

# **The Agony Of The Church**

**By**

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*Freeditorial* 

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE WISDOM OF THE CHURCH SOPHIA**

The most magnificent sanctuary of the Eastern Churches is called St Sophia (Holy Wisdom), whereas the most magnificent sanctuaries of the Western Churches are called St Peter's, St Paul's, or St John's, etc. As every hair on our head and every line on the palm of our hand has a certain significance, so these dedications of the Church have doubtless certain significance. And this significance is typical of the religion of the East and the West. Western Christianity, grown upon the soil of a youthful individualism, preferred this or that apostle's personality and dedicated their best temples to him. The aged East, tired of individualistic ambitions, tired of great men, flagellated by the phantom of human greatness, was thirsty for something higher and more solid than any human personality. Adoration of great personalities being the very wisdom of this world, the East stretched its hands to a superhuman ideal, to the Holy Wisdom. It is a psychological fact that youth sees his ideal in personal greatness, progressed age in holiness. The East asked for something more eternal than Peter, Paul or John. There is wisdom, and there is holy wisdom. Philosophical or personal wisdom existed from the beginning of mankind, but Holy Wisdom entered the world with Jesus Christ. Christ was the embodiment of God's wisdom, the very incarnation of Holy Wisdom. This Wisdom stands above all human wisdom and revives and illuminates it. Holy Wisdom includes the essential wisdom of Peter, Paul, John, and any other apostle or seer, or any other thing or creature, as the ocean includes the water of many rivers. In the darkest times of dissension, uncertainty or suffering, the Christian East did not rely so much upon the great apostles, either Peter, or Paul, or John, but looked beyond time and space to the Eternal Christ, The Logos of God, and asked for Light. And it looked to Eternity through this church in Constantinople, St Sophia, as the all-embracing and all-reconciling, holy symbol. Whenever Peter, or Paul, or John, or any other apostle, or prophet, became the ground upon which the believers quarrelled, it was in the Holy

Wisdom that they sought refuge and healing from their intellectual one-sidedness and ill-will.

Yet if Holy Wisdom has only in the East a magnificent visible symbol, Holy Wisdom is none the less the very foundation, substance and aim of the Western Church as well as of the Eastern, yea of the one, holy Catholic Church. For Christianity had been destined neither for the East alone nor for the West alone, but for the whole globe. And what means the so-much abused word Catholic if not inclusiveness? Even such is, too, the meaning of the Divine wisdom as revealed in Christianity from the beginning.

I will try to show this inclusive wisdom of the Church, revealed from the beginning, Firstly in the Church's Founder, Secondly in the Church's organisation, and Thirdly in the Church's destination.

### **THE INCLUSIVE WISDOM OF THE CHURCH'S FOUNDER**

By His birth He included and bound together the lowest and the highest, the natural and the supernatural: stable, manger, straw, sheep and shepherds on the one hand; stars, angels, magi and Davidic royal origin on the other.

By His life He included the austerity of the Indian monks, of John the Baptist and the Nazarenes on the one hand; and on the other the Confucian moderate feasting, in the houses of friends, at the marriage feast and on other solemn occasions.

His life-drama was interwoven into the lives of all classes of people: men, women and children, Judaists and heathen, King Herod and the proconsul Pilate, priests and soldiers, merchants and beggars, learned sophists and ignorant fools, the sick and the healthy, the righteous and the sinful, Jews and Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, and all others who could be met in Palestine, the very market of races and creeds.

He was by no means a party man like the Pharisees and the doctors of law. He called both the Pharisees and their enemies to follow Him. He went to the temple to pray, but He also prayed alone in the desert. He kept the Sabbath and He broke the Sabbath by healing the sick and doing good on

this sacred day. He came not to destroy the Law, but He brought something which was higher than the Law and even included the law itself, i.e. love and mercy.

He rebuked people who used to pray and say. "Lord, Lord!" And yet He prayed very often Himself. He rebuked those who were fasting, and yet He used to fast Himself. What He really looked for was neither prayer nor fasting, but the spirit in which one prayed or fasted.

He commanded the people to give to Caesar things which were Caesar's, and to God that which was God's. He did not criticise this or that form of government, nor did He accentuate Monarchism, Republicanism, or Socialism as one form preferable to another. Under His scheme all forms of government were included as equally good or evil according to what place they reserved for God, what gifts they duly gave to God, and by what spirit they were inspired.

He followed the customs of His nation, and did not break them or evade them purposely. He took food according to the Law, and washed hands according to the Law, and went to the Holy City and took part in worship in the temple (though He was "greater than the temple"), according to the Law. It seems that He excluded no form of worship or social life, though He despised the unclean and petty spirit with which the hypocrites filled these forms. And when it came to a dispute He, the Messenger of a new spirit, naturally tried to save rather the pure spirit even without a form than a form filled with an impure spirit. Therefore He felt bound to say: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man," or "to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man," or "thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet," etc.

Even so, too, He embraced all nationalities and races. Nothing was for Him unclean that God had created, nothing but unclean spirits. When the Roman centurion asked help from Him, He gave it. And when the people beyond the Israelitish boundaries, from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, cried after Him, He did not listen to the exclusivistic warnings of His disciples, but He distributed even there His divine mercy. He was mindful even of

the people of Nineveh. And when He sent His disciples, He sent them to "all nations."

Finally, He included the natural and the supernatural. He talked with spirits. He saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven. He stood amongst Peter, John and James on one side, and Moses and Elias on the other. All the people saw lilies in the field and sparrows upon the roof, but He saw more, He saw how, His Father clothed the lilies and how He fed the sparrows. He united the natural and the supernatural in His teaching.

"Love those who love thee" was a natural teaching. But He added: "and those who hate and persecute thee," which was supernatural.

"Give to them who give to thee" was a natural teaching. But He added: "and to them who do not give to the", which was supernatural.

"Bless those who bless thee." But He added: "and those who curse thee," which was supernatural.

And He united the natural and supernatural in His death. He suffered and died in agony. He rose from the dead, descended to Hell and ascended to Heaven. For Him there was as little boundary between heaven and earth, between nature and supernature, as between Israel and Canaan, or as between man and man, or form and form.

His wisdom was inclusive from the beginning to the end. What did He ever exclude—save unclean spirits? His disciples were as exclusive as anybody could be, exclusive when judging and acting according to natural wisdom. But when they looked at Him, they were reconciled. He was the Holy Wisdom, in which everyone could find a mansion for himself, every disciple, every nation, every form of worship, everything—but the unclean spirit.

### **THE INCLUSIVE WISDOM IN THE CHURCH'S ORGANISATION**

Let us look now to the Christian Church in the early time of her formation.

Jesus Christ gave the largest possible scheme on which to work and the largest foundation to build upon. There is no other name in history upon which more has been constructed than upon His name. The primitive

Church realised it from the beginning, and declared it. She was inclusive from the first, inclusive in her teaching and worship.

(a) Inclusive in Teaching.—Christ was put in the centre of the world's history. He represented what was the best and highest in Eastern and Western thought. The dream of Messiah was the best and highest in the Jewish conception. Well, Jesus was the Messiah.

The expectation of a second Adam, the redeemer of the first, sinful Adam, was common among the peoples in Palestine and Mesopotamia. Well,

Jesus was the second Adam, the expected Redeemer, God's Messenger.

Egypt had an intuition into the mystery of the Divinity as a Trinity. However rough may have been that idea, the Trinity being thought of as a human family of Father, Mother, and Son, still it existed very vividly in Egypt. And the people expected the coming of God's only Son, the third person of their Trinity, not an imaginary being like Horus, but the real son of Osiris in flesh and blood who would bring happiness to men. Well, Jesus of Nazareth was this Son of God, and He as Christ was the eternal sharer of the Divine Trinity.

India was the cradle of the teaching of the Incarnation. The supreme God, Brahma, had already been incarnated in many persons since the dawn

of history. But the highest incarnation of Him was still to come. Well,

Jesus Christ was this highest incarnation of Brahma in human shape.

The cultivated polytheists did not like the idea of a monotonous theology of one solitary God. They liked rather a divine company upon Olympus. Well, Christianity with its Trinity-teaching presented to them a limited polytheism. God was not physically one, as in Judaism, nor many, as in Hellenism. He was a Trinitarian Plurality in Unity. He was not a grim hermit, but He had the riches of an eternal life.

The intellectual Greeks and Hellenists climbed to the idea of one God and of Logos, the Mediator between God and the world, through whom God

created whatever He created, and who may be incarnated for the salvation of the fallen, suffering creation. Well, Jesus Christ could include in His person this wonderful doctrine of Neoplatonism.

The mountainous Asia under Caucasus and Ararat, plunged into the mystery of Mithras, which was born out of the Zoroastrian dualistic religion of light and darkness, of Ormuzd and Ahriman. Well now, Christ, the friend of humanity, revealed Himself as the God of light struggling against Satan, the enemy of humanity.

Rome, politically ruling the world, was longing for a sacred King, for a Prince of Peace, who should come from the East and bring to the people some higher and truer happiness than that deceiving chimera of political bigness. Well, Christ should be this universal, sacred King, this Prince of Peace, and Messenger of a durable happiness. It is not true that Christ had His prophets among the people of Israel only. His prophets existed in every race and every religion and philosophy of old. That is the reason why the whole world could claim Christ, and how He can be preached to everybody and accepted by everybody. Behold, He was at home everywhere!

(b) Inclusive in Worship. – Inclusive in doctrine, the primitive Church was wisely inclusive in worship too. It would be nonsense to speak of Christian worship as of something quite new and surprising. There was very little new and very little surprising in it indeed; almost nothing. The first Church met for prayer in the Jewish temple. Wherever the apostles came to preach the new Gospel they went to the old places of prayer, to the temples of Jehovah. Their Christian spirit did not revolt against the old forms of worship. Later on the naked Christian spirit needed to be clothed, and it was clothed. But when Israel looked to Christian worship they recognised much – forms, signs, vestments and administration – to be like their own. And not only Israel, but even Egypt, India, Babylon and Persia, Greece and Rome, yea, the Pagans of North and South. If Nature could speak, it could say how much it lent of its own to Christian worship.

A student of ancient history one day asked me: "How can I recognise the Christian religion as the best of all, when I know how much it borrowed

from the ancient religious forms of worship? How poor it looks without all that!"

I said: "Just this wonderful power of embracing and assimilating gives evidence of the vitality and universality of Christianity. It is too large in spirit to be clothed by one nation or one race only. It is too rich in spirit and destination to be expressed by one tongue, by one sign, or one symbol, or one form. In the same sense as Christian doctrine was prepared and prophesied by the religions and the philosophies before Christ, in the same sense Christian worship was prepared and prophesied as well. Whenever the Christian spirit is strong the Church is not afraid of worship being strange, and ample, and even grotesque. The weaker the Christian spirit, the greater exclusiveness in worship. Some people say: It is wicked to use pagan architecture for the Church, and incense and fire, and music, or dance, or bowing, or kneeling, or signs and symbols, in Christian worship, because it is pagan." Yes, all this is pagan indeed, but it is Christian too if we wish it to be. The Latin language was pagan, but now it is Christian too. The English language was a vehicle of Paganism as well, now it is a vehicle of Christianity. The human body was itself pagan too, but the Eternal Christ, God's Holy Wisdom, entered it and filled it with a new spirit, and it ceased to be pagan. We in the East sometimes use for our sacerdotal vestments Chinese silk made by pagan hands in China, or chalices and spoons and little bells and chains made by the Moslems, or precious stones gathered and scents prepared by the fire or stone-worshippers of Africa, and no one of us should be afraid to use them when worshipping Christ, as Christ Himself was not afraid to touch the most wretched human bodies or souls with His pure hands. Christianity cannot be defiled, using for its worship the works of pagan hands, but pagan people are hereby taking a share in Christian worship, physically and unconsciously, waiting for the moment when they will share in it spiritually and consciously as well. Every piece of Chinese silk in our vestments is a prophecy of the great Christian China. But this belongs to the following paragraph.



## THE INCLUSIVE WISDOM IN THE CHURCH'S DESTINATION

Judaism was destined for the people of Israel only. The Christian Church was destined for the people of Israel too, but not for them only. She included Greeks as well.

The Greek polytheism of Olympus was destined for the Hellenic race only. The Christian Church was destined for the Hellenic race too, but not for it only. She included Indians as well.

Buddha's wisdom was offered to the monks and vegetarians. Monks and vegetarians the Christian Church included in her lap, but also married and social people too.

Pythagoras founded a religious society of intellectual aristocrats. The Christian Church from the beginning included intellectual aristocrats side by side with the ignorant and unlettered.

The Persian prophet, Zoroaster, recruited soldiers of the god of light among the best men to fight against the god of darkness. His religious institution was like a military barracks. The Christian Church included both the best and the worst, the righteous and the sinners, the healthy and the sick. It was a barracks and a hospital at the same time. It was an institution both for spiritual fighting and spiritual healing.

The Chinese sage, Confucius, preached a wonderful ethical pragmatism, and the profound thinker, Lao-Tse, preached an all-embracing spiritualism. Christian wisdom included both of them, opening Heaven for the first and showing the dramatic importance of the physical world for the second. Islam – yes, Islam had in some sense a Christian ambition: to win the whole world. The difference was: Islam wished world-conquest; the Church, the world's salvation. Islam intended to subdue all men and bring them before God as His servants: The Church intended to educate all men, to purify and elevate them, and to bring them before God as His children.

And all others: star-worshippers, and fire, and wood, and water, and stone, and animal-worshippers had a touching sense of the immediate divine presence in nature. The Church came not to extinguish this sense but to

explain and to subordinate it; to put God in the place of demons and hope instead of fear.

The Church came not to destroy, but to purify, to aid and to assimilate. The destination of the Church was neither national nor racial, but cosmic. No exclusive power was ever destined to be a world-power. The ultimate failure of Islam to become a world-power lies in its exclusiveness. It was with religion as with politics. Every exclusive policy is foredoomed to failure: the German as well as the Turkish and the Napoleonic. The policy of the Church was designed by her Divine Founder: "He that is not against us is for us." Well, there is no human race on earth wholly against Christ and wholly unprepared to receive Him. The wisdom of the Christian missionaries therefore is to see first in what ways Providence has prepared a soil for Christian seed; to see which of the Christian elements a race, or a religion, already possesses, and how to utilise these elements and weld them into Christianity. All that—in order to make Christianity grow organically, instead of pushing it mechanically.

In conclusion let me repeat again: the wisdom of the Church has been inclusive. Inclusive was the wisdom of her Founder, inclusive the wisdom of her organisation and of her destination. Exclusiveness was the very sickness and weakness of the Church. That is why we in the East in the time of sickness of the Church looked neither towards Peter, nor Paul, nor John, but towards the Holy Wisdom, the all-healing and all-illuminating. For St Sophia in Constantinople, the temple dedicated to Christ the Eternal, includes in itself the sanctuaries of Peter, Paul and John; moreover, it is supported even by some pillars of Diana's temple from Ephesus and has many other things, in style or material, which belonged to the Paganism of old. Indeed, St Sophia has room and heart even for Islam. The Mohamedans have been praising it as the best of their sanctuaries!

I speak thus to you because I am sure you will not misunderstand me. And because I know you, the British, to be a race of the world-wide spirit, I dare to make this appeal to you.

Look to the Holy Wisdom! Look beyond Peter, and Paul, and John—through them and still beyond them! Every Church has her prophet, her

apostle, her angel. Look now over them all to the very top of the pyramid, where all the lines meet!

Either Christianity is one, or there is no Christianity. Either the Church is universal, or there is no Church.

There lived once upon a time twelve men as different as any twelve men could be. And the Holy Wisdom united all of them into one spiritual body. Such was the first Church of the twelve, and such ought to be the last Church of the millions: different in all her parts, but cemented by the Holy Wisdom into one glorious building. Christ, God's Holy Wisdom, includes all of us, why should we exclude each other? He was sent for the salvation of China and Japan and India as well as for that of the Jews and Greeks. Well, let us quarrel no more about the "circumcision" while a million of human beings are still waiting to hear for the first time the name of Jesus Christ—yea, for the first time after two thousand years! Let the present time be the new Pentecost for us all. I speak to you, the British: don't look around you and wait; it is yours to start. All the peoples of earth are looking towards you and listening to you. Don't be too shy to start.

To start what? To start a revival of the primitive wisdom of the Church, i.e. to confess and declare:

That Christianity in its integrity is one and indivisible;

That Christianity is not a precious stone preserved in a box called the Church of England, or the Church of the East, or Rome, but that it is the common good of mankind, destined for all continents and all races;

That there is no constituent of the present European civilisation, but the Christian religion, which could stop the brutal struggle among men, in one form or another, and guarantee a Godlike peace profitable for the whole of mankind.

All of us, small or great nations, are now looking to you with respect, not only for the victory over a revived anachronical Paganism in Central Europe, but also for a formulation of the new ideal, of saving power for all men.

Great is our expectation indeed, but it is justified by your gifts, given to you by Providence. Therefore let your hearts be larger than your Empire and your national Church, and the respect of mankind towards you will be warmed by love. Surely there can not be built a greater Empire than yours, humanly speaking. The only greater Empire than yours will be Christ's Empire. And if you are longing for something greater than your present possession, you are indeed longing for this universal, pan-human Empire of Christ. Otherwise you would be sticking either at a stagnancy or at something impossible. Both would be unwise: nature tolerates no stagnancy and punishes experiments with the impossible.

But who am I to teach you? "A reed (from the wilderness) shaken with the wind"? Not I but the present despair of the world teaches you. I am only a loud amongst many suffocated cries from West and East, from North and South, directed to you: lift up your hearts and listen! God is now doing a great thing through you, and the whole world is expecting a great thing from you. What is this great thing? How to reach it? Pray and listen! One thing only is sure, that this great thing will come neither from any Foreign Office nor from any War Office, but from the living Christian Church. Yes, she is still living, although she looks dead. She is only sleeping. But Christ is standing beside her now, calling: "Rise, ye daughter! Talitha Cumi!"

## CHAPTER II

### THE DRAMA OF THE CHURCH

The Church is a drama. She represents the greatest drama in the world's history, yea, she personates the whole of the world's history. She originated in an astounding personal drama. Humanly speaking, in the life of Jesus Christ during the three years of His public work there was more that was dramatic, from an outside and inside point of view, than in the lives of all other founders of religion taken together. And speaking from a soteriological and theological point of view, His life-drama had a cosmic greatness, involving heaven and earth and both ends of the world's history. Wonderful was the life of Buddha, but his teaching was still more wonderful than his life. Very striking was the life of Mohammed, the life of a pious and romantic statesman, but his work quickly overgrew his personality. Five years after Mohammed's death, Islam numbered more followers than Christianity five hundred years after Golgotha. But the life-drama of Jesus was and still is reckoned as the most marvellous aspect of Christianity: not His teaching or His work, but His life.

Well, was not His life-drama typical and prophetic for His Church? His Church had to live through all those agonies, external and internal, that He Himself lived through. She had to go through sunshine and darkness, through angelic concerts and devilish temptations, through death and resurrection. In one word, she had to live His life, again and again, treading sometimes quickly, sometimes reluctantly, her path, always asking for light and comfort from her visions of Him. I say the visions of Him, because those visions were omnipotent, including in themselves words and works.

There is an impressive picture now circulating in London of an English soldier lying wounded in agony on the battlefield. Well, what would a Buddhistic painter put as a simile of consolation for the man in agony? What else if not a Buddha's sentence or word? And what would a Mohammedan painter put on the picture to console the expiring soldier if not also a sentence or word from the Koran or an imaginative view of the Paradise which is waiting for him? And you know what a Christian painter

depicted – the vision of the Crucified! the soldier lying beneath this vision grasping with his hand Jesus' bleeding feet; this vision of the Crucified is greater than any sentence, any word, yea, it includes all the words of sympathy and of consolation. On another occasion the Christian painter would paint another appropriate vision, and a painter of another religion or philosophy would write another appropriate word. Therefore, it is difficult to learn the Christian religion without pictures, or to teach it without visions.

### **THE DRAMATIC FORMATION OF THE CHURCH**

It was a quarrel, as usual, among men about God and bread, when Jesus interrupted them. Peter never thought to fish anything else all his life but fishes, nor Pilate to sentence to death anyone but criminals, nor the Jewish patriots that they were losing their greatest opportunity, nor the heathen of Britannia that they were contemporaries with the very God in flesh of their posterity. How many times did it happen that Jesus during the first thirty years of His life was present in the temple when a Rabbi read the prophetic passages on the Messiah! Reading the Scriptures the poor Rabbi measured the distance between himself and the Messiah by thousands of years, and 10 – the Messiah in person was listening to his reading!

All the controversies in the synagogues and in the streets of Jerusalem were merely repeated platitudes, when a man appeared in Galilee, who claimed the highest authority and showed the greatest humility at the same time. The Law was the highest authority for the Jews, and the Emperor of Rome the highest authority for Pilate. But Jesus declared himself to be the bearer of an authority which was incomparably higher than any authority existing on earth. He did not beg either Andrew or Peter or John and James, to follow Him; He commanded them: "Follow Me!" Speaking with authority He gained the confidence of His first followers, and showing humility He also gained their love. Authority and humility – two qualities which not often were united in the character of the church-leaders, a good reason why many of them were feared and many others pitied, instead of being respected and loved as Jesus was respected and loved by the first Church. For fear and pity are the degenerate forms of respect and love.

What we call the first Church represented in reality the smallest Church in number as well as in time and space, but the richest in its dramatic changes and conflicts.

Some few fishermen were called by Christ, and this call meant real baptism for them. He let Himself be baptised but He did not baptise His disciples otherwise than by His personal calling to them to follow Him; Pentecost was their "confirmation." The history of the first Church comprised a time not of some hundred years but of some hundred days. When Andrew and Peter followed Jesus the formation of the Church started. There were already two gathered in His name and conducted by Him in person. As a matter of fact, they followed Jesus at first merely with their eyes and feet, but with their hearts they still followed Moses and the Law. The Twelve Disciples were at first nothing more than twelve insignificant grains of sand placed upon a big rocky foundation of a palace, which had to be built. Only after their confirmation by the Holy Spirit did they become the real pillars of the palace. They were uncertain about their Master and everything He said, and they quarrelled about many things. I think they represented through their differences not one church but twelve churches, but by their common respect and love for their Master they represented one Church only. What a prophetic image of the Church of Christ, say, after nineteen hundred years!

Now as long as the living Jesus was with the first Church she was all right. His life was the source of her life; His authority and power meant her existence and unity. But when the Shepherd was smitten the sheep were scattered. When the followers of Christ saw Him powerless and dead they denied Him and fell back to their natural instinct of self-defence, and the first Church died with the death of Christ. It was like the green corn in the field smitten by a flail to the very root. The owner of the corn walks in the field and looks with despair on his perished corn. But it happens often that after a few days the field begins under the sunshine to flourish anew, and the corn grows beautifully and brings forth plenty of fruit.

Mary of Magdala and the other Mary brought this first sunshine over the smitten corn. "He is alive!" This was the tidings of the women on the

second morning after His death. This tidings about the living Lord Jesus con-verted Peter and the other disciples again to Christianity. "He is alive" – that was the greatest word ever uttered by any human tongue since the Church was founded. Yea, through this very word the drooping Church was brought again to life. Whatever utterances Peter made during Christ's life were as dead as stone compared with Mary Magdalene's tidings of the living Lord after the catastrophe of His death. The beautiful and true words: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," had no meaning whatever for the future of Christianity in comparison with the certainty that the dead Christ had risen, i.e. that He was Lord even over death. Therefore if I could be convinced that a grain of good as small as the mustardseed should result from the strange quarrels about the primacy of this or that Church—or this or that bishop—I would be very sorry that there did not exist a Church founded upon the memory of Mary Magdalene. For Mary Magdalene, and not St Peter, expressed the first the absolutely decisive revelation, churchmaking and world-changing. "He is alive" was this decisive revelation.

Pentecost was the crown of the first Church and meant her victory over all her internal conflicts and her final armament for the coming dramatic struggle in the world. The Church, which kept herself after Golgotha on the defensive, inwardly against doubt and fear, outwardly against the regardless persecution of men, now, after Pentecost, undertook again her offensive against all her enemies, and became again the Church militant as she was before Golgotha when the Lord led her in person. This is the second Church, to which also we all belong. Historically, this Church is the second, but organically and dogmatically she is absolutely one with the first Church. Let us see now what were.

### **THE EXTERNAL CONFLICTS OF THE MILITANT CHURCH**

For the quantity and quality of the conflicts are the conditions of the dramatic life of a person as well as of a society. Well, the Christian Church had plenty of the most extraordinary conflicts, external and internal. Among the gravest external conflicts I reckon her conflicts with Patriotism and Imperialism.



The first Christians were persecuted most fiercely by the exclusive Jewish patriots, as all good Christians always have been persecuted by exclusive patriots. For it is an essential characteristic of a true Christian not to be an exclusive patriot, exalting his own nation and despising all others. Oppression and suffering are the best soil for a too excited Patriotism. Such a soil was Israel in the time of Christ and the first Church. All parties were united against Christ and His followers upon national and patriotic grounds; the Pharisees, the Scribes, the Sadducees and the ignorant people, believers and sceptics—they all accused Christ of "perverting the nation." They accused St Paul of the same crime. Yet St Paul it was who dealt with the question of Jewish Patriotism very courageously and minutely.

Patriotism is a natural quality, but Christianity is supernatural. Patriotism is a provincial truth, but Christianity is a pan-human truth. Patriotism means love of one's country or one's generation, Christianity means love of all countries and all generations. Christianity includes a sound and true Patriotism, but excludes untrue and exaggerated Patriotism as it excludes every untrue thought and feeling. Of course an exalted Patriotism in a frame of hatred all around excludes the Christian religion and is its most dangerous enemy. St Paul, who remained a true patriot till the end of his life, thought, as we all shall think, that Christianity never can damage the just cause of a country, but, on the contrary, it gives to a patriotic cause a universal nimbus and importance, putting it direct before the Eternal Judge, and liberating it from small anxieties, little faith and unworthy actions. He who is numbering every day our hair, and feeding the sparrows, and clothing the grass in the field—He is a greater warrant for our patriotic justice than any of our exaggerated calculations and sentiment about our country and our nation. Alas, no European nation has right to blame the Jews because of their persecution of Christianity in the name of their Patriotism. There exists no country in Europe which has not at some time in the name of a false Patriotism either directly persecuted or abased the Church, or at least subordinated her to the cause of the country or put her in the service of its local and temporal cause. The purest Christianity in the nineteenth century had a struggle against patriotic and nationalistic exclusiveness not much less dramatic than the primitive Church,

struggling in Judasa against Judaism and in Greece against Hellenism. The national hero-saints were exalted in Europe over the merely Christian saints: in France, Jeanne d'Arc; in Russia, Serge of Radonez; in Germany, Luther; among the Serbs, St Savva, and St Peter of Cetinje.

Another enemy of the Church from the beginning was Imperialism. First of all Roman Imperialism. Christ's second "crime," for which He was brought before Pilate, was His disregard of Caesar. And Caesar was the symbol of the Roman world-dominion. Therefore, one Caesar after the other did their best to exterminate this dangerous Christian sect. Therefore, among hundreds of religions only Christianity practically was prohibited in the Roman Empire, as a *religio illicita*. No wonder! All other religions which swarmed in Rome were tolerated as naive curiosities by the people who had lost their own religion. But Christianity was marked as an enemy from the first. Not only a corrupted Caesar, like Nero, persecuted the Church, but the wise ones like Trajan and Diocletian, and the wisest, like Marcus Aurelius. There were plenty of pretexts to excite the public mind: burnings, earthquakes, diseases, etc. It was Trajan who prohibited by an edict the Christian secret clubs, Heterias, as dangerous to the State. And it was the philosopher Marcus Aurelius who sentenced to death the Christian philosopher, Justin, on Imperialistic grounds.

Rome was armed to the teeth and the Church had no arms at all except an ardent belief and the inspired word. Rome drew the sword against the unarmed Christians, and the Christians armed only with Jesus Christ, and with empty hands, took the challenge. The enemies knew each other from the beginning. Rome's conviction was: better to lose the soul than the Empire; and the Christians' was: better to save the soul than to get an Empire. The Roman persecutors were every day sure of their victory, slaughtering defenceless men and women, or throwing them *ad bestias*, whereas the martyrs saw their victory as a distant vision, and still rejoiced. "The prison was like a palace to me," exclaimed St Perpetua. And Saturus, another martyr, spoke to his executors: "Mark our faces well, that you may know us again in the day of judgment." Such was the spirit of the primitive Church in her duel with pagan Imperialism.

Islam was another kind of Imperialism against which the Church fought. If the Roman Imperialism was cool, calculating, without any fanaticism, Islam was a unique form of religious, fanatical Imperialism, having in view world-conquest and world-dominion, like Rome and yet unlike Rome. Here the Church fought with the sword against the sword. Before the definite fall of the Roman Empire the crusades of Christianity against Islam began, and it has not been finished until this day. Very dramatic was this struggle in Palestine, under Western crusaders, in Spain and Russia. But I think the most dramatic act of this dramatic conflict happened in the Balkans, especially in Serbia, during the last five hundred years.

The conflict with Islamic Imperialism was not yet at an end when a French, and English, and Russian, and German Imperialism were formulated. We may call it by one name, European Imperialism, although every species of it is different. What was the Church's attitude towards the European imperialistic formulae? Did she agree with them? Or did she oppose and protest as she did against Rome and the Crescent? No, she neither agreed nor disagreed as a whole, but partially she agreed or disagreed. Yet the true Church of Christ reserves the world-dominion only for Christianity in its most spiritual and perfect form and excludes every other dominion of man over men. The present cataclysm of Europe may show the world that no earthly king is destined for dominion over our planet, but Christ, the Heavenly King of souls.

### **THE INTERNAL CONFLICTS OF THE CHURCH**

Dramatic was the external course of Church history, fighting against exclusive Patriotism and Imperialism, dramatic too, her internal struggles for a true doctrine and an ethical ideal.

1. The Struggle for a True Doctrine.—The central problem for the living Church has always been: Who was Jesus? and how to worship Him? The restless spirit of humanity endeavoured to define the details both in His relation to God and to the world. The Church did not define her doctrine in advance, but bit by bit, pragmatically, according to the questions and doubts raised in the Christian communities. The refused solutions of a raised question were called heresy, the adopted solution by the Church

was called orthodoxy. No heresy came merely as an abstract theory, but every one was a dramatic movement, an organisation, a camp, a deed – and not merely a word. That made the struggle against it more difficult. Docetism, Nicolaism, Gnosticism, Chiliasm, Manichaeism, Monatism, Monarchism, Monophysitism, Monotheletism, Arianism, Nestorianism – every one of these terms means both a theory and a drama. The Church had to correct the opinion of the heretics for herself, and to fight against them for themselves.

The doctrine of the Church was regarded by the heretics as incorrect or insufficient, and by outsiders as wicked. Celsus, an Epicurean writer, despised the Christian doctrine as of "barbarous origin." The people of Smyrna being aroused against the Christians and their bishop, Polycarp, cried: "Away with the Atheists!" the heathen misunderstood the Church doctrine and called the Christians atheists, as Montanus, a Christian heretic, misunderstood the Church doctrine and regarded Jesus only as his own Precursor and himself as an incarnation of the Holy Spirit. But the Church did not care either for the pressure from without or from within, she went on her way cheerfully, struggling and believing, showing to the world her saints and martyrs as her argument and Christ as the guarantee of her ultimate victory.

The Church had also a dramatic struggle with the philosophers. She rather was inclusive concerning the different opposed systems. John of Damascus based his theology upon Aristotle, like Thomas Aquinas, and Gregory of Nyssa based his own upon Plato, as the Scottish School did in the nineteenth century. Pantheism and Deism were both against the Church. Pantheism thought God immanent, Deism thought God transcendent. The Church had already in its creeds the true parts of both of these systems. She taught that God is by His essence transcendent to this world, which is His image, but immanent in the world pragmatically, or dramatically, i.e. visiting this world and acting in this world.

Materialism and spiritualism excluded each other, but both held the Church in contempt as a "rough philosophy for the people." Yet the Church included the true parts for both, not by asserting anything about the atoms

but by recognising two different worlds, the world of bodies and the world of spirits, in a dramatic union in this transitory Universe.

In the same way the Church cut off the extremities and one-sidedness in empiricism and supernaturalism, in rationalism and mysticism, in optimism and pessimism. All these systems represented the human effort to solve the riddle of our life without taking any notice of the Church and her wisdom. And all failed to become the universally accepted truth, but all of them helped the Church unconsciously to her own orientation and strength. The Church collided with any extreme philosophy. Her wisdom was broad as life, simple as life on the one hand, and manifold as life on the other; mystical as the starry night and pragmatic as a weekday.

2. The Struggle for an Ethical Ideal. – The primitive Church was "of one heart and of one soul," or, in the words of a very early document, it was among the Christians: "A life in the flesh but not according to the flesh" (Epist. ad Diognet.). But the restless human spirit soon dug out difficult questions and conflicts concerning the ethical life of the Church members. Of course the Lord Himself was the supreme moral ideal, but men felt themselves to be too small and too narrow to grasp this ideal both in its purity and its broadness and inclusiveness. Therefore we see not only in the primitive Church but throughout Church history extreme and exclusive propositions to solve the problem. For instance, asceticism with celibacy and flight from the world was regarded by some people in the primitive Church as the highest ideal of morality. The deserts were populated with the ascetics. The same ideal has been strongly accentuated in Russia even in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, chastity has been preferred as an ideal by many others.

Another problem was: what were more salvatory, faith or works? Or another: whether we are saved or condemned by God's predestination or by our free will (libertarian, arbitrary, Augustinianism, and Pelagianism; Jansenism and Ultramontanism)? Or another: in our moral perfection how much is God's grace operating and how much our human collaboration? Or another: what part worship plays in our salvation (the problem known in theology as *opus operatum*)? Or another: what should be the normal

relation of the Church and State, the Church and social life, the Church and education, the Church and the manifold needs and tribulations of mankind?

All these problems, and many others here unmentioned, moved every part of the Christian Church in the East and West. Your Church history too is full of a moving and dramatic struggle for light in all these problems, from the day when the first Roman missionaries brought the new Gospel to your country up to our days.

The Church, inclusive in wisdom, has had the most dramatic history in the world. Struggling against Patriotism, she pleaded for humanity; and struggling against Imperialism, she pleaded for spirituality. And again: struggling against heretics, she pleaded for unity, and struggling against worldly philosophers, she pleaded for a sacred and pragmatic wisdom. She looked sometimes defeated and on her knees before her enemies, but she rose again and again like the phoenix from its ashes. In her dramatic struggle through the world and against the world the internal voice of her Founder comforted and inspired her. The harder struggles she fought the louder was the comforting and inspiring voice. The more comfortable she made herself in this world, the less was His magic voice heard. His life was a scheme of her life: his crucifixion and resurrection a prophecy of her history to the world's end. Whenever she became satisfied with herself and with the world around her she was overshadowed and eclipsed. Whenever she feared struggle and suffering she became sick, on the dying bed. He then stood, meek and sorrowful, at her bed and called: Arise, my daughter!

The Church's craving for comfort is indeed her craving for death. Like a noble knight who descends into a prison to liberate the enchained slaves, to whom the prison is painful and liberation still more painful, so is the Church's position in this world. But how regrettable should it be if the noble knight accommodated himself in the prison among the slaves and forgot the light from which he had descended and to which he ought to return! "He is one of ourselves," the slaves will say. So might say to-day all the worldly institutions about the Christian Church in this valley of slavery: "She is one of ourselves." She is destined to quicken the world end,

and she is postponing it. One millennium is past, another is near by, yet the Church does not think of the world end: she loves this world; that is her curse. The world still exists because of the Church's hesitation and fear. Were she not hesitating and fearing she had been dramatically struggling and suffering, and a new heaven and a new earth should be in sight. Why has the Church stopped being a drama? Why is she hesitating and fearing? Doubts and comfort have weakened the Church. The most tragical religion has climbed from Golgotha to Olympus and is now lying there comfortably, in sunshine and forgetfulness, while Chronos, appeased, continues to measure the time by thousands of years, as before.

## CHAPTER III

### THE AGONY OF THE CHURCH

The present time should be one of self criticism. The European race now needs this self-criticism more than any other race, and the Christian Church needs it more than any other religion in the world, for before this War the European race set itself up as the critic of the defects and insufficiencies of all other races, and the Christian Church exalted herself over all other religions "as high as the heaven is exalted over the earth." The other races and religions thought that behind this proud criticism of Christian Europe there must be at least a well-possessed security for the world-peace. Of course it was an illusion. On no continent was the peace of mankind more endangered than in Europe, the very metropolis of Christianity and Christian civilisation. And it has been so not only during the last few years, it has been the case during the last thousand years, that Europe has represented a greater contrast to peace than any other continent. During the last thousand years history can report more wars, more bloodshed, and more criminal unrest in Christian Europe than in the heathen countries of the Far East—China, Japan, and India. It is a very humiliating fact, both for the white race and for its religion, but, nevertheless, it is a fact. This humiliating fact should rouse us in the present painful times to the consideration of our own defects and insufficiencies. Europe is sick, and her Church is sick too. How can a wounded man be healed unless his wounds are unveiled? Europe's soul is sick, therefore her body is so sorely suffering and bleeding. Well, Europe's soul is nothing else than Europe's religion, but the religion of Europe to-day is not Europe's guide and lord, it is Europe's most obedient servant.

### THE CHURCH THE SERVANT OF PATRIOTISM AND IMPERIALISM

Patriotism and Imperialism—qualities more physical than spiritual—were the worst enemies of the primitive Church, as I tried to show in my previous chapters. Well, Patriotism and Imperialism have been the most prominent qualities of modern Europe. Now compare the primitive Church with the modern Church: the primitive Church fought most tenaciously and heroically against the exclusive Patriotism of the Jews and



against the Imperialism of the Romans, and the modern Church serves very obediently modern Patriotism and Imperialism! I wish I were wrong in what I am stating now, but, alas! the facts are too obvious, both the facts of this War, and the facts of previous peace.

Here are the facts:

When Austria mobilised against Serbia and declared War, the Church in Austria did not protest against it, but, on the contrary, she supported the Vienna Government with all her heart and means.

It is well known how much the Church of Germany, both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic, unanimously and strongly supported the War policy of the Kaiser's Government – the very policy of a blind exclusiveness and a regardless Imperialism.

The Governments of Russia and Great Britain declared War against their enemies without consulting their respective Churches, yet the Churches of both countries have done their best to help their "country's cause."

The Churches of France, Italy, Serbia, Rumania, Belgium, and Bulgaria have been at the disposal of the War Governments of their countries.

Now we have almost the same denominations of religion on each fighting side (it is, however, significant that the whole Anglican Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church are on the side of the Allies), so that we cannot say it is a War of Protestants against Catholics, nor of the Orthodox against the Modernists, nor of the Episcopalians against the Presbyterians, nor even of the Christians against Mohamedans (because on both sides we have Christians and Mohammedans). No, we cannot say that, for it is not a War of one Church against the other, nor of one religion against another; it is a War of Patriotism against Patriotism, of Patriotism against Imperialism, and of Imperialism against Imperialism. The Churches are only the tools of Patriotism or Imperialism. Not one of the Churches has stated her standpoint as a different one from the standpoint of its respective Government. The Churches have simply adopted the standpoint of the Government. They seemed to have no standpoint of their own concerning

this War between nations. As if the War were quite a surprisingly new event in history!

When the Austrian Government declared war on Serbia, the Church of Austria adopted the standpoint of the Austrian Government as the right one. The Serbian Church adopted the standpoint of the Serbian Government, of course, as the right one. So it happened that the Churches in Austria and Serbia prayed to the same God, and against each other.

The Church of Germany stood up against the Church of Russia because the German Government stood up against the Russian Government. Neither could the Church of Germany raise any protest against the warlike German Government, nor could the Church of Russia say anything to cancel what the Russian Government had already said. And so it happened that the Churches of Germany and Russia prayed to the same God for each other's destruction.

The Churches of France, England, Belgium, and Italy have fully recognised the justice of the Governments of France, Belgium, and Italy concerning the War of those countries against other countries, whose justice on the other hand has been fully recognised by their Churches. And so it has happened that during the last three years the most contradictory prayers have been sent to God in Heaven from the "One, Holy, Catholic Church" on earth.

The Churches of the different countries adopted the standpoint of those countries which governed them. What is the consequence if a Christian Church adopts the standpoint of a worldly Government as the true one? It means practically nothing else but that the said Church recognises that standpoint as the Christian one.

Now, if the German policy is right, the German Church is right, and consequently, the Russian Church is wrong; and, on the other hand, if the Russian policy is right the Russian Church is right, and, consequently, the German Church is wrong. The same, if the Serbian Patriotism, which dictates the Serbian policy, is right, then the Serbian Church, too, is right; and if the Austro-German Imperialism is right, then the Austro-German Churches are right, and the Church in Serbia wrong. Of course the same

could be said for other belligerent Churches, i.e., the justice or injustice of the Church of England depended on the justice or injustice of the English Government, and the same about the French, Belgian, and Italian Churches, which are dependent on the justice or injustice of their respective Governments. The same is true not only of the so-called established Churches, but of the Disestablished as well. The great fact remains: no Church whatever did protest against the War action taken by the respective Governments; no Church whatever refused to do the War work she was asked to do, and, finally, no Church whatever opposed her views to the views of the Governments. In one word, no Christian Church now existing has declined to be the very obedient servant either of Patriotism or Imperialism. Future generations will be, I hope, more truly Christian than we have been – they will be shocked to read in the history of the greatest and bloodiest conflict in the world's history, that the worldly Governments, and not the Christian Church, formulated the truth; in other words, that the politicians and soldiers were bearers and formulators of the truth, and that the Church was only a follower and supporter of that truth, this truth having to wage War in consequence, i.e. the disobedience of all God's ten Commandments – not to speak of the New Testament – which truth must be condemned by the Church as untrue. Following to the extreme the ideals of Patriotism and Imperialism, the Churches partially did not shrink even from preaching War as a legal thing. The court preacher of the Kaiser, preaching in the Domchurch at Berlin after the Allie's refusal to enter into peace negotiations with Germany, said: "We have spoken to our enemies (read, the enemies of German Imperialism), and they did not listen to our words; well, let our guns talk now until our enemies are compelled to listen to us!" That is the voice of a great Church. Yet this voice has not remained unaccompanied with similar warlike and unchristian voices from other great and small Churches.

### **THE LITTLE ISLANDS AMIDST THE OCEAN**

Why did not the Church – the educator of Europe for the space of nineteen hundred years – why did she not protest against this War?

Because she was too weak everywhere; and, even if she had protested, her voice would not have been listened to.

But why was the Church so weak as to be silent at a most fatal moment in history, and to have to listen to the Foreign and War Offices to know what the truth was?

Because she was not a united, universal Church, like a lofty mountainous continent despising all the storms of an angry ocean around. She was weak, because she was cut in pieces and had become like an archipelago of small islands in a stormy ocean.

The Churches were not prepared to protest, they were prepared only to surrender to any temporal power. Therefore, they surrendered altogether, without making any effort, to Patriotism and Imperialism.

But what led to the Churches' surrender? It was through their internal quarrels; through their fruitless controversies and paralysing mutual accusations and self-sufficiency.

For instance:

The Eastern Church proudly insisted on her superiority over all other Churches, because she preserved faithfully and unchangingly the most ancient traditions of Christianity, and because she had an episcopal decentralised system of Church administration, which has been capable of adapting itself to all political and social situations. She reserved perfection only for herself, and was prodigious in criticising other Christian communities. She became an isolated island.

The Roman Church has had nothing to do with any other Church, living in her isolation and raising higher and higher the walls which separated her from other Churches. She has a wonderful record of missionary work in Europe and outside; she has a minutely organised centralisation, with an infallible autocrat at the head; and she has an enlarged dogmatic system, larger than any other Church. She pointed out again and again her superiority to all other Christian communities, and claimed for herself the exclusive right to speak in the name of Jesus Christ. Thus she became an isolated island.

The Anglican Church repudiated the papal authority. She repudiated as well the Eastern worship of the saints and use of ikons on the one side, and on the other she repudiated all the extremes of Protestantism in teaching, worship and administration. She thought in that way to be the absolutely true Christian organism, incomparably better than any other all around. Thus the Anglican Church became an isolated island too.

The Protestants of the Continent, and of England and Scotland, thought to save the Christian religion in its integrity by bringing it back to its primitive simplicity. By repudiating the Pope and the Bishops, by shortening the Christian dogmatic, and by reducing worship to a minimum, they boasted of restoring the true Church of Christ and His Apostles. Everything which was an addition to their simplicity was regarded by them either as unnecessary, or even as idolatrous and false. Thus the Presbyterian and Protestant Nonconformist Churches became isolated islands.

But the more the morselling of Christianity went on, the more dangerous became the raging ocean around it, so that now the Christian Archipelago seems to be quite covered with the stormy waves. The Church, therefore, is in an agony everywhere. Even if the Church had no responsibility upon her shoulders for the present bloodshed in Europe, she would be in agony, just because the whole Christian world is in agony, but much more so because a great deal of responsibility for it must rest on her shoulders.

### **SELF-CASTIGATION**

The Christian monks of old used to castigate themselves when a great plague came over the world. They used to consider themselves as the real cause of the plague, and did not accuse anybody else. Well, this extreme method ought to be used now by the Churches, for the good of mankind and for their own good. It would be quite enough to bring the dawning of a new day for Christianity if this self-castigation of the Churches were only a self-criticism.

If, for instance, the Eastern Church would say: Although I have preserved faithfully and unchangingly the most ancient traditions of Christianity, still I have many faults and insufficiencies. I have much to learn from the

Roman Church, how to bring all my sections, all my national and provincial branches into closer touch; and from Anglicanism I have to learn the wonderful spirit of piety, expressed not only in old times, but even in quite modern times through new prayers, new hymns, new Psalms, added to the old ones; and from Protestantism I have to learn the courage to look every day to the very heart of religion in its simplest and most common expressions.

Or, if the Roman Church would use this self-criticism, saying: My concentration is my strength and my weakness. Perhaps, after all, my Pope is more a Caesaristic than a Christian Institution, making more for worldly Imperialism than for the Spirituality of the world. I have to learn from the Christian East more humility, and from Anglicanism more respect for human freedom and social democracy, and from Protestantism a more just appreciation of human efforts and results in science and civilisation generally.

Or, if the Anglican Church would use self-criticism like this, and say, I am, of course, an Apostolic Church, but I am not the only Church. I have to learn from the Eastern Church something, and from the Church of Rome something, but, above all, I have to learn that they are the Apostolic Churches as well as I, and that I am, without them, too small an island, and unable to resist alone the flood of patriotic and imperialistic tendencies. And from the Protestants I have to learn to put the living Christ above all doctrinal statements and liturgical mysteries.

Or, if the Protestants of all classes would abandon their contemptuous attitude towards so-called ecclesiasticism and ritualism, and criticise themselves, saying: We have had too much confidence in human reason and human words. Our worship is bare of every thing but the poor human tongue. We have excluded Nature from our worship, though Nature is purer, more innocent and worthier to come before the face of God than men. We have been frightened by candles and incense, and vestments, and signs, and symbols, and sacraments, but now we see that the mystery of life and of our religion is too deep to be spoken out clearly in words only. And we have been frightened by the episcopal administration of the

Church, but now we see that the episcopal system is a golden midway between the papal and our extremes. Besides, we have gone too far in our criticism of the Church tradition and of the Holy Scriptures. We have to learn to abstain from calling the Eastern Church idolatrous and the Roman Church tyrannical, and the Episcopal Church inconsistent. We have our own idolatries (our idols are: individualism, human reason, and the human word); and we have our own tyranny (the tyranny of criticism and pride); and we have – thank god – our own inconsistencies.

Such a self-criticism would mean really a painful self-castigation, because it would mean a reaction from a policy of criticism and self-sufficiency which has lasted a thousand years, ever since the 16th July 1054 – the very fatal date when the Pope's delegates put an Excommunication Bull on the altar of St Sophia's in Constantinople. The primitive monks, who practised self-castigation because of the world-evil, experienced a wonderful purification of soul, a new vision of God, and an extraordinary sense of unity with all men, living and dead. Well, that is just what the Church needs at present; a purification, a new vision of God, and a sense of unity.

### **A COMMON ILLUSION**

The present agony of the Church has resulted from an illusion which has been common to all the Churches, i.e. that one of the Churches could be saved without all other Churches. It is, in fact, only the enlarged Protestant theory of individualism, which found its expression, especially in Germany, in the famous formula: "Thou, man, and thy God!" It is an anti-social and anti-Christian formula too, quite opposed to the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father," which is in the plural and not in the singular possessive. This prayer is a symbol of our salvation: we can be saved only in the plural, not in the singular; only collectively, not as individuals: i.e. we can be saved, but I cannot be saved. I cannot be saved without thee, and thou canst not be saved without me. For if thou art in need I can be saved only by helping thee; and vice versa, if I am in need, thou canst save thyself only by saving me. And we all, and always, are in need of each other. Peter could not be saved without Andrew, and John and James, nor could the others be saved without Peter. That is why Christ brought them all together, and educated

them to live and pray together, and spoke to them in assembly as to one being. If Christ's method were like the German Protestant method, "Thou, man, and thy God!" He would really never have gathered the disciples together, but He would have gone to Andrew and saved Andrew first; and then to Peter and saved Peter; and then to John and James and the others, and saved them individually, one by one. That is just what He did not – because He could not do it. He knew, and He said (speaking of the two Commandments), that God is only one constituent of our salvation, and that the other constituent is our neighbours. What does that mean, but that I cannot be saved without God and my neighbours? And my neighbours! The whole of mankind must become the mystical body of Christ before any one of us is saved. If ninety nine of us think we are saved, still we must wait in the corridor of Heaven until the one lost sheep is found and brought in; the door of Heaven does not open for one person only. And speaking in larger circles we may say: If ninety-nine Churches think they are saved, still they must wait in the corridor of Heaven until the one retrograde Church has become the member of the mystical body of Christ. The door of Heaven is open for Christ only and for nobody else. And the mystical Christ does not mean one righteous man only, or two, or twelve, or one Church denomination, or one generation – no. It means millions and millions of human beings. All the Churches are inbuilt into His body. This building is yet far from being finished, still it is much larger and more magnificent than we think. It is larger than a denomination, it is loftier than our nation, or our race, or our Empire; yea, it is stronger than Europe.

Consequently, the Church of England cannot be saved without the Church of the East, nor the Church of Rome without Protestantism; nor can England be saved without Serbia, nor Europe without China, nor America without Africa, nor this generation without the generations past and those to come. We are all one life, one organism. If one part of this organism is sick, all other parts should be suffering. Therefore let the healthy parts of the Church take care of the sick ones. Self-sufficiency means the postponement of the end of the world and the prolongation of human sufferings. It is of no use to change Churches and go from one Church to another seeking salvation: salvation is in every Church as long as a Church



thinks and cares in sisterly love for all other Churches, looking upon them as parts of the same body, or there is salvation in no Church so long as a Church thinks and cares only for herself, contemptuously denying the rights, beauty, truth and merits of all other Churches. It is a great thing to love one's Church, as it is a great thing to love one's country, but it is much better to love other Churches and other countries too. Now, in this time, when the whole Christian world is in a convulsive struggle one part against the other, now or never the consciousness of the desire for one Church of Christ on earth should dawn in our souls, and now or never should the appreciation, right understanding and love for each part of this one Church of Christ on earth should dawn in our souls, and now or never should the appreciation, right understanding and love for each part of this one Church begin in our hearts.

Stick to your Church: it is a beautiful and a holy Church, but, nevertheless, break up every sort of disgraceful exclusiveness from other Churches. That is the way to bring the Church out of the present agony and weakness. That is the best way for you to serve your own Church and your own nation. And the Crucified does not ask any other service from your Church in the present world agony.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**THE VICTORY OF THE CHURCH**  
**WHAT IS THE CHURCH?**

What is the Church, psychologically viewed?

The Church is:

1. A school of the Christian spirit. That is her first task in the world.
2. She is the Body of Christ. That is her official and physical determination – her firm, her name.
3. She is the living Christ Himself, i.e. Christ's body (consisting of all the human bodies inside the Church organisation), and Christ's spirit (filling all the human bodies inside the Church). That is her ideal, her end, her Horeb.

What is the Church, sociologically viewed?

The Church is:

1. A Theocracy. That is her general virtue, which she shares with all the religions in history.
2. She is a Christocracy. God is the abstract Ruler of Humanity, but Christ is the pragmatic God, leading, enlightening, encouraging and inspiring Humanity. That is the Church's special charter, special way, different from the charters and ways of other religions.

She is a Sanctocracy. The saints ought to lead mankind – not the great men of the world, but the saints. But when all men become saintly, no special leaders will be needed: no authority, no state, no law, no punishment. All men will do their over-duty, and all will be happy in their neighbour's happiness. The fight for right is an inferior stage in human history. It is a savage fight. But there will come a fight for over-duty. It will be a smiling, pleasant fight.

What is the Church, historically viewed?

The Church is:

1. A heresy regarding Judaism and Paganism, a real, deep heresy. Not so deep was the outward gulf as the inward. Outwardly, this heresy made a thousand compromises with Judaism and Paganism. That did not matter. But inwardly it was a new, an absolutely new and most uncompromising spirit with anything in the world.

2. She was a heresy regarding the whole practical life of mankind: politics, society, art, war, education, nationalism, imperialism, science. She meant the most obstinate conflict between what exists and what ought to exist. Therefore her martyrdom is quite comprehensible.

3. She was built up and applied to human life by the Graeco-Hebrew spirit. Yet she has become the European religion, par excellence, almost exclusively European. That is her historical development and fate. Europe's acceptance of Christianity is nominally definite. No other Asiatic religion (all great religions are Asiatic) has had any notable success in Europe. Yet Europe's mission of Christianity has been no success. St Paul has done more for the Christian mission than the whole of modern Europe. Historically, Christianity has been and has remained until now the religion of the European race only.

What is the Church viewed from the point of view of the world war?

The Church is:

1. The only keeper of the secret of the present war. The present war is the result of the de-christianisation of Europe, and de-christianisation of Europe's Church. The Church only is conscious of this fact and keeps silent. She has no courage to accuse because she has no courage to self-accuse.

2. She is the only thing which makes European civilisation not lower than the civilisation of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, and China. The ruins of those ancient civilisations are more magnificent than the actual constructions of Europe. But the Church gives Europe a special nimbus and a special excellency over those ancient worlds. Secular Europe does not know that, but the Church knows it and keeps silent. She cannot announce it because she has sinned. Her sins keep her tongue-tied.

3. Nothing is sure to survive the present catastrophe of Europe, but the Christian Church. None of the European potencies has the idea for the reconstruction of the world, for durable and Godlike world-peace, but the Church.

Socialism, Masonry, Philanthropy, Rousseauism, – all these are only small units of the great treasury that the Christian Church hides under her clouds and dust of errors and miseries. All non-Christian systems and schemes mean, my own interest first and then thine, or first I and my nation and my race, and then thou and thy nation and thy race, or, my happiness and, along with it, thy happiness. The Christian idea hidden in the Church is a revolutionary one, the most revolutionary idea in the world. The Christian idea is, thou and thy nation and thy race first, and then me and my nation and my race; or, thy happiness first and in thy happiness my happiness. Saintliness above everything, the true saintliness including goodness and sacrifice. That is the fundamental idea of the Church. That is the only constructive, Godlike treasury that Europe still possesses, the sleeping, never used, never tried treasury. The Church is the keeper of this treasury. This treasury must survive the old Europe and the old Church, the de-christianised Europe and the de-christianised Church.

### **THE POVERTY OF EUROPEAN CIVILISATION**

The poverty of European civilisation has been revealed by this war. The ugly nakedness of Europe has brought to shame all those who used to bow before Europe's mask. It was a silken shining mask hiding the inner ugliness and poverty of Europe. The mask was called: culture, civilisation, progress, modernism. All was only vanitas vanitatum and povertas povertatum. When the soul fled away, what remained was empty, ugly and dangerous. When religion plunged into impotence, then:

Science became a mask of pride.

Art – a mask of vanity.

Politics – a mask of selfishness.

Laws – a mask of greediness.

Theology – a mask of scepticism.

Technical knowledge – a poor surrogate for spirituality.

Journalism – a desperate surrogate for literature.

Literature – a sick nostalgia and a nonsense, a dwarf-acrobacy.

Civilisation – a pretext for imperialism.

Fight for right – an atavistic formula of the primitive creeds.

Morals – the most controversial matter.

Individualism – the second name for egoism and egotism.

Christ – a banished beggar looking for a shelter, while in the royal and pharisaic palaces lived: Machiavelli, the atheist; Napoleon, the atheist; Marx, the atheist; and Nietzsche, the atheist, imperially ruling Europe's rulers.

The spirit was wrong and everything became wrong. The spirit of any civilisation is inspired by its religion, but the spirit of modern Europe was not inspired by Europe's religion at all. A terrific effort was made in many quarters to liberate Europe from the spirit of her religion. The effort-makers forgot one thing, i.e. that no civilisation ever was liberated from religion and still lived. Whenever this liberation seemed to be fulfilled, the respective civilisation decayed and died out, leaving behind barbaric materialism in towns and superstitions in villages. Europe had to live with Christianity, or to die in barbaric materialism and superstitions without it. The way to death was chosen. From Continental Europe first the infection came to the whole white race. It was there that the dangerous formula was pointed out: "Beyond good and evil." Other parts of the white world followed slowly, taking first the path between Good and Evil. Good was changed for Power. Evil was explained away as Biological Necessity. The Christian religion, which inspired the greatest things that Europe ever possessed in every point of human activity, was degraded by means of new watchwords; individualism, liberalism, conservatism, nationalism, imperialism, secularism, which in essence meant nothing but de-christianisation of the European society, or, in other words, emptiness of European civilisation. Europe abandoned the greatest things she possessed and clung to the lower and lowest ones. The greatest thing was – Christ.

As you cannot imagine Arabic civilisation in Spain without Islam, or India's civilisation without Hinduism, or Rome without the Roman Pantheon, so you cannot imagine Europe's civilisation without Christ. Yet some people thought that Christ was not so essentially needed for Europe, and behaved accordingly without Him or against Him. Christ was Europe's God. When this God was banished (from politics, art, science, social life, business, education), everybody consequently asked for a God, and everybody thought himself to be a god, and in truth there it failed, not on theories in Europe proclaiming, openly or disguisedly, everyone a god. So the godless Europe became full of gods!

Being de-christianised, Europe still thought to be civilised. In reality she was a poor valley full of dry bones. The only thing she had to boast of was her material power. By material power only she impressed and frightened the unchristian (but not antichristian) countries of Central and Eastern Asia, and depraved the rustic tribes in Africa and elsewhere. She went to conquer not by God or for God, but by material power and for material pleasure. Her spirituality did not astonish any of the peoples on earth. Her materialism astonished all of them. Her inner poverty was seen by India, China, Japan, and partly by Russia. What an amazing poverty! She gained the whole world, and when she looked inside herself she could not find her soul. Where has fled Europe's soul? The present war will give the answer. It is not a war to destroy the world but to show Europe's poverty and to bring back her soul. It will last—this war—as long as Europe remains soulless, Godless, Christless. It will stop when Europe gets the vision of her soul, her only God, her only wealth.

### **THE CHRISTIANISATION OF THE CHURCH**

The Church must first awaken out of her sleep and her European emptiness, and then Europe will come again to life. The Church has failed, not because she was not Europeanised, but just because she was too much Europeanised. Instead of inspiring Europe she was inspired by Europe, i.e. emptied by the empty Europe. The soul obeyed the body and became the body itself. All the secular watchwords entered the Church and the Church watchwords were eclipsed. Liberalism, conservatism, ceremonialism, right,

nationalism, imperialism, law, democracy, autocracy, republicanism, socialism, scientific criticism, and similar things have filled the Christian theology, Christian service, Christian pulpits as the Christian Gospel. In reality the Christian gospel has been as different from all these worldly ideas and temporal forms as heaven is different from earth. For all these ideas or forms were earthly, bodily, dusty—a convulsive attempt to change unhappiness for happiness through the changing of institutions. The Church ought to have been indifferent towards them, pointing always her principal idea, embodied in Christ. And her principal idea meant never a change of external things, of institutions, but a change of spirit. All the ideas named were secular precepts to cure the world's evil, the very poor drugs to heal the sick Europe outside of the Church and without the Church.

Yet the Church only possessed the true remedy, although she became forgetful of it, because she herself got sick, and instead of giving the world the necessary remedy she looked about to take it from the world. Weakened in her position in the world and forgetful of her external value, the Church, or some parts or parties of the Church, made even coquetry with the current and transitory potencies in order to make her position stronger. Yet the fact stood in history as big as a mountain that the Church always failed when making concessions of her spirit to any temporary power, and when not making concessions as to the visible forms and transitory shapes of human societies.

Neither Ritualism nor Liberalism helps anything without the true Christian spirit. The modern Ritualism and Liberalism are absolutely equally worthless from the Christian point of view, being so hostile to each other as they are, filled with the unclean spirit of hatred, unforgiveness, despising and even persecuting each other. They are equally unchristian and even antichristian. Measured by the mildest measure they are a new edition of the Judaistic Pharisaism and Sadduceeism. The Ritualists cling to their ritual, the Liberals cling to their protest against the Ritualists. But the true spirit by which both of them move and act and write and speak is the unclean spirit of hatred and despite of each other, the very spirit which

excludes them both from communion with Christ and the saints. The Church has been equally de-christianised by Ritualists and Liberals, by Conservatives and Modernists, by bowers and by talkers. The Church must be now re-christianised amongst all of them and through all of them.

Let the Church be the Church, i.e. the community of the saints. Let the world know that the Church's mission on earth is not to accumulate wealth, or to gain political power or knowledge, or to cling to this institution or to that, but to cleanse mankind from its unclean, evil spirits, and to fill it with the spirit of saintliness. Let the Church first change her spirit and then urge the whole of mankind to change theirs.

Let the Ritualists know that however devout they might be, still they can call the Protestants their brothers. The most devout have been often killers of their neighbours and killers of Christ.

Let the learned doctors of Protestantism think that however learned they might be, still they are foolish and ignorant enough to be self-satisfied. It is doubtful whether the most elaborate sermon of a Protestant doctor smells more beautifully than incense. The most learned theologians in Germany and elsewhere have whole-heartedly supported the criminal enterprise of the warlike and criminal scientia militans. The deepest learning and the meanest spirit have often shown in history a very brotherly alliance. Christianity is not that.

Let the Pope be congratulated for his tenacious keeping of the idea of Theocracy. But let him consider this idea only as the starting-point in the social science of the Church. His Theocracy has been refused because it was not at the same time Christocracy and Sanctocracy. The saints in Christ are alone infallible. Let the Vatican be filled with saints, and infallibility then will not need to be preached and ordered but only to be silently shown. Nobody believes infallibility upon authority, but everyone will accept it upon Saintliness.

The way of authority is a fallible way.

The way of knowledge is quite as fallible.

But the way of saintliness is infallible.



Every spirit is fallible but the spirit of saintless. The Church is infallible not by any talisman but by her saintliness. The Bishop of Rome or of Canterbury will be infallible only if they are saints. The saints are detached from everything and attached to Christ, so that Christ incarnates His spirit in them. Not we, but Christ in us, is infallible.

Let the people of the Eastern Church stick to their Christian ideal of saintliness. Their interpretation of the Christian spirit may be the best and truest. Yet the ideal must become flesh. Let them not be proud of their not having pride, and exclusive because God chose them to understand the bottomless deepness of the esoteric Christianity. By pride towards the proud and by exclusiveness they may spoil and darken their ideals and remain in the dark.

Let all the Churches feel their unity in the ideal spirit of saintliness. But if that is difficult for them, let them first feel their unity in sinfulness, in committed sins and crimes, in their nakedness and poverty. Just to start with, this first step seems absolutely necessary. Never any great saint became saintly unless he first thought himself equal in impurity and sinfulness with all other human beings. The Churches must go the way of the saints. Their way is the only infallible one.

### **THE ONLY NECESSARY EXCLUSIVENESS OF THE CHURCH**

When you deeply search in history about the causes of the strength of the primitive Church and of the weakness and decay of the modern Church, you will come to a very clear and simple conclusion.

1. The primitive Church was inclusive as to its forms, but exclusive as to its spirit.
2. The modern Church has been exclusive as to its forms, but inclusive as to its spirit.

The primitive Church was very puritanic concerning the Christian spirit. She was not particular as to the vessels in which to pour the new wine, but she was extremely particular as to the wine itself. She borrowed the vessels in Judæa, Alexandria, Athens, Rome, but she never borrowed wine. The Christian spirit and the pagan spirit were just like two opposite poles, like

white and black, or day and night. The Church was conscious of it, and jealously watchful that no drop of any foreign spirit should be mixed with the precious spirit of the New Gospel. There existed no thought of compromise, and no idea of inclusiveness whatever regarding the spirit. The terrific conflict of Christianity and Paganism through centuries sprang from the irreconcilability of two different spirits. Were the Church as inclusive as to the spirit as she was to forms, doctrines, customs and worships, conflicts never would arise – but then neither would Christianity arise.

The modern Church is particular as to its institutions, but not particular at all as to its spirit. The Roman Emperors never would persecute the modern Church, for they would easily recognise their own spirit included in her. Nor would the Pharaohs from Egypt persecute modern Christianity. Nor would Areopagus or Akropolis be puzzled so much had St Paul preached to them the modern European Christianity with its complicated spirit of all kinds of compromises with Heaven and Hell, compromise with the State, Plutocracy, Nationalism, Imperialism, Conquest, War, Diplomacy, Secular Philosophy, Secular Science, Agnostic Parliaments, Tribal Chauvinism, Education, Officialism, Bureaucracy, etc., etc. All these things have their own spirit, and every such spirit is partly or wholly included in the spirit of the Church, i.e. of modern Christianity. None of the Christian Churches of our time makes an exception as to this inclusiveness of all kinds of spirits. Even Protestantism, which claims the simplicity of its Christian ritual and administration, represents a lamentable mosaic of spirits gathered from all the pagan corners of secular Europe and mixed up with the Christian wine in the same barrel.

The Church of the East excommunicated thousands of those who crossed themselves with two fingers instead of using three fingers. The Church of the West burnt thousands of those who did not recognise the papal organisation of the Church as the only ark of salvation. Yet there is rarely to be found in the Church annals an excommunication on the ground of chauvinism or brutal egoism. No one of the world conquerors – neither Napoleon nor Kaiser William – have been excommunicated by the Church.

It signifies an extreme decadence of the Church. And this decadence penetrates and dominates our own time. Speaking on the reunion of the Churches the peoples of the East are anxious to know – not whether the Church of the West has preserved the unmixed Christian spirit in its integrity, but whether this Church still keeps Filioque as a dogma, and whether she has ikons, and whether she allows eggs and milk in Lent. And the people of the West are anxious to know whether the Eastern Church has a screen quite different from their own screen at the altar, and whether she has been always tenaciously exclusive in teaching, worship and organisation. Who of us and of you asks about the integrity of the Christian spirit? If St Paul were amongst us he would ridicule our controversies on Filioque and all the trifles concerning Church organisation and the external expressions of Christianity. He would ask: What happened with the spirit he preached? What happened with this spirit which excommunicated de facto the Jewish narrow Patriotism and the Roman Imperialism? Have we still this exclusive spirit which moved the world effecting the greatest revolution in History? I am sure he would have to repeat with good reasons to every Church and to everyone of us: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

Well, we must come again to this source of Christian strength and greatness, which is Christ's spirit. A new revival, yea, regeneration of Christianity, could be possible only in a united Christian Church; and the union of the Church is possible only upon the ground of the primitive Church, which was inclusive in teaching, worship and organisation, but exclusive in spirit. On the day when we all exclude from ourselves the Jewish and Greek and Roman spirit, and retain only the pure Christian spirit, we shall be at once ready to include each other's Church into one body, into one Christianity. We must be clear about it, and we must confess that the divisions of the church are due to the invasion of a foreign spirit, an unclean spirit, into the Church. When the Church cleanses herself from this foreign unclean spirit she will be victorious over herself, and from this victory to the ultimate victory of Christianity over our planet will be a very short distance.

## ECCLESIA TRIUMPHANS

How can the church get her past strength again and triumph over the evil inside and outside her walls?

If she were united she could get it by waiting for the ruin of Europe – i.e. of a house which is divided in itself – which is not very far off. But she the Church – is divided too. She is fighting with and for the European parties, and against herself. Consequently, in waiting for the ruin of Europe she is waiting for her own ruin. Therefore she must make up her mind lest it is too late. Horribile dictu – she must start a dramatic movement in order to get her soul back.

First of all she must become again a heresy towards Europe and European secular, antidivine civilisation, just as she was a heresy towards the theocratic Israel and semi-theocratic Greece and Rome. Theoretically, she must stick to Theocracy, historically, to Christocracy, and practically to Sanctocracy. She must loose herself from all the chains binding her either to the chariot of any dynasty or of any oligarch or president, or whatever political denomination it may be, and insist upon the Holy Wisdom to lead humanity. It ought to be absolutely indifferent to the Church what political denomination, or social creed, or institutional shape a human society shall have as long as this is founded upon any other ideal but saintliness. The Church ought to know only two denominations – politics and social life, inter-human as well as international and inter racial-racial relations in trade and business, in education and family life – i.e. saintliness and unsaintliness. If you ask what saintliness ought to mean, Christianity has not to argue but to show you the saintliness in the flesh. Christ the saintly Lord, St Paul and St John, Polycarp and Leo, Patrick and Francis, Sergius and Zosim, St Theresa and hundreds of other saints. And if somebody thinks still that a few thousands of Christian saints are not a sufficient argument to show that saintliness is practicable, then the Church has still not to give her ideal up and to take as her ideal thousands of great and small Napoleons and Bismarcks, and Goethes and Spencers, or Medics and Cromwells or Kaisers and Kings – no, in the latter case it would be much nicer for the Church to point out the saintly men outside of Christian walls,

like St Hermes and St Pythagoras, or St Krishna and St Buddha, or St Lao-Tse and St Confucius, or St Zoroaster and St Abu-Bekr. Better even is unbaptised saintliness than baptised earthliness.

Saintliness includes goodness and sacrifice, and excludes all the earthly impure spirits of selfishness, pride, quarrels and conquests. Therefore, when the Church returns to her fundamental ideal, she will return to her elementary simplicity in which she was so powerful as to move mountains and empires and hearts at the beginning of her history. That is what the world needs now just as much as it needs air and light, i.e. an elementary spiritual power by which it could be moved, cleared up, purified and brought out of its chaos to a solid and beautiful construction.

### **HOLY CHURCH IN HOLY EUROPE**

Europe has been eclipsed because her Church—her soul—has been eclipsed; the Church has been eclipsed because her principal ideal has been eclipsed. The principal ideal of the Church is saintliness. This ideal, plunged down into darkness like a sun into ashes, must come out again to illuminate the Church and Europe. Europe has tried all the ways but the way of the Church, the European Church has tried all the ways but the way of Christ. Well, then, Europe must try the only way left, which is saintliness. The Church must give an example to Europe.

Europe has been materialistic, heroic, scientific, imperialistic, technical, secular. At last she has to be holy. Whatever she has been, she has been unhappy and restless, and brutal and criminal, unjust and gluttonous. Soldiers and traders, despots and robbers, popes and kings, gluttons and harlots, have ruled Europe, but not yet the saints, the holy wizards. The Church's duty has been to provide Europe with such holy wizards. She has failed because she has been obscured by Europe, as a fine soul often is obscured by a heavy and greedy body. The body, one thought, the soul, another, until their thought became one and the same, i.e. the bodily thought. Now, after a bitter experience, the soul must come to its rights. Europe and Europe's Church have not henceforth to think two different thoughts, but one and the same, and this one thought has not to be a bodily one but a spiritual one. The aim of the Church as well as of Europe has to

be God, Christ, saintliness. If this thing is given to the Church and Europe, everything else will be easily given. A Holy Church in Holy Europe!

A holy Europe only can be a missionary Europe. No other mission has Europe on other continents but a Christian one. It was an illusion to speak about Europe's mission in the wide world without Christ. Well, but only a Christlike people can be a missionary of Christ. How could an unholy Europe preach the Holy One?

Do you think that the Arabs, who gave Europe knowledge, are expecting from Europe knowledge? No, they expect Europe's goodwill.

Or do you think that India, whose history is a history of saints, is anxious to accept German materialistic science, individual philosophy, and a destructive and shallow theology? No, they expect from Europe more saintliness than they have had in their history. And that is just very difficult for Europe to give them.

Or do you think that Chino-Japanese civilisation has anything worth mentioning to borrow from Europe but Christian ideals? No, nothing that could make them happier than they have been.

Well then, let Europe kill her pride and self-conceit in this war and become humble and meek. The Church ought to give an example to secular Europe: an example of humility, goodness, sacrifice – saintliness.

But which of the Churches ought to give this example for the salvation of Europe and of the world? Yours, if you like. Why not just your Anglican Church? But whichever undertakes to lead the way will be the most glorious Church. For she will lead the whole Church and through the Church Europe and through Europe the whole world to holiness and victory, to God and His Kingdom.