letter which records his arrest, Jean Louis de Balzac writes: 'On a peur, à mon avis, que l'Abbé voulût faire secte et qu'il pût devenir hérésiarque. Je ne parle pas de ces hérésies charnelles et débauchées, comme celle de Luther et de Calvin, mais de ces hérésies spirituelles et sévères comme celles d'Origène et de Montanus.'[1] The writer is hard, perhaps, on the morals of the Reformers, but how admirably he seizes the point which I have tried to illustrate above, in discussing the Reformation, that Luther's movement never achieved its proper destiny as a spiritual movement, remained 'carnal' in the sense given to that word by the vocabulary of enthusiasm! The mention of Origen is perhaps inappropriate; there was no Father whom the Jansenists so much detested, because of his views on grace. But Montanus is in point; there is a kinship between him and St. Cyran. But did the followers of St. Cyran tread the path which Balzac had marked out for them? Were they, in any sense, illuminists?

Those theologies which lay great stress on the corruption of human nature, and the difficulty of salvation, are apt to make up for it by offering to the elect *sensible experiences* of God's favour. It may be the complete inner conviction of the Calvinist that he is bound for heaven; it may be the warm consciousness of the Wesleyan that his sins are, here and now, forgiven: in either case, there is the feeling that things can never be the same again, a threshold has been crossed, nature has been supernaturalized. So it is with the more modern enthusiast who tells you that 'his life has been changed'; with that moment of decision to look back upon, he finds

[1] Quoted by Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. ii. 65.

(at least for a time) that virtues or abstinences which hitherto meant laborious effort now 'come easy to him'. Instead of resolving to conquer his temptations, he believes that he will conquer his temptations, and does. Pascal's experience seems to have been something of this kind. The word 'certitude', occurring in the *Memorial*, definitely points to this, and Bremond's treatment of the subject[1] seems to establish beyond doubt that Pascal expected and came to believe that he had been granted a sign from heaven. Whether it was a full assurance of his ultimate salvation, as Bremond seems to assume, is more doubtful;[2] there is an obvious parallel to be drawn between his experience and Wesley's. It is clear that from that moment onwards the severe discipline which he imposed on his life ceased to be a matter of uphill struggle, *seemed* at any rate to be made easy for him. This can be inferred from the curious document written by him on a loose sheet of paper, and preserved for us by Madame Périer, towards the end of the *Life*. He gives a list of his own moral qualities, startlingly reminiscent of the Pharisee's thanksgiving in the temple, and then adds: 'I bless my Redeemer every day of my life for having engrafted (these sentiments) in me; from one who was a man full of weakness, misery, concupiscence, pride and ambition, he has made me a man exempt from all these evils, by the power of his grace, to which only it is owing; in myself, I find nothing but misery and horror.' The language of a perfectionist could hardly go further.

I am not sure, however, that Bremond is justified when he seems to suggest[3] that the Jansenists, at least in the earlier part of their history, identified the sweetness which sometimes comes to us in prayer with grace itself, with that *sancta delectatio* which, as we have seen, tips the scale in the moral conflict, in the Augustinian view. The language of Port Royal does, occasionally, suggest this interpretation. Thus, the *Fréquente Communion* tells us that an act of contrition is valueless when we do not *feel*, in making it, detachment from the world and joy in the expectation of eternal happiness; we are only making *actes imaginaires de contrition*.[4] Arnauld even falls foul of Père Sesmaisons for telling his penitent that we ought to communicate 'lors même que l'on ressent peu de dévotion'.[5] But

[1] Op. cit. iv. 336 sqq.

[2] Nicole repudiates the doctrine of assurance, attributed to the Jansenists by Desmarais (*Visionnaires*, no. iii). [3] Op. cit. iv. 328, vii. 19. [4] II. xiii. [5] I. xvii.

elsewhere he distinguishes between the want of zeal which should, and the want of sensible devotion which should not, keep us away from Communion.[1] I suppose, then, that in the two earlier passages he is thinking, not of any quasi-mystical experience, but of a fixed attitude of the will.

But, while it is not clear that the Jansenist expected, as a matter of course, to find *positive* feelings of sweetness or consolation about the practice of his religion, it is clear that 'dryness' in prayer was sometimes read by the Jansenist as a sign that grace had been withdrawn from him. 'Il vaut donc mieux sans doute s'en tenir à la spiritualité des Pères, et prendre les sécheresses pour une absence de grâce, et par conséquent pour un état où l'amour est moins fort.'[2] This pestilent doctrine evidently arises from a gross misunderstanding of spiritual authors like Thomas à Kempis, who are apt to use the word *gratia* to describe sensible devotion. In iii. 54 of the *Imitation*, for example, the word *gratia* is used in its proper sense, of that quality, unseen, unfelt, inhering in the soul after the manner of an accident, whose motions cannot be distinguished from those of mere nature, except by a man of great spiritual enlightenment. But in iii. 7 the author is talking of something quite different, which he defines in the first sentence as *devotionis gratia*, and refers to afterwards as *gratia* for short.

(x) *Signs and Wonders*

I do not feel convinced, then, that for Port Royal grace was something *foncièrement délectable*;[3] I would rather say that Port Royal shook its head over you if it heard that you found prayer tedious. But this is not to say that the illuminism of St. Cyran died suddenly with St. Cyran. There was, evidently, a channel of mystical tradition among his followers, which soon dried up. The name principally connected with it is that of M. Barcos, his nephew; a priest whose influence on the councils of Port Royal seems to have been tentative and intermittent. He was, perhaps, too much of a genuine solitary to have much relish for the perpetual atmosphere of controversy which reigned there; it is possible that he was, in more ways than one, inconveniently wedded to his uncle's ideas, at a time when Arnauld, Nicole and the rest were anxious to interpret those ideas in their own sense. For Barcos contemplation was something to be

[1] III. i. [2] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 569. [3] Ibid. vii. 18.

preferred to meditation, if only because it owes less to human effort; our nature, hopelessly corrupted by the fall, must contribute as little as possible to the machinery of our prayer.[1] It is unquestionable, too, that the Jesuits, as being committed to the tradition of St. Ignatius, were the official exponents of formal meditation; and this alone was enough to condemn it in Jansenist eyes. Meanwhile, the *attraction* which contemplative prayer has for the mystic, seeming to claim him and beckon him to itself instead of having to be cultivated by his own assiduity, could easily be identified with that *victrix delectatio*, that overmastering pleasure, which was, for the Augustinian, the hall-mark of grace.

The disappearance, or rather the deliberate choking, of this stream of mystical tradition was due to a curious accident. It arose from the conversion and what followed the conversion of that rather *opéra-bouffe* figure, the Sieur de Desmarets. A dramatist at the height of his fame, he was converted from worldliness to ways of piety. This was in itself bad enough, for he was not converted by Port Royal or according to the formula of Port Royal. He retired into no wilderness, but began writing works of devotion. It was an age when, it must be confessed, the religious world was rather too fond of methods by which the secret of interior prayer might be learnt in sixteen lessons; 'ce fut alors une pluie de moyens courts';[2] and Desmarets produced his *Delights of the Spirit*, a book of unexceptionable piety, but hardly to be expected from one whose interest in religion was of such recent growth; it aroused the suspicion of charlatanism. Then, as if that were not enough, he produced a violent attack on the Jansenists, in which he repeated many of the most improbable charges which malice had invented against their orthodoxy. The Peace of the Church happening about this time, Nicole was on the look out for somebody to write against, without mention of the word 'grace'. His pragmatical mind had already been disturbed by finding a tendency towards mysticism in his own party. He sat down and wrote *Les Visionnaires*, an elaborate but fundamentally stupid attack on contemplative prayer generally, which Bremond has dignified by a long exposure of its fallacies.[3] This had the effect of creating an anti-mystical prejudice among the defenders of Port Royal, which was hardened by their subsequent controversy with the Quietists. Contemplation, instead of being a stick to beat

[1] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 534. [2] Ibid. vii. 141. [3] Ibid. iv, ch. xi.

the *Exercises* with, became suspect as a Jesuit trick, calculated to distract the mind of fallen man from the all-important business of working out his own salvation in fear and trembling.

With all the wisdom of the first six centuries for its oracle, Port Royal did not need, as other separatist movements have needed, an inner light for its guidance, inner convictions of sinfulness and of redemption. On another side, it was strangely open to invasions of the supernatural. Signs and wonders were to accompany the mission of the apostles, and few enthusiastic sects have been proof against the craving for signs and wonders, as an evidence of true mission. Port Royal should have been above this; it had never forsaken the communion of the Catholic Church, and inherited, in common with the rest of Christendom, a chain of continuous life which bound it, visibly, to the apostolic age. Pascal, in an almost latitudinarian vein, protests that there is no need of miracles now, as there was in the first ages of the Church, to be proof of her divine origin.[1] But, at a crisis in Port Royal's history, an event happened which gave a new and a dangerous direction to Jansenist thought. In 1656, just when the persecution which ultimately took place in 1661 was on the point of starting, Pascal's niece, a daughter of Madame Périer, was cured suddenly of an obstinate eye trouble, when she had been touched in the church at Port Royal by a relic, a Thorn supposedly from the Crown of Thorns. The medical evidence was satisfactory, the *réclame* of the fact enormous; at the instance of Cardinal de Retz, then in exile, permission was given for a Te Deum. Anne of Austria, it is said, was profoundly impressed by the story, and the persecution was held off for another five years.

It would not be in place here to consider the genuineness of the miracle, or its theological implications; both have been widely canvassed. The effect was, as Sainte-Beuve points out, that Port Royal accepted the miracle not as a proof that the relic was a true relic, but as a proof that Port Royal was right and the Jesuits were wrong. From that time onwards the normal Catholic belief in ecclesiastical miracles was reinforced by a confidence that, when need arose, Almighty God could be trusted to perform *Jansenist* miracles. Eighty others, in the years that followed, were attributed to the same relic.[2] Once whetted, the appetite grew. When M. de Pontchâteau died, in 1690, his coffin had to be taken away forcibly from

[1] *Pensées*, no. xvi. [2] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. iii. 182.

the church, where a crowd of relic-hunters had already torn his shroud to pieces.[1] Thus arose among the Jansenists that mood of 'looking for a sign from heaven', which was destined to produce such extraordinary fruits, forty years later, in the convulsions of St. Médard.

(xi) *The Epitaph of Port Royal*

That later Jansenism belongs to a different age, and a different world, from the Jansenism which took its cue and its colour from Port Royal. St. Médard will deserve our study, in a later chapter, among the influences which determined the eighteenth-century attitude towards enthusiasm. Meanwhile, what epitaph is to be written on Port Royal itself? Pathetically enough, it was always to the verdict of posterity that the Jansenists appealed, when they were not appealing to the verdict of antiquity. 'La postérité saurait toute chose', said D'Andilly,[2] and Nicole confidently assumes that in fifty years' time all these disputes will be thought quite trifling;[3] the good name of Port Royal will be vindicated, since time, in the seventeenth century as much as in the fourth, would be the real test of orthodoxy.[4] That was the origin of the Jansenists' prodigious literary activity; the *relations*, the *mémoires*, the collections of *pièces justificatives*, the obituaries, the biographies. It was for this that they edited, so painstakingly and in such a jealous spirit, their necrology. They believed the Catholic Church would come to see that they had been right, and would treasure these memorials of the few souls who stood firm, in the bad days when the world groaned to find itself Molinist.

Instead of that, their notions about grace have passed into the text-books, in the next paragraph after Pelagius; their rigorism no longer finds support, their attitude about Holy Communion died out under Pius X; their pet aversion, devotion to the Sacred Heart, has spread through the world and become imbedded in the liturgy. *Exoriare aliquis*, quotes Sainte-Beuve, *nostris ex ossibus ultor*—but the champions they have found in later times, men of study who have delighted to quarry among their inexhaustible archives, have not been of their camp, nor of their mentality. Evangelicals, like Frances Martin, hail them as choice souls who aimed at the purifying of religion, but have to admit that they insisted, beyond the wont of

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. v. 267.
[2] Ibid. iii. 194.
[3] *Imaginaires*, no. i.
[4] Ibid. no. iii.

Catholics, upon absolute submission to the advice of a director. High Churchmen, like Lord St. Cyres, fraternize with them over their devotion to the first six centuries, only to find them turning Ultramontane when it suits their policy. Liberal thinkers, with a taste for dabbling in spirituality, like Sainte-Beuve, acclaim them as the antagonists of a relaxed morality, yet trace in them a rapid declension from the high ideals of their founder. What is admired in them chiefly is their pagan virtues; the fortitude of Arnauld reminds the scholar of Horace's *praeter atrocem animum Catonis*—the pagan virtues of men and women who held the virtues of the pagans to be sin! If the three authors I have mentioned had applied for a night's lodging together at Port Royal, Mother Angélique would perhaps have allowed Frances Martin the bread and cider of the lackeys, but only after explaining that she did so out of pure charity; Lord St. Cyres would have been soundly rated by Arnauld for his Protestant insincerity; and I doubt if Pascal would have accorded an interview to Sainte-Beuve.

Meanwhile, what legacy did they bequeath to the Church of which they remained, so obstinately, members? French religion in the eighteenth century is overlaid, for the most part, with a joyless moralism that has lost the fire and the fervour of the old Port Royal; the country that had once been so rich in saints and mystics was now condemned to dissipate its energies in controversy. The sharp distinction drawn between nature and supernature disheartened the libertine, and lost for the Church her hold over the consciences of sinners. The doctrine of the *Fréquente Communion* held its unlovely sway;[1] just when it first appeared, St. Vincent of Paul complained that hundreds among the parishioners of St. Sulpice had given up the practice of monthly Communion;[2] and the generations which followed were content with Communion once a year.[3] Meanwhile, the constant echoes of controversy between the two parties in the Church weakened her influence, and left her ill-prepared to face the crisis of the Revolution. Such was the harvest which St. Cyran reaped from his effort to reform Christendom.

The enthusiast wants to see results; he is not content to let the wheat and the tares grow side by side until the harvest. It must be

[1] Gazier says (ii. 19) that for a hundred years it was the standard guide for such confessors as were not Jesuits.

[2] Abercrombie, op. cit., p. 204.

[3] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 148.

made possible somehow, even in this world, to draw a line between the sheep and the goats. Thus a little group of devout souls isolates itself from the rest of society, to form a nucleus for the New Jerusalem; and in doing so it loses touch with the currents of thought that flow outside, grows partisan in its attitude, sterile of new ideas. Jansenism was not (except in Holland) a severed limb of the Church, like Donatism before it; but it was like a limb which has been tied up with a tourniquet, so that the blood no longer courses freely in it. For that reason its splendid energies declined, its ardours paled, its literary achievement dwindled into insignificance. We may yet need, in the centuries which lie before us, a tightening-up of discipline, a general return to more exacting standards, a recovery of our origins. But if such a movement owes anything to Jansenism, it will owe nothing more than those lessons of greater prudence which the Church, with her long memory, derives from the record of failure in the past.

XI

QUIETISM: THE BACKGROUND

THE rise of Jansenism in the seventeenth century would not have been an easy thing to prophesy. Had not Luther and Calvin sufficiently advertised the danger of offering ready-made solutions to the problem of grace and free-will? Had not the careful definitions of Trent so blazed the trail of orthodoxy, as to exclude, for several centuries to come, the possibility of error? To have succumbed to an infectious disease, and to have survived it, immunizes the system, at least for a period, against liability to the same infection; might we not have hoped that the body of Christendom, rallying with difficulty after the shock of the Reformation, would at least have secured the same kind of immunity from the subtle poison of the *Augustinus*? But doctors, when they are baffled by the premature return of unwelcome symptoms, will tell you (not over-confidently) that there is such a thing as 're-infection'. And it seems as if the Church had overcome the crisis of the sixteenth century, only to be visited with a reinfection of the same troubles, within two generations of the Tridentine settlement. . . . Human nature supplies the key to the difficulty. Our minds, as by the action of a pendulum, swing from one extreme to the other. Jesuit theology, in reacting against the theological determinism of Calvin, swung back, and produced a corresponding reaction in favour of St. Augustine. That reaction was Jansenism.

The same period provides us with an exactly parallel tendency in the sphere of devotion. The Reformation movement, as we have seen, though it was early captured by the politicians and the pundits, shows a background of mystical revolt against institutional religion. That revolt finds its expression, and its Nemesis, in the history of the Anabaptists. A reaction against mysticism followed, both in reformed and in Catholic countries. The Inquisition, roused to fresh activity, treated every form of enthusiasm as suspect; St. Ignatius himself was threatened by its vigilance. Prayer, like everything else in the post-Tridentine world, was standardized, regimented, almost to excess. Once more, reaction led to counter-reaction, and the seventeenth

century became a century of mystics. The doctrine of the interior life was far better publicized, was developed in far more detail than it had ever been in late-medieval Germany or late-medieval England. Bremond, in his *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux*, has traced unforgettably the progress of that movement in France. But Spain, too, the country of St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, had her mystics; Italy, too, had her mystics, who flourished under the aegis of the Vatican; even the exiled Church of England produced, in Father Baker's *Sancta Sophia*, a classic of the interior life. Unfortunately this counter-reaction in its turn went too far, with results which we have now to consider.

(i) *Quietism and Jansenism*

So far, we have only been recognizing Quietism and Jansenism as parallel developments; one is tempted to ask whether they should not be recognized as cognate developments. After all, would it not have been natural to expect that Port Royal, with its emphasis on the influence of Divine grace, its depreciation of human free-will, would breed a Quietist type of spirituality? That it would discourage the frantic strivings of human effort in prayer, bidding the soul wait for, and quietly correspond with, the Divine afflatus instead? Was not Quietism the natural outcome of Jansenism, a translation of its theories into practice? 'God will work out his purifications in us, as long as we freely give our consent by means of resignation'[1]—could there be, at first sight, a more appropriate rider to the conclusions of the *Augustinus*? Fénelon can be called in evidence side by side with Molinos; he writes to de Rancé of 'this pure love, which leaves nothing to nature, by referring everything to grace'.[2] And indeed, Bossuet seems to indicate that there were those who did not shrink from pressing the resemblance; Fénelon's doctrine of self-abandonment means, he tells us, rejecting all effort of our own, all that activity 'qu'on dit être le reste d'un zèle *demi-pélagien*'.[3]

Whatever sympathy should, in theory, have existed between Jansenist and Quietist, it is well known that in fact they were bitter enemies. Anti-Catholic writers try to slur over this uncomfortable fact by speaking of the two movements in the same breath, and

[1] Molinos, *Spiritual Guide*, I. vii.
[2] Letter quoted in Upham's *Life of Madame Guyon*, p. 434.
[3] Bossuet, *Sommaire de la doctrine* &c., II. x.

leaving it to be assumed that they were two allied manifestations of the same godly protest against ecclesiastical tyranny. Thus Lord St. Cyres (who should have known better) wants us to believe that 'Quietism was essentially a reaction against the bureaucratic ecclesiasticism always latent within the Church of Rome, though it had come more especially to the front during the struggles of the Counter-Reformation carried through by the Jesuits. Like their contemporaries, the French Jansenists . . . the Quietists fell back on a doctrine of immediate inspiration of the individual conscience.'[1] Here was a man who had written a history of Port Royal and a Life of Fénelon; yet he will not tell us that Fénelon, so far from being an opponent of ecclesiastical tyranny, was a notorious Ultramontane;[2] he will not tell us that the Jesuits were his best allies all through the controversy with Bossuet; he implies that the *Jansenists* believed in 'the individual inspiration of the private conscience', which is a shocking untruth. But the real poison of the paragraph lies in what it does not say but leaves the reader to understand; namely, that the Jansenists and the Quietists were vaguely in alliance, both of them having the same quarrel with the doctrines of the Church; in short, each corroborates the other's protest. Whereas in fact the two cancel out; what the Jansenist dislikes in the ecclesiastical system of his day is precisely what the Quietist does not mind, and vice versa.

That the Jansenists were the sworn enemies of Madame Guyon neither she nor anyone else had the least doubt. They are so characterized, unmistakably, in the preface to her *Life*;[3] she herself attributes the persecution which drove her out of Marseilles to the 'seventy-two disciples of M. de St. Cyran';[4] she identifies Sœur Rose, the favourite prophet of Jansenism at the time, with a girl she herself had just failed to rescue from a life of sin, and attributes to her influence the attack made on Quietism by the Abbé Boileau.[5] It was Monsieur N. (obviously Nicole) who persuaded a Jansenist Canon to interview her, Madame Guyon—an interview which resulted in the 'exile' of many whose names had been falsely associated with hers.[6] Her English biographer is plainly embarrassed by these allusions; he makes no reference at all to the Jansenists of Marseilles,

[1] Art. 'Quietism' in *Ency. Brit.*
[2] Cf. Abercrombie, *Origins of Jansenism*, p. 304.
[3] *Life of Madame Guyon, written by herself* (Paris, 1791), Pref., p. xxv.
[4] Ibid. II. 23. [5] Ibid. III. xii. [6] Ibid. III. iv.

and contents himself elsewhere with the discreet statement, 'Madame Guyon did not find those helps from personal intercourse (with the Messieurs of Port Royal) which would have been desirable'.[1] In other words, they detested her. Early in the history of the Bossuet–Fénelon controversy we hear of broad-sheets being distributed in Rome which described Fénelon's opponents as 'a Jansenist cabal';[2] and indeed, it is difficult to believe that Nicole would not have had a hand in it, had he lived—he had died, still writing his *Refutation of the Chief Errors of Quietism*, three years earlier.

We are told that, as the result of a 'split cell', a twin birth may take the form, not of two similar, but of two complementary and therefore opposite products; what one lacks is emphasized in the other. So it was with Jansenism and Quietism; like Jacob and Esau they were enemies from birth. Jansenism is Lutheranism, with the Fathers substituted for the Bible; and the Jansenists reacted to Madame Guyon exactly as Luther reacted to the prophets from Zwickau—no one is so embittered against mysticism as the mystic *manqué*. Engrossed in the theology of predestination, the Jansenists were disgusted by the appearance of a rival sect which asked whether, after all, one's own salvation mattered so very much. Prone to identify 'grace' with sensible devotion, they felt little in common with a system which regarded sensible devotion as a kind of imperfection, a sign of spiritual inferiority. And, above all, they distrusted Quietism because it seemed to be presenting the world with a soft option, to be under-estimating the *difficulty* of being a Christian. 'Serait-il d'ailleurs bien difficile', asks Grégoire, 'de prouver l'analogie entre les doctrines de Molinos, de Molina, et du Père Pichon?'[3] Jansenist and Quietist, both have affinities with the Protestantism of the Reformation, but not the same affinities—in fact just the opposite. Jansenism, as you see it in Pascal, has its doctrine of assurance but will not hear a word about human perfectibility. Quietism believes in perfection but denies even to the most perfect the conviction that he is saved.

(ii) *Quietism and Reformation Protestantism*

Meanwhile, has the Quietist genius any kinship with that of Reformation Protestantism? 'So far as Fénelon and Madame Guyon

[1] Upham, p. 72. [2] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 197.
[3] *Histoire des sectes*, ii. 99.

diverged from Romanism, they were Protestants.'[1] Is that, in any sense, a just observation? It goes without saying that Catholic controversialists have sometimes tarred a Guyon and a Bourignon with the same brush. Monsignor Farges, for example, tells us the phrase *Laissez faire Dieu*, which is, for him, the watchword of Quietism, 'follows logically from the false principles of Luther and Calvin about the corruption of man's nature by original sin. If all our acts are tainted at their source, then it is our duty to suppress them'.[2] It was presumably on the same grounds that Godet des Marais, Bishop of Chartres, condemned Madame Guyon's works as 'tending to the errors of Luther and Calvin'.[3] But Godet des Marais could point, with some justice, to the repercussions of the Fénelon controversy among contemporary Protestants. 'Il ne faut pas donc s'étonner, si les Calvinistes ont fait apologie de Molinos, et si les Trembleurs d'Angleterre ont reçu dans leur communion les Quiétistes fugitifs.'[4] Even before the condemnation of Molinos there appeared, at Amsterdam, a *Recueil de diverses pièces concernant le Quiétisme*;[5] the book was published, rather ominously, by the same firm which was responsible for printing the works of Antoinette Bourignon.[6] At the end of her life, when she lived in retirement at Blois, Madame Guyon seems to have been visited by admirers from England and Germany, and thus took rank, after her death, as a kind of honorary Protestant. This equipollent canonization has created a legend which it is important to dispose of, if we are to see Quietism in its true historical perspective.

'*The Life, Religious Opinions and Experience of Madame Guyon*, by Thomas C. Upham, Edited and Revised by an English Clergyman' had already passed through several editions when it was republished in 1905. It was now fortified with a third preface by the Rev. W. R. Inge, afterwards Dean of St. Paul's; but he must not be held responsible for the views expressed in the book—I strongly doubt whether he read it. It is for the most part a rewriting of the famous autobiography, carried out, however, on a singular principle.

A translation of words [says the author on p. 42] is not necessarily a translation of ideas. It is necessary first to ascertain what she meant, and then

[1] Preface by an English Clergyman to Upham's *Life of Madame Guyon*.
[2] Mgr Farges, *Les Phénomènes mystiques* (Paris, 1920, Eng. tr. 1926), p. 133.
[3] Upham, op. cit., p. 461. [4] Approbation prefixed to Bossuet's *États d'oraison*.
[5] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 201 note. [6] Ibid. no. 247.

to embody her ideas in such a mode of expression as will convey to the reader just that meaning which she herself would have conveyed if she had used the English language with the Anglo-Saxon mind. . . . What I give as a translation is, in some cases, of the nature of an *interpreted* translation, a translation of the spirit rather than the letter.

Admirable principles, but hardly reassuring to the historian. To be translated, or rather rewritten, 200 years after her death by a foreigner of a different creed, with no kind of literary qualification for his task, is a harder fate than Bossuet himself would have wished for the incorrigibly orthodox woman who gave him so much trouble.

The trick of it is to substitute, at every turn, the jargon of Evangelical piety for the Quietist jargon in which Madame Guyon wrote. 'Whether we call this state of experience *pure love*, or whether we call it . . . *assurance of faith* is perhaps not very essential.'[1] Perhaps not, except that (as we shall see in a moment) it is just the opposite; but why not allow the authoress her own choice of terms? It is wonderful what an effect of Protestantism can be managed by merely using '*the* Lord' for a translation of 'notre Seigneur', as Upham does throughout. 'The way of forgiveness and salvation by faith in Christ alone', 'She became truly willing to receive Christ alone as her hope of salvation', 'Sanctification by faith, word uttered from Madame Guyon's burdened heart', 'A heart truly redeemed and sanctified through the blood of Christ'[2]—such phrases as these, by constant repetition, hypnotize the reader into the impression that he is studying the experiences of some Evangelical lady in the early nineteenth century. But they are not her phrases, they are the phrases which Upham has considerately lent her.

The only shred of excuse that can be devised for this habit of laying Protestant eggs in the nest of Quietism is Madame Guyon's use—it is Malaval's, too, and Molinos's—of the word 'faith'. It is true enough that the Quietists described their approach to the interior life as 'the way of faith'. And, to a mind saturated with Reformation thought, the word 'faith' inevitably suggests a contrast between faith and good works. 'She was erroneously seeking religion by a system of works without faith' until she was admonished on the subject by an exiled lady whom her father had befriended.[3] Upham conjectures that this was 'some person driven from England by the civil wars'; if so, she was presumably a Catholic,

[1] Upham, op. cit., p. 129. [2] Ibid., pp. 40, 44, 155, 168. [3] Ibid., p. 31.

and it does not seem probable that she spent her time preaching to Madame Guyon about the uselessness of good works. The contrast, as any reader of the original Life will see for himself, was not between faith and works, but between the rival claims of the active and the contemplative life. And 'faith' as Madame Guyon uses the term, as Malaval and Molinos use the term, is not faith as contrasted with good works, but faith as contrasted with sensible devotion, with consolations in prayer.[1] Nowhere is there any suggestion, either in the writings of the Quietists or in those of their opponents, that they held any doctrine of merit distinguishable from that held by other Catholics. Bossuet, in six volumes of controversy directed against Fénelon and Madame Guyon, never once alludes to the existence of such a quarrel.

To write, as Upham does, that the *Moyen Court* 'is essentially Protestant, making faith, in distinction from the merit of works, the foundation of the religious life',[2] or to say, as he does, of the Quietists generally, that they 'did object very strenuously to any system of observances, to any and every form and degree of labour and suffering, as having an *atoning* merit, and as furnishing a justification of past sins',[3] is to convict yourself of having read the Quietists without taking the trouble to master their vocabulary, or, for that matter, the rudiments of Catholic theology. No Catholic has ever suggested that any kind of penance 'furnishes a justification of past sins'; nor did the Quietist doubt, for an instant, the satisfactory value of suffering. What he did claim was that the sufferings which God inflicts upon the soul when it gives itself up to contemplation have a much higher satisfactory value than the self-imposed penances of the Christian who remains in the common way of prayer.

Upham remarks that Madame Guyon's autobiography is 'less valuable in itself than as furnishing material for others'.[4] He certainly seems to have found it so. Had he done his heroine the justice to ask what her theology was, instead of inventing it for her, he would have discovered three startling differences between her fact and his theory. They are these:

A. It was an accusation constantly brought against the Quietists, one which (as we shall see) they partly explained away and

[1] Cf. *A Simple Method of Raising the Soul to Contemplation*, by François Malaval, tr. Menzies, 1931, p. 224.

[2] Upham, op. cit., p. 245. [3] Ibid., p. 267. [4] Ibid., p. 280.

partly defended, that their devotional system left too little room for the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ. 'The saint does not love Christ as *his* Redeemer, but only as the Redeemer of the human race.'[1] Could anyone ever contemplate bringing that charge against Evangelical Protestantism?

B. Any account of an Evangelical conversion—Bunyan's, for example, or Wesley's—will disclose the presence of acute mental suffering until the crisis of self-surrender is over. Then, although there may be intervals of mysterious obscuration, in the main all is peace. Quietism, following out (but exaggerating) the lines of orthodox mysticism, will tell you that the great period of spiritual trial begins *after* the soul's surrender to God.

C. The keynote of Evangelical Protestantism is an act of confidence in the promise of salvation. The keynote of Quietism is complete indifference upon the question whether we are saved or not.

If Madame Guyon has been so misinterpreted by her biographer, what has been the fate of Molinos? For Upham Molinos is a mere replica of his own heroine; he 'insisted on the entire sanctification of the heart, resting upon faith as its basis in distinction from mere works', an estimate which can only be justified on the supposition that the foulest charges brought against him were true.[2] For his own biographer he is a kind of Modern Churchman, hailed by his contemporaries as one who would 'bring them nearer to God and further from priestcraft and obscurantism'.[3] You find the same estimate in *John Inglesant*, that store-house of historical inaccuracies from which most Englishmen derive all their knowledge of the Quietist movement: 'It cannot be denied . . . that freedom of thought as well as of devotion was the motive of numbers who followed the teaching of Molinos.'[4] The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* goes farther, and seems to regard him as a pioneer of modern rationalism: 'Few writers have struggled so long and so hard to disengage the essence of religion from its transitory embodiment in a historical creed.'[5]

[1] *Ency. Brit.*, art. 'Fénelon'.
[2] Upham, op. cit., p. 268.
[3] *Molinos the Quietist*, by John Bigelow (New York, 1882), p. 12.
[4] *John Inglesant* (1933 edition), p. 330.
[5] Article on Molinos, by Lord St. Cyres.

That is their picture; that is the legend of the man. We are often told that Molinos was never given a chance to defend himself; let him speak for himself now.

> You will never reach the mountain of perfection . . . if you are governed by your own will. This is the cruel beast, God's and your soul's enemy, which you have to conquer. Self-direction and private judgement are rebels you must subdue, fight down, and burn to ashes in the fire of obedience. . . . The most effective means for making progress in the spiritual life is to impress it firmly on your mind that your spiritual director stands in the place of God. . . . God revealed it to Marina of Escobar that if, in her opinion, Christ our Lord wished her to receive Communion, and her spiritual father forbade it, she ought to follow her spiritual father's opinion.[1]

This is the man who is represented by the ignorance of his biographers as having been condemned by the Inquisition for asserting freedom of thought.

(iii) *The Pre-history of Quietism*

No, it is misleading to connect, or even to compare, the doctrines of Quietism with those of the Reformation. This is not to say that they are unique as a religious phenomenon; they had been anticipated, at least in part, by other spiritual adventurers who had gone cruising in search of truth much earlier and had made shipwreck. The Messalians (or Euchites) of Syria and Mesopotamia, in the fifth and sixth centuries, claimed to practise continual prayer, encouraged a spirit of complete *apathy* or indifference, and were accused by their opponents of drawing, in their way of life, immoral inferences from such doctrines.[2] Seven centuries later, the Western world heard of the strange mystics on Mount Athos, who sat gazing at their stomachs and thus acquired the name of *omphalopsychoi*; they were also known as *hesychasts*, quietists, but they had little in common with Western Quietism, and, indeed, savour of Yogism rather than of mysticism proper.[3] In the West itself the Brethren of the Free Spirit were said to cultivate an entire passivity, discouraging all deliberate practice of the virtues and claiming, like the antinomians, that no action could be sinful in the perfect.[4] Ruysbroeck, whose own mystical doctrines were sometimes criticized

[1] *The Spiritual Guide*, ii. 9.
[2] Pourrat, art. 'Quiétisme' in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*. Cf. p. 82 above.
[3] Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes*, iv. 203.
[4] Pourrat, as quoted above.

as extravagant, wrote against them: 'It is impossible to find God in this natural repose, to which unbelievers and great sinners can attain, if they stifle the remorse of conscience, and free themselves from all images and every kind of activity.'[1] Should we identify them with the Beghards? Of these, much the same account is given; with the significant addition that they regarded meditation on the Sacred Humanity of our Lord as something imperfect; it was a descent from those heights in which the contemplative should move.[2] Their condemnation (in 1312) was part of Bossuet's case against the Quietism of his own day.[3] Another condemnation to which he appeals more than once is that of Eckhart's teaching by John the XXIInd in 1329. The complete identification of the contemplative soul with Christ, which Eckhart illustrated by the mystery of the Eucharist, perhaps went beyond the extravagances of Madame Guyon; but when he claims that abandonment of our wills to the permissive will of God excludes regret for our past sins he is anticipating the Quietist view with dangerous accuracy. 'Il y a quatre cents ans qu'on voit commencer des raffinements de dévotion sur l'union avec Dieu et sur la conformité à sa volonté, qui ont préparé la voie aux quiétistes modernes.'[4]

Such an assertion carries very little meaning. The Renaissance, with its rediscovery of the classics, had made scholastic literature unfashionable reading, and it is not likely that Eckhart had any influence on seventeenth-century thought. Something of the Beghard tradition lingered, no doubt, among the Anabaptists; but the Counter-reformation world had forgotten it. At the back of Bossuet's mind is the idea that mysticism itself is a nuisance; that Tauler, and Suso, and Ruysbroeck, and Harphius were to blame. Quietism is a morbid growth on the healthy body of mysticism, and mystics of recognized orthodoxy may carry the germs of the disease without developing its symptoms. To that extent Bossuet was right; if his age had produced no mystics, it would have produced no Quietists. But he did not dare to draw his own conclusion. St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis of Sales had made the position of mystical prayer unassailable. He could not say what he really felt, even to his nephew.

[1] *Spiritual Marriage*, ii. 76. [2] Fleury, op. cit., p. 91.
[3] Correspondence, no. 104; cf. *États d'oraison*, iii. 7.
[4] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 360.

It might, indeed, be reasonably urged that these medieval heterodoxies had prepared the way for Quietism in a different sense—they had put the Church on her guard, made it impossible for the same false speculations to lurk unsuspected in her bosom. But in fact the Church had no need of such warnings. The history of the seventeenth century gave numerous examples of what false mysticism was, and what it might lead to. And, indeed, there is some ground for thinking that the memory of these recent scandals was partly responsible for the suspicion which Quietism aroused. Of all these, the one which produced the most lasting reverberations was the affair of the Illuminati.

The Illuminati, or Alumbrados, are first heard of about the year 1575, in the dioceses of Seville and Cadiz.[1] They were condemned by the Inquisition in 1623, on evidence given (somewhat incoherently) by their own members. Many of the disclosures, it must be admitted, suggest a strong affinity with the allegations afterwards made against Quietism. They discouraged vocal prayer, holding that mental prayer was necessary to salvation. This mental prayer dispensed with all images (presumably mental images); they never meditated on the Sacred Humanity or on our Lord's Passion. The absence of sensible devotion made prayer all the more meritorious. Those who had attained perfection no longer had any need of performing virtuous acts, and some, by a special grace, were able to allow themselves every indulgence without sinning—a doctrine, according to the evidence, which covered numerous immoralities.[2] On the other hand, their claim to see God clearly in a light half-way between faith and glory, the shuddering and tremblings which assured them of being in a state of grace, the existence of a privileged caste of *perfecti* who engaged in no secular activities, their reprobation of marriage and the marriage act, the Puritanism which disapproved of finery in apparel—all these are symptoms which belong to a different type of heterodoxy, reminding us now of the medieval Manichees, now of Anabaptism and its derivative sects.[3] In the absence of better information—only the list of condemned opinions has come down to us, not the details of the trial—it is hard to resist the impression that the Inquisitors spread their nets too wide, and

[1] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 7 and 8. The statement in his biography that St. Ignatius in his early days incurred the suspicion of being an *illuminatus* is probably an anachronism.

[2] Pourrat, as quoted above; Bremond, op. cit., pp. 62–7.

[3] Ibid.

brought in two shoals instead of one, mixing them up in the process. Bremond seems to doubt whether Illuminism was, strictly speaking, a mystical movement at all; he would rather identify it as a semi-Reformation movement, perhaps due to the influence of Erasmus, which had been driven underground and so turned into a sect.[1] It would be equally possible to suggest that it was an obscure survival from the heresies of the Middle Ages. But I find it hard to believe that some of the persons implicated (7,000 or 8,000 of them are said to have confessed their errors)[2] effectively belonged to the movement at all. If a few stray mystics, who had no more than a bowing acquaintance with the Alumbrados proper, were brought to trial and owned up to quietistic aberrations of their own, it would explain some of the complications which are so baffling to the historian. It is difficult to feel certain that the Domini Canes were not, on occasion, distracted by red herrings.

Be that as it may, the condemnation of the Alumbrados has a definite importance for the story of Quietism. Not that there is any reason to suppose, with Pourrat, that the movement had any direct influence in forming the ideas of Molinos. But, as Bremond rightly sees, the condemnation itself produced a 'scare' in the public mind, which was thenceforth prepared to suspect illuminism wherever the mystical tradition spread beyond convent walls and took on the form of a popular cult. And we shall do well to discount, from the outset, a certain readiness in the seventeenth-century mind to suspect the worst—without concluding, as Bremond invariably concludes, that every subsequent disclosure of the kind was necessarily a mare's nest. In particular, the proceedings of 1623 will help us to understand why the authorities were so anxious to discover whether a Molinos or a Lacombe had been guilty of holding 'assemblies'. The imputation would be that any 'assembly' of mystics took the form of something like a witches' sabbath. Conversely, it may be suggested that the judges and inquisitors of the period, when they investigated cases of real diabolism, were apt to put leading questions which brought Quietism, unnecessarily, into the picture.

Bremond has no difficulty in showing that the French authorities, Richelieu in particular, were liable to fits of anti-illuminist panic for some years after the Edict of Seville. There was considerable excite-

[1] Bremond, op. cit., pp. 59–61. [2] Grégoire, op. cit., p. 7.

ment, for example, in 1634 over the so-called 'Guérinets' of Picardy. Pierre Guérin, with two other priests, who had already been examined and found innocent by no less respectable an authority than St. Vincent de Paul, was committed to the Bastille in that year for teaching what would later have been called Quietist doctrines. It was unnecessary for the perfect to practise the Christian virtues, unnecessary to be occupied with the thought of our past sins, and so on. Their insistence on the importance of living in the present seems to anticipate Père de Caussade. Grégoire takes the accusations seriously,[1] but, as Bremond points out, it is difficult to see why the priests were restored to their parishes without further incident, except on the supposition that they were once more proved innocent; difficult to believe that erroneous opinions had infected 60,000 people, since we hear no more of the 60,000 people, or how they were disabused.[2] Pourrat, a less friendly advocate, admits that the heresy-hunt was probably no better than a wild-goose chase.[3]

Yet the France of the seventeenth century had some reason for its mistrust of visionaries. When the Quietist controversy was raging in the nineties, Jean Labadie was only twenty years dead, and Antoinette Bourignon only fifteen. Men in late middle age could remember the time when both of them were Catholics. Labadie, who apostatized in 1650, had been influenced by Condren and by St. Cyran, but it is doubtful whether we can write him down a mystic. And when he is called a Quietist,[4] Bremond rightly complains that the description is inaccurate;[5] among the farrago of opinions attributed to him in his Protestant days only one suggests Quietism. As for his morals, the charges which are dismissed by Bremond as a Jansenist libel rest upon Protestant as well as Catholic testimony.[6] He met Antoinette Bourignon in 1666, though it seems doubtful whether she was ever effectively his disciple;[7] she too has been described, somewhat loosely, as a Quietist. No sect perpetuated her memory; but her writings, circulated by the indefatigable Poiret, had a considerable vogue on this side of the Channel, and Bishop

[1] Ibid., p. 10.
[2] Bremond, op. cit. xi. 113.
[3] Art. 'Quietism' as quoted above.
[4] e.g. Mrs. Balfour, art. on 'Port-Royal', *Dublin Review*, July 1910.
[5] Op. cit. xi. 175.
[6] Grégoire, op. cit. v. 306. The Labadists were still a living sect in Holland at the end of the century, and perhaps did not die out altogether till 1770. Ibid., p. 310.
[7] Ibid., and Marchal, art. 'Labadie' in *Dict. de théologie catholique.*

Lavington professes to believe that they influenced Wesley. To-day, both prophet and prophetess have passed into oblivion, but their memories, when still recent, were notorious enough to make the term 'visionary' a formidable reproach.

So far we have been considering the influences which made Quietism suspect; we have not yet done anything to trace the real filiation of the movement. Making every allowance for Bremond's spirit of advocacy—to him Quietism is what Jansenism is to Gazier, orthodoxy miscalled by its enemies—you must not look for the ancestry of Quietism elsewhere than among the recognized, to some extent among the canonized, mystics. The successive 'states' through which Madame Guyon claims to have passed will be unintelligible to the reader who has never acquainted himself with the doctrines of the French Oratory. It was the tradition of St. Francis, of Sainte Chantal, of St. John Eudes, of Camus and Binet, of Bérulle, Condren, and Olier, of Coton, Lallemand, and Surin, of Madame Acarie and Marie de l'Incarnation that gave birth, when its energies were already failing, to the extravagances of a Père Lacombe. That tradition took on, sometimes, exaggerated forms; Gagliardi, though he was adapted for French readers by Binet and Bèrulle, was found unsuitable for Catholic readers a century later, and Malaval, as we shall see, incurred condemnation for expressions which might have gone unnoticed a century earlier. So it was everywhere; Falconi died in the odour of sanctity, and it was only because he had inspired Molinos that he was placed on the Index.

(iv) *The Prayer of Contemplation*

What is its origin, this stream of contemplative prayer which runs through the seventeenth century? How did a single age produce such a spate of monographs on the interior life, biographies of interior souls, popular devotions calculated to spread the mystical idea? Dean Inge has suggested[1] that it was a state of mind artificially induced by the counter-Reformation; the word went out from headquarters that all Catholics were to be mystics, as a counterblast to the mystical propaganda—such as it was—of Protestantism. With his curious felicity, he appears to have seized on the exact opposite of the truth. What did receive official encouragement at

[1] *Christian Mysticism*, p. 242.

the time was the practice of meditation. And it is as a revolt from the practice of meditation that mysticism makes its appeal. It disengages itself from a background of formalism, asserting, not always in temperate language, the freedom of the spirit.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius were a weapon of unexampled power for their own purpose. That purpose was to convert the soul, as by a kind of treatment, from worldliness and selfishness till it reached a state of unhesitating obedience to God's will and to Christ's cause. With that in view, he would harness all the natural faculties of man in a single team. You might picture it as a coach and six. The leading pair were intellectual considerations; on the one side that of God's attributes, of our Lord's earthly life, and so on; on the other that of your own soul, its fallenness, its need of an end, its choice of means to guide it to that end. Then followed the affections; on the one side feelings of admiration, gratitude, confidence, &c., towards God; on the other side feelings of confusion, of contrition, &c., as you turned to look at yourself. The will followed, translating these affections into resolutions; you were to make up your mind to do this and that which you now saw God wanted of you, to do without this and that if and when you saw God wanted you to do without it. Such was the marrow of the exercise; there were preludes, too, the most important of which gave scope to the imagination by telling you to represent to yourself a scene from the Bible, or a moral allegory, as if you were seeing and hearing all that went on; and there was a conclusion. This elaborate frame-work of psychological effort, meant in the first instance for use in the novitiate of St. Ignatius's own institute, quickly became the favourite model of mental prayer in post-Tridentine Christendom.

Bremond has called attention to the prevalence of the meditation habit in an age 'passionnée pour la méthode'.[1] Madame Guyon, before the spiritual change which she regarded as her conversion, used to make two such meditations every day.[2] Are we to add, with Bremond, that in the opinion of numberless contemporary directors meditation had proved 'un immense progrès, et tout ensemble une faillite manifeste'?[3] That is the language of controversy. But it is beyond question that the Ignatian method, in its classical form, makes less appeal to some souls than to others. The ignorant find it too great a tax on their energies; the imaginative cannot pursue it

[1] Op. cit. xi. 335. [2] *Autobiography*, I. vii. [3] Op. cit. xi. 339.

without encountering endless distractions; the simple-minded ask if no more direct approach can be found for them to the sanctities of prayer. But probably, if they could have analysed their feelings more closely, its critics would have discovered a more fundamental ground of objection. St. Ignatius's object had been a simple one—to make the thoughtless, whose attention was all directed to outward things, turn back upon themselves and see their own souls in the light of eternity; he would turn extroverts into introverts. But the age which immediately followed the counter-Reformation was, on the whole, an age of introverts. On the threshold of its philosophy Descartes had inscribed the words *Cogito, ergo sum.* It had produced Montaigne, and was to produce La Rochefoucauld; it had learned already to believe that the proper study of mankind was Man. Caught up in observation of its own mental processes, haunted by the scruples which introspection breeds, it demanded, hardly less than our own, a method of devotion which should turn introverts into extroverts. It must have its gaze, somehow, directed outwards upon God, not concentrated eternally upon itself. These affections, these acts of the will, how was the mind to make them successfully when it was watching all the time to see whether it was making them successfully or not?

Hence arose the reaction against formal meditation. Going back to the tradition of the medieval mystics, with St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross for their warrant, the devout of the world and of the cloister would identify prayer with 'loving attention to God present to the soul'. The whole apparatus of considerations, affections, and acts was to be by-passed. For some few, and those the *élite*, there was no option; the decision was taken out of their hands. They found themselves *physically unable* to go through the mental gymnastic of formal meditation; a kind of supernatural paralysis fell on them in their times of prayer, technically called 'the ligature'. The experiences of Sainte Chantal, and the advice given to her by St. Francis on the subject, became classical in the literature of the interior life. When this happened it was clear that you had been called to 'infused contemplation', to that 'prayer of quiet' in which God wanted you to adhere to him with the centre or apex of the soul, allowing all your faculties to be held in a sort of divine suspense; in the old words of the pseudo-Denys, you 'suffered divine things', became passive under an influence stronger than yourself. Had this

been all, the very infrequency of such occurrences would have been the guarantee of their genuineness; in all probability there would have been no Quietist controversy.

But what if you had had no such experience, yet had come to feel, after long practice of meditation, that it was not meant for you, or was no longer meant for you? Supposing you to be one who was genuinely anxious to serve God, free from any habit of mortal sin, obedient to the counsels of a prudent director, was it permissible to take the initiative yourself, instead of waiting for God to call you unmistakably to something higher? Was there such a thing as 'acquired contemplation'? The prayer of quiet was something beyond man's contrivance; it was all supernatural. But it had a kind of natural counterpart, usually called 'the prayer of simple regard'. This meant that you *deliberately* gave up trying to make acts or to elicit emotions in your prayer; you remained simply attentive to God's presence—or, if you could be said to show any sign of activity, it was only that general 'heaving up of the soul' to him which you meet with in *The Cloud of Unknowing*. It was this process, recommended in so many 'short methods' of interior prayer, sometimes even by Jesuit authors, that led to the wide diffusion of mysticism in the seventeenth century.

It is important to observe that the 'oraison' which the Quietists preached was, in the first instance, this prayer of simple regard. They did not make the mistake of supposing you could attain the prayer of quiet by your own efforts. The twenty-third of Molinos's condemned propositions is decisive on that point. It is upon acquired, not infused, contemplation that he would have the director embark his penitents when they show signs of being ready for it;[1] nor does he deal *ex professo* with infused contemplation until he is already half-way through his third and last book.[2] So, too, Père Lacombe complains that Nicole accuses Quietist spirituality of innovation, whereas if he were less ignorant he would realize that the 'prayer of simple regard' is identical with that practised by most of the Visitation nuns in the time of St. Francis.[3] When, therefore, Madame Guyon appeals to the directors of her time to conduct 'des âmes sans nombre' in the way of Pure Love,[4] she is only pleading for more liberty of *acquired* contemplation; a practice with which the most

[1] *Spiritual Guide*, 1st and 3rd of the preliminary admonitions.
[2] Ibid. iii. 13. [3] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 47. [4] *Autobiography*, ii. 8.

cautious of modern writers have no quarrel.[1] Bossuet probably thought that she meant *infused* contemplation; that is why he disagreed with her so violently over the number of souls called to mystical prayer. The Quietists, he complains, make extraordinary prayer seem so ordinary 'que tout le monde y soit appelé'.[2] It is true that she confused the issues by telling him there must be a hundred thousand people in the world who were experiencing the ligature, over-estimating the figure as surely as he underestimated it when he declared that there were only four or five.[3]

For Bremond, the difference between meditation and contemplation involves something more than a mere difference of method. The real issue, he claims, is between an anthropocentric and a theocentric type of spirituality. The Ignatian method, he complains, treats prayer as a means to an end, the end being our own perfection; did not Père Mercurian lay it down that for members of the Society prayer was not an end or a principal occupation but an instrument for acquiring the virtues?[4] This philosophy almost reduces the principle of the interior life to a 'culte ascétique du moi'.[5] Whereas, to the mystic, prayer is its own justification; a continual attitude of loving attendance upon God is the thing, precisely, we were made for. If he desires his own perfection, it is because he wants to be what God wants him to be; it is a secondary aim compared with that of praising, adoring, and loving God. Few of his readers will doubt that Bremond dwells unduly on this contrast, darkens in the lines of it unnecessarily. But it remains true that in meditation, where meditation is most characteristic, we are for ever turning back upon ourselves and examining the state of our own consciences; in contemplative prayer, though it be of the most rudimentary kind, we open a window outwards upon God, and forget ourselves in the exercise. To the contemplative, as *The Cloud of Unknowing* tells us, his own soul presents itself only as a mass of sinfulness, not directly envisaged, in the middle background of his spiritual view.

And, correspondingly—this is of the utmost importance, if we are to understand the very notion of Quietism—the meditative soul differs from the contemplative soul in its characteristic manner of approaching God. When I meditate about God, I seldom lose sight

[1] Cf. Farges, op. cit., pp. 39 sqq.
[2] *États d'oraison*, ix. 11.
[3] Madame Guyon's *Autobiography*, iii. 14.
[4] Bremond, op. cit. viii. 234.
[5] Ibid. xi. 171.

of what he is *for me*, my Benefactor, my Last End, &c.; the *tandem salvus fiat* of the foundation still echoes in my ears. Whereas, when I use the prayer of contemplation, my mind is more easily directed to the thought of what God is *in himself*, without reference to my perfection or even to my salvation. Here again, the contrast ought not to be over-stressed; if it had not been over-stressed, Quietism would probably have ended with Molinos and the Church in France would have been spared a long and painful controversy. But Bremond proves by a hundred examples that the doctrine of pure (or 'disinterested') love was a growing preoccupation in the minds of orthodox mystics, long before an exaggerated emphasis on its importance led to the embarrassments of Fénelon. With these two contrasts in mind—that between a prayer of acts and a prayer of attitude, that between a love of God for what he does and a love of God for what he is—we are in a position to examine the Quietist tendency in more detail.

(v) *Seven Paradoxes of Mysticism*

The extravagances of Quietism, says the Abbé Grégoire, 'trouvent un aliment dans le vague de locutions qui résistent à l'analyse, dont les faux mystiques fixent le sens d'après les affections variables de leur cœur, et non d'après les lois immuables de la raison'.[1] Nobody, perhaps, who had not lived through, and relished, the French Revolution could have achieved that phrase. It is hardly necessary to point out that his criticism applies not merely to the Quietists but to the orthodox mystics as well—for whom Grégoire, like the Jansenist he was, had in truth very little respect. The mystic, when he describes his experiences to us, is trying to recall to his conscious memory something which happened while consciousness was only partly aware; he hesitates, has scruples about the accuracy of his reports; how much is he remembering, how much imagining? The mystic, in trying to tell *us* something which is lucidly clear to him, finds that he has no language in common with us others suitable to the expression of it; he must take refuge in metaphors and analogies. What wonder if he cannot present his findings with the lucid logic of a Danton? All this must be borne in mind, when we are discussing the paradoxes of mysticism. You cannot cross-examine your witnesses in lawyer-fashion; the subject-matter is too elusive.

[1] *Histoire des sectes*, ii. 90.

A. *The mystic has a sense of being carried away by a force stronger than himself, yet he can merit by his prayer.* We are haunted, most of us, by a misleading tendency to confuse meritorious action with conscious effort. Consequently, when we read of mystic prayer (at least in its higher states) as something which is done *en nous et pour nous*, we find it difficult to believe that there can be any merit in the exercise; we are more impressed when we hear of St. Patrick reciting the whole psalter every day. We should be less baffled by the apparent contradiction if we remembered that all meritorious prayer demands the action of divine grace. What chiefly distinguishes the mystic's prayer from ours is not that grace plays a part in it but that he is conscious, while we are unconscious, of the part grace plays in it. 'La charité, chez les mystiques, n'est pas seulement infuse, mais est consciemment infuse.'[1] When we pray we forget that it springs from divine grace; the mystic rises from his knees oblivious of his own effort. It is because he exaggerates his recipiency and we minimize ours that he talks a language which is foreign to us. Infused contemplation is, to be sure, a special gift, different in kind from our ordinary graces; nor could any effort on our part be instrumental in winning it for us; we do not, strictly speaking, co-operate with it. But our acceptance of it is an act.

Sometimes, it must be admitted, this language of passivity threatens to outrun our comprehension. Thus Gagliardi, the interpreter of the Milanese *dévote*, Isabella Bellinzaga, tells us that in the final stage of the soul's purification God 'really withdraws from us his concurrence and his divine assistance', so that we are unable to act even in the way of loving him.[2] He is speaking, not of grace, but of that divine *concursus* without which no action, even sinful action, is possible to man. Surely here there is a positive interference with human free will? Yet even so he admits that the soul 'freely accepts' its own condition of passivity; the ligature is applied to its fullest extent, but man does not become a *mere* automaton, actuated exclusively by a divine principle. He remains in an attitude of bewildered sacrifice.

B. *The contemplative's apprehension of God, in becoming more direct,*

[1] Père de la Taille, quoted by Bremond, op. cit. xi. 96.

[2] Ibid. 44. Gagliardi's *Breve Compendio* was put on the Index in 1703. It was published nearly a century earlier, and its doctrine survived in adaptations made by Bérulle and by Père Binet, S.J. It is noticeable that Bérulle himself expurgated the tradition at this precise point. See Bremond, op. cit. xi. 1–56 generally.

becomes less distinct. In the higher states of contemplation, no doubt, the appreciation of truths known by faith—the doctrine of the Trinity, for example—may become more lucid. But in the first stages of contemplation, whether it be infused or acquired, theological *considerations* (like all other considerations) tend to disappear. The soul cannot, without distraction from its main effort (which is to attend to the presence of God), *think* about his attributes, for example, his omnipotence, immutability, &c., although such ideas, floating as it were in the background of the mind, may colour the attitude with which we approach the Divine presence. We stop reasoning about God and are content to adhere to him. This 'confused act', which is treated by Bossuet as if it were a private invention of the Quietists,[1] is involved in the very nature of mystical prayer. Mental prayer is prayer without words; contemplative prayer (at least in its initial stage) is prayer without images; if the phrase may be allowed, we do not think about God, we think God.

C. *In trying to love God more, the soul makes less use of its affections.* Thus (if I may revert to the rather crude metaphor given above) we have cut the traces which bound us to the two leaders of our team; reasoning no longer forms part of our mental prayer, when it is mental prayer we are engaged upon. The affections are the next faculties to be cut adrift. It must be understood that the mystics regard the faculties of the soul, its reason, will, and affections, as exterior organs through which it expresses itself; behind all these there is an inner core (as it were) which they distinguish freely from the intellect and the affections, though not so commonly from the will. Sometimes they will call it the apex of the soul, sometimes its centre, sometimes its foundation; but always it is something which possesses an inner activity of its own. And it is with this inward activity that we love God. When we meditate we arouse our sensitive affections by deliberately providing food for their exercise; we elicit fear by thinking about hell, gratitude by thinking about God's goodness to us, and so on. But above all we arouse these sentiments in ourselves by thinking about our Lord's Sacred Humanity and his Passion. When we use the prayer of contemplation we no longer itemize our motives for loving God; consequently, no fuel is provided such as would excite our sensitive affections. If our tears flow, they flow from some more intimate source than

[1] *États d'oraison*, ii, *passim*.

(say) the imaginative representation of Gethsemane. In a sense, then, it is true that the contemplative, in his prayer, loses sight of the Sacred Humanity more than he did while he stuck to meditation.

It was perhaps in recoiling from the logic of such a conclusion that the devotional school represented by the Oratory (Bremond's 'French School') devised a system of prayer which may be described as a compromise between meditation and the prayer of simple regard. They would have us associate ourselves, identify ourselves in intention, with the different 'states' of our Lord's life, making ourselves imaginatively one with the Child Jesus at Bethlehem, or with the Son of Man toiling for souls, or with the suffering Christ in the various stages of his Passion, and so enter God's presence using the prayer of the contemplative, but with the mantle of the Incarnate Christ thrown about us. This compromise did not satisfy the Quietists—Malaval seems to criticize it as an effort to turn away souls from true contemplation[1]—but it evidently had great influence in forming the curious spirituality of Madame Guyon.

D. *The will becomes more and more the centre of our prayer, yet its acts become less and less perceptible.* So far, the principle of passivity has hardly asserted itself. Our reasonings have been silenced, our affections calmed, only to throw the weight of our prayer more and more upon the remaining faculty, our will. Can the will, in its turn, cease to act altogether? Clearly not; you cannot turn the human soul into an automaton. Yet there are mystical states in which the soul has the illusion of inactivity; St. Francis's parable of the statue, eagerly cited by Malaval, puts this beyond doubt.[2] He compares the contemplative soul to a statue, which carries out its maker's will by simply remaining in the attitude which he has designed for it. He allowed Sainte Chantal to wear a list of acts next her heart at a time when she found herself unable to make any without detriment to her prayer; a gracious subterfuge which Bossuet feels constrained to put on record, while trying to make the best of its implications.[3] Where the ligature is present, to make acts is often, it would seem, psychologically impossible; and no doubt this supernatural inhibition is sometimes counterfeited in less favoured souls by a nervous inhibition in which imagination has played its part. In the prayer of simple

[1] Preface, p. 41.
[2] Ibid., p. 202; St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, vi. 11.
[3] *États d'oraison*, viii. 35.

regard there is no such inhibition; but the soul, as its prayer becomes more and more simplified, finds that the various acts of faith, hope, love, gratitude, confidence, &c., which meditation itemizes, tend to become merged in a general attitude of dependence on God which does duty for all of them. This general attitude will perhaps be *tinged* at one time with confidence, at another time with humility, at another time with contrition, and so on; although we shall not be able to find any reason why one particular time of prayer should have been tinged with this feeling rather than that.

In a word, contemplation, whether acquired or infused, tends to replace the multiplicity of acts by a single, sustained exercise of loving attention to the presence of God. And this exercise, making little demand upon the soul's outward faculties, cannot always be contained within the narrow limits of our 'times of prayer'; it will overflow into our daily occupations, and a Brother Laurence will live for years continually conscious, it seems, of the presence of God. Catherine Ranquet, one of Bremond's heroines, never yet named, I think, as a Quietist, provides a delicate picture of a soul thus favoured. By her own account (but she is very humble) it does not appear that she had got beyond the prayer of simple regard. She finds herself so entirely unable to tell God all she wants to tell him, that 'je suis réduite à m'expliquer par ce mot, *Oui*'. It is only her prayers that suffer from distractions; during recreation she can continue in God's presence easily enough.[1] Still more extraordinary is the recollection practised by Marie de l'Incarnation, celebrated by Bossuet himself as the St. Theresa of France. You read of her doing the rough work of a large transport business, all the time steeped in prayer; she does not lose sight of God for a moment as she makes up the accounts, though she is glad of having to dip her pen in the ink from time to time, because it gives more opportunity for recollection.[2] To such souls prayer becomes a lifelong habit; and it is not surprising if when prayer-time comes they can fall a-praying without any preambles, even so much as an act of putting themselves (how should they *put* themselves?) in God's presence.

E. *Some contemplatives find that the more they pray, the less they ask for.* If contemplative prayer aims at a greater simplicity, by substituting a single, general act for a multitude of particular acts, what is its effect on our prayer of petition? Evidently our petitions

[1] Bremond, op. cit. vi. 336, 337. [2] Ibid. 28.

have more power still to distract us from the consciousness of God's presence; the mind is invited to fly off at a hundred different angles. Here St. John of the Cross has an interesting and, it must be confessed, rather disconcerting contribution to make. He tells us that a person in the state of union, when asked by a friend for prayers, will forget the request (so deeply is the memory absorbed in God) unless God, meaning to hear that prayer, recalls it to the mind when the time comes.[1] It is easy to imagine what scorn Bossuet would have poured on such an attitude, if it had not been that of a canonized saint. But it is more important to ask, in view of the Quietist controversy, what is the attitude of the mystics towards the prayer which asks favours, temporal or spiritual, for ourselves? Here a new principle emerges. The prayer of petition does, in any case, tend to disappear, or rather to be merged in the stream of contemplation. But, more than that—in proportion as the soul becomes united to God, its will becomes united to his, and the objects of ambition (spiritual, no less than temporal) are seen rather as something that must be left to him by an exercise of holy indifference than as something which we must secure from him at all costs. 'A soul wholly lost in God wants to have only the virtue and the perfection that God wills it to have', says Sainte Chantal.[2] This is not to say that the contemplative ceases to offer petitions, but that (at least in the prayer of contemplation) a different emphasis makes itself felt; the *transfer a me calicem hunc* falls into the background, as the *non mea voluntas sed tua fiat* achieves prominence.

In what, then, is this holy indifference to be practised? 'In things belonging to the body, . . . in the affairs of the spiritual life, . . . briefly, in all events'—such is the reply of St. Francis.[3] And elsewhere he recommends it as his ideal 'se laisser entre les bras de la Providence divine sans s'amuser à aucun désir, sinon à vouloir ce que Dieu veut de nous'.[4] Did this complete abandonment, this resolute preference of the Giver to his gifts, extend even to the desire for eternal salvation? Conditionally, yes; you could imagine, *per impossibile*, conditions in which the soul would actually want to be lost. A soul ought to throw up its salvation and run eagerly to

[1] *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, iii. 1.
[2] *Mystical Prayer according to St. Jane de Chantal* (Saudreau), p. 66.
[3] *On the Love of God*, ix. 5.
[4] *Entretien XXI*, quoted by Bossuet, *États d'oraison*, viii. 2.

perdition 'si, par imagination d'une chose impossible, elle voyait un peu plus de la volonté de Dieu en celle-ci qu'en celle-là'—this was St. Francis's doctrine.[1] His most faithful disciple, Bishop Camus of Belley, taught that a man should acquiesce in his own damnation, 'la grâce de Dieu toujours sauve, au cas que Dieu le voudrait'.[2] Catherine Ranquet was prepared to accept hell gladly 'si Dieu m'eût voulu y condamner, pourvu que je ne lui fusse plus ennemi'.[3] The Venerable Alain de Solminihac 'did not even think about hell or Paradise'—because, he says, God's Providence hid these considerations from his mind.[4] Sentiments of the same kind could be quoted from St. Catherine of Siena, from Blessed Angela of Foligno, and from St. Ignatius himself; the thing was so incontestable that the Articles signed at Issy, Bossuet's sheet-anchor all through the controversy, admitted it. Truly humble souls might consent to God's will, even if, on a wholly imaginary supposition, it were his good pleasure to keep them in eternal torment, without the loss of his grace and his love.[5]

'A truly humble soul'—the proviso was well conceived. Two sentiments may be expected to struggle for the mastery in a soul which has begun to turn towards God, the humility which would ask him for everything, and the generosity which would ask him for nothing. He must begin, St. Cyran would tell us, by remaining in God's presence in the attitude of a beggar asking for alms;[6] only when he has passed through that stage of apprenticeship can he be trusted to abandon himself into God's hands *without a secret sense of pride in doing so*. It is difficult to avoid the feeling, all through the course of the Quietist proceedings, that if there had been more humility there would have been no controversy. It is clear, however, that there are choice souls which attain such ease in their approach to God as to be able to tell him they can, if need be, forgo his gifts. It was this doctrine of 'disinterested love', hardly mentioned in the condemnation of Molinos (only in the twelfth of the sixty-eight propositions), that gave rise to the main encounter between Bossuet and Fénelon.

There is, however, an extreme case in which the counsel of abandonment seems to reach farther. It is the general testimony of

[1] *Love of God*, ix. 4. [2] Bremond, op. cit. ix. 213. [3] Ibid. vi. 339, note.
[4] Ibid. 441.
[5] Art. XXXIII, see Bossuet's Pastoral Instruction, prefixed to the *États d'oraison*.
[6] Bremond, op. cit. iv. 162.

souls which have attained a high degree of mystical experience that they did so only by means of, and at the cost of, acute spiritual trials. The chief of these takes the form of an overpowering conviction that the soul has been deserted by God's love and is marked down for reprobation. During these periods of dereliction, ought such a soul to meet the temptation face to face, in an effort to fight it down by returning to deliberate acts, which it is powerless to make with any sense of reality, of confidence in God's mercies? Or can it be advised to go on as if, after all, the question of its salvation were only a secondary matter, compared with God's will? Prudence will usually recommend the former attitude. But it is well known, and even Bossuet had to admit it,[1] that St. Francis of Sales, as a young man, encountered an ordeal of this kind and came safely through it by making a resolution to go on loving God, even though he knew himself damned.

The true explanation of this heroic phenomenon, the mystical authors would tell us, is that the doubts and despairs concerned belong to the outward faculties of the soul, and do not penetrate to the apex or centre of it, which remains unaffected. It were here that Molinos made his false step in interpreting the spiritual authors; over-emphasis on this division between the soul itself and its exterior faculties led him into strange speculations, which were the chief cause of his ruin.

F. *The more the soul enters into itself, the less is it self-conscious.* This disinterested love, ready (if need be) to make so little account of heaven and hell, goes in constant fear of being found disloyal by resting its content not in the Giver but in the gift. This applies, not only to the comforts and pleasures of earth, but to those consolations, those accesses of 'sensible devotion', which often attend the first steps of the contemplative life. St. John of the Cross defines undue attachment to favours of this kind as 'spiritual gluttony'.[2] Camus goes so far as to tell us that 'consolations' may come either from God, from our own temperament, or from the devil; and advises us accordingly to pass them on, untasted, into God's keeping, though he will not have us 'reject them'.[3] If we neglect this advice we shall be for ever interrupting our prayer to take stock of the consolations which our prayer gives us, 'as a bride', says St. Francis,

[1] *États d'oraison*, ix. 3.
[2] *Obscure Night*, i. 6.
[3] Bremond, op. cit. xi. 32.

'who should keep her attention on her wedding-ring, without looking upon the bride-groom who gave it her'.[1]

Hence the reiterated warnings offered us by spiritual authors, particularly of the Salesian school, against the danger of self-consciousness, of *repli sur soi*. What this great director of souls was concerned to fight against, Bossuet tells us, was reflecting on our own prayer-experiences in a spirit of self-applause; he did not, of course, find any fault with such reflection when it occupied itself with returning thanks to God.[2] Bossuet has, it is to be feared, missed the point; there is not a word about self-congratulation in the passage on which he is commenting. 'Lorsque sans cesse et par des replis ou retours perpétuels sur nous-mêmes, nous voulons penser quelles sont nos pensées . . . ce qui jette l'âme dans un labyrinthe et un entortillement'—it is self-consciousness that St. Francis fears, not self-congratulation. Nicole, who sternly refused to be interested in any kind of mysticism, could have told Bossuet that the same defect can spoil even 'ordinary' prayer. How difficult it is to know whether we have been really making an act of the will, or *thinking about ourselves making an act of the will*! 'Car l'âme aime ses passions.'[3] And in contemplative prayer the case is even worse. For here we do not exactly make God the object of our thought; rather, we try to substitute God for self as that centre of reference to which all the objects of our thought are related. To reflect is to dethrone God, momentarily, from that position. Not even gratitude, then, should encourage us to reflect on God's favours *at the time*; there will be plenty of opportunity for that when prayer is over. Unless, indeed, we are Quietists; your Quietist talks about *all* reflection as if it were a kind of infidelity.

G. *The soul, as it advances in contemplation, becomes less, not more conscious of living virtuously.* This principle is felt in two different ways, both important to our subject, but the latter more so than the former. In the first place, the mystical writers warn us that we must not be content so long as we find ourselves wanting to acquire the virtues *in order that they may be ours.* We shall acquire them slowly and grudgingly, if we acquire them only to appropriate them. St. Francis of Sales, perhaps, as Bremond suggests, owing something to the influence of Gagliardi,[4] uses almost startling language to this effect.

[1] *Love of God*, vi. 10.
[2] *États d'oraison*, v. 9.
[3] See Bremond, op. cit. iv. 508 sqq.
[4] Ibid. xi. 49.

> The same God who made us desire virtues . . . takes from us the affection to virtues and all spiritual exercises, so that . . . we may care for nothing but the Divine Majesty's good pleasure. . . . We are not to give our affection to them, save only so far as we know that such is the good pleasure of God. . . . Having renounced all—yes, even the affection to virtues, desiring neither of these nor of other things a larger share than God's will intends—we must put on various affections anew, . . . not because they are agreeable, profitable, honourable to us, and proper to content the love we have for ourselves, but because they are agreeable to God, profitable to his honour, and destined to his glory.[1]

It is certainly with justice that Bremond attributes what he calls *theocentricity* to St. Francis.

It is not, of course, suggested that the contemplative as seen from the outside (by his confessor, for example) becomes less virtuous as he reaches a higher stage of prayer. He loses, not virtue but an attitude towards virtue. There is, however, one particular department of conduct in which the novice is apt to outshine the proficient—that of voluntary mortification. It is not at all uncommon, the spiritual authors will tell us, for a beginner to outrun his grace. 'Allured by the delights they then experience, some of them kill themselves by penances, and others weaken themselves by fasting. They take upon themselves more than they can bear, without rule or advice. . . . Bodily penance is full of imperfections when the penance of the will is neglected.'[2] Language like this, when exaggerated by the Quietist authors, involved them in the charge of discounting bodily penance altogether, or writing it down as only fit for novices.

But there is another direction in which Quietism exaggerated orthodox language, with more sinister effects. The trials undergone by souls advancing in contemplation sometimes include strong temptations to sin, long after the process of mortifying their bodily appetites would seem to be complete. These disturbances of the imagination, which are temptations, not sins, belong, the mystics would say, to the outer faculties, like the despairs which we were mentioning just now. It may be the business, then, of the contemplative to ignore them—they are temptations, not sins—and remain inviolably attached to God in the centre of his soul. It was all the more necessary to give such advice, because it is not uncommon for devout souls to be at the same time scrupulous and ready to mis-

[1] *Love of God*, ix. 16. [2] St. John of the Cross, *Obscure Night*, i. 6.

take involuntary suggestions of evil for sins of thought. And it is perhaps fair to remember that the authors who were condemned as Quietists may well have over-emphasized the principle here in question, for the very reason that they were accustomed to directing scrupulous souls. Quietism is a message of hope, as Jansenism is a message of despair, for the scrupulous.

So much of preliminary is needed before we examine the doctrines of Quietism proper and its historical development. Unless we see it against this background of mysticism, unless we realize that it was the exaggeration, at every point, of an existing and perfectly orthodox tendency, our judgement of Quietism will necessarily be at fault. It has been admired as a lonely protest, claiming liberty for the human spirit; it has been condemned as a Satanic parody of Christian devotion. But it was neither. It was the error of a few incautious souls, trying to repeat the lesson they had learned from the saints of the counter-Reformation, and getting it wrong.

XII

QUIETISM: THE DOCTRINE

QUIETISM is a direction of the human mind, not a bunch of conclusions. You can be *more* or *less* of a Quietist; so much was recognized even in the language of the seventeenth century. The Bishop of Geneva describes Madame Guyon as having been in touch with 'quelques personnes du parti du Quiétisme outré',[1] as if, even in 1695, the word only became a reproach when it was applied to an extravagant manifestation of something in itself harmless. More than this—we must not expect, always, to be able to say with confidence, 'this is a Quietist statement, and this other is not'. Isolated sentiments are to be found, even in the most approved mystics, which would perhaps arouse suspicion if we met them in the works of Molinos or of Père Lacombe; you have to judge by the whole tone, the whole atmosphere, whether your author is a Quietist or not. That is why a writer like Bigelow, who does not know his subject at all, will assure you that St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross taught unqualified Molinosism.[2] That is why a writer who knows his subject all too well, but has strong partisan sympathies, like Bremond, will tell you that if Fénelon and Madame Guyon were Quietists, 'toute la France mystique d'Henri Quatre et de Louis Treize l'est également'.[3] Bossuet himself, whose *États d'oraison* is in great part devoted to finding an orthodox sense for misused quotations from St. Francis of Sales, admits that two particular expressions of the Saint's are *peu exacts*, and adds 'Cela nous apprend a ne prendre pas tout à la lettre dans les écrits des saints'—a somewhat lame conclusion.[4] Where does Quietism begin and end? Neither the condemnation of Molinos nor that of the *Maximes des saints* allows us to say with confidence that this proposition or that is heretical, or even erroneous. The condemnation is made *in globo*, and leaves it doubtful which censure applies to which of the extracts.

Other books, including those of Madame Guyon, were simply

[1] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 32.
[2] *Molinos the Quietist*, p. 98.
[3] *Histoire littéraire*, &c. xi. 54.
[4] *États d'oraison*, ix. 7.

put on the Index; evidence, to be sure, that they contain false doctrine, but with no suggestion that they may not include much wholesome doctrine as well. St. Francis himself, writing to Sainte Chantal in 1607, includes Gagliardi's *Breve Compendio* among mystical writings that may be read with profit, though he warns her that it must be used with caution, because Gagliardi moves on the summits.[1] Yet Gagliardi was condemned. In the same way, and perhaps with even more confidence, we may doubt whether the Holy Office meant to express any wholesale disapproval of Malaval's book. What you find in these writers, and find still more in Molinos or in Madame Guyon, is a false emphasis. The more startling utterances of the mystical writers are singled out for our attention, and their implications are over-stressed. Moreover, there is a tendency to exalt contemplative prayer as if it were the only exercise of the human spirit really pleasing to God, really efficacious in promoting man's salvation. The Quietist authors use the word *oraison*, meaning their own type of prayer,[2] just as the Jansenists talked about *la grâce*, meaning their own characteristic doctrine of grace. They set out to vindicate the liberty of the spirit by defending contemplation against its critics; but you abridge the liberty of the spirit if you impose contemplation as a kind of duty on the faithful in general.

What, then, does Quietism make of the seven paradoxes of Mysticism outlined in the foregoing chapter?

(i) *Action and Passivity*

It is a vulgar error, based on a mere verbal confusion, to suppose that Quietism consists in leading a quiet life. The accusation of idleness frequently brought against its exponents has no justification in experience. It is true that the first few propositions alleged against Molinos would suggest something of the kind; when a man says 'Velle operari active est Deum offendere, qui vult esse ipse solus agens', our unregenerate instincts are ready to accuse him of wanting to shirk his daily duties under the pretext of humility. And the long, finely conceived passage in praise of Nothing, in the *Spiritual Guide* itself, might lend colour, at first reading, to the impression. 'Ah, what a sure defence thou wilt find in this Nothing. . . . It is by the way of Nothing that thou must reach the goal of losing thyself in God. . . . Who will be able to disturb the soul from this sweet,

[1] Bremond, op. cit. xi. 51. [2] Cf. Bossuet, *Relation sur le Quiétisme*, xi *init.*

pleasant, delightful sleep that it enjoys when it rests in Nothing?'[1] But Molinos is only preaching, in a style perhaps dangerously paradoxical, the view that we should become dead to ourselves and allow the Divine will to have its way in our lives; if he tells us, in the second of the condemned propositions, that the contemplative ought to be like a lifeless corpse, we have heard the same thing before, and heard it from St. Ignatius. A man who had 20,000 letters from pious females in his possession at the time of his arrest was not (if experience goes for anything) living an idle life.

So it is with Madame Guyon. It is one of her affectations, if I may use the word without grave prejudice, to be always 'leaving things to God', taking no action to promote the success of her own cause. Thus, she gives up, before leaving Switzerland, all attempts to defend her confessor, Père Lacombe, against calumny. A more earthly minded woman might have done something to avoid scandal, by travelling less frequently in his company; Madame Guyon only sees an excellent opportunity for the doctrine of *laissez-faire*.[2] But the motto of Quietism was not *laissez-faire*, it was *laissez faire Dieu*; and the whole of her life, except when she was shut up in prisons or convents, was a round of ceaseless activity—God's, she said, not hers. Fénelon himself sometimes catches her accents; it is for Noailles, he says, to pronounce on her writings, 'je n'ai qu'à me taire, et à me renfermer dans mes fonctions';[3] this was at the end of 1696, and he proceeded to publish his *Maximes des saints* in the following year. Curiously, the chief complaint made against the Quietists by their adversaries was that they would not keep quiet.

We must not even accuse the Quietists, as Bossuet does,[3] of excluding human effort completely from their prayer—in spite of some exaggerated statements. Molinos himself will tell us that the contemplative *acts*, by attending to God, by adoring him with the centre of the soul, by brushing away distractions and temptations, though all this is done 'sweetly and contentedly'.[4] So Malaval, who claims that in acquired contemplation the soul should not be described as passive at all; and even in infused contemplation 'that soul is not idle which, holding itself in the presence of God, keeps interior silence. . . . For the will to keep silence is an act of venera-

[1] *Spiritual Guide*, iii. 20.
[2] *Autobiography*, ii. 9.
[3] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 83.
[4] *Spiritual Guide*, i. 5.

tion.'[1] It is by no means easy to draw a line between such language and that of the orthodox mystics.

At the same time there is no doubt that Quietism, with its insistence that the soul must remain passive always, and not only in its times of prayer, opens the door to a dangerous kind of illuminism. There is an *abandon* which allows itself to be guided by the fall of outward circumstances and recognize that as God's will; it is the *abandon* of Père Caussade. But, unless she has expressed herself very awkwardly, Madame Guyon's state of abandonment, or indifference, meant something more than that. It meant that you expected to receive, all the time, a direct signification of God's will for you, something like the Inner Light of the Quakers. What must the soul do, she asks, to be faithful to God? 'Nothing, and less than nothing. It must simply suffer itself to be possessed, acted upon, and moved without resistance . . letting itself be led at all times and to any place, regardless of sight or reason, and without thinking of either; letting itself go naturally into all things, without considering what would be best or most plausible.'[2] Such language as this goes far to justify Bossuet when he accuses the Quietists of 'pure fanaticism',[3] encouraging so-called perfect souls to 'give up attending to their eternal salvation, and let themselves be carried away by instinct'.[4] We shall see, later, how profoundly this Inner Light doctrine coloured Madame Guyon's self-portrait, and how convenient an excuse it afforded for incoherencies in her theology.

(ii) *The Disuse of Intellectual Considerations in Prayer*

In encouraging the devout public to give up the use of 'considerations' in mental prayer, the Quietist authors did not go beyond the lines already laid down by masters of the spiritual life. St. John and St. Francis could be quoted unmistakably on behalf of acquired contemplation, which they clearly regard as a higher state for those who have been called to it. The saints, however, have been reluctant to speak of discursive meditation as if it were something essentially inferior, a temporary stage at best. 'Let each follow the way to which she is drawn. These three kinds of prayer are very good. So

[1] *A Simple Method*, pp. 112, 206.

[2] *Spiritual Torrents*, tr. from the French edition of 1790 by A. W. Marston, pp. 112, 113.

[3] Preface to *Divers écrits* on the *Maximes des saints*, v.

[4] *Sommaire de la doctrine*, &c. v.

let those who are drawn to the imagination follow it, and the same with those who are drawn to consideration, and those who are drawn to the simplicity of the presence of God.' Such is the doctrine of Sainte Chantal;[1] and you can match her language, if you will, from the writings of the Quietists. Madame Guyon tells us that the troubles which are agitating the religious world spring from the narrow-mindedness of directors, the contemplative and the meditative each seeking to make the whole world travel by his own road;[2] but a few pages later she is telling us, without qualification, that 'God's design for the soul is that it should be lost in himself, in a manner unknown to ordinary Christians',[3] and neither her writings nor her history leave us in any doubt that in practice she urged *l'oraison* on everybody she came across. In the same way Evelyn Underhill claims for Malaval that 'he is keenly alive to the diversity between spirits, and anxious to safeguard the rightful liberties of each'.[4] But when we come to examine Malaval's list of souls not called to contemplation, the chief classes named are 'the sick, the indolent, and the unfaithful';[5] and it is not a very generous concession when he adds, in the same paragraph, 'though I do not deny that the Divine Wisdom may wish to keep certain devout souls all their lives in the way of meditation, this must not be taken as the rule'. As for Molinos, though he admits that the way of meditation is good, he tells us that it will never get us a step nearer perfection 'as is shewn by the experience of many, who after fifty years spent in this outward exercise find themselves empty of God, full of themselves, and with nothing of the spiritual man about them, except the name'.[6] That is the *temper* of the Quietists; and with it goes a habit of identifying the 'contemplative state' with the 'state of disinterested love'—as if those who continue to meditate live on an altogether different plane from those who love God as he ought to be loved.

We must not be surprised, then, to find that the condemnations of Quietism sometimes appear to call the whole contemplative method in question. It is not the prayer of quiet, nor the prayer of simple regard, that such censures attack. They are directed against the disproportionate emphasis which Quietism laid on contemplation, as if it elevated the soul to a different grade of Christianity from

[1] Saudreau, op. cit., p. 19. [2] *Spiritual Torrents*, p. 8. [3] Ibid., p. 28.
[4] *Simple Method*, Introduction, p. xiii. [5] Ibid., p. 189. [6] *Spiritual Guide*, iii. 1.

anything it had experienced hitherto. Thus, Molinos is condemned for saying (not for writing) that 'he who uses images, figures, ideas, conceptions of his own, in prayer, *does not worship God in spirit and in truth*'. He is condemned for saying that '*it is our duty* to remain in the darkness of faith, forgetting all particular thoughts, even the distinctions of the Divine attributes . . . without producing any act, *because God takes no pleasure in it*'.[1] And so on.

(iii) *Meditation of the Sacred Humanity*

The Reformers, on the ground that the human soul must find direct access to God, destroyed almost everywhere the images and pictures they found in churches. More logical, the Quietists declared war even on mental pictures, even on mental images; what did it matter, for the purpose of direct access to God, whether the image was one which confronted your eyes, or one which was formed in your brain? They were only following out, with their customary rigour, the principles of orthodox mysticism; as we have seen, if your aim is to contemplate God, not merely to think about God, a picture formed in your mind, whatever its subject, is a distraction in a more or less degree. . . . But then, if you excluded the use of pictorial imagination in prayer, that meant excluding even the thought of the Crib or the Crucifix; was the Sacred Humanity to excite our devotion no longer? The hesitating answer which Quietism gave to this difficulty was the more unfortunate, because such notions had a history. The Beghards thought you should not meditate on the Sacred Humanity; it was coming down from the heights of contemplation.[2] The Alumbrados taught the same doctrine in Seville;[3] so, according to Père Archange, did their French imitators not long afterwards.[4]

The Quietists, for once, were on their guard. Already, when he wrote the *Spiritual Guide*, Molinos found that 'some theologians' held you ought to meditate on the Passion, whatever the state of your prayer might be; others, 'going to the opposite extreme', that it should have no place at all in contemplative prayer. The compromise which he suggests is that when you pass from meditation to contemplation you should keep alive your faith in, and love towards, the Word Incarnate, with a general readiness to follow

[1] Propositions 18 and 21.
[2] Fleury's *Church History*, xci. 58.
[3] Bremond, op. cit. xi. 67.
[4] Ibid. 84.

all his inspirations. A boy who is urged 'not to abandon' his father is not, for that reason, expected to keep his eyes permanently fixed on his father.[1] Elsewhere he tells us that contemplation is imperfect when its gaze is directed not at God, but at God's works, among which the Sacred Humanity is expressly included.[2] In his condemnation he is accused of teaching that we should not make acts of love towards the Sacred Humanity; the context of this is left uncertain.[3]

Malaval is plainly conscious of the same difficulty. But he falls back on a tradition common to him and Molinos, the Falconi tradition. It was, no doubt, this unfortunate similarity which brought down on him the thunders of Bossuet[4] and on his book the censure of the Index. But it must be confessed that he has a passage of his own on the same subject which might easily be criticized as *male sonans*. 'Thy Humanity itself, my Saviour, which is the most precious of all creatures, not being regarded as it should have been, deceived the Jews, tempted the apostles, and every day keeps people of real devotion away from perfection. The Jews did not recognize thy Divinity, the Apostles did not sufficiently regard it, and the devout do not realize it, stopping short at the Humanity.'[5] It is difficult to see exactly what he means, but there is a suggestion here of something like spiritual snobbery.

As for Madame Guyon, she does not seem to have shared the scruples felt on this subject by the school of Falconi. She believed, as we shall see more fully later, that her contemplative life united her successively to the various 'states' of the Incarnate Word, to his infancy, to his apostolate, &c. She thought, in fact, that she was *living* the doctrines of Bérulle and the French School, living them passively, involuntarily, unconsciously; unnecessary, therefore, to ask herself whether she practised any devotion towards the Sacred Humanity, since her whole life united her to it in a more excellent manner. It is doubtful if Bossuet understood all the implications of her language; his criticisms do not suggest it.[6]

(iv) *The Single, Enduring, Universal Act*

We have already seen Malaval suffering for the misfortune of using a parable he had taken from Falconi. Still more disastrously

[1] *Spiritual Guide*, i. 16. [2] Ibid., Preliminary Admonition No. 11.
[3] Proposition 35. [4] *États d'oraison*, ii. 9. [5] *Simple Method*, p. 208.
[6] *États d'oraison*, ii. 2–5.

for himself, he has borrowed Falconi's doctrine of the single act, and his illustrations of what he means by it. Falconi, who is credited with having invented the doctrine,[1] was no doubt struck by a feeling of superfluousness as he made his acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition in the manner of his fellow Christians. Had we ceased to believe in God meanwhile, that it should be necessary to recite to-day the formula we recited yesterday? Why should not yesterday's act live on, so that there should be no necessity to repeat it? (A devotee of the Ignatian method would reply that each time we say it we are deepening our own appreciation of its truth; but the mystic might reply that there are other, surer methods of achieving the same result.) A pilgrim setting out for Rome does not need to be continually reminding himself that he is going there.[2] This illustration is borrowed by Molinos,[3] and the remainder of the argument can be traced by comparing Molinos with Malaval.[4] It is unnecessary even to say to God, at the opening of your prayer, 'I remember that thou art in me, and I desire to give myself to thee'. The simpler your thought or remembrance is, the more spiritual it is, and more worthy of God. If you were standing in the presence of a king, it would be discourteous to repeat at intervals, 'Sire, I believe that you are here.' When a woman has given her hand in marriage she does not need to be always repeating, 'I am yours'; enough for her to express the fact of her union with her husband by obedience and by love. This series of echoes (mostly unnoticed by Bossuet) no doubt helped to involve Malaval in Molinos's ruin.

Falconi believed in the possibility of a permanent *act*; it was not difficult for Bossuet to show that such an act only becomes possible in heaven; on earth we may have a permanent habit, but our acts are transient.[5] It does not appear, either from the *Spiritual Guide* or from his condemnation, that Molinos used the same phrase. Malaval is visibly troubled over it. He will not allow that the mystic's continual attention to God is merely virtual;[6] that description would apply equally to the habit of charity, which persists in us even when we are asleep.[7] (It appears that Falconi *did* maintain the persistence of the act during sleep.)[8] No, this attention is something more

[1] Ibid. i. 14. [2] Ibid. [3] *Spiritual Guide*, i. 15.
[4] Ibid. 14, and *Simple Method*, pp. 14–16.
[5] *États d'oraison*, i. 20, 21. [6] *Simple Method*, p. 39.
[7] Ibid., p. 192. [8] *États d'oraison*, i. 16.

than a habit, it is a continuous act, 'which is nothing else, properly speaking, than the repetition of the same act, but so gently and easily produced by the force of habit that one would say it was one sole act'.[1] Bossuet has no difficulty in making these hesitations look foolish.[2] Madame Guyon was really better advised in following Falconi's doctrine openly, and telling us that the act by which we return to God subsists as long as our conversion lasts.[3] For the whole point of the doctrine is to explain why it is unnecessary for the contemplative to make any particular act in prayer—he is making an act all the time. That he should merely have a *habit* of attention to God would not prevent his making repeated acts to reinforce it, just as a religious can renew his vows annually, although he has a permanent habit of obedience.

Fénelon disclaimed any belief in the single, permanent act; indeed, he protests that for a long time he was quite unable to realize he was being charged with holding such a ridiculous belief.[4] Bossuet will not accept the statement made in Fénelon's Letter to Innocent XII: 'I have condemned the Permanent Act . . . as a poisonous source of idleness.' Had he not told us, in the *Maximes des saints*, how contemplatives make 'acts, so simple, so direct, so peaceable, so uniform, . . . that they appear to be making only a single act, or even to be doing nothing at all'?[5] Here Bossuet overreaches himself. Fénélon, no doubt, is trying to screen Madame Guyon, but the language he uses can be matched from unimpeachable sources. Had not Père Archange, the sworn enemy of the French *illuminati*, written of the contemplative as engaged in 'an action so simple, so bare, yet so lively, so calm, and so delightful that it seems as if it were doing nothing'?[6] Nor in fact does any mention of the single act, or anything like it, occur in the articles of Fénelon's condemnation, or even among the thirty-eight propositions originally selected.

Falconi's act was not merely permanent, in the sense that it never had to be repeated; it was also *general*, or *confused*; 'the soul does not know how to say what it is; only that it is supported and filled'.[7] Probably you would call it an act of love. But here a fresh difficulty arises—does the contemplative make no other acts? Can we suppose

[1] *Simple Method*, p. 226. [2] *États d'oraison*, i. 27. [3] Ibid. 25.
[4] Bremond, *Apologie pour Fénélon*, p. 122 note.
[5] Bossuet, *Sommaire de la doctrine*, &c. xii.
[6] Bremond, *Histoire littéraire*, xi. 96. [7] Malaval, op. cit., p. 213.

that the act of love includes in itself the acts of faith, hope, contrition, and so on? The Articles of Issy tell us that in our most perfect prayer the acts (of faith, hope, and charity) are united in charity taken alone; charity 'animates all the virtues, and commands their exercise. . . . We may say the same of the other Christian acts; it regulates and prescribes the exercise of them severally, although they are not always perceived consciously and clearly' (Art. XIII). This is qualified, however, by Article XXI, which says that it is merely an attempt to shirk the obligation of these acts, if we reduce them to implicit or 'eminent' acts, on the pretext that, in a sense, love includes them all. The compilers of these articles were no doubt glancing at Malaval, who tells us that 'the simple and living presence of God . . . comprises all the acts you might be capable of making in detail'.[1] But they have contrived to leave their views almost as oracular as those of Malaval himself. Bossuet, who (like Fénelon) regards himself as the depository of the Issy tradition, reproaches Madame Guyon with obliterating the real distinction between the three acts, though without saying in so many words that the distinction must be *felt* by the contemplative.[2] Madame Guyon, in reply, admits that she had thought the act of charity all-inclusive, without ever teaching that the other acts were imperfect. If she did not make the other acts, it was due to the ligature. Expressions are to be found in her writings which constitute quite distinct acts[3]—this is her claim, though it does not appear that she can be credited with having *made* those acts, since (as we shall see) she attributes her authorship to a kind of automatic writing.

The weakness of Bossuet's position lay in the fact that there are very few occasions on which we are commanded by the Church to make an act; the duty which most commonly urges is that of making an act of contrition when we go to the confessional. It is probable that this was the problem which chiefly exercised him. M. Pirot taxes Madame Guyon with having said, in the *Spiritual Torrents*, that the most perfect souls, although they go to confession with child-like docility, 'find nothing in themselves which has committed (the fault); and if you tell them to say that they have committed it, they will do so with their lips, but without any grief or repentance'.[4]

[1] Ibid., p. 35; cf. p. 154. [2] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 12. [3] Ibid., no. 13.
[4] Ibid., no. 58. The words do not seem to appear in the printed edition; Pirot quotes from the manuscript copy then in circulation.

Père Latenai claimed to have met a Quietist, a penitent of Père le Valois, who had been told that she ought not to go to confession 'with any grief or contrition, since these did not concern her state'. She was referred to Père le Valois again; he then told her (this is her own account) that she was mistaken, she had misinterpreted 'need not' as 'ought not', refusing, however, to put his opinion in writing.[1] This, it will be seen, is hardly first-hand evidence; and it would be difficult to show that such language was part of the common Quietist tradition. Molinos, as we know, discouraged confession for advanced souls (Prop. 60). But Malaval certainly teaches that, although charity includes the other virtues, we must make distinct acts whenever we are required to do so, calmly and without strain.[2]

(v) *Impetrative Prayer, and Abandonment to God's Will*

In the condemnation of Molinos, the doctrine of the Single Act is fundamental, the question of consenting to one's own damnation figures but little. In the condemnation of Fénelon, the doctrine of the Single Act has only occasional repercussions, that of Disinterested Love comes forward and fills the stage.

The mystic believes fully, as we others do, in the efficacy of prayer; at the same time he is more conscious than we others are of the need for submission to God's will; there is a different emphasis in his prayer of petition. Yet total abandonment to the Divine will is not inconsistent with having, and with expressing, wishes of one's own; that is the whole meaning of Gethsemane. It is a vice of Quietism, that it cannot leave these half-resolved antinomies alone; it must be always trying to tidy up the situation, with a pious pedantry unknown to the mystics. Malaval is perhaps the most successful here; contemplation, he tells us, is a universal prayer, just as it is a universal act; it 'embraces all the objects, all the motives, and all the ends of our particular prayers'.[3] And the formula he recommends is, 'Lord, look what nature, or necessity, or charity to my neighbour makes me ask of thee. Do thou grant it or refuse it. I ask for nothing but thyself.'[4] This is, at least, a grudging recognition of the fact that our Lord said, 'Ask, and you shall receive'. But Molinos was more

[1] Note attached to Letter 237 in Bossuet's Correspondence; cf. Letter 262.

[2] *Simple Method*, p. 246. No. XII of the Issy Articles points out that we are not required to make acts which are *inquiets et empressés*.

[3] *Simple Method*, p. 239.

[4] Ibid., p. 240.

absolute in his conclusions. 'When a man is resigned to the will of God, it is unfitting that he should make any demand of him; a demand is an imperfection, being an act of our own will and our own choice.'[1] And Madame Guyon cannot tone down her language even when she is trying to make a good impression on Bossuet. 'I told you that I did not pray for myself, and this is true; but I am often led (*portée*) to pray for others; and when the impulse is given me, I am given the power to do so. Since yesterday I have been praying for your Lordship unceasingly; and I feel in my feelings (*je sens dans mon sens*) something which makes me ready to give up a thousand lives, if I had them, for the accomplishment of God's designs for your Lordship.'[2] It will be seen that even when she is praying for others, she only asks God to accomplish his own will; she must punctiliously avoid every indication of a preference. What irritates the reader, as he probes the writings of the Quietists to see where Quietism goes wrong, is not any proposition or set of propositions; it is the *temper* which seems to be continually claiming that they have a monopoly of the love of God.

Hence the suspicion which Fénelon incurred by the sentiment which stands at the threshold of his condemnation. 'Il y a un état habituel de l'amour de Dieu, qui est une charité pure et sans aucune mélange du motif de l'intérêt propre.' The main point at issue was this: Was there a special grade of love, the highest of all, which deliberately and permanently excluded from its considerations all thought of attaining heaven? Nobody denied that it is a higher thing to love God for himself alone, than to love him for the sake of the rewards he promises. Nobody denied that the most perfect attitude was that of the saint who loves God for himself alone, without thinking about the rewards he offers. The question was, whether you could go beyond this fourth grade of love (as it was called), to a fifth grade which, according to the *Maxims of the Saints*, is even higher. In this fifth grade you *deliberately exclude*, all the time, every thought of your own salvation. The most obvious objection raised against this doctrine by Bossuet and other critics was that such an attitude would make it impossible to exercise the virtue of hope.[3]

We are not concerned here with Fénelon's subsequent explanations of what he meant; this was the sense in which his critics

[1] Condemned propositions, no. 14. [2] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 22.
[3] See, for example, *Divers écrits*, &c., I. iii. 18; *Schola in Tuto*, Quaest. xi.

understood him, and the sense, therefore, in which the extract was condemned. He was understood to mean that there was a state of indifference, something higher than a state of resignation, and that in this state of indifference you returned God's gift of salvation to him, telling him that you did not need it. If it be objected that the fourth and fifth degrees are not sufficiently different to be worth quarrelling about, it is Fénelon who must be held responsible; the fifth degree was his own discovery. He was trying, I take it, to find a theological formula which would describe the condition of Madame Guyon's perfect souls, those who 'are without action, without desire, without inclination, without choice, without impatience, in a state of complete death, seeing things only as God sees them, and judging them only with God's judgement'.[1]

There was a reverse side to the medal. Fénelon appeared to be maintaining that a soul could lawfully acquiesce in the prospect—not merely the supposition, but the prospect—of its own loss. That it could acquiesce in the supposition, we know; Bossuet admitted it. The saints had used this language, as far back as St. Paul himself. But St. Chrysostom, in interpreting Romans ix. 3, had insisted that St. Paul only declared himself ready to be lost *if* that loss would save his fellow countrymen—a bargain which he knew God would not in fact make. So with Blessed Angela of Foligno and the others. Fénelon would allow a soul to acquiesce *absolutely* in its own loss.[2] It is true he allowed this absolute acquiescence only when the soul was undergoing its most extreme trials, and felt utterly abandoned by God; and had tried to safeguard himself by saying 'ce sacrifice devient en quelque manière absolu'.[3] But Bremond and Upham are not justified in implying that Fénelon only recognized the conditional acquiescence.[4]

The trouble was that some of the Quietists seem to have spent their whole lives under this conviction that they were destined to be lost. Madame Guyon might claim that the contemplative way alone brought peace and joy,[5] but if it had that effect on the unfortunate Père Lacombe, he did not show it. Writing to her from prison, he says: 'Je suis autant convaincu de votre salut, que je suis persuadé

[1] Final words of *Spiritual Torrents*.
[2] *États d'oraison*, ix. 1, 3; cf. *Declaration of the Three Bishops*.
[3] Maxim IX, condemned propositions 8.
[4] Bremond, op. cit. xi. 414; Upham, op. cit., p. 123.
[5] *Autobiography*, i. 7.

de ma perte.'[1] Nor did this persuasion leave them at the hour of death. St. Philip Neri used to bid the dying abandon themselves to God without any reserves about their salvation or damnation; it was healthy enough to make them think of God's glory, instead of tormenting themselves with despairing scruples.[2] And perhaps we must not quarrel with the eccentric legacy by which a disciple of Père Piny endowed a series of Masses, not for the welfare of her soul, but in thanksgiving to God for having decreed her salvation or damnation, as the case might be.[3] But what were you to do when you were summoned, like Père Cambolas, to the death-bed of a young priest who asked God in set terms to send him to hell, so that the Divine justice and the Divine glory might be more fully manifested?[4]

Once again the reader may be disposed to complain that these distinctions between absolute and conditional acquiescence are too finely drawn; need the Church of France have been distracted for so long over hair's-breadth qualifications? Could not authority have turned a blind eye to such equivocal declarations as that of the Sieur de Desmarets, 'Une victime d'amour ne demande pas miséricorde, ni pour le temps ni pour l'éternité'?[5] Once again I think the answer is that the whole temper of the Quietists, of Madame Guyon at any rate, was at fault. She harps on the matter of damnation, it is an article of standing or falling to her *petite église*. 'If a risen (i.e. perfect) soul were taken to hell, it would suffer all the cruel tortures of its fate with complete contentment'; 'Damn me, so that I may stop sinning'; 'An entire abandonment . . . keeps back nothing, neither life, nor death, nor perfection, nor salvation, nor heaven, nor hell'; the soul in its state of trial, though it thinks itself damned, wants death, preferring it to sin.[6] And Père Lacombe, her well-trained director, says he does not write to reassure her; he knows this to be impossible with a soul God wishes to leave 'dans une affreuse apparence, et même conviction de perte et de désespoir'.[7]

(vi) *The Quietist Horror of Consolations, and of 'Reflexion'*

The soul of the Quietist has thus been progressively stripped. It has renounced considerations of the intellect; it has renounced

[1] Madame Guyon's *Autobiography*, Letter IV at end of vol. iii.
[2] Bossuet, *Reply to Madame de Maisonfort's Difficulties*.
[3] Bremond, op. cit. viii.
[4] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 447.
[5] Nicole, *Les Visionnaires*, vii.
[6] *Autobiography*, i. 23, iii. 17; *Spiritual Torrents*, pp. 28, 152.
[7] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 45.

sensible affections; it has renounced acts of the will; it has renounced all preferences in time and in eternity. What remains for it to lose, or to abjure? Only those 'consolations' from above which are given to the contemplative, at certain stages in his course, to compensate him for the earthly privileges he has abandoned. These, too, must figure in the holocaust of Quietism; either they are not granted, or, if they are granted, they must be studiously ignored. Souls in the way of faith must never *reflect* on what is happening to them; it is an infidelity.

We have seen that the orthodox mystics distrust sensible devotion, such as is often felt by beginners. And even in the higher stages, they warn us, visions and ecstasies are not necessarily marks of the Divine favour; they may be illusions, created by the human spirit or sent by the devil. Assuredly we must not let ourselves feel complacency over them; even to pay much attention to the lower forms of consolation is to let ourselves be distracted from our attention to God. The Quietist exaggerates this language; to him every kind of respite from the hard discipline of naked faith is something to be regretted. Even Bérulle, in his adaptation of Gagliardi, writes off sensible consolations as 'choses basses, très infirmes et puériles'.[1] For Molinos they are 'abominable, filthy and unclean'.[2] We must despise them, not merely as dangerous, but as an obstacle to our progress.[3] He has compared the soul which goes on its way in faith and in dryness to the donkey you may still see grinding, with blinkers on, in the *trillos* of his own country. Yet it is the soul which receives consolation that is really *animal*, only the way of aridities is in truth worthy of *men*.[4] So Madame Guyon: 'Poor souls, you do not love God for what he is; you love him because of the pleasure you find in what he is.'[5] What upheld her in all her tribulations, she is careful to point out, was the *invisible and insensible* hand of God.[6] The constant repetition of such language recalls a shrewd observation of Sainte Chantal's: 'There is some lack of humility in making so much of serving God by aridities.'[7]

But if the Quietists decided to do without consolation, it was not only in the determination to show their mettle. They dreaded, above everything, the sin of Lot's wife—looking back. To look back on

[1] Bremond, op. cit. xi. 31. [2] Condemned propositions, no. 30.
[3] *Guida Spirituale*, i. 5. [4] Ibid. 2, 4. [5] *Spiritual Torrents*, p. 46.
[6] *Autobiography*, iii. 18. [7] Saudreau, op. cit., p. 41.

one's own state of mind, to consider whether one's own prayer was pleasurable or not, in a word, to reflect—that was the danger. Perfect love, wrote Fénelon, had nothing to spare from its object for itself; the perfect lover never thought how well he prayed.[1] How few there are, complained Molinos, who follow Christ in simplicity and nakedness of spirit, through thorny and deserted ways, and never look back on themselves. The soul, when it loves, is unconscious of its love.[2] So much he may have had from Falconi,[3] but it was no doubt an improvement on Falconi when he maintained that 'in the interior way all reflection is harmful, even on one's own human actions and one's own faults'.[4] With Madame Guyon the doctrine becomes an obsession. The sight of oneself is the basilisk's eye; it kills.[5] Oh, if we had fidelity enough never to look back, what progress might we not make! Even in the 'immobile' state the soul is sometimes guilty of 'sights of itself',[6] and these are its greatest faults. It was an inconvenience of this doctrine that, logically pressed, it made thanksgiving, even after Communion, undesirable. Molinos at least does not seem to have shrunk from this conclusion; even in his early days at Rome he made no such gesture,[7] and in the fifteenth of the condemned propositions he lays it down that the soul should never thank God, since this is an act of self-will.

What lay behind all this dislike of spiritual favours? It has not, I think, been sufficiently noticed that the Quietists have the intention, here, of parting company with the mystics, no less than with the defenders of meditation. Bremond does well to remind us that Quietism is, in its leading features, only a development of the mystical tradition. What he does not seem to ask himself is whether it was not also a deliberate *break-away* from the mystical tradition. Unless I am strangely mistaken, the Quietist authors themselves are glancing (most unfairly) at the mystics when they criticize those who follow the 'way of lights' instead of the Quietist way of darkness. Bremond points out that we must not confuse the Quietist with the Illuminist, since the Illuminist, *ex hypothesi*, receives 'lights', whereas the Quietist does not even ask for them.[8] But he does not seem to face the fact that the Quietists themselves regarded people

[1] *Maximes des saints*, no. 13.
[2] Molinos, op. cit. i. 5, iii. 7.
[3] Dudon, *Michel Molinos*, p. 22.
[4] Condemned propositions, no. 9.
[5] *Autobiography*, ii. 8.
[6] *Spiritual Torrents*, p. 116.
[7] Dudon, op. cit., p. 16.
[8] Op. cit. xi. 333.

like St. Gertrude as, in this sense, Illuminists. The Quietists themselves claimed to be teaching a new doctrine, not merely handing on an old one; and they supported their claim by calling their *oraison* a way of darkness, in contrast, not with 'Illuminism', but with the 'Illuminative Way', as it is described and recommended by the spiritual authors.

I must be pardoned if I give at some length the evidence that is to be found for this view. At the beginning of the *Spiritual Torrents* Madame Guyon distinguishes between three classes of souls—all of them, we are expressly told, 'converted'. The first class remains content with meditation, 'or even works of charity'.[1] The third class goes by Madame Guyon's way, the passive way of faith.[2] In between these comes the second class, which follows what she calls 'the passive way of light' or 'of sight'. *Numbers of saints who shine as stars in the Church have never passed this limit.* Such characters are 'the wonder and admiration of men. God bestows upon them gifts upon gifts, graces upon graces, visions, revelations, inward voices, ecstasies, ravishments, etc.' Not that they are merely his spoiled children; they have heavy crosses and temptations, but these temptations 'are thrust back vigorously, these crosses are borne bravely; they even desire more of them; they are all flame and fire, enthusiasm and love'.[3] Is it possible to doubt that this would be a true portrait of St. Theresa? Is it altogether fanciful to suggest that it may have been *meant* for a portrait of St. Theresa?

Observe that these souls of the second way talk all the language of mysticism.

> They make use of the same terms—of death, loss of self, annihilation etc.; and it is quite true that they die in their own way, that they are annihilated and lose themselves, for often their natural sensibilities are lost or suspended in their seasons of devotion; they even lose the habit of making use of them. Thus these souls are passive, but they have light, and love, and strength in themselves; they like to retain something of their own, it may be even their virtues, but in so delicate a form that only the Divine eye can detect it. . . . What must be done with them, then, to lead them out of this way?[4]

It is clear that Madame Guyon thought her own way best, although the 'way of lights' was that trodden by the saints; the way of faith was for a small *élite* of souls, to the world's eye quite undistinguished.[5]

[1] *Spiritual Torrents*, p. 4. [2] Ibid., p. 21. [3] Ibid., pp. 14–16.
[4] Ibid., p. 18. [5] *Autobiography*, ii. 8.

But in God's eyes (we are consistently led to conclude) so much the worse for the saints if they disagreed with Madame Guyon.

'What must be done with them, then, to lead them out of this way?'—are we really to suppose that she offered better advice to people who already followed the same way as the saints? She did, indeed. We have proof of it, in the way she brought up her own director, Père Lacombe. He had, she explains, been following a mistaken course; he had been accustomed to direct souls who had rare gifts, visions, revelations, and interior voices. Thus he was unable to realize the utter nakedness of the soul which is lost in God —was not, in fact, quite as much impressed by Madame Guyon as he should have been. He did not understand the difference there is between mediated communications, like those made to the saints, and the immediate communications of the Word in the soul—the soul of Madame Guyon. We ought to pass beyond these mediated utterances to the speech of the Word himself, which is nothing other than a Silence, ineffable and continually eloquent.[1]

She had not had this doctrine, I think, from the tradition of Quietism. Molinos, with all his dislike of those sensible consolations which are sometimes granted to beginners, had no contempt for visions or ecstasies; he writes of them with enthusiasm in the fifteenth chapter of his third book, when we have come to the end of all the trials. No, I think Madame Guyon was taught by her own experience. In all the three volumes of her life, there is very little suggestion of actual miracle, and the warnings she sometimes receives are given her in ordinary dreams. As for her knowledge of supernatural things—she instances her complete knowledge of the conversation between our Lord and St. John at the Last Supper—these things are not exactly revealed to her; 'mes intelligences n'étaient pas des lumières, mais des intelligences d'expérience'.[2] We shall have to consider the meaning of this curious phrase in the next chapter but one. No, Madame Guyon had not had the experiences of the saints, therefore there must be something higher than the experiences of the saints. It was no vulgar question of fox and grapes; she really believed that God had shown a special predilection for her, and the explanation given was the only explanation possible. Visions, revelations, and ecstasies *hinder* the process of losing yourself in God.[3] When you have really lost yourself in God, your whole

[1] Ibid. iii. 1. [2] Ibid. ii. 22. [3] Ibid. i. 10.

life is an ecstasy, which lasts all the time, with no trace of violence or of variation.[1]

We may pause here for a moment to consider a curious contrast. Readers of Madame Guyon's autobiography will rub their eyes when they find her describing the way of faith as her *petit sentier*.[2] It sounds like a blasphemous anticipation of that *petite voie* which was the message of another St. Theresa. Yet there is this in common between Madame Guyon and the Carmelite of Lisieux—neither of them claimed to have been greatly privileged, in life, with sensational marks of the Divine favour. Only there is a difference. To Sainte Thérèse it meant that of course she was just an ordinary soul, not like these great saints. Madame Guyon drew a different and (most of us will say) an equally inaccurate inference.

(vii) *In what Sense Quietism despised the Virtues*

We found St. Francis of Sales using language which at first sight seemed to imply a low estimate of the virtues. What he intended, in reality, to discourage was the pursuit of the virtues for their own sake, for the love of *having virtues of our own*. He had, perhaps, been influenced to some extent by Gagliardi's *Breve Compendio*, a work to which Bremond devotes fifty of his most sympathetic pages.[3] It is unnecessary to give any full account of the book here; though it was put on the Index at the time of the Quietist troubles, it does not belong in any sense to the history of them, since it was published a century earlier. But it must be admitted that, in a considerable degree, it anticipates the attitude which the Quietists held about the place of the virtues in contemplative prayer. It was not enough that you should get rid of a proprietary interest in your own virtues; you got rid of the virtues themselves, in the sense of letting God act in you, instead of acting yourself. In the last stages of the process you got rid even of conformity to God's will, considered as an action of your own; and indeed in a sense got rid of the will itself, passing from conformity with God to transformation into God. It is not to be wondered at that Camus, Bérulle, and Binet, Gagliardi's French interpreters, occasionally had to tone down his sentiments, or even, for greater safety, to expurgate them. It was lucky, perhaps, for Camus that he was not called upon to defend them against the dialectic of a Bossuet. Gagliardi had assimilated the

[1] *Spiritual Torrents*, p. 126. [2] *Autobiography*, ii. 11. [3] Op. cit. xi *init.*

thought of Isabella Bellinzaga more thoroughly than Fénelon ever assimilated Madame Guyon's.

It must be admitted that Madame Guyon's language on this subject needed some interpreting. She did not often give such a handle to her critics as when she wrote 'Que l'on ne me parle plus de l'humilité; les vertus ne sont pas pour moi'.[1] It may even be conjectured that she had imbibed something of Gagliardi's own spirit, though doubtless—for his work did not long survive—at second hand. Thus, the third degree of spoliation involves losing not only facility for the exercise of the virtues, but the virtues themselves. Not that we really fall into sin, but we are overwhelmed with the recognition of our sinfulness.[2] At a later stage the soul finds devotion and prayer taken away from it; 'it must lose not only all prayer, every gift of God, but God himself to all appearance (that is, so far as he was selfishly possessed)', and lose him for ever. 'All facility for good, all active virtue, are taken from it.' 'Formerly, whole days were spent in the visitation of the sick, often even against natural inclination; such works as these can be practised no longer.'[3] We gather from her autobiography that this is the record of a personal experience.[4] At the highest stage of all, that of immobility, the soul 'has no desire to procure the glory of God, leaving it to God to procure his own glory'; it is sanctified, not 'by the practice of virtues, but by the Lord himself' as dwelling in it.[5] Like Gagliardi, she speaks the language of deiformity, which is not the language of the schools. You may see her attitude from one point of view, with Bremond's eyes, as a sort of pedantic piety; from another point of view, with Bossuet's eyes, you may see it as rank blasphemy. But did these things need saying at all? Those who experience such refinements of spirituality will not need to be told about them; we others, who still trudge on in less advanced ways, derive nothing from the lesson except a weariness of virtue, and a scruple that we are perhaps guilty of a false attachment to it.

These speculations had figured in the condemnation of Molinos. He was condemned for saying that no contemplative ought to practise inward virtues in the true sense, because that would mean conscious action on the part of the soul; 'we have to lose the virtues'.[6] But this was not enough to put Fénelon on his guard, and his

[1] *Rélation*, vi. [2] *Spiritual Torrents*, pp. 79 sqq. [3] Ibid., p. 97.
[4] *Autobiography*, i. 21. [5] Ibid. iii. 8 and 10. [6] Condemned propositions, no. 31.

attempts to justify Madame Guyon on this point led to the censure of four propositions which Camus would probably have found edifying. You cannot tell the world that 'les saints mystiques ont exclus de l'état des âmes transformées, les pratiques de vertu'[1] without inviting misconception. Madame Guyon wrote the *Torrents* for private reading, and under the *afflatus* of the prophetess; Fénelon had undertaken to produce a carefully reasoned work which would publicly dissociate him from the false views with which she was credited. How few great preachers consider beforehand the deadly effect upon literature of scissors and paste!

Were the Quietists, by habit, less virtuous than their neighbours? Not Malaval certainly, not Fénelon. The worst that could be said against them as a group was that they seemed to attach less importance to bodily mortification than their rivals at Port Royal. Malaval does insist rather strongly on the idea that spiritual mortifications are more effective, and even suggests that extreme self-denial in outward things is an old-fashioned remedy.[2] And Madame Guyon will have the senses treated less rigorously when the soul has reached the stage of spiritual death.[3] 'Tout cela est passé pour lui. Tout est rendu nouveau, et c'est encore une grande faute que font les personnes de bonne volonté, qui demeurent toute leur vie attachés là, sans laisser ce travail par une parfaite indifférence.'[4] It is not clear whether it was only for the perfect, or for souls generally, that Molinos said: 'Voluntary mortifications are burdensome and unprofitable; they must be abandoned.'[5]

But the sinister association which the name of Quietism had for the men of its own day was not the result of this frigidity towards the virtues; it arose, rather, from the Quietist attitude on the subject of temptations. The mystics have left us in no doubt that the way to contemplation is a difficult one; not so much because it calls for great effort, as because it involves great suffering. If the soul is to be purified it must be purified in God's way, by what seems a cruel discipline of dryness, of darkness, of desolation, of inward privations unimaginable to those who have not experienced them. With the Quietists the thing becomes a kind of obsession. All through Madame Guyon's autobiography you are made to feel that her

[1] Condemned propositions, nos. 18–21.
[2] *Simple Method*, p. 177.
[3] *Spiritual Torrents*, p. 93.
[4] *Autobiography*, i. 11.
[5] Condemned propositions, no. 38.

frequent illnesses, her imprisonments, the long campaign of obloquy which she encountered, were nothing compared with the inward crosses which she was called upon, by God's own dispensation, to endure. And some chapters of the *Spiritual Guide*, especially the fifth chapter of Book III, give a really terrifying account of what Molinos calls (and Madame Guyon also called) 'the spiritual martyrdom'. Among these inward trials, Molinos is continually reminding us, are temptations to sin. 'Your invisible enemies will persecute you with scruples, with lustful suggestions, with unclean thoughts', and so on.[1] Our Lord allows us to be assailed by 'many thoughts against the faith, horrible temptations, violent and troublesome suggestions of impatience, pride, gluttony, lust, anger, blasphemy, cursing, and despair'.[2] 'You will experience in yourself . . . horrible desolations, unceasing and teasing suggestions of evil, violent temptations of the enemy. . . . You will see yourself abandoned and exposed to feelings of impatience, anger, rage, blasphemy and disorderly appetites.'[3] So Madame Guyon describes her 'state of privation'; she had 'les sentiments de tous les péchés, sans les commettre cependant'.[4]

In such times of affliction it is the doctrine of the *Spiritual Guide* that 'God will value your peace and resignation more, than if you formed good resolutions'.[5] The secret was to persevere in the prayer of faith and take no notice of the temptations. The only remedy was 'to be silent, to suffer, and to preserve patience, quietly and resignedly'.[5] And the soul did not emerge from this nightmare of dereliction to find peace and union with God. It achieved peace and union with God in the midst of its trials; you might compare it to a mountain, with clouds hanging about its lower slopes while its peak was bathed in sunlight. For the temptations have their seat in the lower part of the soul, in its faculties; the apex of the soul remains undisturbed by them.[6] This separation between the two halves of the soul becomes so marked that at times you would think you were possessed by the devil, who rages against your director and sometimes *uses your tongue* to cast reproaches at him.[7] This last is the only passage in the *Spiritual Guide* which implies the possibility of *an exterior action*, sinful in itself, being consistent with the state of contemplation. As we know, in his recantation he admitted having taught the doctrine privately, and he was accused of acting on it.

[1] *Spiritual Guide*, i. 8. [2] Ibid. 10. [3] Ibid. iii. 4. [4] *Autobiography*, i. 224.
[5] *Spiritual Guide*, i. 11. [6] Ibid. iii. 21. [7] Ibid. ii. 11.

We must return later to the history, and to the baffling personality, of Michael Molinos. What I am concerned to point out here is once more that the Quietists, judged at their best, end up by extinguishing that freedom of the spirit which they set out to assert. Your admirer of the solid virtues tells his penitents that if a thought (say) of despair occurs to them while they are praying, they must break off at once and make an act of confidence in God, to dispel the blasphemous intruder. With some, it may be good advice; with others, perhaps with many, it only leads to scruple and to endless distractions. Thereupon a St. Francis of Sales offers a different treatment; the thought, after all, is only a kind of shadow at the back of the mind; would it not be better to take no notice and kill it by neglect? The treatment is successful, and hundreds of souls find relief from their scruples in this gentler counsel. What must the Quietist do but proclaim that nobody may ever stop to parley with distracting half-temptations of this kind, in his prayer or out of it; to reflect on them, if not actually sinful, is at best infidelity to your grace. And so the shackle is riveted, as in Stevenson's fable, to the other foot; fresh scruples are bred, and the unwelcome influences are strengthened in the mind by our very eagerness to be rid of them. And the freedom of the spirit has gone.

(viii) *Bossuet and the Mystics*

Bossuet, in a famous passage of which he learned to repent, alluded to Fénelon as 'the Montanus of a new Priscilla'. With all deference to the unquiet ghost of the Abbé Bremond,[1] I think Fénelon made rather heavy weather of it. There is, after all, a certain analogy between Montanism and Quietism. In the earliest age of the Church 'prophecy' was a recognized phenomenon. We do not know what was the precise scope of the prophetic activity; but it is clear that, side by side with the sacramental life from which Christians drew, then as now, their unconscious nourishment, a second form of prayer-life was to be found; one which aimed at holding commerce with the supernatural without material symbols, without liturgical forms and ceremonies. The Spirit breathed where he would, through uncovenanted channels. Prophecy died hard, and would perhaps have lived longer if the 'sect of the Cataphrygians' had not contrived to bring it into discredit.

[1] *Apologie pour Fénelon*, p. 257.

But if the external manifestations of it no longer echoed in Christian assemblies, the gift, the instinct some have for a conscious and (if a suspect word may be used for once) an experimental commerce with the unseen, was not lost; it went on underground. Clement of Alexandria rationalized it; it only found its fated expression in the writings, perhaps of the fifth century, which were long ascribed to St. Denys. His memory remained green through the centuries, an oasis in that arid wilderness of speculative controversy; the stream had disappeared underground, to spring up again, as if unbidden, in the mystical authors of the later Middle Ages. Beghard and Anabaptist enthusiasm drove the world back to rationalism—mirages, that brought an ill name on the oases. But just before and all through the seventeenth century, as we have seen, the mystical genius of the Christian religion came to the surface again; the pools were filled with water. Mysticism became, once more, a familiar feature of Christendom; to some minds, a peril. And there were dangerous tendencies in it, which offered to break out in flood as the *Grand Siècle* drew to its close. Quietism, with its plausible exaggerations, its pedantic restatements, of the mystical doctrine, clamoured for, and incurred, condemnation. If mysticism had disappeared with Fénelon, as some think prophecy disappeared with Montanus, how much loss would the world have suffered? And how much would Bossuet have minded?

The former question we must leave undiscussed; it will be answered variously, as long as there is a variety in human temperaments. It is to the latter I would here address myself; are we to think of Bossuet as a friend of interior spirituality, who quarrelled only with what seemed to him a false tendency in it—Baxter rebuking the early Quakers? Or are we to think of him as a conscientious ecclesiastic, with a Philistine prejudice against all enthusiasm, true or false—Lavington rebuking John Wesley? Other enemies of Quietism we may write down unhesitatingly as belonging to the second class; Nicole, for example, and all the official Jansenist school with him. Has not Grégoire coolly assured us that 'Le mysticisme est à la saine théologie ce que furent l'astrologie à l'astronomie et l'alchimie à la chimie'?[1] But the attitude of Bossuet, making what allowance we will for advocacy, is something different. 'Mystique un matin, et jusqu'à l'excès, anti-mystique le soir' is Bremond's diagnosis of him.[2]

[1] *Histoire des sectes*, ii. 92. [2] Op. cit. viii. 182.

It is certain that the *États d'oraison* has been hailed before now as a manual of piety; Bossuet himself has been called a master of prayer by no less an authority than Père de Caussade. Yet we know that, at the time of the Issy conference, he had never read St. Francis of Sales. Bremond, in the last chapter of his *Apologie pour Fénelon*, seems to suggest that Bossuet studied the mystical writers to find material for pulverizing the Quietists, and was carried away by what he read. *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit*; it may be so. When you read the *États d'oraison*, and come across chapters 12–26 of the fifth book, you look up and rub your eyes. The peevish, captious tone of the nagging critic has suddenly disappeared; not a word is said about the *nouveaux mystiques*; not a line is quoted from them. You have, instead, an admirable treatment of the unselfconscious atmosphere in which (what seem to be) our best times of prayer are passed. In chapter 22 you have the mystic's interpretation of Ps. lxxii. 21, 'I have become a beast of burden in thy sight'; the same passage which was used by Molinos himself[1] and has splendidly inspired the doctrine of Père Grou. Then, in chapter 27, Bossuet resumes, 'J'oserai pourtant prononcer . . .', and you are back in the stale fumes of controversy. Was Saul also among the prophets?

I do not pretend to solve the inconsistency; if I were given to the methods of higher criticism, I should boldly pronounce that Bossuet, conscious of his own inadequacy, had induced a friend, Tronson or some other, to write in the chapters for him. It is certain that elsewhere he writes as if the whole notion of contemplative prayer were foreign to his thought. He insists on treating the mystic's application to God's presence as if it meant singling out one *conception* of the Divine nature and discoursing on that notion with your intellect, to the exclusion of all others; an obvious misunderstanding of the whole mystical approach.[2] And this was the impression Madame Guyon carried away from her interviews with him, that he judged everything by cold reason, and was incapable of understanding the *voie de foi simple*.[3] It is certain that he was hopelessly at sea over the difference between infused and acquired contemplation, misrepresenting both Molinos and St. John of the Cross in their treatment of the subject.[4]

[1] *Spiritual Guide*, iii. 20. [2] *États d'oraison*, ii. 15, 20, 23. [3] *Autobiography*, iii. 14.
[4] *États d'oraison*, vii. 30; cf. Preliminary Admonition III to the *Spiritual Guide*; *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, ii. 13.

I am not sure that Bremond's attitude towards Bossuet did not harden from one volume to the next. Certainly in vol. xi, contrasting him with Père Archange, who wrote the *Abomination des abominations*, he is ready to write him down as an anti-mystic pure and simple.[1] It is only 'a strategic precaution' when *Mystici in tuto* pays compliments to Tauler, or even to St. John of the Cross; Bossuet had to claim them for his own side in the dispute, so that Fénelon might not have the monopoly of them. So much, says Bremond, we can learn from the Letters, even if we cannot read it between the lines of all the pamphlets. I confess that this was my own experience. In dealing with Fénelon's quotations from the mystics Bossuet is frankly embarrassed; when St. Theresa writes of being prepared to go to heaven or hell without murmuring, as God pleases, he can only suggest that these are 'fortes manières de parler, où l'on mêle le possible avec l'impossible'.[2] If Brother Laurence (author of the little manual which tells us how to practise the presence of God) thought for years that he was doomed to perdition, he did so *en pleine securité*. He knew really that it was impossible, because God had given him a revelation to that effect; it can only have been a sort of uncomfortable feeling, both for him and for St. Francis of Sales. If the same Brother Laurence tells us that in later life he never cared about heaven or hell, we must understand him to mean that these were not his principal motives in loving God. If he wished he could hide his good deeds from God, so that they might not be rewarded, this was *une amoureuse folie*, like that of Blessed Angela of Foligno (he writes, *Foligny*) when she tells God that though she should be damned, she will go on doing penance for her sins.[3] The reasons given are doubtless excellent, but you cannot help feeling that if Bossuet had been consulted by these authors, he would have dissuaded them from publication. Even when St. Francis, true to the teaching of the whole French School of piety, bids the soul unite itself with the dispositions of the Infant Christ, and allow itself to be carried blindfold by Providence, we are warned that 'les écrivains qui, comme ce saint, sont pleins d'affections et de sentimens, ne veulent pas être toujours pris au pied de la lettre'.[4] *A la bonne heure!* as Bremond would say; and may we not allow the same liberty of speech to the Quietist authors?

[1] Op. cit. xi. 95.
[2] *États d'oraison*, ix. 3.
[3] *Les Passages éclaircis*, iv, ix, x, xiii.
[4] *États d'oraison*, viii. 20.

Not at all; when these authors tone down their meaning by a word of qualification, describing the contemplative state as *comme permanent* instead of simply *permanent*, we should pay no great attention to it. What is sauce for St. Francis is not sauce for poor Malaval.[1]

In his letters Bossuet makes little attempt to hide these feelings. Writing to the Bishop of Mirepoix about the act of perfect abandonment, he claims that 'les esprits les plus solides, comme saint Augustin, ont atteint la perfection' without making these quite useless acts; but, since other saints have made them, 'il faut les réduire à une explication légitime'. And he goes on: 'Pour le bien-heureux Jean de la Croix, je n'ai rien à dire, sinon que je ne le crois pas assez autorisé, pour faire de ses sentiments un motif pour approuver dans une ordonnance.'[2] Poor Bossuet! St. John had not been declared a Doctor of the Church when the *États d'oraison* were in the press. Of Camus, favourite disciple of St. Francis, he writes: 'C'est un auteur si confus, et dont la théologie est si peu précise, qu'il n'y a point à s'inquiéter de ce qu'il dit.'[3] In general, 'on ne peut pas prendre pour règle, ni pour excuse, les expressions outrés de *la plupart* des mystiques; autrement on justifieroit par cette méthode Molinos et tous les Quiétistes'.[4] If Bossuet does not, like his nephew, hope that the French bishops will reduce 'the mystics' to the rank they deserve,[5] he foresees the danger of the truth being obliterated by 'a cabal of mystics, dominated by women'[6]—you can see that 'mystic' is hardly a compliment in his vocabulary.

Here, then, is Bossuet, the typical churchman of his time, wondering if contemplation does not give more trouble than it is worth, half-inclined to root up the wheat with the tares. It will be seen that the Quietists laboured under a formidable handicap. They were trying to make good their position as ultra-mystics, when mysticism itself had not achieved a secure foothold. No wonder, then, that it was difficult to persuade them of their unorthodoxy; no wonder they read hostility to their own contemplative methods as hostility to contemplation generally. We shall not understand the attitude of the authors we are now to consider until we realize that they thought of themselves as the champions, not of some eccentric speculation, but of a truth widely held and honoured in Christendom. So it is, to

[1] *États d'oraison*, i. 28. [2] Correspondence, no. 35. [3] Ibid., no. 346.
[4] Ibid., no. 399. [5] Ibid., no. 445. [6] Ibid., no. 428.

be sure, with most heretics. But the Quietists had the more excuse for their want of perception, in that the mystics, as we have heard Bossuet complaining, do not always express their meaning in terms of arithmetical precision. The protagonists of Quietism believed that the opposition they met with was the same opposition which had treated St. Theresa as a madwoman.

XIII

MALAVAL, PETRUCCI, MOLINOS

(i) *François Malaval*

NOWHERE does Bossuet show up worse than in his treatment of Malaval. Malaval's book, it is true, had been condemned (in the Italian translation) by a decree published in 1688, but he had submitted to the decision with all humility, and had kept silence. To associate his name with that of Molinos, making no distinction between them, was unfair; to ridicule a blind man for his scanty reading of theology was ungenerous. Nor, in fact, do Bossuet's criticisms of him always bear inspection. When the Pastoral Charge issued in 1695 to the diocese of Meaux condemned his book in the French edition (it was not put on the Index till 1703), Malaval wrote a letter to the French bishops defending his orthodoxy; Bossuet took no notice of it at all. From a man who spent so much ink in trying to refute the *explications* of Fénelon this was a studied insult.

Malaval's only published work, the *Pratique facile pour élever l'âme à la contemplation*, has recently become accessible in an English translation; both introduction and footnotes are concerned to vindicate him from the charge of Quietism, but without defining the term. An equally sympathetic and much fuller account of him is to be found in the volume of Bremond's *Histoire littéraire*. That he has, nevertheless, a place in the history of the Quietist movement is shown clearly enough in Père Dudon's life of Molinos. Would his writings ever have been condemned if there had been no Molinos? It is perhaps unlikely; they have little in common with the *Maxims of the Saints*. But Malaval was fatally loyal to the Falconi tradition over the doctrine of the Single Act. He had drawn no dangerous corollaries from it, but he was full of its terminology; and that was enough to condemn him, in days when the name of mystic had almost become a reproach.

Malaval's life was so uneventful that there is no need to give details of it here. He was born in 1627, and received an excellent

education, in spite of his blindness, from the Fathers of the French Oratory at Marseilles. The first part of the *Simple Method* was published in 1664; that he added a Second Treatise in 1669 was due to the encouragement he received from so safe an authority on mystical matters as Cardinal Bona. Both treatises were in dialogue form, after the fashion set by St. Francis of Sales. They were translated into Italian in 1669 and 1672 respectively, and seem to have enjoyed an immense popularity in that form; the mystical tradition was firmly established in Italy long before the appearance (in 1675) of Molinos's *Guida Spirituale*. He enjoyed the intimacy not only of theologians but of scientists, and held court as a kind of prophet in Marseilles, where Madame Guyon visited him in the course of her wanderings. He died in 1719, patient under his disappointments and universally beloved.

His age had an itch for controversy; and the complaints which he makes, a little shrewishly perhaps, in the introduction to the Second Treatise, prove that even so placid a life as Malaval's could not escape altogether from its influence. This was the more unfortunate, because it led him, like other mystics of the period, to speak slightingly here and there of meditation as practised by the Ignatian method. Quietism, it must be admitted, like Jansenism was to some extent the author of its own troubles; it was the aggressor, not seldom, in the war of spiritualities. There was nothing aggressive about Malaval; but the critics of contemplation had ruffled his calm,[1] and he retaliated. In theory he held that it mattered little whether you went to God by way of meditation or by way of contemplation; it was simply a matter of *attrait*. But his sense of injury makes itself felt. To forbid the prayer of simple regard is to do an injury to God and man. Those who write scornfully about contemplation show clearly that they possess no charity—their meditation has done them no good. Considerations, affections, petitions—'they are always making demands of God, and they abuse those who demand nothing but God. They make long speeches to Jesus Christ, but they never listen to hear Jesus Christ speak', and so on.[2] It is a false form of self-abasement for us, who are created in the image of God, to 'leave God and retain the image' by trying to think adequately about God.[3] Those who meditate are compared to pilgrims who travel first class when they make a pilgrimage to Loretto or

[1] *Simple Method*, pp. 64, 65. [2] Ibid., p. 181. [3] Ibid., p. 127.

Compostela; they carry with them in their luggage 'so many acts, so many considerations about their spiritual poverty, that they are often neither really poor, nor really detached'.[1] A soul which has once entered on the way of contemplation must never read spiritual books with an eye to meditating on them; that would be an infidelity towards one's grace.[2] All this disparagement of meditation is not mere tilting at windmills; Malaval is writing of his own contemporaries, of directors who led their penitents in a way of prayer which differed from his own. We can share his impatience with their narrow-mindedness, but it is difficult to feel that his criticism was not sometimes exaggerated; certainly it was unwise.

It is not until we have verified the three conditions required by St. John of the Cross[3] that Malaval would encourage us to leave off formal meditation.[4] It is explicitly the prayer of simple regard, 'ordinary contemplation', as he calls it, that he would have us adopt instead;[5] not the prayer of quiet. Infused contemplation supervenes, if it is to be granted us, without any further effort of our own; it is not necessary that we should be able to distinguish it from acquired contemplation,[6] although we can make a moral conjecture that it is present.[7] Curiously, he suggests that the two kinds of contemplation can exist simultaneously in the same soul, like faith and reason.[8] He admits that contemplative prayer does not exercise itself with the different attributes of God,[9] but this is hardly to be wondered at when 'the whole soul is recollected in adoration of God present';[10] nor does he, as Bossuet thought,[11] make the mistake of supposing that God is really different from his own attributes.[12] And he energetically repudiates the idea that, as we advance in contemplation, the Sacred Humanity has no further meaning for us; it is *through* the Sacred Humanity that we are approaching God all the time, although we do not 'make ourselves attractive labyrinths of little devotions' to eke out our times of prayer.[13] In a word, Malaval's doctrine does not seem calculated, in itself, to put his reader on a false spiritual track; though it is easy to see how it plays into the hands of Molinos, and how easily it might be exploited by a public greedy for new forms of spirituality, like the Italian public of

[1] *Simple Method*, p. 212. [2] Ibid., p. 214. [3] *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, ii. 13.
[4] *Simple Method*, p. 53. [5] Ibid., p. 187. [6] Ibid., p. 114. [7] Ibid., p. 117.
[8] Ibid., p. 119. [9] Ibid., p. 123. [10] Ibid., p. 223. [11] *États d'oraison*, ii. 22.
[12] *Simple Method*, p. 132. [13] Ibid., p. 151.

Molinos's day. 'Leave Jesus Christ to *pray in you*, Philothea, and, associating yourself *once for all* with him praying, do not ask yourself *by continual reflections*, and do not tell him, how you pray; you will pray better in conjunction with him than separated from him. But *you do separate yourself from him*, if during your prayers you make so many reflections on yourself.'[1] The words I have here picked out in italics might have passed without comment fifty years earlier; they were fuel of fire in the Rome of the sixteen-eighties.

Meanwhile, anybody who reads the *Pratique facile*, and then the *Spiritual Guide*, cannot fail to be struck by one significant contrast. Molinos, it must be repeated, contrives better than most spiritual authors to give you a *horrifying* picture of what the contemplative life involves. The first of his three books has for its heading: 'Of the darknesses, drynesses and temptations by which God purges the soul, and of interior recollection.' The second deals with obedience to a director, and even here the eleventh chapter unrolls a long pageant of miseries. The third book has twenty-two chapters, and of these the first ten are devoted to 'The spiritual martyrdoms, by which God purges the soul'. The soul that is left desolate 'seeing itself deserted by God, surrounded with temptations, with darkness, with difficulties, with afflictions, with troubles, with a hard discipline of dryness, tastes death at every moment in this its most heavy torment and terrible desolation, nor can it experience the least comfort, being in such affliction that its tortures seem nothing other than a long death, and a continual martyrdom'.[2] There are whole pages where you feel as if you had strayed, not into the *Obscure Night* but into the *Anatomy of Melancholy*. His message to the world is 'Yearn, hope, suffer and die unknown.'[3] All this paean of suffering, which finds a ready chorus in Madame Guyon, wakes no echo in Malaval. The blind prophet of Marseilles, bathed in the sweetness of interior recollection, seems to have found a back door into heaven.

The contrast gives rise to many considerations. But at the moment I am only concerned with one aspect of it. The Quietists were accused by their opponents of deliberately blurring the line which divides the prayer of simple regard from the prayer of quiet, active (or acquired) from passive (or infused) contemplation. Now it is possible to prefer that charge against Molinos. For it is the teaching of the mystics that the Dark Night of the Senses 'usually coincides

[1] Ibid. p. 153. [2] Op. cit. iii. 5. [3] Ibid. 10.

with the first degree of the prayer of quiet', and the Dark Night of the Spirit is 'a preparation for the prayer of union or the higher stages'.[1] Molinos, as we have seen, professes to be writing about a stage of active contemplation, before passive prayer has started. If, then, he uses (and exaggerates) the language used by St. John of the Cross about the purification which the soul must be prepared to meet in its course, he is using language which does not apply to his subject. And it was with some justification that a Segneri or a Bartoli accused him of trying to pitch-fork Tom, Dick, and Harry into the prayer of quiet, regardless of their dispositions. You cannot bring that charge against Malaval. He omits both the high lights and the dark shadows of Molinos's picture; he asks no more of the soul than a loving attention on God; promises it no more than a sense of steady peace in the pursuit of that exercise. You may call him an arm-chair mystic if you will, but you cannot mention him in the same breath with fanaticism.

Thus, when we are speaking of their doctrine, it is possible to draw a sharp line between the author of the *Guide* and the author of the *Simple Method*. But their fates were interlinked. In this imperfect world a man cannot stand by himself, armed against criticism by his own honesty of purpose; we creep together for warmth, ally ourselves for mutual defence with other men whose opinions overlap, but do not coincide, with ours. Malaval was not a mere theorist; he was a party man. The issues in the struggle were badly defined; he could not see that Molinos was defending untenable conclusions, he could only see that Segneri, with all the modesty of his professions, was the enemy of mysticism. He wrote to his friend Pastrizio, a theologian at the Propaganda, in triumph over Segneri's defeat: 'May it please God to bring much good out of this controversy; to save contemplation, to glorify the holy doctors who have written about it, and to sanctify their adversaries.'[2] Yet he had, even then, premonitions of trouble, and was soliciting protection at Rome for his own works.[3] He stood or fell with Molinos; and his repudiation of all the views for which Molinos was condemned could not save his writings, though it might save his personal credit. The spirit of faction rules in our natures; it had involved this gentle recluse in the ruin of a cause not his own.

[1] Mgr Farges, *Mystical Phenomena*, p. 196.
[2] Dudon, op. cit., p. 139. [3] Ibid., p. 140.

(ii) *A Quietist in the Curia*

A more interesting biographical study might be attempted, if we were to trace in full the fortunes of Pier Matteo Petrucci, Bishop of Jesi and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. But he is essentially a subordinate figure, and we must content ourselves, here, with a note on his life, merely in illustration of his doctrines. He was born at Jesi, near Ancona, in 1636, and became a priest of the Oratory in 1661. Père Dudon shows that his early works were written, though some of them were not published, before 1675; he owes no literary debt, therefore, to the *Guida Spirituale*.[1] But it is certain that he corresponded with Molinos about the very question which chiefly led to Molinos's downfall,[2] and when Segneri wrote his attack on the *Guida Spirituale* it was Petrucci who replied, in a book on *Mystical Contemplation*. About the same time he became Bishop of Jesi, and remained in high favour at Rome, where his patron, Cardinal Cibo, was then Secretary of State. In 1686, when Molinos was already under examination, Petrucci was quite unexpectedly made a Cardinal; Pasquin made merry over it, and it was freely conjectured that the hat was bestowed to save its wearer from the Inquisition.[3] But a scandal caused by the behaviour of a disciple, reported to Rome in the next year, suggested a closer examination of the new Cardinal's doctrines. His books were submitted to the Holy Office, and fifty-four propositions were censured; at the end of the year he retracted all these opinions privately, in the presence of Cardinal Cibo. The Pope, who had made difficulties throughout, would allow the matter no further publicity; but in the course of the next month all Petrucci's books were put on the Index. Alexander VIII suspended him from the administration of his diocese; but with the election of Innocent XII he became a personage of some minor importance in Rome. 'J'oublie de vous dire', the Abbé Bossuet writes to his uncle in October 1697, 'que le Cardinal Petrucci a dit que le livre de M. de Cambrai étoit très-mauvais et insoutenable.'[4] The operation needed to extract the beam from his eye had been thoroughly successful. He died at Montefalco in 1701, and is described on his tomb-stone as *pietate et doctrina ornatissimus*.[5]

[1] Ibid., p. 61. [2] Ibid., p. 214.

[3] Bigelow, *Molinos the Quietist*, p. 54. Pasquin wrote 'Ostrum Petrucius, vincla Molinos habet'.

[4] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 167. [5] Dudon, op. cit., p. 248.

What was this doctrine? If it may be judged by the fifty-four condemned propositions, it was the quintessence of Quietism. The consideration of particular mysteries is, for souls called to higher prayer, a snare of the devil (i). Our spirits must aspire towards the Divinity of our Lord as something higher than his Humanity (vi). Our model in the mystical life should be Nothing; Nothing did not ask God to begin the Creation (xi). The soul that has abandoned itself to God does not ask whether he loves it (xv). Perfect resignation reduces the soul to a state in which its only activity is to know that God exists (xvi); God lives in it apart from it (*senza lei*), willing and choosing and refusing in it (xix). All that I can do actively to love God is a mere hindrance; I have given up my will, and so given up loving (*mi son privato dell' amore*) (xl). Do not reflect on yourself; Nothing never catches sight of itself (xlvi). Fear reflecting on yourself more than death or hell (xlviii). Until the soul gives up all its thoughts, knowledge, lights, discourses, conceits, images, it does not find or taste God, and is not united with him (liii). But these are random specimens of Petrucci's thought; propositions xxiii to xxxvii form a body of doctrine on a single subject, that of resisting temptations.

We have, curiously, Père Lacombe's testimony that Petrucci did not teach, as Molinos taught, the doctrine of non-resistance.[1] And indeed the twenty-third proposition does lay down, by way of preface, that the will (aided by grace) is our weapon for meeting temptations of every sort. But the fourteen propositions which follow all appear to support the opposite principle; the last two of them being so scandalous that they are worded in Latin instead of Italian, as if they were not the sort of thing you could safely leave lying about. It would be open to argument that some of these quotations apply only to scrupulous souls, which are apt to mistake temptations for sins. But did Petrucci ever make that claim? Unlike Fénelon, he does not seem to have complained that his judges had misrepresented him. And when we are told that a contemplative who falls into a rage with his friends, and thereupon utters blasphemy against God and the saints, is only the victim of an attack by demons (and consequently not to be blamed), it makes us raise our eyebrows over the good bishop's principles of direction (xxxi and xxxiv). The same applies to filthy utterances, and to worse; it is only our

[1] Dudon, op. cit., p. 210.

brute nature rising up to make war on the spirit; souls in this position must not regard themselves as guilty of sin (xxxvi and xxxvii). Is it altogether wonderful that the form of prayer which involved these questionable accompaniments was regarded with suspicion? The extraordinary thing is, that Petrucci should have proclaimed on the house-tops what Molinos whispered in the ear.

That Petrucci lived up (or rather down) to his principles does not appear. Early in the next century a vile scandal-monger retails the legend of fantastic immoralities connected with his name, but even this professional pornographer does not credit them.[1] It appears, however, that when the other Cardinals made inquiries about Petrucci's private life, the information received suggested that he had been guilty of mild indiscretions.[2] Meanwhile, it is fair to remember that a manuscript survives among the archives of Jesi in which his virtues are set out as those of a canonizable saint. Let us leave him, then, his *pietas*; we must be pardoned for questioning his *doctrina*.

(iii) *Molinos comes to Rome*

Few histories are more inaccessible to English readers than that of Michael Molinos. The only biography of him in our tongue seems to be a brochure of 125 pages, luxuriously produced, but quite innocent of scholarship. The author, John Bigelow, was an American journalist who had some success in diplomacy; it is difficult to know why he imposed this task on his own limited abilities, having evidently no knowledge either of Latin or of Italian. He calls Malaval Malvalle, and refers to the Italian translation of the *Simple Method* as the 'Oraziono de Pure Fede'; he represents his hero as a monk all through the book; he tells us that the Church canonized St. Theresa, St. Francis of Sales, and St. John of the Cross, though they taught as unqualified Quietism as Molinos and Madame Guyon, whom 'a few centuries later' it imprisoned, and Fénelon, 'whom it degraded'. It will be seen that the walks of history were not familiar to him, and his views are coloured by anti-Catholic prejudices hardly believable in a man so travelled. His book, now wholly forgotten, is only of interest because it gives you the myth current

[1] Bigelow, op. cit., p. 53 note.

[2] Dudon, op. cit., p. 59 note. The condemned propositions of Petrucci are given by Dudon (Appendix E).

in English-speaking countries on the subject of Molinos, and shows, by means of liberal footnotes, how that myth was built up. It depends chiefly on Gilbert Burnet, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, who travelled to Italy in 1685, and published the gossip he had picked up at street corners two years later at Rotterdam. This curiously misleading document was supplemented afterwards by three 'Letters from Italy', published anonymously at Cologne. Père Dudon makes no guess at their origin, but Grégoire[1] attributes them without hesitation to the well-known Swiss Protestant, Misson. If he is right, it is interesting to reflect that Bigelow's facts were mainly derived from the historian who told us the legend of the warming-pan, and from the sympathizer who gave credit to the Camisard miracles—we shall meet them later—in his *Théâtre sacré des Cévennes.*

For one Englishman who has come across this rarity of literature, there must be a thousand who have read *John Inglesant.* Incomparably more sympathetic to the spirit of the age he is dealing with, Shorthouse is equally erroneous on the facts—indeed, there can be little doubt that he used the same authorities. Lord Acton, in one of his letters to Mary Gladstone,[2] records his impressions of reading *John Inglesant* when it first came out, and lays his finger, off-hand, on some twenty historical inaccuracies in it. He points out, for example, that Inglesant returns from Italy after witnessing Molinos's condemnation in 1687 to find Charles II still reigning. Nor must the student seek to correct the impressions derived from Shorthouse by referring to the article on Molinos in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* The first sentence of this is twelve years out over the date of his birth, the second is seven years out over the date of his arrival in Rome; and the body of the article credits him (through the imaginativeness of the late Lord St. Cyres) with a far-reaching heterodoxy of which his bitterest enemies were unconscious.

Fortunately, in recent years the ill-documented history of the famous Spaniard has been written at last. Père Dudon, S. J., the author of *Le Quiétiste Espagnol Michel Molinos,* seems to have laid all the libraries of Spain and Italy under contribution in piecing together what can really be known, from contemporary sources,

[1] *Histoire des sectes,* ii. 106. Misson published a *Nouveau Voyage d'Italie* at The Hague in 1691 (Grand Larousse).

[2] Edited by Herbert Paul, p. 108.

about the man himself and the thing he stood for. Molinos was born, it seems, of peasant stock at Muniesa in Aragon in the month of June 1628.[1] He was educated by the Jesuits, and entered the secular priesthood in 1652. He took his doctorate, but there is nothing to suggest that he was a marked man in any way, except perhaps that he was chosen to represent, at Rome, the cause of Francis Simon, a priest of his own province who had died in the odour of sanctity. It was on this comparatively humble mission that he entered, at the very end of the year 1663, the city which was to be the scene of his triumph, and of his downfall.

For some reason, now beyond the reach of conjecture, he was relieved of his charge. The circumstance is chiefly interesting because it called forth a letter to his employers in Spain, which is one of the few personal documents that have come down to us from his pen. Père Dudon gives it in full.[2] After ten years of bitterness at Valencia and at Rome, only this was needed to crown his discredit. He had never wanted the commission; entreaties, remonstrances, compulsion, obedience had prevailed on him. God be praised for this humiliation, a rich treasure if only he uses it properly! At least he has never consulted his personal convenience; for several years he has been content to go without his pension. He has never asked for it; he was determined to work like Jacob for Rachel. Well, now he is free from any temptation to vain-glory; *bonum mihi quia humiliasti me*. No doubt it was a kindly artifice, to put about the story that he had asked to be relieved of his duties. But he prefers 'discredit and infamy' to the suspicion of having flinched in his task. He is astonished that his services, so zealously given, should have been replaced by those of an unknown Italian stranger, a married layman! But it must not be thought that he feels any resentment. Thank God, he has been preparing for this, months past, years past. . . . Then he goes on, in a somewhat calmer mood, to discuss the prospects of the cause.

We are not in a position to gauge the extent of Molinos's grievance. But I confess that I find in this curious outpouring a perceptible echo of that hysterical humility which meets you, everywhere, in the writings of Madame Guyon. It seems to have been a fault of

[1] Dudon, op. cit., p. 3. 'Molinos was of a noble family of Minozzi in Aragon . . ., where he was born December 21, 1627', is Bigelow's version of the affair.

[2] Ibid., pp. 18–21.

temperament with the Quietists—and I do not except Fénelon—that they could not take things quietly. Every slight, every set-back in their careers had to be dramatized and exclaimed over; they resign themselves to their loss not (as we should expect) with a pious shrug of the shoulders, but in a roaring ecstasy of self-abandonment. To desire martyrdom is, no doubt, an attitude worthy of the Christian. What is more questionable Christianity is to make so sure that you have found it.

Molinos was relieved of his commission, but not recalled. Perhaps in the hope of meeting further rebuffs, he stayed on at Rome, where he had now spent twelve years, and attained, already, a position of remarkable influence. From the first he had given his support, and before long he was giving his directions, to a confraternity of Spaniards living in Rome; that he imposed his own views on them may be inferred from the fact that, before long, he expelled a hundred of its members. He even wrote to Spain, warning the organizers of the same confraternity there to refuse these backsliders any opportunity of return.[1] With this nucleus, he seems to have gathered round him a vagrant congregation which followed him from church to church, wherever he said Mass, and waited for a sermon at the end of it. It was a peculiarity unwelcome to sacristans, but always he managed to find a suitable rendezvous; for two years the Jesuits lent him the hospitality of a chapel in their professed house.[2] He became the fashionable director of Rome. Was it his doctrine that won him that position, or his personality? The portrait reproduced as Père Dudon's frontispiece shows you a heavy jowl, an eye with something of a hunted look about it, a weak mouth, contrasting noticeably with the trap-like firmness of St. Cyran's.[3] Whatever the magnetism, the fact of his ascendancy is disputed neither by friend nor by foe. When Queen Christina, the devout eccentric who had renounced the throne of Sweden to become a Catholic, took him under her patronage—the date of this is not certain[4]—he was evidently at the top of the wave. The obscure doctor from Valencia had become a man to be reckoned with.

When or how he developed his principles of spirituality remains

[1] Dudon, op. cit., p. 17. [2] Ibid., p. 16. [3] See Bremond, op. cit. iv. 54.

[4] According to Bigelow, p. 41, he gave her a letter of introduction from the Archbishop of Palermo when he came to Rome (in 1663); she 'promptly' addressed to the Archbishop a letter dated 13 December 1681.

a mystery. From the earliest days of his sojourn in Rome, it appears that he said Mass without making any external gesture of preparation or of thanksgiving,[1] an ominous sign which was afterwards remembered. His first published work was a *Short Treatise on Frequent Communion*, produced in 1675. It belongs to a different controversy from that with which we are here concerned, although it had some minor repercussions on the history of Quietism. What is certain is that it can have done nothing to create bad feeling between Molinos and the Jesuits—the French Jesuits at any rate. It was more than thirty years since the appearance of Arnauld's *De la Fréquente Communion*, but Port Royal had not allowed the controversy to die, and Molinos's pamphlet (it is hardly more than that, only occupying seventy-five of the smallest possible pages) might have been written as a deliberate counterblast. There is the same formidable array of patristic quotations, all to the opposite purpose; the same considerations of reverence, &c., which Arnauld has adduced are examined and set aside. Small wonder that Quietism was not popular with Nicole.

Molinos's advocacy of frequent Communion is responsible for the main blunder about Quietism in *John Inglesant*. Shorthouse apparently mixed up this early essay with the *Spiritual Guide* itself; he represents 'the importance' of Molinos's doctrine as lying in the fact that 'he presses the point of frequent Communion'. This will mean (says Count Vespiriani) that 'the obligation of coming always to the priest, as the minister of the sacrament of penance, before every Communion, cannot long be insisted upon. . . . I cannot tell you what a blessing I anticipate for mankind should this method be once allowed'.[2] Bigelow is less reticent about the nature of this blessing; 'if the confessional with its perquisites and its precious secrets was to be closed, how was the Church to be supported? How were they to know the secrets of foreign cabinets?' and more to the same effect.[3] Unfortunately, this ingenious reading of history cannot be sustained. Molinos lays it down quite clearly that frequent Communion is a practice which can only be adopted with the permission of your confessor;[4] and although he was condemned for teaching that the more advanced souls must be excused from confession, being quite unable to make one,[5] he also taught, as we have

[1] Dudon, op. cit., p. 16. [2] pp. 271, 272, in the 1933 edition.
[3] Op. cit., p. 18. [4] *Spiritual Guide*, ii. 13. [5] Condemned proposition no. 60.

seen, that these souls ought to have directors, whose voice they must obey in preference to the voice of God.

The *Spiritual Guide* itself was published in the same year, 1675, first in Spanish, then in Italian,[1] with a formidable array of testimonials by way of introduction. One of those who thus helped to launch it on its career was a Jesuit, Father Martin de Esparza. It ran through twenty editions in six years. In the course of these chapters we have already encountered much of its doctrine; and what remains to be said about this will be most conveniently studied under another section. As to the form of the book, it makes no attempt to allure the reader by literary artifice; it has no wealth of illustration, for example, such as you find in Malaval's *Simple Method.* The copy that has been in my hands is bound up with an edition of the *Imitation of Christ*,[2] and I am strongly inclined to think that Molinos used the *Imitation* as his model. The ground he covers is very small; what he tells us, in effect, is that we ought to abandon ourselves to God's will by practising the prayer of simple regard, neglecting every other devotional resource, and aiming at complete indifference to all we may endure, whether it comes from God, from man, or from the devil. We are to choose for ourselves as little as possible, to be like wax in the hands of a director. Only in the second half of the third book does the author concern himself with mystical states of prayer properly so called; and that so jejunely that it is impossible to tell whether he even claims to be speaking from his own experience. I suspect that he has pirated some of his matter, here, from other authors; it seems strange that he should represent *gustus* as the effect of 'meditating' on our Lord's Passion, a marked deviation from his usual vocabulary.[3] On the whole, however, in spite of some debt to Falconi, the *Guide* is an original work—unlike the treatise on Frequent Communion, a good deal of which is borrowed material.[4]

Molinos's inhumanity as an author makes it difficult to guess what was the secret of his popularity as a director. It looks as if the doctrine, rather than the man, must have been responsible. Père Dudon prints two letters of advice addressed to a certain Don Sancho, who had been dismissed from his post in Sicily—almost the only documents of the kind available.[5] He infers that the writer had a method of

[1] Bigelow reverses the order, p. 4.
[2] *Manuductio Spiritualis*, &c., translated into Latin by Hermann Franck (Leipzig, 1687).
[3] *Spiritual Guide*, iii. 15. [4] Dudon, op. cit., p. 29. [5] Ibid. pp. 84–8.

direction which was 'capable de discrétion et de souplesse'; I must own that I find them both sanctimonious and commonplace. Did Don Sancho really need to be informed that 'It is the greatest happiness and glory of a married man to have an excellent wife'? Could he not have discovered for himself that 'The nobleman ought to marry one of the nobility, the plebeian a plebeian. If they are not thus properly matched, the inferior party will be discontented, and the superior party will be reduced to despair'? After a good many reflections of this kind Molinos assures his correspondent that he has written as the Lord inspired him; let us leave it at that.

(iv) *The Man and the Movement*

Whatever his qualifications, Molinos had by now become something more than the director of numerous individual souls; he was the head of a party. And it would appear that he claimed this headship by right of inspiration, signing his letters 'In the light of the Most High', or 'Under the direction of the Holy Spirit'. Like St. Cyran, he had the tricks of the hierophant; like him, when asked to undertake the direction of a soul, he would insist upon waiting for several days before making a decision, so as to find out God's will.[1] Did he then, like St. Cyran, create a party? Or did he find it ready-made? It is perhaps interesting to notice that D'Angeau, the father of French diarism, describes him as 'wishing to become the chief of a new sect called the Quietists';[2] a phrase which, if pressed, would imply that the sect was there before him. And indeed, there are scattered indications which suggest that he may, in certain milieux, have found the soil prepared for his propaganda.

We need not, perhaps, pay much attention to the sporadic outbreaks of half-schismatic spirituality which caused trouble in the earlier part of the century. The Pelagins at Brescia, condemned in 1657, seem to have been far from numerous—600 is the figure mentioned;[3] although it is perhaps interesting to notice that Brescia was the first centre in which Quietist meetings, properly so called, were forbidden, twenty-five years afterwards.[4] At Osimo a priest called Lombardi had been under suspicion as early as 1641, preaching a system which discouraged vocal prayer and mortification; in the dioceses of Alba and Savona, a doctrine of 'pure faith' invited

[1] Document cited by Dudon, op. cit., p. 25; cf. p. 194 above.
[2] Cited in Upham, p. 268. [3] Dudon, op. cit., p. 45. [4] Ibid., p. 161.

proceedings in the years 1671 and 1676.[1] But these rare incidents seem confined to the northern part of Italy, always susceptible to Reformation influences. It is perhaps more pertinent to notice, with Père Dudon,[2] the dissemination of earlier Quietist treatises in Italian, before Molinos had made his name. Falconi's *Alphabet* was translated in 1660, before Molinos came to Italy at all; Malaval, we have seen, was accessible in an Italian version as early as 1669. Père Dudon might have added that the *Breve Compendio* of Gagliardi probably retained some influence, though it was published in the sixteenth century; Molinos himself quotes from it in one of his controversial writings.[3] In enclosed convents and remote presbyteries there were, perhaps, ready-formed cells of mysticism, inflammable material ready to catch the new influence.

Did Molinos adopt mysticism as a cult because he saw mysticism was in vogue? Père Dudon sums him up as an 'aventurier audacieux, avisé, confiant en soi, habile à manier les hommes, et à feindre'.[4] Possible, then, to think of him as belonging to the race of the *conquistadores*, a man with an eye to the main chance, seeing Abandonment to the Will of God as a career. But his biographer vindicates him from any such charge. A local edition of Falconi had been published at Valencia in 1662; Molinos was saturated with his thought, and with that of Gregory Lopez, the Charles Foucauld of early Mexico.[5] Make what you will of his character, the Quietist leader had evidently modelled himself on the saintly lives of his fellow countrymen. There was no Illuminism, it appears, in the diocese of Valencia,[6] and Molinos's energetic repudiation of the Alumbrados in a letter to Father Oliva[7] discredits the once popular theory that he had learned his mysticism in that sinister school. No, he came to Italy as a mystic, just when Italy was ripe for mystical propaganda; for the moment a happy, in the long run a fatal coincidence.

We think of the Quietists as a party; it seems very doubtful whether they were ever a real party, like the Jansenists. They had no Port Royal for their rallying-point; no school, no central fund. Even their numbers can hardly have been considerable. Burnet's estimate[8] that there were twenty thousand Quietists in Naples in the winter of

[1] Dudon, op. cit., p. 46. [2] Ibid., pp. 48–63. [3] Ibid., p. 76.
[4] Ibid., p. 15. [5] Ibid., pp. 14 and 23. [6] Ibid., p. 13.
[7] Ibid., p. 74. [8] Cited by Bigelow, op. cit., p. 14.

1685 is on a par with the rest of his information—street-corner gossip, worked up to amuse the foreigner. Guérin, it will be remembered, was credited with a following of 60,000, who conveniently disappear from history when Guérin is put on his trial and acquitted.[1] No, the propaganda of mysticism, true or false, cannot reach beyond a very limited circle. An anonymous defence of the *Guida Spirituale*, which probably saw the light in 1681, gives a more probable estimate when it claims that there are 'hundreds' of people in Rome alone who are prepared to stand or fall by its orthodoxy.[2] If the comparison may be used without prejudice, Quietism in the Italy of 1680 was probably very much in the same position as Buchmanism held in the England of 1930. You had the same circle of devotees, the same, much larger penumbra of people who 'do not see that there is any harm in it'; the same spirited defence against literary attack, the same habit of whispering that people in the highest places are 'practically' converted to its principles. And you have the same fear of an undefined 'group' which threatens to become a church within the Church.

'Quietism' was not, like 'Jansenism', a name fastened on the movement by its enemies. Caracciolo describes the devotees in Naples as people 'who affect to take the name' of Quietists. To that extent, then, they were a self-contained body; in some places, too, they evidently held meetings. The charge brought against Molinos, that he encouraged *conventicoli* of both sexes, was patient, no doubt, of a sinister interpretation; the Alumbrados were still remembered. But the mere fact of holding meetings, however innocent their purpose, held out the possibility of schism. That was why the bishops of Italy, just before Molinos's condemnation, were warned not to tolerate the existence of unauthorized confraternities of either sex;[3] that is why the defence of the *Guida Spirituale*, referred to above, is careful to claim that the Church has no more loyal sons than the followers of the new doctrine;[4] that is why Madame Guyon was always getting into trouble for holding 'conferences' in the towns she visited.[5] Of all this tenuous web Molinos was the centre. The number of his own penitents need not have been enormous—12,000 letters of spiritual inquiry can easily be written, within a

[1] Bremond, *Histoire littéraire*, xi. 110.
[2] Dudon, op. cit., p. 136.
[3] Ibid., Appendix B.
[4] Ibid., p. 137.
[5] Cf. Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 27 (supplement).

comparatively short time, by a circle of 120 *dévotes*. But he was the representative figure of the movement, and its darling prophet. You could not assail his position without setting mysterious forces at work, whose strength you had no means of calculating.

(v) *The Triumph of the Doctrine*

Nothing could be better proof of the strong position Quietism held than the extreme circumspection with which the Jesuit fathers launched their attack on it. True, they were in an invidious position. The *Guida* had spoken slightingly of formal meditation, and formal meditation was the peculiar glory of their institute; they could not affect to approach the subject impartially. It was important, then, to avoid the appearance of working off a private grudge. But the cautiousness of their approach wants more explaining than that; they write like men manœuvring for a position of vantage against a formidable opponent. In 1678 Belluomo, their first champion, a theological professor, published a book on the relation between ordinary and mystical prayer; a positive treatment of the subject, mentioning neither Molinos nor Malaval, and only giving a discreet hint that false teaching was to be found on the subject at all.[1] Molinos, however, took up the challenge, wrote a long defence of his position which is still unpublished, though extant, and exchanged a series of letters with Oliva, the Jesuit General, in which he disclaimed all intention of ill will. Oliva was gracious in his replies, but evidently unconvinced. He did not, however, as Bigelow implies,[2] himself select the new champion who now appeared in the field; he only gave him leave to write, at his own request.[3] Nor was Father Paul Segneri a casual spokesman; to describe him as the John Wesley of seventeenth-century Italy is certainly no exaggeration. A man who travels 800 miles in the year, and all bare-foot, a man who can draw an audience of 20,000 from the neighbourhood when he gives a village mission, can claim a hearing when he undertakes to write on spirituality.[4] The attack on Molinos was still an indirect one. Father Segneri mentioned no names; did not even appear to be taking sides. The title of his book, *A Reconciliation between Effort and Repose in Prayer*, indicates its method of approach. Here was a moderate man, it was implied, suggesting a compromise; there was

[1] See Dudon, op. cit., pp. 65–7. [2] Op. cit., p. 19. [3] Dudon, op. cit., p. 101.
[4] See his Life in the Oratorian series (London, 1851), pp. 19, 35.

room for two schools of thought about the practice of mental prayer. Yet in fact Molinos was directly envisaged, and his whole method called in question.

Nor is it easy to see how Father Segneri could have had any tenderness for the Quietist side in the controversy. A man who habitually takes the discipline three times a day[1] does not mean what the rest of us mean by *la fatica nell' orazione*. His missions aimed at the reformation of character, and were always accompanied by a holocaust of playing-cards; but they were penitential besides, and the discipline, taken publicly, was the chief feature of them. Quietism, notoriously, discouraged bodily mortifications, or at best tolerated them for the imperfect. Nor, holy as he was, did Father Segneri's own prayer borrow much from the mystical tradition. When he gave up meditation he gave it up, it appears, for the prayer of petition[2]—from the Quietist point of view, a retrograde step. Later, indeed, he adopted St. Theresa's 'prayer of recollection';[3] but this is described by herself as a form of vocal prayer,[4] and it was not until he was favoured, at intervals, with the infused prayer of quiet that we can write him down as a contemplative. The prayer of simple regard, then, was either something which Father Segneri had never come across, or something which he had shrunk from in distrust. He was scarcely qualified to be an arbiter in the dispute.

Petrucci (who, like Segneri, was treated by his biographer as an uncanonized saint) was the next to intervene, with a book on *Acquired Mystical Contemplation*. He, from the other side, made a gesture of moderation, taking a defensive line, as if to put the Jesuits in the wrong. Some of Father Segneri's own colleagues found his attitude injudicious. The Society was making itself enemies among the Carmelites and the Oratorians, was accused of not understanding the higher states of prayer; did not the Quietist point of view, perhaps, deserve a better appreciation?[5] It must have looked, for a time, as if the two parties might be brought together. But the issue was, in fact, a plain one; which was to be the normal type of mental prayer for the devout Catholic? Meditation, or the prayer of simple regard?

Molinos, in the first of his letters to Oliva, appears to give

[1] Ibid., p. 143. [2] Ibid., p. 112. [3] Ibid., p. 115.
[4] *The Way of Perfection*, ch. xxix (given as xxviii in Father Segneri's Life).
[5] Dudon, op. cit., p. 110.

meditation its full due, and speaks of the *Exercises* with warmth.[1] But this had not been the tone of the *Spiritual Guide*. The lights God gives in meditation, compared with those which he gives to a mind 'recollected in pure and universal faith', are a mere drop in the ocean.[2] He writes down as 'exterior souls' those who go in for bodily mortifications, and who 'carry the presence of God about with them, conceiving of him as present by imaginative ideas, now as a Shepherd, now as a Physician', and so on; until they leave this way they will never make a step towards perfection.[3] How can the pure Spirit make himself heard, in the midst of artificial considerations and discourses?[4] When Molinos told you that he approved of meditation, it was as if Paderewski had told you that he approved of doing five-finger exercises; the meaning was exactly the same. Formal meditation existed to be outgrown.

On their side the Jesuits thought of formal meditation as a type of prayer which was normally meant for a lifetime; the exception was when an unmistakable call from above wafted you away, almost in spite of yourself, into the infused prayer of Quiet. That such a thing existed as acquired contemplation they could not well deny, although it is noticeable that, all through the controversy, they base their argument chiefly on St. Theresa, a doubtful friend to the prayer of simple regard.[5] At the back of their minds they probably thought of acquired contemplation as meditating with the affections, rather than with the reason; or else as a very unusual gift, so exalted as to be hardly distinguishable from the prayer of quiet. In any case they did not trouble themselves much about it. Segneri, in a private letter, describes the Quietists as 'these people who want to replace meditation by this new form of prayer, not merely dangerous but useless, which they have christened contemplation'.[6] It was convenient propaganda to insist that the new doctrine discouraged meditation on our Lord's sacred Humanity. The grievance, for some of its opponents, was that it discouraged meditation.

It was not only the Jesuits who protested against the new spirituality. Marchese, an Oratorian, and an admirer in some ways of Molinos, criticized him for trying to put contemplation within the

[1] Dudon, op. cit., p. 94. [2] *Spiritual Guide*, i. 15. [3] Ibid. iii. 1. [4] Ibid. 13.

[5] Bremond, after referring to St. John of the Cross as a 'pitiless critic' of discursive prayer, adds in a note, 'Sainte Thérèse paraît moins décidée. . . . En demeurant, je ne la comprends pas très bien'. Op. cit. xi. 339.

[6] Dudon, op. cit., p. 144.

reach of the multitude, and was not satisfied with his reply;[1] nor was he alone in his hesitations. But it was the Jesuits, for the most part, who kept the controversy alive, Brunacci, Caprini, Bartoli, and the others. A powerful order, of comparatively recent foundation, must needs have its ill wishers. The success of Jansenism in France was partly due to jealousy of the Society's influence; the same feeling may have contributed to the success of Quietism. Whatever the reason, its success for the moment was indisputable. Segneri's book was put on the Index in November 1681; Belluomo's followed it two days later. A year afterwards the same censure was incurred by the *Clavis aurea* of Father Alessandro Regio—not a Jesuit—who had compared Molinos's teaching to that of the Beghards.[2]

There are deceptive currents in Church history, not unlike that under-tow in a lock-stream which for a time draws you up to the waterfall. In the middle of the third century the party of Felicissimus is for showing mercy to the lapsed, and you would think, from protests like that of St. Cyprian, that the current of orthodox thought had set in the direction of sternness. But the schism that is brewing is in fact the Novatian schism, which breaks with the Church because the Church is too lenient. In seventeenth-century Rome, as in third-century Carthage, the signs of the times were misleading; it looked as if the Church was going Quietist when in fact Quietism was doomed. But no one could have been blamed for reading the portents wrong. Pope Innocent XI had two secretaries in succession, Favoriti and Casoni, who were close allies of Molinos; according to Cardinal D'Estrées, he was the eager recipient of Quietist revelations, and allowed himself to be guided by them.[3] Protestant legend invented, later, the story that he himself had been summoned to appear before the Inquisition.[4] Palafox, the Archbishop of Palermo, who had recommended the *Spiritual Guide* in the warmest terms to the faithful of his diocese, became Archbishop of Seville. Petrucci was rewarded for his Quietism with a mitre; was to be rewarded, later, with a cardinal's hat. A Commission, it is true, had been set up to inquire into the bearings of the new doctrine, but two of the three cardinals nominated for this purpose, Capizucchi and Lauria, were notoriously biased in its favour. Could there be any doubt of

[1] Ibid., pp. 119, 122.
[2] Ibid., pp. 142, 143.
[3] Ibid., pp. 189, 190.
[4] Bigelow, op. cit., p. 94.

the issue? Hector had breached the wall, and was setting fire to the ships of the Achaeans.

(vi) *The Defeat of the Doctrine*

On the 18th of July 1685, in broad daylight, Michael Molinos was arrested by the Pontifical police.

When a sudden reversal takes place in the whole posture of affairs, the historian must needs search for a real cause, a new factor in the situation which has reversed the wheels of destiny. The Protestant legend about Quietism has a very simple and self-contained explanation to account for Molinos's arrest. The Jesuits, says Burnet,[1] 'as a provincial of their own told me, finding they could not ruin him by their own force, got a great king, that is now extremely in the interests of their order, to interpose'. And a correspondent from Versailles, repeating the gossip he has had from Rome in the year 1686, represents Molinos's condemnation as due to the influence of Cardinal D'Estrées, Louis XIV's special envoy to Rome over the question of the *régale*.[2] We know, independently, that this was the current gossip in Rome; Estiennot, a Benedictine of St. Maur, credulous of contemporary scandal as keen critics of history will often be,[3] repeats it in one of his letters.[4] There, then, you have the legend, which needs little piecing together. 'The Jesuits set Father La Chaise to work on his royal penitent, Louis XIV, who was on very bad terms with Innocent XI',[5] and he got Molinos condemned.

Unfortunately all the probabilities are against it, and so is the evidence of the person chiefly concerned. Louis was indeed 'on very bad terms' with Rome in the matter of the *régale*; but why should that make it easier for him to put pressure on the gentle but obstinate nature of Pope Innocent? Worse still, at this time the Jansenists had become Ultramontane, and the French Jesuits—God forbid we should say they had become Gallican, but they were turning a blind eye to the Roman telescope. Partly from dislike of Jansenism 'and partly as the consequence of internal disruptions within the Society, the Jesuits of France as a whole supported the Gallicanism of Louis against Innocent XI'.[6] Thus the whole story labours from improbability, and the evidence for it melts when you touch it. If Burnet

[1] Bigelow, op. cit., p. 15.
[2] Ibid., p. 26.
[3] Cf. Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 219.
[4] Dudon, op. cit., p. 167.
[5] *Encyc. Brit.*, art. 'Molinos'.
[6] Abercrombie, *Origins of Jansenism*, p. 300.

ever did have conversation with a Jesuit provincial, he perhaps spoke of a *gran principe*, meaning the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who had tried to prevent the condemnation of Segneri's book in 1681.[1] The popular story which makes D'Estrées take the lead against Molinos does not insinuate, anywhere, that he was acting under orders from the French Court. In point of fact, D'Estrées had heard of these rumours, and was amused by this fresh instance of popular credulity. He had never believed in Molinos, and since the arrest had been in favour of expediting the proceedings against him, but cannot 'claim the merit' of having worked to secure his imprisonment. As for Louis, he does not refer to Molinos at all until after the arrest has taken place, when he is anxious to hear all about it—not unnaturally. Cardinal Chigi did suggest securing Louis's influence in favour of hurrying on the process, but D'Estrées would not hear of it.[2] There is no trace, in these dispatches, of support for the Protestant legend. And it would be ridiculous to suppose that Louis, for no reason, conducted this negotiation in secret. The events of ten years later prove abundantly that when the Grand Monarque went heresy-hunting, he did it with all the honours of the chase.

What was the immediate cause, then, of Molinos's arrest? Père Dudon tells us much about the proceedings which led up to it; Cardinal Caracciolo's letter in 1682, the appointing of a commission on the new doctrine, the exchange of memoranda and draft manifestoes on the subject in the course of that year; but all through the two following years there is silence. The train has perhaps been laid, but what was the spark that fired it? Père Dudon never asks the question. Is it not clear that some alleged fact must have come to the knowledge of the Inquisition, in the year 1685, which made them take prompt action against the man whom, hitherto, they had refused to meddle with? The *Guide* was not in question; that had been delated to them at least four years earlier,[3] and nothing had been done. Either something fresh came to light about Molinos's teaching, or else, far more probably, about his private life. Whether the imputation was true or false does not matter for our present purpose; what it was the Holy Office naturally would not disclose until they had questioned him. But the conclusion is irresistible that those stories had begun to leak out which were to convince the Roman world, from the Pope downwards, that Molinos was leading

[1] Dudon, op. cit., p. 128. [2] Ibid., p. 168. [3] Ibid., p. 135.

a double life. Evidence had been accumulating against the prisoner for some months, D'Estrées tells us; he was denounced over various 'cases', connected with his principle of non-resistance to temptation.[1] But something must have tipped the scale to make Azzolini, Queen Christina's bosom friend, acquiesce in silence.

The first impression of the Spanish ambassador was that some of Molinos's penitents, reproved by him for their faults, had trumped up evidence against him; it would be best, however, to wait and see what the Holy Office made of the affair—a judgement in which his royal master concurred.[2] Clearly, what he heard was enough to convince him. It convinced the Pope himself at last, and the Maurist fathers have perhaps preserved for us the authentic formula of his disillusionment, *Veramente siamo ingannati*.[3] But he was slow to yield, and the process dragged on for two years; as Père Dudon discreetly puts it, 'les congrégations romaines ont . . . leurs lenteurs qu'on peut appeler professionelles'.[4] But indeed there was every excuse for slow progress. It is not true, as Bigelow says, that 'the Jesuits proceeded to hunt up' all Molinos's friends;[5] Bigelow himself has pointed out that by now the prisoner had 'fallen into the slimy and inexorable embrace of the Dominican octopus'.[6] But the Holy Office did cast its nets wide; the condemnation was based on the depositions of more than seventy witnesses.[7] It is not true that Molinos was tortured;[8] that seems to have been an invention of the unfortunate François Bruys in his Protestant days;[9] but he was given a hearing on all the points raised (263, afterwards condensed into 68), and Molinos was not a man who gave way easily, or a man who used one word when six would do. The wonder is that the Inquisitors got through their work so quickly. As we shall see, it took nearly three years to condemn the *Maxims of the Saints*.

In May 1687 Molinos decided to submit to the conclusions of his judges. In September he listened to the reading of the charges, and made his retractation of them, before a vast audience in the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva. He also admitted to certain charges against his morals. He was condemned to penitential imprisonment for the rest of his life. His Protestant admirers,[10] uncertain whether to treat him as a Reformation hero or a pious but misrepresented

[1] Dudon, op. cit., pp. 171, 172. [2] Ibid., p. 170. [3] Ibid., p. 173.
[4] Ibid., p. 188. [5] Op. cit., p. 58. [6] Ibid., p. 45. [7] Dudon, op. cit., p. 177.
[8] Ibid., p. 203. [9] Bigelow, op. cit., p. 63. [10] Cf. ibid., ch. xi.

Catholic, have been at pains to argue in the first place, that he never held the views attributed to him, and in the second place, that he never abandoned them. But this view, apart from the inconsistency which it involves, would add unnecessarily to the riddle of Molinos's character. If he never taught erroneous doctrine, why did he confess teaching it? If he never abandoned it, why did he abjure it? It adds also to the riddle of his history. What reason had the Inquisitors for condemning him, except the belief that he had taught erroneously, and sinned grievously? If the case was legally proved, the action of the Inquisitors calls for no comment; if it was not, what conceivable motive had they for pretending to believe in it?

The witnesses describe his demeanour at the trial as utterly impassive; a detail which may or may not be of importance.[1] It is possible that in the depths of his strange mind he accepted the penalty not because he really admitted its justice, but because he thought this humiliation was sent by Almighty God to purify him. The 'spiritual martyrdom' was a cardinal article of his belief, as it was of Madame Guyon's. He died in 1696, when the *Maxims of the Saints* were already under discussion, a little distance away.

(vii) *What the Condemnation condemned*

After all the interminable discussions, the pamphlets, the counter-blasts, it was not the *Spiritual Guide* that was held up to the world as the canon of Molinos's false teaching. By a kind of afterthought all his books were prohibited; but in the formula of retractation which was imposed upon him not a line was quoted from the book which had made him famous, not an allusion was made to it. The fact can be accounted for without difficulty. For two years Molinos was under examination; and no doubt all the objections raised against the *Guide* by Segneri and the others were put to its author by his judges. And the effect of his answers was to deepen their impression of his guilt. When you confronted Fénelon with some ill-sounding proposition from the *Maxims of the Saints*, it produced a torrent of explanations; the sense was not the odious sense you had attributed to him; how could he, of all men, have been supposed to maintain such palpable absurdities? But Fénelon valued his reputation as a theologian; he would qualify, he would distinguish. It was not so with Molinos; his role was that of the inspired prophet, and he not

[1] Ibid., p. 67; Dudon, op. cit., p. 206.

only stuck to what he had said, but accepted all the implications, all the corollaries of it. You can trace, I think, a curious instance of that, which seems to have escaped the notice of historians. In the sixth chapter of the second book you find a set of rules for the guidance of directors, the last of which reads: 'Although women find it difficult to keep silence about the commands their directors have given them, the director must see to it that they do so; it is unfitting that the inspirations which the Lord has given him should be *exposed to the censures of the world at large*.' The Inquisitors will have fastened on this; surely Doctor Molinos cannot mean that letters of spiritual advice are not to be shown to those in authority upon legitimate demand? You get the reflection of Molinos's reply in the 68th and last of the condemned propositions: 'There is no power or jurisdiction on earth which can command us to disclose the letters written by a director about the inner state of our souls.'

These hesitations were not shared by the Holy Office. All the 12,000 letters from Molinos's penitents, found when his domicile was searched, must be heroically read through; letters from Molinos, proudly or reluctantly produced by the witnesses under examination, must be scrutinized in their turn. Hence a new crop of statements, far more intimate than anything in the *Spiritual Guide*, to be argued over and stigmatized. The plain fact is that Molinos, like so many other visionaries, had a secret doctrine which did not appear, which was not allowed to appear, in his published works. Not that he was ashamed of it himself; but he knew that it would not bear the inspection of prying eyes. When it came to the light of day the Roman public, which had been content to take him on trust as an oracle, filled the church of the Minerva with cries of *Fuoco!*

Curiously, the only condemned propositions which are textual are also the most damning ones. It appears that at some stage in his examination Molinos actually asked to have a memorandum of his own incorporated in the findings of the Inquisitors; and this is represented (possibly in full) by propositions 41–53, which deal with temptations of the devil, and the reasons for not resisting them in our times of prayer. It looks as if Molinos had been determined to make what excuse could be made for his own moral failures; posterity must not be allowed to regard them as lapses, there was a theory to account for them. . . . Meanwhile, the remaining propositions are set down in confused order, and it is not always easy,

at first sight, to recognize their bearing on the doctrine. To give a bird's-eye view of the condemnation, it will be best to analyse here, in brief, the allocution which was made to Molinos just before he abjured.

He has taught, it appears, that if souls in a high state of prayer are tempted to commit the most obscene and blasphemous actions, they must not leave their prayer to resist the temptation; the devil is being allowed to humiliate them, and if the actions are committed, they are not to be confessed as sins. He has preached 'a new and hitherto unknown form of prayer, which he calls acquired contemplation, holy peace, rest' and so on, which means lifelong persistence in a single unrepeated act, undisturbed by any fresh acts, any reflection on oneself, any consolations or austerities; such prayer recognizes God as the only Agent in all it does, and contributes only a passive co-operation. According to some witnesses the thought of God Himself disappears in this prayer. He has taught that no acts or feelings should be excited even at the time of receiving Holy Communion. That no demands should be made, even for salvation, or for grace to avoid sin; all use of the will is an imperfection; that vocal prayer becomes impossible. That a soul using this prayer forgets its sins, which are remitted in virtue of its union with God; that it has no longer any time to bestow on the exercise of the virtues. That vows hinder perfection; that many practices of piety, such as spiritual reading or visits to the Blessed Sacrament, should be discontinued as depending on human effort. His penitents find themselves inhibited from heavenly aspirations, claim the need of rich foods to compensate for their internal sufferings, and laugh at ordinary Catholic pieties as only fit for children.

So far the witnesses; Molinos's own admissions follow. He has confessed to teaching this way of prayer, in which the ordinary principles of Catholic direction (being based on human effort) do not apply. He has admitted that, on his principles, such prayer must never be interrupted to make requests of God, indifference being a more effective means of progress. *Fiat voluntas tua* is the only clause of the *Pater noster* needed in this prayer, which precludes even asking for the relief of souls in Purgatory, or for the conversion of sinners. He has counselled complete resignation to souls which felt that God had abandoned them to eternal loss. He admits having said in a letter that he knows numberless souls which never feel

remorse of conscience, and having himself omitted all sacramental confession for the last twenty-two years. Although he denies having taught that God wills human sin, and that we ought to resign ourselves to our own future sins accordingly, he confesses that he may have rebuked a penitent for trying to avert temptation by prayer. He denies having sanctioned indecencies among his penitents, but his judges do not altogether absolve him, on this point, from suspicion.

(viii) *The Personal Character of Molinos*

Such, in outline, is the system which Molinos recognized as his own, and abjured. It is condemned *as a system*; it does not follow, for example, that 'acquired contemplation' is a figment, because Molinos used that term to describe his *reductio ad absurdum* of it. The vice of the system was its assertion of the single act, which never needs to be repeated. Its most intolerable feature, evidently, was the view that externally sinful acts can be inculpable if the director sees them to proceed from the violent interference of the devil. That this was Molinos's view, there can be no reasonable doubt. Forty witnesses deposed to it.[1] As we have seen, a comparison of the tenth chapter in Book I with the eleventh chapter of Book II shows it to be the doctrine of the *Guide*. And Molinos himself exposed it, with appeals to the experiences of Job and other Old Testament characters, in the written memorandum which he insisted on producing at his trial. The only saving clause to be found in the memorandum is where he claims to possess special powers which enable him to detect the presence of diabolical interference. He bases his judgement on 'an actual (i.e. non-reflective) light, superior to all human and theological lights, which causes me to recognize with full inward conviction' that diabolic action has overpowered the penitent. This light comes from God, accompanied by a certitude, leaving no room for doubt, that it *does* come from God.[2] The saving clause did not help Molinos with his judges. They proceeded to arraign him as falsely claiming prophetic powers, and then went on to examine the charges against his private character.[3]

The evidence for his claim to prophetic powers is not of great

[1] Dudon, op. cit., p. 195.

[2] Condemned proposition no. 53.

[3] The case against Molinos, in this and the foregoing section, is given by Dudon, op. cit., pp. 274–92, from the official account.

interest. He has encouraged his admirers to make up anagrams in his honour; has given one of his shirts away as a relic; he told the officer who arrested him to beware of the Divine vengeance that might await him, for laying hands on such a man. 'I am Doctor Molinos; . . . I am not speaking of myself, it is an Angel of God that suggests these words to me.' He did not admit all the charges made under this heading; but enough remains to suggest that he affected a man-of-God pose, in the style of Donatus and of Saint-Cyran, though with less restraint than either of them. He talked incessantly, if the evidence of his captors may be trusted, on his way to prison, and all in these accents of spiritual gasconade. Was he sane? You can hardly affirm his insanity on the strength of an hysterical outburst like this. He was often surprised at himself, but concluded, like Madame Guyon, that he had been acting under inspiration. After a somewhat incoherent letter to a priest who had asked his advice over a refractory penitent, he adds: 'I have only tried to give your Reverence a plain answer, and it is God who has willed that I should write as I have written. You must excuse me for my boldness. But you ought to know that all this has happened against my will, an experience I have often had in corresponding with others.'[1] Language of this kind, though it is not the language of mania, makes us pause before we pronounce on the character of the man who used it. For better or worse, his was no ordinary psychology.

Molinos was accused by two persons, numbered 13 and 14 on the list of witnesses, of committing gross indecencies in their company.[2] Both were women, one of whom had been in his service; he did not deny the allegations, which referred to a period covering ten years.[3] Such charges are often the result of hysteria, or even of malice. But if we discredit them here, we have to discredit Molinos's own confession. On the other hand, why should Père Dudon insinuate that these women did not confess the whole truth; that there had been, in the legal sense, actual misconduct? No doubt he is right in saying that Molinos was 'un sensuel plus ou moins anormal'.[4]

[1] Ibid., p. 197.

[2] Ibid., pp. 193, 290. Bigelow's statement that such accusations were made by thirty-three different persons, and that Molinos denied all the charges, must be due to his ignorance of Italian; the figure given was that of the persons to whom he had *given demoralizing advice* on matters of sex; see Dudon, op. cit., p. 295.

[3] Ibid., p. 254.

[4] Ibid., p. 194.

Being such a man, Molinos was prepared to assert his own innocence in spite of monstrous improprieties, which would certainly have earned a sentence in a British court of law; he boasted of being technically pure.[1] It is even possible that he allowed himself these liberties by way of demonstrating, to himself and others, that he was proof against carnal temptations; that was exactly the attitude of the Perfectionists, of Lucina Umphreville or of Archdeacon Ebel, though not of Noyes or of Henry Prince.[2] All the easier for a distorted conscience to maintain, as Molinos did until he was persuaded to submit his judgement to that of the Holy Office, that the sorry record was one of temptations, not of sins.

When sudden revelations are forthcoming about a man who has hitherto enjoyed a reputation for unusual sanctity, there will always be those who reject their authenticity on *a priori* grounds; the thing cannot be true of a man like that. And certainly it is the part of charity not to believe all we hear; most of us, before now, have preferred to suspend judgement where prudent doubt was possible, rather than shatter the idol we have venerated. But it is difficult to gainsay the thesis, as a matter of experience, that a man may pray and pray, and be a villain. You had heard of a remote figure whom all Russia was said to regard as a saint; then, one morning, you opened your newspaper to find that this man had been shot like a dog, after a career of shameless debaucheries, by a man you had met a year or two before as an undergraduate. Molinos was not more idolized in the Rome of 1685 than Rasputin in the Petrograd of 1915; shall we be content to think that Molinos was the victim of an injustice, because it all happened so long ago?

If we accept the charges, as the Inquisitors accepted them and Molinos confessed them, what picture are we to reconstruct of his disordered psychology? Père Dudon seems inclined to write him down a hypocrite, and leave it at that; he wanted to dominate the minds of others, and the assumption of mystical experience was the most convenient way of doing it.[3] It is a curious conclusion, for Père Dudon is eager to convince us that moral deterioration follows almost inevitably from Quietism. If Molinos was only a sham Quietist, surely the blame for his collapse cannot be laid on his alleged beliefs? No, there seems to be substance in Père Dudon's contention that Quietism does enervate the moral system. It is

[1] Dudon, op. cit., p. 290. [2] See Chapter XXII, below. [3] Op. cit., p. 254.

probable, then, antecedently, that Molinos was a genuine Quietist. He will not have been a cynical careerist; nor will he have been a man of strong passions who fell into sin, and thereupon invented the theory of non-resistance to temptation by way of justifying himself. Brother Benignus, a Capuchin who passed for a saint, publicly abjured his Quietist errors and confessed to wholesale depravity before the Inquisition in 1698,[1] and Robert, the curé of Seurre, in Burgundy, had been convicted of similar offences the year before. Wherever Quietism goes it seems to attract the same ugly suspicions. Economy demands that we should write down Molinos's fall as the effect, not the cause, of his doctrinal aberrations.

The truth is, I think, that Molinos believed himself to be a prophet, and as is the way of such men (where the belief is ill-founded) thought himself superior to considerations of ordinary moral prudence. His temptations were those of the exhibitionist, and he readily induced himself to believe that the laws of decency were made for the common run of mankind, not for the spiritually perfect. He maintained before his judges that a man who had experienced the mystical death would not be ashamed to run naked through the Forum, if God inspired him to do it—though, of course, God never would.[2] In saying this, he unconsciously echoed the language of that elusive pre-Quietist, the *mauvais sujet* of Maubuisson, Madeleine de Flers. Such was the duty, she had said, of following one's first instinct, that 's'il lui venait d'aller toute nue dans l'église, elle le devait faire en liberté'.[3] We have seen the Anabaptists, we have seen the early Quakers, putting this strange doctrine into practice.[4] The Perfectionists at Brimfield followed their example in 1834.[5] Molinos's disappointment over the mission from Spain, his elation at the success of the *Guida Spirituale*, may have combined to unsettle his moral equilibrium about the year 1675. It was then, it seems, that his trouble began. Penitents had told him about grave sins, committed while they seemed to be in a state of uninterrupted prayer. Pedantically true to his own principles, he had assumed the manner of an oracle, and told them there was no harm in it; it was only the devil making use of their exterior faculties to humiliate them; a Divine light assured him of it. Now he

[1] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 301, and documents appended to no. 331.
[2] Dudon, op. cit., p. 283.
[3] Bremond, op. cit. xi. 139.
[4] See above, pp. 136, 151.
[5] Strachey, *Religious Fanaticism*, p. 55.

began to take advantage of his own lax principles; encouraged dangerous intimacies, perhaps partly with the idea of experimenting, of making sure that it was all right. He did not quite take himself in; he still indignantly repudiated the doctrine of the Alumbrados, who claimed that a man should yield to his temptations rather than abandon the state of repose. But all the time he was falling into lower depths of abasement, while self-conceit assured him that he, Doctor Molinos, could not really be sinning. . . . So it went on, till the police came to his door, and he was led off, screaming voluble protest, while the devout women who were his neighbours looked on and wondered that no miracle happened. What followed when he was cooling his heels in prison? Did he repent, or did he merely acquiesce, living as he did by a principle of acquiescence? That secret he carried with him to the grave. We only know that he submitted; a man who had received, perhaps, great graces, and presumed on them to his own undoing.

XIV

MADAME GUYON AND THE BATTLE OF THE OLYMPIANS

THERE are cheating perspectives in history which make us rub our eyes, occasionally, as we verify our notions with a bare table of dates. Molinos and Fénelon, for example—who does not think of them as belonging to two different worlds? Molinos, the younger brother of the *conquistadores*, Fénelon, the elder brother of the Encyclopaedists! Yet a space of only ten years intervened between the two condemnations; when Molinos was arrested, the *Moyen Court* had already been written, and Molinos was still alive when the Abbé Bossuet began to make himself agreeable to the cardinals in Rome.

'Les hommes font les hérésies', wrote Père D'Avrigny, 'les femmes leur donnent cours et les rendent immortelles.' We have seen the Phrygian Church carried away by the prophesyings of Priscilla and Maximilla; we have seen another victim of that fatal termination, Lucilla, building up the Donatist schism at Carthage. We have seen Martha Simmonds and her cronies crying Hosanna as they led poor James Nayler into Bristol. Quietism, too, had its high priestess. The first rumours of it had begun with a woman; Gagliardi was only the mouth-piece, as he himself claimed, of Isabella Bellinzaga; but since then its chief prophets had been men, in that age of woman-mystics—Falconi, Malaval, Petrucci, Molinos. Now the tide turned again; Lacombe went to prison only as the creature, Fénelon sacrificed his career only as the champion, of Madame Guyon.

(i) *Madame Guyon; her Early Life*

Jeanne Marie Bouvières de la Mothe—you might have guessed it; that was her maiden name. La Mothe was the true name—why relinquished, Sainte-Beuve does not tell us—of the Arnaulds; Port Royal, which persecuted our heroine so relentlessly, was a nest of her remote cousins, and the man who stood by her in her persecutions was François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon. Some remote ancestor had bequeathed to them, assuredly, a legacy of indomitable

courage. Jeanne Marie, then, was born in 1648, of a good family, living at Montargis. She tells us that her childhood was unhappy; her mother neglected her, through a preference for one of her brothers,[1] who used to beat her, and once threw her off a coach.[2] She went to school at four, and conceived a desire for martyrdom, which her school friends, with terrifying realism, threatened to gratify, until she protested that she must ask her father's leave first.[3] The psychologist will not be slow to intimate that she has all the makings, so far, of an hysterical subject. Nor did marriage do anything, it must be supposed, to right the balance; she was only sixteen when she married Jacques Guyon, a man twenty-two years older than herself, whose father had made a fortune by connecting the Loire with the Seine.[4] She seems—dare we say it?—to insinuate that she had married a little bit beneath her.[5] But M. Guyon was a man of piety, and a faithful husband; the difficulty was that they did not set up a separate establishment. The dowager Madame Guyon, if we may believe her daughter-in-law's account, was not the woman to ease that proverbially awkward situation; more markedly than any Princess Roccapalumba she managed the household as before, and made the unfortunate girl a scarcely welcome guest in her own house. Jeanne Marie was pious, like all her family; her visits to church were sternly rationed, and her taste for interior prayer was early whetted by the constant presence of a mother-in-law who watched from the card-table to make sure that she was not moving her lips at the fireside.[6]

I do not accuse myself of isolating these features of the record, which seem to stand out in Madame Guyon's own mind; what else she tells us of her early years is principally concerned with her pieties, her beauty, her ill health, and her wide reading, of the Bible especially. Whether she may not have exaggerated her grievances is another question. She had a will of iron, an intellect above the common, and, as friend and foe alike testify, a vivid imagination; whether her memory was equally good, Bossuet and others have doubted. In 1676 her husband died, leaving her a widow with two sons and a daughter. By this time she had been converted, as she would have said, to the interior life; that is, she had exchanged meditation for the prayer of simple regard. Mysticism was then

[1] *Autobiography*, i. 2. [2] Ibid. 4. [3] Upham's *Life of Madam Guyon*, p. 4.
[4] Ibid., p. 19. [5] *Autobiography*, i. 6. [6] Ibid. 12.

in the air; she discovered it through a friend, and through a Franciscan priest whose name she does not mention. She had met Père Lacombe for the first time in 1671, but was not closely associated with him till later. From 1673 to 1680 she passed through a state of 'privation', in which she experienced all the classical *épreuves* of the mystics; it came to an end when she began a regular correspondence with Père Lacombe.[1] (She described her state thenceforward as 'the peace of God'.) What was she to make of her life? She discarded the idea of a Visitation convent, on account of her family,[2] and France was probably saved from a second Port Royal. In the first year of her widowhood, as she assures us without a trace of humour, she had resolved not to 'come down from her cross' by separating from her mother-in-law.[3] But when the old lady told her that they could no longer live together her scruples were removed. She took a house of her own and began to educate her children.

In the year 1681 she felt a call to the apostolate. Had she, in the course of her spiritual reading, come across the story of Marie de l'Incarnation, who, half a century before, had deserted her little son to enter a convent, and then gone out to end her days as a missionary in Canada?[4] What makes me think that this example influenced Madame Guyon's mind, at least subconsciously, is that one of the priests she consulted about her plans was Père Claude Martin, the son in question.[5] Her Indies, however, were nearer home; all she proposed to do was to help in instructing and encouraging the Nouveaux Convertis (that is, Huguenots who had been reconciled, in great numbers, to the Church) at Geneva and some neighbouring centres. The plan does not seem to have worked out very well. She did, indeed, spend large sums in charities, to the dismay of her relations, especially a half-brother, the Barnabite Père la Mothe, to whose influence she ascribes most of her misfortunes. But her mission, as she conceived it, had little or nothing to do with the Nouveaux Convertis. It was to instruct everybody she came across, especially the religious of both sexes, in her own markedly Quietist principles of spirituality. To Geneva, at any rate, she went, leaving her two sons, after somewhat perfunctory lamentations, to be looked after by relatives, but taking the daughter with her.

[1] Ibid. 28. [2] Upham, op. cit., p. 139. [3] *Autobiography*, i. 22.
[4] See Bremond, *Histoire littéraire*, vi, ch. 2.
[5] *Autobiography*, i. 29. Madame Guyon does not mention Dom Martin's parentage.

The five years of her life between 1681 and 1686 were a prolonged Odyssey which can only be treated in brief summary. They were spent mostly on the French–Swiss border or in northern Italy; wherever she goes it is the same story of triumphs and persecutions. At Geneva, at Gex, at Thonon, at Grenoble, at Marseilles, at Turin, at Vercelli, she is besieged all day by people who come to ask for her advice, and go away satisfied; the bishops (when they are left to themselves) welcome her influence, the religious assure her they never knew what prayer meant before—yet always she has to move on, generally because enemies, whom she neither names nor accounts for, have poisoned the minds of the authorities against her. She writes several books (of which, however, only the *Moyen Court* and the interpretation of the Canticles were published at the time). Her journeys involve hair's-breadth escapes from sudden death, in the midst of which she remains calm; she suffers continually from unspecified ailments, but her soul is in a state of utter peace and resignation. Her dreams, and the prophecies of various holy persons whom she meets, warn her that great tribulation is in store for her. Then, without giving us any clear information about the need for it, she returns to Paris.

(ii) *Madame Guyon; her Character*

What was this woman like, a woman who has been represented so variously, as saint, devil, or lunatic? Before such a question is answered we have to clear up our minds about her association with François Lacombe. She had been directed, up to the year 1681, by Père Bertot, who was evidently rather suspicious of her 'states', rather sceptical about her inhibitions. When he died the Bishop of Geneva, with whom she was then much in favour, appointed the Barnabite priest from Thonon, on the other side of the lake, to be her director instead. 'The selection', writes Upham, 'met her views and wishes. Bertot's views and experiences were not altogether accordant with hers.'[1] There is no doubt that Upham is right. Lacombe has sometimes been represented as Madame Guyon's evil genius; we read about 'les erreurs dans lesquelles sa simplicité naturelle, et son aveugle confiance pour le Père de Lacombe l'avaient fait tomber'.[2] We are even assured by Père Dudon[3] that she learned

[1] Op. cit., p. 153.

[2] Letter from Bossuet's friend, the Abbé de Saint André (1732); see Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 33.

[3] Op. cit., p. 242.

her Quietism from her new director, who was the pupil of Ripa, the pupil of Molinos. But anyone who has read her autobiography knows that Madame Guyon was 'changed' (if I may use a modern expression) on the 22nd of July 1668,[1] whereas she did not meet Lacombe till 1671,[2] and was never in close touch with him till nine years later. Moreover, when he became her director, she found it necessary to 'change' him. He believed in the 'way of lights', and had to be converted to the 'way of darkness'. When she had managed this she obeyed him (she tells us) implicitly, being then in her 'state of infancy'. But soon afterwards a supernatural ligature prevented her from doing what he told her; this was a Divine dispensation, intended to purify him. And in general it is clear that his control over her was limited; if his view differed from hers it was an infidelity on his part, and she suffered spiritual agonies in consequence; when she wrote and told him about these mere chivalry induced him to submit.[3] It was revealed to her on one occasion that he was her son as well as her father;[4] one wonders why it was necessary.

She professes a great esteem for his holiness; did he not calm the waters of Lake Geneva? When the devil gave her a blow on the left foot, which sent convulsions upwards through her intestines, did not Lacombe stop them just in time to prevent them reaching her heart?[5] But their relations were very close from the first; 'Dieu lui donna une grande ouverture pour moi', she explains, in an oddly Methodist turn of phrase, assuring us at the same time that her 'communications' with him, of which we shall hear more later, were 'rien d'humain ni de naturel, mais tout pur esprit'.[6] But it must be confessed that her attitude towards him in public was wanting in discretion; more so, perhaps, than she realized. Was it a coincidence that, when she felt this unaccountable impulse to begin an apostolate at Geneva, Lacombe was stationed at Thonon, just across the lake? After a time she actually moved from Gex to Thonon, and was disappointed when Lacombe, almost at once, left for Aosta.[7] It was in his company that she travelled to Turin, though she tells us that another priest went with them.[8] Was it a coincidence that, after a few days spent at Marseilles, she took ship for Italy, and turned up

[1] Upham, op. cit., p. 44: 'Je suis changé, mon père', says a priest who has met Madame Guyon (*Autobiography*, ii. 17); and she refers to it afterwards as his *changement*.
[2] Upham, op. cit., p. 87. [3] *Autobiography*, ii. 11 and 12. [4] Ibid. 7.
[5] Ibid. 3, 14. [6] Ibid. 2. [7] Upham, op. cit., p. 175. [8] *Autobiography*, ii. 15.

at Vercelli, where Lacombe was? He himself manifested a strange chagrin, and feared that the visit might be interpreted as an appointment.[1] Was it a coincidence, finally, that she decided to return to Paris, just at the moment when Lacombe was transferred there by his superiors?[2] People noticed these things; and although the story that she rode behind her director on his crupper was no doubt malicious gossip,[3] it is difficult to feel that the scandal her behaviour caused was entirely Pharisaical; difficult to believe that, for a time, Lacombe was not actually trying to escape from her.

In 1698 Lacombe, now in confinement at Lourdes, confessed to misconduct with some women who shared his fortunes there,[4] and immediately afterwards wrote to Madame Guyon, telling her that they had both sinned gravely, and exhorting her to repent.[5] On receiving the letter she declared that the writer must be mad; and this explanation has been generally accepted, since Lacombe died a lunatic at Charenton. Bossuet himself, although he had made the most of this, as we shall see, while proceedings were pending at Rome, gave a public testimony to Madame Guyon's morals before the Assembly of the Clergy in 1700.[6] Bausset, in his Life of Fénelon, treats Lacombe's madness as a certainty, on the ground that he died 'the year after' writing the letter in question. Père Dudon, however, points out that Lacombe lived twenty-five years longer, and was only shut up at Charenton in 1712.[7] Madame Guyon's acquittal, then, is not certain; but a man may go mad long before he is shut up as a madman, and the world (if he is already in prison) be no wiser. I confess that Lacombe's two earlier letters, printed in Bossuet's Correspondence, in which he urges Madame Guyon to visit him at Lourdes under pretext of taking the waters near by, read to me like the letters of a crazed man.[8] Nor, it must be observed, is the evidence of the incriminating letter altogether unequivocal. He recognizes 'qu'il y a eu de l'illusion, de l'erreur, et du péché dans certaines choses qui sont arrivées avec trop de liberté entre nous', and urges her to disavow all maxims and conduct that are contrary

[1] *Autobiography*, ii. 24.
[2] Upham, op. cit., p. 260.
[3] *Autobiography*, ii. 7: 'on ne laissait pas faire de lui et de moi les contes les plus sanglants du monde'.
[4] See document attached to no. 227 in Bossuet's Correspondence.
[5] Ibid., no. 254.
[6] Bausset's Life of Fénelon (as prefixed to Migne's edition of the *Works*), iii. 50.
[7] Op. cit., p. 239 note.
[8] Nos. 45 and 47.

to the laws of God and the Church, 'afin que vous et moi réparions, autant qu'il est en nous, le mal que peut avoir causé notre mauvais exemple'. An attack of scruples, not yet developed into mania, would account for such language without authorizing us to believe the worst of it all.

Let her go clear, then; scandals are not to be multiplied *praeter necessitatem*. How are we to sum her up? Bossuet, who knew her, but did not love her, called her (among other things) 'une femme dont les lumières étaient si courtes, le mérite si léger, les illusions si palpables'.[1] Upham says: 'It is difficult to read Madame Guyon's life and writings without feeling she was a temple of the Holy Ghost.'[2] In his preface to Upham's work, Dean Inge seems to qualify this estimate when he says there is much in the earlier part of the autobiography 'which shews that she was not wholly sane'.[3] Take her at her own estimate (there are three volumes of it), which of these is the true account to give? If we take her estimate at its face value, she was not only (like all Christians not in mortal sin) a temple of the Holy Ghost; she was a saint, and perhaps something more than a saint. You have all the proper signs of it, including a few miracles. The devil shakes her bed, and disturbs her furniture;[4] she rolls in nettles, wears stones in her shoes, carries wormwood in her mouth;[5] a stranger meets her, dressed like a beggar, and tells her that God wants to make her assured not only of salvation, but of reaching heaven without a Purgatory.[6] She heals wounds, declared incurable, by sucking them;[7] she meets a girl who is suffering from an abscess, and from the presence of sixteen devils, which she banishes;[8] another visitor has had two teeth broken by the devil, and Madame Guyon tells her 'de le défendre de ma part de la toucher'.[9] She is ordered to keep accounts, by way of avoiding her ruinous expense on charities; she does so, purposely omitting what she has given away in alms, and her books balance nevertheless.[10] We are to meet other claims of hers, not less startling. A woman who writes of herself like this is not one of your everyday Christians; she forbids you to think so.

'She was constitutionally imaginative', writes Upham; 'consequently, viewing things in a clear and strong light, she expresses

[1] *Relation sur le Quiétisme*, i. 2. [2] Op. cit., p. 495. [3] Ibid., p. xix.
[4] *Autobiography*, i. 5. [5] Ibid. 10. [6] Ibid. 13.
[7] Ibid. 28. [8] Ibid. ii. 19. [9] Ibid. 21. [10] Ibid. i. 30.

herself more strongly than a person with less imagination would be likely to do.'[1] I wonder whether Bremond would have approved of this delicate admission? For him Madame Guyon is more reliable —how else could her evidence be used to counter Bossuet's? 'Que de bon sens, chez elle, quel discernement, quelle connaissance des hommes!'[2] Let us remind him of a story; he has told it us himself in his *Histoire littéraire*. Madame Guyon has heard that Nicole disapproves of her book, the *Moyen Court*; she demands, and actually achieves, an interview with the odd little recluse, reads the whole book aloud to him, and leaves him silenced, though hardly satisfied. She adds in her autobiography: 'M. Nicole me proposa de prendre une maison auprès de lui . . . et me parla comme s'il avait fort souhaité que je fusse de ses amis et liée avec les siens . . . Je sais qu'il s'était fort loué de moi à quelques personnes à qui il avait parlé de ma visite.' After which, she is naturally rather surprised at his vitriolic attack on Quietism a few years later. Of this inconsistency Sainte-Beuve, who also quotes the passage, gives us a somewhat startling explanation. M. de Pontchâteau, in a letter written on 5 March 1688, cites Nicole for the statement that he did offer Madame Guyon an interview, and she refused it.

Bremond, to be sure, has a ready explanation. The interview must have taken place, in spite of a preliminary coyness; but it took place *after* De Pontchâteau wrote his letter. I wish I felt so certain— certain either that the interview took place, or that, if it did, Nicole (of all men) declared himself *fort content* with Madame Guyon. Why is it that she carries away, from every interview, a favourable impression which the conduct of the other party subsequently belies? Nicole sent her on to the Abbé Boileau, and he, by her account of it, was delighted with the *Moyen Court* when the authoress had given him a few explanations of it; 'Madame, that is all that is wanted.'[3] Yet Boileau is one of the three people she names as her chief enemies in 1694.[4] According to De Pontchâteau's letter, just referred to, M. Le Camus, Bishop of Grenoble, 'lui avoit donné des marques de son estime pendant qu'elle étoit dans son diocèse'. But Le Camus tells us in a letter[5] that he stopped her holding

[1] Op. cit., p. 208. [2] *Apologie*, p. 35.
[3] *Autobiography*, iii. 11; Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, vol. iv (Book V), p. 430; Bremond, *Histoire littéraire*, iv. 483.
[4] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 15. [5] Ibid., no. 27.

conferences in his diocese, and was only induced by false pretences to write her a letter of introduction, in which he described her as 'une dame qui faisoit profession de piété'. It is the same with the early interviews between her and Bossuet. Did he really tell her that he had spent three days reading the *Moyen Court* (which fully justifies its title), and had found it so full of unction that he never lost the sense of God's presence throughout?[1] That the Visitation nuns were impressed with her we know from their own testimony;[2] nuns always were. But did they really report Bossuet as saying it would be worth a bishopric and a cardinal's hat to him if he could get Madame Guyon to live in his diocese?[3] Did he really urge her to stay; did he really preach a sermon to the nuns in which he fully endorsed her doctrines?[4] His own statement is that, after reading the *Moyen Court*, he forbade her to circulate any more copies, to write any more books, to write to others, to teach, to dogmatize, to direct souls.[5]

Bremond's solution of all these difficulties is a simple one; he accepts, in each case, Madame Guyon's account, and gives the most charitable explanation he can of what the other party said; people have short memories, their recollections of the past are coloured by what has happened in between, Court prelates have to steer a difficult course, and so on. But is it not a more economical way of dealing with the difficulty to suggest that Madame Guyon was the sort of person who does nearly all the talking and goes away interpreting silence or bare politeness as eager assent? Had she really much knowledge of men? And if her accounts of them are so strangely falsified by subsequent events, shall we not be tempted to agree with Upham that she expressed herself more strongly than a person with less imagination would be likely to do? This doubt about the accuracy of her reminiscences may even shake our belief in some of the other statements which she has made in her autobiography. It is possible, of course, that at the age of four or thereabouts she expressed a desire for martyrdom, and was shown, by a special revelation, her place in hell.[6] But one is uncomfortably conscious that St. Theresa wanted martyrdom when she was a small girl, that St. Theresa was shown her place in hell. . . .[7]

[1] *Autobiography*, iii. 13.
[2] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 43 (attached).
[3] *Autobiography*, ii. 18.
[4] Ibid. iii. 19.
[5] *Relation*, section III.
[6] *Autobiography*, i. 2.
[7] *Autobiography of St. Theresa*, i and xxxii.

The autobiography is not a book you can submit to detailed historical criticism. Only here and there can we check it by evidence that is available to us from other sources; and if it does not agree, well that is not surprising in view of the hostility which Madame Guyon's teaching aroused. You can only read through the book and form your own impressions of the whole, try to *see* the authoress as a real woman, not as a cardboard saint or devil. We talk about 'true mystics' and 'false mystics'; but everyone admits that the true mystic distorts, a little, the message he has to deliver, and may not a false mystic stumble, here and there, on a salutary truth? The point is, whether Madame Guyon rings true *as a whole*, when you read her autobiography as a whole. Did Bremond, I wonder? Or did he shun reading it, like Fénélon, so as not to lose his faith in the prophetess? Anyhow, the impression I carry away is that Madame Guyon does *not* ring true. I do not mean to say that the whole story is an invention, like the Description of Formosa. I mean that the mind which produced it seems to labour under the want of any sense of proportion.

There is disproportion in the avidity with which she records her ill health, her discomforts, her mortifications. Perhaps she did have teeth pulled out, when they were perfectly sound, for the sake of the pain;[1] we may believe her if we like when she tells us how she used to kneel on venomous snakes in the woods, or how she preserved an attitude of complete abandonment in the presence of a dangerous bull, 'quoique j'eusse une antipathie pour ces sortes d'animaux, et eux pour moi';[2] but, if so, we shall be inclined to agree with Dean Inge about her sanity. She herself, looking back on those days when she had not found the way of faith, criticizes these early heroisms; her nature, she says, derived food from this luxury of abandonment.[3] But did she really lose that source of satisfaction, after the change had come? Again, there is disproportion in the references to her enemies. You may be really persecuted, and yet have persecution mania. I do not feel confident that Père la Mothe, her half-brother, was the cause of all her troubles when she returned to Paris, and that it was because he had failed to get some money from her.[4] She had dreamt that he would persecute her,[5] and the fulfilment of the dream may easily have been invented

[1] *Autobiography of Madame Guyon*, i. 17. [2] Ibid. i. 21. [3] Ibid. 19.
[4] Ibid. iii. 1. [5] Ibid. 3.

to match. I do not feel confident that it was Sœur Rose who briefed the Abbé Boileau against her, or that Sœur Rose is to be identified with a girl sold to the devil and convicted of church robbery, whom Madame Guyon had attempted to convert.[1] It is true that Sœur Rose had great influence with Boileau; but the Jansenists who disapproved of her (and the Jansenists had a flair for gossip) do not seem to know anything about it.[2] In 1693 Madame Guyon believed that she had been poisoned by a servant, at the instigation of her enemies;[3] Bremond, who is always wanting us to believe in the authenticity of her statements, has not the courage to mention this story. 'Quand Madame Guyon raconte quelque évènement de la vie réelle, elle ne fait pas figure de visionnaire';[4] it would simplify history more than a little if we could share his optimism.

It is perhaps too much to expect that an autobiography should be completely guiltless of egoism. But I think it is difficult to read Madame Guyon's without the sense that this woman, who professed to be incapable of all introspection, all *repli sur soi*, was in fact immoderately interested in herself. Of course, she is for ever reminding us that she does nothing, that it is God who does everything through her, and so on. But by dint of constantly repeating the admiring remarks other people have made about her, she contrives to give a good account of herself nevertheless. It is difficult to isolate passages to illustrate this self-complacency of hers; perhaps the most revealing is that which describes how she trained her new director, the unfortunate Lacombe. At the cost of Purgatorial suffering, to her, worse than any pain she ever felt in her life, his resistance to Madame Guyon's doctrine of prayer has been broken down.[5] Yet he is still blamed because, when they get to Turin, he has no lights by which to direct her; worse still, he disagrees with her judgement about certain souls, which he wrongly supposes to be perfect. He even draws a comparison between her and another of his penitents, in favour of the latter, until Madame Guyon convinces him by argument that this other person is *dans un état tout sensible*, full of pride and obstinacy. Sometimes he tries to conceal these infidelities of his, but Madame Guyon always knows; it

[1] Ibid. 12; see Bossuet's Correspondence, document attached to no. 14.
[2] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. vi. 56.
[3] *Autobiography*, iii. 11; cf. Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 46.
[4] *Apologie pour Fénelon*, p. 249.
[5] *Autobiography*, ii. 12.

causes a separation between them, and for him being separated from her means being separated from God.[1] Later still he is taken in by the dissimulation of a girl whose dispositions she has been able to recognize at once.[2] It is only on their return to Paris that she fully makes him understand the worthlessness of all visions, revelations, and interior locutions, as compared with those 'immediate communications' which she is privileged to receive. In this way God unites him completely to himself, and to her.[3] Was there ever mystic who felt so sure that she was right, so sure that her director was wrong? To the last her letters to him are all lectures; his to her are those of a miserable creature who is sent to her as an added cross, to drag her through the mud and crucify her.[4]

(iii) *Madame Guyon; her Peculiarities*

Does Père Dudon really expect us to believe, of Madame Guyon and Père Lacombe, that 'it is difficult to distinguish which is managing the other'?[5] Would Fénelon, if he had condescended to read the autobiography when Bossuet lent it to him, have excused the authoress on the ground that she 'donne simplement à ses supérieurs ce qui lui passe par la tête'—knowing, as he did, that there was only one 'superior' in question, and that was Père Lacombe?[6] Bremond admits that his heroine was 'à certaines minutes, quelque peu bizarre';[7] but he accuses us of judging her by one or two incidents, singled out for satire in Bossuet's *Relation sur le Quiétisme*.[8] To be sure, Bossuet had the pick of the material. He has told us how Madame Guyon used to sit opposite her friends in complete silence, not praying with them, not praying for them, but acting as a kind of reservoir through which grace flowed into them; he has told us of the famous occasion when she found herself so full of this mysterious influence that a duchess, whose name is not divulged, had to oblige by unlacing her corsage.[9] But there is much more of the same kind. She used to hold the same silent commerce with several of the saints; our Lady, for example, and St. John; she could communicate with some favoured souls, especially Père Lacombe, even at a distance.[10] Some of those whom she influences are her

[1] *Autobiography*, ii. 15. [2] Ibid. 19. [3] Ibid. iii. 1.
[4] See Letters 3 and 4 among those printed at the end of the *Autobiography*.
[5] Op. cit., p. 242. [6] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 83.
[7] *Apologie*, p. 65. [8] Ibid., p. 33. [9] *Relation*, ii. [10] *Autobiography*, ii. 13.

spiritual children; they have been saved from urgent peril by invoking her as 'Ma mère!'.[1] She suffers terrible pains when they become her children;[2] a confession which reminds us uncomfortably of Antoinette Bourignon, and the pains which accompanied her *enfantement spirituel*.[3] Whether Madame Guyon's pains were felt in her body is not clear. She tells us that she has never had extraordinary experiences *qui redondent sur le corps*; she believes that only happens *dans l'amour sensible*, i.e. the mystical prayer of ordinary saints;[4] and she assures Bossuet that the pains which she feels are of the heart, not of the body.[5] Yet she once bit a piece out of her own arm in the sufferings she voluntarily took upon herself to relieve those of a disciple.[6]

In visiting Annecy she has a singular 'union' with a relic of St. Francis of Sales.[7] In the same way, when she is commenting on the Psalms, she feels an *étroite union* with King David.[8] Our Lord makes her conscious of things in the *fond de l'âme*,[9] and in describing her attitude to one of her erring children she says *mon fond la rejettait*.[10] She can, without any *réflexion* at all, detect false doctrine in a sermon.[11] She can read the state of souls which are 'strong in their own strength', not in that 'littleness' which pleases God; if she hears one of the saints wrongly praised, her *fond* rejects it, without any conscious attention on her part.[12] 'A certaines minutes, quelque peu bizarre'. Malaval has warned us that 'a strong and lively imagination takes forms and impressions from what it reads, and sometimes imagines itself to be in all the states into which the Saints may have entered'.[13] Would we apply that maxim of his to the prophetess who visited him at Marseilles, a matter of fifteen years later? She has her answer ready; she describes her own state, what she calls the *union d'unité*, as something 'si peu connue et si peu comprise, que je n'ai jamais rien lu de semblable'.[14]

Perhaps the most disconcerting of all Madame Guyon's claims is the account which she gives of herself as an authoress. Early in her travels Lacombe ordered her to write down all the thoughts which came to her during his absence; she proceeded to do this, quite automatically and without reflecting at all as she did so.[15] You may

[1] Ibid. 18. [2] Ibid. [3] See Grand Larousse, s.v.
[4] *Autobiography*, iii. 14. [5] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 3.
[6] *Autobiography*, ii. 16. [7] Ibid. 1. [8] Ibid. 22. [9] Ibid. iii. 8.
[10] Ibid. ii. 19. [11] Ibid. iii. 1. [12] Ibid. 8. [13] *Simple Method*, p. 215.
[14] *Autobiography*, ii. 4. [15] Ibid. 11.

say with a peculiar appropriateness of phrase, that after this she never looked back. The whole of her commentaries on the Bible, occupying twenty volumes, were written in the same way, *sans retour sur moi-même*.[1] She worked at night, after talking to people all day; at such speed that her interpretation of the Canticles only took one and a half days to write.[2] Her letters were written in the same way;[3] so was the autobiography itself, which stands unique among autobiographies if she is right in claiming that 'il ne m'a jamais été permis de faire une retour sur moi-même en l'écrivant'.[4] Consequently, her works must not be judged by any common standard; only the heart can pronounce on writings in which nothing but the heart took a share; 'ce que j'écris, ne passant par la tête, ne peut être bien jugé par la tête'[5]—it will be seen that Fénelon's description was misplaced. What was poor Bossuet to do with a woman who protested that she could not rid herself of her ideas, because she had none—she could only disavow them? She cannot think how she came to write these things; she sees now that it must have been all wrong.[6] Yet elsewhere she makes it quite clear that the mistakes in her writings are all due to her own fault, in 'reflecting' about them.[7] Certainly she was a remarkable woman.

If, in spite of these confidences about the manner of their composition, we may venture to criticize her books, what is the impression they make on the reader? An impression, I think, of extraordinary glibness; of much unconscious imitativeness (she never quotes, she never refers to other authors); of eccentricity rather than originality; of very mediocre taste. Her poems seem to me frankly dull; nor did Cowper, who admired them, manage to make a great deal of them in translation. And if her prose writing is less conventional it does not compare, for genuineness, with that of her predecessors. The *Spiritual Torrents*, which she wrote at Thonon in 1680 for private circulation,[8] perhaps gives you a more intimate account of her doctrine than the *Moyen Court*, destined for a wider public. Its account of the degrees by which the soul is stripped of all spiritual goods, and then undergoes mystical death, does not attain the splendid severity of Gagliardi, on whom, no doubt, it was ultimately

[1] *Autobiography*, ii. 21. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid. 1.
[4] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 10. [5] Ibid., no. 17. [6] Ibid., no. 13.
[7] *Autobiography*, ii. 21.
[8] *Spiritual Torrents*, translated from the Paris edition of 1790 by A. W. Marston.

based. It degrades the notion of 'stripping' by a sensuous over-insistence on the metaphor, and adds little to the notion of 'death' by a ghoulish description of the soul in putrefaction—a line of thought which Molinos had indicated, but not exploited.[1] Her constant tendency is to 'run to death' the symbolism which she has come across in her wide spiritual reading. All her doctrine of 'states'—that of infancy, that of apostolate, that of death, that of burial, that of resurrection—is modelled on the language of Bérulle, Condren, and the French School; but always she disengages its implications with an alarming literalness, calculated to bring it into discredit. She says of the resurrection state, for example, 'In this degree, God cannot be tasted, seen, or felt, being no longer distinct from ourselves, but one with us'.[2] We experience 'a loss of the will in God by a state of deification'.[3] By a fatal instinct, she crosses the line between mysticism and pantheism, between theocentricity and deiformity; henceforward she will think of her state, most dangerously, in terms of the Incarnation.

The real mistake of Madame Guyon was the mistake of James Nayler. What genuine mystical experience she may have had we shall never know; it was all hopelessly overlaid by the workings of an exuberant, yet strictly logical, imagination. Madame Guyon had ceased to exist; that which spoke and acted in her was God. St. Catherine of Genoa writes 'I find no more *me*, there is no longer any other *I*, but God', and leaves it to Dean Inge to discuss whether this language implies 'a deification of the real or natural soul';[4] if she has overstated the facts there is no great harm done. But Madame Guyon cannot leave it alone; she has become deiform, and she will behave accordingly. As if unconsciously she echoes the speech of the Incarnate. It was not enough for her to be identified with the star-crowned Woman of the Apocalypse,[5] to give up praying to the saints because after all she belonged to the family,[6] to bind and loose (scruples, she explained afterwards, not sins) like the apostles.[7] She did miracles—only a few, to be sure—and felt afterwards that virtue had gone out of her;[8] she calls Lacombe her well-beloved son, in whom she is well pleased;[9] she invites a friend to come and

[1] *Spiritual Guide*, iii, 10. [2] *Spiritual Torrents*, p. 110. [3] Ibid., p. 152.
[4] *Christian Mysticism*, p. 239. [5] *Autobiography*, ii. 14. [6] Ibid. iii. 8.
[7] Bossuet's Correspondence, nos. 12 and 13. [8] *Autobiography*, ii. 12.
[9] *Relation*, vi.

witness her death, if imprisonment leads to execution, 'Do as Mary Magdalen did';[1] she concludes her autobiography with a long passage which is an adaptation (and very little adapted) of our Lord's prayer in the Cenacle, 'Père saint, je vous ai remis entre les mains ceux que vous m'avez donnés; gardez-les dans votre vérité'.[2]

If we raise our eyebrows, she has her answer ready—she always has an answer for everything. Did not David speak in the person of the Messiah? If David, why not she?[3] But it is not a mere form of words when she tells us how her admirers used to assure her that 'God was in her'.[4] She was not like the saints, who are sanctified through their virtues, she was sanctified 'by the Lord himself'.[5] The soul that is in a state like hers does not abide our question; 'Neither am I capable of giving any reason for my conduct, for I no longer have a conduct; yet I act infallibly, so long as I have no other principle than the infallible One'.[6] It is almost impossible for her to will anything except what God wills.[7] Our Lord has given her 'le pouvoir d'un Dieu sur les âmes, en sorte que d'une parole je les mettais dans la peine ou dans la paix'.[8] If St. Theresa had used this language, would all her ecstasies have secured her canonization? 'À certaines minutes, un quelque peu bizarre.'

(iv) *Madame Guyon; her Triumph and Eclipse*

In July, then, of the year 1686 Madame Guyon and Lacombe returned to Paris. It was an unfortunate moment; the hostility of Père la Mothe, if it really existed, was not needed to bring odium upon his half-sister, or on his brother in religion. Molinos was condemned in the September of 1687, and in the following month Lacombe, newly returned from Italy, and full of Quietist contacts, was imprisoned, first in the Bastille, then in the castle at Lourdes. How few, among millions of pilgrims, give a thought to the poor wretch who languished there, implored Madame Guyon to visit him there, confessed to grave disorders there, and probably went mad there! At the beginning of the next year Madame Guyon was committed to strict confinement at the Visitation convent in the Faubourg Saint Antoine. Here she was examined at the instance of Harlay, then Archbishop of Paris, but there was no evidence to

[1] Upham, p. 467. [2] Op. cit. iii. 21. [3] Ibid. 14.
[4] Ibid. 19. [5] Ibid. ii. 10. [6] *Spiritual Torrents*, p. 135.
[7] *Autobiography*, iii. 11. [8] Ibid. ii. 12.

incriminate her. She had, by now, friends at court, and was released, in October, through the influence of Madame de Maintenon. The next few years of her life were her apogee. She is the confidante of an uncrowned queen, who made her a welcome visitor in her own seminary for young ladies at St. Cyr. More important still, she was introduced to Fénelon, then in high favour. She had not succeeded in making a St. Francis of Sales out of poor Lacombe; here, perhaps, was better material.

Why was Fénelon so deeply impressed by her? It makes you wonder whether she had two selves. 'The presence and fervid eloquence of a woman whose rank, beauty, and afflictions could not fail to excite an interest only exceeded by that of her evangelical simplicity and sanctity'—that is Upham's account of it;[1] but, if so, she must have used guarded language in talking to him. She probably did; we shall see how instinctively she 'played up' to Bossuet, and her letters to Fénelon, though they have something of the lecturer's tone, are full of restraint. It is not improbable that Fénelon was suffering from scruples; a sensitive idealist, conscious of ambition, yet dreading the influence of a court, may easily have developed them. And Madame Guyon, whatever her eccentricities, was clearly steeped in the writings of the mystics, and knew how to deal with scrupulous souls; it was her *forte*. In any case he restated her ideas for her in chastened terms, as he tried to restate them afterwards in the *Maxims of the Saints*; 'delphinized them', Bremond calls it, or (as we should say) bowdlerized them; had not Bérulle done the same for Gagliardi?[2] It has been conjectured, without evidence, that Fénelon's 'goût délicat et sûr repoussait pour son compte le style épithalamique de cette dame'.[3] It is certain that he refused to read the *Torrents* and the *Autobiography*, perhaps in fear of opening a Bluebeard's chamber. On her side, Madame Guyon discovered a 'spiritual filiation' for him; there was a *rapport* between them as complete as that of David and Jonathan.[4]

Madame Guyon's popularity lasted five years; in 1693 she lost, completely, her favour at Court. Bremond—it is the thesis of his *Apologie pour Fénelon*—would have us believe that Madame de Maintenon suddenly grew jealous of her intimacy with Fénelon, suddenly took alarm at her theological tendencies. But, as with

[1] Op. cit., p. 311. [2] Bremond, *Histoire littéraire*, xi. 55 note.
[3] Quoted in Bremond's *Apologie*, p. 55 note. [4] *Autobiography*, iii. 9.

Molinos, so with Madame Guyon, you must postulate some definite cause for the change; indiscreet theological language had been used to, and repeated by, the ladies of St. Cyr, and Madame Maintenon began to see her protégée in a new light. It may well be, as Bremond suggests, that she worked hard thenceforward to drive a wedge between Madame Guyon and Fénelon; it may well be that she retained Bossuet's services to that end. It does not seem likely that Bossuet at this time was a mere tool, and acted against his convictions. In any case, the theology of the *Moyen Court* was submitted to joint consideration by him, by Noailles, then Bishop of Chalons and afterwards Archbishop of Paris, and by M. Tronson, the head of St. Sulpice. The result was a series of articles on interior prayer, drawn up at Issy, to which we must return later. On the whole, they were a compromise; three of them were inserted to pacify Fénelon, if not actually at his demand. Fénelon signed the articles, and so did Madame Guyon. She did so, according to Upham, with a bad grace; they expressed the truth, but not the whole truth.[1] She did so, according to Bremond, *des deux mains*; she could not understand what all the fuss was about.[2] But in any case, externally, the thing was settled; she had signed an orthodox formula, and it looked as if she would be left in peace.

Why was she not left in peace? Because, says Bremond, Madame de Maintenon had not yet succeeded in driving a wedge between her and Fénelon. It may be so. But I think it is equally probable that Bossuet doubted the sincerity of her submission; wondered whether he had not come short of his duty in letting her off with a mere signature, without any retractation of her errors. He took himself very seriously as a defender of the faith. He had interviewed Madame Guyon, had read several of her works, including the autobiography, so far as it was then written, and had received a series of letters from her which can only be described as grovelling. Bossuet was a man you instinctively approached on all fours, and Madame Guyon was prudent enough to see it. She tried to get round him, exactly as Molinos tried to get round the Jesuit General, Oliva, when Belluomo criticized the *Guide*. She was prepared, she said, to be examined by anyone, but 'mon cœur n'avait de penchant que pour vous'.[3] She has experienced, for several days past, 'une

[1] Op. cit., p. 371. [2] Bremond, *Apologie*, p. 112.
[3] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 6.

union très-réelle avec votre âme'.[1] If he does not like the manuscript autobiography it shall be burnt; she does not want to defend herself, only to condemn all that he condemns in her character or her writings; she will write no more, and never talk to anyone about spiritual affairs; she accuses herself of rashness, of illusion, of folly, of deceit, and so on.[2] He replies in a long letter, praising her docility and accepting her assurances; she, in return, announces her intention of hiding herself away altogether, and seeing nobody.[3] The Issy conference followed, and she signed the articles. Would she hold her tongue after that? It seemed most unlikely. A holy man had a vision, in which he saw a bishop and two other men trying to drown Madame Guyon in a boat; she, however, always bobbed up to the surface again.[4] A better symbol could hardly have been found, either for her character or for her destiny.

In any case, she was by now in Bossuet's hands. She was determined to undergo an examination, not only of her beliefs, but of her morals;[5] and with that in view she spent six months with the Visitation nuns at Meaux, from January to July 1695, while the Issy deliberations were still proceeding. Bossuet, up till now, had kept his temper, and with her fatal readiness to believe she had made a good impression[6] she felt he was the man to put everything right; at the end of the six months he was prepared (she tells us) to give her a certificate, testifying to her orthodoxy as well as her morals.[7] The certificate which he did give her when she left relates only to her morals and conduct, although in testifying that she has repudiated in his presence the 'abominations of Molinos', it perhaps dissociates her from the doctrine of non-resistance to temptation.[8] It is difficult to see how Bremond can have supposed that this document gave Madame Guyon a clean bill of faith, since it alludes expressly to Bossuet's ordinance of April 1695, in which two of her books had been condemned by name.[9] It is not so difficult to see why Madame Guyon herself affected to treat it as a clean bill of faith, a circumstance which greatly disturbed the author of it[10]; her story is that he actually tried to make her give it back.[11]

Meanwhile, what were the circumstances of her leaving the

[1] Ibid., no. 11. [2] Ibid., nos. 3, 7, 9. [3] Ibid., nos. 12 and 13.
[4] *Autobiography*, ii. 6. [5] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 14.
[6] *Autobiography*, iii. 13. [7] Ibid. 15.
[8] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 43 (attached). [9] Op. cit., pp. 163, 167.
[10] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 42. [11] *Autobiography*, iii. 19.

convent? According to Bossuet she went with his leave to take the waters, under a promise to return.[1] According to her own story, accepted by Bremond, she left free as air.[2] But her own story, at this point, labours from such gross inconsistencies as to make credulity impossible. We have seen above her account of the impression she made on Bossuet while at Meaux;[3] at the same time she wants us to believe that he interrupted a sacred concert in her room with clamorous demands that she should confess her disbelief in the Incarnation;[4] she wants us to believe that he pestered her, when she was in a high fever, to sign a document declaring herself a heretic.[5] If there is any truth at all in her statements at this point, we can only suppose there was a misunderstanding. Madame Guyon left Meaux, announcing her intention of coming back, and Bossuet understood this as a promise to come back. What is certain, I think (although Bremond still mutters to us about the implacable enmity of Madame de Maintenon), is that Bossuet's own dislike of Madame Guyon dates from what he regarded as a breach of faith.

It was a fatal move on her part. If she had stayed at Meaux, the evidence of her good intentions might have saved her; in Paris, at the end of 1695, she was arrested and imprisoned. She remained in confinement all through the crowded history of the next three years, first at Vincennes and later in the Bastille. Released in 1702, she spent the remaining fifteen years of her life near Blois, winning general admiration by her piety, her love of the poor, and the simplicity of her faith. She had renounced vain speculations; 'Dieu m'a voulu humilier; je ne suis pas assez'.[6] She died on 9 June 1717. 'No cloud', says Upham, 'rested upon her vision; no doubts perplexed the fulness of her hope and joy.'[7] As a matter of fact, if we are to believe the memoir prefixed to the *Autobiography*, she was experiencing during her last eighteen hours the state of desolation felt by our Lord on the Cross. Poor Madame Guyon, so true to type! And then the blundering piety of a Victorian sympathizer must take away this last crown, to provide her with a suitable Evangelical death-bed!

She remains an enigma, and it is for everyone who reads her story to write her epitaph for himself. I cannot believe in Madame Guyon as a reincarnation of Héloise; to tell the truth, I see her more as an

[1] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 42.
[2] *Autobiography*, iii. 19.
[3] See above, p. 337.
[4] *Autobiography*, iii. 18.
[5] Ibid. 19.
[6] La Bletterie, quoted in Bausset, op. cit., App. XII.
[7] Op. cit., p. 498.

anticipation of Mrs. Jellyby. There is a smugness about her autobiography which forbids me to credit the legend of her sanctity; yet she was no ordinary woman, even if she imagined the stranger features of it—what friends she made, and what enemies! Providence puts us all to strange uses, and I can believe there have been far more genuine mystics, whose names have evoked less gratitude than hers.

(v) *The Breaking of the Truce*

Meanwhile, the prisoner had left behind her an apple of discord which was to provoke one of the epic controversies of ecclesiastical history—the controversy between Bossuet and Fénelon. At any of its earlier stages Fénelon could probably have bought peace, and saved his theology from censure, if he had been prepared to state openly that it was not the theology of Madame Guyon. It would have been a gain for religion in France; it would have been a loss to literature. It is an epic struggle, because the two champions were of no ordinary mettle. Not merely as authors, which all the world admits, but as characters; and characters, you might say, predestined to conflict, no less than were Newman and Manning. Indeed, there is much in common between Fénelon and Newman; the same sensitiveness, the same gift of splendid indignation, the same reluctance to detach persons from principles, the same tenderness for weak consciences and for the unpopular point of view. In Bossuet, as in Manning, you have a kind of fated antithesis to all that; the ecclesiastical mind, jealous for order and for orthodoxy, irritated by subtleties and suspicious of evasions. Dig down beneath the personalities, and you lay bare an age-old difference of principles; it is the difference between Plato and Aristotle. Bossuet takes his stand on the tradition of the Schools; Fénelon, though he is ready to meet that challenge, is really under the spell of Descartes; his thought will ascend straight to God by the path of the contemplative, leaving Bossuet's to climb upwards by meditating on creatures. And Fénelon wants the disinterested love which makes no account of human happiness; Bossuet, by instinct, sees happiness as the end of every human action, like Aristotle. The good Leibnitz even thought to settle the controversy by getting them to agree that the desire for salvation was only the unconscious, not the conscious motive which dictates our love of God.[1]

[1] Bausset, as quoted above, App. XI.

On the whole, the sympathies of posterity will always be with Fénelon. Not precisely because of what he stood for; Dean Inge does less than justice when he tells us that 'the stand-point of Bossuet was not really religious at all'.[1] But there is a *magnanimity* about Fénelon's attitude and Fénelon's utterances which is not reflected in Bossuet's. The Jesuits did not miss the mark when they suggested that when the former was censured for abolishing hope, a rider might be added censuring his accuser for abolishing charity;[2] and Pope Innocent was even better inspired if he really said that at Cambrai they loved God too much, and at Meaux they loved man too little.[3] If there is any criticism to be made against Fénelon, except that of being on the wrong side, it is that he had the defects of his qualities. A superb orator, he threw himself heart and soul into the attitude which the rhetoric of the moment demanded. You get the same thing in Cicero. The charge of hypocrisy will not cling to Fénelon; but changing moods, each of them paraded with all the impressiveness of the *grand siècle*, give a man the aspect of insincerity. You see it when he is banished from Court; his letter to Madame de Maintenon is a masterpiece. But why implore the King not to let the guiltless diocese of Cambrai suffer? The diocese of Cambrai is threatened with nothing worse than the arrival of its archbishop, to take up residence in his own see.[4] The whole gesture is overdone; you cannot kiss, effectively, the doorposts of Versailles. Hence that almost hysterical humility, which gives us a bad taste in the mouth by reminding us of Molinos. We find it in that series of letters to Bossuet, just before Issy, when he protests, 'Tout ce que vous ne croirez pas bon, ne sera jamais mon sentiment . . . Je suis dans vos mains comme un petit enfant . . . Je vous conjure au nom de Dieu de ne me ménager en rien . . . J'irai me cacher et faire pénitence le reste de mes jours', and so on.[5] At his own consecration he kisses Bossuet's ring and swears not to desert his doctrine.[6] He protests too much; and the surprise is all the more unpleasant when, a year or two later, he seems to flick his fingers at the object of all this veneration by publishing the *Maximes des saints*. And, as we shall

[1] *Christian Mysticism*, p. 240. [2] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 291.

[3] 'Erravit Cameracensis excessu amoris Dei, peccavit Meldensis defectu amoris proximi.' Bausset, iii. 67.

[4] Quoted in Upham, op. cit., p. 439.

[5] Bossuet's Correspondence, nos. 18, 19, 20, 21.

[6] *Sur l'Affaire du Quiétisme*, xii.

see, the same difficulty has been made over the tremendous act of submission with which he welcomed the news of the Pope's brief.

It must be remembered in Bossuet's favour, that he was an old man, and old men do not like to feel they have been 'let down'. When sight and hearing begin to fail, it sharpens the suspicion that men may be laughing at us in secret. Already, as we have seen, Bossuet had come to look upon Madame Guyon as the Magdalen of a false theology, only to find that she had vanished overnight with an alleged certificate of orthodoxy in her luggage. Then, with Fénelon's protestations ringing in his ears like those of an adoring disciple, he learns, on a sudden, that Fénelon has gone back to his wallowing in disinterested love. Embarrassed by the necessity of exposing himself to the public view as a man twice duped, he gives way to an intelligible, though not always pardonable, spirit of resentment. He even allows himself to hint that Fénelon only changed his front because he had become, in the meantime, an archbishop.[1]

We have seen that the three men chosen by Madame Guyon to sit in judgement on her doctrine, Bossuet, Noailles (then Bishop of Châlons), and M. Tronson of St. Sulpice, met at Issy in the July of 1694, and finished their deliberations in March 1695. The thirty-four articles which they drew up insist on the duty of making acts, and demands for perseverance, when occasion arises. They condemn indifference to one's own salvation, or to one's past sins; they disown Quietist doctrine about reflections, mortifications, and the Single Act which contrives to exclude all other acts in the prayer of simple regard. They will not allow any pretensions to a secret mystical doctrine handed down from the apostles, or any claim that extraordinary states of prayer are the only way to perfection. We must not exclude the Divine attributes or the mysteries of our Lord's life from contemplation. We must not neglect the natural or supernatural lights given us, on the pretext of abandoning ourselves to Providence, or confine the notions of apostleship and prophecy to a particular form of prayer. The extraordinary states of prayer are very uncommon; and it is dangerous to conduct souls as if they had reached the level (if there is one) at which God moves us to all necessary acts and good works without effort on our part. Souls

[1] *Relation*, iii. v.

tempted to despair must not be allowed to acquiesce in their own damnation, or ask God to exercise his justice on them. Three articles were added, as a sop to Fénelon: the thirteenth, which admits that in the most perfect prayer the act of charity includes the acts of the other virtues; the thirty-third, which allows acquiescence in our own damnation *on an impossible supposition*; and the thirty-fourth, which admits in general that what is a rule for the beginner must not be made a rule for the perfect.

To sign such a document was, for Madame Guyon, a retractation. Whether she realized that she was retracting anything is more doubtful; she was not very good, perhaps, at noticing what other people were saying to her. It was *her* Quietism, and not merely Molinos's Quietism, that was being pilloried. But the articles were a compromise, and showed the defects of a compromise. M. Tronson, with the tradition of M. Olier and M. Olier's masters to defend, was scrupulously anxious not to overstate the case, for fear of rooting up the wheat of mysticism with the tares of Quietism. Noailles was predestined to a life of fatal hesitations. Bossuet could not pull his colleagues with him as easily as he may have hoped; and then, there was Fénelon. If Fénelon and Madame Guyon had both refused their signatures, Issy would have gained nothing. The meshes would have proved too close to let the little fish out. As it was, they proved too wide to keep the big fish in, partly because there was a compromise. The thirteenth article, just mentioned, might perhaps have been reconciled, by a capable lawyer, with the terms of the twenty-first; but from the plain man's point of view the Conference had said that the act of love included the acts of faith and hope, and that it did not. It was a truce, not a peace, that had been imposed on the controversy.

The result was that Bossuet and Fénelon, independently, proceeded to interpret the articles, and in opposite senses. Madame Guyon was in prison, but Bossuet was determined to stamp out the traces of her influence. Madame Guyon was in prison, but Fénelon was determined that her principles, as he understood them, should be left at large. *Dux femina facti*; from her seclusion at Vincennes, like a phantom Helen, she still animated the combatants. It was because he found her name held up to censure in page after page of Bossuet's *États d'oraison*, that Fénelon refused that work the approbation he had offered to bestow. It was because he traced her influence

in every conclusion of Fénelon's *Maximes des saints* that Bossuet made up his mind to write against it. Bremond wants us to believe that Bossuet would have been satisfied, even now, if Madame de Maintenon had left things alone. But if Madame de Maintenon was not satisfied with Fénelon's orthodoxy after Issy, why did she allow him to be made Archbishop of Cambrai? And it was in the same year that Bossuet took up his pen to write the *États d'oraison.*

The two books came out early in 1697. Which of the champions had broken the truce it would be difficult to say. The *Maxims,* certainly, drove a coach and four through Issy by allowing the soul in desolation to acquiesce absolutely in its own eternal loss.[1] But it seems clear that the book was meant to be within the terms of the definitions, and in the main succeeded. Its design was not to provoke further controversy; rather, it was a sober manifesto, claiming for contemplative prayer its full rights, and not stating, though perhaps implying, that the contemplative prayer in question was Madame Guyon's. A kind of intellectual chivalry kept Fénelon true, all the time, to the cause of the distressed heroine, but it is swallowed up more and more by the indignation of the author who thinks he has been misunderstood. At the first stage of the controversy few will doubt that it would have been wiser to let the *Maximes des saints* pass without comment, errors and all—I mean, from Bossuet's point of view, and that of the French Court. To raise the cry of *Fuoco!* meant an appeal to Rome, and the France of that period was not in love with Roman intervention.

Bossuet would not leave the thing alone, for many reasons. His account of the scandal which the book caused is probably, as Bremond suggests, exaggerated.[2] Officially, no doubt, the Court had to go into half-mourning over Fénelon's orthodoxy; but it was Bossuet who fanned the flame of discontent. We never like the man whose book appears at the same moment as ours, treating the same subject as ours, and treating it differently. Moreover, from Bossuet's point of view, Fénelon was bound over to keep the peace, and had not kept it. Bossuet had saved the State—his favourite accomplishment, and the *Maxims* appeared to insinuate that it had not needed saving; it was as if Julius Caesar had published, in 61 B.C., an appreciation of Catiline.

[1] Condemned proposition no. 8; cp. Issy, nos. 31–3.
[2] *Apologie,* p. 238.

(vi) *The Controversy*

Fénelon had appealed to Peter, to Peter he must go. Rome, as Père Dudon reminded us, has her *lenteurs*, and while the cardinals, from 1697 to 1699, were making up their minds what to think, there was time for one of the most famous literary controversies of all history to be conducted in France. It would be impossible to trace the whole course of it. Pamphlet followed pamphlet, until Fénelon reached the position of writing[1] a Reply to Bossuet's Remarks on Fénelon's Reply to Bossuet's *Relation*. This was towards the end of 1698; a full year before Pope Innocent had been mildly complaining about the inexhaustible fecundity of the French genius; 'Questi Francesi cacciano via infiniti libri; come possono fare?'[2] Fénelon, who in August 1697 had written to Beauvilliers, 'C'est dans le silence que sera notre force',[3] was unwearied in explaining what he had meant, and insisting that he had not meant this or that; Bossuet, *un grand simplificateur*, as Bremond maliciously calls him,[4] adopted the attitude of the plain, blunt man, and stuck to the literal sense of the *Maxims*. The *Relation*, published early in 1698, was probably the most effective of his efforts. The eccentricities of Madame Guyon, the alleged opportunism and insincerity of Fénelon, were revealed for the first time both to the French and to the Roman public, and there is no doubt that the recital made an impression. But it did Bossuet no good in the eyes of posterity; the use of documents which were entrusted to him privately for the public denunciation of their authors was frankly inexcusable, and the man who has recourse to personalities will always look as if he doubted whether he has a good case.

As for the controversy proper, it turned almost entirely on the question whether the love of God, at its highest, does or does not mean consciously excluding all thought of our own eternal happiness; that, and the practical question which was a pendant to it—whether in the extremes of desolation a soul might be encouraged to acquiesce in the prospect of its own eternal loss. Half of the propositions originally selected for censure are concerned with these two topics; of those which, ultimately, were condemned,

[1] The Abbé Bossuet, in Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 375.
[2] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 284.
[3] Ibid., no. 138.
[4] *Apologie*, p. 263.

nearly two-thirds. The rivals, as they defined their positions with more exactness, drew continually closer together; in a friendly atmosphere agreement on a formula would probably have resulted. But it was war to the knife; Bossuet and his party were determined that Fénelon should be judged, not by the expressions he had come to use, but by the expressions which stood in the text of the *Maxims* themselves, interpreted with all rigour.

Could they achieve that end? Innocent XII, though not suspected of favouring Quietism like Innocent XI, had a tenderness for Fénelon, and dreaded a scandal if he should refuse to submit under a condemnation. Casanata was still powerful, but the attitude of the other cardinals was ambiguous. The Jesuits, the front-line troops of ten years ago, were thought to be in the interests of Cambrai. Among the ten cardinals to whom the business was to be turned over, five were for gentle measures. Would it be possible to condemn the book in general, without stigmatizing any propositions? To condemn the book as it stood, with a rider intimating that Fénelon had now changed his opinions? Or to leave the book unmentioned, and to draft a series of Canons expressing the true doctrine of interior prayer? News of all these hesitations reached Meaux, and caused terrible searchings of heart. Bossuet realized, no one better, that even when you are defending the truth before a tribunal supernaturally armed against error, you must represent your case forcibly and unremittingly, by means of trusted agents. His agents were the Abbé Philippéaux, whose history of the controversy has won him no applause, and his own nephew, the Abbé Bossuet.

Take him how you will, the Abbé Bossuet is an odious fellow. It is not merely that he reflects, and exaggerates, all the prejudices of his uncle, plays Hyde to his Jekyll, calling Fénelon a fierce beast, his party a hellish cabal, and so on.[1] It is not merely that he carries on with such zest the work of an intriguer, congratulating himself that he will soon be able to retain the services of a spy, and sending home for more money on the ground that it has been so expensive giving Christmas-boxes to the lackeys of all the cardinals.[2] It is not merely the shameless *arrivisme* with which he claims, when it is all over, to have been one of the three men who bore the brunt of it, and is surprised that the Nuncio has not received any orders to tell

[1] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 375. [2] Ibid., nos. 375, 394.

the French Court how greatly he, the Abbé Bossuet, has been appreciated at Rome.[1] There is, besides all this, a bumptiousness about the tone of his weekly dispatches which is particularly nauseating; Bremond is trying to give the flavour of it when he calls him 'un homme vile, un malappris et un matamore'.[2] He is at his worst, perhaps, in his frequent interviews with the Pope. He lectures the tired old man about the doctrine of disinterested love; 'il comprit fort bien tout cela. J'allai plus avant, et j'ajoutai qu'il était de foi que la jouissance de Dieu étoit la consommation de toutes les vertus . . . Le Pape fut frappé de mes observations . . . et me dit en termes exprès, *Questa dottrina è cattiva* . . . Pour le confirmer en cette pensée, je lui fis remarquer' . . . and so on.[3] However well satisfied with his own diplomacy, the wretch is never content to let well alone so far as the Holy Father is concerned; 'sa foiblesse et sa facilité lui font faire quelquefois de terribles faux pas'. So another long interview follows: 'enfin je finis, et en prenant sa bénédiction je crus lui devoir répéter que, pour contenter le Roi et les évêques, il falloit une censure de la doctrine'.[4] The worst thing about the Abbé Bossuet is that one has met him.

Whether his uncle really gained by his services may well be doubted. More than once you can read between the lines, and see that the Holy Father, the victim of all this persecution, was not really conciliated by it. After a long diatribe against M. de Cambrai and his friends, 'il a répondu à cela par un soupir'[5]—a sigh which would, perhaps, have given a more perceptive interviewer reason to think. It may well be conjectured that the extreme gentleness with which Fénelon was ultimately treated was the result, in part, of the Abbé Bossuet's atrocious manners. But there is no doubt that he tried. Perhaps the saddest memory you carry away from reading this correspondence is that of his uncle, the Eagle of Meaux, feeding this carrion-bird with scraps of gossip about Madame Guyon and her guilty relations with Père Lacombe.[6] They went down well, the nephew assures us; and he clearly did not scruple to insinuate that Fénelon himself was implicated, though indirectly, in these unsavoury records; after all, that was how they got Molinos condemned.[7]

[1] Bossuet's Correspondence, nos. 426, 484.
[2] *Apologie*, p. 229.
[3] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 336.
[4] Ibid., no. 435.
[5] Ibid., no. 402.
[6] Ibid., nos. 230, 238, 252, 253, 261, 265, 268, 371, 384.
[7] Ibid., no. 158.

Yet the uncle testified publicly, two years afterwards, that he believed Madame Guyon to be innocent.[1]

There is a human machinery about all justice, however venerable its source. But we do not like to be cynically reminded of the human factors in the decision, and at the same time treated to unctuous sentiments about the Providence which directs our affairs. 'Nous avons pour nous', writes M. de Meaux, 'Dieu, la verité, la bonne intention, le courage, le Roi, Madame de Maintenon etc.'[2] There is much virtue in that 'etcetera', which is Bossuet's own. 'Je crains que la tête du Pape ne soit pas fort bonne', the old man writes; and his nephew agrees that his Holiness 'dit toujours *oui* au dernier venu', so that 'il le faut soutenir jusqu'à la fin'.[3] And indeed they persuaded King Louis to write five letters, each more impatient than the last, to 'sustain' the Vicar of Christ. Fair game, perhaps, but people who write like that ought not to speak, almost in the same breath, about 'les saintes intentions du Pape',[4] or assure members of the Curia that they have no intention of prejudicing the mind of Rome, which is the fountain-head of tradition.[5] And more than our sense of humour is outraged when the nephew announces his triumph with the words 'Dieu est plus fort que les hommes; la vérité enfin a triomphé', and the uncle replies, 'Rendez grâces à Dieu de vous avoir conduit par la main'.[6]

(vii) *The Condemnation*

When they came to examine more closely the packet which the cardinals had handed to them, Bossuet and his nephew did not feel so certain that the arm of the Lord had not been shortened after all. It proved, after all, that the Pope had insisted on the most lenient course,[7] and that the Archbishop of Cambrai had not been treated as he deserved.[8] The prosecution had asked for a bull, and they were given a brief—less formal, less weighty, less worthy (they felt) of the occasion. The customary direction, that a copy of the book should be publicly burned, was omitted.[9] Through the direct influence of the Pope none of the propositions was stigmatized as 'heretical',[10] or even as 'bordering on heresy'.[11] The propositions were condemned *in globo*, so that you could not say for certain

[1] Ibid., no. 33 note. [2] Ibid., no. 133. [3] Ibid., nos. 136, 165, 383.
[4] Ibid., no. 300. [5] Ibid., no. 240. [6] Ibid., nos. 436, 442. [7] Ibid., no. 440.
[8] Ibid., no. 466. [9] Ibid. [10] Ibid., nos. 426, 440. [11] Ibid., no. 440.

which of them were erroneous, which were merely rash, or offensive to pious ears.[1] The book was condemned in general, not on the ground that it betrays the reader into wrong conclusions, but on the ground that it *might* do so by gradual degrees.[2] Worst of all, the condemned propositions had all been taken from the *Maxims* themselves, and nothing had been said about all Fénelon's subsequent explanations, which had disclaimed any intention of using the objectionable phrases in the sense in which they were objected to. True, Bossuet tried to put a bold face on it, maintaining that these explanations were ruled out by the clause in the brief which condemned the twenty-three propositions 'sive in obvio earum verborum sensu, sive attenta sententiarum connexione'; as if this meant that they were equally objectionable whether you took them in their context or out of their context.[3] But the inference is wholly unjustified; and, moreover, it is fairly clear that *sive* here means 'either', not 'whether'; some of the propositions were objectionable in themselves, some when you took them in their context. Albani had insisted on this wording, when Casanata wanted *et . . . et*, or at least *tam . . . quam*, as in John XXII's condemnation of Eckhart.[4] It was a lamentable business; and for a time there was talk of having the brief changed into a bull, or demanding a further censure of Fénelon's explanations.[5] But wiser counsels prevailed; it would be dangerous to invite a second rebuff. They had their brief; 'on le recevra comme il est, et on le fera valoir du mieux qu'il sera possible'.[6] After all the royal letters and the Christmas-boxes, Rome had pronounced on the doctrine without chastising the delinquent. You called upon her to fulminate her worst thunders, and she roared you as gently as any sucking dove.

Fénelon rose to the occasion. Say, with his friends, that he was a convinced Papalist, who saw the chance of giving posterity a shining example of obedience; or say, if you will, with his enemies, that he played the game of submission *en artiste éminent*[7]—you cannot deny his superb sense of the dramatic. Hearing of what had happened, at the very moment when he was about to enter the pulpit, he laid aside the sermon he had prepared, and announced to the congregation, in terms of glowing eloquence, the news of his

[1] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 435.
[2] Ibid., nos. 440, 446.
[3] Ibid., no. 460.
[4] Ibid., no. 441.
[5] Ibid., nos. 440, 445.
[6] Ibid., nos. 440, 441.
[7] Crouslé, quoted by Bremond, *Apologie*, p. 234.

defeat. He wrote to the Holy Father, expressing his intention of suppressing the book; 'libellum cum viginti tribus propositionibus excerptis, simpliciter, absolute, et absque ulla vel restrictionis umbra condemnabo'. Bossuet and his nephew both declared his submission to be insincere,[1] and the charge has often been repeated. Lord Acton, at the height of another controversy, quoted Fénelon's case as an example of the somewhat half-hearted allegiance to her decisions which (by his way of it) Rome exacts and her subjects are content to give.[2] He has no difficulty in proving that Fénelon continued, all his life, to distinguish between the sense which the *Maxims* conveyed to the ordinary reader and the sense which he had meant them to convey—the former he had repudiated, in obedience to the brief, the latter had never been condemned. What Acton does not mention is that Fénelon wrote a second letter to the Pope six days after the one quoted. In this he makes it perfectly clear that he distinguishes between the doctrine expressed in the book itself and that expressed in his later explanations; what he now admits, in deference to the authority of the Holy See, is that the *Maxims* were badly worded, 'mentem meam eo in libello male esse explicitam'.[3] A month later Innocent replied *to this second letter* in terms of warm commendation.[4] Only the interference of the inevitable Abbé Bossuet, with threats of the royal displeasure, prevented him from adding that the explanations had not been condemned.[5] To the last, Fénelon maintained this perfectly intelligible distinction, maintaining in his will that he had never meant to uphold any of the false doctrines in question, and at the same time that he had always adhered to the Pope's judgement; 'je n'ai jamais dit un seul mot *pour justifier ce livre*', he says, and none of the quotations adduced by Lord Acton suggest that he did.[6]

We have seen that 'Quietism' is a word often misunderstood. William James, for example, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*,[7] quotes a very harmless passage from the *Spiritual Guide*[8] about scrupulous souls which torment themselves over slight faults, as 'one of those heresies for which the Jesuits got that spiritual genius, Molinos, . . . so abominably condemned'. It is even easier to mistake

[1] Bossuet's Correspondence, nos. 470, 472, 479.
[2] Letters to *The Times*, see Lord Acton's Correspondence, i. 123, 136, 139–44.
[3] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 451. [4] Ibid. [5] Bausset, iii. 86.
[6] Aimé-Martin's introduction to the Lefèvre edition of Fénelon, p. xxx.
[7] Lecture VI (*init.*). [8] ii. 17, 18.

the scope of Innocent XII's brief against the *Maxims*; even more important to determine the bearings of it accurately because Innocent himself announced beforehand, in a phrase which should be of interest to theologians, 'qu'il vouloit juger cette affaire *ex cathedra*'.[1] It should be made clear, then, that the prayer of simple regard, with its neglect of 'sensible images', was not included in the condemnation; the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of the propositions originally selected, which bear on the subject, were deliberately left out, in spite of Casanata's remonstrances. Nor is the charge of 'Quietism' well founded when mystical writers venture to suggest that the prayer of simple regard is a prayer suitable to the needs of many. On the contrary, the twenty-second of the condemned propositions was precisely aimed against the forty-fourth of the *Maxims*, which taught that the way of disinterested love was a mystery jealously guarded against all but a small *élite* of highly privileged souls.

Meanwhile, Quietism itself received its death-blow in the last year of the seventeenth century; just a hundred years before, Gagliardi's *Breve Compendio* had for the first time been translated accurately into French. What lies at the root of the Quietist error? In the last analysis, a kind of ultra-supernaturalism. Just as the Lollard will decry human reason so as to leave more room for the inner light, just as the Anabaptist will protest against human institutions so as to pave the way for a theocracy, the Quietist wants to do away with human effort as such so as to give God the whole right of spiritual initiative. Primarily in his prayer; but ideally—why not?—in every other department of life. He is not content that grace should perfect the work of nature; 'fill the water-pots with water', 'give *ye* them to eat'—and God will do the rest. God alone must do everything; we cannot even co-operate with him, only allow him to operate in us, and forget that he even allows us to allow him. You will find the Quietist's fear of action echoed, sometimes, in the writings of orthodox mystics, though not pedantically insisted on. But the Quietist's fear of reflection is something peculiar to himself. Ultimately, he is the ostrich, burying his head in the sands of spiritual aridity and pretending he is not there. To look out of the corner of your eye and catch sight of yourself praying is to see *yourself* praying, not God. That is the infidelity.

[1] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 147.

God is our first Beginning; he is also our last End. And the Quietist, pedantically fearful of mistaking himself for the principle of his own actions, is Quixotically determined not to make himself, *however indirectly*, the end of his own actions. He will torture himself with scruples to make sure that he is not loving God because he hopes to get anything out of it, or even because he enjoys it. And the effect of this tendency, if it is allowed to have its way, is to depersonalize, dangerously, our love of God; it turns into mere motiveless self-renunciation instead of love proper. Meanwhile, our action and our interest thus wholly identified with God's, how shall we remember to distinguish ourselves, even in essence, from him? Once more the idea of 'losing yourself in God' is common to Quietist and mystic; 'I am no longer alive, it is Christ that lives in me.' But the Quietist has an emphasis all his own; he proceeds to *identify* himself with Christ. 'The good man', said Eckhart, 'is the only-begotten Son of God.'[1] Put that text from the Galatians to a saint like St. Catherine of Genoa and she will take it in her stride. Put it to a philosopher like Fénelon and he (when he is writing in a cool hour) will comment on it with the precision it needs. Put it to a psychopath like Molinos and he will tell you that he has become as God, knowing good and evil; he enjoys that participated light which can assure you that you are not sinning when you sin. Put it to a hysterical subject like Madame Guyon and she will say anything, retract anything, sign anything; 'neither am I capable of giving any reason for my conduct, for I no longer have a conduct, and yet I act infallibly'.[2]

Here, it will be seen, the dangers of Quietism are curiously analogous with those of a contemporary movement, Quakerism. Reverse the positions of the sexes, and there is not a great deal of difference between Francis Lacombe greeting Madame Guyon as 'femme forte, mère des enfants de la petite église',[3] and Martha Simmonds crying 'Hosanna' after Nayler. And indeed there are other resemblances. Madame Guyon, too, has her inner light; she acts infallibly: 'O prudence charnelle, je te laisse à tes partisans.'[4] Nor is there a great distance between Malaval, complaining that 'thy Humanity itself, my Saviour . . . every day keeps people of real devotion away from perfection',[5] and Howgill with his warnings

[1] Denzinger, no. 520.
[2] *Spiritual Torrents*, p. 135.
[3] Bossuet's Correspondence, no. 45.
[4] *Autobiography*, iii. 21.
[5] *Simple Method*, p. 208.

against 'missing Christ the substance, and teaching a religion which was all at a distance, grounded on the report of Christ dying at Jerusalem'.[1]

'Les enfants de la petite église'—it is a phrase which gives us pause. Pietism is a movement exactly contemporaneous with Quietism, and Spener had his doctrine of the *ecclesiola*, the church within the Church. Was that all Lacombe meant, or was there at any time danger of a Guyonian schism? Only, I think, a remote one; Fénelon, certainly, could not have been involved in it. Yet Poiret, that watchful enemy of all that was Catholic, Poiret, who had been the disciple and the propagandist of Antoinette Bourignon, gave the world a French version of the *Spiritual Guide* in the year after Molinos was condemned, and was responsible for the first translations of Madame Guyon.[2] Bossuet, I think, never lighted on a passage in the autobiography which reads, to me, more strangely than all the rest of it, where she claims that she and those who followed her way of prayer were martyrs of the Holy Spirit, just as the old saints had been martyrs for Christ. 'Le règne du Père et du Fils sera rétabli et consommé sur la terre par celui du Saint-Esprit'.[3] She was very close to the dreams of many who had gone before her; Wilhelmina of Bohemia, Guillaume the silversmith, Simon Morin, and Jean Labadie.[4] Was she not, after all, the star-crowned Woman of the Apocalypse, like Elizabeth Buchan in 1779,[5] like Joanna Southcott in 1814?[6] There was, perhaps, a remote danger of schism when Jeanne-Marie Guyon began writing her commentary on the Apocalypse. But God sent her a good adviser. 'Libellum cum viginti tribus propositionibus excerptis simpliciter, absolute, et absque ulla vel restrictionis umbra condemnabo.'

NOTE ON CHAPTER XIV

Antoinette Bourignon

THOSE who are puzzled by the prodigious vogue of Madame Guyon can at least find a parallel for it in the career of a somewhat earlier visionary, Antoinette Bourignon. The chief interest about her, when the whole of her story has been read, is how she came to interest anybody. Yet she did, and

[1] See above, p. 175. [2] Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes*, ii. 95. [3] *Autobiography*, iii. 7.
[4] Grégoire, op. cit. 165. [5] Ibid., v. 128. [6] Matthews, *English Messiahs*, p. 77.

furiously; nor is it the least intriguing fact about her influence that it was felt mainly in Scotland. That the Nuncio at Paris should have warned Catholics against her is perhaps intelligible; with all her farrago of heresies she never openly disavowed her allegiance to the Church. But why the Vicar Apostolic in Scotland?[1] Why should it have been an Episcopalian clergyman, George Garden, who was at pains to translate her writings?[2] And why should the Kirk itself have been so exercised over her views that Bourignonism was disavowed under that name by all candidates for Presbyterian ordination between 1711 and 1889?[3] In England, it may be added, she had the inglorious fate which befell so many theologians of so many schools, that of being 'potted' by Wesley. It is not surprising to learn that 'in editing the treatise Wesley deleted every paragraph, sentence and clause containing distinctive doctrines'.[4] *A Snake in the Grass* Charles Leslie might call her, but there was one man who knew how to draw her sting.

She was born at Lille, in 1616, and early gave symptoms of a certain morose piety which she never made lovable. At a time when her father was trying to make her marry she was assured in a vision that she was to restore the Gospel spirit; men and women were to live under her guidance like the first Christians. On her father's death in 1648 she came into a sufficient fortune, which did not prevent this devotee of the Gospel from being entangled in lawsuits for a large part of her life. She refounded and conducted an orphanage whose rules allowed the children only half an hour's recreation during the day; they came to believe that they were possessed by the devil, and the witch-trial that followed, although the jury acquitted her, suggested the advisability of removing to Ghent. It was, however, at Malines, among the fathers of the (Bérullian) Oratory, that she began, at the age of forty-seven, to make spiritual disciples. It is important to observe that her beginnings were entirely Jansenist; and indeed her misfortunes were largely bound up with the attempt to found a Jansenist colony at Nordstrand, an island off the coast of Denmark. In describing her as a Quietist her biographer shows little appreciation of religious history. She cuts the paradoxical figure of a Jansenist who was also a Pelagian.

At the time of her flight from Lille she was assured in a vision that God would make her famous through the whole world.[5] The egotism of the words need not surprise us; 'Believing deeply on religious grounds . . . in her own infallibility, she was so autocratic in her disposition that she could not associate with anyone on a footing of equality.' Her spiritual children 'must be obedient children, accepting her laws and bending to her will without reserve or hesitation'.[6] If they were Catholics she expected them, roughly speaking, to throw overboard the whole doctrine of the Church and of the

[1] *Antoinette Bourignon, Quietist*, by Alexander MacEwen, D.D. (London, 1909), p. 9.
[2] Ibid., p. 10. [3] Ibid., p. 15. [4] Ibid., p. 18. [5] Ibid., p. 43. [6] Ibid., p. 45.

Sacraments. If they were Jansenists she put them right by assuring them that 'Disputes about sufficient and effectual grace are mere words. All the books which argue on such topics ought to be burned.'[1] The fact that she escaped censure must be attributed to her prudence in avoiding publication; none of her works had seen the light when she left Malines for Amsterdam in 1667.

Here she enjoyed a brief apotheosis. Amsterdam was a receiving station for all the sects of Christendom, and she won the respect of all in turn by violently disagreeing with them. For this she had no warrant other than her inward light; but in an age greedy of spiritual novelties any private inspiration was looked up to as long as it was thoroughly private. She found the Anabaptists proud,[2] Labadie ecclesiastically minded,[3] the Quakers unspiritual.[4] With these last she ought to have felt some kinship; did she not boast that for twenty years she never read the Scriptures because she found it simpler to trust the revelations made to her in prayer?[5] But nobody would do, though she met everybody and won enthusiastic admiration from Comenius, the aged bishop of the Bohemian brethren, then in his dotage.[6] 'Not one sect of religion has spoken to me of its sentiments without my immediately perceiving what good or evil it contained';[7] but we may believe it was the latter she rubbed in. The most important acquaintance she made was that of the industrious Poiret, who proceeded to 'build her up' exactly as he 'built up' Madame Guyon a few years later.

Her own doctrines have little that is positive in them apart from certain fantastic speculations about our first parents which she is suspected of having borrowed, without acknowledgement, from Jacob Böhme. Her Quietism was a very shallow affair; she did not concern herself with disinterested love, and she caricatures the Quietist negations; thus, she forbids the practice of almsgiving as only leading to mischief.[8] Madame Guyon really wanted every man (except perhaps the unfortunate Père Lacombe) to be his own director; Antoinette preferred to be the world's director and do the Quietism for herself. Out of all her voluminous writings her biographer does not quote a single sentence which betrays any marked degree of spiritual insight. 'Examine well all that comes from my pen, and you will always find more and more enlightenment and wholesome instruction, especially in those twenty-three letters which I have written to you about the words of Jesus, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.*'[9]

Her 'persecutions' in Germany and Denmark (she never spent a night in prison) were not more numerous than might have been expected by a visionary who denied the eternity of the Divine Word and insisted all the

[1] *Antoinette Bourignon, Quietist*, by Alexander MacEwen, D.D. (London, 1909), p. 58. [2] Ibid., p. 72. [3] Ibid., p. 77. [4] Ibid., p. 78. [5] Ibid., p. 34. [6] Ibid., p. 75. [7] Ibid., p. 82. [8] Ibid., p. 120. [9] Ibid., p. 123.

time that she was a Catholic. The closing stages of her life were chiefly marked by inability to keep the loyalty of her own disciples. She fell ill in 1680 and made the curious declaration, 'If I die, it is not the will of God; for the mission he has given me, and what I was bound to do and to write, I have not yet completed.'[1] Only Poiret, who arrived in time for the funeral, can have echoed her sentiments.

[1] Ibid., p. 205.

XV

THE FRENCH PROPHETS

BEFORE we cast stones at our ancestors for stoning the prophets it is well to assess the reasons they had, or thought they had, for taking alarm. Nobody can read a book like Bishop Lavington's *Enthusiasm of the Methodists and Papists Compared* without wondering how a Christianity so thin-blooded can ever have qualified a human being for ordination. The very word 'enthusiastic' is a compliment, though sometimes a guarded compliment, in our modern speech; was there really an age when it could be bandied about as a term of reproach? True enough, in the eighteenth century the pulses of religion beat intolerably slow. But, in justice to the stone-throwers who then flourished, we must remember that the beginning of the century had witnessed the rise of two sinister movements to which Methodism in its early days bore a disconcerting resemblance; that of the Huguenot prophets in the Cévennes, and that of the Jansenist convulsionaries at the cemetery of Saint-Médard.

We have seen already strange phenomena attending the process of 'convincement' among the earliest Quakers; how 'many fall into dreadful Tremblings in their whole Bodies and Joints, with Risings and Swellings in their Bowels; Shriekings, Yellings, Howlings and Roarings'.[1] There seems to be little doubt, in spite of the alternative explanation produced by Fox himself, that these manifestations were the origin of the name by which, among its enemies, the sect was christened.[2] But it was only a passing phase, as even Baxter admits,[3] nor is it an essential element in the history of the sect. With the coming of the eighteenth century you are suddenly presented with the spectacle of two separate movements, considerable in their importance and obstinate in their survival, which find their characteristic expression, and almost their *raison d'être*, in physical contortions which outquake the Quakers. Camisards and Convulsionaries

[1] Turner, *History of Providences*, quoted by Lavington, *Enthusiasm of the Methodists and Papists Compared*, iii. 294.

[2] See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'Quakers'.

[3] *Life*, p. 77.

—was there any connexion between the two? The suggestion has sometimes been made,[1] but the probabilities are enormously against it. In their ostentatious concern for the unity of the Church the Jansenists were for ever denouncing the Huguenots; Arnauld crossed swords with Jurieu, and not amicably. And nobody is more Pharisaically determined than your Jansenist not to fall into the errors of his opponent. The wonder is that the Jansenists ever condescended to have convulsions once it was pointed out to them that the trail had been blazed in advance by the pupils of du Serre. It is more credible that the two tendencies had a common origin in the belief, endemic among enthusiasts, that the end of the world was now shortly to be expected, and that an invasion of the miraculous was a suitable, perhaps an inevitable, prelude.

(i) *The Prophets of the Cévennes*

When the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685 the Huguenot world was in a mood propitious to fanaticism. In those valleys of southern France which had enjoyed liberty of worship for a full human lifetime, resentment was hot against the representatives of government, still hotter against the *Nouveaux Convertis* who in large numbers had deserted the standard of Calvinism. The Protestant leaders, exiled in Holland or Switzerland, looked eagerly for some reversal of the political situation in Europe which would compromise the fortunes of Louis XIV. One of the most prominent of these, Pierre Jurieu, was a respectable controversialist holding a pastorate at Rotterdam; he undertook, in an evil hour for the fortunes of his party, to comment on the Apocalypse. The scholar, as might have been foreseen, turned prophet. He won some credit for his predictions by announcing that William of Orange would usurp the throne of England; a revelation which need have caused no surprise since it is now generally agreed that it was Jurieu himself who put the idea into William's head. As he himself admitted, with engaging candour, 'Souvent les prophéties, supposées ou véritables, ont inspiré à ceux pour qui ils avaient été faites les desseins d'entreprendre les choses qui leur étaient promises.'[2] But it was with more eagerness that he sought in the oft-threaded labyrinth of St. John's testimony a clue to the future of the reformed religion in France.

[1] *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique pendant le XVIII*ème *siècle* (Bruges, 1825), i. 202.

[2] Brueys, *Histoire du fanatisme de notre temps* (Utrecht, 1737), i. 54.

An earlier Huguenot commentator, Dumoulin, had foreseen the downfall of the Catholic Church in A.D. 2015.[1] Jurieu, preferring quick results, dated it in 1690, at least so far as France was concerned; in France the Two Witnesses were already awaiting their resurrection, at the end of three years and a half.[2] The whole of the Camisard revolt, like so many other forlorn hopes in ecclesiastical history—the defence of Munster, for example—has to be seen against a strong apocalyptic background. It was well organized, and its leaders, Cavalier especially, took no unnecessary risks. But the inspiration under which its soldiers fought was that which comes from the certainty that you are going to win; the stars in their courses are fighting on your side. Even in exile, as we shall see, they continued to threaten the world with judgements.

The *Accomplissement des Prophéties, ou la Délivrance prochaine de l'Église* was not well received in Huguenot circles generally.[3] But it had its *retentissements* among the remnant in France; and its influence, if not the influence of Jurieu himself, seems to have produced the extraordinary activities of M. du Serre. This man, the owner of a glass-factory, collected fifteen children of either sex from the peasantry of the Vivarais and trained them in the art of prophecy. His school was at Mont Peyra in the Dauphiné; here amid scenes of rugged grandeur he initiated his pupils, exercised by two or three days of fasting, into the four grades of prophecy, breathing into their mouths to convey the gift of Pentecost.[4] Was he genuine? His frequent visits to Geneva, across the frontier, gave rise to the suspicion that he was in concert with the exiled leaders there,[5] and the historian of the Reformed Church in France writes him down unhesitatingly as 'an adroit knave'.[6] If he planned the mass hysteria which his scholars were destined to produce he must certainly have had powers of no common order. Or was he simply an enthusiast following the light of his visions? It is tempting to think of him as deriving his inspiration from the technique of his own glass-blowers. Jurieu certainly believed in the genuineness of the child-preachers; when three of them became Catholics he remarked 'qu'ils pouvaient être devenus fripons, mais que certainement ils avaient été prophètes'.[7]

[1] Brueys, op. cit. i. 59.
[2] Smedley, *History of the Reformed Religion in France*, iii. 292.
[3] Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes religieuses*, ii. 108.
[4] Brueys, op. cit. i. 112.
[5] Ibid. 98.
[6] Smedley, op. cit. iii. 293.
[7] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 110.

Having graduated in this singular school the children, it seems, were encouraged to go round the country preaching, in the hope of bringing back the *Nouveaux Convertis* to their Protestant allegiance. Some doubt is expressed by Bost[1] whether the child-prophesyings and the hysteria were really influential before the general outbreak of revolt at the end of the century; de Brueys, he complains, is too ready to derive his material from confessions extracted by the methods of the persecutor. Vivens and Brousson, from whose sermons Bost gives long quotations, were certainly not prophets of ecstasy, they were ordinary Huguenot preachers. Perhaps de Brueys exaggerates when he tells us that between June 1688 and February 1689 five or six hundred children were going round prophesying.[2] But it is impossible to get rid of the impression—Brousson himself confirms it—that the twelve years preceding the actual revolt were marked by rumours of preternatural phenomena among which the precocities of childhood were prominent. Children were said to have prophesied at six or seven, even at three years old; one at the age of six months.[3] And the tradition lived on; a child of twelve was prophesying in London as late as 1708.[4]

According to de Brueys (whom our other authors follow) the four grades of inspiration which du Serre professed to impart were named, respectively, *l'Avertissement*, *le Souffle*, *la Prophétie*, and *le Don*. He tells us no more about them except that those who reached the stage of possessing *le Don* performed miracles but seldom continued to prophesy.[5] The usual method of preaching seems to have been as follows. The prophet beat his head with his hands for some time, then fell down on his back; his stomach and throat swelled up and he remained speechless for some minutes, after which he broke out into utterance.[6] De Brueys gives us a more highly coloured account of these symptoms elsewhere, on the authority of one who had experienced them; you shivered all over your limbs as if in a fever, then you fell, foaming at the mouth, and you lay motionless with your stomach and your neck swelled out, a state which might last for several hours.[7] When a congregation was present, the preacher shouted 'Miséricorde' many times over, echoed by his congregation. Then he beat his head, crying 'Miséricorde' again,

[1] C. Bost, *Les Prédicants Protestants des Cévennes*, i. 303. [2] Brueys, op. cit. i. 1.
[3] Bost, op. cit. 188. [4] Smedley, op. cit. iii. 311. [5] Op. cit. i. 374.
[6] Ibid. 111. [7] Ibid. 156.

then directed his audience to fall on their backs, conducting them with his hand like an orchestra. It was a mark of reprobation if you did not fall when you were told to. The preacher now fell into convulsions, as a prelude to the actual sermon.[1] It is not clear whether the auditors, too, were expected to have convulsive movements; but this did sometimes happen, even to strangers who were present.[2]

The swelling of the stomach provides an interesting parallel with Quaker manifestations. Even more striking, if they are correctly reported, are the resemblances between the alleged powers of the Camisard prophets and those of the Jansenist convulsionaries. These have been preserved for us by the author of the *Convulsions de nos temps*.[3] It was impossible for the bystanders to stop the convulsive movements; the subject of them, who was in a state of trance, felt complete tranquillity throughout and returned to full health immediately afterwards. Sometimes the prophets would fall from rocks 12 feet high without injury. Some drove knives into themselves leaving no mark, or gave proof that fire could not burn them. Without any education they preached an exalted piety and quoted Scripture texts aptly enough. They talked sometimes in languages they could not have known; made prophecies or told of things which were happening at a distance and were proved right by the event. Most of them during the period of their inspiration were quite unconscious of what they did or said. It should be added that their claims were sometimes exaggerated. Gabriel Astier assured his hearers that they were invulnerable just before they were cut to pieces by the regulars.[4] Nor can we derive much reassurance from the single instance of their glossolaly which has been preserved to us. 'Mon enfant', said Marion Fage, in London, 'je m'en vais répandre sur les ennemis mes jugements terribles, et ma dernière sentence sera, Tring trang, swing swang, hing hang.'[5] It is the language of a spiritualistic séance.

Probably with the Camisards, as with other enthusiasts, we have to allow for a gradual toning down of the symptoms; the violence of the ebullition subsided, and it will have been difficult for the

[1] Brueys, op. cit. i. 149–53.
[2] Smedley, op. cit. iii. 308.
[3] Quoted by Mathieu, *Histoire des miraculés et des convulsionnaires de Saint Médard*, pp. 479–80.
[4] Brueys, op. cit. i. 142.
[5] Smedley, op. cit. iii. 309, note.

exiles who came over to England to recapture the mood of the nineties. But they did not, like the Quakers, allow the convulsionary tradition to die out; it was an integral part of their witness. The main elements of their technique were unchanged. Thus we read of an English follower of theirs in 1707:

> J. P. was for a long time under violent agitations, and laboured greatly with struggles in his throat and organs of speech, almost as if he were choking, and uttered some inarticulate sounds. Here the Spirit threw him violently upon the floor, where he lay stretched out as dead, without motion or breathing. After some time, there came a trembling motion into every part of him at once, his feet, legs, arms and shoulders; after which there appeared some breathing, which grew still louder and stronger in him, . . .

and so he proceeds to the business of prophecy.[1] Some thirty years later the Wesleys came across the survivors of the movement and have given us their impressions of it. Charles shared a bedroom with one of them at High Wycombe and was alarmed to find that while undressing he 'fell into violent agitations, and gobbled like a turkey-cock'.[2] And John was allowed to witness the transports of a woman prophet: 'She came in, and soon after leaned back in her chair, and seemed to have strong workings in her breast, with deep sighings. Her head and hands, and by turns every part of her body, seemed also to be in a kind of convulsive motion. She spoke much, all in the person of God, and mostly in Scripture words, of the fulfilling of the prophecies, the coming of Christ at hand, and the spreading of the gospel all over the earth.' He was not impressed and was inclined to put it down to hysteria or even to artifice.[3]

(ii) *The Camisards at Home*

The Camisards, it will easily be imagined, were the *enfants terribles* of the Huguenot party just as the Circumcellions were of Donatism. Ever since the revocation of the Edict there had been two factions among the Huguenots, in disagreement over the lawfulness of resisting the civil power.[4] The appearance of the prophets was a signal for fresh divisions. Merlat, an exiled pastor at Lausanne, wrote violently against their alleged miracles, which were defended no less violently by Misson in his *Théâtre sacré des Cévennes*. To make matters worse the prophets were commonly accused of preaching

[1] Smedley, op. cit. iii. 312, note.
[2] Southey, *Life of Wesley*, ch. viii.
[3] *Journal*, 28/1/39.
[4] Brueys, op. cit. i. 11.

an antinomian morality.[1] A letter addressed to Brousson by one of the *Nouveaux Convertis* denies the miracles, gives instances of predictions which had been falsified by the event, and accuses the women prophets of sexual irregularities which they justified by claiming a special guidance from the Holy Spirit.[2] These imputations followed the Camisards into exile, and Bishop Lavington, a greedy collector of scandal, assures us that the loose morality common among enthusiasts, from Montanus to David Georg, 'was zealously inculcated and defended in print, as well as exemplified in practice, by Mr. Lacy, so famous among the French Prophets'.[3]

Of these visionaries, the first to attract attention was Gabriel Astier, a young man who appeared in the Vivarais, prophesying the establishment of the Protestant religion in France for May 1689.[4] The assemblies which listened to his preaching sometimes numbered three or four thousand,[5] and it was only natural that authority should proscribe them. A proclamation was made inviting them to disperse before the troops were given orders to fire. But Astier had assured his followers that if they stood their ground and raised shouts of *Tartara* weapons would be powerless against them. At the first approach of the troops they were discovered lying on the ground in ecstasy, or breathing into one another's mouths to produce an inspiration of supernatural courage; it was only as the failure of the prediction became apparent that they began to fire in their turn.[6] At the next encounter it was the Camisards who opened hostilities; they were dispersed, and Astier, found hiding in their ranks, paid the death-penalty.[7] By the end of 1690, the year of triumph announced by Jurieu, the whole prophetic movement seemed to have collapsed.

Meanwhile, however, the preaching of Vivens and Brousson was beginning to raise trouble in the Cévennes. They did not long elude the watchfulness of the authorities; Vivens was killed defending himself in 1695, and Brousson, who confessed that he had exchanged treasonable messages with the army of Schomberg,[8] was executed in 1698. But their ministry, though neither of them belonged to the school or used the methods of du Serre, was accompanied by an outbreak of belief in supernatural manifestations which kept

[1] Brueys, op. cit. i. 142.
[2] Bost, op. cit. ii. 518.
[3] Op. cit. ii. 161.
[4] Bost, op. cit. i. 311.
[5] Brueys, op. cit. i. 146.
[6] Ibid., pp. 175 sqq.
[7] Ibid., pp. 190 sqq.
[8] Ibid., p. 291.

enthusiasm at fever-height. In a manuscript which was found on him when he was captured Brousson relates numerous stories of earthquakes and lights from heaven; a rain of blood had fallen on the Vivarais in 1695, a child of nine months old had sung psalms; he himself had heard, for long stretches of time together, celestial music echoing in his ears.[1] Some of the miracles reported at the time appear to have been purely fictitious;[2] but it is certain that Brousson was convinced of supernatural interference.[3]

It was not till the War of the Spanish Succession broke out in 1701 that these troubles came to a head. The murder of the Abbé du Chayla in the following year was the signal for an armed rising accompanied by the burning of churches, the massacring of priests and of *Nouveaux Convertis* on a hideous scale. To detail these atrocities would be tedious as well as painful; let it serve for a sample that the year 1704 alone saw the murder of eighty priests and some 4,000 lay Catholics in cold blood.[4] Orthodox Huguenot opinion was shocked, and among the instructions given to some messengers from Holland intercepted by de Basville was an appeal to the insurgents to discontinue this useless bloodshed and take their stand on liberty of conscience.[5] It is not to be denied that cruel reprisals were sometimes taken, especially by irregular bands of Catholics which had been formed to resist the outbreak.[6] Nor were the official methods of repression less odious than such methods commonly are. The use of the death-penalty against those who had merely provided arms,[7] the transportation of able-bodied men from suspected villages,[8] and finally the devastation of thirty-two parishes in the hope of smoking out the rebels from their homes,[9] make reading which sickens the heart. Unfortunately such records can be matched from the history of many nations which have had to deal with internal rebellion while the enemy was at their gates; of many armies which have been engaged in the thankless task of stamping out guerrilla warfare, with its secret and silent movements, its hidden bases among lonely hills, its dependence on the tacit support of a friendly country-side.

But what lends an added touch of horror to the Camisard murders

[1] Bost, op. cit. i. 185, Smedley, op. cit. iii. 295. [2] Brueys, op. cit. i. 224, 227.
[3] Ibid., p. 211. [4] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 113. [5] Brueys, op. cit. ii. 211.
[6] Ibid., p. 76. [7] Ibid., p. 179. [8] Ibid., p. 136.
[9] Ibid., p. 220. De Basville, however, would not have innocent villagers used as hostages; ibid., p. 162.

is that they were done not merely in the name of religion but under the direct influence of a religious inspiration. The cynical brutality of governments in crushing out revolt, the mean and hateful revenges taken by an oppressed people, may shock our sense of humanity; but the motives of them are too easily credible, too much akin to the baser instincts in our own nature, to make us feel the full force of Lucretius' *Tantum relligio*. It is when good men, or what seem to be good men, interpose on the side of barbarism, and preach against clemency as something in itself hateful to God, that we begin to despair of the weak vessels we human creatures are. Such are our feelings when we read of the Covenanting minister whose sermon on the Amalekites led to the massacre of the prisoners at Philiphaugh. Such are our feelings when the Camisard prophets override the wishes of their military leaders by insisting that women and children must be put to the sword with the rest.[1] Yet these men, to all appearances, were men of conscience; la Rivière, a pupil of Vivens, justified the massacres when he stood his trial, on the ground that St. Paul told the Corinthians to take away the wicked from among them.[2] That is the worst of it; the ultrasupernaturalist faced with a moral problem believes that the solution is given to him directly by the voice of God, and from that arbitrament there is no appeal.

We are not concerned with the course of military operations in the Vivarais, or in the Cévennes. De Brueys, who was clearly brought up on Livy, has the *Dum-haec-in-alia-parte-geruntur* style of narrative to perfection, but the plain fact is that it is a dull war to read about; a war of skirmishes and surprises, of lucky escapes and lucky captures, much like any frontier expedition in the history of our own Empire. Cavalier, the only leader of military genius on the Huguenot side, had seldom more than a thousand men under his actual command; it was a proud day for him when he made peace in due military form with Marshal Villars and retired from the conflict. His lieutenants, accusing him of treachery to the cause, continued hostilities, which smouldered on, with some encouragement from England, till 1710. No result had been achieved except to make the Huguenot fortunes more desperate than ever.

The *rôle* of the prophets during the war was a singular one. They did not lead the troops, but each commando seems to have had its

[1] Brueys, op. cit. ii. 83. [2] Ibid. i. 242.

own military chaplain (as it were) whose voice could be more potent than that of the leader himself. Cavalier, who was less under the enthusiastic influence than most of his colleagues, nevertheless had a favourite prophet, Daniel Gui. As we have seen, it was the prophets who decreed whether prisoners should or should not be spared;[1] they sometimes gave the signal for the opening of a battle[2] and prophesied its event, not always with accuracy.[3] In the negotiations which led up to the peace we are told that it was only the influence of the prophets which saved Cavalier from being killed by his own supporters;[4] on the other hand, it was they who ultimately stiffened Roland in his resistance when Cavalier had failed them.[5] Nor did Cavalier decide to accept Villars's offer until his own prophet, Daniel, had cast lots against Roland's prophet, Moses, and drawn the winning lot.[6]

(iii) *The Camisards in Exile*

Those of the prophets who survived were dispersed when peace came, or earlier still. Some of them made their way to Germany, where on the whole they were ill received; but we are told that at Halle 'ils avaient trouvé des têtes disposées à l'adoption de leurs rêveries, et qui ont contribué à susciter des idées fanatiques en Allemagne'.[7] This notice is of the highest interest. It was at Halle that Spener's Pietists had founded their great orphanage, and one of the pupils there at the time of the Camisard visit was Count Zinzendorf, then a boy of thirteen.[8] It seems possible, therefore, that the refugees from the Cévennes helped to arouse the spirit of enthusiasm which gave birth to the Moravian brethren and so, indirectly, to the Methodist movement in our own country.

Others, with the instinct of discredited prophets, made their way to England. They were disowned after examination by the Huguenot body in London, and three of them stood in the pillory as impostors. It is amusing to note that one of the charges brought against them was that of 'terrifying the Queen's people'; revelations about the approaching end of the world did not go down so well in London as in the Cévennes.[9] Nevertheless, they made converts,

[1] 'Le prophéte trembla, tomba par terre, demeura assoupi quelques moments, et puis, s'étant relevé, il leur dit que le Saint-Esprit venait de lui déclarer qu'il fallait tuer M. de Saint-Cosme.' Brueys, op. cit. i. 344. [2] Ibid. ii. 282. [3] Ibid. i. 359.
[4] Ibid. ii. 346. [5] Ibid. 362. [6] Ibid. 356. [7] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 117.
[8] Holmes, *History of the United Brethren*, i. 173. [9] Smedley, op. cit. iii. 310, note.

among whom John Lacy and Sir Richard Bulkeley were the most prominent; John Lacy found that he could talk fluently in Latin, and Sir Richard could answer for a young gentleman, an attorney in the Middle Temple, having spoken Hebrew for three or four hours together though he did not know even the alphabet of that language.[1] But what contributed most to their publicity was the announcement made by several prophets that a certain Dr. Emes, then on his death-bed, would be raised from the tomb five months after his burial. The French prophets never did things by halves.

It was the old tragedy of the Englishman and his foreign guests; a spectacle continually re-enacted, from which neither side ever learns. The Englishman with all the warmth of his heart applauds the foreign revolutionary whose enemies are his own enemies; amid much public enthusiasm an expedition is sent out in support of the plucky under-dog. But this warmth of heart is not matched by clearness of head; the Englishman in his generous mood of applause forgets to ask whether the foreign revolutionaries he is supporting are really nice people; and when the expedition has bungled and the disappointed survivors of the movement turn to the generous country which has befriended them, as to their natural asylum, there is inevitable disappointment on both sides. The ordinary Englishman knew nothing about the Camisards except that they were plucky Huguenots; he did not stop to ask whether they were ordinary Huguenots or whether the Huguenot body as a whole supported them. When they actually arrived in England and were found to be quite as contemptuous of the Anglican clergy as of the Catholic, quite as ready to prophesy the approaching destruction of London as the approaching destruction of Paris, there were natural hesitations, and the outstretched hand was unobtrusively withdrawn. Among the first to disown the Camisard propaganda were the Huguenot community already established in London.

The tragedy of these men was that the pass had been sold, and by their own accredited leader. Cavalier, after making terms with Marshal Villars, was accepted everywhere, even at Court; but soon afterwards, fearing treachery, he made his escape to England, where he forgot his undesirable antecedents, became very much the colonel, and finished his days as Governor of Jersey. He has left us his reminiscences, which would be more convincing if the propaganda

[1] Smedley, op. cit. iii. 309, note.

in them were not so plainly manifest. But what shocks us is not his sustained invective against the Catholic Church so much as the insincerity which expunges every trace of enthusiasm from his account of the movement.[1] 'In a village called Montel near Alez, twenty young boys, the eldest not being above fifteen or sixteen, went to sing psalms before the church.'[2] This is all he has to tell us about the miraculous child-prophecy proclaimed so loudly in the *Théâtre sacré*, and attested by Brousson! The presence of prophets with the army is elaborately disguised; 'there came among them one Daniel, who made very fine prayers, and prayed with an extraordinary zeal', or 'one Solomon, who was with us in a manner as a Pastor' is the nearest we get to an admission of it.[3] The plain fact is that our exile had his wits about him and knew how to soft-pedal the note of fanaticism. 'Just for a handful of silver'; I do not find it easy to admire Colonel Cavalier.

You may read the pitiful story of what followed through the eyes of Élie Marion, an *émigré* whose journal has been given to the world by the untiring partisanship of M. Bost.[4] He records for you the lost leadership of Cavalier: 'Quoique les amis l'eussent prévenu et fortement exhorté à donner gloire à Dieu en déclarant les grandes merveilles que Dieu avait faites par lui et par les autres que Dieu avait inspirés de son Esprit dans nos Cévennes et aux environs, il se laissa séduire par le tentateur. . . . Il nia qu'il eût été jamais inspiré, et qu'il se fût gouverné dans cette guerre par les inspirations.'[5] The intransigents who followed him into exile did not find that he had made the situation any easier for them. What was good enough for Cavalier, it was argued, should surely be good enough for them. Messieurs the French Ministers of the Savoy accorded them no less than five interviews and were willing to hear all they had to say or even to prophesy. But they were not going to embarrass their own already delicate position in England by underwriting the lunacies of a fanatical lost cause. If the refugees had kept quiet they might perhaps have won a better hearing; but they were energumens, and it was not in them to keep quiet. One of their number began prophesying, and 'le monde accourut en foule pour l'entendre;

[1] *Memoirs of the Wars of the Cévennes* (London, 1726).
[2] Op. cit., p. 23. [3] Ibid., pp. 25, 39.
[4] *Mémoires inédits d'Abraham Mazel et d'Élie Marion sur la guerre des Cévennes*, Charles Bost (Paris, 1931).
[5] Op. cit., p. 156.

la rue était pleine de carrosses des gens de qualité qui y venaient'.[1] His warnings inveighed indiscriminately against the 'abuses' of all the sects, and the French colony turned against the new-comers. There was mob violence and the prophets were hunted from pillar to post, denounced as Jesuits and emissaries of France.[2] Yet it was in the same year, 1707, that the literary propaganda of the Camisard movement reached its zenith with the publication of Misson's *Théâtre sacré des Cévennes* and Lacy's *Cry from the Desert.*

The language in which they were officially denounced by their own fellow countrymen was uncompromising.

> Les mouvements où l'on voit ces prétendus prophètes ne sont que l'effet d'une habitude volontaire dont ils sont entièrement les maîtres, quoique dans leurs accès ils fassent semblant d'être agités par une cause supérieure. Plusieurs de ceux qui les ont vus dans ces simptômes ont reconnu qu'ils étaient de commande et tout à fait indignes de la sagesse du Saint-Esprit. Mais ce qu'on lui fait dire est encore plus indigne de lui. Ce sont des perpétuelles hésitations, des répétitions puériles, un vrai galimatias, des contradictions grossières, des mensonges palpables, des conjectures tournées en prédictions, des prédictions déjà réfutées par l'évènement, ou des moralités que l'on entend dire beaucoup mieux tous les jours, et qui n'ont rien de nouveau que les grimaces dont on les accompagne.[3]

A formal excommunication followed and even judicial proceedings which, however, proved abortive. The prophets took a tabernacle of their own in the Barbican where the mob pelted them with filth, with dead cats, and sometimes with stones.[4] Unfortunately, Marion must have been writing his depositions at the very time when the public was waiting to see whether Dr. Emes would rise from the dead or not, and no allusion is made to this crucial challenge.

No such reticence was observed by the controversial literature on the other side, which was copious. *The Spirit of Enthusiasm Exorcis'd*[5] mentions the Bishop of Exeter, Mr. Chishill, Mr. Hoadly and Mr. Calamy as rival champions in the same field, though curiously it makes no allusion to Shaftesbury's *Essay on Enthusiasm*,[6] the only considerable literary work to which the Camisard agitation gave rise. It must be confessed that *The Spirit of Enthusiasm Exorcis'd* has gone out of its way to achieve pretentiousness. The first 72 pages are

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, etc., p. 157.
[2] Ibid., p. 158.
[3] Ibid., p. 160.
[4] Ibid., p. 166.
[5] London, printed for Richard Sare, 1709.
[6] Op. cit., p. 354.

a sermon delivered nearly thirty years before, apparently against the Quakers, by Dr. George Hickes, afterwards the nonjuring Bishop of Thetford. This is followed by 180 pages on the history of Montanism contributed by a Lay Gentleman, and the marrow of the accusation is contained in another 180 pages entitled, *The New Pretenders to Prophecy Examined*; it is the work of Nathaniel Spinckes, who was Hickes's own successor in the nonjuring line of hierarchy.

It is evident from the accounts which had reached Mr. Spinckes—he does not lay claim to first-hand authority—that the exiled prophets had not condescended to modify their technique. He writes of

> The Shakings of their Heads, Crawling on the Knees, Quakings and Tremblings; their Whistlings, Drummings, Trumpettings; their Thundrings, their Snuffling; Blowing as with a Horn; Panting, and Difficulty of Breathing; Sighing and Groaning; Hissing; Smiling; Laughing; Pointing with the Finger; Shaking the Hand; Striking; Threshing; as likewise their perpetual Hesitations; Childish Repetitions; unintelligible Stuff; gross Contradictions; manifold Lies; Conjectures turn'd into Predictions; their Howling in their Assemblies like a Dog, and being in all manner of Disorder.[1]

Nor was the matter of their revelations less startling than the manner of them. 'A horrible Tempest was to be poured out upon thee, O London . . . God Almighty was to plant his Battering-pieces against this City, which should be besieged and beat down by his Gunns', and it appears that Mr. Lacy professed himself ready to acknowledge his delusion if these signs from heaven did not follow in the course of six months.[2] It is to be remembered that the War of the Spanish Succession was now at its height, and although our nonjuring authors were willing enough to admit the charge of national apostasy, the casual Londoner was not wanting to be reminded of it.

Meanwhile, the French prophets did not live up to the reputation they claimed as miracle-workers. Misson had dwelt lovingly on the portents which had accompanied the outpouring of the Spirit in the Cévennes; on child-prophecy, for example, in which the Camisards specialized. But though we hear of a twelve-year-old girl prophesying in London,[3] this was not after all very sensational; Mr. Spinckes could direct you to a girl at Wellingborough who could repeat sermons at great length by a mere knack.[4] If the Camisards really spoke with tongues, why did the Frenchmen

[1] Ibid., p. 499. [2] Ibid., pp. 441, 442. [3] Ibid., p. 511. [4] Ibid., p. 394.

normally prophesy in French, the Englishmen in English?[1] There was no evidence that Mr. Lacy had forgotten his Latin as thoroughly as he claimed to have forgotten it.[2] Really, nothing miraculous remained, unless it were true that Mr. Lacy could slide along the room with his heels, calves, and knees touching, 'antick gestures' as Mr. Spinckes complains, which 'do by no means suit with the Influence of the Holy Spirit'.[3]

It was no doubt accusations of this kind that put the Prophets on their mettle. They foretold that Stephen Halford, of Birmingham, would die and rise again; but as he was not accommodating enough to carry out the first part of the programme, the second did not arise.[4] Then at the end of 1707 they announced that Dr. Emes would rise from the dead, five months to the day after his interment at the Bunhill Fields cemetery. Mr. Spinckes prints a list of these prophecies, lent him by Dr. Hickes, and unless they have been elaborately forged they certainly imply that the whole credit of the Camisard inspiration was committed to the fulfilment of the prediction.[5] Londoners at any rate were in no doubt about what they were to expect, and the crowd which collected at the cemetery was such that the City Militia was turned out to keep the peace.[6] There is, somehow, an intolerable bathos about the thought of all those heroic visionaries lying killed in action in the Vivarais, while the scattered remnants of the movement must assemble to witness the resurrection of Dr. Emes in Bunhill Fields.

Dr. Emes remained in his coffin; and the prophets had to account for the fiasco by their own absence from the scene; an absence which they attributed in turn to the fear of popular violence.[7] Even so, they had not cut a very heroic figure; it was perhaps time they gave up London and took to the provinces. With the sure instinct of the foreign adventurer they brought their lost cause to Oxford and held a public meeting there, which Thomas Hearne, to the lasting regret of posterity, did not attend. 'About a week since came to Oxford, and put up at the Greyhound, six of the pretended prophets, called Camisars; namely, two men, three women, and a girl. They continued three or four days in the town without any discovery; but at last the women had agitations, and

[1] Shaftesbury, op. cit., p. 384. [2] Ibid., p. 389. [3] Ibid., p. 402.
[4] Ibid., p. 439. [5] Ibid., pp. 509–30. [6] Ibid., p. 430.
[7] Ibid., pp. 431 sqq.

abundance of people went to see them.'[1] It was not long, however, before they were expelled by order of the Vice-Chancellor, who had formed an unfavourable opinion of their morals. On this score it seems that the sectaries were not beyond reproach; even M. Bost, writing of Jean Cavalier de Sauve, refers to 'certaines accusations qui furent portées contre le prophète à Londres, et qui, malheureusement, semblent véridiques en raison de la diversité de leur origine'.[2] They went to Birmingham; a broadsheet published in 1708 recommends a short way with 'these seducers who lately attempted to pervert several inhabitants in the town of Birmingham, in Warwickshire'.[3] They went to Bristol, where we shall meet them again; they were still in evidence in that neighbourhood when the early preaching of Wesleyanism began to arouse symptoms more spontaneous and hardly less sensational than theirs. But their only lasting success was at Manchester, where they converted the unhappily-married Quakeress Ann Lee.[4] She it was who emigrated to America, and there founded a sect which will occupy our attention in a later chapter, that of the Shakers. Thus, some portion of their spirit was perpetuated; and a community which still boasted nearly 200 members[5] in 1926 is derived, through somewhat muddy channels, from M. du Serre and his pupils in the Dauphiné.

[1] *Reliquiae Hernianae*, i. 147.
[2] Op. cit., p. 154.
[3] Smedley, op. cit. iii. 312, note.
[4] Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes*, v. 187.
[5] *Religious Bodies in the U.S.A.*, under 'Communist Churches'.

XVI

THE CONVULSIONARIES OF SAINT-MÉDARD

We have seen that comparisons were drawn between the feats of the Camisard prophets and those of another set of visionaries, who have now to be chronicled in their turn. The resemblance was noticed by Jordan, a Protestant minister who toured France in 1733 and witnessed the convulsions in Paris for himself; he stoutly declared that nothing but trickery was at work in either case.[1] But it must be observed that the claims made for the enthusiasts of Jansenism go far beyond those made for the enthusiasts of Calvinism. It will do no harm to give a list of them here, as they are set forth by Père Lambert, a Dominican, who partly believed them.

We have cases, he says, of fire having no power to burn the convulsionaries; of their being dragged in different directions by terrifying mechanical apparatus, which caused neither dislocation nor pain; of violent blows being dealt them with extremely heavy objects, without producing bruises, and sometimes with the effect of curing inveterate ankylosis; of swords and spits being pressed forcibly against their cheeks and throats, yet failing to pierce them. On other occasions these instruments have penetrated into the breast, the intestines, the hands, the feet of people who underwent crucifixion, without leaving the slightest trace of a wound; people have rolled about in barrels that were armed with steel points, with knives and razors, and have come out full of life. They have spoken Arabic and other languages they had never learnt; they have taken no nourishment in Lent except a handful of bent pins; they have read all sorts of writing, with their eyes bandaged, by the smell.[2]

(i) *The Literature of the Movement*

Carré de Montgéron, a libertine who had been converted after four hours spent in prayer at the tomb of M. Pâris, undertook the

[1] P. F. Mathieu, *Histoire des miraculés et des convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard* (Paris, 1864), p. 242.

[2] Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes religieuses*, ii. 156.

defence of these Jansenist miracles against the Archbishop of Sens. His five volumes, mostly written in prison (where he was not, we must suppose, too jealously guarded), were the signal for the publication of innumerable books, pamphlets, protests, and affidavits, a torrent which did not dry up for half a century. A lifetime might be spent in analysing them, and assessing the value of the arguments for and against. The materials for this very inadequate sketch have been taken, in the main, from two sources. One is Mathieu's *Miraculés et convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard*; the other is the chapters on the same subject in the Abbé Grégoire's *Histoire des sectes religieuses*. Either author demands a passing notice.

Mathieu, although he describes himself as a member of several learned societies, has won no niche in the temple of fame. No mention of him occurs even in the largest edition of Larousse. He was perhaps a *homo unius libri*; and it must be confessed that his work is little more than a long transcript from Carré de Montgéron, illustrated by quotations from other writers on the subject; of his own, he has given us very little. I take him to have been a free-thinker; but he himself discloses the fact that an uncle of his, in extreme old age, had been deprived of his parish as an appellant Jansenist. (He writes in 1864; so near to living memory are the echoes of the bull *Unigenitus*.) His prejudices, therefore, are anti-Catholic—he would say, anti-Jesuit; his interest in the subject is dictated by other considerations. Home, the Spiritualist, was then at the height of his vogue (*Mr. Sludge, the Medium* also appeared in 1864); and Mathieu's attitude is to accept all the facts as reported, and refer the reader, in a somewhat vague concluding chapter, to the spirit-world as a possible explanation of them.

The Abbé Grégoire, though older in date, is more of a living figure. A violent Jansenist, he belonged to the little group among the French clergy which accepted, throughout, the principles of the Revolution. As constitutional Bishop of Blois from 1790 to 1801, and a prominent figure in the troubled politics of all those years, he voted against the death-sentence on Louis XVI, against the Empire, against the Concordat. If he is to be judged by the work under consideration, published in 1828, two years before his death, his literary gifts were not in proportion to his political influence. He had amassed a huge quantity of facts from a bewildering variety of sources; but his own observations, except when they are winged with the shed plumes of

yesterday's controversies, fall abominably flat. Propaganda is seldom out of his mind for many pages together; and two of his longest chapters are devoted to the imaginary sects of the Cordicoles and the Nouveaux Pélagiens, who turn out to be the Jesuits in disguise. Throughout, he is a monument of orthodoxy, as orthodoxy presented itself to his ideas; after a long life spent in thinking against the mind of the Church, after seeing the failure of so many causes he had espoused, he retained the ineradicable Jansenist consciousness of being in the right, Cato of Utica reincarnate once more. The convulsions, which (incredible as it may seem) still lingered on, in a furtive and debased fashion, a hundred years after the death of M. Pâris, filled Grégoire with antipathy and scorn. In him you find the authentic tradition of Père Du Guet and those other orthodox Jansenists, who mourned over Étémare and Carré de Montgéron as the men who had made Israel to sin.

It was, indeed, a singular retribution of Providence that bred a posterity of convulsionaries from the austere stock of Port Royal. Their whole mental equipment might have furnished abundance of fresh material for the *Visionaries* of Nicole. Yet there was justice in the retribution; as we have seen above, Port Royal had a weakness for the miraculous. It is a singular reflection, to which Sainte-Beuve introduces us, that Marguerite Périer, the *miraculée* of the Holy Thorn (1656), lived on till 1733, in which year the convulsionary miracles were at their height. 'Elle est comme un lien réel entre le moment de Pascal et celui du diacre Pâris'—the latter being to the former, in Sainte-Beuve's view, as moonlight unto sunlight and as water unto wine. She praised God 'd'avoir commencé par elle des prodiges qu'elle acceptait en aveugle, sans en voir l'excès déshonorant'; she died with a portrait of Pascal on one side of her bed, and a portrait of M. Pâris on the other. Sainte-Beuve cries 'Shame!'; yet there is something of a real filiation between the two saints of Jansenism.[1]

(ii) *The Miracles at Saint-Médard*

And indeed, as early as 1725, when the *Unigenitus* controversy was at its height, the Jansenists had taken credit to themselves for a domestic miracle, when a woman had been cured of a long illness while assisting at a Blessed Sacrament procession, in which the

[1] *Port-Royal*, iii. 198.

monstrance was carried by a priest whose sentiments were opposed to the bull.[1] Thaumaturgy was in the air. There is no need to suppose, as the enemies of the movement supposed, that the Jansenists were actually prepared to stage a miracle in the interests of their propaganda.[2] But, as we shall see, the whole convulsionary movement is contemporary with the Abbé Etémare's interpretations of the Apocalpyse, and derives its theological impetus from that work. By a singular coincidence this Jansenist theologian plays exactly the same part in the history of Saint-Médard as the Huguenot theologian Jurieu played in the history of the Cévennes.

The immediate occasion of all the trouble was the death of François de Pâris, a pronounced Jansenist in deacon's orders who had acquired, in life, a reputation for sanctity. His mortifications recall those of St. Benedict Joseph Labre; he has the same instinct for starvation and squalor and complete self-obliteration. If his theology had been that of the Catholic Church his cause might easily have been introduced at Rome, though perhaps not without the suspicion of deliberate singularity. But Pâris was a Jansenist to his finger-tips; his biographers record with pride how he passed two whole years without receiving Holy Communion. When the priest brought him the last Sacraments, he embarked on what promised to be a long statement of his views about the bull *Unigenitus*; the priest (who shared his sympathies) cut him short by telling him that his mind on the subject was sufficiently well known.[3] It was as if he were determined, in his last moments, that any miracles which came to be associated with his name should be Jansenist, not merely Catholic miracles. The only other important thing to record of him, for our present purposes, is that after observing a strict fast until six in the evening all through Lent, 'son corps était quelquefois agité de convulsions et de mouvements extraordinaires'.[4] In view of what happened later this is a fact which cannot be passed over, although views may differ as to its significance.

I have said that his death was the immediate cause of the trouble; I should perhaps rather have written 'the building of his monument'. A few miracles were reported quite soon after his burial, but they were not sensational ones; a similar claim was made for Gérard

[1] Gazier, *Histoire générale du Jansénisme*, ii. 276.
[2] *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, &c. ii. 43.
[3] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 84. [4] Ibid., p. 63.

Rousseau of Aveney, another Jansenist who died about the same time.[1] Pâris had been dead for nearly a year when, in 1728, the piety of an admirer raised a tomb over his remains, in the cemetery of Saint-Médard, embellished (after the eighteenth-century manner) with forty-three lines of epitaph. The stone-mason who was entrusted with this exacting order testified afterwards that the body he found in the coffin—he left the grave-clothes undisturbed—felt to the touch like that of a man newly dead.[2]

The eight important miracles which Carré de Montgéron regards as proved beyond all doubt begin with the early thirties. The cures involved were mostly gradual, and it is possible that a determined *promotor fidei* would have found means to cast doubt on them. But they read very much like the cures performed at the tomb of a canonized saint; and it is important to observe that the earlier ones were not accompanied by convulsions of any kind. More than 200 of these miracles were alleged between 1728 and 1731;[3] and Voltaire, summing up the evidence at a later period, alludes contemptuously to 500 or 600 as the total.[4] Had this been all it would have been a triumph for the Jansenists, and a puzzle for the theologians. But in the summer of 1731 the cure of a paralytic, the demoiselle d'Hardouin, gave a different turn to the proceedings. It began, when she was placed on the tomb of M. Pâris, with 'des mouvements d'une violence extrême. Leurs surprenantes secousses paraient être le combat de la vie qui s'empresse de repousser la mort'.[5] A large crowd of persons witnessed her cure; and we can hardly doubt that it was the origin of the convulsionary phenomena which began at this exact time.

The cures, from this date onwards, seem to have been normally if not invariably accompanied by convulsions.[6] The convulsions, however, did not always stop with the disease. We find this in the case of Marie Giroust, an epileptic girl who kept several novenas in honour of M. Pâris, being unable to go to his tomb owing to the frequency of her fits, which took her five or six times a day. When her condition had already improved, she experienced convulsions, easily distinguishable from her epileptic symptoms, as the result of touching a secondary relic of the alleged

[1] Gazier, op. cit. ii. 278.
[2] Mathieu, op. cit., pp. 88–90.
[3] *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, &c. ii. 31.
[4] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 111.
[5] Ibid., p. 176.
[6] *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, &c. ii. 34.

beatus. This was at the end of September 1731, soon after the Hardouin cure. She now began making visits to the tomb by way of thanksgiving for her improvement, and had convulsions there three days running. By the end of the year the convulsions had died down, but reappeared and became common in the early part of 1732; in the August of that year, on touching a relic in the middle of a convulsion, she suddenly announced, 'Je suis guérie', and came to herself. As she did so, she heard a piercing voice pronounce the words just quoted. It appears, however, that the last of her epileptic fits was in the Lent of 1732, so that the convulsions must have outlived them.[1]

(iii) *The Dance of the Convulsionaries*

And now began, in the cemetery of Saint-Médard, that extraordinary dance of the convulsionaries—some invalids, some in perfect health—which made a more than nine-days' wonder in Paris. You saw, in the cemetery, 'men falling like epileptics, others swallowing pebbles, glass, and even live coals, women walking feet in air. . . . You heard nothing but groaning, singing, shrieking, whistling, declaiming, prophesying, caterwauling'.[2] 'Women and girls, who played a great part in these exhibitions, excelled in capers, in somersaults, in feats of suppleness. Some of them twirled round on their feet with the lightning quickness of dervishes; others turned head over heels, or stood on their hands in such a way that their heels almost touched their shoulders.'[3] On the tomb itself you saw the Abbé Bécheraud, hopping incessantly on one leg, and proclaiming that his other leg, which was 14 inches shorter, was growing by a *ligne* every three months.[4] 'There were nearly a hundred, of all ages and sexes. You could spend a whole day waiting in a queue to reach the tomb itself.'[5] All this Carré de Montgéron treats as 'God's work', by which he showed his 'sensible presence' in the cemetery.[6]

That is the extraordinary thing—friendly observers were overcome by a feeling of reverence at the spectacle.[7] The convulsions themselves are thus described, more in detail, by Grégoire:[8] 'violent

[1] Mathieu, op. cit., pp. 202 sqq. [2] L. Figuier, quoted ibid., p. 217.
[3] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 130. It is perhaps interesting to note that the same acrobatic feat was performed by the 'possessed' nuns of Louviers in 1643 (Bremond, *Histoire littéraire*, xi. 160). See also below, quotation from Wesley's Journal on p. 534.
[4] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 216. [5] *Mémoires pour servir* . . . , &c. ii. 44.
[6] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 213. [7] Ibid., p. 217. [8] Op. cit. ii. 127.

convulsions or contortions of the whole body, rolling on the ground, leaping about on the pavement, rigours, tumultuous shakings of the arms, the legs, the head, and all the limbs, resulting in a difficulty of breathing, a quickening and an irregularity of the pulse'. That swelling of the stomach which we have already noted in Quaker and Camisard manifestations reappears here; falling on the ground, too, and remaining insensible for hours together.[1] In their essentials, then, the phenomena of Saint-Médard do not seem to differ greatly from those we have met with, and shall meet with again; it is the attendant circumstances that mark them out—the extraordinary outlets by which the convulsionaries sought relief. All the evidence (if we are prepared to accept it) suggests that they were in a state of trance while the fit lasted. 'Cela ne vient point de moi; je ne suis point maîtresse de ce que je fais et de ce que je suis,' says the widow Thévenet;[2] Mademoiselle Dusson goes into another room and holds a long conversation with an invalid, whom she heals, without knowing anything about it:[3] the Chevalier Folard often sang most of the night, and came to himself remarking, 'Il me semble que je chante'.[4] The convulsionaries, after agitations which would have left an ordinary man completely tired out, came to without any sense of exhaustion.[5]

We have by now become familiar with the reflection, that when strong currents of spiritual emotion, aroused by some religious crisis, sweep through a multitude of human hearts, physical reactions of an abnormal kind are liable to occur as their by-product. We have seen it happen, and shall see it happen again, where some great preacher sweeps his audiences off their feet. What, then, was the influence which unloosed the flood-gates of Saint-Médard? Remotely, no doubt, it was the decision of Louis XV, in 1730, to enforce acceptance of the bull *Unigenitus*. But more immediately it seems to have been the prophetic activity of the Abbé Etémare. He had reached the conclusion that the Church had unchurched herself; that salvation was to be found only among the faithful remnant of Catholics who were appealing against the bull.[6] This conviction led him to the step which has often betrayed enthusiasts into fantasy—he began commenting on the Apocalypse. It was not difficult to read the apostasy of the Gentiles in the existing state of

[1] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 271. [2] Ibid., p. 249 note. [3] Ibid., p. 260.
[4] Ibid., p. 246. [5] Ibid., p. 224. [6] Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, vi. 73.

the Church. From this it followed that the conversion of the Jews was shortly to be expected, and Elias might appear at any moment. The War of the Beast had begun in 1730, and was to come to an end in 1733.[1]

It was this apocalyptic atmosphere that created the convulsions. Two female energumens identified the Abbé Vaillant, then a prisoner in the Bastille, as the prophet Elias; he was prudent enough to disclaim the title. Another convulsionary, who called himself Brother Augustine, claimed to be the prophet's forerunner, and drew after himself a considerable following.[2] Naturally, de Montgéron has to ascribe the signs and wonders which accompanied these embarrassing predictions to the agency of the devil, but he obviously weakens his own case in doing so. The truth is Jansenism had a weakness for prophecy which Sainte-Beuve regretfully traces to the influence of Pascal's *Pensées*.[3] As late as 1775 Père Pinel was announcing the return of Elias.[4] But there was a special reason why this weakness should have got the better of the disappointed Jansenists between 1730 and 1733. Every centenary of our Lord's death is liable to suggest fancies of an apocalyptic sort to those minds which have an itch for the interpretation of mysteries. We have seen how influential such ideas were with John of Leyden and his Anabaptist followers in the thirties of the sixteenth century; we shall see, in a later chapter, how independent movements of an apocalyptic sort sprang up in our own country, in Germany, and in the United States in the thirties of the nineteenth century. Nicholas of Cusa, at the time of the great Conciliar disputes 300 years earlier, had actually prophesied the end of the world in 1734.[5] The convulsions, to those who really believed in them, were nothing less than the outpouring of the Spirit prophesied by Joel. One of these, in a dying profession of faith, said: 'Je pense que cette œuvre est le signe avant-coureur des saints prophètes Élie et Moïse, de l'exécution des desseins du Seigneur pour le renouvellement de l'Église et le rétablissement de toutes choses, par la conversion des juifs et du monde entier, que j'attends avec une ferme foi, et que je crois très prochaine.'[6] The Jansenists were not playing at spiritualism; a rooted religious conviction underlay their eccentricities.

[1] *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, &c. ii. 40.
[2] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 401.
[3] Op. cit. iii. 448 note.
[4] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 145.
[5] *Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Cusanus'.
[6] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 394.

A Jansenist pamphlet quoted by Mathieu seems to suggest that at first all was done in dumb show; prophesying by word of mouth only came later. 'Peu à peu la bouche d'un grand nombre de convulsionnaires s'ouvrit; on entendit des personnes ignorantes, de petits enfants, parler tout le langage des appelants, pour l'appel contre la bulle, contre le fameux formulaire, sur les prédictions et sur les promesses de l'Écriture, sur l'apostasie des gentils, sur la conversion des juifs, et la proximité de l'avènement d'Élie.'[1] The author of the same pamphlet declares that he has heard more than a hundred times a convulsionary talking in an unknown tongue, and understanding any language that was spoken to her. Once again we are reminded of the Camisards. It must be admitted that much of the glossolaly seems to have been quite unintelligible. The Chevalier Folard, who had convulsions every day when he began the Magnificat at Vespers, used to talk in monosyllables: it was 'complete gibberish, of which nobody understands one word. Some declare that at these moments he is talking Slavonic, but I do not believe that anyone can follow him'.[2] The widow Thévenet is similarly described; 'les mots qu'elle prononce avec rapidité sont inintelligibles et n'appartiennent à aucune langue connue'.[3] These accounts are given by unfriendly witnesses; but it is sometimes necessary to check the all-devouring credulity of de Montgéron.

The dumb-show performances of the convulsionaries are more characteristic. Some of them would, apparently, imitate scenes from the life of M. Pâris; 'là, une convulsionnaire puisait avec une cuillère de l'air dans une assiette vide, la portait à sa bouche, se faisait la barbe avec le manche d'un couteau devant un miroir, et catéchisait, pour imiter le diacre Pâris lorsqu' il soupait, se rasait, et catéchisait'.[4] Others went through the motions of saying Mass; one went round baptizing the spectators with the words 'Dieu te baptise dans le feu et le sang', while another followed bestowing the imposition of hands, and saying, 'Recevez le sceau du Saint Esprit'.[5] It appears that they even heard men's confessions.[6] Some of the pantomime was less ambitious; you would see grown-up persons at Saint-Médard playing with dolls, or wheeling toy carts about;[7]

[1] Jansenist pamphlet quoted by Mathieu, op. cit., p. 226.
[2] Letter quoted ibid., p. 246.
[3] Dr. Calmeil, quoted ibid., p. 248.
[4] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 131.
[5] *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, &c. ii. 54.
[6] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 130.
[7] Ibid., p. 131.

exhibitions which were interpreted as figurative, or excused on the ground that they inculcated the sacrifice of human pride. It is a curious fact that those rare convulsionaries who held some position in society—young girls of little or no education were more commonly affected—seemed to catch the infection in its less dignified forms. M. Pinault, a lawyer, barked like a dog for two hours daily.[1] M. Fontaine, who had held an important position at court, fell into ecstasies during the years 1732 and 1733; at nine every morning and three every afternoon he whirled round and round on the ball of his foot for an hour or two, reading aloud the eight volumes of Quesnel's *Moral Reflexions on the New Testament* till they were finished.[2]

But it was not only their imbecilities that gave the convulsionaries a bad name; there was a strong savour of indecency. The extraordinary postures they adopted led, after a time, to the introduction of a costume which was known as the *robe de convulsionnaire*, on the lines, we must suppose, of a gymnasium outfit.[3] But it was impossible to get rid of an ugly element of sex. Those who underwent the convulsions professed to be in violent pain, and demanded relief, *secours*, of various kinds from the bystanders. The women on these occasions would ask men to take them on their knees, or carry them across their backs and on their shoulders.[4] It is not to be wondered at if the more prudent supporters of the convulsions, including Etémare himself, distinguished between them, and put down some of them to the agency of the devil.[5] Dr. Hecquet, who published the first scientific account of the phenomena in 1733, pronounced himself strongly on the unhealthy character of these manifestations,[6] which we find also among the Camisards.[7]

(iv) *The Secours*

In January 1732 the cemetery of Saint-Médard was closed by an order from the Government. It has been customary to satirize this edict, and to point out that it only had the effect of spreading the contagion by decentralizing it. It is arguable, on the contrary, that it was abundantly justified, and not merely as a police measure. Jansenism had ceased to be what it was in the previous century, a

[1] Ibid., p. 132. [2] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 231. [3] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 131.
[4] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 278. [5] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 144.
[6] Ibid., p. 140. [7] Brueys, op. cit. i. 158.

rather exquisite cult among the parish clergy, the official classes, and the world of literature. It had its rank and file; Gazier, perhaps attaching too much importance to a rhetorical statement, is prepared to estimate the number of those who repudiated the bull *Unigenitus* at a million.[1] Given a public rallying-point, the movement might develop into a dangerous political party, or even into a new religion. Already some of its adherents were for abandoning church-going and the Sacraments.[2] The convulsion-parties, if we may coin an irreverent name for them, which went on for so many years after the closing of the cemetery were unaccompanied by the danger of mass hysteria. They met, for the most part, in the houses of well-to-do people, very much in the style of the modern spiritualist séance. The status of the convulsionary became, like that of the medium, half professionalized. There was no lack of them, to be sure; there were said to be 800 scattered about in Paris and in the provinces.[3] But their performances were for the benefit of a clique, and exploited curiosity rather than political or even sectarian passions.

It is at these domestic reunions of the cult that the convulsions themselves fall into the background, and our attention is focused rather upon the *secours* which were originally intended to allay them. Mistaking means for ends was a vice, it would seem, of the whole movement. The convulsions themselves were first connected with miraculous healing; then they came to be cultivated for their own sake. And the *secours* were understood at first to be a counter-irritant for the pain of the convulsions; then the *secours* too became an end in themselves. When a woman insists that relays of men shall beat her on the back with the flat of their hands, even though the treatment lasts for five hours on end, we are still in the realms of probability.[4] But when we read of Margaret Turpin inviting the spectators to push a spit, as hard as they can, into her chest, stomach, sides, and so on, pointing 'aux endroits où elle sentait une douleur qui lui faisait avoir besoin de ces secours', hysteria or something worse than hysteria must be invoked to explain the connexion between disease and remedy.[5] Carré de Montgéron himself admits that after the first twelve years the notion of relief from pain tends to vanish, and the convulsionaries deliberately undergo the *grands*

[1] Gazier, op. cit. ii. 250. [2] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 141, 154. [3] Ibid., p. 129.
[4] *Mémoires pour servir . . .*, &c. ii. 54. [5] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 355.

secours because they are convinced that that is what God wants of them.[1] The *grands secours* themselves are used occasionally as means of healing; and in some cases their effect might almost be ascribed to a violent form of osteopathy.[2]

Dr. Dubourg, a friendly witness examined before a public magistrate, divided these *grands secours* under five headings: (i) being kicked or trampled on, (ii) pressure by heavy weights, or squeezing with tongs, (iii) being beaten with clubs, (iv) being pricked with swords, spits, &c., (v) crucifixion.[3] Under the first three forms of treatment (and several others which Dubourg has omitted), the wonder is, not that the subject of them should be able to bear it at all, but that she should bear it in such quantity. We hear of people being beaten with an oak cudgel for fifty-five minutes on end, or sustaining 30,000 of these blows in one night;[4] of a girl being dragged along the floor, her face touching it, for several hours together;[5] of a girl of thirteen who allows a paviour's beetle weighing forty-eight pounds to be brought down repeatedly with all a strong man's force on the pit of her stomach.[6] You may read pages and pages of these records, each outdoing the last in the ingenuity of its revolting tortures. And the people who underwent this treatment, if you are prepared to trust the records, came round from their trance (for they were unconscious throughout) with no symptom of injury.

The *secours* of the swords is calculated to tax our credulity still further. You read of Sister Dina who, almost every week for a whole year, edified the company by pushing with all her might against the points of six or eight swords, or resting her whole weight on them; they bent, sometimes they broke, and they pierced Sister Dina's clothes, but not her skin.[7] More commonly, the spectators were invited to do the pushing, and constantly encouraged to push harder, harder—it was the only means to bring relief. A girl called Felicity could manage twenty-two swords at once.[8] On one occasion she and a relation of hers, called Madeleine, put on their *robes de convulsionnaire* and fought five or six duels in the same evening, without inflicting a scratch.[9] An officer, who expressed

[1] Ibid., p. 362.

[2] Ibid., p. 319, and elsewhere in ch. xiii. Sister Madeleine told de Montgéron that her convulsions made her feel as if swords were pricking her, until she was really pricked with swords, and obtained instant relief. (Ibid., p. 361.)

[3] Gazier, op. cit. ii. 290. [4] Mathieu, op. cit., ch. xi *passim*. [5] Ibid., p. 309.

[6] Ibid., pp. 330 sqq. [7] Ibid., p. 344. [8] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 348. [9] Ibid., p. 351.

incredulity on a similar occasion, was brought to a better frame of mind when both duellists attacked him and prodded him with their swords, which did not wound him; this was in the house of Arouet, Voltaire's elder brother.[1] We read of convulsionaries who would have the point of a sword put into their mouths, or into the sockets of their eyes, and so pushed hard, without effect.[2] Felicity and Madeleine kept up a kind of running commentary throughout their duels, in which one represented the character of Israel, the other that of the Gentiles; even in these mad scenes you are never far off from the all-absorbing subject of prophecy.

Finally, there was the *secours* of crucifixion. Here Mathieu has deserted his usual principle of quoting de Montgéron blindfold, and has copied out for us the impressions carried away from the scene by a critical and indeed unsympathetic observer—the geographer Condamine. The effect is curiously disappointing. As to the reality of the facts, we are left in no doubt; that Sœur Françoise was nailed to a cross by her hands and feet, and remained on it for three and a half hours, and that her ribs were pierced with a kind of spear. But he notes that the weight of her body was not taken by the nails, but by cords which supported it; that the cross was only lifted up from the ground at intervals, and never raised to its full height, only leant against the wall, which it touched at a height of about five feet; that blood flowed freely when the nails were withdrawn; also that though she made no sound of protest she was obviously at certain moments in acute pain. The other convulsionary, Sœur Marie, could only stand it for twenty-five minutes, and then begged to be released. So far as the actual crucifixion is concerned, the whole legend of invulnerability and insensibility seems to have disappeared; and indeed, Condamine assures us that both the girls bore plainly the marks of their previous crucifixions. The only thing which challenged his credulity at all was the *secours* of the swords, which was applied to Sœur Françoise in the course of her ordeal. But here he was not certain of good faith; he seems to have discovered that the convulsionary wore certain instruments of penance under her clothes, which may have come in useful. To one of the men who was pressing a sword home she said, 'Mais laissez donc, vous allez trop fort. Ne voyez-vous pas que je n'ai pas de main?' And it is perhaps significant that the con-

[1] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 373. [2] Ibid., p. 349.

vulsionaries usually held the blade of the sword, by way of directing it to the exact spot where the *secours* was needed.[1]

De Montgéron points out that the remarkable achievements of Felicity (as compared with those of others previously mentioned) are 'encore plus étonnants, et par conséquent encore plus capables de convaincre les athées de la presence de celui, qui peut seul renverser les lois qu'il a imposées à la Nature'.[2] That is the burden of his message; that was the gist of the whole convulsionary argument—God was doing miracles in an age which was threatening to lapse into Deism. De Montgéron himself, who had tried to stifle his conscience by reading Deistic authors in his unregenerate days, was probably more concerned to refute the Deists than the Molinists, although he cannot resist the temptation to emphasize the shortage of non-Jansenist miracles during the same period.[3] There were awkward corners to be turned—numerous prophecies which had not come off, wild statements which had been retracted under pressure, cures which remained only partial, and so on. But the great mass of evidence derived from the convulsionist séances, affidavits with long lists of names attached,[4] seemed too imposing to be rejected, except by those who would blind their own eyes to the light.

(v) *Judgement on the Phenomena*

What explanation is to be given of it all is a point which fortunately does not concern us here: our business is with the theology, not with the psychology, of enthusiasm. We shall probably be inclined, with Mathieu, to put the phenomena of convulsionism on a level with those of spiritualism, and to form the same judgement of one as of the other. Home, the founder of Spiritualism, claimed to have cured a grave internal inflammation by beating himself violently, under spirit-direction.[5] The baby-talk used by the convulsionaries is curiously reminiscent of that used by some of the 'controls' at séances, when La Sonet calls out 'Tabou, tabou', meaning that she wants her *tabourets*,[6] or when Sœur Rachel, while being nailed to a cross, 'disait qu'elle faisait *dodo*'.[7] We have all heard stories of the saints punishing those who discredited their

[1] Ibid., pp. 376 sqq. [2] Ibid., p. 348. [3] Ibid., p. 422.
[4] One of the names given is that of Milord Édouard Drummond de Perth (ibid., p. 331).
[5] Ibid., p. 463. [6] Ibid., p. 264. [7] Ibid., p. 461 note.

reputation; but when a glazier, who has expressed disapproval of the *cultus* at Saint-Médard, has all his windows broken at frequent intervals by some undiscoverable agency, you feel M. Pâris is not behaving like a saint, he is behaving exactly like a *poltergeist*.[1] If we attribute spirit-phenomena to natural causes which are still uninvestigated, we shall attribute the convulsions to natural causes, as Dr. Hecquet did.[2] If we attribute spirit-phenomena to diabolic action, we shall attribute the convulsions to diabolic action, as most of the Jesuits and many of the Jansenists did. It is not easy to explain the whole thing, as Jordan would have explained it, by suspecting mere trickery.[3]

If it was diabolism, we must reconcile ourselves to the chastening reflection that diabolism can persist, even where men and women, in relatively good faith, are using religious formulas and invoking the name of God. Those who attended the convulsionary meetings did not come there simply to watch; they prayed and repeated psalms. Dina and Felicity always made the sign of the Cross before they began their performances.[4] 'Mon Dieu, donnez-moi la force d'accomplir votre volonté sans raisonner', said Madeleine, as she arranged the points of two swords in her eye-sockets.[5] More, the atmosphere, as it was felt by loyal Jansenists, was an atmosphere not only of religion but of devotion.[6] A man who had pushed a sword, with all his strength, against the body of a convulsionary was able to write: 'Je me sentis animé, ravi, et pénétré aux larmes de la présence de mon Dieu.'[7] Unfortunately, the phenomena persisted even when the atmosphere was (from the Jansenist point of view) inimical to the truth. A woman called Virginie, who claimed to do miracles of healing by licking wounds or sores with her tongue, fell into open immorality, but did not lose her powers.[8] And there were 'obsessions', which induced convulsionaries to say all the wrong things, to preach acceptance of the bull. De Montgéron naturally ascribes these to the devil,[9] but he cuts a poor figure in doing so. Like Wesley, faced with the criticisms of Bishop Lavington, he found himself unable to distinguish between celestial and infernal influence except on *a priori* principles, which were precisely those in dispute.

[1] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 409. [2] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 141.
[3] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 242. [4] Ibid., p. 350. [5] Ibid., p. 353.
[6] Ibid., p. 216. [7] Ibid., p. 357. [8] Ibid., p. 270. [9] Ibid., p. 461.

However embarrassing these manifestations may have been to the Jesuits, they were far more embarrassing to the Jansenists. The party had long remained united; seemed destined to overthrow the maxim, abundantly illustrated in these pages, that schism always begets schism. Now, its unity disappeared and was never fully recovered. Was Jansenism to accept, or to disclaim, responsibility for the whole questionable mass of phenomena? Or, if it was to distinguish some from others, where was the line to be drawn? De Montgéron's attitude was not by any means peculiar to de Montgéron; the organ of the party, *Les Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, was on his side. But its older members were more cautious. Père Du Guet, of the Oratory, who was now the grand old man of the movement, Père Du Guet, who had concerted measures with Arnauld and Nicole in the days of the Peace of the Church, wrote a letter to the paper, protesting against an article which claimed that the miracles in the cemetery were as undeniable as the miracles of our Lord himself. 'C'est une tache dans sa vie', wrote de Caylus, the Jansenist Bishop of Auxerre,[1] and Étémare, who had once compared Du Guet with St. Augustine, now sadly complained that he was only a cousin, not a child of Port Royal.[2] In 1735 thirty Doctors of the Sorbonne, including Du Guet, repudiated the convulsions altogether as contrary to the majesty of God, the holiness of his worship, the honour of the Church, the purity of morals, and public decency.[3] Grégoire writes as if the Jansenist bishops had been in agreement with this verdict,[4] but Gazier admits that both Colbert and Soanen were much more guarded in their attitude.[5] Lataste, however, the Bishop of Bethléem, wrote against de Montgéron, and gave the devil his full due as the author of the manifestations.[6] The convulsionary prophetesses complained that they were 'plus occupées et plus touchées des fautes commises par les amis de la Vérité, que de celles des ennemis'.[7]

So, like Donatism in its later period, the Jansenist movement broke up into a spectrum of rival *-isms*. 'On distingua parmi les appelants les secouristes et les anti-secouristes, les Discernants, les Consultants, sans compter ceux que Montgéron lui-même anathématisait comme scandaleux, les Augustinistes, les Vaillantistes, les Margouillistes.'[8] The commonest attitude was probably that of

[1] Sainte-Beuve, op. cit. vi. 78. [2] Ibid., p. 81. [3] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 469 note.
[4] Op. cit. ii. 138. [5] Op. cit. ii. 287. [6] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 136.
[7] Mathieu, op. cit., p. 275. [8] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 133.

accepting the miracles, suspending judgement over the convulsions, and altogether repudiating the *secours*. But, if you regarded the *secours* as diabolic, how could you be certain that the convulsions were not diabolic? If you regarded the convulsions as hysterical, how could you be certain that the cures were not hysterical? Meanwhile, the thing went on. As late as 1762 the Parlement forbade the use of the *secours*, *comme pouvant être dangereux*, as Grégoire explains, certainly without committing himself to an overstatement.[1] Yet the meetings went on, in Paris and in one or two provincial centres, degenerating always in the direction of thaumaturgy; there were still convulsionaries, here and there, when Grégoire wrote in 1828.[2] The convulsionist propaganda was kept alive by a curious sect whom he describes as the *Amis de la Vérité*. They split anew into two factions over the question whether the Concordat should be recognized; and when a miracle was reported at the tomb of a *curé* who had been in favour of that instrument, its miraculous character was immediately denied by the anti-Concordatists.[3] To the third and the fourth generation, Jansenism remains incurably tenacious of its pedantries.

It may be complained, in criticism of this and the last chapter, that too much attention has been paid to evanescent agitations which have left no mark on the religious thought of posterity. My object has been to indicate that we ought not to judge the religious temper of the eighteenth century by the religious temper of its political idols or of its literary interpreters. There were deeper currents below the surface; the age of enlightenment was also an age of fanaticisms. And lest any reader of the chapters which follow should exclaim in bewilderment over the spiritual phenomena of the Wesleyan movement, asking how such things could happen in the England of Dr. Johnson, it will not be out of place to have reminded him that still more extraordinary things had been happening in the France of Bayle, and Diderot, and Voltaire.

[1] Grégoire, op. cit. ii. 138. [2] Ibid., p. 158. [3] Ibid., p. 191.

XVII

THE MORAVIAN TRADITION

IT is above all curious that the phenomena of Saint-Médard should have had so little repercussion outside Catholic France. Bishop Lavington, who might have made excellent capital out of them when he set about comparing the enthusiasm of the Papists with that of the Methodists, appears to be quite ignorant of the convulsionist legend. And even in Holland, that strange clearing-house of religious ideas,[1] you find no direct echo of the controversy. A kind of convulsionism did, indeed, make its appearance about the same time in Gelderland. The Mennonites, shy repositories of the old Anabaptist tradition, were less affected than their neighbours by the Deist and Rationalist influences which were chilling the heart of Protestantism. And among these, in November 1749, curious symptoms did begin to occur in the course of private prayer-meetings. 'They would sigh, groan, and bawl. They made the strangest contortions, and wrung their hands with violence. A cold sweat overspread their faces. They were dying with drought and could hardly drink. They breathed with difficulty; their whole body was convulsed. They were exactly in the situation of a person afflicted with the falling sickness, for they could neither walk nor support themselves.' In the course of these paroxysms they gave utterance to broken sentences: 'Alas, what shall I do? Ah, give me Jesus; I want Jesus', and so on.[2] But the author who records these happenings treats them as merely hysterical; the curious, who had come to watch, were apt to be carried away by the same influence, without experiencing any access of religious conviction.[3] Nor was this kind of revivalism anything new in Anabaptist history; Zwingli, a century earlier, had noted the occurrence of symptoms resembling those of epilepsy among the 'prophets' of his time.[4] The only odd coincidence which seems to recall the atmosphere of Saint-Médard

[1] In 1727 there are said to have been eighty different Protestant sects in Amsterdam (Grégoire, op. cit. v. 326).

[2] *Essay on Fanaticism*, by the Rev. J. Stinstra, tr. the Rev. Isaac Subremont (Dublin: T. Ewing, 1774), Pref., pp. cxxvi–cxxvii.

[3] Ibid., p. cxxviii.

[4] Ibid., p. cxiii note.

is that these convulsions were described by sympathizers as 'the work'.[1]

It was this portent among others that aroused alarm in the breast of the Reverend John Stinstra, a Mennonite pastor of the period, and inspired him to write his *Essay on Fanaticism*. To tell the truth he is a dull dog, and there is little to be derived from his warnings which the reader did not know before. 'If, then, as reason requires it, you look upon moral virtue and the observance of God's commandments, as the noblest and most essential part of religion, let this just notion be the standing rule of your conduct'[2]—sentiments such as these abound, delivered in the flattest manner of the eighteenth century. What is far more illuminating is the Preface attached to the French translation of the book, illustrated by *pièces justificatives* at the end; these, taken together, occupy rather more space than the *Essay* itself. And they make it evident where the true source of anxiety lay. Stinstra himself is content with a vague reference to the harm that has been done by 'a swarm of very bad Pietists';[3] 'old people remember still Antoinette Bourignon; she, Labadie, and Poiret have made as much noise in the world as it is possible for any Fanatic to do'.[4] But the author of the Preface devotes himself almost entirely to polemic against an invasion, not from France, but from Germany. The Moravian Brethren are his target; and it was no doubt this circumstance which called for an English translation, produced in Dublin as late as 1774.

(i) *The Bohemian Brethren in the Later Middle Ages*

Among all the enthusiastic sects which are still represented in our time, two only claim a pre-Reformation origin. The Waldenses have survived as a kind of museum-piece, ruminating, in the valleys of Piedmont, the memories of an inconsiderable past. The Moravians, few in number and diminished in influence, are spread over five continents and can point to a time, not above 200 years since, when they were the vital leaven of European Protestantism. Both alike come down to us from that underworld of heresy which obscurely honeycombed the structure of medieval Europe. But, while the Waldenses claim that descent as an honourable title, the

[1] Ibid., p. cxxix. Stinstra alludes, but only in general terms, to the Jansenist convulsionaries (p. 177).

[2] Ibid., p. 160. [3] Ibid., p. 178. [4] Ibid., p. 180.

Moravians have always shown a delicacy about blazoning such questionable antecedents, preferring to date their official existence from the middle of the fifteenth century.

The truth is, no doubt, that the medieval heretics, under stress of persecution, lost themselves more and more in the Germanies, gravitating always towards the east. Here the Pope's writ did not run so surely, and the conditions of a ruder society promised more hope of concealment. That some of the Waldenses early took refuge in Bohemia is certain; it was there that their founder, Peter Waldo, ended his days.[1] But it seems clear from what followed that either with them, or after them, more subversive elements had found their way into Czech Christendom, at the time when Huss's challenge to the Papacy threw all its counsels into confusion.[2] To say, with Hutton,[3] that after the reformer's death his followers broke up into a welter of rival sects, Calixtines, Taborites, Chiliasts, Adamites, and Waldenses, is to under-estimate the complexity of the malcontent forces that were at work in the early fifteenth century. What clearly happened is that the Bohemian revolt ran in two streams, had a party of the Left and a party of the extreme Left.

The party of moderation, as might be inferred from their name of Calixtines (or Utraquists), had only one consistent quarrel with the Church; they demanded Communion for the laity in both kinds, after the fashion of the Eastern rites. At bottom it seems likely that the Calixtine protest was anti-German, rather than anti-Roman;[4] the Czechs looked upon St. Cyril and St. Methodius as their apostles, and the effort to westernize them came chiefly from their German neighbours. Huss was preaching violent sermons against the Sudeten-Deutsch of his period, clerical and lay, before ever he fell foul of the Papacy.[5] In the main the Calixtines were opportunists, and the policy of John Rockycana, Archbishop of Prague, is thoroughly symptomatic of his time. He was actually in negotiation with the Orthodox Church when Constantinople fell in 1453; when this hope failed his anti-Roman attitude was sensibly modified, to the disgust of the Taborites.[6]

The Taborites are related to the Calixtines very much as the

[1] J. Holmes, *History of the United Brethren* (London, 1825), i. 6. [*] See p. 89.
[3] J. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church* (London, 1909), p. 30.
[4] Ibid., p. 13 [5] Ibid., p. 19. [6] Holmes, op. cit. i. 24.

Camisards were related to the more cautious Huguenots of their day. Their general, Zizka, successfully held out against the forces of the kingdom, and in a sense against those of the Catholic world; until his death in 1424 his followers were the terror of the clergy and of faithful Catholics. But there were divisions within his own camp, and the Adamites, its Antinomian wing, had to be liquidated by a massacre. No author gives a coherent account of the Taborite theology, doubtless for the very reason that the movement was, on its theological side, an uncertain re-hash of numerous heretical tendencies. In its general drift it shared the tenets which were held by the medieval heretics and passed on by them to the Anabaptists. The Taborites condemned oaths and, somewhat inconsistently with their military achievements, the wearing of arms.[1] But above all they represented the extreme anti-clericalism to which Huss's doctrine of dominion founded on grace had given shape. The sinful priest was automatically unfrocked; the Sacraments he celebrated were, *ipso facto*, invalid.

There is no need to retell the story of the Hussite agitation, in the course of which the Calixtines managed to win favourable terms for themselves by playing off the Taborites against the Catholics. All that is important for our immediate purposes is that the Church of the Brethren rose on the ruins of the Taborite defeat, very much as the Mennonites, from whom the modern Baptists are descended, rose on the ruins of Munster. Naturally their enemies taxed them with the unsavoury parentage; they, as naturally, repudiated the charge, and claimed to be a new movement which first emerged in 1457, a score of years after the defeat of Procop at Breda. Their Confession (of 1572) makes use of the somewhat disingenuous argument that the Brethren cannot have been Taborites, since there were no Taborites left in the world at the date when their movement was founded.[2] What really happens in such cases is plain enough. The *personnel* of the defeated party, purged by death or exile of its more extreme elements, regroups itself under a different title and adopts an attitude of appeasement towards its former enemies. The more subversive of its doctrines, the more bizarre of its practices, are forgotten or left out of sight; it will live and let live, draw up instruments to vindicate its own innocuousness, and disown, if need

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 31.

[2] Bossuet, *Histoire des variations des églises protestantes*, xi. 152.

be, its past. Thus the Brethren had every right to date their corporate existence, if they would, from the middle of the fifteenth century; but Luther was not being deliberately offensive when he called them 'Picards', as the medieval heretics were called,[1] and Rudiger, their own historian, explicitly credits them with descent from the Taborites.[2] If there were nothing else to connect the United Brethren with earlier religious experiments, we should still find it difficult to believe that they devised for themselves the division of their body into three classes, known as the Beginners, the Advanced, and the Perfect.[3] Whether the arrangement had much practical use may be doubted; it survived as an isolated fragment of the old Albigensian tradition—the Albigensians themselves having most probably derived it from the Manicheans of St. Augustine's time.[4] It is a human thing, when you are consciously making a new departure, to treasure up in this way a few stray husks of tradition.

For the rest, the little community which settled down at Kunwald in the fifties had said good-bye to fanaticism. What chiefly impresses us about the account they gave of themselves in 1535[5] is the care which they took to fence the altar, subjecting the sinner to public reproof and, if he were obdurate, to excommunication. The Perfect, like some of the Anabaptists in the following century, held their goods in common.[6] Utopian moralists, the Brethren seemed likely to settle down into an undistinguished rural existence, the world forgetting, by the world forgot. It was not their destiny. The anti-Catholic agitation was still strong in Bohemia, and needed a more stable *point d'appui* than the vacillating policy of Utraquism could give it. Recruits flocked in to the little sect, representing the aristocratic and intellectual life of the country; from over the border a strong contingent of German-speaking Waldenses modified its national character. The printing-press was largely used to propagate its ideas. By the turn of the century Bohemian Protestantism was no isolated pocket of Beghard enthusiasm ready to be caught up and carried away by the flood of Anabaptism. It was a church, young and vigorous, ready to meet the new Reformers on their own level, and treat with them on its own terms.

[1] Moehler's *Symbolism*, tr. Robertson, p. 424. [2] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 167.

[3] Holmes, op. cit. i. 75. Moehler (op. cit., p. 424) attributes this to Waldensian influence; but it does not seem that the threefold division belongs to the Waldensians, properly so called.

[4] See p. 95. [5] Holmes, op. cit. i. 75–80. [6] Hutton, op. cit., p. 47.

(ii) *The Church of the Brethren and the Reformation*

In theory, as their Hussite origins demanded, the Brethren held the doctrine of the Invisible Church. 'Wherever, in any part of Christendom, the Catholic or only saving faith is found in truth, . . . there is the holy Catholic Church.' So they write in their memorandum to the Calixtines in 1486; but at the same time they explain frankly that they do not allow their adherents to receive sacraments from a minister of any other body than their own.[1] They were very sure of themselves; and yet, with a fine instinct of adventure, they were always on the look-out for spiritual companionship. In 1473 a deputation toured the Near East from Russia to Palestine; another, in 1486, visited Italy and France; but in neither case did any hope of reunion offer itself; 'nominal Christendom was everywhere sunk in error, superstition, and profligacy'.[2] What judgement would be passed by such men on the new Christianities of Luther and Zwingli?

That the Brethren looked upon these as useful political allies in the fight against Catholicism can hardly be doubted; and it is presumably in that sense that Bossuet writes, 'ils ne songèrent qu'à s'appuyer de leur secours'.[3] But, curiously, on the spiritual side it was the new Reformers who appeared in the light of men asking for a favour. In publishing the *Apology* of the Brethren at Wittenberg, their Lutheran friends were careful to point out that, just when the Church of God seemed altogether lost, it had in fact been preserved among this faithful remnant.[4] That Protestantism had no pedigree was a sore subject; and reunion with the heirs of John Huss will have attracted Luther just as marriage into some decayed aristocratic family has been known to attract the *nouveau riche*. There were theological difficulties in the way of such reunion; the Brethren were not interested in controversies about grace,[5] and they retained much of the old Catholic doctrine, with a somewhat cloudy sense of its value—they recognized, for example, the existence of seven Sacraments.[6] Over this and similar points not only the Lutherans but the Zwinglians were prepared to show an open mind;[7] the difficulty came from the other side. The Reformation was a by-product of the New Learning; the Brethren, with the old Lollard instinct, distrusted learning in all its forms—knowledge, for

[1] Holmes, op. cit. i. 59. [2] Ibid. 63. [3] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 197. [4] Ibid. 176.
[5] Hutton, op. cit., p. 81. [6] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 180. [7] Ibid. 190.

example, of Hebrew; and they entered a *caveat* to that effect.[1] Their protest had always been a moral protest; for them, as for Huss, worthiness of life was essential to the validity of the acts which a minister performed;[2] they went so far as to rebaptize their converts right up to the middle of the sixteenth century.[3] And when they began to associate with the new reformed bodies, they easily perceived (in the words of a Lutheran historian) 'that in the Reformation not much importance was attached to strictness in matters of discipline and conduct'.[4] Luke of Prague, the oracle of Bohemia, was especially scandalized by 'this drinking, this self-indulgence, this marrying, this living to the world'; he was not impressed by the wholesale renunciation of celibacy or by the effect of the new justification doctrine on the habits of the students at Wittenberg; 'he would rather see his church alone and poor than swept away in the Protestant current'.[5] Until his death (in 1528) the chances of fraternization were severely prejudiced.

The historian will do well to ruminate on the efforts thus made by disciples of an earlier Protestantism to reform the Reformers. In 1523 a deputation from the Brethren urged Luther to exercise stricter control over the practice of his followers; he admitted the justice of the complaint, but pleaded the necessity of going slowly. This only produced a second representation to the same effect, which ruffled him. Five times the process was repeated, and Luther, who was perhaps by now getting accustomed to it, was still promising to do everything in his power up to the time of his death in 1546.[6] Privately he was inclined to regard his mentors as prigs; 'they were stiff, serious people, who looked grimly at you; they made martyrs of themselves over the law and the works of the law, without any gladness of conscience'[7]—an estimate we shall do well to remember when we come across the Revived Church of the Brethren and the impression it made on its Lutheran contemporaries. On their side the Brethren remained unconvinced. 'Adae vero non inveniebatur adjutor similis eius'; the Reformation had come and gone, and still Europe was, for them, a spiritual desert. In the same year, at a synod held in Jungbunzlau, they came to the conclusion, with tears

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 72.
[2] Addison, *The Reformed Church of the United Brethren* (S.P.C.K., 1932), p. 159 note.
[3] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 176. [4] Cf. Moehler, op. cit., p. 424.
[5] Hutton, op. cit., p. 69. [6] Holmes, op. cit. i. 94–8. [7] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 179.

in their eyes, that nobody quite came up to their level.[1] It was a scene worthy of Port Royal.

Necessity, however, makes strange bed-fellows; and a renewal of persecution compelled those Bohemians who put conscience before ease to go into banishment. The result seems to have been a severe purge of their membership; it had been reckoned at 200,000 in 1535,[1] but the exiles barely numbered 2,000.[2] They made for Poland, but the unfriendly attitude of the bishops drove them to take refuge in East Prussia. And now they were painfully reminded that beggars cannot be choosers; Lutheran Prussia would not allow them entry except on condition of their conforming to the religion of the country, and they found their best asylum in Catholic Poland after all.[3] Here, where Protestantism was less flourishing, they contrived to play off the Lutherans against the Calvinists, and the result was the famous Synod of Sandomir in 1570, at which the three Confessions agreed amicably to differ. Even this *modus vivendi* was to prove, in fact, illusory.[4] Differences arose which a fresh synod held at Thorn failed to patch up; the Lutherans denounced the arrangement, and the Brethren, thrown more than ever into the arms of the Calvinists, lost something of their old spirit.[5]

How much of that spirit had been lost, when freedom of worship was declared in Bohemia at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it is not easy to estimate. Hutton has done well to warn us against attaching too much importance to the complaints made by Amos Comenius in his pastoral letter to the 'scattered brethren';[6] it is a bad habit in historians to take at their face value the hysterical exaggerations of the pulpit. But long years of disingenuous conformity to Catholic practices cannot have been good for the consciences of the rank and file among the Brethren. At least it is certain that they began, at this time, to take an active part in the political and military events of the period, and could not blame Providence if they were caught up in the disastrous wheels of the Thirty Years War. The defeat of the Protestants at Weissenberg in 1620, with the bloodshed and banishments that followed, put an end, for all effective purposes, to the ancient Church of the Brethren; it has been estimated that the population of the country was reduced from three

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 91. [2] Ibid., p. 95. [3] Ibid., p. 98.
[4] Ibid., pp. 100, 101. [5] Holmes, op. cit. i. 111.
[6] Hutton, op. cit., p. 153; the letter is given in Holmes, op. cit. i. 133–45.

millions to one.[1] After the Peace of Westphalia the war between Sweden and Poland, where they were suspected of encouraging the invader, redoubled the misfortunes of the surviving exiles; and the gap between the old *Unitas Fratrum* and the new, a gap of nearly a hundred years, is bridged only by the existence of a token Church, centred mainly in the person of Amos Comenius.

This curious figure, so typical a product of his century, doubled the part of an exiled bishop with that of an educational pioneer. He had come to the conclusion that languages were taught too much by way of grammar, and in his *Janua Linguarum Reserata* he provided, for the youth of twelve nations, the opportunity of Latin without Tears. But his ideas went far wider than this; he projected a grand international College, which was to reunite Europe on a basis of common culture. At one time this was to take shape in an Academy of Pansophy, which he meant to found, for whatever reason, at Chelsea. It hardly needs to be said that a man so in advance of his and of every time was a welcome guest in the capitals of England, Holland, and Sweden, and found no difficulty in raising subscriptions for the benefit of his distressed flock. He might even have found an asylum for them; Cromwell, with a singular lack of humour, proposed to rescue them from the discomforts of their Polish exile by settling them in Ireland.[2] But the incorrigible Utopian had already found other sources of consolation. The Hidden Seed (as the exiles called themselves) mostly had the Apocalypse by heart;[3] misfortune, with them as with many others, was tinder ready to be kindled by the spark of Chiliasm. Several prophets arose, whose works Comenius collected and printed in his *Lux in Tenebris*;[4] the best known of these was Drabicius, who foretold the speedy downfall of the Austrian Empire.[5] The date he had selected for the event was the year 1672; and in that year, more fortunate than others who have outlived their hopes, Amos Comenius passed away, 'ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem'.

One step he took before his death which had momentous consequences; he consecrated his son-in-law, Peter Jablonski, as his successor.[6] Whether this act had any ecclesiastical validity may be doubted. It has been pointed out that the University of Oxford and

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 151.
[2] Ibid., p. 171.
[3] Ibid., p. 160.
[4] Stinstra, op. cit., p. 123 note.
[5] Holmes, op. cit. i. 129.
[6] Grégoire, op. cit. v. 355.

two Archbishops of Canterbury (Sancroft and Wake) were satisfied that the Church of the Brethren had episcopal orders.[1] But in more recent times a formidable Committee appointed by Lambeth to examine the whole question has cast doubt both on the consecration of their first bishop, Matthias, and on his intention of perpetuating the episcopate.[2] What is more important is that the revived 'Moravian Brethren' claimed continuity with the long pageant of Bohemian history on the ground of apostolic succession. Peter Jablonski had consecrated his son, Daniel, and Daniel Jablonski had consecrated David Nitschmann. Everything is in a mind; and this and much else was in the mind of Lewis, Count Zinzendorf.

(iii) *The Squire of Bethelsdorf*

In Luther the humanist had killed the mystic; instead of creating that ideal church which is the recurrent dream of enthusiasm, he had become the father of a national establishment whose gross humours his theology of imputed righteousness did nothing to purge. Yet he, too, sometimes hankered after the old vision, and looked forward to a time when the people who 'meant the Word in earnest' would achieve a grouping of their own.[3] Towards the end of the seventeenth century Philip Spener attempted to translate this idea into practice by rallying within the Lutheran body itself devotional circles which should obey the neglected call of piety. 'He lamented the prevalence of moral laxity and grossness. In the sermons of his day he found . . . a polemical violence, a dogmatizing dryness, a petrifying coldness.'[4] Where his own inspiration came from it is difficult to say; Grégoire would attribute it to the influence of Boehme, received through the unlikely channel of Pierre Poiret.[5] At the same time he calls attention to the popularity of Catholic devotional authors among the Pietists (as the followers of Spener came to be called), including such names as those of Gregory Lopes and M. Olier.[6] It is tempting to speculate on the analogies between Pietism and Quietism, or between Pietism and Jansenism,[7] both contemporary movements. But its insistence on the need for salva-

[1] Hutton, op. cit., note to ch. v.
[2] Addison, op. cit., p. 159.
[3] Ibid., p. 50.
[4] Moehler, op. cit., p. 426.
[5] Op. cit. v. 341.
[6] Ibid. 342.
[7] It was Frederick II who described the Pietists as Protestant Jansenists, and said all they wanted was a tomb of M. Pâris and an Abbé Bécheraud to dance on it. Ibid. 336; Stinstra, op. cit., p. 179 note.

tion distinguishes it sharply from the one, its contempt of scholastic dogma from the other. It is more easily described as an anticipation, in seventeenth-century Germany, of the Evangelical revival which had such powerful effects a hundred years later in the Church of England.

With the opposition which the movement aroused among orthodox Lutherans in Germany and elsewhere we are not here concerned. The chief centre of its influence was the University of Halle, where the orphanage founded by August Francke long remained the principal trophy of its achievement. And it was at Halle that the young Count Zinzendorf, our present hero, was educated in the early days of the eighteenth century; it was here that his mind received those strong religious impressions which, as we shall see, gave Moravianism its character. Evidently, too, it was the Pietist *ecclesiolae*—groups within the body of Lutheranism—that inspired his curious ideas of ecclesiastical organization. Inevitably, as time went on, he broke with his early teachers; his was not the genius that would be content to move within a circle of ideas drawn for it by others. But we shall see that Moravianism, as a system of thought, owes its existence to Philip Spener rather than to Amos Comenius.

Zinzendorf was one of those men who seem made for religion. He began to seek God earnestly at four, and was kept awake by atheistical scruples by the time he was eight.[1] If it is true that he was ill-treated, both by masters and by boys, at Halle,[2] it will have driven him in on himself and intensified a habit of introversion. He had, too, the instinct of the man who is born to set the world right, and something of those conspiratorial airs which not infrequently accompany it. A club which he started at the age of ten[3] blossomed out into an Order of the Mustard Seed, which accomplished little, but spread its nets wide; its membership included the Archbishop of Canterbury (Potter), Cardinal de Noailles, and General Oglethorpe. The historian adds, without a trace of satire, that 'the Grand Master of the Order was Zinzendorf himself'.[4] Determined to be all things to all men, he dropped, in his American travels, his double style of Bishop and Count, preferring to be known as Mr. von Thurnstein.[5] In his undergraduate days at Wittenberg he threw

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 178. [2] Ibid., p. 180. [3] Stinstra, op. cit., Pref., p. vi.
[4] Hutton, op. cit., p. 183. [5] Addison, op. cit., p. 67.

himself into the task of reconciling the Pietists with the Lutherans,[1] and all his life he was possessed with the idea of reuniting the Christianities. In 1740 abortive attempts were made to secure recognition from the Patriarch of Constantinople.[2] In 1746 he offered Archbishop Potter the spiritual allegiance of the English Moravians, but always on the condition that he, Zinzendorf, should be the head of this new sub-church.[3] He was a man undismayed by rebuffs, inexhaustibly fertile in devising schemes for the furtherance of his audacious mission.

But, with all this, Zinzendorf was a German aristocrat; the blood of landowners ran in his veins. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the age of twenty-two (his dates are easily reckoned, since he was born in 1700) he bought an estate at Bethelsdorf, in Saxony, installed his friend Rothe as its pastor, and settled down to make a model village of it, to his own spiritual specifications. You see in him the forerunner of those Victorian county magnates who provided so many English villages with a church and a clergyman precisely of their own colour, and sought, with varying success, to woo the religious sympathies of their tenants. In eighteenth-century Germany the squire's position was even more formidable. 'The Count's family pew in the church was a small gallery or raised box over the vestry; the box had a trap-door in the floor; the pastor, according to the Lutheran custom, retired to the vestry at certain points in the service; and the Count, by opening the aforesaid door, could communicate his wishes to the pastor.'[4] I hope it is not flippant to see, in that admirably arranged trap-door, a symbol of Zinzendorf's whole ecclesiastical method. For the remaining thirty-eight years of his life he was, to all intents and purposes, the Pope of a world-wide organization; under a bewildering variety of titles he had the last word in everything. But always *sub rosa*; to the last the Squire of Bethelsdorf concealed his iron hand under the velvet glove of Brother Lewis.

In the very first year of the Count's residence, a small party of refugees made their appearance from Moravia, where the Catholic Government denied them freedom of worship. Only one or two are known to have been descended from the Hidden Seed over which Comenius once exercised his vagrant pontificate; their leader,

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 185.
[2] Holmes, op. cit. i. 396.
[3] Hutton, op. cit., p. 337.
[4] Ibid., p. 205.

Christian David, a man of eccentric piety, was by his own account an apostate Catholic. They were settled on a hill which formed part of the estate, and laid the foundations there of the flourishing settlement which was to be known to the world as Herrnhut. Others followed in a steady stream, not only from Bohemia and Moravia, but from various centres in Protestant Germany. It was all one to the Count; haunted by the dream of a united Christendom, and resolved to make Bethelsdorf a microcosm for the world to imitate, he would collect denominations as another man might collect rhododendrons. A party of Schwenkfelders, Anabaptist by history and not easily distinguished from the Quakers in their doctrine, were harboured for a year and left of their own free will.[1] Zinzendorf only drew the line at the French prophets, unhappy survivors of the Camisard movement; he found their leaders ill-mannered, and their methods of prophecy hideous.[2]

A federation of sects is not easily controlled, even in miniature. The extravagances of a fanatic named Krüger, who shook even the loyalty of Christian David by his reiterated assurances that Zinzendorf was the beast of the Apocalypse, and Pastor Rothe his false prophet, called for firm action. The Count assembled his unruly followers and read out to them a document ingeniously entitled 'Manorial Injunctions and Prohibitions'. The revolt collapsed under this unmistakable threat, and in August of the same year (1727) the alien tenants went to Communion, as one man, in the parish church of Bethelsdorf.[3] The Count had not only gained his point; he had framed his policy. The religious confederation which was growing up under his eyes should not be exclusive, like the other denominations of Christendom. To be a good Moravian you did not have to sever connexion with the national church of your country. To this principle he held—some think disastrously—all his life.

The question, whether the Brethren should exist as a kind of religious order within the Lutheran Church, or should have a ministry of their own, became acute in 1731. Zinzendorf was for the former policy, but found that the colony in his park was unanimously opposed to him. A weaker man might have given way; Zinzendorf proposed that the difficulty should be decided by lot. (This was, as we shall see, a constant habit with the Moravians.) For once he lost, and had to recognize that he was harbouring a brotherhood

[1] Grégoire, op. cit. v. 357. [2] Ibid. p. 358. [3] Hutton, op. cit., pp. 203–9.

which claimed an independent ecclesiastical existence.[1] He made the best of the situation by having himself ordained as a Lutheran pastor in 1734, and in 1737 consecrated as a Moravian bishop. A letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury assured him that the step had been taken 'with the applause of the heavenly host'.[2] Thus, by a kind of personal union, this extraordinary man linked the destinies of Moravianism with those of Lutheranism, and ensured that the Brethren, wherever they went, should be regarded, not as a schism, but as a branch grafted on to the Church of the country. To the end of his life he insisted that they should have their own ministry only where they were settled in colonies, as at Herrnhut. Isolated adherents of the movement all over the world (technically called 'The Diaspora') were to continue frequenting the sacraments of the denomination to which they originally belonged—all Moravian squeamishness about the unworthiness of the minister notwithstanding. They were to be an *ecclesiola*, not a sect.[3]

As the result of his influence Moravianism spread most characteristically, and most successfully, in the settlement form. As late as the year 1909 twelve out of the twenty-six congregations on the continent of Europe were settlements.[4] 'Such a settlement consists, besides family houses, of the following public buildings: a chapel with adjoining dwellings for the minister and elders, a Single Brethren's House and a Single Sisters' House, frequently also a house for Widows of ministers and others, Schoolhouses for boys and girls, and an Inn for the accommodation of travellers.'[5] Within this framework the Brethren lived a life of singular regimentation. Communism was not attempted, except in one or two isolated centres,[6] but the old Anabaptist instinct for building, in miniature, a city of God upon earth found its full scope. Grégoire describes the Moravian colony as *une sorte de république*, pointing out that the Brethren might not go to law before secular courts, might not name their own heirs without the consent of the Elders.[7] Marriages, too, were arranged by the Elders, instead of being left to private initiative; the behaviour of members was constantly reported on, and an unfavourable report might mean expulsion from the society. The whole setting of the Moravian's world was that of a religious life

[1] Holmes, op. cit. i. 221–3.
[2] Ibid. 242.
[3] Hutton, op. cit., p. 207.
[4] Ibid., p. 487.
[5] Holmes, op. cit., p. 253 note.
[6] Grégoire, op. cit. v. 364.
[7] Ibid. 378.

without celibacy. To-day the more monastic features of the system have disappeared,[1] but in the eighteenth century, when it flourished most, the Moravian experiment bore everywhere the stamp of the model village.

It does not appear that this elaborate organization owed anything to the tradition—such as it was—which the Brethren had derived from Comenius and from the old church. So distinctive a feature of it as the establishment of a common house for unmarried men—which quickly led to a similar provision for unmarried women—was suggested by Zinzendorf himself.[2] While the Settlements reflected the Saxon squire's determination to arrange other people's lives for them, the Diaspora reflected, no less surely, the ecclesiastical conspirator's attempt to achieve the reunion of Christendom by creating in every national church an *élite* of Zinzendorfians.[3] In North America, where no church claimed to be national, he found a sensible difficulty of approach.[4] His fixed idea was that every country has in matters of religion a natural genius of its own; this is its *tropus*, the school which is appointed to bring it to Christ.[5] Moravianism—or, if you will, Zinzendorfianism—is a pedagogue to bring it to that school. The Moravian pastors would actually shepherd their people to the parish church on Communion days.[6] It is an old dream of the enthusiast (not extinct in our time) that he can start a new religion without starting a new denomination. It may be that Wesley, if he had been less fired by Zinzendorf's example, would have been earlier conscious of the direction his own movement was taking, and the schism which must needs result.

(iv) *The New Church of the Brethren and the Old*

The idiosyncrasies of the Moravian leader must not blind us to the extent of his achievement. Few among the Christianities have remained so small in numbers; few have been so influential. 'The Brethren', writes Mr. Jenks, 'rendered three specific services to their time: (i) the great development of congregational music; (ii) the inspiration of their deservedly famous foreign missions; (iii) the stress which they laid upon education.'[7]

(i) The musical tradition, if nothing else, they took over from

[1] R. Jenks, *The Moravian Brethren in North Wales*, p. 8.
[2] Holmes, op. cit. i. 251. [3] Jenks, op. cit., p. 4. [4] Addison, op. cit., p. 144.
[5] See ibid., pp. 34 sqq. [6] Jenks, op. cit., p. 8. [7] Ibid., p. 9.

their Bohemian forefathers. No less than ten editions of their older hymn-book had appeared between 1501 and 1509.[1] It would perhaps have been well if they had confined themselves to these classics of Protestant literature, instead of supplementing them with the less virile Muse of Zinzendorf and his imitators. As we shall see, it was in great part their hymns that gave scandal—not altogether Pharisaical scandal—to the severely classical taste of the eighteenth century. In our own literature Moravianism will chiefly be remembered because our native enthusiasts have stolen its thunders. 'Rock of ages, cleft for me' is a work wholly Moravian in its inspiration; and it is difficult to imagine that either Wesleyanism or Evangelicalism could have taken so firm a hold on the religious sympathies of our fellow countrymen if pulpit eloquence had not been heralded and followed up by musical appeal.

(ii) Protestant missionary endeavour, though it came late in the field, had effectually established itself by the beginning of the century. Yet it is difficult to estimate the debt which it owes to the hastily educated evangelists who went out from Herrnhut to Greenland, to the Danish Indies, and elsewhere, breaking new ground and interpreting Reformation Christianity in a bewildering variety of tongues. It seems scarcely credible that at the time when these missionary labours began the focus of them was an assembly of 600 refugees in Count Zinzendorf's park.[2] Their first settlement in Georgia was undertaken as early as 1734; here the Moravians, like other enthusiasts before them, were concerned to establish a place of refuge against the possible threat of persecution.[3] But already, a year earlier, without thought of any advantage the exiled remnant had been found willing to exile themselves anew.

(iii) Among the Bohemian Brethren there was a party at least, right up to the time of the Reformation, which maintained the old Lollard attitude of distrust towards learning. When they decided, in the middle of the sixteenth century, to turn Humanist like their Protestant neighbours, their great leader John Augusta 'regarded this new policy with horror, condemned it as a falling away from the old simplicity and piety, and predicted that it would bring about the ruin of the Brethren's church'.[4] It was, indeed, a strange freak of destiny that the little, rustic community which had settled at Kun-

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 126.
[2] Holmes, op. cit. i. 219.
[3] Hutton, op. cit., p. 368.
[4] Ibid., p. 123.

wald 200 years earlier should leave, as its last effective representative, a child of the academies like Amos Comenius. But it is doubtful whether Moravian insistence on education owes much to the inspiration of his memory; Zinzendorf had been educated at Halle, where August Francke's orphanage, with its 600 scholars, will have fired his inflammable imagination. And schools he must necessarily have, if he was to perpetuate the ethos of his Christian republic. Not that scholars from outside were refused admittance, but the parents of such scholars must have been tough of fibre. 'By occasion of the small-pox, our Saviour held a rich harvest among the children, many of whom departed in a very blessed manner'[1]—the school authorities who could enter such triumphs on their records must have lacked the finesse of the educationalist.

What, then, was the deep conviction—nothing less would account for this astonishing record—that inspired the hymnody of the Moravians, sent them off on their far missionary travels, prescribed the intensive education of their prematurely pious youth? And what were the origins from which that conviction sprang? For a statement of their creed we shall question their historians in vain. The Brethren have always been fond, perhaps over-fond, of drawing up instruments and issuing manifestoes; but these have been designed to put on record their history, their discipline, their way of life—not their beliefs. Thus we read of the old church: 'The Brethren had no pet doctrines whatever. They had none of the distinctive marks of a sect. . . . They held, they said, the universal Christian faith.'[2] In other words, their beliefs were a residuum; their Catholicism had been purged by Huss and to some extent by Beghard and Waldensian influence; their Taborite eccentricities had been purged by common prudence; they believed by habit, where they were not called upon by an ill-defined sectarian loyalty to disbelieve. In particular, they never showed the smallest interest (while they were free agents) in the doctrine of justification. This is evident from the full and friendly account of their doctrine which was presented to the Emperor in 1535, which avoids all reference to the controversy on grace;[3] it is equally evident from Luther's complaint that they were 'sunk', like John Huss, in the notion that man is justified by faith and works combined.[4] It was only contact with Reformed Protestantism that

[1] Ibid., p. 452.
[2] Ibid., p. 82.
[3] Holmes, op. cit., pp. 65, 66; cf. Hutton, op. cit., p. 81.
[4] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 179.

indoctrinated them with exaggerated ideas of imputed righteousness.[1] The revived church was equally undogmatic. 'They had no rigid doctrine to impose. They did not regard any of the standard creeds as final. They did not demand subscription to a creed as a test.'[2] Nor has this tradition varied in more recent times, in the view of their own historians. 'In these days the question is sometimes asked, What is the Moravian creed? The answer is that they have no creed, apart from holy scripture. . . . They have never had a creed of their own, and have always declined to bind the consciences of their ministers and members by any creed whatever.'[3]

It was this want of uniformity among the Moravians that chiefly exasperated Wesley, who was always trying to pin them down to a definite statement of their attitude. It involved them, too, in the suspicion of bad faith. But the truth is that they based their claim to continuity on a continuity of discipline, not of doctrine. The Hussite protest was from first to last a protest against the lax discipline of the Church, conceived on ultrasupernaturalist lines; the Church was not good enough for them; Lutheranism was not good enough for them. And here the old Unity was perhaps more open in its policy than the new. We have seen that Luke of Prague frankly criticized the absence of godly discipline in the Lutheran community. The trouble about Zinzendorf was that he was too polite; he went about preaching a doctrine of Live-and-let-live which was to unite the Christianities, yet always with the conviction that he had found a more excellent way destined to supersede the older models. He 'looked upon the Lutheran church as, on the whole, irrecoverably lost'.[4] Herrnhut was to eighteenth-century Protestantism much what Moscow is to twentieth-century Socialism; you feared to accept its alliance.

The new Unity of the Brethren, like the old, made a fetish of discipline, of a regimented Christianity. Did the one derive from the other? Unsympathetic historians will tell you roundly that the old church died out in Poland, leaving no trace of its influence.[5] Hutton is curiously inconsistent on the point; in one place he tells us that the 'strict discipline' of the revived church came from the Bohemian brethren;[6] elsewhere he says that its customs were 'not

[1] Bossuet, op. cit. xi. 179. [2] Hutton, op. cit., p. 264. [3] Ibid., p. 483.
[4] Moehler, op. cit., p. 431. [5] Stinstra, op. cit., Pref., p. xxiv; Grégoire, op. cit. v. 356.
[6] Hutton, op. cit., p. 390.

at all' derived from the past, since Amos Comenius's *Book of Discipline* had not been rediscovered when they were drawn up.[1] Zinzendorf himself was not anxious to disclaim the credit for originality; in his Notariats-Instrument, drawn up in 1729 and signed by all the Brethren, he insisted that 'they were not Hussites, they were not Waldenses, they were not Fraticelli'.[2] But, in fact, it is clear that some of the emigrants—country people have long memories—had preserved relics here and there of a tradition handed down by their forefathers; perhaps the Neisser family. That tradition belonged to the heretics of the Middle Ages, and, as we have already seen, was continued independently among the Anabaptists. Zinzendorf himself did not disapprove of taking oaths, but notoriously the Brethren did;[3] the chief ostensible purpose of the recognition secured from the British Parliament in 1749 was to give them the Quaker privilege of affirming.[4] This recognition also exempted them from bearing arms; yet Spangenberg, their oracle next to Zinzendorf, and like Zinzendorf a Lutheran by his antecedents, justified the use of arms in self-defence against the American Indians.[5] A still more curious reminiscence of the old ways has not, I think, attracted sufficient notice among the historians. Until the early years of the nineteenth century the Brethren still kept up the custom of 'washing the feet' as on Maundy Thursday.[6] It had been deliberately 'revived' by Zinzendorf,[7] having been long practised by the old Church, if only as a courtesy to strangers.[8] And we can hardly doubt that it was a legacy from the medieval heretics, since it survived independently among the Mennonite Baptists in Holland, though sporadically, up to the middle of the seventeenth century.[9]

For the rest, Moravian discipline was the discipline, not of Kunwald, but of Bethelsdorf. We know, for instance, that it was the Count who originated that very characteristic feature of the system, the house for Single Brethren. But there is something beyond discipline which determines the character and presides over the destinies of any aggregation of human beings. When we are talking of the religious orders we call it 'the spirit' of an institute. And just as each order has its own spirit, so each Christian sect has its own

[1] Ibid., p. 212. [2] Ibid., p. 228. [3] Stinstra, op. cit., Pref., p. xlviii.
[4] Holmes, op. cit. i. 326. [5] Ibid. 383.
[6] Hutton, op. cit., p. 221; Grégoire, op. cit. v. 368.
[7] Hutton, op. cit., p. 220. [8] Ibid., p. 76. [9] Stinstra, op. cit., Pref., p. cxlii.

atmosphere, its own tricks of devotional emphasis, its own characteristic approach to the great business of the soul. And I will make bold to say that the *spirit*, in this sense, of the new Moravian Unity was something supplied entirely by Zinzendorf and by the Pietism from which he sprang; had nothing whatever to do with the old Bohemian Church—certainly with the old Bohemian Church as it was before it was cross-fertilized with the pollen of the Reformation.

We have seen above the impression which the Brethren made on Martin Luther—grim folk who persisted in cultivating a strait-laced sort of conduct, as if they could win salvation by the works of the law; as if Christ had not come to save us by imputing, to sinners, the merits of his Passion. We shall find that, within a very few years of their refoundation, it is the Brethren who are decrying 'legality' and insisting on a joyous acceptance of our position as saved sinners. It is the Lutherans who regard them as frivolous antinomians, and are proportionately shocked.

(v) *The Moravian Spirituality*

Moravianism is essentially neither a doctrine nor a discipline, but a spirituality. And that spirituality owes nothing to the Middle Ages; it is German Pietism refracted through the curious lens of Zinzendorf's own speculation. Like Jansenism, like Wesleyanism, it is in part a reaction against the Deistic thought of the day, which offered to the human soul a barren nourishment of Christianity without Christ. Zinzendorf, like the Welsh preacher Howell Harris,[1] was driven into Christocentric language which his enemies had no difficulty in labelling Patripassianism. We have only the evidence of a prejudiced bystander for his *obiter dictum*, 'As to praying to the Father, it is no better than praying to a wooden or stone god'.[2] But it seems past question to be Zinzendorfian doctrine that 'God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not our immediate Father . . . he becoming our Father only by the reconciliation, and faith in the mediation of his Son. . . . Therefore we have properly to do with no one else than with the Son, our Mediator.'[3] Even Zinzendorf's admirers have to confess that 'The liveliness of his imagination . . .

[1] Jenks, op. cit., p. 36.

[2] *A True and Authentic Account of Andrew Frey*, translated from the German (London, 1753), p. 53.

[3] Stinstra, op. cit., Appendix, pp. 53, 54.

gave in some instances an air of singularity and even extravagance to some of his sentiments, which rendered him liable to be misunderstood and subjected him to animadversions'.[1] Of formal theology he takes little account; and his excursions into the subject are not always fortunate.[2] He is almost uniquely concerned with the doctrine of Christ, and of Christ as our Redeemer.

Every enthusiasm tends to isolate some one Catholic doctrine, and to exaggerate its emphasis. At first sight frequent references to Christ as the Lamb of God,[3] and to the wound made in his side on Calvary, will seem but a familiar echo of orthodox piety. But Moravian language (especially the language of Moravian hymns) begins to jar upon the ear when it refers to the Lamb almost habitually by a diminutive, only less distressing in German than in English. And the devotional metaphor by which we describe ourselves as taking refuge in our Lord's wounded side, though legitimate enough, can easily become hideous by repetition. 'How blessed are we! We rest in his Side; the Side-hole and the Lambkin fill the exulting heart with flame; and that is all which we wish and can wish you, that you and our dear relations may from the womb be brought into the little Side-hole, and there enjoy all the felicity which the Lamb can impart to a justified sinner'[4]—these are the expressions of an ordinary layman, translated by an unsympathetic hand, but they give some notion of the monotonous sentimentalism which disfigures Moravian literature. If it is true that 'for mawkish, sentimental religion the Count had an honest contempt',[5] he must be thought singularly unsuccessful in forming the style of his co-religionists.

The Lutheran theology of justification reappears in Moravian thought with all its *i*'s dotted. Man was not to be allowed the least simulacrum of co-operation in the work of grace. The soul which hoped for, but had not yet consciously found, saving faith was to be discouraged from trying to prepare itself 'by any action, by good works or resolutions'.[6] 'Those who . . . know not yet on what terms

[1] Holmes, op. cit. i. 427.

[2] e.g. in calling the Holy Ghost the Spouse of the Father. Stinstra, op. cit., Pref., p. lxxxii.

[3] It can hardly be more than a coincidence that the Bohemian Brethren were called *fratres agnini*, Lammbrüder; see Grégoire, op. cit. v. 355.

[4] Frey, op. cit., p. 5.

[5] Hutton, op. cit., p. 208.

[6] Stinstra, op. cit., Pref., p. lxxxix.

they are with their Saviour, are not to be directed to prepare themselves . . . by any works or doings of their own.'[1] A completely passive attitude was recommended, in contrast to the violent struggles and despairs through which the Pietist attained the conviction that his sins were forgiven. 'Pietism was in process of substituting the conception of an invariable, necessary and painful struggle for repentance as the one unalterable method of achieving reconciliation. . . . Zinzendorf at Herrnhut was preaching the process of salvation . . . as an immediate and joyful apprehension of a loving Father.'[2] Zinzendorf himself (unlike Spangenberg and others among his lieutenants) had never been through an agonizing crisis between unbelief and faith; and the Pietists doubted his conversion accordingly.[3] He retaliated by criticizing their self-tortures; and it goes without saying that the 'transports' of the Wesleyans were equally distrusted in Moravian circles. We read of a Welsh convert from Methodism being put in good hands until 'the zeal which at present seems to influence her may be evaporated'.[4] Wesley, on his side, refers to the Moravians as 'the still brethren'; and among all his complaints against them this 'Quietist type of gentle piety'[5] was perhaps the chief.

The word 'Quietist' may be allowed if we are content to forget one poignant difference—that the Moravian attained peace of mind through the conviction that he stood in God's favour, whereas the Quietist preferred to remain ignorant whether he was in God's favour or not. Zinzendorf's prescription will often have been a sovereign remedy for the scruples of the Pietist, as Madame Guyon's was for the scruples of the Jansenist. Frey, by an odd coincidence, echoes the very language of Madame Guyon: 'These people call themselves of the New Period; for, according to them, the Saviour has now shewn his people a new, easier, and shorter way than heretofore.'[6] And, indeed, Wesley has recorded for us that when the Herrnhutters met each evening at eight 'there is commonly only mental prayer'; to which he has added the extraordinary footnote: 'This is unscriptural.'[7] Even after the experience of conversion, the Moravians were 'still brethren' by comparison with their Wesleyan neighbours. Not that they were undemonstrative at their devotions;

[1] Stinstra, op. cit., Appendix, p. 6.
[2] Addison, op. cit., p. 23.
[3] Hutton, op. cit., p. 232.
[4] Jenks, op. cit., p. 71.
[5] Hutton, op. cit., p. 463.
[6] Op. cit., p. 68.
[7] *Journal*, 10/8/38.

we hear of the music being almost drowned by weeping at a confirmation service.[1] But they shrank from the language which suggested that their virtues cost them any effort; it would savour too much of legality and good works. 'A converted man finds no difficulty to walk in newness of life, because it has become a pleasure to him, and his heart lives in it.'[2] 'They knew not what they were doing; it came ready to their hands. Their hand was only laid to it, and it was done. Thus the Saviour's joy was united with theirs, just as one guides the fingers of a child with a pen, and the child thinks, I am writing.'[3] Even apostolic initiatives are frowned upon; Zinzendorf would not advise any of his brethren 'to lay themselves out upon the conquest of souls . . . Satan . . . would not be able to disturb our peace, if we remained within the limits measured out to us'.[4] And all the while they were careful to describe themselves as sinners; not in accents of self-reproach, but to vindicate their own orthodoxy in the matter of imputed righteousness. 'Sinner-like' was used as a term of commendation; we hear of a pastor who has received 'a pretty and sinner-like letter from Brother Oliver'.[5] There is a touch, here, of Père Clugny and his method of *prière des pécheurs*.[6]

The 'assurance' (not to be understood in the Calvinist sense) which the Moravian convert felt was not confined to the things of the next life. It was 'firma fiducia in Deum, et persuasio de gratia divina, tranquillitas mentis summa atque serenitas et pax';[7] it inhibited—that, as we shall see, was Wesley's point of contact with it—all fear of death. He had a constant sense of Divine protection. Zinzendorf wished that the Brotherhood had one or two ships of its own, so that their immunity from sea risks might advertise to the world 'our Saviour's hand upon his people'.[8] Those who are due to take their turn at the night watch—there was continuous prayer at Herrnhut—'without the help of a clock or an alarm-watch are, by an inward impulse, awakened at the very instant for them to perform this office'.[9] Nothing distinguishes Moravianism so strongly as its unquestioning belief in the active interposition of Providence. Alone among the enthusiasms, alone, perhaps, among

[1] Holmes, op. cit. i. 208.
[2] Quoted ibid. i. 294.
[3] Stinstra, op. cit., Appendix, p. 10.
[4] Ibid., Appendix, p. 16.
[5] Jenks, op. cit., p. 62.
[6] See Bremond, *Histoire littéraire*, &c., viii.
[7] Wesley's *Journal*, 10/8/38.
[8] Stinstra, op. cit., Appendix, p. 29.
[9] Ibid., Pref., p. xviii.

the religions, it was prepared to decide all questions, major or minor, by drawing lots.

Curiously, this same tendency is to be found in the old Church of the Brethren. When they decided to start a ministry of their own, in 1467, they fell back upon the apostolic principle, and chose three candidates by lot.[1] The Hutterian Brethren in the Ukraine, who claimed to be an independent survival of the old *Unitas Fratrum*—in 1802 they were still wearing fifteenth-century dress, practised community of goods, and rejected infant baptism—used the lot to settle important issues.[2] But whatever was the origin of this institution at Herrnhut, it is quite certain that by the year 1743 it had won Zinzendorf's full approval. He carried about with him 'a little green book, with detachable leaves; each leaf contained some motto or text; and when the Count was in a difficulty, he pulled out one of these leaves at random'.[3] 'Is it not very presumptuous', we are asked by Stinstra, 'to cast lots when we are deliberating on anything, and expect that God shall determine the chance by his Providence?'[4] But it is perhaps permissible to observe that sortilege is a natural and logically consistent device of the ultrasupernaturalist. 'Ils le fondent', writes Grégoire, 'sur le principe de leur propre insuffisance.'[5] And the Moravian Constitutions insisted that it was, where reasons cancelled out, 'the only way of setting aside one's own will'.[6] If trusting in human prudence is trusting in the 'arm of flesh', as the ultrasupernaturalist must needs think, how else can he avoid the fatal snare? 'To me', Zinzendorf wrote to Spangenberg, 'the Lot and the voice of God are simply one and the same thing.'[3] We shall have occasion to consider later whether the principle did not give rise to abuses. In the meantime it is fair to give the opinion of Holmes, who wrote when the Lot was still in constant use, that mistakes 'have been less frequent since this mode of decision has been systematically adopted'.[7]

Nothing has been more commented on, or more criticized, about the Moravian discipline than the provision that marriages should be settled by lot. You would suppose it to have been devised by some cynical bachelor; or perhaps by an unworldly theorist who knew

[1] Holmes, op. cit. i. 50.
[2] Ibid. ii. 282 sqq.
[3] Hutton, op. cit., p. 274.
[4] Op. cit., p. 41.
[5] Op. cit. v. 367.
[6] Wesley's *Journal*, 10/8/38.
[7] Holmes, op. cit. i. 291.

nothing of real life. But Zinzendorf was nothing of that sort. He had twelve children by his first wife, and, a year after her decease, married his secretary. More courageous than the common run of enthusiasts, he would find a place for sex within the orbit of his system. 'Falling' in love could only be regarded as a relic of corrupt nature; the regenerate must have a higher sense of their responsibilities. The husband in every marriage was simply the vicegerent of Christ, deputed by the Church to act in his name. It was not an ignoble doctrine; unfortunately, in his sermons, the Count dwelt on its implications with a revolting circumstantiality of detail;[1] and an unsympathetic historian does not exaggerate when he tells us that the Moravian preaching 'frequently contained very gross incentives to the work of propagation'.[2] Even more distasteful were the references made in the hymns of the period to the same subject, which they contrive to make more indecent by the use of half-veiled metaphor.[3] An outrage upon taste is not necessarily an outrage upon morals; but the existence of these literary documents was a formidable weapon in the hands of those who criticized the Moravian Church, and aroused genuine, though often exaggerated, suspicion.

(vi) *The Sifting Time*

The Church of the Brethren had already sent out its missionaries far and wide, had already established itself not only on the continent of Europe, but in England and in the North American colonies, had already brought John and Charles Wesley to the pangs of a new birth, when, to all external appearance, it suddenly went mad. From 1746 to 1750 it went through a phase of incredible childishness, to which its apologists look back with embarrassment and with unconcealed regret. They have named it, the Sifting Time. It reigned principally not at Herrnhut itself, but at Herrnhaag, a settlement near Frankfurt where future ministers were trained, and the schools provided accommodation for 600 children.

The origins of this singular visitation are traced by the historians of the Brethren to the Count himself. Never happy when he was not creating some fresh movement, he instituted in 1743 an 'Order of

[1] Stinstra, op. cit., Appendix, pp. 1, 2, 3, 23, 25, 26.
[2] Smollett's continuation of Hume, an. 1760.
[3] Stinstra, op. cit., Appendix, pp. 46–50.

the Little Fools'. God had revealed himself to babes; the Brethren 'were not to use their own brains; they were to wish that they had no brains; they were to be like children in arms; and thus they would overcome all their doubts and banish all their cares'.[1] Once more we are reminded of a Quietist parallel; Madame Guyon claimed to have gone through a 'state of infancy' in which she moved about with all the mental helplessness of a child.[2] Now arose the distressing sentimentalities of expression which have given such a handle to the critics of the movement. These will tell us how the wound in our Lord's Heart came to be described as 'the dearest little opening of the sacred, precious, and thousand times beautiful little side. . . . It is in this opening the Regenerate rests and breathes. It is there he works and plays. It is there he lies straight or cross-ways. It is there he has his country, his house, his room, his little table. It is there he eats and drinks. It is there in a word he lives, and praises the dear Lambkin.'[3] 'They used diminutives for nearly everything. They addressed the Count as Papa and Little Papa . . . and they described themselves as little wound-parsons, cross-wood little splinters, a blessed troop of cross-air birds', and so on.[4] Strange progeny for the church of Amos Comenius!

But these eccentricities of language were only incidental to a habit of thought and speech which appears frankly antinomian, and behaviour which, 'though not immoral and criminal, was yet highly disgraceful to their Christian profession. Had not God in his mercy averted the impending danger, a spirit of religious levity and antinomianism might have sapped the very foundation of the Brethren's church.'[5] Such vague allusions on the part of the historian can fortunately be supplemented by the impressions of an eyewitness. Andrew Frey, a Moravian from Pennsylvania, went to Herrnhaag in the year 1746, when the fanaticism was at its height, and published an account of what he saw and heard. He strikes the reader as something of a prig, and something of an eccentric himself: easily shocked, and of a credulous nature which invited his Brethren to play pranks on him. But he is an honest witness, and his evidence cannot be set aside. 'At one time', writes Hutton, 'I could not resist the conviction that Frey had overdrawn his picture.' But he changed

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 274.
[2] See above, p. 323.
[3] Stinstra, op. cit., Pref., p. lxxxiv.
[4] Hutton, op. cit., p. 275.
[5] Holmes, op. cit. i. 400.

his view on finding that 'as soon as the settlement at Herrnhaag was abandoned, a number of the Single Brethren went to Pennsylvania, and there confessed to Spangenberg that the scandals at Herrnhaag were ten times as bad'.[1] At least we ought to be able to recover the atmosphere.

'A true and Authentic Account of Andrew Frey, Containing the Occasion of his coming among the Herrnhutters or Moravians, his Observations on their Conferences, Casting Lots, Marriages, Festivals, Merriments, Celebrations of Birth-days, Impious Doctrines, and Fantastical Practices', and so on, is an English translation from the German, published in 1753 with editorial footnotes which show that it was part of the great anti-Moravian campaign. What chiefly shocked Frey was a celebration, at Marienborn, of the Count's birthday—the Count himself was then absent in England. The boughs piled up in the great hall, the cake surmounted by forty-six candles, the thousand lights burning, the choice music—all this sounds venial enough to the profane reader, though Frey has no patience with such unapostolic standards of living. But he goes on, 'the young Folks began to grow wanton, laughing, sporting, jesting, leaping, throwing one another on the Floor, and struggling till they were quite out of Breath, besides many filthy, gross Indecencies'; the picture is seen through Puritan eyes, but even when you have made allowances for that, it is not edifying.[2] What chiefly seems to distress Frey is the irreverence which associates piety with buffoonery: 'Some of the Labourers and the young Count himself trying Masteries at versifying, which was attended with frequent Burst of Laughter, and scandalous Abuses of the Name of the dear Lamb slain for Sin.'[3] There is nothing very damning about the indictment, except where it is put in the most general terms. But Frey was taken as a joke; these scenes took place in his presence, and were perhaps partly organized for his benefit; it is the independent evidence about things being 'ten times worse' that makes his revelations disquieting.

And if Frey was a severe critic of their conduct, the words they used in their own justification seem to accuse rather than excuse it. 'Any one having found Lodging, Bed and Board in the Lamb's Wounds, cannot but be merry, and live according to Nature; so that when such a one plays any Pranks, that the godly ones cry out

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 359 note. [2] Frey, op. cit., p. 16. [3] Ibid., p. 39.

against them as Sins, the Saviour himself . . . rejoices the more over the sportive little Wound-worms.'[1] 'All they have to do is to bed and board in the Saviour's wounds, and roll themselves in them, and to rejoice with Songs and Dances, without minding the Precisians and the Visionaries.'[2] 'Do not suffer yourselves to be molested in your Merriments' (these are quoted as Zinzendorf's own words) 'provided that they who are not yet entirely gotten into the Wounds shall not presume to mimic those who are thoroughly drunken.'[3] Nothing is to be spoken of but 'Wounds, Wounds, Wounds', and the less enthusiastic practices of religion are spoken of with startling contempt. 'All Godliness, all Devotion, all Piety are no more than so many Snares of the Devil.'[4] Everything which savours of human initiative must be discouraged: 'Nothing gives the Devil greater Joy, than to decoy (Men) into good Works, departing from Evil, shalling and willing.'[5] The Bible itself is described as a 'nauseous thing', and 'when any one gives himself to meditating on the Bible, it is a sure Sign that he never had the least Spark of Grace in his Heart'.[6] 'Those deceitful legal Precisians, with their Heads full of devout and biblish Lumber, who dare to carp at the Mirth of the Justified-sinner-community' are described as 'Tools of the Devil'.[7]

Evidently this is the language of pure antinomianism, and what it was used to justify is less important than what it might have been used to justify. All this was common form, it appears, from 1746 to 1750; nor can the Count's tolerance of it be explained by his absence, for he was certainly at Herrnhaag in 1747.[8] The truth seems to be that the Moravians, while they were using such expressions and forcing their minds into such an attitude, were still impressing the world and making converts. Frey himself admits that everywhere on his travels he found some newly awakened souls,[9] and John Cennick, one of the most effective preachers our island produced during the eighteenth century, joined the Moravians in 1746, amazed by the spirit of devotion he found at Herrnhaag.[10] That is the curious thing we always tend to forget about the enthusiasms—their splendid achievements and their fantastic eccentricities are found side by side, are simultaneous, proceed (it would appear) from the same root. When Zinzendorf at last took action, it was by

[1] Frey, op. cit., p. 20. [2] Ibid., p. 33. [3] Ibid., p. 31. [4] Ibid., p. 17.
[5] Ibid., p. 19. [6] Ibid., p. 37. [7] Ibid., p. 30. [8] Hutton, op. cit., p. 280.
[9] Frey, op. cit., p. 13. [10] Hutton, op. cit., pp. 278, 323.

calling a synod and making, as best he could, a public gesture of apology. Herrnhaag was disbanded; his own son, Christian Renatus, was relieved of the office he had enjoyed there; a few members were expelled; the twelfth appendix to the hymn-book, containing much offensive matter, was suppressed; and the Count undertook to expurgate his own printed discourses. What more could he do? He could not bewail the occurrence for which he was chiefly responsible,[1] or repudiate the doctrine he had been so sedulous to inculcate.

To tell the truth, what concerned the Brethren at this moment was not to set their house in order, but to strengthen their propaganda position. During the next five years, they were to face a violent outburst of criticism, in England, in Holland, in Germany itself. Wesley and Whitefield both contributed to the literature of the subject. Many of the accusations brought were demonstrably untrue; but the phenomena of the Sifting Time, as they were noised abroad and lost nothing in the telling, lent them a certain plausibility. The hymns, in particular, were a weak spot in their defence; a fresh revision was needed in 1753, and another in 1778, because the collection still retained 'too many relics of the Sifting Time'.[2] It is clear, then, that the Moravians were anxious to give the enemy no occasion to blaspheme; it is not so clear that their own theological emphasis was substantially modified as the result of Zinzendorf's purge. Admirable as their practice might be, their speculative ideas came very close to antinomianism. Jenks has made it clear that they were often confused with the real Antinomians in North Wales, and did in fact admit John Relly to their pulpits.[3] Zinzendorf's theology had set its lasting stamp on their origins.

(vii) *The Vision fades*

Meanwhile, in the year 1760, the founder of their fortunes died an edifying death. Was he a great man? Grégoire approves the judgement that 'dans l'Unité, les grands talents sont toujours rares', and enumerates seven of its heroes who are, he says, 'les hommes les plus recommandables, mais non des génies éminents'.[4] Hutton gives you a different picture: 'In genius, Zinzendorf easily bore the palm; in practical wisdom (Wesley) far excelled him.'[5] I confess that I find it difficult to see Zinzendorf in the front rank of men, in which John

[1] Hutton, op. cit., pp. 275, 280.
[2] Ibid., p. 416.
[3] Op. cit., p. 41.
[4] Op. cit. v. 377.
[5] Op. cit., p. 398.

Wesley will always be placed. For the rest, he was a mixture of virtues and failings like the rest of us. When Spangenberg, his not unworthy successor, was commissioned to write his eight-volume biography, he asked whether the Count's defects were to be mentioned; the lot was consulted, and answered No.[1] More recent historians have shown an engaging frankness in the opposite direction. His chief personal failing was a certain quickness of temper. 'At anything which he disliked, he would storm and rage beyond measure. . . . If either the Voices or the Music happened to fall into any little Dissonancy, he would thunder out that they did not mind his Orders; and indeed, it behoved these poor people to attend all his motions as they valued their souls.'[2] This is a more serious imputation on his character than the statement that he was always late for meals,[3] or that he read (even though it were Bayle's *Dictionary*) 'to quiet his mind' when he went to bed.[4]

It is more pertinent, in discussing a man who was so very much the ecclesiastic, to examine his public qualities. 'He was not always strictly truthful; and in one of his pamphlets he actually asserted that he himself was in no way responsible for the scandals at Herrnhaag.'[5] A more noticeable trick about the man (although the vastness of his undertakings in some measure excuses it) was a kind of ostentation which led to recklessness in money matters. He travelled with a secretariat of forty persons, and when he came to London made his headquarters at Lindsey House, Chelsea, which he 'did up' at an expense of £11,000 pounds.[6] In spite of all his generosity to it, the church which he had created found itself, a few years after he died, £150,000 in debt.[7] He was also imperious; 'a man of dynamic character, somewhat resembling our John Wesley; dominant (not to say domineering), and with a turn for organizing (the enemies of both men would call it an itch for interference) which insisted on remoulding whatever came to hand'.[8] This, to be sure, is a quality seldom lacking in the leaders of enthusiastic movements; but it is the more discreditable in Zinzendorf because he never made any claim to personal inspiration; he ascribed all developments of policy to providential guidance of the community as a whole,[9] with the Lot, if necessary, for its organ of expression. Whatever gestures

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 394. [2] Frey, op. cit., p. 56. [3] Hutton, op. cit., p. 395.
[4] Frey, op. cit., p. 53. [5] Hutton, op. cit., p. 395. [6] Addison, op. cit., p. 107.
[7] Holmes, op. cit. ii. 6. [8] Jenks, op. cit., p. 2. [9] Stinstra, op. cit., Appendix, p. 35.

of humility he makes in his private life, in his public capacity he remains obstinately the Squire of Bethelsdorf.

Imperious temper in a leader is apt to bring its own Nemesis. Because he imposes himself on the men who surround him, instead of having the patience to convince them, his policy endures only while he lives to enforce it; he is scarcely cold in his grave when it is reversed. It was to be expected that this should be the fate of Zinzendorf's great vision. He meant the *Unitas Fratrum* to be a kind of religious order within the framework of Protestant Christendom, acting as a liaison between the rival sects by confusing its own outlines, and remaining always on terms with the religion of the country. Lutheranism in Germany, Anglicanism in England, should be united in spite of themselves because each had a concordat with Moravianism. In Pennsylvania, where no one religion held the field, he tried to unite no less than fifteen sects, including the Schwenkfelders and the Dunckers, in a movement which he called 'the Congregation of God in the Spirit'.[1] He was delighted when Lord Granville in a parliamentary debate described the Moravians as 'a net cast over all Christendom, to enclose all denominations of Christians'.[2] He even prophesied that in fifty years' time the Moravian church would be forgotten—evidently with the implication that its pacifying mission would by then have been achieved.[3] The Brethren as a whole, it is clear, entertained no such illusions; they wanted to have a church of their own, a sect among the sects, surviving and winning ground as other sects had by its own merits. 'A later generation', writes Addison,[4] 'will never perhaps be able to estimate the degree of latent reserve and genuine mystification with which the Brethren accepted their Ordinary's ideas on this point. . . . Zinzendorf had attained a position of control which in practice was akin to personal absolutism.' Who then, now that the tyrant was dead, would defend his acts?

In England, so long as the Count lived, no Moravian congregations (that is, independent units) were started except here and there in the form of settlements. This is the subject of constant complaints about the influence he exercised;[5] Hutton, in summing up his life, has to say: 'No man did more to revive the Moravian church, and no man did more, by his very ideals, to retard the later expansion.'[6]

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 370. [2] Ibid., p. 345. [3] Ibid., p. 262. [4] Op. cit., p. 98.
[5] Hutton, op. cit., p. 380 and elsewhere. [6] Ibid., p. 398.

But when his lieutenants, Spangenberg and de Watteville, took over the control of the movement, things were no better. The hand of the dead man still lay heavy upon the thing he had created, and it was nearly a hundred years before the Brethren, either in England or in America, were allowed to develop a policy of expansion. This is in the main the reason alleged by its historians for a singular fact about the Moravian church; it has marked time from the moment of its first triumph. This does not, indeed, apply to its foreign missions, and there has been some increase in the United States; but in the old world there is no progress. The whole Society has less than 100,000 communicants, and only numbers some 200,000 as its total of adherents, as against 130,000 a century back.[1] What is the secret, when you have made due allowances for the growth in population, of this strange infecundity?

Partly, no doubt, it was due to the reason given above; and partly in general to the want of freedom in the Society, which sacrificed initiative to bureaucracy. At Herrnhut, besides the regular apparatus of Elders, Deacons, and Teachers, there were eleven monitors who 'are a kind of spies on the people, and who acquaint the elders with their discoveries'. Some of these were known to be monitors, some not.[2] After all, it was Zinzendorf's own park. . . . The web of bureaucracy and supervision which grew up as the movement expanded was not calculated to promote vigorous life. There was a certain façade of elective democracy, but the effect of it was neutralized, at every turn, by the use of the lot.[3] Frey openly complains of 'human Machinations, casting and rejecting Lots, and casting them again, and then again altering them',[4] and a more temperate critic refers to 'very human devices for mitigating its inconveniences. . . . The questions put to the lot were so skilfully varied in wording, with so many alternatives and overlaps (blanks were also added), that the considered opinion of the Elders was not often rejected trenchantly and irremediably'.[5] In short it was the Elders who 'prepared business' for the lot, an art of the skilled committee-man. In practice the Moravian church was organized from a centre, and that centre was in Germany. The revolt and expulsion of Richard Viney in 1744

[1] See Holmes (1830), ii. 362, Hutton (1909), p. 498, Jenks (1938), p. 6; but the statistics are confusingly given.

[2] Stinstra, op. cit., Pref., p. xvi, and Wesley's *Journal* under 10 Aug. 1738.

[3] Hutton, op. cit., p. 313. [4] Op. cit., p. 13. [5] Jenks, op. cit., p. 8.

shows how much real democracy there was in the whole system.[1] And as long as differences of nationality last, Englishmen and Americans will always accuse the Germans of unimaginativeness, of pedantic adherence to principle. The Count's vision of the Moravian experiment as a means of uniting the Christianities was soon lost to view; his curious methods lived on, and the machinery he had set in motion to perpetuate those methods revolved automatically.

Meanwhile, one other reason may be assigned for the retarded growth of the Moravians; their own historians have somewhat overlooked it. 'It is better', says one of their official documents, 'for us to decrease in numbers and increase in piety, than to be a large multitude, like a body without a spirit.'[2] We are back again at St. Francis of Sales and his complaint to Mère Angélique about the 'big fish'. Moravianism, like all the enthusiastic sects, began with the aim of producing an *élite* and, unlike most of the others, never lost sight of it. The spirit of piety and brotherliness which distinguishes its rank and file is not, alas, for the generality of men. What that spirit is cannot be better illustrated than by recording the anecdote with which Grégoire concludes his rather unsympathetic review of the movement.[3] During the wars of the eighteenth century, an officer ordered a Moravian peasant to show him the best fields for his troops to forage in. After one or two fields had been reaped, the officer pointed to one close by, which the peasant had missed out, and suggested that this was nearer than the next one he had indicated. '"Cela est vrai," dit le Herrnhutter, "mais ce champ ne m'appartient pas."'

[1] Addison, op. cit., p. 106. [2] Hutton, op. cit., p. 428. [3] Op. cit. v. 380.

XVIII

A PROFILE OF JOHN WESLEY

THE biography of John Wesley is surely unique. Here is a man born in the first decade of his century, who sees it through into the last; a man so far in reaction from the tendencies of his age that he seems a living commentary on them, yet so much the child of his age that you cannot think of him as fitting in with any other. A High Churchman in his youth, he makes for himself in the unsympathetic surroundings of Oxford an enclave of primitive observance and of ascetic living; such is his personal influence that he seems destined, if that were possible, to shake Oxford out of its long dream. *Dis aliter visum*; he undergoes an experience of conversion before his lifetime has reached its mid-point. A sensational conversion; the finished product of the schools becomes the disciple of a foreign visitor to our shores, by no means his match in intellect. Thenceforward, he must fight by other methods, and for the most part with other companions, that battle against irreligion to which he has dedicated his youth. He has made his own soul, but the battle is not yet over; he finds himself in conflict with the men who had been his closest comrades in arms, and who still share his own beliefs but exaggerate their emphasis in a degree which he thinks dangerous. A man who once seemed likely to do great things for the Church of England, yet whose influence, on the whole, was to damage her position in the eyes of his contemporaries; a man, nevertheless, who lived to see something of the old bitterness against him die down, whose age was cheered by public recognition at once welcome, unsought, and unexpected.

So far, however, there is nothing unique about John Wesley. A careful reperusal of the foregoing paragraph will show that it all applies equally to the career of Cardinal Newman.

Wesley and Newman—you might think that some elfin fate had arranged this odd consent between the stars of the two men, just so as to throw into relief the vast difference there was between them. Newman, so sensitive, so warm in his attachments, so revealing in

his literary confidences, Wesley, so unruffled by opposition, so half-hearted in his familiarities, so circumspect in his admissions; Newman, the recluse, Wesley, a lifelong vagabond in the service of his gospel; Newman, painstaking in his judgements, fastidious in his style, Wesley, leaping to infallible conclusions and throwing them at you with the first words that came to hand; Newman, such a child of the Renaissance, Wesley, so fundamentally a Puritan. And, deeper down, Newman the apostle of religious authority, Wesley, a cheerful experimentalist who in all the hesitations of a lifetime never asked himself by what right he ruled, or on what basis of intellectual certainty he believed.

But we shall do best to study Wesley in isolation.

(i) *The Physical Achievement*

Here was a man who from the age of thirty-six onwards, 'travelled 225,000 miles and preached more than 40,000 sermons, some of them to more than 20,000 people'.[1] Father Paul Segneri was credited with covering 800 miles a year on foot, as we have seen, and barefoot at that. But it is not so much energy as staying-power we are here concerned with; Wesley 'first began to feel old at 85',[2] and was still making his way as far as Aberdeen in 1791, the year before his death,[3] though he protested, at the beginning of that year, that his eyes were very dim and his strength had quite forsaken him.[4] If he 'lived to preach at Kingswood under the shade of trees which he had planted',[5] no life was ever lived less in the shade. Continually on the road, continually in the public eye, engaged oftener than not in such controversies as would have sapped the nervous strength of a man ordinarily vigorous, he lived to the age of eighty-eight as a prophet would live who was determined to reproach his contemporaries with their decadence. For about a fortnight, when he had just turned eighty, he treated himself to an outing in Holland. For the rest, if we find a few days in the *Journal* covered by the entry 'I took a little journey into Surrey',[6] it is as much relief as we get from the sense of unremitting activity in the man. It is a grateful

[1] J. Overton, *John Wesley* (1891), p. 87.
[2] Ibid., p. 193.
[3] J. Simon, *John Wesley, the Last Phase* (1934, quoted here as *L.P.*), p. 333.
[4] Wesley's *Journal*, 5th ed., 28 July 1790.
[5] Southey's *Life of Wesley* (abridged, 1903), p. 331.
[6] *Journal*, 15/2/73.

interlude, and a rare one, when he listens to Mr. Handel's *Messiah* in Bristol Cathedral,[1] or accompanies some friends on a visit—his first, one suspects—to the British Museum.[2]

That the man who lived in this way was of a constitution naturally robust does not appear from the evidence. At twenty-seven he was spitting blood, and although the time he spent in Georgia mended his health, he was 'in the third stage of a consumption' eleven years afterwards. Since then (he writes in 1770) he has not known pain nor sickness.[3] In the later years of his life he seldom watched his birthday pass without recording in the *Journal* his growing surprise at this phenomenon. He would not have been Wesley if he had not attributed it in the first instance to a direct interference on the part of Providence; 'I do not impute this to second causes, but to the Sovereign Lord of all.'[4] But he would not have been Wesley if he had not speculated sometimes about the secondary causes too; no man was ever more insatiably curious about all that concerned medicine. He enumerates six of these at the age of eighty-five,[5] and the list is a strange one. He begins with 'constant exercise and change of air'. The next item is 'my never having lost a night's sleep, sick or well, at land or at sea, since I was born'—an estimate, as we can verify by other passages, only slightly exaggerated.[6] And if we are disposed to regard this as a phenomenon, rather than the explanation of a phenomenon, he adds his third reason, 'my having sleep at command; so that whenever I feel myself almost worn out, I call it, and it comes, day or night'. The fourth reason is 'having constantly, for above sixty years, risen at four in the morning'; and he treats it as a fresh point that for most of that time he has preached every morning at five. This was his sincere conviction; on two other anniversaries he gives constant preaching as a recipe for health;[7] and it is on record that he only needed a day's rest to set him up after delivering thirty sermons in eleven days.[8] His final claim, not less extraordinary or less enviable than the others, is that he has had 'so little pain in my life, and so little sorrow, or anxious care'. More remarkable, surely, than anything in his physical make-up was the strength of will, or the power of resignation, which could banish Moravians, Calvinists, Antinomians, rebellious preachers, disapproving bishops, to the

[1] *Journal*, 17/8/58.
[2] Ibid. 22/12/80 (the Museum had been opened in 1757).
[3] Ibid. 28/6/70.
[4] Ibid. 28/6/84.
[5] Ibid. 28/6/88.
[6] Ibid. 10/9/59, 5/7/73.
[7] Ibid. 28/6/80, 28/6/82.
[8] Ibid. 26/9/60.

background of that over-taxed mind, and summon sleep like a menial to his bedside.

It must not be supposed that Wesley was content to preach the triumph of mind over matter and count as a forerunner of Mrs. Eddy. He was an amateur doctor with a fine contempt for the profession and a remarkable repertory of prescriptions. When his face was swollen he cured it in a few hours with boiled nettles;[1] recommended the same treatment, with unrecorded results, for pleurisy,[2] and, with instant success, for a 'hurt of about forty-five years' standing'.[3] Bruised garlic, applied to the soles of his feet, took only an hour to cure him of lumbago, six hours to rid him of hoarseness;[4] and when he was supposed to be in danger of death from consumption, 'a thought came into my mind to make an experiment. So I ordered some stone brimstone to be powdered, mixed with the white of an egg, and spread on brown paper, which I applied to my side. The pain ceased in five minutes, the fever in half an hour; and from this hour I began to recover strength'.[5] But his preference was for electrical treatment, on which he had written a monograph;[6] he prescribed it for a paralytic disorder, for inveterate pain of the stomach,[7] and for angina.[8] It was part of his curious totalitarian régime that he liked the Methodists to come to him for medical treatment; 'I prepare and give them physic myself, having for six or seven and twenty years made physic the diversion of my leisure hours'; nor did his enemies fail to accuse him of dosing his converts with halicacabon and other drugs to produce hysterical symptoms.[9]

'I must be on horse-back for life, if I would be healthy', Wesley wrote in 1764,[10] and he certainly did not neglect the precaution. Up to that year, though he sometimes takes the machine (as the stage-coach was then commonly called) in special emergencies,[11] he is normally to be found in the saddle. It is well known that he got through most of his voluminous reading while he rode—always with a slack rein; he claimed that he had ridden over 100,000 miles without meeting more than two horses that would stumble when thus

[1] Ibid. 10/10/57. [2] Ibid. 7/4/55. [3] Ibid. 25/4/50. [4] Ibid. 14/10/80.
[5] Ibid. 28/1/54. [6] Ibid. 1/11/59. [7] Ibid. 20/1/53. [8] Ibid. 19/4/74.
[9] Lavington, *The Enthusiasm of the Methodists and Papists Compared* (1749–51), iii. 162–4.
[10] J. Simon, *John Wesley the Master Builder* (1927; quoted here as *M.B.*), p. 198.
[11] *Journal* (e.g.) 6/9/56.

left to their own devices. 'To fancy, therefore' (he adds characteristically), 'that a tight rein prevents stumbling is a capital blunder.'[1] Unfortunately, one of the two rogues mentioned caused serious injuries to its rider in the winter of 1765, and in the following year Miss Mary Lewen put a chaise and a pair of horses at his disposal.[2] Her success in combating his equestrian ardour was not complete; in 1772 he is still to be found riding through snow in the midlands,[3] and his friends are getting up a subscription to present him with a new chaise.[4] After this wheeled travel became definitely the rule, but even now he did not spare himself. Bristol is 140 miles from Congleton, and to cover the distance there and back within forty-eight hours, even in a chaise,[5] is hard going for a man who is over seventy. Nor was the saddle abandoned altogether; in the March of 1774 Wesley is still riding, in spite of cold which makes him feel 'downright sick',[6] and June finds him riding still through wind and rain from Barnard Castle to Newbiggin.[7] You have to remember that all these journeys were punctuated with preaching, at every town which was capable (how few were not!) of turning out an audience when the indomitable missionary passed through. And if he had sprained an ankle on the way, he preached kneeling.[8]

(ii) *The Feat of Organization*

Wesley's open-air sermons, lay preachers, and institution of a church within the Church have so often been compared to the Mendicant revival of the twelfth century that we might expect to find in Wesley an admirer of St. Francis. Had he expressed himself in that sense, he would have been out of harmony with the spirit of his age. It was only later that non-Catholic Christendom extended a special kind of patronage to the Poor Man of Assisi; the eighteenth century, enlightened by Voltaire, could say of Enthusiasm; 'Good God! What outrages against reason, and thy pure religion, did it commit in the thirteenth century, when the extravagant Francis preached to swallows and fishes!'[9] And indeed I do not think there is a single reference in the whole of Wesley's *Journal* to the mendicant orders. More singularly, he expressed himself in qualified but wist-

[1] *Journal*, 21/3/70. [2] Simon, *M.B.*, pp. 187, 198. [3] *Journal*, 15/3/72.
[4] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 304. [5] *Journal*, 1/4/74. [6] Ibid. 19/3/84.
[7] Ibid. 10/6/84. [8] Ibid. 17/2/51.
[9] *Letters on Religious Retirement*, by John Langhorne (London, 1762), p. 16.

ful admiration of St. Ignatius. 'Surely one of the greatest men that ever was engaged in the support of so bad a cause! I wonder any man should judge him to be an enthusiast. No, but he knew the people with whom he had to do; and setting out (like Count Z——) with a full persuasion that he might use guile to promote the glory of God . . . acted, in all things, consistent with his principles.'[1] Such language did Wesley no good with Bishop Lavington;[2] and indeed it is impossible not to speculate whether 'that surprising book, the Life of Ignatius Loyola' did not provide him in some sort with a model to be imitated. From the first Wesley strikes you as a man determined to forge a weapon. It was not enough to be an evangelist, you must create and organize a movement. George Whitefield, the co-founder of Methodism, described himself in a moment of discouragement as 'weaving a rope of sand';[3] that was not Wesley's way. When he died he left behind him a powerful religious body, Anglican in its inspiration, and for the most part in its membership, but ripe for schism.

It numbered in Great Britain and Ireland over 70,000 members.[4] It had its cadre, not only of itinerant preachers and local preachers, but of class leaders, band leaders, helpers, stewards, and schoolmasters; it had band-meetings, class-meetings, quarterly meetings, love-feasts over and above its ordinary services. Nominally it was only an aggregation of 'religious Societies' organized in various centres. The notion of such societies was familiar at the time, and a good deal older than Wesley; there were already thirty or forty of them in London alone when he started preaching.[5] In theory his only differed from the rest in so far as he extended a welcome not only to Anglicans but to all those who were anxious to flee from the wrath to come.[6] But in fact a church had formed in embryo within the womb of the Establishment, with John Wesley as its visible head. Nor was this all. Methodism could muster nearly 60,000 adherents in the newly emancipated North American Colonies; and, since the ministrations of the Establishment had been

[1] *Journal*, 16/8/42. [2] Op. cit. iii, Pref., p. x.

[3] R. D. Urlin, *Churchman's Life of Wesley* (London, 1880), p. 188.

[4] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 319. Urlin, who gives the figures as over 130,000, must have inadvertently included the membership in America.

[5] Hutton, op. cit., p. 284.

[6] Simon, *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* (here quoted as *M.S.*, London, 1923), p. 21.

disturbed by the recent troubles, Wesley had sent out his own emissaries to organize the scattered Transatlantic societies—emissaries armed by him with powers which they (at any rate) regarded as episcopal. There is something peculiarly appropriate about the reading which Dr. Coke selected to beguile the leisure of this momentous voyage. It was the life of St. Francis Xavier.[1]

Wesley in fact was the parent and the head of a great religious organization; was he a great organizer? Not, at least, in the commonly accepted sense of the term. Your great organizer is one who can train lieutenants to carry out his plans *here* and *here*, with a minimum of reference to headquarters; who can leave them almost complete responsibility in their several spheres, with the assurance that they will act as he himself would have acted. This was emphatically not Wesley's genius. As we shall see lower down, he remained to the end of his life the sole source of authority in a movement that was continually in need of wet-nursing; he must be here, there, and everywhere, or things began to go wrong. In fact it is the absence of organizing talent (in the sense explained above) that makes his performance chiefly remarkable. His tours were indeed missionary journeys, and he was always breaking fresh ground; as late as 1766 you find him standing up in the streets of Wolsingham and singing a hymn till a crowd collected, and he could begin on the sermon.[2] However flourishing a society might be within doors, he held that it was bound to wither if it gave up field-preaching.[3] But as the years go on Wesley's incessant round, without ever ceasing to be a missionary journey, takes on more and more the character of a pastoral visitation. And it was a visitation, not merely of the local officials, but of the members individually. The house-to-house visiting, upon which he always laid emphasis,[4] was a burden he himself would share, however grievous it might be to flesh and blood.[5] And if, as time went on, the weekly meeting of the 'classes' was instituted to save unnecessary exertion,[6] Wesley, on his rounds, must still 'meet the classes'—an 'unpleasing work', as he calls it.[7] In doing so, he almost admits the failure of his lieutenants. Surely the class leaders must *know* which of the members were walking disorderly? So he complained, as he reduced the numbers of the

[1] Southey, op. cit., p. 305.
[2] *Journal*, 3/7/66.
[3] e.g. ibid. 5/1/61, 13/1/62.
[4] Ibid. 29/12/58, 11/1/74.
[5] Ibid. 30/9/72.
[6] Southey, op. cit., p. 193.
[7] *Journal*, 19/12/87.

society at Gateshead from 800 to 400.[1] But he could not shift the incessant burden; and later, when the doctrine of perfection was to the fore, every claim to have been 'renewed in love' must be separately and personally investigated. Mr. Lunn[2] has acutely observed that Wesley, in religion as in other things, was incurably an experimentalist. He must be for ever taking the lid off to see how his Gospel was working. Already in 1742 he spent more than a week examining the London members 'that I might know the state of their souls to Godward'; then he goes through the same process at Bristol, and finishes up with a sermon on the text, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'.[3]

Such phrases did not escape the eye of his critics, and Bishop Lavington makes the most of this one.[4] It is indeed doubtful whether, in the early Methodist societies, there was not too much emphasis on what Wesley himself called 'watching over one another in love'[5] —it was easy to find a harsher name for it. It has been said that 'there is scarcely a detail of his wonderfully complete system of which he can properly be called the originator',[6] and Southey is probably right in holding that he was considerably indebted to the Moravians.[7] He did not, indeed, reproduce that rather questionable expedient of Moravian discipline which encouraged 'secret monitors' to spy on the behaviour of their brethren.[8] But the 'classes', originally designed to ease the payment of subscriptions, developed into a system of close supervision. Wesley, in the words of an admiring biographer, 'saw that by this means it could easily be found if any of the members grew weary or faint; and that, if any walked disorderly, they could be quickly discovered, and either amended or dismissed'.[9] He was no doubt within his rights in satisfying himself whether his converts were being a credit to him, and scoring their names off the books if they were not. He was not excommunicating them; he was dismissing them from a private religious organization of which he was the sole moderator, and the back-slider had the broad bosom of the Establishment to break his fall. But it seems likely that some of the back-bitings and dissensions, of which he so often complains, arose all the more easily because the early Methodists lived at such close quarters.

[1] Ibid. 8/3/47. [2] *John Wesley*, by Arnold Lunn (1929), p. 305.
[3] *Journal*, 13/9/42, 11/10/42, 29/10/42. [4] Op. cit. iii. 287.
[5] *Journal*, 14/6/82. [6] Overton, *John Wesley* (1891), p. 120.
[7] Op. cit., p. 160. [8] Ibid., p. 133. [9] Simon, *M.S.*, p. 64.

We read in the *Journal* itself the record of a woman who was clearly the victim of malicious tongues among her own fellow worshippers.

> She found peace with God five and thirty years ago, and the pure love of God a few years after. Above twenty years she has been a class and a band leader, and of very eminent use. Ten months since she was accused of drunkenness, and of revealing the secret of her friend. Being informed of this, I then wrote to Norwich (as I then believed the charge) that she must be no longer a leader, either of a band or of a class. The preacher told her further that, in his judgement, she was unfit to be a member of the society. Upon this she gave up her ticket. . . . Immediately all her friends (of whom she seemed to have a large number) forsook her at once. . . . On making a more particular inquiry, I found that Mrs. W. (formerly a common woman) had revealed her own secret, to Dr. Hunt and to twenty people besides. So the first accusation vanished into the air. As to the second, I verily believe the drunkenness with which she was charged was, in reality, the falling down in a fit. So we have thrown away one of the most useful leaders we ever had, and for these wonderful reasons![1]

Only Wesley's candour could have published such a story; only his curious detachment could have summed up the incident in so utilitarian a phrase. It points, surely, to a danger of over-organization; suggests, surely, that the evangelist charged himself with a burden too great even for his powers, when he tried to keep himself accurately informed about the state of 70,000 souls to Godward.

(iii) *Wesley's Spiritual Formation*

I have called this chapter 'A Profile of John Wesley', because it is an attempt to take him off his guard, and see him (for our present purposes) as a man, not merely as an evangelist. Just as you may spend a whole evening with a new acquaintance, and go away able to remember his full-face appearance, yet be lost in describing his profile, because he has been talking to you all the time—so it is with Wesley, as you see him both in his *Journal* and in his biographies. The powerful jaw, the mouth with its rather rugged smile, the eyes hooded like a hawk's, the unwrinkled forehead of the Romney portrait are your visual impression of the man; his tireless energy, his generosity of nature, his stern principles, his conviction of the one thing needful, monopolize in the same way his spiritual canvas.

[1] 27/10/83.

Just at the time of his conversion he lifts the veil and lets you see something of his inner struggles. For the rest, he is always talking at you, always preaching at you; he does not let you into his confidence. I do not say this in any spirit of censure; notoriously he was anything but secretive. He is so much concerned to edify that he will not humour our curiosity. 'John Wesley's conversation is good', Johnson said, 'but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do.'[1] Can we reconstruct some ghost of the elusive presence in the chair so unseasonably vacated?

His spiritual beginnings, indeed, are well documented and sufficiently well known. What strikes you most forcibly about Wesley and his group in the days of the Holy Club, and for some years afterwards, is the rigid asceticism which characterized them. Wesley's own account of the Holy Club, prefixed to the *Journal*, is an *apologia* addressed to a gentleman who believed that his son had died from the austerities of its membership. Accordingly he lays more stress on other aspects of it which tended to be forgotten, such as relieving the poor and visiting men in prison. But there was asceticism too; Wednesday and Friday were observed as days of fasting, and fasting it may be presumed not of a perfunctory kind.[2] Wesley himself was content with five hours' sleep, and formed the habit at Oxford, never discontinued, of rising at four in the morning.[3] On the voyage to Georgia, just when he left Oxford, he and his companions gave up flesh and wine,[4] and afterwards left off taking supper;[5] in Georgia itself he and Delamotte tried, successfully, the experiment of living on nothing but bread.[6] We are not told how long these austerities continued; he returned to vegetarianism after an interval of 'several years' in 1747, but gave it up two years later owing to a flux.[7] Meanwhile, in 1746 he had given up drinking tea, though admittedly with the primary intention of setting the poor an example of thrift; and he records that it cost him only three days of headache.[8] Doubtless, as time went on, the rigid tenor of his ordinary life was sufficient penance for him; we hear no more of these experiments. But he continued to preach the duty of fasting; and, as we

[1] Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, end of March 1778.
[2] See his strictures on the Scottish notion of fasting, *Journal*, 10/5/76.
[3] Urlin, op. cit., p. 16. [4] *Journal*, 20/9/35. [5] Ibid. 7/12/35.
[6] Ibid. 30/3/36. [7] Ibid. 29/1/49. [8] Ibid. 6/7/46.

shall see, his ideal did not fall short of persuading 70,000 people to adopt, for all practical purposes, the rules of the Holy Club. Meanwhile, he shared with the Protestantism of his day a strong objection to the idea of expiatory suffering; and when a certain Mrs. Scudamore died (we shall meet her lower down) after a curiously Catholic assertion of that doctrine, Wesley, in extreme old age, preached a sermon at Bristol against it.[1]

Not that Wesley, in an age so little friendly to mortification, had attained these high ideals without a struggle. It was in 1725, when he was preparing for orders, that he read the *Imitation of Christ*, recognized at once (for he had Johnson's way of 'tearing the heart out of a book') the semi-Jansenist atmosphere which escapes so many readers of it, and almost rebelled.[2] It was Jeremy Taylor who was really responsible for his conversion of manners, in so far as he ever needed one. He became 'throughly convinced that there was no medium; but that *every* part of my life (not *some* only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself—that is, in effect, to the devil'.[3] His thorough-going nature, having thus faced the issue of the Two Standards, took on a cast of sternness which is often disconcerting; he mocks at our hesitations; 'God deliver me', his famous phrase ran, 'from a half Christian'.[4] Later in his life—for his views seem to tone down in later life, though he never admits the charge of altering them—he had more indulgence for the frailty of human nature. 'I have frequently observed that there are two very different ranks of Christians, both of whom may be in the favour of God, a higher and a lower rank. The latter avoid all known sin, do much good, use all the means of grace, but have little of the life of God in their souls'[5]—it is not easy to recognize there the man who preached before the University of Oxford on the 'Almost Christian'; and you would guess any author rather than Wesley for the sentiment 'A little of the form of religion is better than none at all'.[6]

The phrase quoted above about 'half-Christians' occurs in a letter Wesley had written to his father in 1734, which he quotes in full (it is not easy to be certain for what reason) at that point in his *Journal* at which his public mission may be said to begin.[7] His father

[1] *Journal*, 27/8/90. [2] Southey, op. cit., pp. 26, 27, 28. [3] Ibid., p. 28.
[4] *Journal*, 28/3/39, quoting from a letter written to his father in 1734.
[5] Letter written in 1770, quoted by Lunn, op. cit., p. 289.
[6] *Journal*, 24/6/73. [7] Ibid. 28/3/39.

was now an old man (he died in 1735), and was anxious that John should apply for the next presentation to his own parish of Epworth, so that he might continue the family tradition. The reply, which says little either about his father or about Epworth, is a singular document. Wesley premises that in order to secure the glory of God we must promote holiness in ourselves and others, two inseparable processes; but adds, 'However, when two ways of life are proposed, I would wish to consider first, Which have I reason to believe will be best *for my own soul*?' And the twenty-two paragraphs that follow are devoted almost entirely to considering, not what will be best for Epworth or for Oxford, but what will be best for John Wesley. Oxford gives him the blessings of retirement (he is writing in the eighteenth century); Oxford enables him to go and consult wise men at every emergency; Oxford (he is never far from the Ignatian scale of values) provides him with much obloquy and contempt. Most curiously of all, he believes that if he retired to a country vicarage he would never be able to keep up his strict rule of life: 'I could not stand my ground one month against intemperance in sleep, self-indulgence in food, irregularity in study.' Did Wesley know himself so little? Or was he in fact unwilling to bury away such talents as his in so petty a sphere, and did some inhibition obscure the fact in his consciousness? In any case, before the end of the next year he had parted from Oxford and set sail for Georgia.

I confess I cherish the belief that there was in Wesley something of the mystic; that his bent, if Providence had not seen fit to order his career otherwise, was towards a solitary, a contemplative life. He almost admits as much in the well-known letter he wrote to his brother Charles in 1772: '*Vitae me redde priori!* Let me be again an Oxford Methodist. I am often in doubt whether it would not be best for me to resume all my Oxford rules, great and small. I did then walk closely with God, and redeem the time. But what have I been doing these thirty years?'[1] It is difficult to see how a man who lived as Wesley lived could write such words without affectation, unless he meant that his Oxford life afforded him opportunities for recollection which the rest of his crowded years denied him. At Oxford his oracle was William Law, who had not yet given himself to the extravagances of Behmen, and was already, in the more

[1] Overton, op. cit., p. 37.

respectable sense, a mystic. Is it possible to catch a glimpse here of a different Wesley, who might still have done great things for religion in a strangely different sphere of activities?

As we shall see, his official attitude, and perhaps we ought to say his conscious attitude, expressed a lively horror of mysticism. The reason, no doubt, was his growing distrust of the Moravian 'stillness', with which the Quietist mystics had so much in common. But his instinct when he read Catholic biographies (and he read a great many Catholic biographies) was to hold out both hands to the lovers of contemplation. You find him translating (and perhaps, after his fashion, editing) a French book, 'one of the most useful tracts I ever saw, for those who desire to be fervent in spirit. How little does God regard men's opinions! What a multitude of wrong opinions are embraced by all the members of the Church of Rome! Yet how highly favoured have many of them been!'[1] You find him reading, not for the first time, the life of 'that good and wise though much mistaken man, Gregory Lopez'.[2] One of the very few plausible points Bishop Lavington managed to raise, in three volumes devoted to a comparison of Methodist and Papist enthusiasm, was Wesley's intense admiration for St. Francis of Sales, and for M. de Renty.[3] De Renty is described in the *Journal* as 'one of the brightest patterns of heavenly wisdom';[4] nobody except Fletcher of Madeley is to be compared with him.[5] Of his life Wesley published an extract, as he did (in spite of earlier disapproval) from Madame Guyon's. With all his fear of the mystics, how he laboured (and not unsuccessfully) to produce them!

A very curious entry in his *Journal*, made while he was *en route* for Georgia, lends colour to this picture of John Wesley as a mystic *manqué*. He has been exposing to view those inner misgivings which led up to his conversion a year or two later: 'By the most infallible of proofs, inward feeling, I am convinced of unbelief, having no such faith in Christ as will prevent my heart being troubled', &c. That is on 8 January; on the 9th he writes: 'On this and the following days, I reflected much on that vain desire, which has pursued me for so many years, of being in solitude, in order to be a Christian. I have now, thought I, solitude enough. But am I, therefore, the nearer being a Christian? Not if Jesus Christ be the model of Christianity.'

[1] *Journal*, 26/2/68. [2] Ibid. 31/8/42. [3] Op. cit. ii. 173. [4] *Journal*, 6/1/38.
[5] Preface to Wesley's *Life of Fletcher*, quoted by Overton, op. cit., p. 171.

One would give a good deal to have these meditations of his more fully described. And yet, if he had tried to analyse the deeper emotions that were conflicting in him, it is probable that he would have rationalized them away. What really seems to have been the situation is this. He was at the parting of the ways, the influence of William Law urging him to treat his phobias as scruples and go on courageously in the dark, the example of his new-found Moravian friends suggesting that he ought to find a resolution of them in the kind of spiritual crisis which is usually called 'conversion'. The fear of death which at this time chiefly exercised him was either a scruple, to be disregarded, to be 'offered up' if you will—or it was a symptom of a nature wholly unregenerate; all his fasting, his almsdeeds, his preaching of the Gospel were a mistake, and he must start all over again. He was perched on the razor's edge between the watershed of Quietism and the watershed of Jansenism.

Have I interpreted him too much in Catholic terms? What follows is still more extraordinary. 'I doubt, indeed, I am much nearer' (in modern English we should say, 'whether I am not much nearer') 'that mystery of Satan, which some writers affect to call by that name. So near, that I had probably sunk wholly into it, had not the great mercy of God just now thrown me upon reading St. Cyprian's works. O my soul, come not thou into their secret! Stand thou in the good old paths'.[1] This passage (which his biographers have missed) seems to me susceptible of only one interpretation. In those early days, when he was under Law's influence, when French biographies cast such strong lights and shadows on his mental canvas, John Wesley had thought of becoming a Catholic.

I say, 'had thought of becoming a Catholic', and the word *thought* must be italicized. I do not mean that he was, in all probability, within miles of what we mean by the grace of conversion. He shared all the crude anti-Catholic prejudices of his day, and made no secret of it. If he had really been within the orbit of the Church's influence, it would have needed something stronger than St. Cyprian (of all authors) to neutralize the attraction. No, he had, as many unlikely people do have without admitting it (and, but for this passage, I do not find any evidence that Wesley admitted it), a kind of remote velleity which makes you see the Church as a kind of mirage—nothing more—on your mental horizon. And yet perhaps,

[1] *Journal*, 9/1/38.

if the Moravians had not been on board that ship, when he was bound on that particular journey . . . it would have been strange if another hand than Challoner's had given us *Think well on't.*

(iv) *May 24, 1738, at a quarter to nine*

Meanwhile, a different kind of conversion was in prospect.

The circumstances and the setting of Wesley's supreme experience must remain to be considered in the next chapter. What we are to consider here is the question, Was it a decisive experience, which was to determine and dominate the rest of that long life? Or was it a transient influence, which he was destined to outlive, and in some sense to live down? It is very extraordinary that such a point should admit of doubt. No one would dream of denying that a moment came to St. Augustine or to John Bunyan which made all the difference. But with Wesley, as with Pascal, you find yourself asking exactly what it was that a flash of spiritual insight really achieved. Was the man really different afterwards? And if so, how?

The common account of the matter is that somehow after the year 1738, John Wesley was a changed man. 'Working simply on the basis of the great experience of conversion . . . Wesley preached the doctrine of repentance and salvation through Christ with an unremitting diligence and a freshness of feeling that lasted him through fifty years and forty thousand sermons. This one thing he knew; knew it as few men know it.'[1] There were indeed precisians in the Evangelical doctrine who questioned whether he ever attained true illumination at all. 'It is very doubtful', wrote the Moravian bishop Latrobe in 1785, 'whether John ever knew himself as a sinner or the Lord as his Saviour', though he admits the genuineness of many Wesleyan conversions.[2] Wesley himself (according to Whitefield) is no judge of the doctrine of election, because on his own admission he has not the testimony of the Spirit within him.[3] But the question at issue is not so much whether he was in fact converted as whether he thought he was converted, and continued to think he had been converted. This is naturally the impression given by his Methodist biographers. 'Suddenly light shines in his heart. He trusts in Christ, in him alone, for salvation. An assurance is given him that the Saviour has taken away his sins, and saved him

[1] A. Cecil, *A Dreamer in Christendom*, p. 203.
[2] Addison, op. cit., p. 195. [3] Moehler, op. cit., p. 441 note.

from the law of sin and death. He enters on a new experience. . . . It is well known that his change of view influenced him to the close of his life.'[1]

Against this, we have to set the confident assertion of his Anglican biographers that the language he used at this time only marks a Moravian phase of his thought, which did not last. Urlin boldly claims that the true moment of his conversion was when he read William Law, more than a dozen years earlier in his life. 'Light flowed in so mightily upon his soul that everything appeared in a new view. This was therefore the true date of his conversion.'[2] Overton, too, is prepared to 'defend John Wesley against John Wesley' and maintain that he was in fact a good Christian in 1725, whatever he may have written about it afterwards.[3] The same impression is given by authors who escape more obviously the imputation of special pleading. Mr. Lunn, who wrote in 1929 as a detached Anglican with a certain tenderness for the Methodist traditions of his family, warns us that 'the attempt to divide Wesley's life into two parts divided by his conversion in Aldersgate Street produces, as we shall see, a false and foolish dichotomy'.[4] And Dr. Piette is even more outspoken; the conversion, he writes, 'would seem to have been merely a quite ordinary experience whose effects time was quickly to dull. Had it not been entered in the first extract of the Journal, it is quite possible that Wesley would have entirely forgotten all about it'.[5] In defence of this curiously different estimate, it can be pleaded (i) that Wesley was a very good man, living an irreproachable life, long before 1738; (ii) that for some months, at any rate, after the Aldersgate Street meeting he continues to write in the strain of a man who has not yet found spiritual peace; (iii) that in spite of all his insistence on the New Birth, he does not often appeal to his own experience of it; (iv) that in one passage at least, as we have just seen, he turns back with wistful regret to his pre-Moravian days, and that his annotations to the *Journal*, made in later life, deliberately contradict his earlier expressions of opinion.

(i) Clearly it is true that, at least as far back as 1725, Wesley 'led a most holy life, aiming only at the glory of God, the welfare of his own soul, and the benefit of his fellow-creatures'.[6] But to conclude

[1] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 262. [2] Op. cit., p. 13. [3] Op. cit., p. 14. [4] Op. cit., p. 44.
[5] *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, by Maximin Piette (tr. Howard), p. 306. [6] Overton, op. cit., p. 14.

that a man of whom this can be said stands in no need of 'conversion' is surely to forget what the world of early Methodism meant by that term. Remarkable as was the success of the movement in calling sinners to repentance, it was even more remarkably successful in eliciting repentance from people who stood, humanly speaking, in very little need of it. We read of Lady Huntingdon:

> At Donnington Park she was the Lady Bountiful among her neighbours and dependents; though, as she herself afterwards felt and declared, going about to establish her own righteousness, she endeavoured by prayer, fasting and alms-deeds to commend herself to the favour of the most High. For, notwithstanding the early appearance of piety in Lady Huntingdon, it is evident that she remained for many years a perfect stranger to the true nature of that Gospel which is the power of God to every one that believes.[1]

Such was the conviction of innumerable souls; they had been saved from a life not of sin but of self-righteousness. Wesley's own sermon on the almost-Christian gives you the portrait not of some luke-warm Church-goer but of Wesley himself as he had been till lately—it was preached in 1741. The almost-Christian has 'a sincere view of pleasing God in all things'. 'I did go thus far for many years, as many of this place (Oxford) can testify.' 'Yet my own conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost, that all this time I was but almost a Christian.'[2] Did Wesley ever retract that?

The result of conversion was not (necessarily) to turn a bad man into a good man. Quite as often, it gave to a good man a new psychological and (as he believed) a new spiritual equilibrium. Sometimes he would try to explain the difference to himself by exaggerating the peccadilloes of the past. Sometimes he would claim that although he lived a virtuous life before conversion, the roots of sin had not yet been destroyed in him. But the real difference was that he now felt the conquest of sin to be an assured fact, instead of being a daily and almost hopeless struggle. He had achieved a *poise* unknown to him before. Scruples were left behind; in Wesley's case, as we shall see, that scruple which reproached him with the fear of death. Hutton, writing from the standpoint of a modern Moravian, does not hesitate to represent Wesley as a true convert in this sense:

[1] *Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, by a Member of the Family of Shirley and Hastings (London, 1844), i. 10.

[2] *Sermons on Several Occasions*, by the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. (London, 1881), p. 22.

'He had peace in his heart; he was sure of his salvation; and henceforth, as all readers know, he was able to forget himself, to leave his soul in the hands of God, and to spend his life in the salvation of his fellow-men.'[1]

(ii) It is a much more awkward question to answer, when and how this became true. For, notoriously, Wesley's Aldersgate Street conversion did not bring him peace all at once. In October 1738 he is still examining his own state of mind none too happily; on the whole he concludes that although he has not yet joy in the Holy Ghost, nor the full assurance of faith, he has a measure of faith, and is accepted in the Beloved; he 'trusts' that he is reconciled to God.[2] A few days later he meets Charles Delamotte, his old companion in Georgia, who tells him: 'You have a present freedom from sin, but it is only a temporary suspension of it, not a deliverance from it. And you have a peace, but it is not a true peace.'[3] In the middle of December, now a convert of more than six months' standing, he records certain observations from 'one who had examined himself by the reflections wrote October 14'.[4] These are not necessarily his own; the words 'I love *you*, for instance' may indicate that the communication was made by a friend. But at the beginning of the next year we find: 'One who had the form of godliness many years, wrote the following reflections.'[5] Since he records on this date, in his private diary, that he has 'written down a summary of the state of his soul', we can hardly doubt this time that the reflections are those of Wesley himself.[6] The concluding words of the passage are well known: 'Though I have constantly used all the means of grace for twenty years, I am not a Christian.'

We shall return later to the puzzling question of Wesley's spiritual position between 1738 and 1739. In any case, it is beyond dispute that conversion did not for him bear all at once the full fruit his Moravian friends had encouraged him to expect. His lacerated feelings did not settle down all at once to joy and peace in the Holy Ghost; there were intervals of despondency. But the psychological battle was over; and Wesley was not the man to think the less of his conversion because it had not come up to the proper Moravian schedule. Such an unscrupulous borrower as he was would find no difficulty in first adopting and then adapting the Moravian

[1] Op. cit., p. 293. [2] *Journal*, 14/10/38. [3] Ibid. 23/11/38.
[4] Ibid. 16/12/38. [5] Ibid. 4/1/39. [6] Piette, op. cit., p. 324.

technique; he would go about the world preaching the New Birth after their fashion, but not insisting on the instantaneousness of its effects, with his own experience to guide him. It does not follow that because his own conversion puzzled him at the time, he would look back on it afterwards as a thing of no importance.

(iii) But why does he not cite his own case more often to encourage the conversion of others if he really did look upon it as a turning-point in his life? We must observe that he did cite it upon occasion, and perhaps oftener in private than in public. In dealing with the extraordinary manifestations at Everton, you find him trying to comfort the stricken in spirit by telling them that he had been through the same fires of convincement himself. 'I told him how great a sinner I had been . . . I have often found that nothing I can say makes so much impression on myself or others, as thus repeating my own conversion.'[1] This was in 1759, and perhaps at the moment (for he readily caught the influence of his surroundings) he was somewhat under the spell of Berridge's own technique. Normally he is reticent about his own inner feelings except during the months just before and just after his conversion; there was a world of difference after all between his education and Whitefield's. But if he still talked in the accents of a brand saved from the burning as late as 1759, must we believe that he forgot it all when he turned sixty?

(iv) The passage from the *Journal* quoted above (p. 433) does certainly imply a curious lapse. That Wesley should not have willingly cast his mind back to all the circumstances of his conversion is easily understood. He could not disguise from himself the fact that he was a Moravian convert, and he was, as we shall see, waging bitter war against the Moravians all the rest of his life. But that he should be prepared to go back behind 1738, and wish himself back in the Holy Club—can one imagine Newman being guilty of a similar oversight? The fact is, I think, that like Newman he wished his days to be bound each to each by natural piety, and that unlike Newman he sometimes wrote without thinking what he was saying. Once he has occasion to refer to his Oxford days *ex professo*, you will find that he refers to them with suitable though perhaps somewhat perfunctory dissatisfaction. Thus he tells us of the Society at Alpraham:[2] 'Many of them had been long exercising themselves

[1] *Journal*, 23/8/59. [2] Ibid. 19/10/49.

unto godliness, as we did at Oxford; but they were now thoroughly willing to renounce their own, and accept the righteousness which is of God by faith.' And much later, of Charles Wesley's earlier poems:[1] 'Some still savour of that poisonous mysticism, with which we were both not a little tainted before we went to America . . . this made him frequently describe religion as a melancholy thing.' Officially the Holy Club had been burned with the rest of the dead past.

It remains true that Wesley did in later life retract some of the more trenchant criticisms he had made on his unconverted self. On his return from Georgia he had written: 'I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God'; he had implied that all the mortifications involved in his journey were not 'ennobled by faith in Christ'; and he had described himself as still 'a child of wrath'. Later reflection impelled him to qualify these judgements with three footnotes which read: 'I am not sure of this', 'I had even then the faith of a servant, though not that of a son', and 'I believe not'.[2] The plain fact seems to be that Wesley, who constantly asserts that his teaching has not changed with the years, did himself (like most men) change with the years, and that his memories stood out in less violent lights and shadows when they were seen in long retrospect. Thus either side in the quarrel can quote Wesley himself, and it is useless to speculate how he actually saw his conversion when he lay on his death-bed. What remains clear, I think, is that in the course of the year 1738 a man who had been facing great spiritual difficulties, and might have developed in almost any direction, acquired a fixity of soul which never deserted him.

(v) *Wesley on the Human Side*

The extreme frankness with which these spiritual difficulties are treated in the early part of the *Journal* might easily induce the reader to suppose that he was dealing with a neurotic subject; a man tormented with scruples, and guilty at the same time of a certain spiritual exhibitionism—John could never keep a secret, his brother Charles assures us, since he was born.[3] Nor, if that were the whole story, would the psychologist fail to note that in 1703, the year of Wesley's birth, a storm swept over England destructive beyond all

[1] Ibid. 15/12/88. [2] Ibid., end of February 1738. [3] Overton, op. cit., p. 191.

record;[1] that when he was five years old he was rescued, as if by a miracle, from a burning house;[2] and that from the time when he was twelve the family were obsessed by a poltergeist, Old Jeffery,[3] in whose disquieting activities they all firmly believed. Yet—whether or no it were the experience we have been discussing that redressed the balance—it is certain that from the age of thirty-five John Wesley appears (and before how vast an audience!) in precisely the opposite character; as a man so self-contained and self-controlled that you are tempted to find him inhuman. One of the rules he set before himself in his private diary was 'to avoid all manner of passion',[4] and to his opponents all his life he seemed exasperatingly imperturbable. Hutton, in contrasting him with Zinzendorf, complains that 'the Count was a poet, and John Wesley a level-headed Briton, with a mind as exact as a calculating-machine'.[5]

Beware of pressing such language too far; he was not wanting in social gifts, or Johnson, instead of merely regretting his habits, would have written him down as an unclubbable man. He did not, indeed, relish the society of the great; and it is open to argument that Lady Huntingdon would have been an Arminian instead of a Calvinist had Wesley been so ready with pious civilities, not to call them servilities, as George Whitefield. 'I was a little out of my element', he writes, when he is already old and famous, 'among my Lords and Ladies. I love plain music and plain company best.'[6] It was not, I think, any literary affectation that made him prefer 'a small company of plain, loving people . . . an hearty welcome *sub lare parvulo*, with sweet and quiet rest'.[7] Among such friends, we have it on the testimony of Alexander Knox, 'his countenance as well as his conversation expressed an habitual gaiety of heart'.[8] But it must be observed that there is a kind of geniality which comes easily with custom to men who are lionized wherever they go; and it does not follow that Wesley was in fact a sympathetic companion. We may still doubt whether 'expressed' is not the operative word in Knox's verdict. That smile, in the portrait, was it really native to his cheeks? That mind, burdened with such multifarious responsibilities, can it really have noticed much what the other person was saying or thinking?

[1] Urlin, op. cit., p. 5. [2] Lunn, op. cit., p. 1. [3] Southey, op. cit., pp. 17–22.
[4] Lunn, op. cit., p. 27. [5] Op. cit., p. 300. [6] *Journal*, 25/1/81.
[7] Ibid. 14/4/72. [8] Quoted by Simon, *M.B.*, p. 176.

I have the biographers against me. 'After the service', writes Simon, 'a whole troop of boys and girls surrounded him, and would not be content until he had shaken each of them by the hand. Those who have only a superficial knowledge of Wesley will wonder at this scene; those who have closely studied his character will understand it. He was indeed the friend of little children.'[1] But was he? He was 'surprised to see all the street lined with little children, and such children as I never saw till now'.[2] It does not appear, therefore, that children had shown much gratification at meeting him during the previous seventy-nine years of his life; nor does it appear that the conduct of these Oldham children afforded him any particular pleasure. He just notes the incident as a curious one. Overton is similarly impressed by the familiarity with which the evangelist treated his favourite lieutenants. 'The Bozzys and Goldys and Lankys of Johnson found their counterparts in the Tommys and Jemmys and Sammys of Wesley.'[3] I wonder. He quotes from a letter which assures 'Jemmy' that he ought not to be in Dublin; it is for him the most dangerous place on earth. 'Sammy' after all was Wesley's own nephew; 'Tommy' was Thomas Maxfield, and he is so addressed precisely when he is threatening revolt against his benefactor.[4] Am I fanciful in suggesting that this familiarity was something of a rhetorical artifice, designed to enhance the impressiveness of an urgent personal appeal? If so it proves nothing.[5]

'While the grave and serious were charmed with his wisdom, his sportive sallies of innocent mirth delighted even the young and thoughtless; and both saw, in his uninterrupted cheerfulness, the excellency of true religion.' So writes Lady Huntingdon's biographer;[6] and although the standard of mirth at Donnington Park was probably not a high one, it must be accepted that Wesley could on occasion unbend like other men. But in that life intervals of leisure were rare, and upon the whole his is an unsmiling figure. He was too much absorbed by the sense of a divine mission to be really interested in human contacts, except where these directly illustrated it. How little, for example, the *Journal* tells us about his travelling companions; how little about the lieutenants who so

[1] *L.P.*, p. 187. [2] *Journal*, 5/4/82. [3] Op. cit., p. 190. [4] *Journal*, 4/2/63.

[5] When the Foreign Office, in July 1914, drafted a telegram to the Tsar urging him to defer mobilization till the last possible moment, George the Fifth was careful, in signing it, to write in the words 'my dear Nicky' at two points.

[6] Op. cit. i. 58.

often prepared the ground for him! I think it must be admitted that he was unsparing of these as of himself. 'He looked on men, or on animals, as constituted much like himself, and therefore well able to begin the day early, and to take prodigious exercise until nightfall. Making, therefore, no allowance for a diversity in bodily powers, he was apt to expect too much from those mute obedient animals to whom he was so much indebted. . . . It did not occur to the hardy patriarch to accuse himself of demanding too much from them.'[1] And when John Jane, an itinerant preacher, died of a fever he had contracted in his journeyings, leaving exactly sixteen pence to his executors, Wesley's comment was that it was 'enough for any unmarried preacher of the Gospel to leave'.[2] Most of us will agree that it was a fine observation, but one which in the circumstances should not have been made.

Wesley, as we shall see, was a man who liked to manage the whole of people's lives for them; and if this applied to his converts in general, it applied with even greater force to his itinerant preachers. You may almost say that he wanted to make Jesuits of them; they were, however, to keep the vow of poverty without taking it. And it was no doubt with this in view that he wrote his *Thoughts on a Single Life*. That marriage was permissible to the sanctified believer had been laid down in the Conference of 1745;[3] to remain single 'for the kingdom of heaven's sake' was a matter of vocation, and in particular it belonged to the clerical vocation. Wesley himself, who gave up tea by way of setting a good example to the poor, was perhaps less consistent in the matter of celibacy; four days after deciding to marry, he met the single men and urged them to remain single for the kingdom of Heaven's sake, 'except where a particular case might be an exception to the general rule'.[4]

No one will doubt that this gesture, for all its *naïveté*, was perfectly genuine. There can be no question he thought that his own was one of those exceptional cases in which marriage would be a good thing. The tragedy of it is that he was wrong. In no connexion does he show a want of humanness more clearly than in his relations with women. On the one hand, he is too cold-blooded to fall in love decisively, though here he does not say, as Whitefield said about his future wife, 'If I know anything of my own heart, I am free from

[1] Urlin, op. cit., pp. 156, 157.
[2] Ibid., p. 142.
[3] Southey, op. cit., p. 264.
[4] Lunn, op. cit., p. 266.

that foolish passion the world calls love'.[1] On the other hand, he lacks the knowledge of human nature which might have guided him to make a reasonable man's choice. Wesley's Molly, no less than Socrates's Xanthippe, warns us that the man who lives in another world had best for his own sake be a celibate.

A clergyman of twenty-three, highly respected in the self-contained society of a newly founded colony, meets a girl of eighteen who becomes his ardent disciple. He teaches her French, gives her spiritual direction, reads to her out of a variety of authors, including St. Ephrem and Fleury's *Church History*. Their affection for one another is as plain as it could be without a formal declaration. That declaration is never made, because the love-lorn suitor is persuaded by two friends (who have cast lots to fortify their decision) that it is not God's will for him. The lady (who has declared to him her intention of never marrying) becomes engaged to a Mr. Williamson. Upon this the clergyman not only taxes her by letter with the inconsistency, but publicly repels her from Communion. Is such a story credible? Yet that is the story of Wesley and Sophia Hopkey.

An evangelist already famous at the age of forty-five is nursed through an illness by a widow of thirty-two, who for years has been the companion of his travels. He tells her that if he ever marries she will be the Person, and after some time speaks to her 'more directly'. Only a few days later she becomes engaged to a former admirer, an enthusiastic worker in the same cause. Expostulations follow and the engagement is broken off; the widow now pledges herself solemnly to the evangelist. But he, true to the rules of the society he has founded, informs his own brother of the proposed step. The brother posts off on horseback, sees to it that the rival and the widow are safely married, and then, confronting the evangelist with a *fait accompli*, demands that he should publicly acknowledge his 'sin'. This he is 'not altogether ready to do', having examined his affection for the widow under five distinct heads and come to the conclusion that it was not inordinate. The threatened quarrel between the two brothers is only healed by the urgent entreaties of a fellow evangelist, who is destined before long to fall out with them and follow a different theological course. Would such a story be tolerated in fiction? Yet that is the story of John

[1] Ibid., p. 254.

Wesley, Grace Murray, John Bennett, Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield.

The same evangelist is nursed by another widow, of whom he knows comparatively little. Keeping his own counsel this time, he marries her. It is not long before he is having to instruct her in the duties of an evangelist's wife, in such terms as 'Be content to be a private insignificant person, known and loved by God and me. . . . Leave me to be governed by God and my conscience. Then I shall govern you with gentle sway, and shew that I do indeed love you even as Christ the Church'. She is not, however, reassured; she does not like the intimate correspondences he keeps up with his female converts, to one of whom (a woman who has three husbands living, but has repented of them all) he writes: 'The conversing with you, either by speaking or writing, is an unspeakable blessing to me. I cannot think of you without thinking of God.' Three times the evangelist's wife leaves him, and at last carries off private documents of his, which she hands over to his theological rivals so that they can blacken his name with them. Was ever a story so redolent of gross burlesque, in the manner of *Doctor Syntax*? Yet that is the story of John Wesley and Molly Vazeille.

All this record is to be found set out at length, with a wealth of details not less fantastic, in three chapters which Mr. Lunn[1] has rather maliciously headed, 'Wesley's First Love', 'Wesley's Last Love', and 'Wesley's Marriage'. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in affairs of the heart Wesley was an honourable blunderer; that his lifelong contact with thousands of his fellow beings had left him quite destitute of insight into the realities of human nature. There is no hint of irony, I think, in his telling us, when he has been thirteen years married, that his thoughts about a single life are 'just the same as they have been, these thirty years'.[2]

(vi) *The Jack-of-all-trades*

It would be absurd, writes a judicious admirer, 'to contend that anything which John Wesley wrote is of the same calibre as the great works of his contemporaries, such as Butler or Waterland'.[3] Like another hero of the eighteenth century, St. Alphonsus, he managed to combine incessant missionary and organizing activity with a vast literary output; yet it would be hard to find another man

[1] Op. cit., chh. v, xxi, and xxii. [2] *Journal*, 5/12/64. [3] Overton, op. cit., p. 170.

so famous whose works are less generally read. Only the *Journal* retains its popularity, and even this has been described as 'more remarkable for its record of spiritual energy than of intellectual endeavour'.[1] The reasons for it are not far to seek. He was a great popularizer, and a man of wide interests, but his mind was never profound. His copious reading was not digested by a habit of sane criticism; he will tell you that Ossian is 'little inferior to Homer or Virgil, and in some respects superior to both',[2] and an hour or two with Voltaire is enough to convince him that 'French is the poorest, meanest language in Europe'.[3] He leaps to conclusions; is easily taken in, or no less easily repelled, by the last author who has been in his hands; altogether he is not a good advertisement for reading on horse-back.

On the other hand he was—it must be remembered in justice to himself—a complete Philistine about literature, as about everything else that belonged to this world; a utilitarian, uniquely concentrated on the one thing needful. Beverley Minster is a stately building, but where will it be when the earth is burnt up and the elements melt with fervent heat?[4] What an immense field the British Museum gives for curiosity to range in! But what account will a man give to the Judge of quick and dead for a life spent in collecting all these?[5] A man blind from the fourth year of his age has built himself an organ and learned to play voluntaries on it; but what is he the better for this, if he is still without God in the world?[6] Such is Wesley's attitude, and it is hardly to be wondered at that he should be impatient of literary niceties. 'No man', he tells us', should be above writing correctly',[7] and the adverb is revealing. He was too much a child of his age to forsake the grand manner; too much a child of light to achieve the grand manner really well. He has the *style de Port Royal*; he is always adequate, but never once takes your breath away. Like Sophia Hopkey and Grace Murray, the Muses are not to be wooed by such methods. It must be added that his trick of incessant scriptural quotation developed in him a kind of pious argot which becomes wearisome from repetition. 'I had great liberty in praying with them and for them. Who knows but God will fasten something upon them, which they will not easily shake off?'[8] Why cannot he say what he means?

[1] Cecil, op. cit., p. 204. [2] *Journal*, 15/5/84. [3] Ibid. 11/10/56. [4] Ibid. 19/7/66.
[5] Ibid. 22/12/80. [6] Ibid. 6/5/76. [7] Ibid. 12/6/81. [8] Ibid. 30/5/57.

He wrote for the utility not for the pleasure of mankind; a vast literature with titles so arrestingly varied as *Primitive Physic*, *A letter to a Friend concerning Tea*, *Predestination calmly considered*, and so on.[1] Much of his work was simply condensation—his *Complete English Dictionary*, for example, and his *Short Roman History*; there was much editing and abridging, often from Catholic sources; and there was some shameless piracy. The man who complained that such free use was made of the hymns written by himself and his brother Charles,[2] published his own edition of Young's *Night Thoughts*, and only escaped a copyright action by paying damages.[3] When he was assailed by his critics for plagiarizing Johnson's pamphlet, *Taxation no Tyranny*, his defence was thoroughly characteristic: 'As soon as I received more light myself, I judged it my duty to impart it to others. I therefore extracted the chief arguments from that treatise, and added an explication to those whom it most concerns.'[4] Such was the genesis of *A Calm Address to our American Colonies*, and there is no more gracious gesture in literary history than Johnson's acknowledgement of the loan: 'To have gained such a mind as yours may justly confirm me in my own opinion.'

Wesley was unashamedly a retailer; his societies formed a kind of co-operative movement, acquiring their culture on reduced terms at second-hand. It was all part of his scheme to make them not merely a church within the Church but a nation within the nation; a sort of enclave, not only in their piety but in daily life. While Whitefield and the others were scheming to capture the aristocracy by way of Lady Huntingdon's drawing-room, Wesley aimed at a theocracy of the *petite bourgeoisie*. It was not enough that they should be better citizens than their neighbours, running no cargoes even in Cornwall, refusing bribes at election-time even in Bristol.[5] They were to dress with Quaker plainness, if not in Quaker uniform; they were not to go to law with one another; they were to deal for preference at one another's shops.[6] If they were sick, they would avoid paying fees to incompetent practitioners; Wesley would apply nettles, brimstone, and electricity instead. Since worldly education was so dangerous,[7] their children, the children at least of their preachers, should be brought up under Wesleyan auspices at Kings-

[1] Overton, op. cit., ch. xi. [2] Lunn, op. cit., p. 168. [3] Simon, *M.S.*, p. 241.
[4] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 71. [5] *Journal*, 22/11/73, 1/7/47.
[6] Southey, op. cit., pp. 204, 205. [7] *Journal*, 6/4/72.

wood. They should have an *Arminian Magazine* of their own for fire-side reading; a Christian Library to satisfy their thirst for education. They were to publish no books without Mr. Wesley's sanction, print them only at his press in London, sell them only through his book-keeper.[1] Mr. Lunn writes that it is difficult to decide whether Wesley's own enormous circulation was a tribute to his literary gifts, or to his power of imposing his will.[2] It may be difficult, but at least we can make a good guess.

As the early Jansenists tried to establish a little world of their own at Port Royal, as the Moravians tried to preserve their own culture by banding together in local settlements, so Wesley would make a world of his own, but it should be decentralized in a thousand little towns all over England. This social experiment (for it was hardly less) did not fulfil his expectations. The school at Kingswood, above all, was a perpetual anxiety to him. By June 1751 he had written English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and French grammars for it, but the whole state of it was unsatisfactory, the numbers had dropped from twenty-eight to eighteen, and a further purge now reduced them to eleven.[3] The programme was perhaps too ambitious; the children, as at Port Royal, were never out of sight of a master,[4] and as at Herrnhut, they were never given any time for play.[5] Fifteen years later Wesley 'spoke to the children in a far stronger manner than ever I did before. It will kill or cure; I will have one or the other, a Christian school or no school at all'.[6] Adam Clarke, who went there from Ireland in 1782, describes it as the worst school he had ever seen, and tells us that 'the little children of the preachers suffered great indignities, and, it is feared, their treatment there gave many of them a rooted enmity against piety and religion for life'.[7]

(vii) *Was Wesley an Enthusiast?*

The term 'enthusiast' was used in Wesley's day, and by Wesley himself, with singular want of accuracy. The air would have been cleared if controversialists would have confined themselves to Stinstra's word, 'fanaticism'. But some of the charges brought against the early Methodists under this head bear a strong resemblance to the charges you might bring against a Montanist or an Anabaptist.

[1] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 315. [2] Lunn, op. cit., p. 190. [3] *Journal*, 22/6/51.
[4] Southey, op. cit., p. 226. [5] Lunn, op. cit., pp. 105, 320.
[6] *Journal*, 12/3/66. [7] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 204.

Thus Gibson, Bishop of London, defines enthusiasm as 'a strong persuasion on the mind of persons that they are guided in an extraordinary manner by immediate impressions and impulses of the Spirit of God'. He asks the Methodists to show what Divine commission they have 'when they tell us of extraordinary communications they have with God, and more than ordinary assurances of a special Presence with them; when they talk the language of those who have a special and immediate commission from God; when they profess to think and act under the immediate guidance of a divine inspiration; . . . when they claim the spirit of prophecy; when they speak of themselves in the language and under the character of the Apostles of Christ, and even of Christ himself'.[1] Lavington, too, though he has a much less accurate mind, credits his opponents with holding the Quaker doctrine of the inner light.[2] But it is observable that all the debating points he scores in this matter are scored against Whitefield, not against Wesley. It was Whitefield who admitted in answer to Gibson, 'I am a man of like passions with others, and consequently may have sometimes mistaken nature for grace, imagination for revelation';[3] and again, 'I have frequently wrote and spoke too much in my own spirit, when I thought I was writing and speaking entirely by the assistance of God'[4]—impenitent apologies, it will be seen, for a man faced with such charges. It was Whitefield whose followers shouted 'Hosanna' after him, all too much in the tradition of Martha Simmonds and James Nayler.[5]

Against Wesley, Lavington finds no such handle. He does, indeed, cite a passage from the *Journal* which we shall have occasion to notice before long, as evidence that the people called Methodists are given to illuminism.[6] But his suggestion is completely wide of the mark; Wesley had been warning his converts against the propaganda of the French prophets.[7] It was to Wesley that Bishop Butler addressed the famous remark, 'Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing'.[8] But it was Whitefield, not Wesley, who had been reported to him as saying, 'there are promises still to be fulfilled in me'. As a matter of fact, it is evident that Wesley did not approve of any claim to prophetic gifts on the part of his comrades in arms, or

[1] Gledstone's *Whitefield* (1900 edition), p. 162. [2] Op. cit. ii. 146.
[3] Ibid. 107. [4] Ibid., Pref. to vol. ii, p. xxiii. [5] Ibid., p. xx.
[6] Ibid. ii. 107. [7] *Journal*, 22/6/39. [8] Quoted by (e.g.) Lunn, op. cit., p. 131.

of his followers. He liked (as we shall see) to dominate the minds of others, and he hated having to deal with a man who would not argue. He was logical enough (unlike George Fox) to see that if he began trusting to an inner light it would not be long before others followed him, and it would be his word against theirs. On rare occasions he will refer to 'directions received from God in an affair of the greatest importance';[1] he will tell us that when he called upon a Quaker family, 'I was led, I know not how, to speak to them largely, then to pray';[2] or he will counter the vapourings of George Bell by accusing him of 'speaking as from God what I knew God had not spoken'.[3] But these references are exceptional; as a rule he is the last man in the world to obey unaccountable impulses or make instinctive decisions.

In this as in many other matters it may be doubted whether he was entirely consistent. He set out on his career a High Church authoritarian; he and Ingham, on their way out to Georgia, studied the writings of the earliest ages 'that we might not lean to our own understandings'.[4] But by 1750 his reading makes him 'fully convinced of what I had long suspected: that the Montanists in the second and third centuries were real, scriptural Christians; dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all as either madness or imposture'.[5] Without ever being aware of it, he has changed camps. Nor was this fellow-feeling only a matter of historical retrospect; like so many modern Englishmen, who applaud continental revolutions, he was in sympathy with enthusiasm outside his own country. He reads de Montgéron, and instinctively rallies to the side of the convulsionaries: 'I see no possible way to deny these facts, without invalidating all human testimony.'[6] He reads Stinstra—the French edition presumably—and pours contempt on arguments which would prove the apostles to have been 'fanatics' to a man.[7] Charles Wesley was right in saying that this brother of his was incapable of guarding a secret.

And indeed that is the disconcerting fact about early Methodism—that its founder sympathized with enthusiasm, sympathized (as we shall see later) with enthusiasm in its most violent forms, yet was

[1] Ibid. 4/3/37, the date on which Wesley decided to give up Miss Hopkey.
[2] Ibid. 24/3/85.
[3] Ibid. 26/12/62.
[4] Ibid. 21/10/35.
[5] Ibid. 15/8/50.
[6] Ibid. 11/1/50.
[7] Ibid. 6/6/53.

never himself carried away by it. The two brothers, almost alone among the supporters of the movement, kept their heads. Whole audiences might cry aloud—it is Wesley's own phrase—as if men were being put to the sword; the preacher stood there taking notes, ready to publish an account of this curious manifestation in his *Journal*. Not that he was for a moment insincere; he was an experimentalist, prodigiously interested in the phenomena of conversion.[1] The spiritual agonies and consolations which he describes for us, after the year 1739, are other people's experiences, not his own. How fond he is of the word 'calm'! He will write a Calm Address to the Inhabitants of England, a Calm Address to the American Colonists; his pose is one of marble detachment from the passions of his age. He is determined not to be an enthusiast.

Lavington, to whose mill all is grist, pours scorn on the Methodists for the use they made of the lot.[2] There is no doubt that they did use it; no doubt that they learned the use of it from the Moravians. But he neglects to observe that sortilege, although it is indeed a trick of the ultrasupernaturalist, betrays, at the same time, a certain hesitation on his part. Your ordinary Christian, faced with a difficult choice, prays, argues it out, takes advice, and makes up his mind. Your full-blooded enthusiast (George Fox, for example) will follow an inner light and be certain that his choice was the right one. Wesley was not enough of a prophet in his own esteem to gain this instinctive certainty. Yet he distrusted the 'arm of flesh'; somehow, the supernatural must be forced to intrude itself into his calculations. Where the issue was momentous, and the scales equally weighted, he would have recourse to the lot.

Sometimes he used the *sortes Biblicae*, once[3] he appealed, instead, to the *Imitation of Christ*, but there are instances of plain sortilege as well. It is interesting to recall the events that would have taken a different turn if the lot had ruled otherwise or had been allowed to have its way. We have already seen that, but for its influence, Wesley would probably have married Miss Hopkey in 1737. Returning to England, he found that Whitefield had just set sail for America; embittered, perhaps, by experience, he questioned the

[1] 'Wesley had the mind of a scientist rather than of a theologian. He was always listing and rearranging his collection of theological specimens.' Lunn, op. cit., p. 105.

[2] Op. cit. i. 71 sqq.

[3] *Journal*, 19/4/64; Wesley had felt doubts at the last moment about sending out his famous letter which proposed a common front of Arminians and Calvinists.

decision. Slips of paper were inscribed and prayed over while the outgoing boat was still in the offing. 'Let him return to London' was the legend on the winning slip; and if Whitefield had accepted the omen, Methodism might never have taken root in the Western hemisphere.[1] Whitefield came home and began his triumphant experiment of open-air preaching in Bristol. He implored Wesley to come and join him; Wesley, reluctant to do so, opened the Bible at four different places, and learned that if he went he would go to his death. The Society in London insisted on a straight lot; if the opposite paper had been chosen, John Wesley might never have visited Bristol or preached in the open air at all.[2] Whitefield returned to America, and some of his Calvinist supporters made trouble in Bristol. Wesley meditated a reply, and the lot bade him 'preach and print' the famous sermon on Free Grace.[3] But for its arbitrament on this occasion, the split between Arminians and Calvinists might never have happened.

What, then, was the rule of faith by which the evangelist assured himself or others that he was travelling, in general, on the right track? It would not be Wesley if he were not pat with his answer. The manifestations produced by the French prophets (so he told the people of Bristol) were to be judged by one rule and one rule only, 'the Law and the Testimony'.[4] To the Law and the Testimony he appeals against the tenets of the Moravians.[5] It is by the Law and the Testimony, not by any particular impressions or sudden impulses on his mind, that a Christian ought to discover God's will for him.[6] Evidently this is an appeal, of some sort, to antiquity. And indeed a woman who supported him against the Moravians in the Fetter Lane controversy is described as 'contending earnestly for the ordinances once delivered to the saints'.[7] At Birmingham we hear of fifty people who are 'resolved to stand together in the good old path'.[8] And we are even told (so powerful is the effect of one-way thinking) of an occasion in Ireland when 'many Papists . . . were almost persuaded to walk' in these old paths.[9] There is no hesitation about the answer, but what exactly does it mean?

It seems to be the only possible conclusion that when Wesley

[1] Gledstone, op. cit., p. 74. [2] *Journal*, 28/3/39. [3] Southey, op. cit., p. 186.
[4] *Journal*, 22/6/39. [5] Ibid., Preface of 1744.
[6] *Sermons*, p. 527 ('On the Nature of Enthusiasm'). [7] *Journal*, 31/7/41.
[8] Ibid. 4/3/60. [9] Ibid. 18/6/60.

talked about 'the Law and the Testimony' he meant his own interpretation of the Bible. He might on occasion, perhaps, have referred you to Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, where the findings of that work had impressed him. In certain contexts he would perhaps have included the Church of England and its formularies. But his attitude towards the Church of England is a curious one: 'I must still insist on the right of private judgement. I dare call no man Rabbi. I cannot yield either implicit faith or obedience to any man or number of men under heaven.'[1] He will justify open-air preaching on the ground that the king (George II) and the bishops connive at it;[2] but when Butler says 'You are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. Therefore I advise you to go hence', he replies that as the fellow of an Oxford college he can preach anywhere without the permission of the Ordinary.[3] In the long run, it is always to Wesley's interpretation of Scripture that Wesley appeals. That he could do so with success, bears witness to a personal ascendancy of which he was, I think, wholly unconscious. But what is he to do when his converts, as will often happen, turn illuminist? What is he to do with a fashionable lady who dresses like a servant and scarce allows herself the necessities of life? 'Who can convince her that she is going too far? I fear, nothing less than Omnipotence.'[4] We are back at Fox and Nayler again.

'In case the doctrine of any preacher should, in the opinion of the major part of the trustees, be not conformable to Mr. Wesley's *Sermons*, and *Notes on the New Testament*, on representing this another preacher shall be sent within three months.' That was his own method for securing continuity of teaching,[5] and if the documents concerned had not been legal ones, I think he would have written, 'be not conformable to the Law and the Testimony'.

(viii) *Wesley and the Virtue of Humility*

'I cite Alderman Beecher to answer for these souls at the judgement-seat of Christ!'[6] The provocation for this outburst was severe; condemned prisoners had been asking to see Wesley, and their request had been refused. But Bishop Lavington is scandalized;[7] and it may perhaps be admitted that Wesley, who wrote for a general

[1] *Journal*, 7/6/46. [2] Ibid. 6/6/55. [3] Southey, op. cit., p. 163.
[4] *Journal*, 22/6/84; cf. 9/4/66. [5] Ibid. 5/9/83. [6] Ibid. 2/4/40.
[7] Op. cit. ii. 123.

public, is over-prone to recognize, and to welcome, evidences of Divine interference on his behalf. The troubles at Fetter Lane had led to embittered controversy, but they did not justify the comment 'Mr. Molther was taken ill this day; I believe it was the hand of God upon him'.[1] When a former servant of your own has turned highwayman and been condemned to the gallows, it should be possible to find some more sympathetic comment than 'he who before would not receive the word of God from my mouth, now desired what he could not obtain. And on Wednesday he fell a sacrifice to the justice of a long-offended God.'[2] On the whole it may be said that Wesley's point of view mellows in his later years, but not in this matter. When one of his calumniators falls sick, 'If he acknowledges his fault, I believe he will recover; if not, his sickness is unto death'.[3] And in the same connexion, 'God has called one of them to account already, and in a fearful manner'.[4] From a mind so well balanced we do not expect the language of the hierophant, less objectionable on the lips of an emotional subject like George Whitefield. Once and again, but not constantly, a preacher whose audience has remained unconvinced may console himself with the reflection that he is 'clear of their blood'.[5] And if the Knox family at Sligo is less welcoming than formerly, is there not something suggestive of injured vanity in the reflection, 'Perhaps they may wish to see me when it is too late'?[6]

It is not easy for a man with a strong sense of mission, when he writes by way of edifying the public, to avoid the imputation of egoism. Nor is Wesley always careful to do so. He complains that scarce thirty of the Kingswood miners come to hear God's word, 'not even when I preach'.[7] 'Every member . . . at Bolton *does* take my advice . . . in consequence of which they are continually increasing in number as well as in grace'[8]—the sentiment could have been better expressed. An attorney who heckles at a meeting deserves, perhaps, to be snubbed; but the phrase 'If men live what I preach, the hope of his gains is gone' would surely be improved by the substitution of 'we' for 'I'.[9] There is danger, too, in quotations; we shall not quarrel with a dying woman if she greets the entrance of her beloved prophet with the words, 'Art thou come, thou blessed

[1] *Journal*, 23/4/40; Lavington, ii. 119. [2] *Journal*, 11/1/42. [3] Ibid. 9/7/83.
[4] Ibid. 27/5/84. [5] Ibid. 21/9/44, 5/6/57, 27/5/65, 4/5/88, &c. [6] Ibid. 1/5/62.
[7] Ibid. 6/6/59. [8] Ibid. 12/4/84. [9] Ibid. 24/3/64.

of the Lord?',[1] but we may doubt whether he was well advised to record it.

These occasional hints of self-satisfaction in the *Journal* are all the more disconcerting because Wesley, proof-armed at all other points against criticism, has to be defended by his admirers when it comes to the question of humility. Southey, indeed, was a fool to describe him as ambitious;[2] ambitious he certainly was not, and had no temptation to be, a man to whom success came so early and so abundantly. But he was, on the admission of his best friends, an autocrat; was that only the effect of circumstances? Or was he autocratic by temper, by moral choice; does he answer too well to Aristotle's definition of the great man who believes himself worthy of high distinction and is in fact worthy of it?

At the very end of Wesley's life the committee of his London chapel proposed to him that men and women should sit together and that members should be able to rent pews, 'thus overthrowing, at one blow, all the discipline which I have been establishing for fifty years!' Three days later:[3] 'We had another meeting of the Committee, who, after a calm and loving consultation, judged it best (i) that men and women should sit separate still, and (ii) that none should claim any pew as his own.' There is Wesley's technique in a nutshell. He talked people round with pious insistence, and was quite unconscious of having done so. Mr. Lunn may be right in saying that 'no great religious leader has revised his views so readily and so often';[4] when he is accused of having expressed, five years before, political views opposite to his present views, he is content to reply: 'I believe I did, but I am now of another mind.'[5] Mr. Lunn may be right, too, in describing him as the most easily influenced of men; for the Calvinists, a weather-cock.[6] Nor could he always produce positive opinions ready made; Mrs. Crosby's desire to preach finds him quite at a loss, and he can only tell her nakedly what is in his heart.[7] But with all this long-distance openness to conviction, when he is dealing with a situation here and now, he is adamant. Pious adamant, to be sure, and exquisitely reasonable adamant; he will talk the matter over with you for days, but adamant none the less.

The yearly Conference, which was first summoned in 1744, was obviously intended to be something in the nature of a diocesan synod,

[1] *Journal*, 31/7/41. [2] Op. cit., p. 280. [3] *Journal*, 21 and 24/12/87.
[4] Op. cit., p. 306. [5] *Journal*, 9/12/75. [6] Op. cit., p. 191. [7] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 293.

not a legislative body. 'Reading between the lines, we see John Wesley had carefully buoyed out the course of the discussion before the conference assembled.'[1] For a long time it was his intention to appoint his own successor; *οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη*, 'no good ever came of many-headedness', he quoted in offering the position to Fletcher of Madeley, who would not accept it.[2] When at last he devolved the right of succession upon the Conference, he halved its numbers to make the 'Legal Hundred'; and the annoyance of those whom he had pointedly disfranchised led to extravagant scenes at the meeting of 1784.[3] So long as he and his brother Charles were alive, he had no intention of letting it dictate policy, and the protests raised against his autocratic position at the meetings of 1763 and 1766 were satisfactorily quashed.[4] In 1781 he embarked on a new system by which only such preachers as were invited by himself, about seventy in number, attended the annual ceremony;[5] and he notes with satisfaction that as a result of this 'we had no contention or altercation at all'.[6] In commenting on Wesley's action in closuring Dr. Hey's paper at the Conference of 1781, Simon tells us that he was not prepared to let Dr. Hey 'be dictator of the Methodists'.[7] It should have been sufficiently obvious that the post was not vacant.

Wesley's biographers do not usually attempt to explain one thing about him; why is he such a lonely figure? He and his brother Charles are supported by clergymen of great piety like Fletcher and Grimshaw; but they had no sympathizers of their own calibre until the late accession of Dr. Coke—all the great names of early Evangelicalism, Whitefield, Venn, Berridge, Rowland Hill, Romaine, and the others take the Calvinist side. It is the same with the lay preachers; Wesley must dismiss Cennick and Maxfield, and we are always coming across references to local revolts, McNab at Bath, Moore at Exeter,[8] and the rest of them. Is it possible that Wesley could only work with yes-men, and that the more active spirits in the movement were driven into the opposite camp? Or was it merely his Arminian doctrine that isolated him in a religious world that tended more and more to go Calvinist? Several of the local preachers in Staffordshire, he complained in late life, seemed 'to have caught the fashionable disease—desire of independency'.[9]

[1] Id. *M.S.*, p. 210. [2] Ovington, op. cit., p. 151. [3] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 218.
[4] Id. *M.B.*, p. 100. [5] Id. *L.P.*, p. 177. [6] Ibid., p. 254.
[7] Ibid., p. 179. [8] *Journal*, 22/11/79, 3/3/85. [9] Ibid. 27/3/85.

It sometimes looks as if he would have liked to bind them not only by the vows of poverty and chastity, but by a vow of obedience.

Yet he kept the rank and file. And, what is more remarkable, he kept the loyalty of the American Methodists at a time when their relations with the mother country might have been expected to strain it to breaking-point. But it must be confessed that Coke, Asbury, and the others were less obsequious to the wishes of their chief; unlike St. Paul he seems to have been less formidable in his letters than in person. In 1784 they passed a resolution stating that 'during the life-time of Mr. Wesley they were ready to obey his commands in matters belonging to Church Government'. But this was not reaffirmed in 1787, nor in that year did they elect his nominee, Whatcoat, as a superintendent.[1] Wesley took it hard, as old men will; 'every preacher present', he wrote, 'ought both in duty and in prudence to have said, *Brother Asbury, Mr. Wesley is your father, consequently ours.* . . . It is truly probable the disavowing *me* will, as soon as my head is laid, occasion a total breach between the English and the American Methodists.'[2] There is a certain frigidity about Asbury's own comment when the news of the patriarch's death did reach him: 'Notwithstanding my long absence from Mr. Wesley, and a few unpleasant expressions in some of the letters the dear old man has written to me, . . . I feel the stroke most sensibly.'[3] Is it possible that he was all the better for not being too much under the spell of his leader? Asbury covered a thousand miles a year on horse-back, and saw the American Methodists increase from 400 to 214,000.

But it is Wesley himself we are concerned with, not his lieutenants. When he read in Jeremy Taylor that a Christian ought to regard himself as the worst man in any company he visited, he disagreed; such 'comparative humility', he said, was unreasonable.[4] And it is perhaps difficult for a man of high intelligence, in daily contact with the unlettered, and often with the mentally unbalanced, not to develop 'a certain masterfulness and want of humility in himself'.[5] Meanwhile, the next chapter will give us the portrait of a man fighting against no ordinary perils—so at least he saw them—and for that reason compelled, willingly or unwillingly, to keep strict discipline in his army.

[1] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 272. [2] Ibid., p. 321. [3] Ibid., p. 322.
[4] Southey, op. cit., p. 29. [5] Cecil, op. cit., p. 205.

XIX

THE PARTING OF FRIENDS (I)

(i) *Ebb and Flow of the Movement*

WESLEY'S self-chosen parish covered England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland; but he found, evidently, a great variety of spiritual soil, whether among these or in England itself. Wales, which at first seemed promising, went Calvinist under the influence of Howell Harris, and in the later part of his life it is a kind of enemy country which Wesley passed through with loins girded, *en route* for Ireland. Over Scotland he continued to spend much effort, but with little result. His appeal was emotional rather than intellectual, and these northerners, glutted with pulpit theology, found little to admire in it. 'There is seldom fear of wanting a congregation in Scotland. But the misfortune is, they know everything, so they learn nothing.'[1] Even more penetrating is his comment on the people of Glasgow, 'they hear much, know everything, and feel nothing'.[2] When he preaches at Perth, and offers to start a Society there, only four men and four women come up to discuss the project with him,[3] and towards the end of his life Edinburgh is only producing five converts in five years.[4] As the controversy over Predestination becomes more embittered, Calvinist Scotland will honour him with university degrees, but has no ear for his message. If Scotland was the wayside, Ireland was the stony ground, in which congregations grew up all too fast, to wither away no less unaccountably. People flocked to hear him, including (in many centres) the Catholics. But remarkably few perversions are recorded; even in Dublin we read 'I spoke to all that came, but I found scarce any Irish among them. At least ninety-nine in a hundred of the native Irish remain in the religion of their fathers.'[5] Dublin had a Society strong in numbers, and at times in devotion, but its progress gave the evangelist perpetual concern; 'no such fickleness even in Ireland' is his bitter comment on the troubles he finds at Norwich.[6]

[1] *Journal*, 28/5/64. [2] Ibid. 12/5/74. [3] Ibid. 23/4/68.
[4] Ibid. 17/6/79. [5] Ibid. 15/8/47. [6] Ibid. 17/2/81.

There was, however, one part of the Celtic fringe in which, from the first and to the end, Wesley felt at home; the duchy of Cornwall. From Bristol, the earliest and the most jealously nursed of his provincial outposts, he made a progress southwards and westwards through country already softened by a visit from his brother Charles, which rejoiced his heart. And he could write, twenty years later: 'The line is now laid, with no inconsiderable [he means *considerable*] interruption, from the eastern point of Cornwall to the Land's End.'[1] At Gwennap was a natural amphitheatre in which he claimed to have addressed, sometimes, 20,000 or 30,000 people at once.[2] The figure has been questioned,[3] and with reason; Wesley arrived at it, on his own showing, on the principle that a crowded audience occupies the ground at a rate of five persons to the square yard,[4] a principle on which he bases similar computations at Huddersfield and in Ireland.[5] Obviously, people do not in fact stand so close together, but Wesley was never a very accurate observer. (When he visited Ironbridge he conjectured that the rather skimpy structure then in building from which the place takes its name, must have been equal in weight to the Colossus of Rhodes.)[6]

Cornwall, in spite of smuggling, was his *terra sancta*; the East Anglian counties, for a long time at least, his *bête noire*. At Yarmouth the Society has deserted the parish church in a body, and has to be driven back there.[7] At Norwich the scandalous behaviour of James Wheatley has ruined everything,[8] and the members have to be told they are 'the most ignorant, self-conceited, self-willed, fickle, untractable, disorderly, disjointed Society I know in the three kingdoms'.[9] Within a few months almost all the Yarmouth members have left the church again.[10] By 1784 Yarmouth is all rent, and Norwich neglected.[11] Later in the evangelist's life it will be a different story; but it seems clear that the real apostle of the eastern counties was Berridge of Everton rather than Wesley himself.

In the midlands, where the shadow of industrialism had already fallen (close to Fletcher's Madeley they were using pit-coal for working iron as early as 1709), there were favourite centres, like Wednesbury, where the early persecution had been so bitter; but you did not get into Wesley country again till you were farther

[1] *Journal*, 8/9/60. [2] Ibid. 30/8/78. [3] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 200. [4] *Journal*, 21/8/73.
[5] Ibid. 10/8/66, 11/6/85. [6] Ibid. 26/3/79. [7] Ibid. 23/3/67. [8] Ibid. 8/7/54.
[9] Ibid. 9/9/59. [10] Ibid. 7/12/67. [11] Ibid. 14 and 17/11/74.

north. His visits to Lancashire were at first short and infrequent; Bennett (Grace Murray's husband) was its evangelist, and he had embraced the party of Calvin. In Yorkshire the Moravians had an influential settlement; and Ingham, Wesley's companion at Oxford, in Georgia, and at Herrnhut, worked in with them long after Wesley had quarrelled with them, then drifted off into yet stranger theologies. But in the end Wesleyanism arose from the ashes of these experiments. Farther north still, in Northumberland and Durham and above all at Newcastle, the Societies throve; when Wesley imagines himself as retiring from his itinerant work, he can only imagine himself as settling down at Newcastle or in Bristol. By 1780 there were 54 preaching-houses in Yorkshire, 26 in Cornwall, 15 in Durham, 14 in Lancashire, 11 in Lincolnshire; no other county rose to double figures.[1]

The local centres vary all the while in receptivity; sermons will be preached to 'a sleepy congregation' at Reading on Sunday, 'such another' at Salisbury on Tuesday, 'a much more lively people' at Shaftesbury on Wednesday, and so on.[2] But what you are constantly aware of in reading the *Journal*, what is very little emphasized by the biographies, is the constant and violent leakage in the movement. The figures at Norwich, between the years 1755 and 1764, show the following year-to-year variations: 83, 134, 110, 760, 507, 412, 630, 310, 174. Admittedly they are cited as an extreme case,[3] but the same sort of thing was constantly happening elsewhere. You read of a drop from 2,800 to 2,200 in London,[4] 100 members lost at Bristol, then 450 (half the total), then another 100;[5] of half the Society falling away at Liverpool,[6] three-quarters of it at Pembroke;[7] Redruth drops from 300 or 400 to 110,[8] Wigan from 140 to 12,[9] and at Cardiff Wesley preaches to 'what was once a Society'.[10] Usually it meant that some local preacher had taken an independent line, sweeping away his followers with him; sometimes it was due to a public scandal. The effect, in any case, was that the movement did not grow steadily like a snowball, it advanced and recoiled. Always, almost everywhere, Wesley has the Danaids' task of filling a leaky vessel. Meanwhile, he is constantly active in pruning the local Societies of those unworthy members who were reported to him

[1] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 160. [2] *Journal*, 17–20/8/55. [3] Ibid. 12/10/64.
[4] Ibid. 10/2/66. [5] Ibid. 11/3/50, 28/10/57; Simon, *L.P.*, p. 114. [6] *Journal*, 21/4/57.
[7] Ibid. 27/4/81. [8] Ibid. 30/8/68. [9] Ibid. 3/4/72. [10] Ibid. 28/9/53.

as walking disorderly. In a single year he purges Bristol of 40, then of 30 members, seven years later of another 170;[1] he 'leaves out' about 100 names in London,[2] above 50 persons in Newcastle.[3] Sometimes, at least, he 'believed it best openly to declare both their names and the reasons why they were excluded'.[4] Certainly he was heroic in his use of the knife; and there is something almost uncanny about the man who could nurse a young movement through all these vicissitudes, and boast of having never lost a night's sleep.

(ii) *The Minor Cross-currents*

We are apt to think of Wesley's England as if it had been a valley of dry bones, waiting for the genial influence of his prophecy to create a new people that would serve the Lord. To be sure, the Church which produced Butler and Warburton and Johnson was not in active decay; and the statistics of communicants you read in Wesley's *Journal* would be unthinkable nowadays. But, take it by long and large, eighteenth-century Anglicanism is an unadaptable affair, ill-fitted to deal with such prospects as the revolt of the American Colonies and the Industrial Revolution. Nor was it only Anglicanism that had sunk on its lees. 'A sort of creeping paralysis had come upon the nonconformist societies, whether they professed an orthodox or a heterodox faith, or had no faith at all. The puritan theology, where it was preserved, seemed too often a tradition rather than a faith, an old religion which had grown infirm and decrepit, and lost the spirit and the strength which had once worked wonders on the earth.'[5] Even the Quakers—and Fox was only a dozen years dead when Wesley was born—had felt the chill air of the Age of Reason; Deism was contaminating their ill-protected system of theology, and their numbers were on the decline. Whatever persecution the new enthusiasm might have to endure from the World, its diametrically opposed enemy, at least you would augur for it freedom from competition; its pitch would be the only pitch when it went out into the market-place.

But, curiously, the impact of rival 'isms' makes itself felt everywhere in the pages of the *Journal*. For one thing, you have to reckon with the imported enthusiasms of the Continent. Wesley came face

[1] *Journal*, 22/2/41, 9/12/41, 1/10/48. [2] Ibid. 24/2/61. [3] Ibid. 20/2/43.
[4] Ibid. 9/12/41. [5] Halley, *Lancashire, its Puritanism and Nonconformity*, p. 488.

to face with a representative of the French prophets; that is, of the Camisard refugees. Their propaganda was still active, and at Bristol 'one who did run well' had been perverted by it;[1] Wesley was sufficiently alarmed to preach an anti-Camisard sermon. It speaks little for the ingenuity of Lavington and other early critics of the movement that they never tried to connect the Camisard enthusiasm (against which Shaftesbury had written) with that of the Methodists. The French prophets actually had a meeting-house in Rose Green, one of Wesley's favourite pitches at Bristol;[2] and it was at Bristol above all that those violent paroxysms occurred among Wesley's audiences which gave so much scandal to his contemporaries. But, whether or no the Camisard exiles had paved the way for the Methodist preachers, they did not remain long or effectively its rivals; theirs was a dying sect. It was quite otherwise with the Moravians, an importation this time from Germany, as we shall find good reason to conclude in the two following sections.

But meanwhile, there was another influence at work. Wesley, as I have said, did not confine the membership of his Societies to church-goers. When he started to found them he was strongly under Moravian influence; and we have seen what cloudy schemes of Christian reunion on a basis of agreeing to differ occupied the erratic mind of Count Zinzendorf. The difficulty for the Moravians was that they could not make up their minds whether they had founded a church, or a society within the Church. Wesley had no such misgivings; he had founded a Society, or rather a chain of Societies, for the mutual improvement of their members, and he saw no reason why he should exclude anybody who took the business of his soul seriously. 'I do not mean, *Embrace my modes of worship*, or, *I will embrace yours*. . . . We must both act as each is fully persuaded in his own mind. . . . My sentiment is, that I ought not to forbid water, wherein persons may be baptized, and that I ought to eat bread and drink wine, as a memorial of my dying master: however, if you are not convinced of this, act according to the light you have. I have no desire to dispute with you. . . . Let all these smaller points stand aside.'[3] In point of fact, Wesley did baptize Quakers; Baptists, too, when occasion arose.[4] Did he never argue with them? 'Finding he *would* dispute, I let him dispute, and held him to the point till

[1] *Journal*, 22/6/39.
[2] Piette, op. cit., p. 344.
[3] *Sermons*, No. XXXIX (p. 556).
[4] *Journal*, 25/1/39, 6/4/48.

between eleven and twelve o'clock. By that time he was willing to take breath. Perhaps he may be less fond of dispute for the time to come.' This was 'an Anabaptist teacher';[1] was it really so one-sided an affair? We all think it is the other man who insists on keeping us out of bed. As a matter of fact, I do not think Wesley was very fond of arguing. On the other hand, he was fond of stating his own point of view, with the utmost publicity, and deploring the argumentativeness of his fellow creatures if anybody answered him. Why did he call the Baptists, in his published *Journal*, by a name he knew they resented if he was so anxious to avoid crossing swords with them?

The fact is, in any case, that one effect of the Methodist revival was to recall sectaries, everywhere, to a fresh consciousness of their half-forgotten shibboleths. Where it failed to deepen religion, at least it gave a fillip to theology. The fashionable world in London, outside Lady Huntingdon's circle, might dismiss religion as something not quite *de bon ton*; but in little country towns old controversies, dormant since the Commonwealth, about the nature of grace and the need for baptism flared suddenly into life again. You would find in Frome (though admittedly it was exceptional in its own district) 'a mixture of men of all opinions, Anabaptists, Quakers, Presbyterians, Arians, Antinomians, Moravians and what not'.[2] Among the Celts it was worse; Mr. Jenks refers to the 'Arians, General Baptists, Sandemanians, Rellite and other sporadic Antinomianisms, Muggletonians, semi-mystics, queer local cults and quaint local fanaticisms, which jostled each other in a Pentecostal confusion during the latter half of the eighteenth century in Wales'.[3] In such a Babel was it possible for the most patient of evangelists to refrain altogether from controversy?

Clearly there was a good deal of give-and-take in the way of membership between the Wesleyans and their rivals. We read of 'poor John Webb, now thoroughly poisoned with Barclay's *Apology*';[4] of the 'wise Providence' which decreed that a backsliding Methodist practised as a Quaker for some years before he finished up in a mad-house.[5] The Baptists make havoc of the flock at Tipton Green in Staffordshire;[6] the 'renegade Methodists first turning Calvinist, then Anabaptist have made confusion at Hepton-

[1] *Journal*, 18/1/46. [2] Ibid. 29/9/68. [3] Op. cit., p. 16.
[4] *Journal*, 1/1/46. [5] Ibid. 10/9/53. [6] Ibid. 3/4/51.

stall, and there have been many perversions at Bingley and Haworth'.[1] It was easy for a local preacher with a following who had quarrelled with Wesley (and, as we have seen, this happened rather often) to transfer his allegiance without losing caste. English people of that world in which Wesley's converts were mostly found attach themselves more readily to a preacher than to a creed, and shed their theologies with remarkable alacrity. He was perfectly sincere in his principles when he urged Methodists to be regular attendants at their parish churches. But it would be idle to deny that his own movement gained in stability where he achieved this object. 'I see clearer and clearer, none will keep to us unless they keep to the Church.'[2]

But most unwelcome, because most dangerous of all, was the propaganda of the Antinomians. Did any of these survive from the old seventeenth-century movement, or were they newly awakened converts who had strayed off into an abuse of theology by the rival ways of Calvinism and Moravianism? It is not easy to be certain, or to guess how important their influence really was; it is probable that when he uses the term Wesley is sometimes referring to the Moravians themselves.[3] 'The little ones have been much offended by them' in Birmingham,[4] where one of their number is represented as taking part in the following dialogue: 'Have you a right to all the women in the world? Yes, if they consent. And is not that a sin? Yes, to him that thinks it is a sin, but not to those whose hearts are free.'[5] We hear of them also in London[6] and in Ireland.[7]

'Lord, if I must dispute, let it be with the children of the devil! Let me be at peace with thy children!'[8] The prayer was certainly sincere; it was never granted for six months together. The atmosphere of Wesley's world was electric with theological excitement; and his views were always definite, always strongly stated; it must be added that they were, from the point of view of his contemporaries, eccentric. Probably even if there had been no major crises in the movement there would nevertheless have been interminable local squabbles; local preachers with a grievance abandoning the connexion and setting up for themselves. But it was worse than that. It was his unwelcome destiny to be continually at cross-purposes with three sets of people whom, nevertheless, he loved. An unkindly critic

[1] Ibid. 31/7/66 and 4/8/66. [2] Ibid. 4/8/66. [3] Ibid. 29/5/45. [4] Ibid. 16/4/57.
[5] Ibid. 22/3/46. [6] Ibid. 17/2/45. [7] Ibid. 10/4/50. [8] Ibid. 20/7/61.

might say, but would say unfairly, that it was his destiny to kick away the three ladders on which he had risen to fame.

Wesley was a convert of the Moravians; yet within a few months of his conversion he had come to regard them with bitter suspicion, and for the rest of his life was to see their propaganda as an obstacle deliberately thrown in his path by the devil, for the thwarting of his own. Wesley was not an isolated phenomenon of his day; he was a member of a small but important group of Anglican clergymen, some thirty of them at least, who were determined to win back England to a pure Gospel faith. Nearly all of them, on a subject which must needs be ventilated from their pulpits, held views diametrically opposed to his. More and more, as his life went on, he found himself divided from, and at last vilified by, these men who should, he felt, have been his allies. And finally, though in his own conscience he remained loyal to the Church of England all his days, and laboured incessantly to promote a similar loyalty among his followers, he died with a premonition, reasonable enough and fully justified by events, that his death would be the signal among them for a revolt from the Church of England. In all Christendom there was no man more desirous of company on the road he travelled, more surely condemned, by the vagaries of his own thought and temperament, to walk alone.

(iii) *Wesley and the Moravians—they meet*

On the 2nd of December 1737, after evening service, John Wesley shook the dust of Georgia from his feet. He was still bound to appear for trial over the Hopkey incident; but it may be the magistrates who published an order forbidding anyone to connive at his escape from the province[1] were really conniving at it themselves. He was a disturbing influence, and they were glad to see the last of him.[2] Overton contends that the sense of disappointment Wesley felt at this stage in his career has been much exaggerated; did not Whitefield himself put it on record that 'The good Mr. John Wesley has done in America is inexpressible'?[3] But Whitefield was a fanatical admirer, and it is difficult to feel that he had any evidence to go upon, except the feelings of the religious world with which he had been in immediate contact. The plain fact is that Wesley had gone

[1] *Journal*, 2/12/37. [2] Southey, op. cit., p. 91; Lunn, op. cit., p. 85.
[3] Op. cit., p. 53.

out with the sole purpose of converting the Indians,[1] and that by the eve of his departure he had not, as yet, 'found or heard of any Indians on the Continent of America who had the least desire of being instructed'.[2] He had created a storm in the colony by methods of behaviour which a friendly historian describes as 'unworldly and precise, destitute of tact, firm even to obstinacy'.[3] He had been through a crisis of the heart, which produced the entry in his private note-book: 'Incapable of prayer . . . meditation . . . tried to pray . . . lost, overcome.'[4] It seems beside the mark to represent him as the victim of an unaccountable temporary discouragement.

Meanwhile he had made a discovery about himself—he was afraid to die. Twice at least during his outward voyage a storm at sea convinced him of it.[5] Now, on his way home, the same symptoms disquieted him;[6] a fortnight later he felt that he had got rid of them.[7] But he had not got rid of the reflections which they induced. On the voyage out, and during his stay in America, he had become intimate with a little band of Moravians who felt no fear in the presence of death, and seemed to take this immunity as a matter of course. The reason was, they had 'faith'. What was this faith to which he, after so much self-denial, such careful examination of his own conscience, such efforts to do all the good that lay in him, still remained a stranger?

What had done most, perhaps, to induce this attitude of uncertainty was an interview, immediately after his landing in America, with Spangenberg, the second founder of the revived Moravianism. Spangenberg had asked, 'Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God? . . . Do you know Jesus Christ? . . . Do you know he has saved you?'[8] Wesley's mind was not at rest; not even—or so he thought afterwards—on his voyage back to England, when the Moravian influence was still strong upon him. He wanted faith; but wrongly supposed this meant faith in God, instead of 'faith in or through Christ'. It was only after his return to England that another Moravian, Peter Böhler, put him right. True faith was inseparably attended by 'dominion over sin, constant peace, and a sense of forgiveness'. Intellectual conviction he attained partly by Bible reading, partly by three witnesses produced by Böhler who described their own conversions. The actual

[1] *Journal*, 23/11/36. [2] Ibid. 7/10/37. [3] Urlin, op. cit., p. 30.
[4] Piette, op. cit., p. 298. [5] *Journal*, 23/11/35, 23/1/36.
[6] Ibid. 28/12/37. [7] Ibid. 13/1/38. [8] Ibid. 7/2/36.

experience of conversion, as we have seen, came at 8.45 p.m. on 24 May 1738. After this, though much buffeted with temptations, he found himself always a conqueror.

Such is Wesley's own description of his certitude, and the means by which he reached it.[1] Curiously, but perhaps characteristically, he forgets to mention what was one of his chief stumbling-blocks, the idea that conversion should be instantaneous. It was only the unexpected corroboration of the New Testament that disarmed his opposition.[2] With Böhler he seems to have found a natural sympathy;[3] and in his habitual desire to make all good men think alike, introduced him to William Law.[4] It was not a success; Law disliked the idea of sudden conversion, and Wesley thus lost the guidance of one who was admittedly 'his oracle'. The new oracle, meanwhile, set sail for America; and it is probably true to say that for the rest of his life Wesley's conscience was entirely in his own keeping. When his mind was in doubt he would go down to Shoreham in Kent to consult Vincent Perronet, but that was all.

Unfortunately, at this precise moment, he stood in urgent need of spiritual direction. The impression you got from hearing the Moravians talk was that this conversion of which they spoke was not only instantaneous, but instantaneously complete; you found yourself a new man thenceforward. Wesley was not quite sure that the interior peace his own conversion had brought was really up to schedule, and he was too honest a man to convince himself that it must be. Just a month after his conversion he spoke uncharitably in criticism of an acquaintance, and for some hours 'God hid his face'.[5] Was the way of sanctification, after all, to be the same ding-dong struggle he had always been accustomed to? Throughout that autumn and winter, as we have seen, he was seriously exercised over the question whether his conversion was all his Moravian friends would wish it to be. If it was not, it meant either that he was not converted, or that the Moravians were wrong—did he ask himself which? I doubt whether he did at that stage.

There was an obvious practical solution of the difficulty—to go and see Moravianism in its own native haunts, to consult Zinzendorf himself, the all-but-Pope of the Movement.[6] This Wesley proceeded

[1] *Journal*, 24/5/38. [2] Ibid. 22/4/38. [3] Ibid. 3/9/41.
[4] Overton, op. cit., p. 63; Urlin, op. cit., p. 38. [5] *Journal*, 29/6/38.
[6] Southey, op. cit., p. 122.

to do, in August 1738. He was accompanied, not by his brother Charles (who had been converted five days before him), but by another member of the Georgia expedition, Benjamin Ingham. To say his impressions of Herrnhut were, at the time, wholly favourable is to say too little; he lived there as in a kind of Paradise. 'I am with a Church whose conversation is in heaven, in whom is the mind that was in Christ, and who walk as he walked.'[1] The behaviour of Count Zinzendorf 'was not unlike that of his Divine Master . . . when he took the little children in his arms'.[2] He wrote to them a month or two later: 'Glory be to God . . . for his unspeakable gift, for giving me to be an eye-witness of your faith, and love, and holy conversation in Christ Jesus. . . . We are endeavouring here also . . . to be followers of you, as you are of Christ.'[3] We may remind ourselves, with Overton, that 'Wesley always said or wrote what was uppermost in his mind',[4] but at least there can be no doubt what was uppermost in it in the August of 1738.

Meanwhile, it is doubtful whether he gained full reassurance about his own spiritual state. Zinzendorf, it is alleged, refused to let him go to Communion at Herrnhut on the ground that he was *homo perturbatus*.[5] And his interviews with various Moravians, chronicled at some length in the *Journal*, seem to have left his mind unresolved. On the one hand, it was clear that some of them had passed through successive stages of enlightenment, and had not waited until the final stage before they regarded themselves as Christians. Indeed, David Nitschman had been one of the four public teachers of the Moravian Church for several years before his final conversion; and a trenchant footnote suggests that, if this is so, 'a man who has a degree of faith may yet have doubts and fears'. On the other hand, those who had been fully converted seemed to possess an equilibrium of spirit which Wesley could not find in himself. Arvid Gradin, for instance, could boast of 'a firm confidence in God, and persuasion of his favour; serene peace and steadfast tranquillity of mind, with a deliverance from every fleshly desire, and from every outward and inward sin'.[6] Wesley, as we shall see, was destined to come across this kind of thing again, but not to experience it. He was to be like Moses, viewing from Mount Phasga a promised land he was fated never to enjoy.

[1] Ibid., p. 131. [2] Piette, op. cit., p. 312. [3] Ibid., p. 329. [4] Op. cit., p. 67.
[5] Ibid., p. 66. [6] See *Journal*, under 10 Aug. 1738.

(iv) *Wesley and the Moravians—they part*

One of the most curious documents relating to this mysterious part of Wesley's history is the letter he wrote, but never sent, to the Moravian church just after his visit. He has, he says, certain doubts about their way of life. He then proceeds (but only by way of questions) to impute to them a slavish submission to Count Zinzendorf, levity of behaviour, the use of guile or dissimulation, 'a close, dark, reserved temper', and a few other failings which seem less important.[1] I find it difficult to reconcile these criticisms with the ecstatic admiration he expresses at the time of his visit, except by supposing that on his return to England he had met with fresh evidence on the subject. He adds (writing in 1741), 'It may easily be seen that my objections, then, were nearly the same as now'—a characteristic claim, since Wesley always thought that what he was saying at the moment was what he had been saying for the last thirty years. Actually he proceeds to give himself the lie by bringing forward his objections to Moravianism in 1741, which are not at all the same as his objections in 1738. He accuses them now, quite simply, of Universalism, Antinomianism, and Quietism. With the first of these we are not greatly concerned. Antinomianism has much to do with his later distrust of the movement, but it does not figure prominently in the tragedy of Fetter Lane. It was rather Quietism, of a very specialized type, that invaded Wesley's entourage, and his peace of mind.

Wesley had been converted, not at any Moravian gathering, but at one of the ordinary Religious Societies in London.[2] He and his brother Charles proceeded to found a Religious Society of their own, meeting at a disused Baptist chapel in Fetter Lane. Once more, it was not a Moravian institution; its main purpose seems to have been what a more recent argot has christened 'sharing'. But its members mostly owed a spiritual debt to the Moravian leaders, and one of them, James Hutton, was in close touch with that movement.[3] It was not surprising, then, that a Mr. Molther, one of the German brothers, should be welcomed at its meetings. How much Molther's views were personal to himself, how much they represented the official Moravian theology, it is difficult to determine—the Moravians, under the influence of the Count, were rather apt to make up

[1] See *Journal*, under 3 Sept. 1741. [2] Hutton, op. cit., p. 292. [3] Ibid., p. 301.

their theology as they went along. But he seems definitely to have laid down the following propositions: (i) that there were no degrees of faith; there could be no faith short of full assurance (that is, the abiding witness of the Holy Spirit, and a clear perception that Christ was dwelling in you). (ii) That until such assurance was reached, all outward religious activities were useless, and in the circumstances harmful; you must not attempt to do any temporal or spiritual good to others, you must not frequent Communion, you must not even read the Bible. You must wait in perfect stillness for the thing to happen. Only so (this was obviously the theology behind his contentions) could you be sure that grace was absolutely free, conveyed to you for no merits and in consideration of no merits of your own.[1]

Hutton, writing from a Moravian angle, apologizes for Molther on the ground that he had only been a Moravian for a year; the fervours of the novitiate led him to exaggerate, to draw hard-and-fast lines.[2] The probability is, in any case, that he was only forcing on an issue which had, sooner or later, to be fought out. But however indiscreet may have been his presentation of the Moravian case, there can be no doubt that he was persuasive. On the 1st of November Wesley was summoned back from Bristol, where he was preaching, to deal with an unexpected situation. 'The first person I met with there, was one whom I had left strong in the faith, and zealous of good works; but she now told me, Mr. Molther had convinced her she never had any faith at all. . . . In the evening Mr. Bray, also, was highly commending the being still before the Lord.'[3] For a week, Wesley tried to put things right by private conversations; perhaps—such was his power of talking people down—imagined that he had done so. But by December it was plain matters had gone from bad to worse; Hutton, Bell, and others of the Fetter Lane Society were determined to 'raise a Church'.[4] At the end of the year, Wesley had a private conversation with Molther, whom he pinned down to various affirmations; not the least interesting of which was that 'That gift of God, which many received since Peter Böhler came to England, viz. a sure confidence of the love of God to them, was not justifying faith'.[1]

I say 'not the least interesting', because obviously here the issue

[1] *Journal*, 31/12/39. [2] Op. cit., p. 296. [3] *Journal*, 1/11/39.
[4] Ibid. 13/12/39.

became narrowly personal. One of those who had received a sure confidence of the love of God to them was Wesley himself. Molther had, in effect, put himself out of court by doubting John Wesley's own conversion. He had come a year too late. At the end of 1738 he would have found his man still a prey to agonizing self-distrust; ruefully recognizing that his experience did not include a total absence of doubt and fear; hoping, somehow, that he was at least on the road to conversion, at one of those milestones which his friends at Herrnhut had described to him. Now it was all different; now the man who told Wesley to his face that he ought not to be going to Communion, because he was not yet converted, was obviously a mere enthusiast. What had happened in the meanwhile to settle Wesley's mind for him?

I think Mr. Lunn is clearly right in suggesting that, from the time when he started field-preaching, Wesley ceased to fret about his own salvation.[1] I think—as I shall be concerned to show later—that he was convinced by *what he saw*. The last of the despairing entries in the *Journal* is under 4 January 1739. On 21 January 1739 the entry occurs: 'We were surprised in the evening, while I was expounding in the Minories. A well-dressed, middle-aged woman suddenly cried out as in the agonies of death.' The era of Wesleyan manifestations had set in. While Molther and Hutton were trying to convince Wesley that the only way to attain true conversion was to wait for it in perfect stillness, he was preaching, at Bristol, to people who cried as in the agonies of death, who were struck to the ground and lay there groaning, who were released (so it seemed) with a visible struggle then and there from the power of the devil. For Wesley, the experimentalist, it was enough.

All through the early months of 1740 the struggle went on in London. On 26 February the *Journal* shows that Wesley has been expostulating with many who have left off the ordinances (that is, principally, Communion) and are trying to persuade others to do the same. On 23 April more than thirty people tell him they have been canvassed to deny what has been done for their souls, and to wait in stillness. The German was trying shock tactics. On 16 July, Wesley was shown a copy of the pseudo-Denys on Mystic Divinity —strange, that the source of so much Catholic mysticism should have played a leading rôle here!—with 'several extracts nearly allied

[1] Op. cit., p. 118.

thereto'. One of these extracts laid it down positively that reading the Scriptures, prayer, and Communion are 'all very evil' and 'deadly poison' to one who is not yet 'born of God'. He went straight down to Fetter Lane, and read out the offending passage as a *reductio ad absurdum*; he was mortified to discover that it had the full assent of the meeting. Somebody got up and proposed that Mr. Wesley should not be asked to preach at Fetter Lane any more, and it was decided that he should not; 'the place had been taken for the Germans'. (This was true, it had been rented on Lady Day by James Hutton, who was the forefront of the opposition.)[1] The debate lasted till eleven at night, and ended inconclusively.

The denouement came two days later, when 'I went with Mr Seward to the Love-Feast'—the *Journal*, at this point, is insensitive to irony—'in Fetter-Lane; at the conclusion of which . . . I read them a paper'. It was, for Wesley, very short; it summed up the issue about degrees of faith, the absence of doubt and fear, stillness and the ordinances. Then it added: 'I believe these assertions to be flatly contrary to the word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back to the Law and the Testimony. I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn. But as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains, but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgement, follow me.' Then Wesley 'withdrew, as did eighteen or nineteen of the society'.[2]

Two details he has omitted in describing the scene. He was in fact accompanied not only by Mr. Seward, but by Lady Huntingdon.[3] Was he ashamed, afterwards, of having relied too much on the arm of flesh? Selina Countess of Huntingdon was a member of the Society, and it may be supposed that she already exercised considerable influence. The other detail is so irreverent that it has been omitted by Wesley's biographers, even by the careful Dr. Piette; it was left to a Moravian writer to rescue it from oblivion. The Englishman's instinct when he wants to bring any crisis to a head is to take up his hat and leave the building. That had been Wesley's intention, but he was only able to carry out the second part of the programme. Incredible as it may appear to those who are unfamiliar with the Moravian impishness, Wesley's hat had been purposely

[1] Simon, *M.S.*, p. 13. [2] *Journal*, 20/7/40. [3] Simon, *M.S.*, p. 14.

removed by a wag.[1] There had been no such anti-climax since the poor nun had *fou rire* at Port Royal, on the occasion when St. Cyran returned from his imprisonment.

It is easy to get a wrong picture of these happenings; easy to think of Molther as an insidious emissary plotting against Wesley among his own Wesleyans. But in fact the Society at Fetter Lane was a purely democratic institution of which Wesley was one member among the rest. Hutton[2] accuses him of having omitted to mention among the rules (where they stand recorded in the *Journal*) the words 'That everyone, without distinction, submit to the determination of the brethren'. But the rule stands, in Wesley's version, 'That no particular member be allowed to act in anything contrary to any order of the society',[3] which defines plainly enough its parliamentary character. Wesley had no grievance; he merely learned (what it is to be suspected he did not much need) the lesson of distrusting democracies. The Fetter Lane Society was a discarded experiment; when he started again at the Foundery, the plant was his own.[4] Spangenberg, who had replaced Molther, enrolled the remaining seventy-two members as Moravian Brothers in 1741.[5] Meanwhile, the stormy scene which lay behind them did not wholly sever relations between the Moravian and Methodist bodies. Böhler came back from America in that year, and held a little love-feast at which the Wesleys and others were present.[6] Charles, about this time, had shown signs of relapsing into 'stillness', and his brother wrote him a guarded letter giving him a list of reasons why 'AS YET I dare in no wise join with the Moravians'—the capitals are his own.[7] But it was Lady Huntingdon who claimed the credit of having opened Charles's eyes for him.[8] In the September of that year Zinzendorf himself was in London, and met Wesley in Gray's Inn Walks; here these two remarkable men conducted a conversation in Latin, the substance of which Wesley has set down for us in the *Journal*.[9] Zinzendorf did not do himself any good by roundly denying that there could be any inherent perfection in the Christian, any real progress in his sanctification; it was all the work of a moment. Hutton himself describes this as 'extravagant language';[10]

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 299. [2] Ibid., p. 294. [3] *Journal*, 1/5/38.
[4] Simon, *M.S.*, p. 20. [5] Hutton, op. cit., p. 302. [6] *Journal*, 1/5/41.
[7] Ibid. 21/4/41. [8] Letter of 10/4/41, quoted in *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 41.
[9] *Journal*, 3/9/41. [10] Op. cit., p. 301.

it is confusing to have to deal with the all-too-acknowledged head of a sect who overstates his own theology, and describes one of the main tenets of your own system as *error errorum* in consequence.

As late as 1743 a conference between Wesleyans and Moravians was arranged; but Spangenberg was called away to America before it could take place.[1] It did not come as a surprise to anybody when James Hutton, in 1745, published an advertisement to say that he and his people had no connexion with John and Charles Wesley.[2] The historian of the Brethren suggests that Wesley could never have fitted into a society whose democratic principles would have been always overruling him;[3] others prefer to put it a little differently by saying that Wesley and Zinzendorf could never have fitted into the same society.[4] But it was not merely, as Mr. Addison points out, a question of personalities; there were strongly marked differences of principle. The Moravians, for example, disapproved by temperament of the violent conversion-scenes which were attending Wesley's preaching at the moment: disapproved on principle of that movement towards 'sinless perfection' to which, rather later, Wesley attached so much importance.[5] On the other side, the doctrine of 'stillness' was one that Wesley held in particular detestation. He might, perhaps, if more delicately handled, have admitted some force in the argument that the unconverted must wait for the grace of God; nothing they could do would earn it. But the Moravians went further; even the believer's good works must always result from an inward feeling that he was 'free' to act in this way—not from a sense of duty, for this would be legalism.[6] To Wesley's mind, all this was pedantry, if not a mere excuse for luke-warmness. All the plain man in him—and there was a great deal of plain man in him—revolted from it.

(v) *Wesley and the Moravians in controversy*

How seriously 'the Germans' ever threatened to outbid Methodism as a force in the religious life of England it is difficult now to guess. The chief danger centre, from Wesley's point of view, was

[1] Simon, *M.S.*, p. 147.

[2] *Journal*, 6/9/45. Under 29/9/49 there is a reference, perhaps misprinted, to such a declaration having been made in 1743.

[3] Hutton, op. cit., p. 296.

[4] Southey, op. cit., p. 178; Addison, op. cit., p. 73; Lunn, op. cit., p. 104.

[5] Addison, op. cit., p. 85. [6] See Wesley's letter quoted in *Journal*, 3/9/41.

Yorkshire, where the eccentric Benjamin Ingham presided over a chain of societies of his own making, and flirted, for some time, with the Moravian settlement at Fulneck. He strengthened his position with Donnington Park by marrying Lady Margaret Hastings, a connexion by marriage of Lady Huntingdon herself. We read of him as trying to persuade the Methodists at Dewsbury Moor that 'they are in a delusion and have indeed no faith at all'.[1] They are to be 'still', and not 'talk about what they have experienced'.[2] In 1755 Ingham himself was invited to the Wesleyan Conference at Leeds, but his preachers were not; and he seems to have replied by having himself elected as a 'general overseer' of his own congregations.[3] When he took to Sandemanian views his followers melted away, and with his influence the Moravian influence waned. By 1766 he has 'shrunk to nothing at Tadcaster' and Wesley's movement is on the increase; by 1774 the Germans at Pudsey are 'continually declining'; God is no longer on their side.[4] But it was not only in Yorkshire that the Moravian propaganda was formidable; they are, presumably, the 'mystic foxes' who have spoiled what the Antinomians left of the vineyard at Birmingham;[5] even in Newcastle 'some spawn of the mystic divinity' comes to light.[6] Nor was it only Wesley's congregations that suffered; Whitefield tells Doddridge that his Tabernacle has lost 400 of its members to the rival enthusiasm.[7]

How formidable an embarrassment the Moravians were may be inferred from the persistency of Wesley's attacks on them in the *Journal*. Nor does he confine himself to strictures on their eccentric theology; he gives publicity to the gossip of unnamed people who have been in contact with them, which sometimes involves a violent attack on the morals of their English converts.[8] Southey stigmatizes this as the most disingenuous act of Wesley's life; he could not but know what good men he was traducing.[9] But it is fair to remember that these graver charges were launched after 1750, when (as we have seen) the Moravians had been through a strange period of demoralization which they themselves called 'the Sifting Time'. Perhaps it is to be regretted that when a storm of literary propaganda broke out against the Brethren in the fifties, Wesley (like Whitefield) should

[1] *Journal*, 3/6/42. [2] Ibid. 26/5/42. [3] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 268.
[4] *Journal*, 23/8/66, 21/4/74. [5] Ibid. 4/4/55. Cf. p. 465 above. [6] Ibid. 10/4/47.
[7] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 201. [8] *Journal*, 21/12/51. [9] Op. cit., p. 181.

have joined in. In his *Contents of a Folio History, by a Lover of the Light* he accused them of having secured themselves relief by Act of Parliament under false pretences.[1] In his *Letter to the Moravian Church* and *Dialogue between an Antinomian and his Friend* he represented them as 'licentious spirits and men of careless lives'.[2] In his *Questions to Count Zinzendorf* he summed up the charges brought against them by Rimius and all their other critics.[3] In the *Journal* itself he recorded that Rimius's *Candid Narrative* 'informed him of nothing new'.[4] That he was honestly convinced of his view cannot be doubted; his was a curiously uncritical mind, much under the influence of the last book that had been in his hands; and the Moravians had only themselves to thank for it, if the secretiveness of their private lives and the flamboyancy of their public utterances combined, at this period in their history, to give the world a bad impression of them.

Meanwhile, the author of these trenchant diatribes remained, all his life, an enthusiastic admirer of some Moravians; nay, of the Moravian system itself, if they would but have consented to adopt reforms of his own suggesting. It was the despair of Bishop Lavington! How were you to attack a man convincingly when he could not make up his mind whether he was a hater of the Moravians (and therefore grossly uncharitable) or a lover of the Moravians (and therefore involved in their enormities)?[5] But indeed the whole world of eighteenth-century Evangelicalism is disconcertingly confused by these cross-currents of sympathy. Lady Huntingdon herself, long after the breach of all formal relations, tells Doddridge that she is going to meet Zinzendorf—indeed, he stayed with her[6]—but that she 'expects to speak a word to him in love and meekness, but with plainness'; it is a thousand pities that no record of the interview has survived.[7] Wesley, at first, finds the company of the Brethren a kind of temptation: 'I felt their words thrilling through my veins. So soft! So pleasing to nature.'[8] But, as time goes on, these encounters have no fears for him, and are tinged with a deep sense of regret. He meets Charles Delamotte, and finds him 'the same simple, loving man still'.[9] He meets John Gambold, and asks, 'Who but Count Z. could have separated such friends as we were? Shall we

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 349. [2] Ibid., p. 335. [3] Ibid., p. 360. [4] *Journal*, 22/5/53.
[5] Op. cit. ii. 64 and 97. [6] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 262. [7] Ibid. i. 102.
[8] *Journal*, 16/4/42. [9] Ibid. 13/7/59.

never unite again?'[1] The fact is, I think, that Wesley grew away from, but never grew out of, the memory of those early days when Peter Böhler was his oracle, the days of his conversion. For one moment, Herrnhut had been a dream-city to him, and he never quite forgave it for not being a reality.

(vi) *Wesley's Hatred of Mysticism*

There could be no more unpromising employment at first sight than the attempt to draw a parallel between Bossuet and John Wesley. The courtier and the lover of plain folk, the pillar of orthodoxy and the vagrant enthusiast, the master of prose style and the huckster of edifying literature for the million—approve or disapprove of either as you will, how (we shall be asked) can any parallel lie between them? Yet I would ask the reader, if he has access to both, to confront Rigaud's portrait of Bossuet[2] with Romney's portrait of John Wesley,[3] and consider whether there is not an elusive *something* common to both. Of course, there are differences you note at once; Wesley's face draws something of its strength from the straight line of the eyebrows, whereas Bossuet has the arched eyebrows which the painters of his period admired; Wesley has the hooded eyelids of a hawk, while Bossuet stares rather weakly at the middle distance, and so on. Again, part of the resemblance is accidental; either painter has caught the face from exactly the same angle. But there is *something* there; and if there were any art to find the mind's construction in the face, I would identify it as a habit, not so much of command, as of expecting to be agreed with; either man looks as if he might implore you at any moment to use your common sense.

If I am suffering from an illusion about the two portraits, I would still claim not to be altogether wrong about the two characters. It is difficult to read the history of Wesley's controversies without being continually haunted by the phrase Bremond used about Bossuet, *un grand simplificateur*. Like Bossuet in controversy with the Quietists, Wesley in controversy with the Moravians (or for that matter with the Calvinists) is too eager to knock you over with

[1] *Journal*, 5/11/63.

[2] Reproduced in, for example, the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, s.v. 'Bossuet'.

[3] Reproduced, for example, as the frontispiece to Southey's *Life* in the Library of Standard Biographies.

a *reductio ad absurdum*. He is so contemptuous of the other side that you begin to remember the other side had its worthy champions, and to wonder whether Wesley has really seen all there is to be seen in their point of view. A shade more sympathy, and you would be more ready to believe that he had got them right. Does not the philosopher warn us that it is the business of a good controversialist not merely to show where his opponent is wrong but to show what was his temptation to go wrong?

Wesley over the Moravians, like Bossuet over the Quietists, is the apostle of common sense. Either man was dealing with opponents who pushed their doctrines to the point of pedantry, and gloried in rhetorical over-emphasis. It was fatally easy to pick out an eccentric phrase here and there, with the contemptuous exclamation that this was the kind of man you had to deal with. It was fatally easy to contrast their flamboyancy with the more temperate statements of approved authors. And it was fatally easy to play to the gallery, to enlist in your own support the common-sense prejudices of the irreligious world. But there was a fine instinct about the Quietist's insistence that we should love God for himself alone, if necessary to the exclusion of his gifts. There was a fine instinct about the Moravian distrust of 'willing and shalling', the Moravian aspiration to replace the sense of duty by a sense of dynamic liberty. It was a pity that overstatements on the part of the men he was arguing with should have spoiled Wesley, as they spoiled Bossuet, for mysticism.

It has been claimed, indeed, that Wesley had no distrust of mysticism as such. 'What he really rejected was only the mysticism of writers who, like Behmen . . . spoke contemptuously of good works. . . . In the better sense of the word, he never rejected mystic influences. They clung always around the deeper devotional language of the Wesleys.'[1] I confess that this seems to me a misleading estimate; as we shall see later, the whole doctrine of disinterested love was equally in question. It is to be observed that while he was still under Law's influence this doctrine appealed to Wesley. He quotes with evident approval the words of a dying man at Savannah, who, after agreeing that Paradise was a fine place, added: 'I don't mind that; I don't care what place I am in. Let God put me where he will, or do with me what he will, so I may but set forth his honour and glory.' Wesley was 'surprised to find one of the most controverted questions in

[1] Urlin, op. cit., p. 58.

divinity, disinterested love, decided at once by a poor old man, without education or learning'.[1] Bishop Lavington finds occasion, as usual, to take offence; but if he regarded this attitude as Wesley's attitude after 1738, he knew very little indeed of the man he was attempting to vilify.[2]

It is perhaps true that Wesley's chief quarrel with the mystics was their discouragement of promiscuous activity. He reproaches himself for following the advice of the Mystics when, after opening up a serious conversation with his fellow travellers in the Salisbury coach—his constant habit in early days—he decided to 'leave them to themselves'.[3] Internal religion made good works appear flat and insipid, 'yea, and faith itself, and what not? . . . I had no heart, no vigour, no zeal in obeying. . . . Nor can I at this hour give a distinct account how or when I came back a little towards the right way; only my present sense is this, all the other enemies of Christianity are triflers, the mystics are the most dangerous.'[4] But in truth the issue lay deeper. Under Law's influence he was taught to walk on contentedly in darkness: 'Sir, you are troubled because you do not understand how God is dealing with you. Perhaps if you did, it would not so well answer his design. He is teaching you to *trust* him farther than you can *see* him.'[5] Deliberately Wesley discarded this way of darkness for a way of light. He reproached himself and his brother Charles, years later, for the habit of mind which described religion as 'a melancholy thing'; in those days, he reflects, there was still some savour in Charles's hymns of 'that poisonous mysticism, with which we were both not a little tainted'.[6]

This, I think, explains why he fled from mysticism to Moravianism, which his later experience taught him to regard as a progress from the frying-pan into the fire. John Gambold, a former member of the Holy Club, had 'recovered from his mystic delusion' when Wesley came back from America;[7] but only to become an adherent, and later a bishop, of the Moravian body. Why did Wesley, in attempting to escape from the coils of a mysticism which discountenanced good works, take refuge in Moravianism, a creed which lay open to precisely the same criticism? The answer is that his problem lay elsewhere. He wanted, with his whole being, the Moravian conversion which would set him free from doubt and fear; he did not

[1] *Journal*, 1/6/36. [2] Op. cit. i. 35. [3] *Journal*, 27/2/38.
[4] Southey, op. cit., p. 96. [5] Ibid., p. 49. [6] *Journal*, 15/12/88. [7] Ibid. 18/2/38.

want to go on any longer with the melancholy religion which bade him trust farther than he could see. It was only when Molther came over, with his doctrine of stillness, that Moravianism itself was seen as the old devil accompanied by seven spirits worse than itself.

Thenceforward the enemy is all one. He does not make it clear whether it was the mystics proper (he had just been reading Behmen) or the Moravians that he has in view when he comes across Madame Guyon's works and observes: 'Ah, my brethren! I can answer your riddle, now I have ploughed with your heifer.'[1] But the taunt would do equally well for either opponent. The Moravians were guilty of the same crime as Law; they were trying to take away from Wesley his *enjoyment* of religion. They were wholly unimpressed by the paroxysms undergone by so many Wesleyans at the moment of conversion; on the other side, they would not accept the warm, comfortable feelings which attended (for example) the celebration of a love-feast as evidence that the persons concerned really possessed 'joy in the Holy Ghost'. Might it not be, they suggested, that Wesley was mistaking 'animal spirits' for supernatural consolations?

This incredulity rankled, and Wesley returns to it in his *Journal* more than once. Even before he had fully broken with them he accused the Moravians of receiving

> not the ancient but the modern mystics as the best interpreters of Scripture. And in conformity to these, you . . . talk much, in a manner wholly unsupported by Scripture, against mixing nature with grace, against imagination, and concerning the animal spirits, mimicking the power of the Holy Ghost. Hence your brethren zealously caution us against animal joy, against natural love of one another, and against selfish love of God. . . . In conformity to the Mystics, you likewise greatly check joy in the Holy Ghost, by such cautions against sensible comforts, as have no tittle of Scripture to support them.[2]

Later he writes to 'an old friend' on the same subject; the Moravians have destroyed the love of God in many souls, 'teaching them to grieve the Holy Spirit of God by ascribing his gift to imagination and animal spirits . . . perplexing them with senseless, unscriptural cautions against the selfish love of God'.[3] He publishes a letter from another friend describing how 'the false apostles stepped in, laughed at all heart-work, and laughed many of us out of our spiritual senses; for, according to them, we were neither to see,

[1] Ibid. 5/6/42. [2] Ibid. 3/9/41. [3] Ibid. 28/11/50.

hear, nor feel, nor taste the powers of the world to come, but to rest contented with what was done for us seventeen hundred years ago'.[1]

'What was done for us seventeen hundred years ago'—you catch an echo there of the old Quaker slogan, 'thy faith rests in a Christ that died at Jerusalem'. But Wesley was not exalting the Inner Light at the expense of scriptural authority; he was only pleading that his followers must be allowed to have spiritual consolations, here and now, to indemnify them for what they gave up—and they gave up much—when they joined his societies. It will be seen how far he is removed from the austere doctrine of Madame Guyon. He made his position even clearer in a sermon preached at Leeds in 1774, speaking of 'a delicate device of Satan to destroy the whole religion of the heart; the telling them not to regard frames or feelings, but to live by naked faith; that is, in plain terms, not to regard either love, joy, peace, or any other fruit of the Spirit; not to regard whether they feel these or the reverse, whether their souls be in an heavenly or hellish frame'.[2] Only if we have failed to understand the central idea of mysticism, at least as it was understood by the authors Wesley himself so incongruously recommended, shall we fail to see in Wesley an arch-enemy of the mystics.

He is compact of inconsistencies on the point; in January he will be describing Mystic Divinity as a 'specious snare of the devil'; in February he will be loud in praise of Anna Schurman and Antoinette Bourignon; in March he will be complaining that Ralph Mathers's lapse into 'mysticism and Quakerism' had 'well-nigh put an end to that uncommon awakening he had before occasioned among the children'.[3] The truth is, to the end of his life he was only prepared to tolerate mysticism if he were given leave to edit it. Mrs. Scudamore was 'a burning and shining light, till the Mystics persuaded her to put her light under a bushel; so that for above two years she renounced all conversation even with her pious friends!'[4] The exclamation mark is Wesley's own; nothing reveals the preconceptions of a mind like its exclamation marks. It need hardly be added that the memoir written about Mrs. Scudamore by her friends had to be abridged and adapted before it saw the light from his admirably regimented printing-press.

[1] *Journal*, 16/1/51.
[2] Ibid. 1/5/74.
[3] Ibid. 29/1/74, 14/2/74, 12/3/74.
[4] Ibid. 1/9/90.

XX

THE PARTING OF FRIENDS (II)

(i) *A Mother in Israel*

We do not form a just appreciation of Shakespeare if we think of him as an isolated phenomenon, a lonely meteor flashing through the skies of post-Catholic England. We have to see him in relation to a background; some acquaintance with Jonson, Webster, Ford, Massinger, and those other clients of the Mermaid is necessary before we can fix him in his right niche. He is not a solitary peak, but the summit of a range. So it is with Wesley; think of him as the one great enthusiast of his age, and you see him distortedly. Most people know that he had a brother called Charles, who wrote hymns, that he had a rival called George Whitefield. But you misconceive the whole history of the Evangelical movement if you confine your observations to that triad. Wesley's age was an age of relative giants in the preaching world; the age of Venn, and Berridge, and Grimshaw, and Fletcher, and Ingham, and Romaine, and Madan, not to mention his younger contemporaries, like Toplady and Rowland Hill, not to mention the hot-gospellers who never took orders, like Howell Harris and John Cennick. All these, and many others, were preaching the doctrine of the New Birth simultaneously with the great Evangelist in widely scattered centres; often they broke the ground for him, and he was not ashamed to build on another's foundation—Ingham's in Yorkshire, Bennett's in Lancashire, Daniel Rowlands's in Wales. To Whitefield he was notoriously indebted, as we shall see.

It is a fairly safe generalization that any such movement of kindred spirits, even if it does not start from a single centre, will find, before long, a single rallying-point. That rallying-point will either be an institution (like Port Royal), or a personality with a gift for leadership. It would be a capital mistake to suppose that Wesley, whatever his contribution may have been to the genius of eighteenth-century Evangelicalism, was the leader of the Evangelical group. It will become abundantly clear in the course of the next few sections that

he was at issue with nearly all of them on a vital point of theology. Fletcher, who had come away from Switzerland to avoid Calvinism, was on Wesley's side, and Grimshaw's was perhaps a moderating influence. All the other leaders (except a few who remained on terms with the Moravians) were convinced Calvinists. Nor was Whitefield the leader of the movement; it was not his *métier* to be the leader of any movement. There is one single figure which, without dominating the whole picture, interprets and unifies the whole picture. And it is the figure of a woman.

Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, has not been fortunate in her official biographer. 'A Member of the Houses of Shirley and Hastings', he (or she) had no idea how to write a book, let alone a biography, and has contrived to surround the whole story with an atmosphere of stuffiness which the period of composition only partly extenuates. I suppose it will have appeared in 1840, in which year Newman reviewed it for the *British Critic* (No. viii in 'Essays Critical and Historical'). The copy that fell into my hands is dated 1844, and might well have evoked comment from its owner, one whose fates were entangled with Newman's, Lord Acton. But it was I who had the honour of cutting its pages after the lapse of a full century; and it was difficult to feel that a book which had slumbered so long on those shelves was worth the reading. Newman describes it as an 'ill digested and ill arranged volume', but kindliness of heart, or the concentration of the academic outlook, has prevented him from doing justice to its genius.

The book is in fact a monument of pietism, and pietism disfigured by unremitting snobbishness. 'Those Peeresses who had found, at the Cross and Mercy-seat, the happiness they had sought in vain from the world', 'Mrs. Deane was considered as ranking among the higher circles'[1]—a hundred such expressions arrest and exasperate the reader; nor does he take more kindly to the sisters-in-law of his heroine when he is told that they 'were amiably condescending to all their inferiors, even the poorest', and that 'under the ministry of Mr. Ingham, the Lord met these exalted females with all the blessings of his grace'.[2] Ceremonious forms of address are so strictly observed that you may easily miss the subtle flavour of such a phrase as 'his Lordship was condemned to be hanged'.[3] All this is the more regrettable, because the stalwarts of the Evangelical

[1] Op. cit. i. 91, 296. [2] Ibid. 249. [3] Ibid. 404.

Movement, somewhat dazzled by the high society their hostess introduced them to, were apt to speak of her, write to her, in terms not far removed from flunkeyism. It is on record[1]—Whitefield himself is our authority—that when Lady Huntingdon was ill and prayers were offered at the Tabernacle for her recovery,

thousands joined in singing the following verses for her Ladyship:

Gladly we join to pray for those
  Who, rich with worldly honours, shine,
Who dare to own a Saviour's cause,
  And in that hated cause to join:
Yes, we would praise thee that a few
Love thee, though rich and noble too.

Uphold this star in thy right hand—
  Crown her endeavours with success;
Among the great ones may she stand,
  A witness of thy righteousness,
Till many nobles join thy train
And triumph in the Lamb that 's slain.

The subject of these remarkable sentiments was born in 1707, one of the three daughters and co-heiresses of Washington, second Earl Ferrers. I will be less diffuse than my author on the question of her pedigree, content to recall the odd fact that she was thus related to the unfortunate Lord Ferrers who was hanged in 1760 for the murder of his agent. In vain did his pious relative send clergyman after clergyman to see him; in vain did she have the cards removed from his cell, in the fear that piquet was distracting him from proper attention to his eternal destiny.[2] There can be little doubt that the unfortunate man was mad; although Southey is less than generous in claiming that 'there was decided insanity in the family'[3]—whatever else she was, Lady Huntingdon was certainly in full possession of her wits. She went through, after her marriage, the experience of conversion; as with many of her contemporaries, it was not so much a conversion from sin as a conversion from righteousness. She had gone about to establish her own righteousness by prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds, and the record of her pieties, recited by her biographer with something akin to distaste, leaves the reader in little doubt that she was, in her unconverted state, a deeply religious and

[1] Ibid. 117. [2] Ibid. 404. [3] *Life of Wesley*, p. 246.

very charitable woman.[1] All the more surely, according to the theology of her school, was a complete change of outlook needed before she could begin to please God; she must be born again, forgo her own righteousness and borrow a Saviour's righteousness instead. It does not appear that she knew either Whitefield or the Wesleys at the time of her conversion, but she was in the movement almost from the first; and when she died she had spent more than a hundred thousand pounds on the dissemination of her religious principles.[2]

Hers was a double mission; as her biographer characteristically puts it, 'on the week-days her kitchen was filled with the poor of the flock, and on the sabbath the rich and noble were invited to spend the evening in her drawing-room'.[3] She was certainly untiring in her support of the Methodist propaganda as we have already seen it, and more than once, accompanied by a strong party of evangelists, toured the country herself.[4] But what drew more attention was her deliberate effort to christianize the *beau monde*. Her first chapels were built at Bath, Brighton, Cheltenham, and Tunbridge Wells. Nor was her influence inconsiderable; it was a determined woman who persuaded Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, and David Hume to sit, even as critics, at the feet of George Whitefield. A delicious air of sanctified conspiracy runs through her letters; the fact that So-and-so has been at the preaching, the hopes entertained of So-and-so's conversion, remind one irresistibly of later efforts to convert England from the top of its social structure. The ill-fated Prince of Wales who died in 1751 was thought to have been on the high road to conversion;[4] what vistas seemed open in an England still so aristocratic!

Wesley was perhaps never quite at his ease with Lady Huntingdon; so at least he implies when he has begun to have theological differences with her. Whitefield was her Montanus, her St. Cyran. On his side he shows none of that mysterious aloofness which was part of St. Cyran's technique; he falls in with every scheme she proposes, has an unbounded admiration for her spirituality, and perhaps, it will be felt, almost too vivid a consciousness of her social rank. 'As there seems to be a door opening for the nobility to hear the Gospel, I will defer my journey till Thursday. . . . On Monday morning, from nine to near eleven, I will be at your Ladyship's, and wait to know your order concerning Tuesday. Oh that God

[1] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 10. [2] Ibid. 76. [3] Ibid. 103. [4] Ibid. 175.

may be with me and make me humble!'[1] Wesley would not have been so malleable. But to Whitefield the Countess was 'our elect lady';[2] it was, we need not doubt, a real case of spiritual affinities. 'I hope this will not find your Ladyship ill of the gout. . . . I am sensibly touched when anything affects your Ladyship; gratitude constrains to this.'[3] One could only wish there was rather less 'your Ladyship' about it.

Not that Whitefield was alone, either in enjoying the patronage of the great lady, or in making startling acknowledgements to it. She moved about attended by a retinue of honorary chaplains; we hear of a house-party in London at which no less than five clergymen were her guests, and the sacrament was celebrated every morning.[4] And these were not the domestic nonentities we might be tempted to imagine them. Late in her career, when she had founded a college for training preachers at Trevecca—the nucleus of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion—there is perhaps a touch of the Mrs. Proudie about her; she refers to her lieutenants by their surnames without any 'Mr.', and shows a decided tendency to order them about. But the men of whom I am now speaking were highly educated university men of profound and genuine piety whom she received as prophets. She did not domineer over them; did not put herself forward as a prophetess in the style of Madame Guyon. She devoted herself to praying for the effectiveness of their preaching; and if we are told that she appeared among her converts as 'a happy mother, rejoicing in their prosperity, and blessed in the blessings of her spiritual children',[5] it is to her biographer that we owe the tiresome hint of possessiveness. No, it is difficult to accuse her of going beyond her measure. And yet the ascendancy she seems to have established over their minds may well leave the reader gasping.

Fletcher of Madeley, the ardent supporter of Wesley against the Calvinist faction, was among the foremost of her admirers. When he first went to see her, it was with fear and trembling, but he 'soon perceived a little of what the disciples felt when Christ said to them, *It is I*'; he is ready now (he tells Charles Wesley) to sit at her feet.[6] To herself he writes: 'I am greatly indebted to your Ladyship for what light I have into the nature of the foundation of Christianity; and, although I have great reason to be ashamed of the little use I

[1] Ibid. 90. [2] Ibid. 123. [3] Ibid. 228.
[4] Ibid. 163 (1850). [5] Ibid. 378–9. [6] Ibid. 232.

have made of it, I hope . . . to be a closer follower of you, as you are of Christ.'[1] He hopes to predecease her, so that he may 'be allowed to come and meet your departing soul among those you have made your friends with the mammon of unrighteousness and with the blessings of gospel righteousness'.[2] Grimshaw, another close ally of Wesley's, writes to ask: 'When will your Ladyship revive us with another visit? What blessings did the Lord shower on us the last time you were here!'[3], and sends a message from his death-bed: 'Tell her Ladyship, that dear elect woman, that I thank her from the bottom of my heart for all her kindnesses to me during the years that I have known her. . . . I can never repay the spiritual good I have reaped at her hands.'[4] Venn, the great Venn, says to her face: 'I cannot but admire the goodness of the Lord in raising up such a monument of his mercy.'[5] Conyers tells her: 'I love to pray for your Ladyship. I feel a sweetness upon my soul whenever I do';[5] and elsewhere; ''Tis true I never had the happiness of meeting you, but in the bowels of Jesus Christ do I love you; and it is with the most longing desire that I look forward to that happy, happy time when I trust to be with your Ladyship for ever.'[6]

In all that galaxy of Evangelists there is only one (apart from Wesley himself) who writes to her with no hint of approaching her on all fours—Berridge of Everton, whom we shall meet again in the next chapter. Southey gives him the character of 'a buffoon as well as a fanatic',[7] and Newman is frankly shocked by him.[8] How difficult for marble to appreciate granite! By an odd chance I found that Newman had selected as an instance of Berridge's 'singular style' precisely the passage I had selected for admiration. Let me give a few sentences, and leave them to the reader's judgement. He is talking about married evangelists.

> No trap so mischievous to the field preacher as wedlock, and it is laid for him at every hedge corner. Matrimony has quite maimed poor Charles (Wesley), and might have spoiled John (Wesley) and George (Whitefield), if a wise Master had not graciously sent them a pair of ferrets. Dear George has now got his liberty again, and he will 'scape well if he is not caught by another tenter-hook. Eight or nine years ago, having been grievously tormented with housekeepers, I truly had thoughts about looking out for

[1] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 234. [2] Ibid. 295. [3] Ibid. 284.
[4] Ibid. 286. [5] Ibid. 282. [6] Ibid. 328.
[7] *Life of Wesley*, p. 286. [8] *Essays*, i. 421

a Jezebel myself. But it seemed highly needful to ask advice of the Lord. So falling down on my knees before a table, with a Bible between my hands, I besought the Lord to give me direction. . . . This method of procuring divine intelligence is much flouted by flimsy professors who walk at large, and desire not that sweet and secret access to the mercy-seat which babes of the kingdom do find.[1]

Is not this a man who, if his life had been devoted to amusing the public instead of saving souls, might have taken a place side by side with Sterne?

What is more to our immediate purpose is that he pays Lady Huntingdon the compliment of writing to her as man to woman, in his own style, not in the pietistic argot of the school. Whether the compliment was deserved is another question. Lady Huntingdon was not afraid of giving her opinion; she remonstrates with Venn on the tenor of some of his discourses: 'O my friend, we can make no atonement to a violated law—we have no inward holiness of our own—the Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord our Righteousness. . . . And now, my dear friend, no longer let false doctrine disgrace your pulpit.'[2] But it is difficult to believe she was a woman of any speculative intellect; her own letters are always so cumbrous and ill-expressed as to leave the reader uninformed about what she was trying to say. No, there must have been some personal quality about this woman—certainly the biographer has not succeeded in conveying it to us—which made her very different from the Mrs. Jellyby she appears on the surface. There was something more about her than mere riches and love of interference; she was not simply the producer of these great men, she was their oracle. And we have not sufficiently measured Wesley's independence of mind, or the difficulties which attended his mission, until we realize that he had to contend with the determined and growing opposition of such a woman as this, and of all the amazing influence she commanded.

(ii) *The Orator of the Movement*

'Though the Wesleys should never have existed, Whitefield would have given birth to Methodism'—such was Southey's judgement,[3] and it is as well grounded as most conjectures in hypothetical history. Indeed, can we safely assert that Wesley, unaided, would

[1] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 389. [2] Ibid. 225. [3] *Life of Wesley*, p. 113.

have given birth to Methodism as we know it? It was not Wesley, but Whitefield, who started field preaching; who first sought the aid of lay preachers, who held the first Methodist Conference. More importantly, it was Whitefield who really set the movement going in the American colonies. Yet Whitefield persistently talked of Wesley, thought of Wesley, as his master, and was ready to do everything for him except the one service Wesley would really have appreciated from him—keeping his mouth shut about the Decrees. As it was, the Predestinarian issue fatally divided them; their orbits drew ever farther apart, and when they met, they met to weep over their differences but not to dispose of them.

They were Oxford contemporaries, fellow members of the Holy Club, but strangely different in culture. Whitefield's home was the Bell Inn at Gloucester, and when he came up to Pembroke, then a nest of singing-birds (for he was Johnson's contemporary), he came up as a servitor. Mr. Lunn has acutely observed: 'Whatever manner he had, it was certainly not the Oxford manner. He had the cheerful vitality and the unabashed emotionalism of the lower orders from which he sprang. Oxford neither made nor marred him.'[1] Probably even that is not the whole account of the matter; I think Whitefield was one of those men who possess genius unalloyed with any vestige of good taste. You can read between the lines when his great rival claims for him that 'Even the little improprieties both of his language and manner were a means of profiting many';[2] and Tyerman admits that he had 'an unconscious inflatedness of mind which led him to the employment of bombastic expressions, and to the utterance of sentiments sometimes silly, sometimes fanatical'.[3] I confess that I find him continually striking a false note in his correspondence; 'Oh, pray, dear Mr. Harris, that God would always keep me humble' is probably as genuine a sentiment as was ever uttered, but you cannot get away from the Heep-like expression of it.[4] A Father of the Birmingham Oratory, who is still remembered for his sardonic observations, said he thought Faber must have been an interesting person to meet, if you could keep him off the subject of religion. Most of us, from the reading of his letters, would feel the same about George Whitefield.

[1] *John Wesley*, p. 15.
[2] Wesley's *Journal*, 28/1/50.
[3] A. Belden, *George Whitefield, the Awakener* (London, undated but recent), p. 75.
[4] Ibid., p. 34.

Nor is the difference merely one of taste; the whole cast of mind is concerned. Like Faber as compared with Newman, Whitefield as compared with Wesley has the sacristy cast of mind; the religion which so absorbs him contrives, somehow, to limit him. Granted that Wesley was ahead of his time in disapproving of slavery, it is difficult not to feel that a man in Whitefield's position was behind his times in being the owner of slaves; nor does he impress the modern reader when he cites Abraham as a precedent.[1] We have seen that Wesley himself does not appear at his best in the character of a lover. But he is at least more human than the man who could write to his prospective father-in-law, 'I bless God, if I know anything of my own heart, I am free from that foolish passion which the world calls *love*', and proceed, 'I should think myself safe in your family, because so many of you love the Lord Jesus, and consequently would be more watchful over my precious and immortal soul'.[2] Later, he found that the lady in question, Elizabeth Delamotte, was 'in a seeking state only. Surely that would not do. I would have one that is full of faith and the Holy Ghost.'[3] These, no doubt, are admirable theological sentiments; but perhaps there was a certain poetic justice about the dispensation which provided the two great Evangelists with 'a pair of ferrets'.

When you have said all that about George Whitefield, you have not dethroned him from his pedestal. Any man with a reasonable capacity for admiration must stand awestruck at the record both of his labours and of his success. So fervent an admirer of Wesley as Dr. Piette does not scruple to call Whitefield 'the greatest orator of the Revival'.[4] Johnson, indeed, would have questioned the verdict: 'His popularity, Sir, is chiefly owing to the peculiarity of his manner. He would be followed by crowds were he to wear a night-cap in the pulpit, or were he to preach from a tree.'[5] Yet Bolingbroke and Chesterfield were his willing auditors; and Hume, after describing a sudden outburst of his, 'Stop, Gabriel, stop, ere you enter the sacred portals, and yet carry with you the news of one sinner converted to God!', tells us that 'this address was accompanied with such animated, yet natural action, that it surpassed anything I ever saw or heard in any other preacher'.[6] You cannot write him off as a mere mob-orator. Quite early in his career eighty coaches were

[1] Ibid., p. 162. [2] Ibid., p. 101. [3] Ibid., p. 103.
[4] Op. cit., p. 318. [5] Under 6 Oct. '69. [6] Belden, op. cit., p. 170.

counted at Moorfields, where he was preaching.[1] Nor is it a bad index of a man's success in the world of fashion to consult the statistics of the collections he can raise. When Whitefield was going round appealing for his orphanage in Georgia, he used to take up forty or fifty pounds at a single open-air meeting,[2] and his total of £600 for a single charity sermon is not easily rivalled.[3]

But it was as a popular preacher that he excelled; and here he made his name well in advance of the Wesleys. Thousands were being turned away from the churches where he preached in London while Charles Wesley was in Georgia, 'in a murmuring and discontented spirit reading over and over the third of Job',[4] or when John Wesley's Society numbered thirty-two members.[5] In 1739 the young deacon who had been ordained for work in Savannah started field-preaching in Bristol, and before long was counting up to 20,000 auditors.[6] The whole of his preaching career, in England and in America, was upon that scale. Between May and July of 1750 he went on a tour in which he preached over ninety times to congregations which totalled about 240,000 people.[7] He died in 1770, aged fifty-six years, two of which had been spent in crossing and re-crossing the Atlantic.[8]

From personal ambition both Wesley and Whitefield were absolutely free; but for theological differences there could have been no rivalry between the two men. At Oxford, in the days when he was trying to drown his scruples in asceticism and good works, Wesley was the rather improbable means of Whitefield's recovery; 'by his excellent advice and management of me, I was delivered from these wiles of Satan',[9] and he always thought of his old director as 'Honoured Sir', whatever cleavage there might have been since. Wesley, on his side, records several meetings with his old comrade in arms, and never without emotion. But it must be confessed that Whitefield's admiration for Wesley was not inconsistent with a profound conviction that he was wrong, nor with a willingness to tell him so. How embarrassing they can be, those ardent spirits who think they know us better than we know ourselves! Nor was his tone always consistent; on one page of his

[1] Belden, op. cit., p. 71. [2] Ibid., p. 72. [3] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 92, note.
[4] Belden, op. cit., p. 38. [5] Lunn, op. cit., p. 109.
[6] Ovington, op. cit., p. 96. [7] Belden, op. cit., p. 187. [8] Ibid., p. 41.
[9] Whitefield's *Journal*, quoted in Belden, op. cit., p. 22.

biography you get a letter which opens: '. . . My honoured friend and brother, for once hearken to a child, who is willing to wash your feet. . . . If you would have my love confirmed towards you, write no more to me about misrepresentations wherein we differ.' On the next, after a short interval, he is writing: 'Remember you are but a babe in Christ, if so much. Be humble; talk little; think and pray much.'[1] Faced with these quick-change tactics, it is probable that Wesley sometimes felt what Bossuet felt about Fénelon—nay, about Madame Guyon herself—that you never quite knew where you were with these people. For the rest, I doubt whether there was much *natural* sympathy between the two men, close as their stars were allied; whether Wesley ever craved for the society of Whitefield, as Newman did for that of Keble and Church.

(iii) *The Controversy of 1740*

I have already devoted two chapters to the history of Jansenism without, I hope, trying the reader's patience too highly by theologizing over grace and free will. We are back at the same point; Calvinism, like Jansenism, though of course at a different level, out-Augustines Augustine and tries to pluck the heart out of the mystery, be the corollaries as gruesome as they will. But there is this curious difference between the two situations. The Jansenist propaganda against universal redemption has no natural alliance with the Jansenist severity of morals; if anything, in strict logic, the contrary. The more you incline towards the assertion of human free will, the more rigorous views you might be expected to hold on the necessity of a strict code for any Christian who hopes to find acceptance with God; yet in the seventeenth-century controversy it is the Jesuit theologians who insist on human free will, the Jesuit theologians who plead for some concession to human weakness. In the eighteenth-century controversy the lists are more intelligibly marked out. It is the nerve of the Arminian case against absolute predestination, that you cannot preach it without opening the door to the Antinomian. Wesley had the mind of a Jesuit, with the morals of a Jansenist.

How much Antinomianism was really a force to be reckoned with it is difficult to say. It was disconcerting, at least, that anybody claiming to be a Methodist should be capable of arguing as follows: 'My sins may displease God, my person is acceptable to him. Though

[1] Belden, op. cit., pp. 105, 106.

I should outsin Manasses, I should none the less be a child of goodwill, because God always sees me in Christ. Hence in the midst of murders, adulteries and incests, he can address me with the words, Thou art all fair, my love, my undefiled; there is no spot in thee.' We have the authority of so gentle a controversialist as Fletcher for believing that such language was actually used, and he does not allow us to suppose that it was all bark and no bite. 'Antinomian principles have spread like wildfire among our societies. Many persons, speaking in the most glorious manner of Christ, and of their interest in his complete salvation, have been found living in the grossest immoralities.'[1] Wesley himself had been in contact with such extraordinary vagaries of the religious mind, as exemplified in his own brother-in-law. We can hardly doubt that his distrust of Calvinism was accentuated, at least, by the prevalence of such views, and that it was honestly as a counterblast to the Antinomians that he devised the fatal Conference minutes of 1770. But his Arminianism was deeply rooted and of long standing. At the time of his ordination, his inquiring mind had been troubled by the references to predestination in the Thirty-nine Articles.[2] More curiously, he seems to have detected a Calvinist strain in *The Imitation of Christ*,[3] and had a long correspondence on the subject with his mother; she very reasonably challenged his attribution, but seems to have laid his scruples to rest by an explanation of the whole difficulty which might have come straight from the pen of Molina.[4] Just after his conversion (although as we have seen it took place under Moravian, and, therefore, under Lutheran auspices) Wesley seems to have been exercised by the subject once more, and spent a whole fortnight in thinking it out.[5] It is very characteristic of him that he should have allocated just that much time to a consideration of the whole problem, and then argued against Calvinism without a qualm for the remaining forty-odd years of his life.

How Whitefield's Calvinism developed his biographers do not help us to understand; it is possible, as they suggest, that he was confirmed in his strict views by contact with the redoubtable Jonathan Edwards in America.[6] But, indeed, there is no reason why we should demand explanations; the whole of Lady Huntingdon's

[1] Quoted in Moehler's *Symbolik* (tr. Robertson, London, 1906), p. 442.
[2] Southey, op. cit., p. 30. [3] Lunn, op. cit., p. 26. [4] Piette, op. cit., p. 258.
[5] Urlin, op. cit., p. 22. [6] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 197.

school was steeped in Calvinism, and Wesley himself, had he been more sensitive to the opinions of others, and more ready to let them have their say, would have realized that he was the black swan of the Movement; that it was *his* orientation, not that of his rivals, which needed explaining.

Nearly a century and a half earlier the Congregation *De Auxiliis* had imposed silence on the Dominican and Jesuit controversialists, to the extent at least of forbidding them to stigmatize a rival view about grace as heresy. If the Methodist movement was to reach the same *modus vivendi*, it must be by common agreement; and such an agreement was constantly being suggested from both sides. But, as his biographers have pointed out, it was not much use asking Wesley to 'let the decrees alone'; an 'obstinate and pugnacious Arminian', who was 'incapable of any disguise', he could not withhold himself from declaring what he considered to be the whole counsel of God, on this or any other matter.[1] At the same time Wesley honestly believed that Whitefield, not he, was the troubler of Israel. 'He made the first breach among the Methodists; O that God may empower him to heal it!'[2] He insisted that no member was ever turned out of his, Wesley's, Society for holding opinions about Particular Election and Final Perseverance, although two or three had left, for that reason, of their own accord.[3] But he was always turning out members because they 'walked unruly', or on some similar charge; and it is not always easy for the hostile critic to agree what constitutes factious opposition, or how much of encouragement a malcontent may have received before he decides on a voluntary resignation.

The fact was that there was no healing the breach; the point at issue was not—as it was between the Dominicans and the Jesuits—one of abstract theology, it was a burning question, that touched the very heart of the Revival's message. When you were converted, when you experienced the New Birth, what did it mean? According to Wesley, that you were then and there conscious of Christ having died for your sins, and of yourself as then and there accepted in Him; but nothing proved you would not have fallen away from that faith in six months' time. According to Whitefield it gave you the conviction that you were irrevocably sealed for heaven. How could it be supposed that such a major misunderstanding could be hushed

[1] Urlin, op. cit., p. 87. [2] Wesley's *Journal*, 3/1/66. [3] Ibid. 14/5/65.

up, among the rank and file of a movement which was pledged to the doctrine of conversion, which regarded the very circumstance of conversion as an infallible guarantee of the convictions that came with it? 'God himself, I find, teaches my friends the doctrine of election. Sister H. hath been lately convinced of it, and if I mistake not, dear and honoured Mr. Wesley hereafter will be convinced also'[1]—to Whitefield the absence of such conviction simply meant that dear and honoured Mr. Wesley had not quite been converted yet. On his side, with his almost ultra-logical orientation of mind, Wesley could not understand how you could convince a person of his inevitable salvation without turning him into an Antinomian, in theory if not in practice. During the whole period between 1740 and 1770, Methodism had two nations in its womb. The inevitable separation was only staved off by the immense respect which the rival controversialists had for one another; against their own better judgement they persisted in trying to convince themselves that their differences were of minor importance. Never were theologians so resolved to make a molehill out of a mountain.

As early as 1740 Whitefield was complaining that no atheist can more preach against predestination than the Wesleys.[2] The actual history of the breach is well known. Goaded by the curiosity of his own followers on the subject, Wesley took lots, and accepted the arbitrament of destiny; in 1739 he preached his sermon on Free Grace, and published it in the following year, with a hymn by his brother Charles. Whitefield, from America, retaliated by publishing his own view of the case, with a hymn by Dr. Watts. 'Oh that there may be harmony and intimate union between us!' he writes from Maryland. 'Yet it cannot be, since you hold universal redemption.'[3] He returned to London, and was so affected by his meeting with Charles Wesley that he promised never to preach against the Wesleys again.[4] Early in 1741 John Wesley went to thresh the matter out with him. 'He told me, he and I preached two different gospels, and therefore he . . . was resolved publicly to preach against me and my brother, wheresoever he preached at all. Mr. Hall (who was with me) put him in mind of the promise he had made but a few days before. . . . He said that his promise was only an effect of human weakness, and he was now of another mind.'[5] By this time Wesley's

[1] Southey, op. cit., p. 184. [2] Ovington, op. cit., p. 165. [3] Belden, op. cit., p. 106.
[4] Southey, op. cit., p. 189. [5] Wesley's *Journal*, 28/3/41.

Society at Bristol had split in two; he had declared Mr. C(ennick) and his party to be no longer members of it, in view of their persistent 'backbiting'.[1]

(iv) *The Controversy of 1770*

'The breach between Wesley and Whitefield', Mr. Lunn writes, 'did not last long. They agreed to differ . . . till Whitefield's death, nearly thirty years later.'[2] This is the impression you derive from most of the biographies, but it hardly does justice to the tense situation which persisted, all through those years, not so much between Wesley and Whitefield as between Wesley and Whitefield's lieutenants. True, there are many signs of *rapprochement*. In 1749 Lady Huntingdon made strenuous efforts to bring the two evangelists together;[3] as the result, Wesley took the prayers one day at West Street, Whitefield preached, and they reversed their rôles on the next; 'by the blessing of God, one more stumbling-block is removed'.[4] In 1753 Wesley preaches in a new church built for Whitefield at Plymouth; 'thus it behoveth us all to trample on bigotry and party zeal'.[5] In 1755 we read: 'Mr. Wh. called on me; disputings are now no more; we love one another.'[6] Four years later: 'Walked over to L . . . H . . .'s. After breakfast came in Messrs Whitefield, Madan, Romaine . . . and Venn.' Whitefield insisted on Wesley's taking his place at the Communion table, and Wesley comments: 'Oh, what are the greatest of men to the great God?'[7] In the summer of 1762 Lady Huntingdon actually presided over the Methodist Conference at Leeds.[8] In 1766 she was once more aiming at a reconciliation,[9] and Wesley officiated in buildings dedicated to Calvinism in London, at Plymouth, and at Bath.[10] Next year Whitefield's congregation attended a Wesleyan love-feast at Bristol, and the hope is expressed that 'we shall not know war any more'.[11] Even in 1769, a year before the storm broke, we find Wesley preaching at the anniversary of Lady Huntingdon's foundation at Trevecca.[12] The idea seems to have been that the college should turn out Calvinist and Arminian preachers indifferently; Fletcher, a convinced Arminian, was its warden.

[1] Ibid. 28/2/41. [2] Op. cit., p. 163. [3] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 118.
[4] Wesley's *Journal*, 19/1/50. [5] Ibid. 14/9/53. [6] Ibid. 5/11/55.
[7] Ibid. 27/2/59. [8] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 118. [9] Ibid., p. 199.
[10] Wesley's *Journal*, 17/8/66, 2/9/66, 25/10/66. [11] Ibid. 2/10/67.
[12] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 262.

There is much in all this that may serve to edify us. But the question naturally suggests itself, Would reconciliations have been so carefully brought about, so enthusiastically greeted, if there had not been a certain amount of quarrelling in between? And indeed, no reader of Wesley's *Journal* can escape the conviction that he was subject to continual sharp-shooting from Whitefield's adherents, and that he smarted under the grievance. He believes, he writes in 1742, that Whitefield 'is sincere in all he says concerning his honest desire of joining hand in hand with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. But if (as some would persuade me) he is not, the loss is all on his side. I am just as I was; I go my way, whether he goes with me or stays behind.'[1] He was conscious, all the time, of a barrier between himself and the theologians of the rival school, and always, characteristically, felt it was they who had put it there. So, in 1746, he meets his old friend Humphreys, 'rigorously tenacious of the Unconditional Decrees. O that opinions should separate chief friends! This is bigotry all over.'[2] So, in 1764, he reports a visit to Conyers at Helmsley. 'His house-keeper faintly asking me, I went in. By the books lying in the window and on the table, I easily perceived how he came to be so cold now, who was so warm a year ago. Not one of ours, either prose or verse, was to be seen, but several of another kind. O that men were as zealous to make Christians, as they are to make Calvinists.' Conyers, however, asked him to preach, and afterwards seemed 'convinced for the present that things had been misrepresented'.[3] It was from his neighbourhood that Wesley sent out his famous circular to forty or fifty clergymen of Evangelical views, proposing a united front.

This interesting document is preserved in the *Journal*.[4] It suggests that Wesley himself and his rivals should do what (according to the biographers) they were doing already—agree to differ. It suggests that they should not do certain things which they evidently were doing: 'speak disrespectfully, slightly, coldly or unkindly of each other; never repeat others' faults, mistakes, or infirmities . . . never say or do anything to hinder each other's usefulness.' The very necessity for writing such a letter is eloquent proof that the revival movement was divided into two camps. What is still more extraordinary is that, of all the addressees, only three sent any kind of acknowledgement. Overton sees nothing surprising in the ill

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, 23/4/42. [2] Ibid. 3/4/46. [3] Ibid. 17/4/64. [4] Ibid. 19/4/64.

success of the gesture;[1] but surely they might have written? They were such letter-writers! As we have seen, it was Lady Huntingdon who took the initiative. What she and Wesley really thought of one another it is not easy to guess. He usually writes of her with a hint of disapproval over her preoccupation with the *beau monde*. But we get a different picture in a letter which was found among her papers, endorsed in her own hand 'Received by me at Brighthelmstone, March 21, 1763, S.H.' These are some of its phrases:

> For a considerable time I have had it upon my mind to write a few lines to your Ladyship, although I cannot learn that your Ladyship ever enquired whether I was living or dead. By the mercy of God I am still alive, and following the work to which he has called me, although without any help, even in the most trying times, from those I might have expected it from. Their voice seemed to be rather, *Down with him, down with him, even to the ground.* I mean (for I use no ceremony or circumlocution) Mr Madan, Mr Haweis, Mr Berridge, and, I am sorry to say it, Mr Whitefield. Only Mr Romaine has shewn a truly sympathizing spirit, and acted the part of a brother. . . . The Lord repay it sevenfold into his bosom. . . . However, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved. The will of the Lord be done.[2]

It will be noticed that Whitefield's name occurs among the list of unfriendly Edomites; it is no good pretending that the *modus vivendi* between the two men ever really worked. If I may once more commit the extravagance of comparing Wesley to Bossuet, I would suggest that there is a curious analogy between the relations of the former with Whitefield, and the relations of the latter with Fénelon. Just as Bossuet at the back of his mind thought of Fénelon as the man he had made, now setting up on his own under the aegis of Madame de Maintenon, so, at the back of his mind, Wesley seems to think of Whitefield as a child of his own, fatally put out to nurse with Lady Huntingdon. We have seen Fénelon throwing himself at Bossuet's feet and protesting that he will never entertain any sentiment which his master does not approve, that he is like a little child in the hands of Mgr. de Meaux,[3] and then going off to write the *Maximes des saints*. Whitefield, too, was an inspired orator, and had something of the orator's unreliability. At one moment he will be sobbing his heart out over a reconciliation with dear honoured Mr. Wesley; the next, he will be producing a pamphlet against him.

Meanwhile, Wesley's letter was not without its effect. It was

[1] Op. cit., p. 156. [2] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 329. [3] See above, p. 340.

written at a time when, as Romaine says in commenting on it, Mr. Wesley's societies were in great confusion. I fancy there was something of pathos in the picture of a proud man (for Wesley was by nature a proud man) thus unbosoming himself to a woman he suspected of caring little for him, that touched a maternal heart. The thing must not be allowed to go on; Mr. Wesley must preach at her chapels, at Mr. Whitefield's tabernacles; his Arminian friend should be the warden of Trevecca. And when Lady Huntingdon made up her mind on a thing it happened.

Unfortunately the experiment was not a success. Wesley did not find it easy to breathe in the Donnington Park atmosphere. And in March 1768 he wrote to Fletcher warning him of the loss of spirituality which must be expected, if you consort freely with people who try to make the best of both worlds. He asks whether men 'gather from that amorous way of praying to Christ, or that luscious way of preaching his righteousness, any real holiness?' He, Wesley, has never found it so. 'You have, for some time, conversed a good deal with the genteel Methodists. Now, it matters not a straw what doctrine they hear, whether they frequent the Lock or West Street, if they are as salt which has lost its savour.' Then, descending abruptly into questions of doctrine: 'Do you not observe that all the lay preachers who are engaged with me are maintainers of general redemption? . . . God is with them, and he works by them. . . . Therefore, the opposing them is neither better nor worse than fighting against God.' The contents of this letter 'soon became known', we are not told how, to Lady Huntingdon, who complains that 'dear Mr Fletcher has been severely reprimanded for endeavouring to maintain peace and unanimity in the household of God'.[1]

Evidently the storm that was brewing was not wholly theological; there was a conflict of temperaments. Wesley found in Lady Huntingdon's attitude traces of an autocratic manner which he altogether failed to detect in himself. He writes to Benson, a protégé of his own who was now in command at Trevecca: 'Trevecca is much more to Lady Huntingdon than Kingswood is to me. *I* mixes with everything. It is *my* College, *my* masters, *my* students. I do not speak so of this school.' (Kingswood, it should be observed, had been founded by Whitefield, and Lady Huntingdon had largely contributed to it.) And again: 'There is no great fear that I should be

[1] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, ii. 233–5.

prejudiced against one whom I have known intimately for these thirty years. And I know what is in man, therefore I make large allowances for human weakness. But what you say is exactly the case; they *are* jealous of their authority . . . I fear and shun, not desire authority of any kind; only when God lays that burden on me I bear it for his and the people's sake.'[1] Wesley may have known Lady Huntingdon; did he really know himself?

But it would be absurd to assign merely personal grounds for his decision to break the peace in 1770—in 1770, as in 1740, it *was* Wesley who broke the peace. He was no doubt genuinely disturbed by the scandal of antinomianism, no doubt genuinely convinced that the Calvinist preaching gave it a handle. 'At Wednesbury, Dudley and Birmingham, Predestinarians have thrown back those who began to run well. . . . Still they were called Methodists, and so all their drunkenness and blasphemies (not imputed to a believer) were imputed to us.'[2] At the 1770 conference a set of minutes was drawn up in which the delegates accused themselves of having hitherto 'leaned too much to Calvinism'; they followed up this curious statement by an *exposé* of the Arminian doctrine which seemed to Lady Huntingdon and her friends sheer Pelagianism. She demanded that Benson should dissociate himself from the minutes, and, on his refusing, dismissed him; not without a rather tepid testimonial to his 'capacity, sobriety and diligence'.[3] She also published a circular in which she invited all those who thought with her to assemble in Bristol the following August, and insist on a formal recantation by the Conference of its 'dreadful heresies'. The Wesleyan Conference of 1771 did in fact repudiate the doctrine of salvation by works, but in self-defence rather than in recantation. Whatever chance remained of composing the quarrel was destroyed by the action Wesley took immediately afterwards; he published a defence of the Minutes, composed by Fletcher, in the form of five letters addressed to the Hon. the Rev. Mr. Shirley, a kinsman of the Countess and also her chaplain. There could be no truce now; the doctrine of the Minutes must be publicly exposed. Lady Huntingdon even found that 'an old monk in France has declared these minutes to be the Pelagian heresy'.[4] Juno was moving Acheron; this appeal to an older theological tradition has the poignancy of Heine's

[1] Ibid., pp. 235, 236.
[2] Wesley's *Journal*, 1/4/51.
[3] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, ii. 106.
[4] Ibid., 242 note.

clinging to the cross. An embittered controversy followed, in which Wesley left Fletcher, for the most part, to conduct the Arminian case, not without dignity and charity. On the other side, the foremost champions were Shirley, Rowland Hill, and Toplady, the author of the hymn 'Rock of Ages'. It is well known that dignity and charity suffered somethat in their hands. Wesley was called 'an old fox tarred and feathered', 'a designing wolf', 'the most perfect and holy and sly that e'er turned a coat, or could pilfer and lie', 'a grey-headed enemy of all righteousness', 'a venal profligate', 'the most rancorous hater of the Gospel system that ever appeared in this land', and much else.[1] The most embittered pages of the Jansenist controversy afford no such proof that good men can lose their tempers.

Nor was it only the evangelist's orthodoxy that was called in question. In 1775, for the third and last time, Wesley's wife ran away from him, taking the opportunity to abstract from his cabinet certain letters written to him by women who looked to him for spiritual guidance. By manipulating, perhaps falsifying these, and filling in the gaps from her own quite unreliable testimony, she constructed against her husband a charge of unfaithfulness. Tyerman, Wesley's biographer, asserts that extracts from these letters were actually sent to the press, but search among the newspaper files of the period has failed to disclose them. It is certain that Mrs. Wesley showed them, no doubt with her own embellishments, to Rowland Hill; it is certain that both he and Toplady attached credence to them. Lady Huntingdon, to her honour, would not accept these rumours; but to Toplady and Hill Wesley became 'an object of abhorrence and detestation'; he was 'corrupt in mind and heart'. The charge was openly made in their pamphlets against him, and never retracted. When Toplady was on his death-bed he heard a story that he had expressed regret for some of the things he had said against Wesley. Whereupon 'he managed to write a document which he called his *Dying Avowal*, in which he protested that he had nothing to retract with regard to the Arminian leader'. He says in the course of it: 'I most sincerely hope my last hours will be much better employed than in conversing with such a man.' And, having been set to this curious instrument, the hand which had written 'Rock of Ages' was stilled in death.[2]

Among the men of Wesley's own generation, however deeply

[1] Overton, op. cit., p. 167. [2] Simon, *L.P.*, pp. 74–7.

divided from him in their theological loyalties, all this storm of controversy made little difference. 'O that all men would sit as loose to theological opinions as I do, that they would think and let think!' he writes, after an hour's friendly conversation with Mr. V(enn) at St. Neots.[1] Howell Harris is disposed to agree that he has no great love for the Trevecca students.[2] Conyers, as late as 1777, was trying to devise a formula for reconciling Arminian and Calvinist.[3] Berridge, who had taken the field on the opposite side, remains the lifelong friend of Fletcher.[4] But the almost peevish references we come across in the *Journal* show how much Wesley had to suffer, in his later years, from the opposition of 'My Lady's preachers'. At Dover they have 'gleaned up most of those we had discarded', and 'have my leave to do all the good they can'.[5] At St. Ives 'My Lady's preachers, who screamed and reviled and threatened to swallow us up, are vanished away'.[6] At Rye their doubtful disputations have strangled the children at the birth.[7] At Lynn Calvinism has torn the infant society in pieces.[8] At Canterbury 'those raw, pert young men, vulgarly though improperly described as students, have not been able to tear away a single member'.[9] At Grimsby 'those striplings, who call themselves Lady Huntingdon's preachers, have greatly hindered the work of God'.[10] Nor did Wesley let them have it all their own way; at Truro he must needs declare the whole counsel of God, though 'I doubt the Antinomians gnashed upon me with their teeth';[11] and at Norwich, sifting to the bottom the matter of the Horrible Decree, he shows his converts how they have been 'abused by those vulgarly called Gospel Preachers'.[12] He was a man honourably indifferent to what others thought of him, so long as he had the approval of his own conscience. But there is something of King Lear's tragedy in these afflictions of his old age.

(v) *The Church of England and Wesley*

It may be the fate of any enthusiastic movement to produce a disconcerting backwash. Those religious people who react against it find themselves in alliance with the world, and from rubbing shoulders with the world often acquire a character of worldliness.

[1] *Journal*, 3/12/76.
[2] Ibid. 14/8/72.
[3] Ibid. 25/2/77.
[4] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 236.
[5] *Journal*, 4/12/71.
[6] Ibid. 28/8/78.
[7] Ibid. 1/12/78.
[8] Ibid. 1/11/73.
[9] Ibid. 7/12/72.
[10] Ibid. 3/7/79.
[11] Ibid. 27/9/76.
[12] Ibid. 14/11/76.

Methodism had, in reality, two distinct enemies. On one side, the world, the gay world of Horace Walpole, reflected as by converging mirrors through all the ranks of society till it reached the ale-houses of the industrial midlands; its reaction, its protest, are in reality the same, whether it is Beau Nash trying to drive Wesley away from Bath with polite sneers, or the mechanics of Wednesbury threatening to knock his brains out. On the other side you have the clergy of his day, many of them, refusing him the use of their pulpits; sometimes, with much less excuse, denying communion to his adherents.[1] Unfortunately, owing to the circumstances of the day, there was not always such a clear line of demarcation as could have been wished between the two forms of opposition. That was the century in which Dr. Trapp wrote his celebrated pamphlet on *The Sin and Folly of being righteous overmuch*. Not seldom, the mobs which attacked Wesley or his lieutenants had been given a plain hint from the pulpit that their cat-calls would be doing God service. And in the case of the Wednesbury riots you even find an insinuation that they took their orders from the episcopal chair.[2]

It is not my purpose either to re-tell the story of those bitter persecutions, which demanded of the early Methodists all the firmness of confessors, or to defend (if there be any defence) the motives of those who countenanced them. The ill-wishers who set the press-gangs on, not once but often, to round up the lay preachers as having no visible means of subsistence, the busybodies who put it about everywhere that Wesley was in league with the Pretender, can expect no gentle verdict from posterity. What I am here concerned to suggest is that when you have said all there is to be said against mob violence and bearing false witness, you have not disposed of the question, What *ought* the Church of England to have done about Wesley?

It is often suggested that if the Anglican prelates of his day had been men of piety and of vision, they would have welcomed the Methodists with open arms; they would have found in them a bulwark against the dangers of their time, repeated the experience of Pope Innocent when he committed Christendom to the experiment of St. Francis. But this is to be wise after the event; was it reasonable to expect, in the first half of the eighteenth century, that a movement which started with the *éclat* of the Wesleyan movement would be

[1] *Journal*, 25/3/68. [2] Ibid. 18/7/43.

kindly viewed by ecclesiastical authority? We must not be misled by the fatuities of Bishop Lavington into supposing that all the prelates of the day were stupid and lukewarm. It was no blockhead, but the great Butler himself who produced the unforgettable remark about pretensions to special inspiration being 'a horrid thing, a very horrid thing'. It was no Laodicean, it was no less a man than Warburton, who insisted on the rector of Stinchcombe having Sunday evening services, not (as he explained) for any good he was likely to do in his own parish, but to avoid the harm he did by 'rambling about in other places'.[1] If men of that calibre fell foul of the Wesleys and of Whitefield, we cannot diagnose mere blindness or mere intransigence.

Previous chapters in this book will have made it clear that the stage was badly set for enthusiasm. The French preachers had made no good name for themselves, and they were still active when Methodism began. The Moravians, quite reasonably connected with Wesley in the public mind, were soon to be the talk of the town through Zinzendorf's eccentricities. Even the doings at St. Médard will have had some repercussions, though curiously faint ones, on this side of the Channel. Then Wesley's preaching begins, and what the world hears (for the world only hears what is of news-value) is that the audience on such occasions is apt to fall down in a fit and lie screaming on the ground; it hears of George Bell, with a positiveness exceeding that of the Camisards themselves, announcing the exact day of the ensuing month on which the world will come to an end, and being treated by many of his fellow Methodists as an oracle. Meanwhile, clergymen of the Established Church are invading each other's parishes, and (with a slight sense of grievance at not having a pulpit offered them) holding conventicles in the open air outside. Berridge's retort, that his own clerical neighbours went and played bowls in one another's parishes, was good fooling, but it did not meet the point.[2] The very *tempo* of the Methodist success, the very eagerness of Lady Huntingdon to turn the *beau monde* into a kind of Port Royal overnight, created alarm.

There was victimization, no doubt; but the great bulk of the people who disapproved of Methodism can be accused of nothing worse than disapproval. As time went on, such is the Englishman's worship of the *fait accompli*, Wesley became accepted as a kind

[1] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 481. [2] Ibid. 369.

of national institution even by those who disagreed with him. You find him, towards the end of his life, giving communion at St. Patrick's, Dublin,[1] preaching at All Hallows, Lombard Street,[2] dining with the Bishop of Exeter;[3] 'the number of churches at which he was welcomed rapidly increased', and by 1783 he had more invitations of this kind than he, than even Wesley, could accept.[4] Occasionally there was bitterness when a new incumbent, acting (after all) within his rights, did not offer the Evangelist the use of some familiar pulpit.[5] But it would be impossible to claim that the Church of England, by a process of gradual ostracism, drove Wesley away from its communion. The cleavage came, not from its side, but from Wesley and (still more) from his followers.

(vi) *Wesley and the Church of England*

'As I told Jack, I am not afraid the church should excommunicate him, discipline is at too low an ebb; but that he should excommunicate the church.' So the eldest of the Wesley brothers wrote in the early days of Methodism;[6] he died almost immediately afterwards, and the subject of the prophecy, who outlived him by half a century, was only destined to give it a posthumous fulfilment. 'I live and die a member of the Church of England', John Wesley wrote in 1790,[7] and it was not until five years later that his followers decided by a majority to separate from the establishment. He was not, perhaps, rigidly logical in his notions of church membership; you find him receiving communion at a Presbyterian service in Edinburgh[8] and baptizing according to the Presbyterian rite at Glasgow,[9] yet preaching from an Episcopalian pulpit at Banff.[10] He had made up his mind he would not separate from the church, only 'vary' from it.[11]

But unquestionably he had, all his life, a deep and growing conviction that his societies would revolt from the Anglican allegiance, and in doing so become 'a dry and formal sect';[12] the shadow of that conviction darkened his declining years. When the Conference of 1786 decided, without a single dissentient voice, to retain its old loyalties, he expressed a hope that the resolution would hold good

[1] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 53. [2] Ibid., p. 97. [3] Ibid., p. 196.
[4] Ibid., pp. 153, 200. [5] *Journal*, 20/6/84. [6] Overton, op. cit., p. 102.
[7] Ibid., p. 212. [8] *Journal*, 16/6/64. [9] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 23.
[10] Id., *L.P.*, p. 85. [11] Ibid., p. 330. [12] Ibid., p. 325.

'at least till I am removed into a better world'.[1] His brother-in-law, Hall, was for secession as early as 1745;[2] the question was up before the Conference in 1755, 1756, 1761, and 1778, and although its members, under Wesley's influence, always returned a decided negative, the constant recurrence of the theme tells its own story. Charles Wesley was much more alarmed by these symptoms than his brother, whose 'twelve reasons against separating from the Church of England' he criticized as based on mere expediency.[3] It has been plausibly conjectured that these scruples, quite as much as his marriage, were responsible for Charles Wesley's abandonment of open-air preaching after 1757.[4] Inevitably the scattered congregations, who found a warmer centre of fellowship in the meeting-house than in the parish church, grew weary of their divided loyalty; everywhere it was necessary to drive them back into their pews, to fulminate against the preaching of sermons during 'church hours'; at Deptford Wesley had to threaten that if such preaching went on the society 'would see his face no more'.[5] Inevitably the lay preachers, who had less of ecclesiastical status than the Nonconformist ministers around them, longed for some new arrangement which would give them the recognition their arduous labours deserved.

Wesley himself was acutely conscious that he needed more clerical supporters. Destiny had so ordered it that nearly all his fellow Evangelists who had an Oxford or Cambridge education fell foul of him over the Decrees. Very rarely could he induce a bishop to ordain one of his own preachers, whatever his qualifications. For a moment it looked as if he were going to fall back on an expedient familiar in the early days of the present century, by smuggling in the grace of ordination from the Levant. A certain Erasmus, reputedly Bishop of 'Arcadia, in Crete', was in England in 1763; his credentials were suspected by Lady Huntingdon and her school,[6] but apparently without justice.[7] To him Wesley presented for ordination a young man named John Jones, who was a master at Kingswood school; the ceremony took place, and he was afterwards allowed to assist at the celebration of communion when Charles Wesley was unable to be present.[8] It seems to have been a desperate expedient, of which Wesley was somewhat ashamed; certain other lay preachers, who

[1] *Journal*, 25/7/86. [2] Urlin, op. cit., p. 69. [3] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 42.
[4] Ibid., p. 12. [5] *Journal*, 24/10/86. [6] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 331.
[7] Overton, op. cit., p. 198; Simon, *M.B.*, p. 130. [8] Ibid., p. 150.

had obtained ordination from Erasmus without permission, were never allowed to exercise clerical functions at all.[1] (It is perhaps worth observing that John Jones was afterwards ordained as an Anglican, and died Vicar of Harwich.) Toplady asserted publicly that Wesley himself had asked Erasmus for episcopal consecration;[2] it is curious to reflect that if this had happened, the Episcopal Methodists in the United States would be in a good position to claim recognition for their orders. The whole incident is of minor importance, except as illustrating Wesley's attitude, in 1763, to a problem for which he found a very different solution afterwards.

The cold truth is, though there is no reason to suspect Wesley of having seen the matter in that light, that insistence on loyalty to the Church of England suited his own book. As long as he, Charles, and Fletcher, with a handful of others, were the only ordained clergymen connected with the societies, there was not much danger of the rank and file getting the upper hand; the bands and gown were enough to overawe them. But there were intermittent signs of restiveness among the preachers. In early days at Fetter Lane, Shaw and others held the speculative view that any Christian might celebrate the sacraments.[3] In 1760 some of the lay preachers at Norwich were putting the same doctrine into practice and Charles Wesley believed that they were heading straight for schism.[4] The awkward thing was that John Wesley himself had doubts about the apostolic succession; he had read, in the fifties, the views of King and Stillingfleet, and adopted them into his curiously impressionable mind, as his way was when an argument caught his fancy.[5] But whether episcopacy were of Divine institution or no, on one point he was and remained clear. Nobody had a *right* to celebrate the sacraments, Erasmus or no Erasmus, as long as he had received no authorization to do so, either from the Church of England or—from Wesley himself. It was in 1789, when he had already burnt his boats so far as the High Church theory of orders was concerned, that he preached his famous sermon on Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, entreating his followers to 'contain themselves within their own bounds'.[6] The choice of text is characteristic; the revolt in the wilderness was

[1] Southey, op. cit., p. 294.
[2] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 331.
[3] Ibid. 35.
[4] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 73.
[5] Overton, op. cit., p. 198.
[6] Ibid., p. 81.

directed not only against Aaron, but against Moses, and you feel that Wesley, though only half conscious of the fact, is pleading for loyalty to himself under cover of pleading for loyalty to the Church of England.

But worse problems were in store on the other side of the Atlantic. At the Pennsylvania Conference of 1773 it was decided that preachers must not administer the sacraments,[1] but this did not prevent the pioneer missioner Robert Strawbridge from taking clerical functions upon himself at times of emergency.[2] When the War of Independence broke out in 1775, the position of the Anglican clergy was hopelessly compromised, and by the end of it only twenty-eight of them were left out of ninety-one.[3] Wesley appealed to the Bishop of London to ordain a Methodist preacher for the neglected continent, but he refused.[4] Meanwhile, the Fluvenna Conference had proposed a heroic remedy; four of its members, elected for the purpose, ordained one another and then prepared to give ordination to such as were desirous of receiving it.[5] But the naïve expedient of mutual ordination, which recalls the outlook of John Smith the Sebaptist,[6] was not extensively used. Wesley, harassed by discouraging reports from abroad, and perhaps by rash counsellors at home, made up his mind to cut the Gordian knot. 'Being now clear in my own mind, I took a step which I had long weighed in my mind, and appointed Mr Whatcoat and Mr Vesey to go and serve the desolate sheep of America. I added to them three more; which, I verily believe, will be much to the glory of God.'[7]

This curious entry in the *Journal* is more remarkable for what it omits than for what it discloses. It conceals the fact that one of the people concerned was Dr. Coke, who was already in orders. If Wesley was honestly convinced that the episcopacy was only of human foundation, and that Presbyterian ordinations were the rule in the primitive Church, he might reasonably impose his hands on a set of laymen and 'set them apart' for the American ministry. But what was he doing laying hands on Dr. Coke? Dr. Coke had already received whatever powers a priest of the Church of England possesses; how could Wesley, a priest of the Church of England like

[1] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 24. [2] Ibid., p. 28. [3] Ibid., p. 221.
[4] Ibid., p. 228. [5] Ibid., p. 227. [6] See p. 169.
[7] Wesley's *Journal*, 1/9/84.

himself, add anything more to them?[1] 'The omission', as Mr. Lunn says,[2] 'was doubtless due to a feeling of uneasiness.' He was clear in his own mind, but was he clear in his own conscience? Charles Wesley was actually in Bristol at the time when his brother was creating an American hierarchy there, but he was not asked to be present; he was not even told of what was going forward.[3] It may easily be imagined what his feelings were when he heard the news: 'I believe', he wrote to John, 'God left you to yourself . . . to shew the secret pride that was in your heart.'[4] To be left to oneself, to act on mere human impulse, because you were denied the supernatural illumination which is always accorded, if he asks for it, to the man of prayer—what more terrible accusation could an enthusiast have to face before the tribunal of conscience?

But the official documents with which Dr. Coke was fortified for his mission show no trace of uneasiness; we drown our secret misgivings, often enough, by blustering on paper. John Wesley, late fellow of Lincoln, sends greeting to all to whom these presents shall come, and describes the state of affairs in America with a legal flourish of 'Whereas'. He thinks himself 'to be providentially called at this moment to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America'. And therefore he has 'set apart as a superintendent, by the imposition of hands and prayer (being assisted by other ordained ministers), Thomas Coke, D.C.L.' and so on.[5] The word 'bishop' was not used, but there is no suggestion that Coke was exceeding the powers Wesley meant to invest him with, when he ordained Francis Asbury as a Presbyter and afterwards as an Associate Superintendent. It must have been the more surprising when Asbury got a letter from Wesley asking, 'How can you, how dare you, suffer yourself to be called a bishop?'[6] He might have been pardoned for pointing out, that on the Presbyterian theory of ordinations, which Wesley now seemed to have embraced, a presbyter and an *episcopus* are one and the same thing. If Asbury had been set apart by a body of presbyters with the intention that he should preside at other ordinations in his turn, he was (from the Presbyterian point of view) as good an *episcopus* as ever Timothy was, or Titus. How was it that Wesley, having discarded the sub-

[1] Overton, op. cit., p. 201. [2] Op. cit., p. 341. [3] Urlin, op. cit., p. 185.
[4] Ibid., p. 186. [5] Given in, for example, Simon, *L.P.*, p. 232.
[6] Overton, op. cit., p. 202.

stance of the apostolic succession, remained so jealous for the honour of its shadow?

The explanation, I think, is given by his subsequent behaviour when he 'set apart', in August 1785, three local preachers for the ministry in Scotland. They found, to their chagrin, that they were expected to discard their clerical attire whenever they came south of the border, and to drop the title of 'the Reverend'.[1] Wesley, who had a horror of lay baptism, was disgusted when one of these ministers baptized in Nottinghamshire.[2] In short, he had evolved a system of Gretna Green ordinations, which, unlike Gretna Green marriages, were not meant to have any effect south of the Tweed. The plain fact is that though he prided himself on having a severely logical mind, Wesley's logic deserted him in this matter of ordinations. In England his imagination was dominated by the spectacle of indubitable bishops, men in wigs and coaches who claimed possession of the pre-Reformation sees. In America there were none, in Scotland the Established Church knew nothing of them; in America, then, or in Scotland a man who had hands laid on him by Wesley would do. But in England, though he referred to the bishops as 'mitred infidels',[3] and paid no attention when they asked him to desist from preaching, they held the field. 'Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction';[4] he was too much of an Englishman, perhaps too much of an Oxford man, to dismiss that formidable spectre from his mind. At the time of his death, indeed, two ministers recently 'set apart' by him were actually ministering in London.[5] Urlin thinks that this was only a temporary arrangement; they were meant for work outside.[6] But if they were really 'set apart' for work in England, it only means that at the eleventh hour Wesley yielded to the logic of his own proceedings. He had not done so by 1786, in which year he explained to the Conference: 'This is not a separation from the Church at all. Not from the Church of Scotland, for we were never connected therewith . . . not from the Church of England, for this is not concerned in the steps which are taken in Scotland. Whatever then is done either in America or Scotland is no separation from the Church of England.'[7]

[1] Urlin, op. cit., p. 187. [2] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 327.
[3] Overton, op. cit., p. 203.
[4] Commission to Coke, given in, for example, Simon, *L.P.*, p. 233.
[5] Ibid., p. 327. [6] Op. cit., p. 184. [7] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 264.

He went on to admit, in public, the possibility that there *would* be a separation after he was dead. But he had reached that point of old age at which a man does not care greatly about such a prospect. 'It would last his time', this tenuous link which still united him to the church of his baptism, when the Calvinists had disowned him, and he had shaken the dust of Herrnhut from his feet.

XXI

WESLEY AND THE RELIGION OF EXPERIENCE

(i) *Wesley as Preacher*

'WESLEY is a lean, elderly man, fresh-coloured, his hair smoothly combed, but with a *soupçon* of curl at the ends. Wondrous clean, but as evidently an actor as Garrick. He spoke his sermon, but so fast, and with so little accent, that I am sure he has often uttered it, for it was like a lesson. There were parts and eloquence on it; but towards the end he exalted his voice, and acted very ugly enthusiasm.'

'As soon as he got upon his stand, he stroked back his hair, and turned his face towards me where I stood, and I thought fixed his eyes upon me. His countenance struck such an awful dread upon me, before I heard him speak, that it made my heart beat like the pendulum of a clock; and when he did speak, I thought his whole discourse was aimed at me.'

Those are two estimates of Wesley as a preacher; one from a famous contemporary of his, Horace Walpole; the other from a famous disciple of his, John Nelson.[1] At first sight you would think they could not refer to the same man; or if they did, one was a picture of him when he was off colour, the other a picture of him 'on his day'. But it is probably a truer account of the matter to say that the difference lay in the minds, or perhaps deeper than the minds, of the two auditors. What you made of Wesley's preaching depended on whether you were, or were not, a conductor to the particular magnetism which he exercised. Walpole writes, 'Except a few from curiosity, and some honourable women, the congregation was very mean'; apart from having no Lady Huntingdon to produce him, Wesley was not, like Whitefield, an orator who could draw crowds by his mere oratory. You must go out into the wilderness to find a prophet, and more than a prophet; ready to be

[1] Walpole, letter to John Chute, 10 Oct. 1766; Nelson's *Memoirs*, quoted in *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 251.

impressed, like John Nelson, before the sermon began; or you would hear nothing at all.

We shall not go far, I think, in penetrating the secret of Wesley's appeal by consulting that volume of printed sermons which he made a Rule of Faith for his societies.[1] One of the great points about the Methodist preaching was that it was extempore,[2] in days when the majority of clergymen read out their sermons—and not always *their* sermons—Sunday after Sunday. Wesley preaching extempore, and constantly shifting the field of his operations, was quite unabashed about his use of 'Old Soldiers'. His texts, to which he frequently refers, are a surprisingly narrow collection, considering how well he knew his Bible. He had been told of preachers who burned their old sermons every seven years, but for himself he avowed: 'I cannot write a better sermon on the Good Steward than I did seven years ago; I cannot write a better on the Great Assize than I did twenty years ago; I cannot write a better on the Use of Money than I did near thirty years ago; nay, I know not that I can write a better on the Circumcision of the Heart, than I did five-and-forty years ago.'[3] But evidently it was his rule to 'write' sermons independently of, and commonly after, their delivery; he 'writes', for example, a sermon on the Wedding Guests five months after he has preached it.[4] And when a man like that sits down to write out the message he has delivered, always in different forms, these many years past, he is not likely to give it, in print, the exact form which it ever took in the pulpit, or (heaven knows) at the street-corner. He is lucky if it does not take on the mournful appearance of dried seaweed.

Wesley's printed sermons are not dried seaweed. 'John Smith' (according to some to be identified with Secker, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury) told him in one of his private letters, 'You have a natural knack of persuasion',[5] and we must all take our hats off to the innocence which could attribute the success of the Movement to that circumstance. Persuasive is what these printed sermons are—sometimes unscrupulously so. They will prove to you that the New Birth must be something different from Baptism, because the Anglican Catechism distinguishes the one as an inward grace and

[1] Title-page of *Sermons on Several Occasions* (first printed 1771).
[2] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 12.
[3] *Journal*, 1/9/78.
[4] Ibid. 25/10/89, 26/3/90.
[5] Simon, *M.S.*, p. 279.

the other as an outward sign.[1] Only their vocabulary is simple; their appeal is to the head, not primarily to the heart. I doubt if Wesley ever left his logic behind him when he got up to preach. The Methodists claimed that their preaching, like St. Paul's, seemed foolishness to the unregenerate world; a claim which drew from one of their critics the indignant rejoinder that 'in him [St. Paul] was happily united whatever could distinguish or adorn the scholar, the gentleman, the Christian'.[2] But in truth their message was simple only in so far as they left nine-tenths of Christian doctrine out of consideration, and concentrated on the remaining tenth—Soteriology. On that favourite topic they could split hairs like any Jansenist. Wesley, at least, was a born controversialist; he always had his eye on the imaginary objector, and always stopped to argue with him. How was it that with so much of head-work in his preaching he managed to put in so much heart-work (as he loved to call it) besides?

No doubt he was unimpassioned as compared with Whitefield. Mr. Lunn draws our attention to an odd contrast between the two men; Whitefield 'was the captive of the forces which he set in motion. Wesley, on the other hand, remained calm and even critical, when the thousands around him were in the throes of revival fever.'[3] That is a valuable observation; but we must not stress it too far. The extraordinary thing about Wesley was not that he never got carried away. The extraordinary thing was that he was constantly getting carried away, but had the knack, at such times, of standing outside himself, in a calm and critical spirit, *watching himself doing it*. It would be impossible for a preacher who never got carried away to write 'I began about seven, but could not conclude till half an hour past nine'.[4] He himself claimed that he only exceeded his time 'when his heart was enlarged'.[5] You can trace, I think, two separate influences which altered, now and again, the course of a sermon Wesley was preaching. Sometimes he was put on his mettle by the unresponsiveness of his congregation, and hit out deliberately. Sometimes, without any effort on his part, he was visited by a kind of inspiration which he could not, or did not, resist.

[1] *Sermons on Several Occasions* (ed. 1881), p. 644.
[2] Correspondence in the *Universal Magazine*, Jan. and Feb. 1761.
[3] Op. cit., p. 114. [4] *Journal*, 2/6/42. [5] Ibid. 23/7/70.

'I was a great deal moved at the self-sufficiency which was visible in the countenances, air and whole deportment of a considerable part of them' (an audience at Wigton in Cumberland). 'This constrained me to a very uncommon plainness of speech.'[1] 'I made a pointed application to the hearts of all that were present.'[2] 'Nor did I ever speak so searchingly.'[3] Entries of this kind are common enough; a preacher who has his hand on the pulse of his congregation, as Wesley had, will sometimes be driven into a kind of deliberate fervour, by way of protest; quite probably it was the presence of Horace Walpole which led to that final outburst of 'very ugly enthusiasm' which so jarred on him. But there were other, less calculated, effects. At Sheffield: 'I was constrained to break off in the midst, our hearts were so filled with a sense of the love of God.'[4] At Norwich: 'I preached with great liberty of spirit on, *What is a man profited?*'[5] At Castlebar: 'Observing many fashionable people in the courthouse . . . I spoke with such closeness and pungency, as I cannot do but at some particular seasons; it is indeed the gift of God, and cannot be attained by all the efforts of nature and art united.'[6] At Manchester: 'I found much enlargement in applying . . . the lovely account given by St James of pure religion and undefiled.'[7] At Raithby: 'My design was to have preached seriously . . . but I was turned, I know not how, and could preach scarce anything but consolation.'[8] On these and many other occasions you feel that Wesley was in the position of the old prophet, 'being in a trance, but having his eyes open'. Wesley the enthusiast, rapt in the communal ecstasy of some consoling love-feast, is being watched all the time by Wesley the experimentalist in religion, who is taking notes, unobtrusively, for his *Journal*.

It goes without saying that he was instinctively conscious of the effect he was producing; knew, in the modern phrase, whether he was 'going down'. He deals faithfully with the people of Alnwick, and believes that the most general call of God to them was at this hour; at Berwick the word of God is as a fire and a hammer, 'here was a loud call to the people of Berwick'.[9] Once across the border his success was more doubtful: 'I use the most cutting words, and apply them in the most pointed manner; still they hear, but *feel* no

[1] *Journal*, 27/4/61. [2] Ibid. 13/6/79. [3] Ibid. 30/12/42. [4] Ibid. 17/6/42.
[5] Ibid. 18/2/65. [6] Ibid. 31/5/71. [7] Ibid. 20/5/81. [8] Ibid. 4/7/88.
[9] Ibid. 21 and 22/7/48.

more than the seats they sit upon';[1] this was at Edinburgh, and again: 'I cannot find my way to the hearts of the people at Perth.'[2] More curiously he makes the same complaint at Armagh,[3] and finds many people 'sermon-proof' at Aghrim.[4] There are rapid alternations; his first impression of Cornwall was of a 'huge approbation, and absolute unconcern' in his audience; a few days later, at St. Ives, 'the dread of God fell upon us while I was speaking, so that I could hardly utter a word; but most of all in prayer, wherein I was so carried out, as scarce ever before in my life'.[5] What results he looked for may be judged from the following (typical) phrase: 'I observed none wounded, nor anything more than a calm, dull attention.'[6] No doubt he was more effective on some subjects than on others; at Waterford, for example: 'I soon got above their heads; I should have talked of death or judgement.'[7] But it was not only the subject which made a difference. 'Finding the bulk of my hearers quite senseless, I spoke as strongly as I could on *Where their worm dieth not.* . . . But I did not perceive they were at all effective. God only can raise the dead.'[8]

(ii) *Wesley and the Preternatural*

Such was the normal atmosphere of Wesley's preaching; we have still to consider the abnormal atmosphere which, notoriously, it often created. In order to understand Wesley's attitude towards the paroxysms induced in some of his audiences, it is important to be clear about his attitude towards the preternatural as a whole. 'Fanciful speculations', Mr. Lunn tells us, 'unsupported by evidence, never appealed to Wesley.'[9] That is true; but when you have said that, you have not established his character as a competent observer. The question remains, whether the evidence on which he was prepared to believe things was good evidence? Whether he really devoted enough time and trouble to sifting it? Or whether he allowed himself to be swayed, capriciously, by the first man who caught his ear; more especially when the evidence supported views which he, Wesley, wanted to be true? And I think it is fair to say that Wesley, in his prodigiously busy life of action, simply did not give himself time to be a useful critic as well. He rushed to con-

[1] Ibid. 25/4/84. [2] Ibid. 21/5/74. [3] Ibid. 11/6/75.
[4] Ibid. 20/6/69. [5] Ibid. 3 and 12/9/43. [6] Ibid. 13/5/69.
[7] Ibid. 1/7/65. [8] Ibid. 26/4/69. [9] Op. cit., p. 300.

clusions. He gives us a 'striking proof that God can teach by whom he will teach. . . . A man full of words, but not of understanding, convinced me of what I could never see before, that *anima est ex traduce*; that all the souls of his posterity as well as their bodies were in our first parent'.[1] On a point so momentous and so abstruse he is prepared to believe one doctrine for two-thirds of his life, and to believe the exact contrary for the remaining third of his life *on the strength of a single interview*.

He shocks us alternately by his credulities and by his incredulities. He regarded Livy as fiction,[2] St. Patrick as a mythical character,[3] put Captain Cook on a par with Robinson Crusoe,[4] and doubted 'whether any man on earth knows either the distance or the magnitude, I will not say of a fixed star, but of Saturn or Jupiter, yea, of the sun or moon'.[5] On the other hand, we have already seen him taken in by Fingal's *Ossian*, and concluding that the iron bridge over the Severn, which, he says, 'will not soon be imitated', must weigh as much as the Colossus of Rhodes.[6] He is always for revising popular judgements; he will win our sympathies by calling Mary Queen of Scots an injured woman[7]—Queen Elizabeth, he held, was 'as just and merciful as Nero, and as good a Christian as Mahomet'[8]—then make us pucker our foreheads by maintaining the innocence of Richard III,[9] and finally spoil it all by asking, when George II dies, 'When will England have a better prince?'[10] He is too free with his random criticisms to inspire us with confidence.

Such a man will not be a patient investigator of strange phenomena. Wesley was investigating strange phenomena, at intervals, all his life, but always in a hurry. It is notorious that he started life in a haunted vicarage; a poltergeist, known to the family as 'Old Jeffery', produced those knockings and clatterings which seem so well attested, so difficult (on whatever hypothesis) to account for. In old age Wesley affected to doubt the whole affair, asking Charles whether Old Jeffery was not perhaps 'a Cock Lane story'.[11] But at the time there is no question that he, like the rest of the family, believed in it; and Overton (who was himself vicar of Epworth, but does not tell us whether the hauntings persisted in the nineteenth

[1] *Journal*, 27/1/62.
[2] Lunn, op. cit., p. 300.
[3] *Journal*, 25/4/48.
[4] Ibid. 17/12/73.
[5] Ibid. 1/1/65.
[6] pp. 447, 460, above.
[7] *Journal*, 24/5/80.
[8] Ibid. 29/4/68.
[9] Ibid. 17/6/69.
[10] Ibid. 25/11/60.
[11] Piette, op. cit., p. 236.

century) believes that it had a strong influence on his cast of mind.[1] Certainly he makes frequent allusion in the *Journal* to such happenings, although there is often no moral to be made out of them.[2] What is even more strongly marked is his belief in diabolical possession, and certain phenomena akin to it. Out of these, there *was* a moral to be made; they were a stick to beat the Sadducees with.

There was nothing of a superstitious temper about Wesley; he was not the kind of person who claims to be psychic. But he lived, like Carré de Montgéron, in the age of the Deists, and he had a passion, like Carré de Montgéron, for proving that the Deists were wrong. The order of nature as we know it was not a closed circle; there was a mysterious world interpenetrating it, which sometimes invaded it; if you failed to believe that, you must be a person incapable of being convinced by evidence. Again and again he records some special providence in the most trivial circumstances of his own life—sunshine or cloud occurring just when he wanted them—and alludes with pitying contempt to the 'poor reasoners' who would attribute such things to coincidence. When a story reaches him, on decently credible authority, of happenings which cannot be explained at all by natural causes, he is openly triumphant. 'I was with a gentlewoman whose distemper has puzzled the most eminent physicians for many years; it being such as they could neither give any rational account of, nor find any remedy for. The plain case is, she is tormented by an evil spirit, following her day and night. Yea, try all your drugs over and over; but at length it will plainly appear that this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.'[3] Elsewhere, he has the opportunity of 'enquiring thoroughly' into the case of a girl at Halifax, who went through convulsions not unlike those of the Jansenists, though not in any religious context. A doctor says it is 'what formerly they would have called being bewitched'. On which Wesley comments, 'And why should they not call it so now? Because the infidels have hooted witchcraft out of the world, and the complaisant Christians, in large numbers, have joined with them in the cry'; he names Mr. Smollett and Dr. Guthrie as notable offenders.[4] It was not a belief he grew out of; he was seventy-three when he wrote: 'I cannot give up to all the Deists in Great Britain the existence of witchcraft, till I give up the credit of all history,

[1] Op. cit., p. 180. [2] *Journal*, 3/6/56, 25/5/68, 31/10/72, 1/2/83, 26/10/86.
[3] Ibid. 10/7/42. [4] Ibid. 1/6/70.

sacred and profane. And at the present time I have not only as strong but stronger proofs of this, from eye and ear witnesses, than I have of murder; so that I cannot rationally doubt of one any more than the other.'[1]

Nor is it only witchcraft that convinces him the Deists are wrong. He has personally interrogated Jonas Rushford, a boy of fourteen who exactly described the circumstances of a baffling murder by gazing at the crystal; 'is it improbable only, or flatly impossible, that this should be all pure fiction?'[2] A Methodist, in the presence of eight persons, has preached under eight heads, dealt with an interrupter, preached under five more heads, and shaken hands with those present, *all in his sleep*; 'by what principle of philosophy can we account for this?'[3] A woman has had seventeen pins taken out of her, by doctors who believe her to have swallowed them, 'though nobody can tell when or how. Which is the greater credulity? To believe this is purely natural? Or to ascribe it to preternatural agency?'[4] Even when he goes to see the electrical exhibition, he has his eye on the Deists: 'How must these also confound those poor half-thinkers, who will believe nothing but what they can comprehend!'[5]

Such was the man who, in the fourteenth year of his Anglican ministry, found that members of his audience, not once or twice but commonly, interrupted his sermon by falling into paroxysms.

(iii) *The Paroxysms*

In the September of 1654 two Quakers, Audland and Camm, went to preach at Bristol. And we are told that Audland 'opened the way of life in the mighty power of God with such effect, that they [the congregation] were seized in the soul and pricked at the heart; and some fell on the ground and foamed at the mouth, while others cried out, while the sense of their states of sin was opened to them'.[6] Some eighty years afterwards, on 17 April 1739, John Wesley was in the same town, not preaching but conducting a sort of Bible class. He expounded the fourth chapter of the Acts, and then

> We called upon God to confirm his word. Immediately one that stood by (to our no small surprise) cried out aloud, with the utmost vehemence, even as in the agonies of death. But we continued in prayer, till a new song

[1] *Journal*, 23/5/76. [2] Ibid. 24/7/61. [3] Ibid. 2/6/52. [4] Ibid. 8/7/86.
[5] Ibid. 16/10/47. [6] Robert Barclay, *Inner Life*, &c., p. 310.

was put in her mouth. . . . Soon after, two other persons . . . were seized with strong pain, and constrained to roar for the disquietness of their heart. But it was not long before they likewise burst forth into praise to God their Saviour. The last who called upon God as out of the belly of hell was I.E., a stranger in Bristol. And in a short space he also was overwhelmed with joy and love.[1]

What had happened? Was there something in the air or the soil of Bristol which produced these transports? Did memories of the Quaker visit linger in the memory? Or had the convulsions of the French preachers, who had recently 'run a pitch' in the same district, predisposed men's minds to such a method of welcoming the gospel? All such questions are beside the mark, and for a simple reason. The Methodist paroxysms, although they are usually referred to as if they started on the occasion named, began in fact not at Bristol, but in London. Three months before 'we were surprised in the evening, when I was expounding in the Minories. A well-dressed, middle-aged woman suddenly cried out as in the agonies of death.'[2] Admittedly the woman had been told by her minister that she was stark staring mad; perhaps Wesley had slight doubts about her, though he expresses none. But he cannot have been altogether taken by surprise when the same thing happened at Bristol in April.

It was Bristol, however, that first witnessed in large numbers those instances of 'Shriekings, Roarings, Groanings, Gnashings, Yellings, Cursings, Blasphemies and Despairings' which so shocked Bishop Lavington.[3] Little more than a week later, during a sermon at Newgate (Bristol), 'one, and another, and another sunk to the earth; they dropped on every side as thunderstruck'. The same thing happened in the evening; 'almost before we called upon him [Christ] to set to his seal, he answered'; it will be noticed that by now a deliberate prayer-technique is used for the evocation of the symptoms.[4] It would be easy for the historian to cumber his pages with endless quotations; a précis of the manifestations must suffice. There is a cry, or a roar; usually (not always) the afflicted person drops to the ground; you can see that he or she is something in the position of the demoniac healed after the Transfiguration; Satan is letting his prey go, with the utmost reluctance. The bystanders fall to prayer; if there is no immediate deliverance the interrupter is carried out, and prayer goes on, often till late at night. We do not hear,

[1] *Journal*, 17/4/39. [2] Ibid. 21/1/39. [3] Op. cit. iii. 152. [4] *Journal*, 26/4/39.

commonly at least, of people foaming at the mouth; but in these as in other cases of religious convulsions we are often told that it took so many strong men to hold the energumen down. (Six or seven in the case of Thomas Maxfield.)[1] Sometimes the interior struggles of these people who could not yet 'find Christ' were prolonged for several days, though in such cases the outward manifestations were only intermittent. Whether the re-converting of backsliders was accompanied by exactly the same symptoms as accompanied the 'new birth' of the unawakened is nowhere made sufficiently clear.

'The power of the Lord was present, both to wound and to heal';[2] I think that Wesley, whenever he uses the word 'wound' in such contexts, means an outward manifestation of spiritual crisis, more or less sensational. But he attached great importance, also, to the inward experiences of the people concerned, and shows obvious disappointment when they can 'give no clear, rational account' of these.[3] They seem to have tallied with the outward behaviour of those who underwent them; a sense of despair, sometimes vividly representing itself as slavery to the devil, was followed by a conviction that Christ's blood had now conquered, and they were free. 'She saw her Saviour, as it were, crucified before her eyes';[4] what virtue is there in the 'as it were'? Wesley does not tell us, but it seems clear that some of the new converts claimed to have been favoured with visions. Others were less precise; 'her case was peculiar. She felt no fear of hell, but an inexpressible sense of the sufferings of Christ, accompanied with sharp bodily pain.'[5] These pangs of the new birth did not occur only during sermons; they might be caused by a dispute about Justification in a private house,[6] or even by reading a sermon to yourself.[7] Convulsive motions of the body, like those at St. Médard, are mentioned sometimes, but not often.[8] It was not long before Newcastle followed the lead of Bristol. 'There seemed in the evening to be a deeper work in many souls than I had observed before. Many trembled exceedingly; six or seven (both men and women) dropped down as dead. . . . In the evening, God was pleased to wound many more who were quiet and at ease. . . . Several of these were now constrained to roar aloud. . . . I never

[1] *Journal*, 27/10/39. [2] Ibid. 1/3/42. [3] Ibid. 25/9/48.
[4] Ibid. 18/9/39. Cf. entry under 20/5/39. [5] Ibid. 7/5/50.
[6] Ibid. 8/3/39. [7] Ibid. 2/5/39. [8] Ibid. 15/6/39, 28/10/39.

saw a work of God, in any other place, so evenly and gradually carried on.'[1] (Wesley, no doubt, is not thinking *merely* of the paroxysms when he talks about 'the work', like Carré de Montgéron and his friends, who called the convulsions *l'œuvre*.)

If it was the work of God, how did the devil come into it? Clearly he was allowed—we may suppose, for evidential purposes—to give outward proof of his vain efforts to keep souls under his dominion; that was all. It may be observed that the afflicted persons sometimes spoke in the character of the devil, in the proper tradition of exorcism. Thus, a woman at Bristol cries out: 'No power, no power; no faith, no faith. She is mine; her soul is mine.'[2] Sometimes the very technique of the exorcist was imitated. When a Bristol woman lay on the ground, roaring and gnashing with her teeth, 'one who from many circumstances apprehended a preternatural agent to be concerned in this, asking *How didst thou dare to enter into a Christian?* was answered, *She is not a Christian; she is mine.* Q. *Dost thou not tremble at the name of Jesus?* No words followed, but she shrunk back and trembled exceedingly. Q. *Art thou not increasing thy own damnation?* It was faintly answered, *Ay, ay*', and so on.[3] Another Bristol woman, while 'the thousand distortions of her body shewed how the dogs of hell were gnawing her heart', cried out 'I am the devil's now . . . I will be his . . . I must, I will, I will be damned'.[4] In this and in other cases mentioned, Wesley confines himself to prayer, and hymn-singing is the only incantation.[5] On one occasion he writes 'I felt as if I had been plunged into cold water'; this was with a woman who 'reared up in bed, her whole body moving at once, without bending one joint or limb'.[6] He does not often claim success in dealing with such extreme cases—indeed, anybody but Wesley was content to write them down as lunatics. But it must be admitted that Lavington is nearer the target than usual when he compares the scenes in question to the exorcisms performed by Ignatius and other Popish enthusiasts.[7]

All through those early years of the forties, even when there is no suggestion of diabolic interference, you feel the atmosphere to be one of Pentecostal visitation. 'About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily

[1] Ibid. 23 and 25/11/42.
[2] Ibid. 27/10/39.
[3] Ibid. 25/10/39.
[4] Ibid. 23/10/39.
[5] Ibid. 12/10/39, 20/5/49, 7/9/55, 1/7/59.
[6] Ibid. 13/1/43.
[7] Op. cit. iii. 45, 78, 147.

upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground.'[1] 'Forty or fifty of those who were seeking salvation desired to spend the night together, at the Society room. . . . Between two and three in the morning I was waked, and desired to come downstairs. I immediately heard such a confused noise, as if a number of men were all putting to the sword.'[2] 'The words God enabled me to speak there, and afterwards at Bristol, . . . were as a hammer and a flame. . . . A cry was heard from one end of the congregation to the other, not of grief, but of overflowing joy and love.'[3] 'Our Lord was gloriously present with us at the watch-night, so that my voice was lost in the cries of the people.'[4] 'Great indeed was the shaking among them; lamentation and great mourning were heard.'[5] 'Men, women and children wept and groaned and trembled exceedingly; many . . . cried with a loud and bitter cry.'[6] 'One of the old colliers began shouting amain . . . for mere satisfaction and joy of heart.'[7] 'God darted into one and all, I believe hardly one excepted, the melting flame of love, so that their heads were as water.'[8] 'Almost every person who was present at the meeting of the Society seemed to be broken in pieces.'[9]

What were the critics to make of it all? Southey offers a heroic solution: 'Like Mesmer and his disciples [Wesley] had produced a new disease, and he accounted for it by a theological theory instead of a physical one.'[10] More commonly, the Wesleyan manifestations were dismissed as coming under one or other of two heads—lunacy or hysteria. Thus Lavington contemptuously refers to people who 'were scarce in their senses when they went among them, and have quite lost their senses since'.[11] It was alleged that Whitefield's first sermon had driven fifteen people mad.[12] But, so far as lunacy was concerned, Wesley was content to answer the objectors in their own kind. They claimed that all diabolical possession was lunacy; he claimed (for practical purposes) that all lunacy was diabolical possession. Once he seems to have hesitated; it was when he was considering (in Cornwall) 'the darkness which was fallen on many who lately rejoiced in God. . . . One or two persons . . . seemed to be indeed lunatic, as well as sore vexed. But while I was musing,

[1] *Journal*, 1/1/39. [2] Ibid. 11/8/40. [3] Ibid. 25/9/41.
[4] Ibid. 12/3/42. [5] Ibid. 11/6/42. [6] Ibid. 17/11/43.
[7] Ibid. 17/3/43. [8] Ibid. 5/4/44. [9] Ibid. 3/7/49.
[10] Op. cit., p. 154. [11] Op. cit. ii. 3. [12] Belden, op. cit., p. 28.

what would be the issue of these things, the answer I received from the word of God was, *Glory to God in the highest*', &c.[1] There was no arguing with him; when he is told a few days later, that some of the people concerned have gone quite distracted, he adds: 'That is, they mourn and refuse to be comforted, till they have redemption through his Blood.'[2] Yet even Wesley must sometimes have put two and two together; had he really no inklings of the true situation when he wrote of the 'immense scandal which has been given [at Dudley] by those who lately rejoiced in the love of God. One of these has lately killed his own child, by a blow upon the head'?[3] On the question of hysteria, he is content to say (apropos of the convulsionaries at Wapping) that theirs are like none of the many hysterical and epileptic fits which he has seen.[4] But here again, with the great honesty which characterizes him, he has put on record certain manifestations which suggest that hysteria, sometimes at least, haunted those early gatherings. 'I was a little surprised by some, who were buffeted of Satan in an unusual manner, by such a spirit of laughter as they could in no wise resist.'[5] This was at Bristol; a few days later the same epidemic recurred, and two people who had maintained laughter could always be controlled were themselves overtaken by it. They 'laughed whether they would or no, almost without ceasing. Thus they continued, a spectacle to all, for two days; and were then, upon prayer made for them, delivered in a moment.'[6] Lavington assures us that *fou rire* of this kind was common among the French prophets in their convulsions.[7]

(iv) *The Work of God at Everton*

The question naturally suggests itself, Was it only Wesley's preaching and Wesley's influence that produced these strange phenomena? Or was it a common experience of his fellow Evangelists? The question is evidently of importance, for if Wesley stood alone in this respect, we might be led to conjecture that there was some literally hypnotic power in the man which carried his audiences away. But it seems clear that other preachers of the Revival were accustomed to similar interruptions. Daniel Rowlands's sermons in Wales made many 'cry aloud in the most awful manner';[8] a heckler at Bristol, on being called 'a contemptible little worm' by Howell

[1] *Journal*, 12/10/39. [2] Ibid. 17/10/39. [3] Ibid. 16/4/57. [4] Ibid. 15/6/39.
[5] Ibid. 9/5/40. [6] Ibid. 23/5/40. [7] Op. cit. ii. 72. [8] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 85.

Harris, fell down in a trembling fit from which (it is said) he never recovered.[1] Cennick, when he was a lay preacher at Bristol in Wesley's own connexion, had people lying before him with swollen tongues and necks, held down sometimes, and with difficulty, by as many as seven men.[2] You meet the same thing in the works of Jonathan Edwards, that flinty-minded Calvinist whose account of the Great Awakening in America was in Wesley's hands as early as 1738 (he read it on a walk from London to Oxford, before his own field-preaching began). 'There have been several instances here', Edwards writes, 'of persons waxing cold and benumbed, with their hands clinched, yea, and their bodies in convulsions.'[3] And after Whitefield's visit to Northampton (U.S.A.) in 1741: 'The whole room was full of nothing but outcries, faintings and the like. . . . The children there were very generally and greatly affected with the warnings and counsels that were given them, and many exceedingly overcome . . . and when they were dismissed, they almost all of them went home crying aloud through the streets.'[4] Do we grudge him the children? We shall find, later, that Wesley himself was no less edified by their distress.

Whitefield's preaching in America notoriously produced these symptoms; 'some were struck pale as death, others were wringing their hands, others lying on the ground, others sinking into the arms of their friends'.[5] His position in the matter is curious. He had preached many times in Bristol without producing any remarkable symptoms,[6] and when they began to emerge, he was disposed to register a protest: 'Honoured Sir, I cannot think it right in you to give so much encouragement to these convulsions which people have been thrown into under your ministry. Were *I* to do so, how many would cry out every night?'[7] But when he discussed the matter with Wesley in person, he was severely reprimanded by the logic of facts. The very next day, when he, Whitefield, was preaching, 'four persons sunk down close to him, almost in the same moment. One of them lay without sense or motion. A second trembled exceedingly. The third had strong convulsions all over his body, but made no noise, unless by groans. The fourth, equally convulsed,

[1] Belden, op. cit., p. 145. [2] Hutton, *History of the Moravian Church*, p. 319.
[3] Edwards's *Works*, 'Thoughts on the Revival', I. ii. [4] Ibid., 'Memoir', ch. x.
[5] Gledstone's *Life of Whitefield*, p. 215. [6] Southey, op. cit., p. 108.
[7] Quoted in Lunn, op. cit., p. 138.

called upon God, with strong cries and tears. From this time', Wesley adds, 'I trust we shall all suffer God to carry on his own work in the way that pleaseth him.'[1] It appears, however, that Whitefield's sermons did not so often give rise to marked outward effects. That his fiery preaching 'relieved by proxy the pent-up feelings of his hearers'[2] is less certain. He continued his sermon on the text 'It is appointed to men once to die, and after that, the judgement', when two deaths among his audience had already been reported to him.[3]

It has been suggested that Bristol and Newcastle provided a fertile soil for such psychological disturbances because, in those days, the miners lived in a state of half-savage culture.[3] The argument certainly needs restating. The most extraordinary outbreak of these symptoms was produced neither at Bristol nor at Newcastle, but in East Anglia, in the heart of an agricultural community. And the preacher mainly responsible for exciting them was neither Wesley nor Whitefield, but (of all admirably level-headed men) John Berridge. We have remarkably full accounts of the scenes witnessed in his parish of Everton, and in Hicks's neighbouring parish of Wrestlingworth, at the end of the fifties, because Wesley went to see what was happening, occupied the pulpit, and fanned the flame himself. Nor was there lack of interest in other official quarters; Madan and Romaine, sent to the spot as *legati a latere* from the Countess of Huntingdon, reported that 'Great numbers, feeling the arrows of conviction, fell to the ground, some of whom seemed dead, and others in the agony of death, the violence of their bodily convulsions exceeding all description'.[4] What chiefly impressed the two envoys was the testimony of two girls, converted at the ages of fifteen and eleven respectively; others experienced the new birth at the ages of eight and six; so we learn from the account given in Wesley's *Journal* under 29 July 1759. The whole passage must be read in full if you are to get the atmosphere. It seems to have had a profound effect on Wesley himself. 'I shook from head to foot, while tears of joy ran down my face.' 'I no sooner kneeled by him than the consolations of God came upon me, so that I trembled and wept much.' 'I no sooner sat down by her than the Spirit of God poured the same blessedness into my soul'—the visionaries of Everton (for there were frequent visions) had something the same

[1] *Journal*, 7/7/39. [2] Belden, op. cit., p. 269. [3] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 266.
[4] Ibid. 398 note.

power, it seems, as Madame Guyon. 'J.D. was kneeling when the fit came. We laid him on the ground, where he soon became as stiff as last night, and prayed in like manner. Afterwards his body grew flexible by degrees, but was convulsed from head to foot.' This is not a sinner under the hammer-blows of convincement, it is a good Christian at his prayers; 'he did not find any of these things grievous, neither could he ask to be delivered from them'. Laughter is mentioned no less than four times as a characteristic index of 'consolation'; Petty Jenkins 'frequently laughed when she saw his glory'. Ann Thorn often lay in a trance for many hours together. John Dennis prays aloud, in a trance; 'his prayer unfolded the whole Christian system with great accuracy', and when he came to he was unaware (as some of the Jansenist convulsionaries were unaware) of having said anything. Meanwhile, there was no lack of convincements, in the approved manner. We hear of 200 people, mostly men, crying aloud for mercy at the same time. Thomas Skinner lies for some hours in an agony during which 'the veins of his neck were swelled, as if ready to burst'. Nor is there any doubt that this is the Lord's doing; news comes from Grantchester that 'God had broken down seventeen persons last week by the singing of hymns only', and one of the reborn explains how 'it seemed as if the Lord came upon him mightily, taking him by the neck and shaking all his bones in pieces'.[1] People fell to the ground, as a rule, not singly but in twos and threes; there might be as many as seven lying there together.

Let it be remembered that Wesley seems to have had little acquaintance with Berridge; that Wesley's own preaching at Everton and in the neighbourhood seems to have had less effect in breaking people down than the local evangelists had; and that Berridge was a Calvinist. If personal vanity or theological prejudice had been consulted, there was no reason why Wesley should not have put it all down as the work of the devil. But he knelt there, shaken with sobs.

(v) *What did Wesley think of it?*

The Methodist paroxysms are in themselves interesting enough; what I am more concerned to examine here is Wesley's own reaction to them. He has been accused, even by people who had

[1] Other descriptions of the Everton phenomena may be found in the entries under the dates: 6/11/58, 20 and 24 May, 4 June, 5, 6, and 28 Aug. of 1759.

much in common with him, of cultivating thaumaturgic effects and mistaking them for the index of a true change of heart. In his own day the Moravians were much scandalized by it; Molther complains of the 'sighing and groaning, whining and howling, which they call the demonstration of spirit and of power';[1] it is to be suspected that he was referring, not merely to the birth-agonies of the newly converted but to the general atmosphere of early Wesleyan meetings. Robert Barclay, in comparing the Bristol happenings of 1739 with those of 1654, notes that the Quakers did not attach much importance to the outward phenomena of convincement; instead of praying over the prostrate figures, they used to say, 'Let them alone, trouble them not; the Spirit is now struggling with the flesh', though they characteristically provided beds and cordials for the patients.[2] What Lavington makes of the convulsions may easily be imagined. Accordingly, it is the habit of Wesley's biographers to treat these incidents as a passing affair of the forties, and his own interest in them as a fault of his earlier manner; we are led to believe that he soon got out of that. By 1747 'the convulsions and shoutings of the converts, which had marred the early stage of the movement, were now rarely met with.'[3] 'His success at Newcastle was hindered by the occurrence of scenes similar to those which had produced disturbance at London and Kingswood, but the mischief wrought by the cries and prostrations was transitory.'[4] 'In later years Wesley neither expected paroxysms of this kind nor encouraged them.'[5] That is the insinuation you meet everywhere. Is it true?

Wesley himself admitted that 'these circumstances are common at the dawn of a work, but afterwards very uncommon.'[6] But he does not mean that they died down altogether after 1742 or so; he means that they died down at Bristol, to reappear at Everton in the late fifties. At Everton, too, you get a law of diminishing returns; 'few were now affected as at first, the greater part having found their peace with God.'[7] Wherever new ground was broken, you were liable to get an outbreak of raging conversions, lasting for a few months—though seldom on the scale of Everton. The revival at Weardale (he is concerned to point out) was different. There was no new ground to be broken; the Society had been flourishing there

[1] Hutton, op. cit., p. 296.
[2] *Inner Life*, &c., p. 312.
[3] Urlin, op. cit., p. 100.
[4] Simon, *M.S.*, p. 87.
[5] Southey, op. cit., p. 159.
[6] *Journal*, 4/6/72.
[7] Ibid. 3/2/61.

for years. It was in 1772; Wesley had had thirty years in which to outlive his juvenile interest in convulsions, but it is evident that he had not done so. Here are some extracts from the account Wesley gives of it:

> On Sunday afternoon, December 1, as William Hunter was preaching, the power of God fell on the congregation in a wonderful manner. Many, being cut to the heart, cried aloud for mercy. . . . On Saturday night we met at six, and three of us sung and prayed. But before the third was done, his voice could not be heard for the cries of the people. Seven of these soon arose, praising and blessing God. . . . We had nothing to do, but to stand and see the wonderful work of God. And oh how dreadful, yet pleasing, was the sight. All this time many were crying for mercy. Among these were four young men who remained on their knees five hours together. . . . One was asked, what he thought of this. He answered, I wish it be all *real*. He then turned to go home; but, after taking a few steps, began to cry aloud for mercy. He cried till his strength was quite gone, and then lay as one dead till about four o'clock in the morning. . . . At our meeting on Tuesday, eleven more were filled with the peace of God. Yet one young man seemed quite unconcerned. But suddenly the power of God fell upon him; he cried for two hours with all his might. On Saturday evening God was present through the whole service, but especially towards the conclusion. Then one and another dropped down, till six lay on the ground together roaring. . . . Four young men . . . came out of mere curiosity. That evening six were wounded. . . . One of them, hearing the cry, rushed through the crowd to see what was the matter. He was no sooner got to the place, than he dropped down himself, and cried as loud as any. The other three, pressing on, one after another, were struck in just the same manner. And indeed all of them were in such agonies, that many feared they were struck with death . . . Edward Farles . . . was struck to the ground, so distressed that he was convulsed all over.

And so on.[1] Wesley, instead of feeling that his movement is 'marred' by such occurrences, remarks that such a work of God as this has not been seen in the three kingdoms.

The outbreaks were sporadic, had their ups and downs; but did they ever cease, or did Wesley ever cease to thank God for them? Here are some random quotations. In Cornwall ('55) 'one or two felt the edge of God's sword, and sunk to the ground'. At Newcastle ('57) Wesley's hostess 'was much offended at one who sunk down and cried aloud for mercy. Herself dropped down next, . . . as did

[1] *Journal*, entry under 4/6/72.

several others quickly after.' At Cardiff ('58) 'two or three were cut to the heart and cried to God with strong cries and tears'. At Norwich ('60) 'a young woman, who had contained herself as long as she could, sunk down and cried aloud. I found this was a new thing at Norwich.' At Otley, near Leeds ('60) 'the Holy Ghost made intercession in all that were present'—this was at a meeting of devout persons. 'At length the travail of their souls burst out into loud and ardent cries. . . . One cried out, in exceeding great agony, Lord, deliver me from my sinful nature . . . a second, with loud and dismal shrieks, I am in hell; O, save me, save me! . . . Thus they continued for the space of two hours.' At Barley, Herts. ('62), 'a middle-aged woman dropped down at my side, and cried aloud for mercy'. At Limerick ('62) 'many more were brought to the birth. All were in floods of tears, cried, prayed, roared aloud, all of them lying on the ground.' At Macclesfield ('62) 'a man fell down and cried aloud for mercy. In a short time, so did several others.' At Grimsby ('64) 'all the gentry of the town were present; and so was our Lord in an uncommon manner. Some dropped down as dead. . . . One was carried away in violent fits. I went to her after the service. She was strongly convulsed from head to foot, and shrieked out in a dreadful manner. The unclean spirit did tear her indeed, but his reign was not long.' At Stroud ('65) 'a young man cried out, *I am damned!* and fell to the ground. A second did so quickly after, and was much convulsed, and yet quite sensible.' At Montrath, Ireland ('69), 'in a few minutes her strength failed, and she sunk to the ground. I was sorry they carried her away.' At Enniscorthy ('69) 'one dropped down like a stone; many trembled and wept exceedingly'. At Newcastle ('72) 'an eminent backslider came into my mind, and I broke off abruptly. . . . *Is James Watson here? If he be, shew thy power.* Down dropped James Watson like a stone.' In Wales ('74) 'it was a good time. The power of the Lord was unusually present both to wound and to heal.' At Coleford ('84) 'when I began to pray, the flame broke out. Many cried aloud, many sunk to the ground, many trembled exceedingly.' In London ('86) 'the power of God came mightily upon us, and there was a general cry. But the voice of two persons prevailed over the rest, one praying, and the other shrieking as in the agonies of death.'[1]

[1] Ibid. entries under 28/8/55, 19/7/57, 1/9/58, 1/1/60, 16/2/60, 7/1/62, 28/7/62, 6/8/62, 4/4/64, 18/3/65, 28/6/69, 15/6/69, 5/6/72, 8/9/84, 5/2/86.

But perhaps Bristol remained the most congenial atmosphere for these manifestations. It was here that Wesley watched, with so much anxiety, the progress of his educational experiment at Kingswood. In 1765 he complains that the children 'behave well, they learn well, but alas! there is no life in them'.[1] On the 20th of April 1768 there was a dawn of better things. 'God broke in upon our boys in a surprising manner . . . like a rushing mighty wind, which made them cry aloud for mercy. Last night, I hope, will never be forgotten, when about twenty were in the utmost distress. . . . While I am writing, the cries of the boys, from their several apartments, are sounding in my ears. . . . Their age is from eight to fourteen. There are but few who withstand the work.'[2] Two years later the boys went to see the body of a dead neighbour; all but two cried aloud for mercy, and ten days later we find them 'wrestling, with still increasing cries and tears, till three more found peace with God'.[3] Next year Wesley is complaining that no trace is left of the wonderful work of grace; 'then we must begin again'.[4] Two more years passed, and then a new master had the desired success. 'Mr Mather asked, Which of you will serve God? They all seemed thunderstruck, and ten or twelve fell down upon their knees. Mr Mather prayed, and then James Whitehouse. Immediately one and another cried out; which brought in the other boys, who seemed struck more and more, till about thirty were kneeling and praying at once.'[5] After all these scenes, the inspirer of them sadly admits that several of the boys 'have been convinced of sin again and again, but they soon trifled their convictions away'.[6]

A more curious incident at Bristol is well known; it took place as late as 1788, when Wesley preached his anti-slavery sermon there.

> About the middle of the discourse, when there was on every side attention still as night, a vehement noise arose, none could tell whence, and shot like lightning through the whole congregation. The terror and confusion was inexpressible. You might have imagined it was a city taken by storm. The people rushed upon each other with the utmost violence, the benches were broken in pieces, and nine tenths of the congregation appeared to be struck with the same panic. In about six minutes the storm ceased. . . . It is the strangest incident of the kind I ever remember, and I believe none can account

[1] *Journal*, 5/10/65. [2] Ibid. 27/4/68. [3] Ibid. 18 and 28/9/70.
[4] Ibid. 6/9/71. [5] Ibid. 3 and 10/9/73. [6] Ibid. 1/10/79.

for it without supposing some preternatural influence. Satan fought, lest his kingdom should be delivered up.[1]

His biographers sometimes give you the impression that Wesley had a quick eye to detect impostures; of this, in spite of all his great qualities, I find little evidence. I would rather say that when he came across phenomena which were certain to discredit a religious movement, he unhesitatingly put them down, not to hysteria or to lunacy, but to the deliberate influence of the devil. It was so with the Jumpers, when he first heard of them in 1773. A verse of a hymn was sung thirty or forty times; 'meanwhile, the bodies of two or three are violently agitated, and they leap up and down, in all manner of postures, frequently for hours together'. Wesley, so much impressed by the similar occurrences at St. Médard, had a ready solution here: Satan 'serves himself of their simplicity, in order . . . to bring a discredit on the work of God'.[2] He gives us another account elsewhere:

> Some of them leaped up many times, men and women, several feet from the ground; they clapped their hands with the utmost violence; they shook their heads, they distorted all their features, they threw their arms and legs to and fro, in all variety of postures; they sung, roared, shouted, screamed with all their might. . . . The person of the house was delighted above measure, and said, Now is the power of God come indeed.[3]

This time no comment is added; it is strange that Wesley, with his great curiosity in such matters, never went to see the Jumpers for himself.

These, however, were Calvinists; it was more embarrassing when strange symptoms were observed at Chapel-en-le-Frith, among converts of his own, and people who had been recently 'perfected in love'—we shall see what that means later in the present chapter.

> Frequently three or four, yea, ten or twelve, pray aloud all together. Some of them, perhaps many, scream all together as loud as they possibly can. Some of them use improper, yea, indecent expressions in prayer. Several drop down as dead, and are as stiff as a corpse; but in a while they start up and cry, Glory, glory, perhaps twenty times together. Just so do the French prophets, and very lately the Jumpers in Wales, bringing the real work into contempt. Yet whenever we reprove them, it should be in the most mild and gentle manner possible.[4]

[1] Ibid. 3/3/88. [2] Ibid. 27/8/63. [3] Ibid. 11/8/74. [4] Ibid. 3/4/86.

He gives no explanation; only tells us that 'even while they are full of love, Satan strives to push many of them to extravagances'. He did not like screaming; Bell's followers had gone in for it, and at Weardale he had to ask one of his audience not to drown the sound of his preaching in this way.[1] Still less can he have relished the improper expressions. But he is careful, at this point, to avoid stern denunciation; it might have discouraged the Perfection movement.

One curious disorder Wesley did investigate, in the next parish to Brechin, though curiously omitting to tell us whether it had any religious context. People there, mostly children, were seized at intervals with a kind of fit, beginning with 'an involuntary shaking of their hands and feet'. They would jump, twenty times or more, then run from 200 to 500 yards, climb on to roofs, and at last fall down as if dead. The girl Wesley interviewed bent backwards till her head was on a level with her hips, in precisely that posture which was regarded as a miracle at St. Médard.[2] 'I believe', Wesley adds, 'if this be in part a natural distemper, there is something preternatural too. . . . Satan will so disguise his part therein, that we cannot precisely determine.' It is fair to say that when he was confronted by a similar patient at Bolton a month later, he prescribed an electric shock, and apparently with success.[3] He was so curiously in advance of his times in some ways! But he never prescribed electrical treatment for his agonizing converts.

Whenever he is challenged Wesley claims that the outward phenomena accompanying conversion are beyond nature, and are meant to provide evidence of the supernatural. If they fail to do so it is because we refuse belief, or because Satan manages to interfere. 'Perhaps', he writes in 1739, 'it might be because of the hardness of our hearts . . . that God . . . suffered so many outward signs of the very time when he wrought this inward change to be continually seen and heard among us. But though they saw signs and wonders (for so I must term them) yet many would not believe.'[4] He refers to this incredulity two months later, as a possible explanation of the fact that people are now being convinced of sin without getting converted: 'I fear we have grieved the Spirit of the jealous God, by questioning his work.'[5] A few years later, after describing some of the experiences people have had when they were felled to the ground,

[1] *Journal*, 2/6/72. [2] Ibid. 1/6/64. [3] Ibid. 13/7/64.
[4] Ibid. 20/5/39. [5] Ibid. 23/7/39.

he asks: 'What wisdom is that which rebukes these, that they should hold their peace?'[1] He fully allows that the most distressing symptoms are due to Satan, enraged at losing his prey; but they are not natural: 'I can no more impute them to any natural cause than to the Spirit of God.'[2] Sixteen years pass, and questions begin to arise about the genuineness of the phenomena at Everton. Wesley is pained: 'The Everton congregation is in danger of running from east to west. Instead of thinking, as many then did, that none can possibly have true faith but those that have trances or visions, now they are ready to think whoever had anything of this kind had no true faith.'[3] His own considered view is that: (i) God began by suddenly convincing people of sin; this naturally resulted in outcries and strong convulsions. (ii) To encourage the believers, he favoured several people with divine dreams, trances, and visions. (iii) In some of these instances, after a time, nature was mixed with grace. (iv) Satan likewise mimicked this work of God, in order to discredit the whole work; and yet it is not wise to give up this part of the work, any more than the whole.[4] When it comes to Weardale, a dozen years later still, he seems if anything relieved that there were no visions, since these give a handle to Satan, but records with evident satisfaction that the painful outward symptoms of conversion reappeared; 'many were violently convulsed all over, and many seemed to be in the agonies of death'.[5] He did not believe that it mattered whether people rolled on the ground or not; the evangelist 'ought to be quite passive in this respect'.[6] But to suggest that at any period of his life he either regretted or discouraged such happenings is, to my mind, plain contradiction of the evidence.

(vi) *The Importance of the Feelings*

Was the Revival ever seriously threatened with the danger of illuminism? Did the high pressure at which its meetings were so often conducted embolden its devotees to claim private inspirations, or the gift of prophecy? In answering that question there is more ground for distinguishing between the earlier and the later days of the movement. There was a certain atmosphere of Inner-Light mysticism about some of the leaders; Perronet was a man of visions,

[1] Ibid. 30/12/42. [2] Ibid. 12/3/43. [3] Ibid. 3/1/62, cf. under 25/11/59.
[4] Ibid. 25/11/59. [5] Ibid. 4/6/72. [6] Ibid. 6/8/59.

so was Grimshaw;[1] and even Berridge, who has been threatened by Lady Huntingdon with God's scourge if he refuses to go and preach at Brighton, counters her 'Vatican Bull' with the argument that he has felt no 'check or reproof within' since he declined the invitation.[2] 'Perceptible Inspiration' was one of the three main objections urged against Methodist orthodoxy,[3] and Wesley was at pains to defend himself publicly against the charge of preaching the Inner Light.[4] 'I have sought the Lord by prayer and fasting', writes Whitefield, 'and he assures me that he will be with me.'[5] All through the *Journal* there is constant mention of dreams, warnings, and strange experiences encountered by the faithful; in all such matters Wesley remained inexhaustibly curious. 'It was strongly impressed' on Sarah Mallet that she ought to call sinners to repentance; but she resisted the impression till it was suggested to her 'If you do it not willingly, you shall do it whether you will or no'. She fell into a fit, during which she seems to have dreamt that she was preaching to a numerous congregation, and in the course of a year or two had eighteen of these 'fits'; they ceased when she began to obey the 'impression'.[6] Margaret Barlow was 'convinced that she heard many things from an angel'; she was also convinced that this angel was of the female sex, but Wesley assures us this is of little consequence; Margaret is deep in grace, and incapable of deceit. One of her communications assured her, apparently in March 1788, that Wesley himself would die within the year, and he duly speculated in the following March whether the prediction would be verified;[7] as we know, it was not. He throws these things at us, as if bidding us take them or leave them; they will be a headache for the conscientious Deist; meanwhile, it is perhaps best not to lay too much stress on them.

He had good reason not to lay too much stress on them. As early as 1739 he had been warning his congregation at Bristol not to judge the spirit by which anyone spoke 'by any dreams, visions or revelation supposed to be made to their souls, any more than by their tears, or by any involuntary effects wrought upon their bodies. . . . All these . . . are of a disputable and doubtful nature, . . . and to be tried by a further rule, to be brought to the only certain test, the

[1] Southey, op. cit., pp. 289, 290.
[2] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 234.
[3] e.g. by 'John Smith', quoted in Simon, *M.S.*, p. 277.
[4] *Universal Magazine* of December 1760.
[5] Quoted in Southey, op. cit., p. 187.
[6] *Journal*, 4/12/86.
[7] Ibid. 10/6/88, 1/3/89.

Law and the Testimony.'[1] This, I have suggested, was the Bible as John Wesley interpreted it. Probably he is thinking of the French prophets, who were still active in Bristol. As we shall see, he was to have considerable trouble with visionary followers of his own some twenty years later, and was not wholly successful in calling them to order. I had a description from a friend (whether accurate or no I cannot say) of a 'Group' meeting, at which Dr. Buchman got up at the end of a rather fantastic speech and said, 'I check that guidance'. Wesley was not slow to check guidances which did not fit into his own religious framework. He does not deny that 'in some very rare instances' God manifests his will by 'visions or dreams, by strong impressions or sudden impulses of the mind'. But he adds: 'How frequently do men mistake herein! How are they misled by pride, and a warm imagination, to ascribe such impulses or impressions, dreams or visions, to God, as are utterly unworthy of him! Now, all this is pure enthusiasm.'[2] True enough, but the difficulty for Wesley, as for many spiritual advisers, was to find a test of suitability by which you could explain to the energumen whether his visions were suitable or not.

But if he was chary of trusting dreams and revelations, he set, as we have already seen, an enormous value on those sensible consolations in which (it seems) his followers abounded. Witness his comment on Stinstra: 'The very thing Mr Shinstra [*sic*] calls Fanaticism is no other than heart-religion; in other words, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. These must be *felt*, or they have no being. All therefore who condemn inward feelings in the gross, leave no place either for joy or peace or love in religion, and consequently reduce it to a dry, dead carcase.'[3] It would be impossible to find a point of view more absolutely opposed to that of the Quietists. For Madame Guyon the very adventure of religion is adhering to God by naked faith, disregarding consolations and even welcoming the absence of them. For Wesley a religion in which love resides strictly in the will and does not overflow into the feelings is a dead, dry carcase. 'How do you know whether you love me? Why, as you know whether you are hot or cold. You *feel* this moment that you do or do not love me. And I *feel* at this moment that I do not love God, which therefore I *know* because I *feel* it.'[4] Such was the

[1] Ibid. 22/6/39. [2] Sermon on Enthusiasm (*Sermons*, p. 527).
[3] *Journal*, 12/8/71. [4] Ibid. 4/1/39.

terrible doctrine Wesley held while he was still groping for full conviction; it is not to be wondered at, if he emphasized, in season and out of season, the feelings of consolation which Methodists claimed to enjoy.

'All our hearts were in a flame';[1] 'the great power of God was in the midst of them';[2] 'God was again present at the room, and filled many souls with strong consolation';[3] 'so general an outpouring of God's spirit we had seldom known';[4] such are the expressions that meet us on page after page of the *Journal*. Nor were these experiences confined to the times of meeting; they were the private solace of the individual believer. Wesley is chary of citing his own experiences; such an entry as 'I saw every thought . . . just as it was rising in my heart, and whether it was right before God; I never knew before what it was to be still before God'[5] is an unusual piece of self-revelation. But he is not slow to tell us about the privileges accorded to his converts, even when they are somewhat disconcerting. What were you to make of women who felt the Precious Blood 'running down their throat, or poured like warm water on their breast or heart'? He was inclined to suspect a heated imagination, but 'some of these circumstances might be from God working in an unusual manner'.[6] He did not willingly resort to natural explanations.

At this point one question arises of evident importance—Was the New Birth always and necessarily an *experience*? In order to be a Christian, as opposed to an almost Christian, must you have *felt*, at some time or another, that your sins were forgiven, or was a change in your outward behaviour sufficient evidence of the fact? It is worth noticing the views Wesley expressed in a letter to his mother as early as 1725, long before he had met the Moravians or learned the ABC of revivalism. 'The Holy Ghost confers on us the graces necessary for . . . an immortal nature. Now surely these graces are not of so little force as that we cannot perceive whether we have them or not; if we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, which he will not do unless we are regenerate, certainly we must be sensible of it.'[7] It looks as if Wesley had thought out for himself, very early, that identification of 'grace' with spiritual consolations, against which devout authors are continually warning us. At the very outset of his evangelistic career you find him expecting adult baptism to be

[1] *Journal*, 25/7/45. [2] Ibid. 16/9/60. [3] Ibid. 4/7/69. [4] Ibid. 11/6/79.
[5] Ibid. 23/12/44. [6] Ibid. 6/9/42. [7] Piette, op. cit., p. 254.

accompanied by the *consciousness* of a New Birth, and disappointed when it turns out otherwise. 'Of the adults I have known baptized lately, only one was at that time born again, in the full sense of the word; that is, found a thorough, inward change, by the love of God filling her heart. Most of them were only born again in a lower sense; that is, received the remission of their sins. And some, as it has since too plainly appeared, neither in one sense nor the other.'[1] So convinced an experimentalist is he that he expects the sense of pardon to be, not merely felt, but manifested. When he was baptizing a Quakeress, 'God, as usual, bore witness to his ordinance. A solemn awe overspread the whole congregation, and many could not refrain from tears.'[2] It is no matter for surprise, then, that the first Wesleyan Conference, in 1744, answered the question 'Can a man be justified, and not know it?' in the negative.[3]

This cruel doctrine was not, however, consistently maintained. That there need not be any *sudden* realization of a change he lays down in set terms: 'It may be, he that does all things well has wise reasons, though not apparent to us, for working more gradually in you than he has done in late years in most others.'[4] But, indeed, by this time (the sixties) he seems to have retracted his whole view. He notes as 'peculiar' the case of T. Salmon, who 'did not know when he was justified, but did know when he was renewed in love' —that is, attained Perfection.[5] And he tells us, in a very characteristic phrase, 'I have not for many years thought a consciousness of acceptance to be essential to justifying faith'.[6] By 1767 he finds it 'clear as the day' that 'a Mystic, who denies Justification by Faith, (Mr Law, for instance,) may be saved'.[7] He believed intensely, and never ceased to believe, in the importance of the feelings. But there was a candour in him which compelled him to admit, alone in the coach between Newmarket and Norwich, that there was a value in that conception of faith which holds the feelings to be something quite beside the mark. 'I believe a consciousness of being in the favour of God . . . is the common privilege of Christians, fearing God, and working righteousness. Yet I do not affirm there are no exceptions to this general rule. Possibly some may be in the favour

[1] *Journal*, 25/1/39. [2] Ibid. 16/10/56.

[3] Simon, *M.S.*, p. 207. It is worth noticing that Bohler and Zinzendorf were disagreed on this question (*Journal*, 12/1/38).

[4] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 157. [5] *Journal*, 14/2/62.

[6] Quoted by Urlin, op. cit., p. 53. [7] *Journal*, 1/12/67.

of God, and yet go mourning all the day long.'[1] I am glad Wesley wrote that.

He held that assurance in the full sense, in the sense of *knowing* that you were bound for heaven, was the privilege of a very few. With all the more tender insistence did he watch over the death-beds of his converts, to make certain that in the all-important moment they had that flowing sense of love which proved them to be, there and then, acceptable to God. He records death-bed scenes at interminable length in his *Journal*. Many of the persons in question are children, and heaven knows they are remarkable. But those of us who were brought up in our own youth on the stories of Henry Milner and Little Nonie cannot, unfortunately, fight down the acute sense of discomfort with which those memories of our early education afflict us. I cannot do justice here to the undoubted pathos of these records. Let it be enough to mention the occasion upon which 'some laughed, some cried . . . such an emotion as I have seldom seen',[2] and to quote the hymn-verse by which, it seems, Wesleyans were speeded to their rest: 'Oh, lovely appearance of death! What sight upon earth is so fair? Not all the gay pageants on earth can with a dead body compare.'[3] Martha Wood, of Darlaston, died exclaiming: 'I see the heavens opened, I see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with numbers of the glorified throng, coming nearer and nearer. They are just come.'[4] Was it in the hope of hearing some testament of the same kind that the watchers at Wesley's own death-bed asked him to give them a message? If so, they were disappointed. He replied, as we know, 'The best of all is, God is with us'.[5] A heartening slogan, but any theist might have used it; to the last Wesley seems to stand a hair's breadth outside his own movement.

(vii) *Sinless Perfection*

In the year 1761 Wesley claims, 'God has poured out his Spirit on the Society in a manner not seen for twenty years';[6] he is thinking of Bristol in particular, but other references in the *Journal* show that Bristol was not exceptional. He was now doing his best to stimulate in his converts the ambition to reach a higher stage in their spiritual careers; it was sometimes called 'perfection', sometimes 'entire

[1] Quoted by Southey, op. cit., p. 243. [2] *Journal*, 5/4/82.
[3] Ibid. 28/6/86. [4] Ibid. 17/8/75. [5] Simon, *L.P.*, p. 341. [6] *Journal*, 1/9/61.

sanctification', but more commonly, at least by Wesley himself, 'being renewed in love'. He writes of the people in question: 'After being deeply convinced of inbred sin, particularly of pride, anger, self-will and unbelief, in a moment they feel all faith and love, no pride, no self-will, no anger; and from that moment they have continual fellowship with God.'[1] He described the experience in brief as 'free, full and present salvation from all guilt, all the power and all the in-being of sin'.[2] He had long held the possibility of this, and it had been one of his quarrels with the Moravians; they, like good Lutherans, held that justification was imputed, and loved to describe themselves as 'sinner-like'. When he began to insist on the doctrine and preach it up, it was a fresh cause of dissension with the Calvinists; Grimshaw, Venn, and Romaine all criticized him,[3] and Whitefield protested, 'I feel the strugglings of indwelling sin every day'.[4] It was Whitefield, apparently, who invented the phrase 'sinless perfection', which was not used by Wesley himself,[5] and Wesley's biographers have been at pains to show that the claim he made was much exaggerated in popular discussion. It may be so; but the language of Wesley's own followers was certainly arresting enough.

That he everywhere interviewed personally the people who claimed to have had this experience goes without saying, and the records of these interviews are given considerable prominence in the *Journal*. In early days he himself is only half convinced; there was a woman at Sheffield, for example, whom he interviewed in 1742. 'She has the witness in herself that whatever she does it is all done to the glory of God. Her heart never wanders from him, no, not for a moment, but is continually before the throne. Yet whether she was sanctified throughout or not, I had not the light to determine.'[6] As the phenomenon became less rare, his pronouncements became more confident. He interviews two women at Wednesbury in 1760 who talk in the same way, and is obviously satisfied that they do not exaggerate. One says: 'I never find any cloud between God and me; I walk in the light continually. . . . And I have a continual witness in myself, that whatever I do, I do it to his glory.' The other: 'He is never out of my thoughts. . . . I see him always. . . . When I sleep,

[1] Ibid. 29/11/61.
[2] Belden, op. cit., p. 104.
[3] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 281, 330.
[4] Belden, op. cit., p. 105.
[5] Overton, op. cit., p. 82.
[6] *Journal*, 14/6/42.

I sleep as in the arms of Jesus. . . . I never find any heaviness or coldness.' Wesley's comment is: 'Constant communion with God the Father and the Son fills their hearts with humble love. Now this is what I always did, and do now, mean by perfection.'[1] He held another examination at Leeds soon after; 'the testimony of some', he admits, 'I could not receive', but the state of the others (unless they were wilfully lying) was that they felt no inward sin, were not conscious of committing any, saw and loved God at every moment, and had as clear a witness of sanctification as of justification.[2] The 'witness', it appears, was unequivocal enough; Dorothy King 'felt an entire change, while these words were spoke to her heart, *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee*'.[3]

If these entries had been rare, or the figures they dealt with had been small, most of us would be less ready to doubt the genuineness of the experience. But Wesley was out for mass sanctification; by him and under his influence it was preached as earnestly as the justification which preceded it. In Cornwall he complains that it has not been preached enough; wherever this happens 'the believers grow dead and cold'.[4] At Bristol the Society registers a loss of fifty members; 'one reason is, Christian perfection has been little insisted on'.[5] There was perhaps a certain backwash; three years later (again at Bristol) we hear that there is 'heaviness of spirit among all who are not going on to perfection'.[6] Nor was Wesley's conviction on this subject short-lived; some fifteen years after the campaign has started you still find him complaining that at Tiverton the preachers 'spoke of perfection, if they spoke at all, only in general terms. Wherever this is not earnestly done, the work of God does not prosper.'[7] The truth was, perhaps, that a movement such as Wesley had started must be kept at white heat somehow, if there were not to be backslidings, or at best lukewarmness. When, in a given centre, all or nearly all the adherents of the movement had achieved the New Birth, they asked for fresh worlds to conquer, and Christian Perfection was an answer to their demand. But was there no self-deception? Was there no hysteria?

When he buried one of his converts, Elizabeth Lee, he asserted his belief that she had persevered in her state of sanctification for fifteen or sixteen years.[8] Was her case, then, so exceptional? As usual he is

[1] *Journal*, 6/3/60. [2] Ibid. 12/3/60. [3] Ibid. 26/7/62. [4] Ibid. 15/9/62.
[5] Ibid. 30/9/65. [6] Ibid. 19/10/68. [7] Ibid. 14/8/76. [8] Ibid. 11/10/78.

candid in giving us figures. In 1765, when he examined 'those who once believed they were saved from sin' at Barnard Castle, he found there, 'as at London, about a third part who held their confidence. The rest had suffered loss, more or less, and two or three were shorn of all their strength.'[1] You get the same story next year from Manchester.[2] At York, 'scarce two of them retained the grace they had two years ago'.[3] To be sure, Wesley did not claim that this grace was inamissible: 'I retract', he wrote, 'several expressions in our hymns which partly express, partly imply, such an impossibility.'[4] But the number of lost vocations might seem to indicate that some, at least, were mistaken vocations. Not to Wesley: 'That many of these did not retain the gift of God is no proof it was not given them.'[5]

(viii) *Bell and Maxfield*

Admire Wesley for his consistency, blame him for his obstinacy, which you will; it is certain that he did not easily change his mind. Just when Moravian and Calvinist alike were uttering scandalized protests about sinless perfection, sinless perfection was responsible for one of the most difficult crises he ever had to tide over; an open revolt against his authority which left his Society diminished in numbers and in credit. But he went on preaching sinless perfection to the end of his days.

There were always minor incidents which needed his attention; which could easily have worried the life out of a man who knew how to worry. From its very nature his movement attracted the attention and often the sympathies of the queer people in the world, borderline cases who would have been written down by anybody except Wesley as hysterical patients at best, and probably lunatics. The *Journal* abounds in casual references to the vagaries of such folk. Now it is a woman who has started visions, and discovered that human beings are a third kind of angel,[6] now it is a spirit of enthusiasm that has broken in upon many at Bristol,[7] now it is John Brown of Tanfield Leigh, who, after being full of love, peace, and joy the week before, 'came riding through the town, holloaing and shouting and driving all the people before him, telling them God had told him he should be a king, and should tread all his enemies under his

[1] Ibid. 13/4/65. [2] Ibid. 1/4/66. [3] Ibid. 4/7/76. [4] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 71.
[5] *Journal*, under 28/10/62. [6] Ibid. 3/9/40. [7] Ibid. 13/7/41.

feet'.[1] Six persons at Birmingham have become wild enthusiasts, given up to the spirit of pride and blasphemy;[2] two members have to be dismissed from the Society at Otley because, having attained perfection, they say the Precious Blood has no further use for them;[3] at Weardale, where most of the liveliest in the Society were the single men and women, 'several of these in a little time contracted an inordinate affection for each other, whereby they so grieved the Spirit of God that he in great measure departed from them'.[4] A woman at Sheffield, who should have had Molinos for her director, 'never loses a sense of the love of God, and yet is continually harassed by the devil, and constrained to utter words which her soul abhors';[5] the Burslem love-feast is a throw-back to the earliest days at Corinth, 'two or three were speaking at a time till I gently advised them to speak one at a time';[6] Mrs. B., by foretelling the early end of the world, has persuaded the community at Hartlepool to fast three weeks on water, and three more on water-gruel.[7] These were the pin-pricks.

Thomas Maxfield was a man created by the Wesleyan Movement. Sensationally converted at Bristol, he used to look after things in London in early days, while both the Wesleys were on their travels. It was Lady Huntingdon who persuaded him, though a layman, to begin expounding the Scriptures. 'He is highly favoured of the Lord. The first time I made him expound . . . before he had gone over one fifth part, anyone that had seen me would have thought I had been made of wood or stone, so immovable I both felt and looked.'[8] He went on from this to preaching; there was to have been a reprimand, but Wesley's mother stepped into the breach, and the laity, from that time onward, were free of the pulpit. Maxfield himself was ordained by the Bishop of Derry, as a kindness to Wesley, and by 1760 he held a post of considerable responsibility in the London Society, where the campaign for perfection was then at its height. He seems to have encouraged a small group of enthusiasts who dealt much in dreams and visions; they came to look upon him, rather than Wesley, as their guide, and regarded 'renewal in love' as indispensable to the exercise of any spiritual influence. Wesley himself never claimed to have had this experience,[9] and it

[1] *Journal*, 4/12/42. [2] Ibid. 25/3/53. [3] Ibid. 25/7/61. [4] Ibid. 12/6/74.
[5] Ibid. 16/7/76. [6] Ibid. 29/3/87. [7] Ibid. 15/6/90.
[8] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 33. [9] Overton, op. cit., p. 83.

does not make us love Maxfield any the better when we find him writing to his own father in the Gospel: 'I long to have your heart set at full liberty. I know you will then see things in a wonderful different light from what it is possible to see them before.'[1] Sanctification does not seem to have brought him either grammar or manners.

How much Thomas Maxfield was responsible for George Bell it is not easy to determine. He himself, in his *Vindication*, claimed to have been a moderating influence.[2] But it seems fairly evident that Maxfield brewed the culture in which Bell's enthusiasm fermented; Wesley himself assures us that 'Mr M. was at the bottom of all this; that he was the life of the cause, that he was continually spiriting up all with whom I was intimate against me'.[3] Bell himself is described as 'a man of piety, of deep communion with God, and of extraordinary zeal for the conversion of souls'.[4] After his 'renewal in love' in March 1761, he began—it was not uncommon—to develop strange pedantries of spirituality; the perfect did not need self-examination, did not need to be taught by man;[5] they were more holy than our first parents before the Fall, and were themselves in no danger of falling.[6] In a letter to Bell and his group, after mentioning these and several similar tendencies, Wesley adds that he has faults to find with their manner of worship. It practically excluded the First Person of the Blessed Trinity, they never knelt, their 'postures and gestures were highly indecent', and they screamed so as to make their words unintelligible.[7] The first of these tendencies was endemic to Methodism; was not Howell Harris described as a Patripassian? The fourth we have already met among the energumens of Chapel-en-le-Frith. Perhaps so far there was no great harm done; and even when Bell tried, unsuccessfully, to cure a woman of blindness,[8] no special publicity attached to the incident. It was otherwise when he confidently announced the end of the world for 28 February 1763.

It is fair to say, though the fact has been generally overlooked, that for this development Wesley himself may have been remotely to blame. All enthusiastic movements, in their effort to detach people

[1] Letter of January 1762, under entry in *Journal* 4/2/63.
[2] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 127. [3] *Journal*, 4/2/63. [4] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 124.
[5] *Journal*, 15/4/65. [6] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 125. [7] *Journal*, 1/11/62.
[8] Overton, op. cit., p. 163.

from worldliness, are apt to talk the language of chiliasm; and there must have been some ground for the charge, even made by so unreliable a critic as Bishop Lavington, that Wesley in early days was heard to speak as if the coming of Christ was now at hand, in the manner of the Fraticelli and of the French prophets.[1] More importantly, he was interested in earthquakes; when London felt three tremors in a single night he observes: 'How gently does God deal with this nation!'[2] The Portuguese nation was less gently dealt with when, on 1 November 1755, the greater part of Lisbon was suddenly reduced to a heap of ruins. Wesley improved the occasion by writing a tract called *Serious Thoughts on the Earthquake at Lisbon* for the benefit of 'the learned, rich and honourable heathens commonly called Christians'.[3] It is not unreasonable to guess that you can trace the repercussions of all this in the ravings of poor George Bell seven years later.

It need hardly be said that official Methodism immediately disclaimed all connexion with the prophecy. 'Their wildness and enthusiasm daily increasing, Lady Huntingdon hastened to London, to endeavour to stop the plague by every means in her power.'[4] Wesley himself preached, on the night itself, with the text 'Prepare to meet thy God', and 'largely shewed the utter absurdity of the supposition that the world was to end that night! But, notwithstanding all I could say, many were afraid to go to bed, and some wandered about in the fields, being persuaded that, if the world did not end, at least London would be swallowed up by an earthquake.'[5] The excitement was so general that Bell himself had by this time been lodged in jail.[6] Whether or no the conviction among certain members of the Society that they would not die[7] survived, as it so often survives, the disappointment, it is clear that Bell himself remained, for the time being, a fanatic. Berridge, in a letter dated 2 September 1763, reports that 'Mr Maxfield grows violent, and Bell recovers his delusions apace, bidding fair for a greater enthusiast than ever'.[8]

Bell, we are told, finished up as an atheist.[9] Maxfield remained a highly respected preacher, but no longer under Wesleyan auspices.

[1] Op. cit. i. 80, 125. [2] *Journal*, 16/2/50. [3] Ibid. 26/12/55.
[4] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 322. [5] *Journal*, 28/2/63. [6] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 126.
[7] Ibid., p. 110. [8] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 339 (misprinted 359).
[9] Simon, op. cit., p. 127.

On 28 April 1763, for contumacious disobedience to 'his father, his friend, his greatest benefactor',[1] he was dismissed from the Society, and there was an open breach, accompanied by public recriminations. His secession is described as having cost the London Society 200 members;[2] on some different basis of computation, no doubt, the figure is elsewhere given as 600.[3] Some ten years later Wesley had an interview with T. M. . . ., 'who seemed much to desire a reunion. But he only seemed, for when we explained upon the head, I found he meant just nothing'.[4] There was a reconciliation, much later, when Wesley preached at Maxfield's chapel in 1783;[5] he died the following year.

(ix) *Wesley's Legacy*

If I have dealt at some length with this single side of Wesley's character—I mean his preoccupation with strange psychological disturbances, now commonly minimized—it is because I think he, and the other prophets of the Evangelical movement, have succeeded in imposing upon English Christianity a pattern of their own. They have succeeded in identifying religion with a real or supposed experience. I say 'real or supposed', because in the nature of things you cannot prove the validity of any trance, vision, or ecstasy; it remains something within the mind. Still less can you prove the validity of a lifelong Christ-inspired attitude; in the last resort, all it proves is that certain psychological influences are strong enough to overcome, in a given case, all the temptations towards backsliding which a cynical world affords. But, for better or worse, the England which weathered the excitements and disappointments of the early nineteenth century was committed to a religion of experience; you did not base your hopes on this or that doctrinal calculation; you *knew*. For that reason the average Englishman was, and is, singularly unaffected by reasonings which would attempt to rob him of his theological certainties, whatever they may be. For that reason, also, he expects much (perhaps too much) of his religion in the way of verified results; he is easily disappointed if it does not run according to schedule. It must chime in with his moods, rise superior to his temptations; a decent average of special providences must convince him that it works. Otherwise, though without

[1] *Journal*, 28/4/63. [2] Simon, *M.B.*, p. 128. [3] *Lady Huntingdon's Life*, i. 34.
[4] *Journal*, 25/3/72. [5] Ibid. 16/11/83.

rancour, he abandons the practice of it. He is not prepared for that unrewarded adventure of naked faith which is, for the Quietist, the common lot of Christians. Not on the scale, but in the spirit, of those eighteenth-century pioneers, he demands 'heart-work'. And, in days when we are apparently less moved by the crowd-appeal, it is hard to come by.

XXII

SOME VAGARIES OF MODERN REVIVALISM

THERE is a magic, for some minds, about the year of Waterloo; it stands for a dividing line between the dead world and the living. Pressed for our reasons, we hesitate; push the date back to the invention of gunpowder, or forward to the invention of the aeroplane. But our instinct is to make of the Revolutionary Wars a water-parting between history, which we trace back to its origins, and the modern world, which is bearing us on towards an uncharted future. Before the nineteenth century people wore wigs, fought duels, lost fortunes in a night at the gaming-tables; it is a book world of fancy dress, no part of our experience. And, still unconsciously, we allow this arbitrary division to govern our assessment of human testimony. Before 1800 (that is our secret thought) people would believe anything. When we light on the record of what seems physically or humanly improbable, we raise our eyebrows and leave the facts unexplored. It is for that reason that I have added the present chapter to my book. The historical part of it should have come to an end with the death of Wesley; but this would have left the impression that enthusiasm was entirely a thing of the past. The reader's focus will be better adjusted if he is allowed to catch a few glimpses of it—no more—still at work in the England of Peel, in the America of Andrew Jackson.

Not that it has ever died out; but revivals, all through the last hundred years, show a law of diminishing returns. The reasons for it are to be considered later; the fact will hardly be disputed. There have been developments in the technique of evangelism—witness the Salvation Army—but no new message. Where prophets have arisen they have led men into new paths, of inspiration wholly unorthodox, into Spiritualism or Christian Science. The older Evangelicalism seemed to spend its force in giving birth to an admirable progeny of social reform. Only one 'revival' looms really

large in nineteenth-century history; and that is the Oxford Movement, whose whole programme was a return from the charismatic to the institutional.

Let us be content, then, to take a few glimpses at certain by-ways of religion, on the eve of the great Victorian age; enough to remind ourselves that the figures we have met in earlier chapters were living men and women. We have seen Quaker and Camisard and Wesleyan so carried away in prayer as to behave like automata rather than human beings; we shall be more ready to believe it when we find the Irvingites speaking with tongues. We have wondered how the Cathari expected to draw the world after them when they preached, it would seem, an ideal of race-suicide; we shall wonder less when we reflect that the Shakers still exist, although they have not bred since the eighteenth century. We have suspended judgement over attacks brought against the morality of Familist, Quietist, and Antinomian; we shall be less ready to accuse ourselves of a fault in charity when we see the Perfectionists resolutely playing with fire, and not seldom burnt by it.

(i) *The Irvingite Departure*

Perhaps the most striking thing about the claim to speak with tongues is its infrequency. All enthusiastic movements are fain to revive, in a more or less degree, the experience of Pentecost; a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit has taken place, and a chosen body of witnesses is there to attest it. What more likely than that they should aspire to imitate Pentecost in this, its most characteristic manifestation? Accordingly, if you consult the works of reference, you will find a long litany, copied from one encyclopaedia into another, purporting to show that all the enthusiastic movements have in fact given rise to glossolaly. Thus Conybeare in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:[1] 'The same morbid and abnormal trance utterances occur in Christian revivals in every age, e.g. among the mendicant friars of the thirteenth century, among the Jansenists, the early Quakers, the converts of Wesley and Whitefield, the persecuted prophets of the Cevennes, the Irvingites.' All that sounds well enough, until you examine his evidence for glossolaly in earlier times. Here he gives references, to the *Timaeus*, to the Sixth Aeneid, to the *De anima* of Tertullian; and in each case you find that there is a reference

[1] Eleventh edition, s.v. 'Tongues, Gift of'.

to ecstatic prophecy, but no mention of strange languages. It is the old, discredited Frazer technique of piling up parallels which are not parallels at all.

Authors who have studied the matter show more caution. Thus, Nathaniel Spinckes, who is particularly concerned to represent the Camisard prophecy as a re-hash of older heresies, refers you to John de Rupescissa, to Francis Hacket, to the Anabaptists, to the early Quakers, all as the victims of enthusiasm, but not as having spoken with tongues.[1] And Dr. Drummond, in a more sympathetic *résumé* of the same subject[2]—he calls it 'Glossolalia in History; Parallels'—has something to say about the Montanists, the Schismatical Franciscans, the Anabaptists, the early Quakers, but not that they spoke with tongues. Obviously, in all that turmoil of sects, there may have been instances of mysterious locution here and there; but no one of the movements in question was publicly identified, even by its enemies, with such phenomena. The absence of glossolaly among the early Methodists is even more remarkable. Wesley is for ever commenting on the various jumpers, jerkers, and roarers of his day; such things interested him vastly; yet I cannot recall a single allusion, in all his *Journal*, to the gift of tongues. To judge by his silence, you would say the thing was a monopoly of the 'French prophets'.

I do not mean to deny the existence of glossolaly all through the period under dispute. To speak with tongues you had never learned was, and is, a recognized symptom in cases of alleged diabolical possession. What does not appear is that it was ever claimed, at least on a large scale, as a symptom of divine inspiration, until the end of the seventeenth century. Then you find it cropping up in two separate movements, among the Huguenots of the Cevennes and among the appellant (but still nominally Catholic) Jansenists. A nine days' wonder in either case, it goes underground again for the next hundred years. In 1830, quite without warning, it begins to be practised by a handful of simple people in the neighbourhood of Port Glasgow.

There was tinder to catch the spark. It would be out of place here to discuss the character of Edward Irving, the friend of Carlyle, the fashionable preacher in whose Presbyterian congregation you might

[1] *The Spirit of Enthusiasm Exorcis'd*, pp. 368 sqq.

[2] *Edward Irving and his Circle*, by Andrew Drummond.

find Peel and Coleridge among your fellow worshippers. You might criticize him as a man too wedded to his own opinion, with an over-developed sense of the dramatic, but of his natural gifts there was no question. It was, however, supernatural gifts that he craved; he had been engaged, with a little group of friends, in studying the prophecies, and, like so many others, had fallen under the spell of chiliasm. Was he unconsciously influenced by the fact that an anniversary of the Crucifixion was approaching? We can only offer it as a guess; on the other hand, it is fairly clear that the times in which he lived had something to do with it. The Albury Group (so he and his friends were called) had come to the conclusion that the 1,260 days mentioned in Apoc. xi. 3 represented the years between the appearance of Justinian's Digest and the execution of Louis XVI;[1] evidently (in 1830) the last days were upon them. Irving, like many enthusiasts, was politically of the extreme right; he identified the newly founded University of London as the Synagogue of Satan,[2] and the passing of the Reform Bill must have confirmed his fears and hopes. He prayed openly for the return of the Pentecostal gifts, and the news from Clydeside seemed an evident answer to his prayer. A deputation from London went down to investigate the phenomena and seem to have carried the torch back with them. Glossolaly began in Irving's congregation; and before long, to the scandal of many but to his own delight, his sermons were interrupted by prophets who rose and uttered their message, sometimes intelligibly, sometimes by the use of 'tongues'.

If theology is endemic north of the Tweed, revivalism is an exotic; Wesley, for all the veneration in which the Scots held him, could not enlist them in the cause of 'heart-work'. Yet it was among Campbells and Macdonalds that the new movement arose; an Irving, a Drummond, an Erskine were among its earliest patrons. It is fair to add that the general reactions of the Presbytery were unfavourable; that Irving was relieved of his charge, and deprived of his ministry, a year or two later; and that the 'Catholic Apostolic Church' took no root in Scottish soil. Meanwhile, what was the nature of the manifestations themselves?

St. Paul, in a well-known passage, refers to 'the tongues of men and of angels'. The expression—which may, however, be purely rhetorical—has been understood as meaning that there are two

[1] Drummond, op. cit., p. 134. [2] Ibid., p. 120.

separate forms of glossolaly. The sounds uttered may be recognized, with some good will on the part of the auditors, as belonging to some known family of human languages; if so we are listening to 'the tongues of men'. Or they may be, humanly, quite meaningless; in which case it is only charitable to assume that the tongues must be those used by angels. It is commonly the energumen's own impression that he is talking in a foreign language he has never learned, but capable of being interpreted, without further miracle, by a trained linguist. We have seen[1] that the Chevalier Folard was credited, on slender grounds, with talking Slavonic. Mary Campbell announced that she was speaking in Turkish, or in the language of the Pelew Islands,[2] and thought of going out to convert the heathen by this means.[3] They took fewer risks than Mr. Lacy, the adherent of the French prophets, who discoursed at large in Latin, and is reproved by Nathaniel Spinckes for crediting the Holy Spirit with a large number of solecisms in that language, duly set out in a footnote.[4]

It must be confessed, however, that the characteristic specimens of Irvingite glossolaly which have been preserved to us are beyond the reach of any lexicon. Such utterances as 'Hippo gerosto niparos boorastin farini O fastor sungor boorinos epoongos menati', or 'Hey amei hassan alla do hoc alors loore has heo massan amor ho ti prov his aso me',[5] hardly bear out the claim that 'the languages are distinct, well-inflected, well-compacted languages'.[6] The philology of another world does not abide our question, but if we are to judge these results by merely human standards, we must admit that a child prattles no less convincingly.

It was easy for the cynic to infer that the whole notion of 'angelic tongues' was a mere subterfuge of propaganda. 'After much diligent inquiry, no satisfactory evidence could be found that it was a *real language* spoken by any portion of mankind. It was then concluded to be, in the literal sense of the expression, an *unknown tongue*, and viewed merely as a sign of the Holy Ghost.'[7] But it is doubtful whether the imputation is justified. Mary Campbell is an unprepossessing witness at the best of times, and it looks as if the Macdonald

[1] See p. 380 above. [2] Drummond, op. cit., p. 146. [3] Ibid., p. 148.
[4] *The Spirit of Enthusiasm Exorcis'd*, p. 387.
[5] Drummond, op. cit., p. 170. [6] Quotation from Erskine, ibid., p. 143.
[7] *Cyclopaedia of Religious Denominations*, p. 262.

brothers did not expect their utterances to be interpreted by any natural means. James Macdonald 'when repeating over the concluding words of what he had spoken in the tongue, which were *disco capito*, said, And this is the interpretation: The shout of a king is among them'.[1] As for Irving himself, a curious anecdote of him makes his position abundantly clear.

It seems that a certain Mr. Pilkington attended the Regent Square church, and was so carried away by the atmosphere of it that he broke out into prophecy himself. But he was something of a linguist, and thought he could translate some of the phrases he had heard used by other speakers. He identified *Gthis dil emma sumo* as meaning 'I will undertake this dilemma'; *Hozehamenanostra* as 'Jesus in the highest will take care of this house'; *Holimoth holif awthaw* as 'Holy, most holy Father', and *Casa sera hastha caro* as 'the house will be in my care'. He does not seem to have displayed great ingenuity, but no doubt he expected Irving to be pleased by his disclosures. Instead of that he was severely lectured on the impiety of attempting to interpret the unknown tongues when you were not 'in the Spirit'.[2] Evidently Irving and his colleagues regarded the interpretation of tongues, no less than the tongues themselves, as dictated by 'the Power' to certain 'Gifted Persons' without any appeal to the understanding.

The gift of tongues, when so understood, loses its main evidential value; nobody who is present in a merely inquiring spirit will be impressed by the sight of A talking gibberish and B saying the gibberish means this and that. But I doubt if Irving thought of the tongues as evidential in that sense. Rather, he seems to have valued them because they gave people fresh opportunities of exercising faith; you were to leave your 'understanding' behind when you entered the doors of Regent Square. 'It is most useful for thee, in order to get the better of thine unbelief and irreverence, to abate thy trust in thine own understanding.'[3] If there had been only prophesying, however impressive were the manner of it, you could not deny that the content of it was rather trite, and for the most part a mere re-hash of Scripture texts. But when men and women got so carried away as to be frankly unintelligible, you could see (that, I think, was his argument) that they must be actuated by some Force wholly out of the common.

[1] Drummond, op. cit., p. 144. [2] Ibid., pp. 170–8. [3] Ibid., p. 161.

Whether you found the performance impressive was, I suppose, a matter of temperament. Carlyle certainly did not; 'one of the prophetesses, a woman on the verge of derangement, started up and began to speak with tongues, and, as the thing was encouraged by Irving, three or four fresh hands started up in the evening. Whereupon the whole congregation got into foul uproar, some groaning, some laughing, some shrieking, not a few falling into swoons—more like a Bedlam than a Christian Church.' Nor was he mollified by witnessing a close-up view of the *afflatus*: 'He forced us up into a back room, and we could hear the wretched creature raving, like one possessed; hooing and haaing, and talking as sensibly as one would do with a pint of brandy in his stomach, till after some ten minutes she seemed to grow tired, and became silent.'[1] It seems clear that there was a violence about the manifestations which, although it impressed believers, outraged the feelings of an unfriendly critic. 'I went at 6 a.m. to Mr. Irving's. . . . It was full, containing at least seven hundred. . . . An awful stillness prevailed for about five minutes. Suddenly an appalling shriek seemed to rend the roof, which was repeated with heart-chilling effect. I grasped involuntarily the book-desk before me; and then, suddenly, a torrent of unintelligible words, for about five minutes, followed by *Why will ye not repent? Why will ye not repent?*'[2] And again: 'The whole was uttered in a tone of varied cadence, but so loud, revolting, and unnatural (not *unearthly*) that it operated on me like a shock from which I could not immediately recover.'[3] There is virtue in that distinction, 'unnatural, not unearthly'; the Irvingite ecstasy seems just to have failed in its purpose, just to have overshot the mark. You did not, like the scoffers on the day of Pentecost, diagnose mere drunkenness. What you heard had the disturbing effect of lunacy.

The prophecies themselves, if the account given of them is textual, must have been sufficiently shattering.

Oh, grieve him not! Oh, grieve not your Father! Rest in his love! Oh, rejoice in your Father's love! Oh, rejoice in the love of Jesus! In the love of Jesus! Oh, for it passeth knowledge! Oh, the length, oh, the breath, oh the height, oh, the depth of the love of Jesus! Oh, it passeth knowledge! Oh, rejoice in the love of Jesus! Oh, sinner, for what, for what, what, oh, sinner, what can separate, separate, separate from the love of Jesus? Oh, nothing,

[1] Ibid., p. 169. [2] Ibid., p. 167. [3] Ibid., p. 166.

nothing! Oh, none can pluck you out of his hands! Oh, none shall be able to pluck you out of your Father's hand!'

Such were the interruptions while Irving actually discoursed; and afterwards, when notice was given of a service at which admission would be by ticket only, a Member of Parliament chimed in: 'Ah, be ye warned, be ye warned! Ye have been warned! . . . Be faithful each under his load, each under his load; but see that ye build with one hand, and with a weapon in the other. Look to it! Look to it! Ye have been warned! Ah, Sanballat, Sanballat, Sanballat! The Horonite, the Moabite, the Ammonite! Ah, confederate, confederate with the Horonite.'[1] All this in the time of our grandfathers; given the proper atmosphere, would our own nerves be proof against the hypnotizing effect of those insistent repetitions?

The suddenness of these outbreaks must have been less felt if you were sitting in the immediate neighbourhood of the energumen. Sometimes, at least, they seem to have worked themselves up to prophesy, in a disconcertingly mediumistic fashion. This is Pilkington's description of it:

> Her whole frame was in violent agitation, but principally the body from the hips to the shoulders, which worked with a lateral motion. The chest heaved and swelled, the head was occasionally raised from the right arm, which was placed on the forehead, while the left hand and arm seemed to press and rub the stomach. She was but a few seconds in this state when the body swayed, the neck became stiff, the head erect; the hands fell on the lap, the mouth assumed a circular form, the lips projected, and the Tongue and English came from her in an awful tone.[2]

The behaviour of the French prophets was even more out of the common, as we have seen; Wesley is our authority for it. 'Presently after, she leaned back in her chair, and seemed to have strong workings in her breast, with deep sighings intermixed. Her head and hands, and, by turns, every part of her body, seemed also to be in a kind of convulsive motion. This continued about ten minutes, till, at six, she began to speak.'[3] The symptoms, in this case, are more definitely hysterical; but the Irvingite prophetess, in her turn, clearly disposed herself for ecstasy.

Prophecy, in the Church at Corinth, seems to have been something quite separate from the gift of tongues; by implication you would

[1] Mrs. Oliphant's *Life of Irving*, quoted in Blunt's *Dictionary of Sects*, pp. 231, 232.
[2] Drummond, op. cit., p. 167. [3] *Journal*, 28/1/39.

gather from St. Paul that it was unusual for the same person to be endowed with both charismata. Rather unexpectedly, the revivalist movements which claim to be a throw-back to Pentecost break away from this tradition; prophecy and glossolaly seem to merge and alternate. We have already found the Camisard, Marion Fage, announcing: 'Je m'en vais répandre sur mes ennemis mes jugements terribles, et ma dernière sentence sera, Tring trang, swing swang, hing hang.'[1] Similar accounts are given of Mormon ecstasies, a little later than Irving's time: 'My heart is glad to overflowing; I hope to go to Sion and to see you there, and to . . . to . . . O, me sontro von te, sontro von terre. O, me palasate te . . .' and so on.[2] At Regent Square the same alternation is noticeable, although in the instances cited the unknown tongue comes first, the prophecy afterwards. (Irving himself calculated that the prophecy predominated in a ratio of at least four to one.)[3] If we are disposed to give a psychological account of the whole matter, I suppose we shall say that the energumens, with more or less of deliberate effort, allowed the unconscious mind to get the upper hand (Mary Campbell practised automatic writing, as well as prophecy),[4] and their speech ceased to be intelligible as often as it outran their stock of biblical phrases and other remembered sentences.

Irving died, a young man, in 1834. The 'Catholic Apostolic Church', with its strange experiment of putting old wine into new bottles, was his monument, but not his creation. Meanwhile, the Tongues have reappeared at intervals; they belonged to the official Mormon programme,[5] and you find them in Germany, India, and China, but more noticeably at Chicago.[6] Only it is all on the Ebenezer level; you cannot recapture the past. *Vixere fortes*; in Irving you had a man of prophetic calibre, whose fall from nature was worthy to be lamented by a Thomas Carlyle. He had much in common with another great contemporary, John Henry Newman. Either had the same reactions to the Age of Reform; either foresaw, and branded as apostasy, our modern preoccupation with politics. Could Irving, if he had been less sure of himself, less credulous, have counteracted the swing away from the charismatic to the institutional

[1] Smedley, *History of the Reformed Religion in France*, iii. 309, note.
[2] Drummond, op. cit., p. 261. [3] Ibid., p. 162. [4] Ibid., p. 141.
[5] *Cyclopaedia of Religious Denominations*, p. 293.
[6] Drummond, op. cit., pp. 286–93.

which came in with the Oxford Movement? Or would he, too, have been carried away? His voice is lost to us, shouted down by the importunacy of his own catechumens.

(ii) *The Persistence of Shakerism*

So far we have concerned ourselves little with the farther side of the Atlantic. Not for us to thread our way through the uncharted jungle of sects which, in that favoured climate, has flourished so luxuriantly. Consider—the Pilgrim Fathers, the Catholics of Maryland, the exiled Huguenots had blazed the trail for other spiritual adventurers. Once you had landed, safe from the storm and prelates' rage, a vast continent stretched before you; and if your neighbours did not like you—commonly they did not—you had only to stake out your claim on some hitherto uncultivated region, build there your New Jerusalem, and wait quietly for the Second Advent. In fifty years' time you had become an immemorial landmark, and reporters were crowding round to write up your old-world seclusion. It would have been tempting to say something in this book about the Mormons; but who can feel certain that the founders of the movement were at any time in good faith? Oneida Creek, too, might be supposed to fall within the limits of our subject. Its atmosphere is elaborately described by Mr. Pierrepoint Noyes, who was born and spent his childhood there.[1] A child, I think, can be happy anywhere; but the grown-ups—did the privileges of communal marriage compensate them, in fact, for such a drab existence? There was more fun to be had, you feel, in the cloistered shades of Mount Lebanon. The Shakers for us!

The origins of their bizarre culture were, at least, European. As we have seen, it was (of all strange experiments in theological fertilization) a cross between Quakerism and the fanaticism of the Cevennes. James and Jane Wardley belonged to the Society of Friends; and it was perhaps under the pleonastic title of 'Shaking Quakers' that they first became known to their unenthusiastic fellow citizens in Manchester. It was as the spiritual descendants of George Fox, not (heaven knows) of Jean Cavalier, that the United Society of Believers, in the crucial hour of American history, were exempted from military service. What they got from the other side of their ancestry is less certain; the devotional dance which was their best-

[1] *My Father's House*, by Pierrepoint Noyes, 1937.

known characteristic may have come down to them, indirectly, from the antics of the Camisards. But the movement, whatever its early genius, did not take shape all at once; it was a society 'without any established creed, or particular mode of worship, professing perfect resignment, to be led and governed, from time to time, as the Spirit of God might dictate'.[1]

Such a *tabula rasa* as this exactly suited the temperament of a convert who joined them in 1758, Ann Lee. It does not appear that she was a woman of any great spiritual originality. You might have traced in her the influence of Antoinette Bourignon, but that the negative theology of each (both denied the Trinity, the Atonement, and the doctrine of grace) was what you would have expected of a rather stupid woman trying to reinterpret Christian dogma. The conviction that she was a new, female Messiah was more unexpected; yet even here an exactly similar claim was made by another Quakeress, Jemima Wilkinson, in 1786.[2] So disconnected, so departmentalized was the America of those days that it was possible for two female Messiahs, each with her own following, to be accommodated in New York State without either (it seems) having ever heard of the other. Like Mother Ann's settlement at Mount Lebanon, Jemima Wilkinson's settlement in Yates county was conducted on strictly celibate lines. They differed, however, in their blue-prints of the future; Jemima Wilkinson believed, until 1820, and some of her followers believed even after her death in that year, that she was immortal; for Mother Ann the millennium had begun in 1770, and her promise was that there would be 'a great increase and permanent establishment of the Church' on American soil.[3]

Her departure, at the head of eight fellow emigrants, was due to a revelation. The new gospel seemed to make no headway in Manchester, and even came in for persecution. Some of her statements—as, that she was imprisoned by the authorities for a whole fortnight without food, and lived on milk and wine introduced by one of her followers through a pipe in the wall;[4] that she was interrogated by four clergymen, and answered them in seventy different languages[5]—do not altogether produce conviction. But

[1] *Cyclopaedia of Religious Denominations*, p. 279.
[2] Strachey, *Religious Fanaticism*, pp. 48, 49.
[3] *Cyclopaedia of Religious Denominations*, p. 280.
[4] Melcher, *The Shaker Adventure* (Princeton, 1941), p. 12.
[5] *Ency. Brit.* (11th edn.), s.v. 'Shakers'.

whatever be the truth about this, it is admitted that for two years before she sailed she had been left quite unmolested.[1] The little band of adventurers went out, not as refugees, but as missionaries. With a ship's company no larger, Noë had saved the world.

Rather surprisingly, they made converts; perhaps it would be more accurate to say that converts joined them; they entered into other men's labours. The War of Independence was followed by an age of revivalism; religious excitement rose to fever heat, and before it had simmered down it was natural that some of the froth should boil over into the enthusiastic sects that were ready to receive it. The revival at New Lebanon (N.Y.) in 1779 'was not dissimilar to the meetings held by the Wardleys in England. Some who attended confessed their sins aloud, crying for mercy; some went into a trance-like state in which they saw visions and received prophecies of Christ's imminent second coming.'[2] The Shakers, with their assurance that the millennium had already come, with their strict code, with their bouts of spiritual dancing, offered a permanent home to some of the converts; not least to Joseph Meacham, a Baptist minister who joined the Society at this time and became, in 1787, its third founder. It was possible, now, to form Shaker settlements up and down the country, living by a communistic and celibate rule; the first eleven of these dated from the period 1787–94.

At the beginning of the new century a fresh wave of revivalism broke over the country, unexampled, perhaps, in its religious history. You read of people

> trembling, weeping and swooning away, till every appearance of life was gone, and the extremities of the body assumed the coldness of a corpse. At one meeting not less than a thousand persons fell to the ground apparently without sense or motion. . . . Towards the close of this commotion, viz. about the year 1803, convulsions became prevalent. . . . The rolling exercise consisted in doubling the head and feet together, and rolling over and over like a hoop.[3] . . . The jerks consisted in violent twitches and contortions of the body in all its parts. . . . When attacked by the jerks, the victims of enthusiasm sometimes leaped like frogs, and exhibited every grotesque and hideous contortion of the face and limbs. The barks consisted in getting down on all fours, growling, snapping the teeth, and barking like dogs.[4]

[1] Melcher, op. cit., p. 14. [2] Ibid., p. 21.
[3] Cf. the Jansenist convulsions, p. 377 above.
[4] Cf. the Jansenist convulsions, p. 381 above.

Sometimes numbers of the people squatted down, and, looking in the face of the minister, continued demurely barking at him while he preached to them. These last were particularly gifted in prophecies, trances, dreams, rhapsodies, visions of angels, of heaven, and of the holy city.[1]

Men and women fell in such numbers that it became impossible for the multitude to move about without trampling them, and they were hurried to the meeting-house. At no time was the floor less than half covered.[2]

The preachers would at times creep along the ground, crying out that they were the old serpent who had tempted Eve, and exhorting their hearers to agonize and be saved.[3]

Such, in Kentucky at least, was the pattern of the revival. It is hardly a matter for surprise that the Presbyterian Synod were for quenching the spirit; there was the usual schism between the old lights and the new, and some, though not all, of the rebels found their way into the Shaker camp. The leader of these, Richard McNemar, was one of the most useful converts the sect ever made, and a fresh age of prosperity followed, during which eight more settlements were made, and the total of them reached its peak of nineteen. Everywhere the same model was observed; the neophyte must give up his property absolutely to the common funds; men and women lived in the same establishment, but curtained off from one another by a variety of prudent regulations; they worked incessantly, and became especially well known for the excellence of their hand-made furniture.

The year 1837 is a mysterious landmark in the history of Shakerism. Hitherto, the religious dancing which was their only act of public worship invited the inspection of the outside world. But 'the manifestations of the Spiritual Revival of 1837 were so extreme in many communities that they excited the ridicule of the onlookers, and brought about the closing of the Church doors against non-believers'.[4] It must be confessed that the Shakers had always been, as the Abbé Bremond would have said, *quelque peu bizarres*. Read, for example, John Cotton's account of his conversion: 'The power of God came upon me, filling my soul and controlling my whole being. It raised me from my chair, and under its influence I turned around swiftly for the space of half an hour.' He was whirled down to the shore of the lake and back again; 'this was a seal to my faith

[1] H. Caswall, *Prophet of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1843), pp. 5–7.
[2] Melcher, op. cit., p. 62.
[3] Strachey, op. cit., p. 50.
[4] Melcher, op. cit., p. 225.

and a baptism of the Holy Spirit'.[1] Or watch two of the community riding up and down the streets of Lebanon, waving their hats and pronouncing the Shaker curse on it.[2] All this is in the good old Anabaptist tradition; in the decade 1837–47 it is replaced by an atmosphere of mystery-making and conspiracy. Ever since 1830 a rival enthusiasm, that of the Mormons, had been making itself felt; Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon (a revivalist of the same school as Richard McNemar) had been propagating the fantastic story of a book written on gold plates by an angel, which contained a new revelation to mankind.[3] And now the Shakers produced a *Sacred and Divine Roll and Book* (1843), in obvious imitation of it; stones, too, with prophetic inscriptions on them were conveniently 'discovered' in the various Shaker settlements, and fenced off with much parade of sanctity.[4] It is impossible to resist the impression that the wisdom of the serpent had replaced, among Ann Lee's followers, the harmlessness of the dove.

More curious, and not less baffling, is the outbreak at this time of spiritualist phenomena. 'This development', writes Mrs. Strachey, 'which did not arise among them till fifty years after their founder's death, preceded by a few years . . . the popular outburst of spiritualism in the world outside; but whether it was the cause of the phenomenon, or merely a part of it, it is hard to be sure.'[5] What seems certain is that during the ten years immediately preceding 1848 (the year of the Hydesville phenomena) a series of spirit-messages were said to have come through from Mother Ann,[6] and spirit-drawings, of no very sensational character, were prized as keepsakes in the community.[7] More perilously, they invited mediums to pronounce on the fitness or unfitness of members to hold office,[8] unconsciously reviving the old conflict between official leadership and the prophetic ministry which had done ill service to their Camisard ancestors.

What induced the hierophants of the movement to break fresh ground? They felt, perhaps, that it was becoming standardized, institutionalized, almost a museum-piece. The Shaker costume was in a sense a parody of the Quaker costume; it dated only from 1830,[8] and was an archaism, not a true survival. More significantly, the dancing which was, in the world's eyes, the *raison d'être* of the sect

[1] Melcher, op. cit., pp. 36, 37. [2] Ibid., p.145. [3] Caswall, op. cit., pp. 63 sqq.
[4] Melcher, op. cit., p. 249. [5] Op. cit., p. 46. [6] *Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Shakers'.
[7] Melcher, op. cit., p. 218. [8] Ibid., p. 153.

developed into a kind of ritual dance with prescribed figures, shown off to the outside world and appreciated as a show. 'At a given signal, the singers began, rising on their toes and swinging both arms in time to the song. Then the procession started to move around and around in perfect rhythm with the singing and the gestures.'[1] That was the impression made on a sympathetic spectator; it was possible to give a more critical account of the whole performance.

> Twelve of the company arranged themselves in two lines, back to back, in the centre of the apartment, . . . singing in a loud voice some doggrel verses to a very lively tune:
>
> I love to dance and love to sing,
> And oh! I love my Maker;
> I love to dance and love to sing,
> And love to be a Shaker, etc.
>
> The several couples, perpetually smiling or giggling at each other, and flapping their hands in mid air, accompanied this strange kind of psalmody by a quick but monotonous shuffling of their feet, being an apology for a dance. This grotesque scene was prolonged to an hour and a half.[2]

With all their differences, the two accounts agree in describing a regularized, concerted movement; the thing has become a fixed observance.

It was not always so. By good fortune we have an earlier account which seems to date from the very moment when dancing had begun to pass out of the charismatic into the institutional stage; it is dated 1847, and the unnamed author of it was a Shaker.[3] 'It will be difficult to describe all the various modes of exercise given in the worship of God at different times; because the operations of the Spirit are so various, that even the leaders are unable to tell beforehand what manner will be given by the Spirit in the next meeting. Yet, in a regular meeting, where nothing extraordinary appears, they sometimes exercise in a regular dance . . . in harmony with regular songs sung on the occasion.' The figure-dance, it will be seen, is still regarded as a kind of *pis aller*, useful only when there is no sudden afflatus to produce a more spontaneous manifestation.

That earlier and more spontaneous manifestation was, it seems clear, of the convulsionary sort. 'It consisted in a holy marching and dancing, accompanied by . . . outbursts of gibberish, believed

[1] Ibid., p. 225. [2] *Notes and Queries*, quoted in Blunt's *Dictionary of Sects*, p. 559.
[3] *Cyclopaedia of Religious Denominations*, p. 280.

to be inspired utterances. . . . When there were seasons of revival, or outbursts of spiritualistic fever, they rolled violently upon the ground, and shook and quivered with the inrush of the spirit.'[1] One account represents them as keeping half an hour's silence, at the end of which some of them fell into convulsions. The ritual dance followed, and took the form of hopping at a height of about four inches from the ground. But it was sometimes more spectacular; a woman Shaker was known to whirl round on her heel for half an hour (like M. Fontaine, the convulsionary) so rapidly as to be indistinguishable.[2]

A very unfriendly description, from personal experience, is given in Dwight's *Travels*, under the year 1783, when he was snowed up at a Shaker settlement.

> They believed themselves to be under the immediate guidance of the Spirit, made known to them by an involuntary extension of the right arm, which they followed (one man being thus directed to a hog-trough, where he regaled himself). In their worship they sang in an *unknown tongue*; it was a succession of unmeaning sounds, frequently repeated, half-articulated, and plainly gotten by heart, for they all uttered the same sound in succession (tune, *Mary Dawson*). They practised many contortions of the body and distortions of the countenance. The gesticulations of the women were violent, and have been practised so often and in such a degree as to have fixed their features in an unnatural position; made them goggle-eyed, suffused their eyes with blood, covered their faces with sickly paleness. . . . I observed that the sounds could not be words, as they were not articulate. One woman replied, *How dost thee know, but that we speak the Hotmatot language?*[3]

Whatever changes may have affected the Shaker body by the middle of the nineteenth century, it is plain that they were not yet on the decline. There lies before me as I write a curious volume called *Cyclopaedia of Religious Denominations*.[4] The title is misleading; only twenty-two are in fact thought worthy of mention in 1853, and the Shakers are among them. It is doubtful whether their whole strength at any time exceeded 6,000, yet here they are; evidently they had *réclame*. Thirty years before, Coleridge had written: 'The Essenians for several generations subsisted by adop-

[1] Strachey, op. cit., p. 46. [2] Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes religieuses*, v. 202–5.

[3] Quoted, in part, by Blunt's *Encyclopaedia of Sects*, p. 559, and in part by Drummond, op. cit., p. 286.

[4] Published by John Joseph Griffin, Glasgow, 1853.

tion; we shall see if the Shakers continue so long.'[1] Here, it seemed, was the answer to his question; the Shakers, by their own account, could show 'a gradual increase of numbers in the various branches of the community, which are in a general state of prosperity, both temporally and spiritually'. But the summit of Shaker fortunes had been reached already. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century their numbers were steadily dwindling, and four settlements had to be closed down; by 1940 only three were left out of the nineteen, to be the almshouses of a failing population. What governs these ups and downs in the history of a small sect? Its life has always depended on conversions; why, with its *outré* pattern of life, should it ever make converts at all? And if it does, why should it steadily increase for seventy-five years, and for the next seventy-five years steadily decline?

The Shaker settlements, like Oneida Creek, were microcosms that had a commercial life of their own; and, if you will, you may trace their downfall, in the modern fashion, to economic causes. A community that goes in for village industries can support itself by good workmanship, until the fatal day when it has to compete with mass-production. Shaker furniture to-day is prized by the collector; but there is no such demand for it as there was in the older times, when a chair was a thing not to be looked at but to be sat on. With the loss of commercial goodwill goes a loss of publicity, and perhaps the Shaker legend does not appeal to men's minds as it did. But, behind all that, more intimate causes will have been at work. Enthusiasm does not maintain itself at fever heat; dance as you will, flap your hands as you will, you cannot conjure up the old days when people rolled on the floor in agonies of convincement, and talked in strange sounds which might, for all they knew, be the language of the Hotmatots. Meanwhile, the fundamental theology of the Shakers, like that of the Quakers from whom they descended, was largely a negative thing; they revolted from the theologizings of the older sects, and failed to provide themselves with such a corpus of doctrine as should resist, in more sophisticated days, the encroachments of rationalism.

But there is worse. The Shaker fortunes, as we have seen, were built up against a background of revivalism; the sect, you might almost say, was a kind of rain-gauge, which attested the strength of

[1] Quoted in *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'Shakers'.

the revival movement by swallowing its overflow. In 1779, in 1801, and again in the early thirties, there was an atmosphere propitious to enthusiasm; and Shakerism throve. If, afterwards, it languished, may we not suspect that it languished for lack of revivals, comparable with the old? Revivals there have been, and still are, but not flooding the whole country-side as they used to; and there is no overflow on Mount Lebanon. It remains, not a dew-pond that has unaccountably dried up, but a rock pool left high and dry where the ocean has receded.

(iii) *Perfectionism*

As the spirit of prophecy, cultivated in the early Church, led to the abuses of Montanism; as the prevalence of Catholic mysticism and the doctrine of 'disinterested Love' in the seventeenth century led to the abuses of Quietism; so, early in the nineteenth century, the great enthusiastic movement which begins with the Methodists and continues with the Evangelicals led to the abuses of Perfectionism. Abuses, in this case, all the more dangerous and all the harder to deal with, because Perfectionism grew up against a background of free Protestantism, which had neither authority to rebuke it, nor theology to interpret it, nor machinery to regulate it. It was an exaggeration, a caricature of the Evangelical standpoint; of its conviction that salvation is something to be achieved here and now, that all things are made new to him who is reborn in Christ. To the enemies of enthusiasm, this exaggeration of the Evangelical spirit was also its nemesis; they told one another that they had always seen this coming. . . . Perfectionism, doubtless to some extent misreported, and suggesting ribald suspicions to the mind of the worldly critic, did much, like Montanism and Quietism before it, to bring disrepute upon enthusiasm generally. Ebel, Prince, and Noyes were names which could be quoted against any enthusiastic movement, like John of Leyden's exactly three centuries before.

A strange heresy [writes the historian of the Evangelical movement][1] had broken out in many places, combining a fierce revivalist fervour with shameless immorality. In Eastern Prussia, Lutheran pastors were found to be secretly teaching doctrines which caused their leaders to be sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. In England a little group of clergy had seceded from the church, and formed the disgusting sect of the Agapemonites.

[1] Balleine, *History of the Evangelical Party*, p. 303.

In America sect after sect had sprung up . . ., and half a dozen weekly papers were spreading their pernicious doctrines. Their method was sanctification run mad. They urged their converts to stand up and profess sanctification, then and there to yield their bodies to the Holy Ghost, and to believe that from that moment they would never sin again. . . . The Christian, they said, must walk by faith. He must cast away every safeguard invented by man, from his temperance pledge to his marriage vows. He must always remember that he is free from the law, free alike from the Ten Commandments and from the law of the land, free from all engagements undertaken in his unconsecrated state, free to yield to all his impulses, for they are now the impulses of the Holy Ghost.

So far an unfriendly critic; and no critic can be more unfriendly than one who is discussing a *reductio ad absurdum* of his own doctrines, which has given occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. I do not suggest for a moment that Mr. Balleine is intentionally unfair, or that the picture he draws is darker than the picture which would be drawn by most disinterested critics. But a more sympathetic judgement is possible; and was attempted in a book which should certainly rank among the curiosities of literature, *Spiritual Wives*, by W. Hepworth Dixon.[1] This book is a study of perfectionism in the three countries, conducted as far as possible at first hand; its author is a journalist before his time, who is for ever beginning his story in the middle, and jumping from period to period in a way that makes the legitimate historian blaspheme. He cannot be accused of partiality towards the enthusiasts whose doings he records, for he has a full Middle-Victorian distrust of any such quality. But he has a queer streak of philosophy, which makes him read into the sayings of Tertullian, or the stories told of the Beghards, or his own interviews with Prince and Noyes, Platonic speculations from the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. By his way of it southern Europe and the Catholic Church are too ready to identify love with the functions of marriage; dwell too much on its physical aspect, as designed for the perpetuation of the human species, too little on the spiritual, etherial side of it. (One thinks of Dante.) Northern Europe and Protestantism are haunted, instead, with the vision of a love which transcends and leaves on one side the functions of sex, concentrates on the mating together, in perfect friendship, of two souls which are 'spiritual affinities' to each other. Hence, though he does not

[1] Hurst and Blackett, 1868.

discredit or condone some of the graver charges made against the Perfectionists, he claims that the ideal with which they set out was not antinomian defiance of common morality, but a complete sublimation of sex which, if logically carried out, would end in the suicide of the human race.

Ebel was a native of East Prussia, born in 1784. A favourite preacher, with the ladies especially, he obtained preferment in the Lutheran Church despite certain odd, Pantheistic doctrines he had picked up from a wandering preacher who claimed to be the Paraclete; he was in charge of the Aldstadt church at Königsberg. The perfectionist movement there initiated by his devotees is curiously reminiscent of Montanism. There is the same outbreak of chiliastic speculation; Ebel expected the Coming of our Lord at Easter, 1823, and prepared for it by a marriage-feast which proved, naturally, a fiasco. There is the same distrust of 'carnal' wisdom, it was the University that chiefly opposed Ebel; and he may well have thought of himself as undoing, in theology, the work of Kant. There is the same prominence of women; like Montanus's prophetesses, the female converts of the group ranked next to the leader himself. Especially they seem to have exercised a most indiscreet form of ministry in acting as confessors to men. It was through resentment of their inquisitorial methods that Sachs, a university professor who had been attracted by the movement, broke away from it, and laid charges against Ebel and his assistants which led to their condemnation in Berlin. Ebel was deprived of his benefice, and sentenced to confinement in a public institution. The death of Frederick William III, and the succession of a king with strong Pietist sympathies, prevented the second half of the sentence from being carried out, and a newly appointed court cleared Ebel's name without restoring him to his office; he died in retirement in 1861.

English perfectionism came from a group of earnest students at St. David's Theological College, Lampeter, among whom was Henry Prince, the founder of the Agapemone. He experienced 'conversion', and as a revivalist preacher had successes, and made trouble, wherever he went. He withdrew from his Anglican ministrations with several companions, including his former vicar, whose daughter he had married; the whole group went to live in a Somersetshire country-house, the purchase of which Prince contrived by marrying off three sisters, heiresses of a considerable

fortune, to three of his own followers. It is not surprising that scandal grew busy over such a career; the more so as the free use of the words 'brother' and 'sister' among a group of married couples, with the description of their house as 'The Abode of Love', inevitably suggested an experiment in communal marriage. The England of that day—Prince was ordained in the thirties—was not sympathetic to such ideas. But all attempts to dislodge the Brethren from their fastness were unavailing; and there was still a community of about sixty living at Spaxton when Hepworth Dixon visited it in 1867.

The American movement was more sporadic, and does not so easily connect itself with any single biography, although John Noyes, founder of the community at Oneida Creek, was its most distinguished prophet. It began with revivalist meetings at the village of Manlius in 1834. The young women of the district forswore matrimony, and formed 'spiritual' unions with the faithful of the opposite sex; preserving chastity, although sometimes openly contemptuous of decency. There is a directness about American manhood which does not always wait for legal action, and it was not long before two ministers were (for good reason) tarred and feathered. How common, among the 'Pauline church', were lapses from the difficult standard they had set before themselves it is needless to inquire. In the end, the survivors of the movement seceded, like the Mormons, from the general society of their time, and in 1846 founded a settlement of their own, on Christian-Communist lines, at Oneida Creek.

Hepworth Dixon calls attention to the extraordinary simultaneity of these outbreaks.

> Archdeacon Ebel, the chief founder of Muckerism, announced the year 1836 as the opening year of the personal reign of Christ; in that year the Revd. Henry James Prince became a student of divinity, founded the order of the Lampeter Brethren, and received his pretended gift of the Holy Ghost; and 'Father' Noyes published the famous paper known as the Battle-axe Letter. . . . Noyes had never heard of Ebel, and Prince had never heard of Noyes.[1]

This is, indeed, a form of statement which conceals the priority in time, of Ebel over Noyes and of Noyes over Prince. But it remains true that there is no *post hunc ergo propter hunc* about the succession. In three different centres, it would appear, independently the same

[1] *Spiritual Wives*, i. 86.

genuine revivalist movement, then sweeping the Protestant countries, gave birth to this monstrosity of Perfectionism. It is difficult not to believe that perfectionism is a danger to which revivalist groups are perpetually liable, a bastard growth which crops up wherever their inspirations are sufficiently untended.

The note of chiliasm is present in all three movements. Ebel, as we have seen, prophesied the Second Advent; Prince, as we shall see, believed that it had already happened. Mary Lincoln, after the scandals at Brimfield, believed and persuaded some of her friends to believe that the town 'would be burnt with fire, like the cities of the plain . . . and that all who would save themselves alive must fly with her to the top of a neighbouring hill'.[1] It is doubtful whether she was sane at this time, and it would be interesting to speculate on the psychological associations of the name 'Brimfield'; but the incident shows the atmosphere in which American perfectionism was cradled. The 'Battle-axe Letter' to which allusion has been made is a prophecy that a new kingdom is to be set up on earth, in which the existing laws governing the relations of the sexes will be abolished. I have suggested elsewhere that each centenary of the Crucifixion might be expected to create something of an eschatological atmosphere;[2] and no doubt the Napoleonic wars carried back the mind of the omen-monger to St. John's Apocalypse, like the European wars of our own times.

All three movements are obsessed with sex-consciousness. It was my experience, over thirty years ago, to travel in a railway carriage whose other occupants were clearly returning from some Sunday-school outing or other. Most were children; but the leader of the party was a young man who sat in the middle, either arm round a girl's neck. In this unconventional attitude, he led the singing with which they beguiled the journey. It consisted entirely of hymns or pious ditties, the most nauseating of which had the refrain:

A little talk with Jesus puts it right, all right.

No doubt they edified one another; but for myself I seemed to be looking back across the centuries to a time older than Christianity, when sex was part of the stuff of religion. The danger is notoriously present in all revivalism; even in mysticism, when the personality of a Madame Guyon crosses the stage. 'Religious love', writes Noyes to

[1] *Spiritual Wives*, ii. 32. [2] See p. 137.

Hepworth Dixon, in a letter whose cold-blooded tone would have branded him a hypocrite if he had been born on this side of the Atlantic,

> is very near to sexual love, and they always get mixed in the intimacies and social excitements of revivals. The next thing a man wants, after he has found the salvation of his soul, is to find his Eve and his Paradise. . . . Revivals lead to religious love; religious love excites the passions; the converts, finding themselves in theocratic liberty, begin to look about for their mates and their Paradise. Here begins divergence. If women have the lead, the feminine idea that ordinary wedded love is carnal and unholy rises and becomes a ruling principle. Mating on the spiritual plan, with all the heights and depths of sentimental love, becomes the order of the day. Then, if a prudent Mother Ann is at the head of affairs, the sexes are fenced off from each other, and carry on their Platonic intercourse through the grating. But if a wild Mary Lincoln or Lucina Umphreville is in the ascendant . . . the end is ruin. On the other hand, if the leaders are men, the theocratic impulse takes the opposite direction, and polygamy in some form is the result.[1]

Noyes (who is clearly talking here about what he knows) links together the desire for an Eve and the desire for an earthly Paradise, for a supernaturalized sex-life and a supernaturalized social order, as if the two went necessarily together. To him, as to the Anabaptists, it seemed evident that men and women regenerated by grace ought to live in a world regenerated by grace; there must be no divorce between spiritual and temporal, no compromise with unredeemed nature. More fortunate than the Anabaptists, he found himself in a country which was large enough to let its citizens live their own lives, in decently isolated conditions. If he felt that he wanted a perfect distribution of property, by all means let him go to Oneida Creek with such as would follow him, and let them share their property as they liked. He did well thus to withdraw himself, for in the Battle-axe Letter (a private letter published, without his permission, in the Philadelphia paper of that name) he had committed himself to a Communist doctrine of sex-relations—always, be it understood, in a community consisting only of the perfect. 'The marriage supper of the Lamb is a feast at which every dish is free to every guest. Exclusiveness, jealousy, quarrelling, have no place there. . . . I call a certain woman my wife; she is yours, she is Christ's,

[1] *Spiritual Wives*, ii. 177, 182.

and in him she is the bride of all saints.'[1] There was no lack of logic at Oneida Creek.

Archdeacon Ebel was the head of a pietistic group; he did not found an ideal community, though perhaps this would have come later. Henry Prince managed to shut himself and his followers off behind the park gates of the Spaxton Agapemone, but he did not found a community on socialistic lines. Rather, he would live in a supernaturalized country-house, with its green-baize door and its staff of servants; who, however, served entirely 'in love'—a phrase which prompts Dixon to the irreverent speculation whether they got any wages. But to Ebel and to Prince, as to Noyes, it seemed impossible that among the perfect there should be any such feeling as jealousy. The root idea of all three movements was the same; the experience of conversion, instead of meaning (as it has to other enthusiasts) that the sins of their past life were forgiven, or that their names were written in heaven, meant that for them all sin was, here and now and for ever, impossible. Prince, soon after his first marriage, 'as he told me himself, . . . died to the flesh, and was born a second time to the Spirit. He put off the old man, he discarded self, he ceased to commit sin, and even to be capable of sin'.[2] Similarly Mrs. Cragin (according to the flesh; spiritually she was the wife of the Rev. Abram Smith): 'I confess Christ in me a Saviour from all sin; I shall never sin again.'[3]

This claim to sinlessness is not to be interpreted in an antinomian sense, at least in the first days of a perfectionist movement. It is not that the believer can do what he likes, and everything he does will *ipso facto* be innocent. He has passed into the state in which the angels are; he lives in the Spirit, not in the flesh, and even the enjoyment of the married state has, henceforward, no claim on him and no appeal for him. 'The real followers of the new gospel' (so Dixon interprets Ebel's teaching) 'would be content not to marry; and if they were already married by the law, . . . they would prefer to live as if they were not. Desire was accounted a sign of the devil's empire in the heart. . . . In the true Church of the Saints, there would be no more births and no more deaths.'[4] The indiscretion and indecorum—to put it at the lowest—with which Ebel's converts behaved were deliberately calculated means towards this end. Man, according to Ebel, if he was to be fit to enter into the life of the

[1] *Spiritual Wives*, ii. 56. [2] Ibid. i. 271. [3] Ibid. ii. 116. [4] Ibid. i. 135.

coming Resurrection, 'must be purged from the lust of the heart and the pride of the eye. . . . In the presence of a living woman, he must be trained to feel as though he were standing by a wall of stone. His eye must be rendered cold, his pulse must be kept calm. . . . How far', adds Dixon, 'these lessons in the art of resisting beauty went, we do not absolutely know';[1] it must be admitted, at least, that such language was not likely to sound well in a law-court. The same dangerous principle inspired the more notorious indecencies practised at Brimfield; and the scandal caused was accepted by the ladies concerned as a kind of martyrdom. Noyes himself had prudently withdrawn, to avoid being implicated in it.[2] The recrudescence of such notions about the unholiness of the marriage bond, combined with the resolution to court scandal, instead of avoiding it, in the matter of sex relations, is a plunge back into the heresies of the Middle Ages. Had the medieval heretics inherited these notions from the old Manichees? Or may they not have sprung up spontaneously in the Middle Ages, as they did in the days of William the Fourth?

Ebel thought he was preparing his converts for the life of the Resurrection, in which they would neither marry nor be given in marriage, but would be as the angels in heaven. Prince, at Spaxton, went farther; he believed that he and the little group around him had already entered on the Resurrection life; redeemed in the flesh as well as in the spirit, they were enjoying the millennium there and then. The chapters in which Hepworth Dixon describes his visit to the Agapemone read like some unfriendly parody of a visit paid to a Quaker family of the old style, with its prim domesticity, its idealism in the midst of creature comforts. He is given biscuits and wine in their church—why not? It has ceased to have any services held in it, for earthly worship is done away. There is a billiard-table, and the balls have obviously been in play; do they (he asks, in an inspired moment) play on Sundays? He is told that there are no Sundays, because time has ceased to exist. 'You live in time,' says Prince, 'we do not. We feel the flow of love which you have taken as your measure of time, but it is no sign of change to us.' Do none of them ever die, then? Only, it appears, those who are not quite saved. That little community in the country-house is already enjoying its heaven, while the whole world outside is marked down for eternal damnation.

[1] Ibid. i. 184, 185. [2] Ibid. ii, ch. iv.

A dozen ardent clergymen [so Dixon sums up], smitten with the passion for saving souls, shut themselves up in a garden, muse and dream, surround themselves with lovely women, eat from rich tables, pretending that the passions are dead, and waiting, in the midst of luxury and idleness, for the whole world to be damned! Is this all? No, not quite all; in the mean time the reverend gentlemen play a game of billiards in what was their church.[1]

At this spectacle of inertia, the face of the outraged Victorian peeps out behind the mask of tolerance. Certainly, it is the strangest Nemesis that has ever befallen the victims of an enthusiasm; to picture eternity to themselves in the form of playing billiards, on Sunday, in a Somersetshire country-house.

Was Prince a scoundrel? It is difficult to believe that he planned his life from the first with a view to the enjoyment of selfish pleasures. He was drawn to the ministry through seeing the neglected state of men's souls in the north country; he formed an inner group of pietists among his contemporaries at a theological college, as if he had been destined to become a second Wesley. All through his life, even in the most repulsive passages of it, he seems to have acted under the conviction that he was following the inner light, not the calculations of worldly prudence. 'If he was going out for a stroll' (in the days when he was a curate at Charlinch) 'he would enquire of God whether it would rain. If he wanted a chair in the room, he would ask leave of the Holy Spirit to buy one. He would not put on a new coat, take up an umbrella, without resort to prayer. Nay, he abandoned the habit of judging for himself in the commonest things, to follow what he called the promptings of the Spirit.'[2] So much for the guidance that goes unchecked.

Was Prince a madman? He used extraordinary language about himself: 'In me you behold the love of God . . . I died to God, and was renewed by the Spirit to do his work. By me and in me God has redeemed all flesh from death, and brought the bodies of breathing men into the Resurrection state . . . Jesus came to destroy the devil's work in the soul; I came to destroy it in the flesh.'[3] But, as we have seen, the enthusiast who believes himself to be specially 'indwelt' by the Holy Spirit is apt to mistake this condition—most enthusiasts are Nestorians without knowing it—for Messiahship. Ebel was similarly identified as the Messiah by Minna von Derschau.[4] If Prince was a madman it is difficult to account for the collective

[1] *Spiritual Wives*, i. 330. [2] Ibid. i. 274. [3] Ibid. i. 316. [4] Ibid. i. 170.

hallucination which drew so many followers after him; kept so many followers true to him, even after the most monstrous incident in Agapemonite history—his 'spiritual marriage' with Miss Paterson. This took place with the connivance of Mrs. Prince, and of her brother, who gave Dixon the assurance: 'I know that what was done was right and holy in the Lord'.[1] It is on record that 'when a party of the Agapemone community visited the Great Exhibition of 1851, the quondam Evangelical curate of Charlinch was to be seen driving about Hyde Park in a carriage and four, preceded by hatless outriders; the latter riding uncovered because they were in attendance upon the Lord in the person of Prince'.[2] Was Prince a madman? He does not seem to have affected Dixon, during their interview, with that sense of discomfort and distaste which we all feel in the presence of the hopelessly insane. Louisa Nottidge, who was carried off from the Agapemone by her relations and shut up in an asylum, insisted on returning; after an application to the Commissioners in Lunacy, 'an enquiry was made, Barry Cornwall wrote a report, and the patient was discharged'.[3]

The story does not end with Prince's death, which happened in 1899. He had a disciple, a Church of England clergyman in London, who proceeded to act as his successor, built himself a church by public subscription, and announced from the altar steps, 'I am that Lord Jesus Christ who died and rose again and ascended into heaven'. How he was driven from London by crowds which the police could hardly restrain; how he betook himself to Spaxton with one of his female converts, and was unfrocked for immorality, may be read in Mr. Ronald Matthews's book, *English Messiahs*.[4] He died as late as 1927; and in 1936 the Agapemone is still described in the present tense: 'From time to time they go out on social occasions; one or two have cars. The latest novels are regularly sent up to them from Bridgwater.' No doubt of it, sects die hard.

In the United States Perfectionism reappears at intervals, but not with the old publicity; you came across it in hydros, or behind the muslin curtains of furnished apartments. That is what makes Mr. Ray Strachey's book, *Religious Fanaticism*,[5] so subtly depressing. His own contribution is a review of those strange, fearless enthusiasms

[1] Ibid. i. 324. [2] Blunt's *Dictionary of Sects*, p. 446. [3] *Spiritual Wives*, i. 312.
[4] Methuen's, 1936. The relevant pages are 182 to 195.
[5] London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928.

which swept across the American Continent between the War of Independence and the war between North and South; we have seen, in the last section, something of their quality. But all this only serves as the introduction to a set of personal reminiscences which his grandmother, Mrs. Whitall Smith, left unpublished at her death. And these personal reminiscences move in a different world, a world of twisted middle-class psychologies, in which the barriers between religion and sex have mysteriously frayed away. Let me not be understood as suggesting that there is anything morbid about the document itself. The writer—she was Logan Pearsall Smith's mother—was a woman of real spirituality and, if I may use an expressive phrase, had her head screwed on the right way. But her position—she belonged to the Society of Friends, and was married to a well-known evangelist—brought her in contact with many inquirers after the truth who bade fair to make shipwreck of the inquiry. And she, respecting their confidences by the use of initials, put her material together explicitly as a warning to others; she would buoy, none too soon, the channels of enthusiasm.

It is not my intention even to summarize these distressing pages. Only, because the writer is a witness who has special claims to be heard in such an investigation as ours, I would like to underline her general conclusions, as throwing light on some of the phenomena which have exercised us in the foregoing chapters.

The apostle has warned us against those furtive hierophants who 'make their way into house after house, captivating weak women whose consciences are burdened by sin'.[1] Reading of such men, however charitably they are described, we instinctively write them down as conscious impostors, and worse. Their shadow is projected into the past, darkening for us the figures of a remoter past, the French prophets, Miguel Molinos. What account, then, does Mrs. Whitall Smith herself give of them; she, who had met them and had speech with them before, and sometimes after, they revealed themselves in their true colours? This is how she writes of one such: 'One of the most saintly men I ever met. No one could be in his presence without feeling that he was a man who lived in continual nearness and communion with the Lord.' And then: 'Never was there a saintlier man to begin with, and never was there a more pitiful fall.' It is her considered judgement: 'All the fanatics I have ever known

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 6.

have been at the same time the most devoted of Christians, and have fallen into their fanaticisms along the paths of the most entire consecration to the Lord, and the most absolute faith in his guidance.'[1] What safeguards, then, does she suggest as likely to avert the dangers of illuminism? With what qualifications does she, a Quaker, hand on to us the doctrine of the Inner Light?

This, in outline, is her warning. 'I cannot tell how many fanatics, when I have tried to convince them of their errors, have said to me, *But Mrs. Smith, what must I do? These inward voices come to me in my most solemn and sacred moments.* . . . The mistake arises from limiting the voice of the Lord to impressions only, and not recognizing that his voice comes to us in many other ways.' And she gives a list of God's four voices, 'the voice of the Bible, the voice of circumstances, the voice of one's highest reason, and the voice of one's inward impressions'. Fanatics, she explains,

> take their inward impressions as being the only voice in which God communicates with them. . . . The emotional nature is thus aroused more and more. . . . It generally begins with physical thrills, which . . . only become dangerous when they are looked upon, yielded to and encouraged as being of divine origin. . . . And I would place at the entrance into the pathway of mysticism this danger signal: Beware of impressions, beware of emotions, beware of physical thrills, beware of voices, beware of everything, in short, that is not according to the strict Bible standard and to your own highest reason.[2]

Excellent advice; but your enthusiast, is he capable of profiting by it? The Bible, what a weapon to put into such hands! Chesterton said wisely, it was no use a man's reading his Bible unless he read everybody else's Bible; how well Madame Guyon could quote Scripture, how well the Convulsionaries! The voice of circumstance is hardly less treacherous; what else but circumstance brought Père Lacombe to a prison, and Nayler to the pillory? No, when it comes to the point it is commonly a straight issue between a man's highest reason and his interior impressions; the appeal is from Philip drunk to Philip sober. Small comfort to the energumen; reason may be quickly dethroned, under the label of intellectual pride, and a hard-headed Scot like Irving will listen, not to Thomas Carlyle, but to Mary Campbell. In the long run the issue is between some kind of authority and unrestrained private judgement.

[1] *Religious Fanaticism*, pp. 167, 163, 165. [2] Ibid., pp. 157, 159, 160, 164.

XXIII

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ENTHUSIASM

'DEAR Father, you are truly God, with unexpressible love and power . . . Lina Tegtmayer.'

'My dear Mrs. Tegtmayer,

Your beautiful letter of praise and thanksgiving is at hand, and it is indeed wonderful to behold the blessings which my Spirit and my Mind have poured out upon you because of your faith . . .

Respectfully and sincerely, I am,
Rev. M. J. Divine, Ms.D., D.D.
(better known as Father Divine).'

So much of citation from a forty-eight-page newspaper, all written to the same effect,[1] will be enough to assure the reader that enthusiasm is not yet dead in countries where they understand salesmanship. In our own island, for the last century, revivalism has shown a law of diminishing returns; each new wave, as it recedes, registers less of a high-water mark—Moody and Sankey, Torrey-Alexander, Aimée Macpherson. And all these, it is unnecessary to add, were reimports from the United States of America. Account for it how we will, by the less general diffusion of religious sentiment, by the decline of fundamentalism, by the modern educational outlook, by the influence of radio on oratorical technique, it is clear that our fellow countrymen are less susceptible, in these days, to the emotional appeal. Perhaps it is a closed chapter, this chapter in the history of religion.

Yet something may be written about enthusiasm by way of epilogue; if you will, of epitaph. There may even be a moral in it; history teaches us our lessons, more often than not, obliquely. Not what happened, but the meaning of what happened, concerns us. At what sources do they feed, these torrents which threaten, once and again, to carry off our peaceful country-side in ruin?

Basically it is the revolt of Platonism against the Aristotelian

[1] *The New Day*, Featuring the works of Father Divine, No. XII, Saturday, 25 Sept., 1948 A.D.F.D. [*sic*].

mise en scène of traditional Christianity. The issue hangs on the question whether the Divine Fact is something given, or something to be inferred. Your Platonist, satisfied that he has formed his notion of God without the aid of syllogisms or analogies, will divorce reason from religion; it is a faculty concerned with the life of the senses, and nothing assures us that it can penetrate upwards; he is loth to theologize. Correspondingly, in his prayer, he will use no images, no mental images even, as a ladder to reach the unseen; the God who reveals himself interiorly claims a wholly interior worship as his right. Nor will this directness of access be merely one-sided; the soul's immediate approach to God finds its counterpart in an immediate approach of God to the soul; he issues his commands to it, reveals his truth to it, without any apparatus of hierarchies or doctrinal confessions to do his work for him. Finally, since God, not man, is his point of departure, the Platonist will have God served for himself alone, not in any degree for the sake of man's well-being; an Aristotelian trick, to make happiness, in this world or the next, the end of man! In a word, he is theocentric; he quarrels with the theologian, for supposing that God can be known derivatively; he quarrels with the liturgist, for offering outward worship; he quarrels with Church authorities, for issuing Divine commands at secondhand; he quarrels with the missionary, for urging men to save their souls, when nothing really matters except the Divine will.

This is the direction Platonist thought will take, if left to itself; the resultant spirituality, it will be seen, is in line with that of the Quakers and of the Quietists. But at one very important point it is not in line with those revivalist enthusiasms which are more familiar to us. The salvation of your own soul is a business which the Quaker takes in his stride, the Quietist elaborately ignores; to the revivalist, it is everything. Aristotelian on this one point, Jansenism, Moravianism, Methodism (not all alike, but all equally) are obsessed with soteriology. For the mystic, the *Cloud of Unknowing* will tell us, God is so much the unique object of regard that a man's own sins will only appear as a dark speck in the middle distance, as a thing within view but not focused. Whereas Pascal will not even let us ask whether God exists, until he has forced us to admit that our need of salvation is desperate—you must not separate the two problems. There are two spiritualities; one which is too generous ever to ask, and one which is too humble ever to do anything else; at

this cross-roads the mystic parts company with the revivalist, and either is tempted to exaggerate his own attitude. On the one side, we shall hear the Quaker talking dangerously about 'the Christ who died at Jerusalem', and the Quietist discouraging all meditation about the Sacred Humanity. On the other side, the figure of a Divine-Human Saviour will so fill the canvas that Zinzendorf and Howell Harris can find no real place in their system for the Eternal Father. The child's phrase, 'I love Jesus, but I hate God', is the too-candid expression of a real theological tendency.

Sin, the Fall, salvation, grace, election—how is it that they loom so large in the vocabulary of a movement which should have been Platonist, should have been theocentric? It is due, I think, to the overmastering influence of one man, St. Augustine. A Platonist if ever there was one, yet Fénelon quarried no material from him in writing the *Maximes des saints*. St. Augustine was a man in whom the moral struggle had become inextricably entwined with the search for God; further, he had to enter the lists against the great heresy of Pelagius, which sought to by-pass the mystery of redemption. Consequently, the doctrine of grace became a major preoccupation with him, and he darkened in, perhaps too unsparingly, the outlines of St. Paul's world-picture. Moreover, he sought to pluck the heart out of a mystery by his theory of the two rival delectations. If you avoided sin, it was only because conscious love for God then and there neutralized the attraction of it; your decision was made on a balance of motives. Exaggerated now from this angle, now from that, St. Augustine's theology has provided, ever since, the dogmatic background of revivalism.

Let us note, from the first, that traditional Christianity is a balance of doctrines, and not merely of doctrines but of emphases. You must not exaggerate in either direction, or the balance is disturbed. An excellent thing to abandon yourself, without reserve, into God's hands; if your own rhetoric leads you into fantastic expressions of the idea, there is no great harm done. But, teach on principle that it is an infidelity to wonder whether you are saved or lost, and you have overweighted your whole devotional structure; you have ruled out a whole type of religious self-expression. Conversely, it is a holy thing to trust in the redeeming merits of Christ. But, put it about that such confidence is the indispensable sign of being in God's favour, that, unless and until he is experimentally aware of it, a

man is lost, and the balance has been disturbed at the opposite end; you have condemned one type of religious mind to despair.

Observe, meanwhile, that the enthusiast, because he exaggerates, always has our sympathies in a given encounter. He cuts a finer figure, doing nothing by halves. Fénelon is so much the orator, Bossuet so much the attorney; what wonder if Dean Inge exclaims that Bossuet's attitude was not really Christian, and we, our eyes dazzled, overlook the cheapness of the observation? If Bossuet really understood what the Maxims meant—and the Maxims were undoubtedly elusive—Fénelon was supporting a doctrine which would eliminate Hope from the Christian's armoury. Christianity *à l'outrance* if you will, but an *outré* Christianity. So it is when Butler tells Wesley that the pretending to extraordinary revelations is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing; Butler, you feel, has coined a phrase, yet the honours remain with Wesley. But in fact the underlying issue was, whether Christian truth was to stand or fall by an experience. Fénelon and Wesley impose their personalities on you; Bossuet and Butler are depressing figures by comparison, but theirs was the longer view.

We have been discussing two types of enthusiasm, which baffle us by occasional similarities but are (as I have tried to show) curiously different in their inspiration. It is time we labelled them; I would suggest a distinction between 'mystical' and 'evangelical' enthusiasm. One, taking its point of departure from the Incarnation, rather than the Atonement, by-passes the theology of grace and concentrates on the God within; not repelling, necessarily, the Unitarian. The other, more acutely conscious of man's fallen state, thinks always in terms of redemption; to know, somehow, that your sins are forgiven, that you are a new creature in God's sight, is all that matters. Call the two tendencies, if you will, Platonist and Aristotelian, Johannine and Pauline, Scotist and Thomist, but all such distinctions will fall short of exactitude. 'Mystical' and 'evangelical' will serve our purpose best.

Either tendency can be a signpost to the morass. Your Anabaptist or Ranter may consult the light within him, and mistake some psychological urge for a divine guidance. He will then be guilty of the most atrocious cruelties, of the most astounding profligacies, on the ground that he is not permitted merely, but ordered, to act in this way. As Hannah Smith found, it is very difficult to argue with him. The very outrageousness of his conduct is, in a sense, the

guarantee of its supernatural inspiration; 'how could you suppose', he will argue, 'that I would behave in a manner so unlike myself, if a Divine command had not made it necessary?' We might, to be sure, write off these unpalatable incidents as the result of lunacy, if the 'inspiration' was felt only by a single person. But what are we to make of it, when a whole group of energumens make common cause?

> Eight members of a family of Kentucky mountaineers were lodged in jail to-day, charged with taking part in the ritual murder of Mrs. Lucinda Mills, aged 72. The prisoners include Mrs. Mills' two sons, two daughters, two sons-in-law, her daughter-in-law, and her grandson. . . . Some of the arrested persons are reported to have told the police that they had received a divine command to make a human sacrifice and that the lot fell upon Mrs. Mills. A son-in-law is alleged to have said that he wanted to prevent the sacrifice, but he had a feeling that he must not.[1]

How are we to argue against such a 'feeling', if it is accompanied by the conviction that the inner light is something which no Bible, no Church, can legitimately gainsay?

The Quietist, meanwhile, less subject to illuminist dangers, has an Achilles-heel of his own. The mystic's claim is that he adheres to God not with his affections or with any outward faculty but with the 'base' or 'apex' of his soul—call it which you will; an inner sanctum, beyond the reach of sense, but apt for communion with the divine. The Quietist, overstressing that doctrine, cuts himself in two; half of him is in the clouds, the other half (not body merely, but will, intellect, affections, all the outward faculties of his soul) remains on earth, mysteriously divorced from its spiritual partner. Did not St. Paul express a wish, 'peregrinari a corpore, et praesentes esse ad Dominum'?[2] And the Quietist, by his own account of it, is in the position of Democritus, 'peregre est animus sine corpore velox';[3] all that happens to his earthly self, all that his earthly self, humanly speaking, 'does', is outside of and beneath his true nature; his 'actions' on this level do not belong to him. Not Molinos did this, not Madame Guyon said that; you mistook the outer shell for the real self. Once more, but by a different gesture, the enthusiast has abrogated moral responsibility.

[1] New York message in *The Times*, dated 9 Feb. 1933.
[2] 2 Cor. v. 8.
[3] Horace, *Epistles*, 1. xii. 13.

On the opposite slope lies the peril of pure antinomianism; a single false step, and your evangelical enthusiast is over the precipice. St. Paul, with his *Omnia mihi licent*; St. Augustine, with his *Ama, et fac quod vis*; Luther, with his *Pecca fortiter*—is it certain that any natural law of morals is binding on a soul which has emancipated itself from the natural, and lives now by a law of grace? Indulgence of the passions is culpable in the unregenerate soul, helps it on its road to perdition; but the children of predestination are emancipated from the bondage of law; not their actions, but the merits of their Redeemer, avail to justify them. May it not be that actions which the world counts sinful are, for them, like all their other actions, sanctified? Alternatively, may they not sin precisely in order that 'grace may abound', obligingly offer to Divine grace a broader target (if we may so put it) for redemption? There have been enthusiasts who, on this principle, were ready to 'outsin Manasses'.

So much for one mischievous germ which is endemic to all forms of enthusiasm. You cannot say as much of another recurrent aberration, which was poor Nayler's downfall. There have been and (as you may read in the first paragraph of this chapter) there are still religious leaders bold enough, and muddle-headed enough, to claim that they are personally divine. But this is a temptation of the mystical, not of the evangelical enthusiast. For a variety of reasons, the Evangelical is pledged to maintain the uniqueness of our Lord's Incarnation; he is more likely to regard it as a mere theophany than as a mere apotheosis. It is true some of Henry Prince's language goes near to claiming divinity, and Henry Prince was, at least in his origins, an Evangelical. But he was much addicted to the inner light, and besides, he was very near the border-line of insanity. In general, it is the mystic who is more likely to go wrong at this point—Maximilla the Montanist, Anabaptists like David Joris, Quakers like Nayler and Jemima Wilkinson.

The mystic, from the very nature of his religious approach, is tone-deaf, as a rule, to theology. He is likely enough, therefore, to be a Nestorian without knowing it; he thinks of our Lord not as God-Man but as man somehow made deiform. A second incarnation on the same lines is not unthinkable. At this point some echo of Abbot Joachim's speculations will come in to disturb the balance of his thought. If the Church is so corrupt, surely the second, Christ-mediated dispensation has come to an end; a third dispensation has

already dawned, or is on the way, mediated—by whom? By St. Francis, was the inevitable reply of the Fraticelli; but a solution does not always lie so ready to hand. What if the hierophant himself, conscious as he is of a heavenly mission, should be the Man of Destiny? That God is in him he may not doubt; if his fellow believers begin worshipping the God in him, dare he repudiate their hosannas? That was, certainly, Nayler's predicament; we may reasonably suspect that the same line of reasoning appealed, in a more or less degree, to others—Hackett and Richard Brothers and the rest of them—who have gone down to history as lunatics. There is no knowing, even, how the turbid genius of Madame Guyon might have developed, but for the chastening influence of Fénelon.

These are extravagances; classic examples of the exceptional. If we had no further hesitations about enthusiasm, it would have little reason for self-reproach. But we have observed, in the foregoing chapters, other disturbing or disruptive symptoms which are more surely recurrent, more native to its genius. The chief of these—and indeed it largely subsumes the others—is what I have called ultra-supernaturalism. It is the attempt to root up nature and plant the seed of grace in fallow soil, instead of grafting the supernatural on to the natural, after the timorous fashion of orthodoxy.

In its extreme form this theology has political repercussions. It justifies the doctrine of Wyclif, of Huss, of Lollardy, of Anabaptism, that dominion is founded on grace. To be born again makes you a new creature; the seed of grace, ransomed from a drowning world, must not be confused with the unregenerate; they are (so to say) a different kind of animal. They alone, and not the ungodly, have legal rights. Readers of Mr. Gosse's *Father and Son* will remember the extraordinary story he tells[1] of a solicitor who belonged to the Plymouth Brethren. This man, accused of having executed a fraudulent will by which he claimed sole inheritance of a rich client's property, not only admitted the fact but gloried in it.

> He could be induced to exhibit no species of remorse, and, to the obvious anger of the judge himself, stated that he had only done his duty as a Christian, in preventing this wealth from coming into the hands of an ungodly man, who would have spent it in the service of the flesh and of the devil. Sternly reprimanded by the judge, he made the final statement that at that very moment he was conscious of his Lord's presence, in the dock at

[1] pp. 261 and following of the first edition.

his side, whispering to him, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant!* In this frame of conscience, and with a glowing countenance, he was hurried away to penal servitude.

To be sure, this was a private revelation, nor did his co-religionists endorse it. But the logic of his position was unassailable, granted his premiss that the worldling has no rights.[1]

To see in the Lollards, or in the Anabaptists, the forerunners of modern Socialism is profoundly unphilosophical; their point of departure was something other. But, in times of social unrest, otherworldliness is tempted to fish in troubled waters, and it is little wonder if the Lollards, if the Anabaptists, were viewed with suspicion by the governments of their own day. The Peasants' Revolt and the defence of Munster lent colour to a persecution which was set on foot by Protestants, no less than Catholics, throughout Europe. Later enthusiasts who sought to attain a perfect earthly society were better advised; they went out into the wilderness and formed a little world of their own. Many such experiments have been made in the old world, from Pepuza of the Montanists to the Jansenist island of Antoinette Bourignon. But the American continent, with its vast undeveloped spaces, gave more opportunity for Jerusalem-building; Oneida Creek and even Salt Lake City could be tolerated in a country so generous of elbow-room. Unfortunately, a community of Christians which thus banishes the rest of the world from its fellowship breeds, almost inevitably, a morose and unintelligent type. Within fifty years the mantle of the Donatists has fallen on it.

More generally characteristic of ultrasupernaturalism is a distrust of our human thought-processes. In matters of abstract theology, the discipline of the intellect is replaced by a blind act of faith. In matters of practical deliberation, some sentiment of inner conviction, or some external 'sign' indicative of the Divine will, claims priority over all considerations of common prudence.

If I may be allowed the use of a crude and inexact analogy, I would say that the human mind, upon accepting the Christian revelation

[1] We shall be reminded that the safe-conduct granted to John Huss was set aside on the ground that it was wrong to keep faith with heretics. But the principle invoked (rightly or wrongly; it does not concern us here) was not that under discussion. The enemies of Huss did not argue that a heretic, as such, has no rights, but that a promise granting safe-conduct to such a man was a promise to do something in itself wicked and (like any such promise) invalid.

in the ordinary way, becomes a constitutional monarchy. The speculative intellect, which till now reigned arbitrarily, still rules, but hedged about with custom and precedent; its range is limited by something other than itself. In a constitutional monarchy, it is often difficult and seldom important to decide where the king's powers begin and end; lawyers may quibble and theorize, but in actual practice you do not need to be told where the Royal Prerogative comes in; the two principles of government are somehow interlocked, and the thing works. Not otherwise, in the mind of the ordinary believing Christian, the two principles of reason and revelation are interlocked; a theologian will sort them out and delimit their spheres for you, but in everyday life there is an unconscious give-and-take which regulates your thought without friction. It is not so with the convert to enthusiasm. In his mind, a sudden *coup d'état* has dethroned the speculative intellect altogether; it remains a mere puppet monarch, signing every paper that is given to it with a rubber stamp. To be sure, you have the illusion of liberty; it is, in part at least, your own 'lights' that interpret doctrine for you. But those lights are not really your own; they are (supposedly at least) dictated to you by a Divine monitor whose authority you are not allowed to question. You must not *think*; that would be to use the arm of flesh, and forsake your birthright.

That is the logic of enthusiasm; naturally, it is not always pressed. Not often can you match the holy pedantry with which Irving rebuked Pilkington for daring to interpret the Tongues by an appeal to philology. But always you find this morbid distrust of the intellect cropping up; whether it be George Fox delaying, for two centuries, the foundation of Durham University on the ground that all human learning is vain, or Madame Guyon abdicating all responsibility for her own writings on the ground that she only played the part of an amanuensis. It must be admitted that evangelical enthusiasm is less marked by this dislike of learning than mystical. For the Evangelical (illogically, perhaps, but by habit) regards the Bible, not the inner light, as the ultimate source of theological certainty. But, in so far as he is true to type, he will reject the interpretations offered to him by scholars. He prefers to get down 'his' Bible and 'see what it says'; from the plain sense of it there is no appeal.

Still more confidently, the enthusiast dismisses all considerations of human prudence, and trusts to the light within him, when he

must face the day-to-day problems of life. What dangerous results may flow from such an attitude we have considered already. But, even if these are left out of sight, it may be questioned whether this kind of illuminism is an enviable characteristic. That there should be a few people, close friends of God, who seem to live by instinct and by-pass calculation, is well enough; even the common run of us may experience, now and again, a flash of intuition which seemed akin to inspiration. But when a whole sect aspires to be spoon-fed with providential guidance, such as makes all deliberation, all effort of decision, henceforth unnecessary, there is ground for misgiving. Our mental powers also are from God; to write these off as hopelessly corrupted by the Fall is an extravagance quite unwarranted by the Christian tradition. To live by, and for, a series of supposedly Divine communications is, too commonly, to cultivate an unhealthy state of mind, avid of portents and ill protected from the inroads of superstition.

What happens if light is denied, or if two rival parties lay claim to rival inspirations? Your strict ultrasupernaturalist will not be at a loss for an answer; he casts lots. We have seen how sortilege was a persistent practice among the early Moravians, an occasional practice among the early Methodists; a level-headed evangelist like Berridge has no patience with those 'professors' who slight the *sortes Biblicae*. Recourse to the lot on special occasions, when there is no other way of making up your mind, has, indeed, the sanction both of reason and of Christian antiquity. But the *habit* of lot-taking, here, there, and everywhere, is the badge of a theology. It means that you regard human prudence not merely as a fallible but as a perverse guide to human conduct. The Moravians, with their odd cross-breed of Lutheran and Quietist notions, had a mania for suppressing every trace of purposive action; 'shalling and willing' was what kept people away from God. A grace-controlled automaton, you must not even marry without the lot's approval.

Less clamorous for guidance, the Evangelical outruns the mystic in his demand for miracle. When the unbeliever is converted, when the prophet receives his *afflatus*, there must be sensational accompaniments to the process, such as you cannot account for by any natural explanation. Your Quietist, who is bred in the orthodox mystical tradition, sets no store by ecstasies and levitations; they are a by-product, no more, of that commerce with the unseen which is

wholly interior. 'Il ne faut pas croire que ces phénomènes extatiques constituent l'essentiel de l'état mystique, et appellent notre admiration; ils n'en sont que les concomitants, la rançon. . . . L'extase . . . n'est pas un honneur, ni une puissance; elle est un tribut payé par les mystiques à la nature humaine.'[1] Indeed, for the Quietist the very nature of prayer is to be an exercise of naked faith, unrewarded by transports, unattested by external phenomena. Nor does it appear that the Quakers attached any great importance to the foamings and wallowings which attended, sometimes, the process of convincement. Credulous, perhaps, of miracle, they did not make it part of their propaganda. It was rather the movements that had a background of free grace and redemption, the Camisards, the Convulsionaries, the early Methodists, the Irvingites, who found these odd physical manifestations encouraging; cultivated them in some cases, and perhaps even engineered them.

The difference may be partly one of period; eighteenth-century enthusiasm had become painfully alive to the growth of infidelity, and every invasion from the other world was, for de Montgéron and for Wesley, a counterblast. But I doubt if that is the whole truth of the matter. At the heart of him, the Evangelical is always an experimentalist. He feels certain that something has happened to him, and he invites you to let it happen to you—that is, really, the whole of his message. And if he is in a position to assure you that when this experience of conversion befell him it took six strong men to hold him down, you will be less likely (he argues) to suspect that it was just your fancy. Wesley, looking round him at the energumens who lay on the floor crying for mercy, did indeed congratulate himself that this was a stick to beat the Deists with. But he also sought to confirm his own faith and that of his followers by the spectacle of a spiritual conflict and a spiritual victory externalized, translated into terms of flesh and blood. One would be able to reflect: 'This thing is real; I have seen it happen.'

How to explain these phenomena—Camisard child-prophecy, or Jansenist convulsions, or Methodist swoonings, or Irvingite glossolaly—is a question that need not detain us. What is important is that they are all part of a definite type of spirituality, one which cannot be happy unless it is seeing results. Heart-work, Wesley called it; the emotions must be stirred to their depths, at frequent intervals, by

[1] Grandmaison, 'La Religion personnelle', in *Études*, 5 May 1913.

unaccountable feelings of compunction, joy, peace, and so on, or how could you be certain that the Divine touch was working on your soul? Here, as we know, he parted company with the Quietists, and, more importantly, with the semi-Quietism of the Moravians. The notion of a faith content to go on blindly in the dark, such as William Law had recommended, no longer had any meaning for him; grace must be something felt, or how could you be sure that it had any existence at all? This identification of grace with interior consolations haunted, though to a lesser extent, the thought of the Jansenists; that is their chief title to figure in the pages of this book.

I have tried to indicate, at the end of the last chapter but one, some hesitations about the religion of experience. We need not doubt that the Evangelical movement had a powerful effect in waking up eighteenth-century England from its religious apathy, or that eighteenth-century England needed it. Where it failed was in its long-term effects. Religion became identified in the popular mind with a series of moods, in which the worshipper, disposed thereto by all the arts of the revivalist, relished the flavours of spiritual peace. You needed neither a theology nor a liturgy; you did not take the strain of intellectual inquiry, nor associate yourself whole-heartedly with any historic tradition of worship. You floated, safely enough, on the little raft of your own faith, eagerly throwing out the lifeline to such drowning neighbours as were ready to catch it; meanwhile the ship was foundering.

It is this by-passing of an historic tradition in favour of a personal experience that has created the modern religious situation in England, and to some extent in the English-speaking world. The Oxford Movement did but lock the door on a stolen horse. On the one hand, it is assumed that every man's religion is his own affair; it does not concern, need not alarm his neighbours. On the other hand, the Christian witness has become a sectional affair; Christianity is one of the fads which people adopt if they are interested in that kind of thing. A poster in a railway station, bidding you be prepared to meet your God, is passed by with an indulgent smile. If people are burdened with a sense of sin, by all means let them seek comfort in some conventicle which promises them release from it; the same is perhaps true of people who begin to feel lonely in old age. But always religion is thought of, instinctively, as a way of changing from one state of mind into another.

But my aim is to interpret enthusiasm, not to criticize it. If we would interpret it rightly, there is one point that must be seized on above all the rest—in itself enthusiasm is not a wrong tendency but a false emphasis. Quietism exaggerates only a little the doctrine of the mystics about simplicity in prayer, about disinterested love. Quakerism does but enthrone in dangerous isolation the truth of God's presence within us. Jansenism is the vigilant conscience of Christendom overshadowed by a scruple. Methodism is the call back to Christ in an age of Deism. What men like Pascal, Fénelon, and Wesley saw clearly was something true and something valuable; the exaggerations, the eccentricities, were hatched by the heat of controversy. The sympathy which those names evoke is not the index of a rebel spirit in us, who read of them; it is not because they fell foul of authority, and imperilled unity, that we attribute to them greatness. It is not surprising if those who are most sensitive to the needs of their age find their way, sometimes, on to the wrong side of the calendar. Fine instruments are easily spoiled.

One distinction I have slurred over, all through this book; I hope not to the scandal of my readers. I have written in the same breath about people like the Vaudois, who broke away from the unity of the Catholic Church, and people like the Methodists, whose movement took its origin in a Reformation culture. I have done so advisedly, because it seems to me that the enthusiast will always react against any form of institutional religion, whether it be Catholic or Protestant, and there is no Christianity with a hundred years of history that does not become, to a more or less degree, institutional. Waldensianism and Wesleyanism have their points of resemblance, their points of difference, but where they differ, it is not because the background was Catholic in the one case, Anglican in the other. Fundamentally, either has the same point of departure; a suspicion, not ignobly entertained, that a church in alliance with the world has unchurched itself.

More than all the other Christianities, the Catholic Church is institutional. Her enemies too easily conclude that she is thereby incapacitated from all spiritual initiative, David in Saul's armour; history makes short work of the conclusion. New things as well as old she keeps in her treasure-house; you will find current coin there, not only obsolete doubloons. But there is danger in her position none the less; where wealth abounds, it is easy to mistake shadow for

substance; the fires of spirituality may burn low, and we go on unconscious, dazzled by the glare of tinsel suns. How nearly we thought we could do without St. Francis, without St. Ignatius! Men will not live without vision; that moral we do well to carry away with us from contemplating, in so many strange forms, the record of the visionaries. If we are content with the humdrum, the second-best, the hand-over-hand, it will not be forgiven us. All through the writing of this book I have been haunted by a long-remembered echo of *La Princesse lointaine*:

> *Frère Trophime.* L'inertie est le seul vice, Maître Érasme;
> Et la seule vertu est . . .
> *Érasme.* Quoi?
> *Frère Trophime.* L'enthousiasme!

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